

## **Research Report**

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# **Defining and Operationalizing the Construct of Pragmatic Competence: Review and Recommendations**

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## RESEARCH REPORT

# Defining and Operationalizing the Construct of Pragmatic Competence: Review and Recommendations

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This review paper constitutes the first step within a larger research effort to develop an interactive pragmatics learning tool for second and foreign language (L2) learners and users of English. The tool will primarily endeavor to support pragmatics learning within the language use domain “workplace.” Given this superordinate objective, this paper is subdivided into 2 parts. In the first section, we provide a detailed overview of previous (empirical) research, theories, and frameworks of communicative competence to review the role of pragmatics as an essential component of L2 communicative language ability. A principled, systematic, and exhaustive literature search was conducted via key word searches, and the selected literature was categorized and coded using NVivo 10 software. Next, 12 distinct models of communicative language ability that contain components of pragmatic knowledge were identified and analyzed. The commonly identified constitutive components were then reconceptualized into a proposed construct of pragmatic competence. The challenges of operationalizing pragmatic competence in both instruction and assessment are discussed. The second part of the paper constitutes a domain analysis of pragmatics in the language use domain “workplace.” First, the literature is reviewed for communicative tasks and activities that feature prominently in different workplace settings across various English-speaking countries. Then, we suggest and exemplify different model task types that can be employed in the context of learning and assessment materials that aim to foster pragmatic-functional awareness in both English as a foreign language (EFL)/English as a second language (ESL) learners and first language (L1) speakers alike.

**Keywords** Pragmatic competence; construct; sociopragmatics; pragmalinguistics; learning; workplace

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*“Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself, (I am large, I contain multitudes.)”*  
— Walt Whitman (1855)

This review paper constitutes the first step within a larger research effort to develop an interactive pragmatics learning tool for second and foreign language (L2) learners and users of English. The tool will primarily endeavor to support pragmatics learning within the language use domain “workplace.” Especially in the workplace, pragmatic competence has been identified as a crucial aspect of communicative language ability (CLA; e.g., Riddiford & Joe, 2010). Not only have pragmatic infelicities been reported as a major cause of communication breakdown in workplace environments (Clyne, 1994), but more severely, pragmatic failure—unlike grammatical mistakes—has been shown to create negative impressions about the speaker (e.g., Timpe, 2013). Yet, despite potentially serious, high-stake consequences, the inclusion of pragmatics in instructional material, especially for business English, is still very limited, which may leave English language learners (ELLs) either unaware of or ill-prepared for pragmatic challenges in the English-medium workplace.

To provide a solid theoretical basis for the development of such a learning tool, this paper aims to review in detail the concepts and theories of pragmatics prevalent in the research literature. Moreover, it aims to propose a construct definition of pragmatic competence for the development of future assessment and learning tools. However, the concept of pragmatics has proved particularly difficult to define coherently as it has been hypothesized to include multiple phenomena and components.

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One of the most frequently cited definitions of *pragmatics* was proposed by Crystal (1997) who described pragmatics as the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication. (p. 301)

While Crystal's definition broadly emphasizes language use in context—be it written, spoken, or a hybrid mode—he places a particular focus on the individual whose utterances are not only mediated by the sociocultural context of the given language use situation, but whose linguistic choices also have an effect on the interlocutor. Thus, as Kasper (1997) summarized, pragmatics can be seen as “the study of communicative action in its sociocultural context” (par. 1). In sum, two features of pragmatics can be derived from these definitions: (a) the mediating effect of the sociocultural context and (b) the (linguistic) choices of the language users.

Within this very broad frame provided by these two definitions, a “flurry of research” (Roever, 2006, p. 229) has been carried out in pragmatics over the past four decades in fields such as linguistics, applied linguistics, communication studies, second language acquisition. In L2 pragmatics, for instance, studies have been conducted in a range of different domains such as instruction in L2 pragmatics, the development of L2 learners' pragmatic competence in different languages, cross-cultural pragmatic differences, or L2 pragmatic assessment (e.g., Kasper & Rose, 2002; Rose & Kasper, 2001; Ross & Kasper, 2013; Timpe, 2013). Moreover, the pragmatic phenomena described and studied within those domains range from speech acts and functions over implicatures, routine formulae, register, and politeness all the way to lexis, deixis, and genre. Hence, pragmatics seems to have functioned as an umbrella term or a “wastebasket”—as Yule (1996, p. 6) put it—for a variety of different language (use) phenomena.

While language use in context seems to be a widely accepted general frame of reference for pragmatics, a number of fundamental questions still remain open: What exactly constitutes pragmatics? Which phenomena pertain to that domain? How are pragmatic phenomena related to other linguistic resources? Questions such as these have surfaced repeatedly in the literature over the past four decades. As early as 1974, Stalnaker called for “the development and application of a pragmatic theory in which detailed explanations of phenomena relating to linguistic contexts can be given” (p. 214). In 1989, Stalker held that

[j]ust what constitutes ‘pragmatics’ is an open question, but there seems to be general agreement that pragmatics is a system of rules which defines the relationship of meaning to the contexts in which it occurs, that is, it matches functions with particular language choices in particular contexts. (p. 184)

In addition to these early voices, more recent scholars such as Eslami-Rasekh (2005) maintained that “[e]ven though pragmatic competence has been recognized as one of the vital components of communicative competence (e.g., Bachman, 1990), there is a lack of a clear, widely accepted definition of the term” (p. 199). Hence, as Roever (2011, 2013) pointed out, a unifying definition of the construct of pragmatics does not exist.

If basic questions such as the ones put forth above remain open, a number of concerns arise for teaching and assessment. In terms of teaching, how do we know what constitutes a pragmatically competent L2 learner? Given the lack of a general construct definition, how are teachers supposed to know what to foster in their learners? With regard to assessment, the primary purpose of a theoretical model is “to describe the construct at a general level” (Chalhoub-Deville, 1997, p. 5) in order to provide “the theoretical direction for the measurement of [L2] pragmatics” (Yamashita, 2008, p. 202). To provide more guidance for a diverse field, as Purpura (2004) argued, “[W]e need to define the domain of [pragmatic] knowledge so that it can be distinguished from the domains of semantic and [grammatical] knowledge, while at the same time, the obvious interrelationships can be recognized” (p. 58). A more profound theoretical base may thus contribute to both learning and assessment of pragmatic competence. By means of a principled literature review and theoretical synthesis, this paper provides an overview of the pragmatics frameworks, models, theories, and phenomena that have been put forth and investigated within applied linguistics over the past 40 years.

The organization of this paper is as follows. First, the systematic approach that was adopted in this review will be outlined in order to identify, compile, retrieve, and review a large body of relevant literature. By means of a systematic literature review, the pragmatic components were examined, which are included in models and frameworks of CLA. We reviewed, compared, and eventually synthesized the components put forth in the models and, thus, developed a somewhat modified

construct of pragmatics, situating pragmatic principles and pragmatic-functional knowledge within a larger context of general language ability. Next, a domain analysis is presented, exploring primarily pragmatics research done in one language use setting: the workplace. Then, some suggestions are made for tasks and items that can be included in the learning and assessment tool. Finally, we acknowledge the limitations of this review and identify directions for further research.

## Method

### The Literature Search

After specifying the research domain and formulating the review questions to be addressed in this paper, a body of relevant literature was identified by means of a principled, well-documented, and exhaustive search of the existing literature. This method was adopted in order to produce a systematically identified, broad foundation of texts.

### Scoping the Literature and Identifying Key Terms

An initial scoping review was conducted for two reasons: (a) to identify keywords and search terms that would be used systematically in the final literature search and (b) to obtain a more detailed understanding of the research landscape, including the types of studies and theories published in the broader domain of pragmatics.

As a first step, the research team compiled a list of key terms in order to investigate which ones would be most productive and, thus, provide the most relevant results with regard to the focus of this particular research project. The final list included the following words: pragmatics, pragmatic, competence, theory, ability, understanding, knowledge, workplace, business, assessment, testing, teaching, and strategy. These terms were employed in Boolean AND-OR combinations across the following indexes and databases, randomly selected from In'nami and Koizumi's (2010) list of frequently used databases in applied linguistics: Academic Search Complete, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts (LLBA), Modern Language Association (MLA) International Bibliography, PsycINFO, ProQuest, and Google Scholar.

These searches revealed some interesting trends. For example, "pragmatic AND competence" showed higher numbers of relevant findings than "pragmatic AND theory." Similarly, "pragmatic AND testing" revealed more relevant hits than "pragmatic AND assessment." Moreover, "pragmatic AND ability" primarily identified disability-related research studies, whereas the majority of publications found by means of "pragmatic AND competence" pertained to the field of applied linguistics. Based on the trends revealed in this initial key-term search, the 10 word combinations, displayed in Table 1 below, were identified and then systematically applied in the context of a comprehensive literature search.

With regard to scoping the existing literature within the domain of pragmatics, this initial review exposed two distinct challenges. First, due to the breadth of the research domain, the number of items obtained during some of the searches exceeded the capacity of the review team (e.g., the key term combination "pragmatics AND theory" in Academic Search Complete generated 3,450 items). Second, the searches revealed studies that were neither directly related to the research questions nor to the final objective of the overarching project. For instance, the set of 3,450 studies obtained in Academic Research Complete included studies as diverse as pragmatic language assessment for children suffering from Williams Syndrome, an overview of neo-Gricean pragmatics, pragmatic development in children with visual impairments, and an investigation of variables underlying L2 pragmatics tests. In short, not only were the search results vast in number, but they were also highly diverse, spanning a range of disciplines, approaches, and phenomena investigated.

In order to constrain the literature search to maintain feasibility, the research team decided to (a) limit the number of items per search that would be inspected more closely with regard to relevance and (b) adopt a protocol-driven search

**Table 1** Combinations of Search Terms Used

Pragmatic competence	Pragmatic competence AND workplace
AND learning OR teaching	AND learning OR teaching
AND technology	AND technology
AND strategies	AND strategies
AND testing	AND testing

**Table 2** Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion of Studies

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Focus on pragmatic competence as a construct	Humor and pragmatics
Focus on pragmatic phenomena	Disability and pragmatics
Adult learners	Children/young learners
Publications in English	Publications in languages other than English
Focus on workplace	Studies that focused on single word research

strategy with a priori inclusion and exclusion criteria. Hence, to be included, publications had to have a relation to (applied) linguistics and meet the criteria outlined in Table 2.

To summarize, the process of scoping the existing literature before conducting the actual literature search provided a more focused and structured approach to retrieving potentially relevant studies.

### **Systematic Application of Search Terms**

A characteristic of research syntheses is an exhaustive search for relevant literature, that is, compiling or retrieving a high percentage of the studies and publications pertinent to the current synthesis (e.g., Cooper, 1988; Dixon-Woods *et al.*, 2006; Flinspach, 2001). However, as White (1994) noted, “[T]he point is not to track down every paper that is somehow related to the topic . . . [but rather] *to avoid missing a useful paper that lies outside one’s regular purview*, thereby ensuring that one’s habitual channels of communication will not bias the results of studies obtained by the search” (p. 44; italics in the original). Hence, the first objective in our literature search was to identify a “large initial ‘net’ of potentially relevant [publications]” (Norris & Ortega, 2000, p. 413).

Capturing such a large body of relevant literature “requires the use of multiple databases and must not be based on a single database” (In’nami & Koizumi, 2010, p. 170). Following this proposition, four different types of channels and indexes were accessed and searched systematically utilizing the battery of key terms presented in Table 1: (a) Google Scholar, (b) electronic databases (LLBA, ERIC, PsycINFO, ProQuest US & UK), (c) journals, and (d) Gottesman Library Super Search. The selection of these source indices was informed by the list of the most frequently used databases in meta-analyses (see In’nami & Koizumi, 2010, p. 172) and the findings of the scoping review.

It should be noted that while quantitative meta-analyses typically recommend the application of research quality criteria for inclusion decisions, an inclusive approach was adopted in this study (Dixon-Woods *et al.*, 2006; Glass, 1976; Norris & Ortega, 2000). Following Dixon-Woods *et al.* (2006), we aimed to prioritize publications that “appeared to be relevant, rather than particular study types or papers that met particular methodological standards” (par. 18). Thus, we initially applied a rather low threshold based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria (Table 2) in order to maximize the number of papers included.

In addition to searching each of the sources for the 10 key term combinations and screening the results for relevance, we conducted several cross-checks of our searches, finding, for example, that dissertations found in Google Scholar were also listed in the ProQuest database or that the Gottesman Library Super Search revealed book references that were also found in the electronic databases.

### **Sampling**

The systematic application of the key terms across the different indices identified a large and diverse body of literature of 375 publications, including dissertations, books, journal articles, book chapters, online publications, and working papers (see Appendix A for the complete list of retrieved publications). All publications were retrieved through library services, from personal resources, and from individuals with access to particular resources. After all publications had been retrieved, they were analyzed further for quality and relevance, thus gradually narrowing the scope of the body of publications.

Adopting Dixon-Woods *et al.*’s (2006) two-pronged approach to quality and relevance, the selection of the sample of publications that was eventually included in this review’s final body of literature was a formal, iterative, and question-driven process. All retrieved publications were browsed to determine their actual relevance to the objective of the current

**Table 3** Further Selection Criteria

Exclusion criteria	Rationale for adopting the criteria
Book reviews	Most publications that were reviewed were already part of the actual body of retrieved literature. Thus, they did not contribute additional information.
Empirical studies that investigated the effectiveness of explicit versus implicit instruction of pragmatic competence in English as a foreign language (EFL)/English as a second language (ESL) settings	<p>a) Those studies were not primarily relevant for the current investigation.</p> <p>b) This topic was already investigated in Jeon and Kaya's (2006) meta-analysis.</p>
Publications that focused on the development and evaluation of learning material and methods used in pragmatics instruction	An overview of these was already provided in Taguchi's (2011) literature review.

synthesis. This iterative process of identifying parameters for the selection of texts was accompanied by recursive meetings and critical discussions among members of the research team. Throughout this process, a Google Docs spreadsheet, accessible online to all researchers, was used to maintain an overview at all times of the complete list of references as well as decisions for exclusion or inclusion. By the end of this second review phase, 184 of the originally retrieved texts were excluded for the reasons explained in Table 3.

In addition, four topic-related, potentially relevant papers—all retrieved through Google Scholar—were excluded because they showed major conceptual flaws. Hence, the final judgment about inclusion rested on the assessment of relevance as well as, to a lesser degree, the quality of the publication.

### Categorization and Development of Themes

After retrieving and selecting the publications that met our inclusion criteria, we proceeded to categorize and code the literature, primarily using QSR NVivo 10 software. Given the grand scheme of the project, the texts were roughly organized based on their main focus into the following categories: pragmatic construct, workplace domain, and computer-assisted language learning (CALL) technology. Publications pertaining to the first two categories constituted the underlying body of literature used in the following two sections of this paper, while texts coded under the label CALL technology were saved for later use in developing the online learning tool. In order to allow for vote counts to support the following review, publications categorized as pragmatic construct and workplace domain were coded with regard to (a) pragmatic definitions by author, (b) reference to the distinction between sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic phenomena, and (c) model(s) of CLA used.

### Pragmatic Competence Revisited

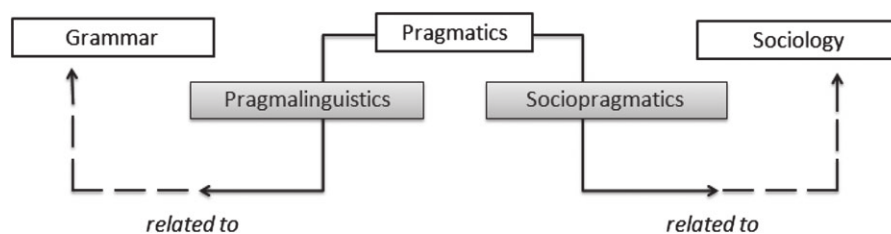
While pragmatics has been consistently defined as the study of language in its sociocultural context (Crystal, 1985, 1997; Kasper, 1997), it is unclear what an individual needs to know in order to be pragmatically competent and communicate appropriately and effectively in a given situation. In short, what exactly constitutes pragmatic *competence*?

To arrive at a construct of pragmatic competence, it is useful to review how pragmatic competence has been conceptualized in various (empirical) studies as well as models and frameworks of CLA. Based on close review of the body of literature identified in the systematic review and the results of different vote counts, we will first present the widespread distinction between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. Second, we will discuss three primary classifications of communicative competence models in which pragmatic competence is situated before finally proposing a construct of pragmatic competence.

### Definition of Key Terms: Knowledge, Competence, Performance

In this paper, we have adopted the distinction between knowledge, competence/ability, and performance as delineated by Purpura (2004). Knowledge, as Purpura argued, describes “a set of informational structures that are built up through





**Figure 1** Leech's distinction between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. Adapted from *Principles of Pragmatics* (p. 11), by G. N. Leech, 1983, London, England, Longman. Copyright 1983 by the Longman.

experience and stored in long-term memory” (p. 85) in the form of mental representations. Thus, pragmatic knowledge would comprise mental representations of informational structures related to pragmatics. Pragmatic competence or ability—which we use synonymously—goes beyond mere information structures and also includes “the capacity to use these informational structures in some way” (Purpura, 2004, p. 86; *italics in the original*) in order to convey meaning. Ultimately, pragmatic performance refers to the use of pragmatic phenomena in actual communicative events. Hence, performance is competence that can be observed. However, it is not necessarily a direct reflection of the competence as various factors such as situational constraints, task demands, or memory can interfere with performance.

### A Fundamental Distinction: Pragmalinguistics Versus Sociopragmatics

As cited and reviewed in almost all of the examined publications, there seems to be a general consensus that pragmatic competence consists of two distinct, yet interrelated subcomponents: pragmalinguistic competence and sociopragmatic competence (see Figure 1).

As defined by Leech (1983), pragmalinguistics constitutes “the more linguistic end of pragmatics” (p. 11), or the linguistic strategies and resources needed to encode and decode a given illocution. For example, a linguistic strategy for making a request is conventional indirectness (e.g., *Could you clean the dishes?*), while the linguistic resources to realize this conventionally indirect request can include questions, modals, or hedges (Roever, 2006). Thus, pragmalinguistics is rather language specific and more closely interrelated with grammatical knowledge. Sociopragmatics, as the “sociological interface of pragmatics” (Leech, 1983, p. 10), is concerned with the rules and conventions of situationally, culturally, and socially appropriate and acceptable language use. This includes knowledge about “the taboos, mutual rights, obligations, and conventional courses of action that apply in a given speech community” (Roever, 2006, p. 230). Thus, a sociopragmatically competent language user—aware of sociocultural variables such as social distance, relative power, and degree of imposition (Brown & Levinson, 1987)—knows when, for example, conventional indirectness may be more appropriate than directness.

For language users to be pragmatically successful, they must be able to consider, select, and “combine elements from these two areas in accordance with [their] illocutionary, propositional and modal goals” (Kasper, 1989, p. 39). As Roever (2011) contended, “Competent speakers of a target language can recognize a situationally appropriate speech style and produce it, indicating through their use of linguistic features that they recognize the social rules and norms of the speech event” (p. 471). Hence, this binary, psycholinguistic structure of pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics positions pragmatic competence on a continuum with grammar at the one end and sociology at the other, which makes pragmatic competence an adaptive process mediated by the linguistic resources of an individual as well as the modalities, constraints, and sociocultural conventions of a given language use situation.

Given this interconnectedness with other areas of language ability, pragmatic competence needs to be considered within the wider context of CLA. Already in 1989, Stalker pointed out that “[t]he theoretical fit of communicative competence with pragmatics is quite unsettled, but needs to be considered” (p. 183)—a call that has surfaced repeatedly in pragmatics literature (e.g., Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Roever, 2011). In response to that call, a closer look was taken at different models and frameworks of communicative competence to review the role of pragmatics as an indispensable component of (L2) CLA.

### Frameworks of Pragmatic Competence Revisited

A count of all of the frameworks and models in the examined body of literature identified 12 distinct models of CLA that contained, in one way or another, components of pragmatic knowledge. These reviewed frameworks can roughly be



grouped into (a) functional, discourse-oriented models, (b) component models, and (c) componential, meaning-oriented models. However, it needs to be noted that this tripartite classification should not mask the fact that considerable overlaps and similarities exist between frameworks as they draw and build upon one another.

### **Functional-Discourse Models**

In three of the frameworks reviewed, pragmatic competence is primarily described and viewed from a functional, discourse-oriented perspective (Bialystok, 1993; Halliday, 1973; van Dijk, 1977). Halliday's (1973) and Halliday and Hasan's (1976) conceptualization of the linguistic system, for example, places heavy emphasis on the sociocultural context that mediates meaning in language use situations. They put forth what Canale and Swain (1980) have called a "meaning potential approach to language" (p. 18). That is, the social context or system mediates a language user's behavioral options, which are then realized in a set of semantic options (i.e., what they can mean or the meaning potential), which are then ultimately realized as a set of grammatical options (i.e., the actual utterance). Hence, in Halliday's view, sociocultural context provides the frame and constraints within which language is organized on multiple levels (strata). The components of the semantic system—ideational, interpersonal, and textual—may be broadly viewed in terms of pragmatic functions and are given principal emphasis. The ideational component pertains to the expression of content, including experience (experiential) and abstract relationships (logical). The interpersonal component is concerned with social, affective, and conative functions. The textual component is focused on the language resources needed to create a text, including structural (theme, voice, information structure) and nonstructural (e.g., cohesion). In Halliday's conceptualization, the three functional components of the semantic system provide organizational structure that is intersected by lexicogrammatical groups. This approach emphasizes that grammatical and pragmatic components are inherently intertwined: functional components of the semantic system provide context (i.e., inform sociopragmatic meaning) and thus help determine the relative importance of lexicogrammatical groups across these components.

A similar discourse focus is maintained by van Dijk (1977), who described language use as a function-oriented, conventional system that has developed over time in a given speech community. Within this view of language, van Dijk framed pragmatic competence as a theory of action. Reminiscent of speech act theory, he argued that "by speaking we DO something" (p. 167) and carry out particular speech acts that carry distinct language use functions. These speech acts in turn are phrased and uttered according to the conventions that govern a given language use context. Thus, pragmatics is understood as dealing with the relationships between utterances and (a) the acts performed through these utterances and (b) the features of the context that promote appropriate language use. The former conceptualization concerns the illocutionary force of an utterance, whereas the latter involves the sociolinguistic conventions and norms that are related to language use in a given speech community. Van Dijk argued that the meaning of linguistic acts in the context of specific language use events only becomes accessible in interpretation—a point that is elaborated on by Bialystok (1993) and eventually Purpura (2004).

Bialystok (1993) described a framework of communicative competence that is largely coherent with Halliday's (1973) and van Dijk's (1977) functional, meaning-driven orientations but emphasizes the role of cognitive processing components. Communicative competence (learner competence) is described as a processing ability consisting of two components: analysis of knowledge and control of processing. From a pragmatic perspective, the first component consists of the process of analyzing knowledge in order to decode and encode *speech intentions* across three levels: conceptual (meaning), formal (structural), and symbolic. The second component requires directing attention to relevant and appropriate information to apply pragmatic knowledge in real-time communication. Within this framework, pragmatic competence is described as the use of these processing components across three pragmatic phenomena (turn-taking, cooperation, and cohesion). Bialystok highlights several aspects of the framework that may be particularly relevant for adult L2 learners to develop pragmatic competence, including the need to build or enhance symbolic representations that link forms to social contexts.

In sum, these three discourse-oriented models view language as a multidimensional (sociosemiotic) system. Therein, pragmatics constitutes a meaning-providing element that is largely synonymous with functional-discourse features. The meaning that is created and mediated through the context becomes overt primarily in the coherent flow of discourse and the interlocutor's interpretation thereof. Hence, all three models feature a meaning-driven view of language use.

## Component Models

In eight of the models reviewed, pragmatics is described as one of several, interrelated knowledge components that constitute (second) language ability (Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 1996, 2010; Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, & Thurrell, 1995; Hymes, 1972; Savignon, 1983; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2006; van Ek, 1986). While these frameworks recognize and try to accommodate features of the functional discourse perspective such as context and meaning orientation, they do not specify how pragmatic knowledge—be it declarative or procedural—is related to the other components or how processing is performed in any level of detail. Despite this lack of specificity, such frameworks may be useful for the purposes for which they were designed: identifying key components of declarative knowledge, fundamental cognitive and meta-cognitive processes, and important task or contextual characteristics that should be considered when teaching or assessing pragmatic ability.

While all of these models view pragmatics as a fundamental constituent of CLA, they can be grouped according to three consecutive phases: (a) the early groundwork (Hymes, 1972), (b) the sociolinguistic competence phase (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Savignon, 1983; van Ek, 1986), and (c) the pragmatic competence phase (Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 1996, 2010; Celce-Murcia *et al.*, 1995; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2006).

### *The Early Groundwork*

Hymes (1972) proposed one of the earliest models of CLA that emphasized the use of language in context. Introducing the term *communicative competence*, he referred to language as a means of social behavior based on two fundamental abilities: linguistic and sociolinguistic competence. While linguistic competence broadly refers to the rules of grammar, sociolinguistic competence also includes rules of use, that is, the ability to use language appropriately in different sociocultural and contextual situations. Highlighting a relationship between both competences, Hymes (1972) argued that “there are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless” (p. 278). Recognizing that appropriate and accepted forms of language vary across speech communities, he maintained that

one cannot take linguistic form, a given code, or even speech itself, as a limiting frame of reference. One must take as context a community, or network of persons, investigating [ ... ] not language, but communication, which must provide the frame of reference within which the place of language in culture and society is to be assessed. (Hymes, 1974, p. 4)

This binary structure of linguistic and sociolinguistic competence—that is, form and the ability to use form appropriately in different contexts—laid the groundwork for models of CLA in the fields of L2 pedagogy and assessment such as Canale and Swain (1980); Canale (1983); Bachman (1990); Bachman and Palmer (1996, 2010), as well as Celce-Murcia *et al.*, (1995).

### *Sociolinguistic Competence Phase*

In line with Hymes (1972); Canale and Swain (1980), and Canale (1983) regarded communicative competence as a synthesized system of knowledge, divided into knowledge of rules and form on the one end and knowledge of contextual language use on the other. Grounded in this synthesis, they originally defined three constitutive components of communicative competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. This work was later expounded upon by Canale (1983) who included a fourth competence: discourse competence. *Grammatical competence* is defined as the knowledge of lexis and rules pertaining to sentence structure, morphology, syntax, semantics, and phonology. *Sociolinguistic competence* is further divided into two principal sets of rules: “sociocultural rules of use and rules of discourse” (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 30). Sociocultural rules refer to whether an individual can interpret and produce an utterance appropriately relative to a given communicative context, that is, depending on factors such as topic, role of participants, setting, and norms of interaction (Canale & Swain, 1980). Rules of discourse describe aspects such as cohesion and coherence of longer utterances as well as—similar to Halliday (1973) and van Dijk (1977)—communicative functions. Thus, sociolinguistic competence—reminiscent of Leech’s (1983) conceptualization of pragmatics—requires that a language user be able to understand and produce utterances that are appropriate to the given situation or context (pragmalinguistics). Furthermore, it includes knowledge of the rules of discourse, suggesting that the grammatical form of

an utterance be appropriate in terms of attitude, style, and register, dependent on the sociocultural setting (sociopragmatics). Finally, *strategic competence*, as the third component, comprises verbal and nonverbal strategies utilized to mitigate breakdowns in communication. As such, strategic competence consists of two primary strategy types: strategies pertaining to grammatical competence (e.g., paraphrasing skills) and to sociolinguistic competence (e.g., how to use forms of address when social status is unclear). Canale (1983) refined this original tripartite framework of communicative competence by adding a fourth component: *discourse competence*. He transferred the discourse elements from sociolinguistic competence into the separate and discrete module that then comprised features such as appropriateness as well as cohesion and coherence of utterances in a given language use context.

Canale's (1983) four-pronged model is almost congruent with Savignon's (1983, 2002) proposed framework, which she originally developed to support L2 instruction and a communicative curriculum. It maintains the same four components as Canale's framework: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. In contrast to the purely linguistic domain of grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence—later called sociocultural competence (Savignon, 2002)—includes awareness for the following subcomponents: the roles of participants, dialects/varieties, shared information of interlocutors, and the function of an interaction—elements that are found under the label of pragmatic competence in later models (e.g., Bachman, 1990). Savignon (1983) also tried to capture and highlight the developmental aspect of communicative competence while emphasizing the contextual use of language. Savignon (1983, 2002) contended that a language user's knowledge will gradually increase and expand over time, thus enabling him or her to perform in a broader range of communicative contexts. However, given any individual's knowledge of a linguistic system is necessarily incomplete, strategic competence is present at all times at different degrees dependent on the amount of grammatical, sociolinguistic, and discourse knowledge available.

Concurrent to the development of Canale's (1983) and Savignon's (1983) models in North America, van Ek (1986) developed a model of communicative competence in support of the Council of Europe's research on communicative language teaching. He referred to his model as a framework for comprehensive foreign language learning objectives. Placing special emphasis on the individual learner, his model encompasses communication skills, in addition to the social and personal development of a learner, while placing a strong focus on the role that sociocultural context plays in learning and using a language. Van Ek's (1986) framework can be summarized to include the following six components: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, strategic, sociocultural, and social competence, in combination with the importance they place on autonomy (i.e., the freedom of a person to voluntarily make their own decisions) and social responsibility. While the first four components echo Canale's (1983) model, van Ek added sociocultural competence, which highlights the importance of the sociocultural context in which a communicative encounter occurs and the impact of context on language use, and social competence, which involves such qualities as "empathy and the ability to handle social situations" (1986, p. 84).

To summarize, while building upon Hymes's (1972) distinction of form and contextually appropriate use of form, these component models introduced more fine-grained, discrete components to describe the language phenomena related to contextually appropriate use of form. Although Canale and Swain (1980); Canale (1983); Savignon (1983), and van Ek (1986) outlined their components separately, they all assumed that the different components included in their respective frameworks were closely related and, thus, interact when individuals engage in communication. Accordingly, grammatical competence cannot function alone but is always accompanied by an individual's sociolinguistic and discourse competence and vice versa. Hence, echoing Leech (1983), these models emphasize the close interconnectedness of pragmatic, grammatical, and sociocultural knowledge. However, while acknowledging the interconnectedness of the various components at the communicative level, they still maintained that the "manner in which the various components of communicative competence interact is open to speculation" (Savignon, 1983, p. 45). Despite this lack of clearly delineated boundaries and relationships between the components, the view and descriptions of sociolinguistic and sociocultural competence put forth in these eight models were classified and elaborated under the umbrella term *pragmatic competence* in subsequent frameworks.

### *Pragmatic Competence Phase*

As the most widely referenced and reviewed model in pragmatics research, Bachman and Palmer's *Model of Communicative Language Ability* has been continuously developed over the course of approximately 30 years. Although Bachman's (1990) version has been accredited in different publications as the first one to explicitly include the term pragmatic

competence, it was in fact Bachman and Palmer's (1982) framework of communicative competence that first incorporated the term pragmatic competence as a category to subsume vocabulary, cohesion, and organization/coherence—thus following the early European functional discourse-orientation. In addition to pragmatic competence, this early model also consisted of grammatical competence (morphology and syntax) and sociolinguistic competence (register, nativeness, nonliteral language). Derived from and strongly reminiscent of Canale and Swain's (1980) framework, Bachman and Palmer (1982) conducted a validation study of this early tripartite framework. By means of confirmatory factor analysis, they found evidence for two traits: grammatical/pragmatic and sociolinguistic. Not only did this evidence provide support for a multidimensional framework of language competence with several analytic components, but it also gave rise to the binary structure of the category, language knowledge, included in the ever evolving model of CLA (Bachman, 1990; Bachman, Kunnan, Vanniarajan, & Lynch, 1988; Bachman & Palmer, 1996, 2010).

Based on their research and earlier work in communicative competence (e.g., Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972; Savignon, 1983), Bachman (1990) subdivided language knowledge into the two categories of organizational knowledge and pragmatic knowledge. Organizational knowledge, which includes grammatical and textual knowledge, incorporates those “abilities involved in controlling the formal structure of language for producing or recognizing grammatically correct sentences, comprehending their propositional content, and ordering them to form texts” (Bachman, 1990, p. 87). Therefore, organizational competence pertains to the structuring of linguistic signals in written and oral communication. Pragmatic knowledge, as the second branch of language knowledge, covers the relationships between the linguistic signals and referents on the one hand (i.e., functional knowledge), as well as language users and the context of communication on the other (i.e., sociolinguistic knowledge)—consistent with the distinction proposed by Leech (1983).

As the first component of pragmatic knowledge, functional knowledge—earlier categorized in Bachman (1990) as illocutionary competence, consisting of speech acts (Searle, 1969) and functions (Halliday, 1973)—refers to “how utterances or sentences and texts are related to the communicative goal of the language users” (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p. 68). For example, the utterance “Do you know what time it is?” most likely functions as a request for time. Thus, it requires a response that provides the time, rather than a verbal response such as “Yes, I do.” which—although literally and grammatically correct—would be inappropriate given that it neglects the character of the question as a request for information. Along those lines, Bachman and Palmer (2010) proposed functional knowledge to include speech acts and, more generally, an awareness of the functional character of language as an instrument to act in a variety of ways. Thus, Bachman and Palmer attempt to classify into functional categories the various communicative ends to which linguistic acting can be employed. They distinguish between four distinct types of function: ideational, heuristic, manipulative, and imaginative.

The second branch of pragmatic knowledge, sociolinguistic knowledge, refers to “how utterances or sentences are related to features of the language use setting” (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p. 68). As such, it describes sociopragmatic knowledge that is necessary to relate utterances appropriately to a particular language use setting. Bachman and Palmer (2010) identified the following knowledge components as pertaining to this category: dialect/varieties, register, natural idiomatic expressions, cultural references and figures of speech, and genre (p. 46f). Hence, pragmatic knowledge encompasses functional and sociolinguistic knowledge, which each include multiple subcomponents. According to Bachman and Palmer (1996, 2010), individuals draw upon the different components of their pragmatic knowledge in relation to a specific language use situation. Thus, they highlight two decisive elements: the language use context and the individual in context.

While adopting the distinction between functional and sociolinguistic knowledge, Celce-Murcia *et al.* (1995) elaborated the pragmatic-sociolinguistic dimensions included in Canale and Swain (1980); Canale (1983), and Bachman (1990). While maintaining Canale's categories of linguistic/grammatical, strategic, and discourse competence, they further subdivided sociolinguistic competence into (a) actional and (b) sociocultural competence. Primarily describing knowledge of contextualized use of language functions, actional competence is defined as the ability to convey and understand “communicative intent, that is, matching actional intent with linguistic form based on the knowledge of an inventory of verbal schemata that carry illocutionary force (speech acts and speech sets)” (Celce-Murcia *et al.*, 1995, p. 17). Hence, it is reminiscent of pragmalinguistic (Leech, 1983) or illocutionary competence (Bachman, 1990). Sociocultural competence describes the “speaker's knowledge of how to express messages appropriately within the overall social and cultural context of communication, in accordance with the pragmatic factors related to variation in

language use” (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995, p. 23). Celce-Murcia et al. included four components within sociocultural competence: (a) social contextual factors (e.g., power relations, gender), (b) stylistic appropriateness (e.g., register, politeness strategies), (c) cultural factors (knowledge of other cultures, dialectal differences), and (d) nonverbal factors (e.g., body language, backchanneling behavior, proxemic, haptic, paralinguistic components, the use of silence). Hence, sociocultural competence extends the range of subcomponents included in Bachman’s (1990) original sociolinguistic competence.

The various (sub)components in Celce-Murcia et al.’s (1995) model are interactive at the level of communication. Discourse competence constitutes the central component of communicative competence, interconnected with the top-down process of sociocultural competence and the bottom-up processes of actional and linguistic competence. That is, discourse is shaped by the surrounding linguistic, sociocultural, and actional competencies. Similar to Canale and Swain (1980); Canale (1983), and Savignon (1983), Celce-Murcia views strategic competence as an underlying connective support system for all competencies, available as a resource in case of communication breakdowns.

In line with Celce-Murcia et al.’s (1995) framework, Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor’s (2006) model maintains the central core of discourse competence while also including pragmatic competence and intercultural competence as primary components. Drawing upon Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000), they argued that discourse competence is central because “it is in discourse and through discourse that all of the other competencies are realized” (p. 16). Pragmatic competence is one competence that feeds into discourse competence. Their definition of pragmatic competence is similar to Bachman (1990) and most closely related to the actional and sociocultural competence proposed by Celce-Murcia et al. Thus, it includes knowledge of speech acts and functions as well as sociopragmatic knowledge about participants and politeness conventions. In an attempt to emphasize the oftentimes cross-cultural nature of (L2) language use, Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor include intercultural competence as a category that emphasizes cultural awareness. As such, it includes sociocultural knowledge of the target language community, knowledge of dialects, and knowledge of nonverbal signals such as body language, use of space, touching, or silence (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2006, p. 17). Thus, intercultural competence seems to provide a more detailed outline of the knowledge components that Leech (1983) may have subsumed under sociology. Moreover, it emphasizes the connection to a learner’s native language and cultural knowledge when learning an L2.

Taking into account all component models, they oftentimes — although using different terminology — show very similar or even identical components. From Hymes (1972) to Bachman and Palmer (2010), the models include an increasingly detailed description of pragmatic competence and its constitutive components. While they do not outline how the components are interrelated, they nevertheless emphasize the interactional nature and interplay between the different sources of knowledge in general and two sources in particular: grammatical (linguistic) and contextualization conventions (social norms). Moreover, context not only is being underscored as important but has adopted an even more centralized role in more recent models (e.g., Bachman & Palmer, 2010). Along with this increased centrality of context — which includes both an individual’s learning context as well as a given language use context — intercultural aspects have started to come into focus, emphasizing the sociocultural aspects of language use and the consequences they may have for conveying meaning in different speech communities.

### *Meaning-Oriented Model*

What we have called a *meaning-oriented model* appears to be a hybrid that takes into account the close interplay between grammar and pragmatics as highlighted in many of the earlier European models while also accommodating the componential idea inherent to many of the North American models. Thus, Purpura’s (2004) model seems to build a bridge between the earlier functional-discourse-orientation and the component models, merging them into a new model that features a multicomponential view on meaning and interpretation.

Purpura (2004) developed his model in direct response to Bachman and Palmer’s framework. Although he acknowledged their multicomponential model of communicative competence as “the most comprehensive conceptualization of language ability to date” (Purpura, 2004, p. 54), he argued that their model would benefit from a more detailed description of how grammatical and organizational knowledge is used to decode and encode meaning in relation to contextual constraints. Hence, he stressed the need for a more refined description of the relationship between grammar and pragmatics.



**Table 4** Purpura's Tripartite Meaning System

Utterance	Literal meaning (derived from the words in syntax)	Intended meaning (derived from speaker's intention)	Pragmatic meaning (derived primarily from context)
<i>Wife to husband: Honey, the garbage is full.</i>	Imparting information	Directive: request for action	Expression of power Expression of politeness Expression of negative affect (criticism/complaint)

*Note:* Adapted from *Assessing Grammar*, by J. Purpura, 2004, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. Copyright 2004 by the Cambridge University Press.

Therefore, Purpura (2004) put forth a theoretical model of language knowledge that consists of two distinct, yet inter-related components: grammatical and pragmatic knowledge. Although theoretically described as separate entities, these two components are inextricably linked at the level of meaning in communication. Meaning, he argued, is derived from the purpose and goal of a communicative act. Thus, Purpura held that

[f]rom a theoretical perspective, the main goal of language use is communication, whether it be used to transmit information, to perform transactions, to establish and maintain social relations, to construct one's identity or to communicate one's intentions, attitudes or hypotheses. (p. 61)

Meaning, as the fundamental basis of his model, is constrained and mediated by the context of a given language use situation. Grammatical knowledge—or what Leech (1983) may call *pragmalinguistic knowledge*—is used to convey the literal and intended meanings of an utterance. These grammatical meanings are “derived both from the meaning of the words arranged in syntax and the way in which the words are used to convey the speaker's intention” (Purpura, 2004, p. 74). In contrast, pragmatics describes “a domain of extended meanings which are superimposed upon forms in association with the literal and intended meanings of an utterance” (Purpura, 2004, p. 75). Reminiscent of sociopragmatics, Purpura's (2004) definition of pragmatics embodies

a host of other implied meanings that derive from context relating to the interpersonal relationship of the interlocutors, their emotional or attitudinal stance, their presuppositions about what is known and the sociocultural setting of the interaction. (p. 74)

Hence, pragmatic knowledge relates to the decoding and encoding of meaning beyond the literal and intended layers of meaning and can only be understood in relation to context. For example, the dialogue in Table 4 can be interpreted along the three layers of meaning.

As such, pragmatic meaning can refer to the appropriateness, naturalness, acceptability, and conventionality of an utterance—be it on a sentential or discourse level.

As presented in Table 5, Purpura (2004) identified five sources of implied, pragmatic meaning in high context language use situations: contextual, sociolinguistic, sociocultural, psychological, or rhetorical. While Purpura seems to rearrange the pragmatic components introduced in Bachman and Palmer's model, he broadens the scope to also include interlocutor variables such as social distance, relative power, degree of imposition (Brown & Levinson, 1987), and politeness in reference to a specific speech community. Hence, Purpura used meaning as a unit to rearrange the constitutive components of pragmatics identified in earlier frameworks.

To summarize, a range of different models that include pragmatic phenomena in one way or another have emerged over the past four decades. Although distinct in their individual perspectives, they have in common a number of ideas and constitutive components. For example, the dual structure reminiscent of Leech (1983) is inherent in all models. That is, they all include, among others, a *code component*, which refers to an individual's knowledge of grammar (i.e., syntax, phonology, morphology, semantics, and lexis), and a *use component*, which describes a “language user's ability to use a language appropriately for a purpose within a given context” (Niezgoda & Roever, 2001, p. 64). Moreover, context and meaning-orientation feature prominently in the pragmatic or “use” dimension of all reviewed models, suggesting crucial importance for a construct of pragmatic competence.



**Table 5** Purpura's Components of Pragmatic Knowledge

	Pragmatic meaning (appropriateness/conventionality/naturalness/acceptability)
Contextual meaning	Sentential or discourse level
Sociolinguistic meaning	Interpersonal Social identity markers (gender, age, status, group membership) Cultural identity markers (dialect, nativeness) Social meanings (power, politeness) Register variation and modality (registers in speaking and writing) Social norms, preferences, and expectations Register variation and genres (academic, ESP)
Sociocultural meaning	Cultural meanings (cultural references, figurative meanings, metaphors) Cultural norms, preferences, and expectations (naturalness, frequency of apologies, formulaic expressions, collocations) Modality differences (speaking, writing)
Psychological meaning	Affective stance (sarcasm, deference, importance, anger, impatience, irony, humor, criticism, understatement)
Rhetorical meaning	Coherence Genres Organizational modes

*Note.* Adapted from Purpura (2004, p. 91).

### Conceptualizing a Construct of Pragmatic Competence

Drawing upon the models reviewed above, we propose a construct of pragmatic ability in this section, including fundamental principles and sociopsychological factors. Our thinking in developing this theoretical framework combines the functional, meaning-orientation with proposed components of pragmatic knowledge—in short, it constitutes a synthesis of pragmatic principles, elements adopted from models of communicative competence, and empirical evidence. Finally, implications of this construct shall be discussed against the background of L2 pragmatic instruction and assessment given that we intend to apply this framework in these two contexts.

Before outlining a construct of pragmatic competence in detail, a few underlying assumptions need to be stated. First, pragmatic competence is understood as a fundamental dimension of language ability. Language ability with its subcomponents is an element situated within the larger context of language use (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, 2010). Within that context of language use, language ability is supposedly interconnected with peripheral attributes of language users such as personal attributes, topical knowledge, affective schemata, and cognitive strategies (Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Canale & Swain, 1980). Thus, pragmatic competence, as a subcomponent of language ability, is also assumed to interact (in yet unspecified ways) with these peripheral knowledge components and attributes within the larger system of human communication. Hence, pragmatic competence is conceptualized within a larger context of CLA. The following construct, however, will be proposed with a primary focus on pragmatic competence as a constituent of language ability.

### Basic Principles of Pragmatic Competence

Pragmatic competence is rooted in three principles, which are understood as necessary conditions for felicitous pragmatic behavior: meaning, interaction, and context.

#### ***Fundamental Principle 1: Meaning***

Pragmatics has meaning as its subject matter, particularly meaning in context (Allott, 2010; Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Fetzer, 2004; Grice, 1968; Purpura, 2004). As the driving force behind pragmatic encoding and decoding processes, meaning is being created in any communicative situation. Basically, a speaker makes an utterance, intending to convey a certain message. For example, the utterance, “It’s cold in here,” can have different layers of meaning. It can be meant as a literal statement denoting the low temperature in a room. But it can also be intended as a request for action to the interlocutor(s) present in that situation, for instance, to close a window or turn up the heat. Hence, as Horn (2004) put it, “What a speaker intends to communicate is characteristically far richer than what she directly expresses; linguistic

meaning radically underdetermines the message conveyed and understood” (p. 3). Moreover, the perspective of the hearer adds another layer of meaning. While a speaker says *x*, implicating *y*, he counts on the hearer(s) to decode the implicature *y* and understand what the speaker meant. Thus, pragmatic meaning goes beyond the literal meaning of a word, phrase, or utterance and competent speakers/hearers of a language “are expected to see through the forms to retrieve the speaker’s intentions” (Bialystok, 1993, p. 43).

The recognition of interlocutor intentions is fundamental to pragmatics (Litman & Allen, 1990; Roberts, 2004; Thomason, 1990). That is, the creation of pragmatic meaning is only possible because language users share certain presumptions about how people should (linguistically) behave in a given sociocultural context. Grice (1975) subsumed these presumptions under the label *cooperative principle* which reads as follows:

Make your contribution such as it is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. (p. 45)

Grice (1989) elaborated this principle further in a series of maxims:

- The maxim of quantity: Give the most helpful amount of information as is needed, and no more.
- The maxim of quality: Do not say what you believe to be false.
- The maxim of relation: Be relevant, and say things that are pertinent to the discussion.
- The maxim of manner: Put what you say in the clearest, briefest, and most orderly manner.

These general presumptions serve as a benchmark or point of reference, guiding the interlocutors as they keep track of each other’s intentions and assumptions (for a detailed overview of conversational and relevance principles see Grice, 1975, 1989).

Different types of meaning have been identified in the literature (Grice, 1969; Purpura, 2004). For example, Grice (1969) distinguished between linguistically encoded (timeless) meaning and speaker-intended meaning (i.e., what did an interlocutor want to convey by uttering words at a certain time, in a given situation?). This widely recognized, fundamental distinction between the proposition, or basic explicature, and the implicature(s), what is implied/intended, has been refined as grammatical meaning on the one hand, and pragmatic meaning on the other (e.g., Purpura, 2004). In addition to the basic distinction between grammatical meaning and pragmatic meaning, Purpura (2004) further proposed that pragmatic meaning can be subdivided into contextual meaning, sociolinguistic meaning, sociocultural meaning, rhetorical meaning, and psychological meaning. In her validation study, Grabowski (2009) provided empirical evidence for (a) the interrelatedness, yet distinction of grammatical and pragmatic meaning and (b) three of Purpura’s proposed pragmatic meanings: sociolinguistic meaning, sociocultural meaning, and psychological meaning (she did not investigate the other two pragmatic meanings). For example, Grabowski reported that L1 and L2 English speakers conveyed sociolinguistic meaning by using contextualization cues such as mitigating language (e.g., hedges). Sociocultural meaning was found to be strongly related to the expectations interlocutors brought to a communicative encounter, whereas psychological meaning seemed to be conveyed through phonological forms such as stress, vowel elongation, or pace changes as well as explicit statements of stance (Grabowski, 2009). Given the central role of meaning in pragmatics, the construct proposed here adopts Purpura’s perspective in that pragmatic meaning needs to be distinguished from grammatical meaning, which can then be further distinguished along contextual, sociolinguistic, sociocultural, rhetorical, and psychological meaning.

### ***Fundamental Principle 2: Interactive Coconstruction***

Pragmatic meaning is coconstructed by all interlocutors involved in a communicative encounter. Although implied in the functional-discourse oriented models, the reciprocal, interactive element needed for the creation of meaning is widely underspecified in the component models—except for Bachman and Palmer (1996, 2010). Following Bachman and Palmer (1996, 2010), we propose that pragmatic competence needs to be conceptualized within an interactional framework of language use. That is, pragmatic ability or

language use can be defined as the creation or interpretation of intended meaning in discourse by an individual, or as the dynamic and interactive negotiation of intended meanings between two or more individuals in a particular situation. In using language to express, interpret, or negotiate intended meanings, language users create discourse.

This discourse derived meaning not only from utterances or texts themselves, but, more importantly, from the ways in which utterances and texts relate to the characteristics of a particular language use situation. (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p. 61f)

Although, as Kasper and Ross (2013) criticized, this approach underrepresents the “fundamentally inter-individual character of interaction as a social, coconstructed, and contingently evolving activity” (p. 9), it is fully compatible with Gricean maxims as well as the psychometric interest in individual traits for the purpose of instruction and assessment—a purpose shared in the present research project.

### **Fundamental Principle 3: Context**

As already implied above, context plays a fundamental role in the creation of meaning: It is “the anchor of any pragmatic theory” (Fetzer, 2004, p. 3). If a person engages in language use, he or she always does so in a specific situation, that is, in certain physical surroundings, at a particular time with potential other interlocutors. All of these factors and characteristics of a communicative situation mediate the language use of interlocutors in that they determine to a large degree the linguistic choices a speaker makes as well as the decoding and, thus, inference processes of the hearer.

As the necessary condition for a (socio)pragmatic perspective on language and language use, context has been described in a variety of ways. In traditional linguistics, context is defined as the immediate features of a speech situation in which an utterance is made, such as time, location, participants, relationship between interlocutors, and preceding discourse (e.g., Levinson, 1983). Fetzer (2004) further distinguished cognitive, linguistic, social, and sociocultural contexts, arguing that theoretical analyses need to be conducted from these various perspectives. Although theoretically one may distinguish among these contexts, a language use situation typically includes components from these various perspectives. Thus, for the purposes of instruction and assessment, the range of contextual elements should be combined in the description of the situational context in which a pragmatic task is carried out. As Halliday, Hasan, and Christie (1989) put it, “[I]n describing the context of situation, it is helpful to build in some indication of the cultural background and the assumptions that have to be made if the text [i.e., an utterance] is to be interpreted—or produced—in the way [ ... the system] intends” (p. 47). Hence, for assessment and instruction purposes, the description of a communicative situation should contain information regarding the following context characteristics: immediate physical surroundings such as institutional and/or cultural settings, role(s) of (co)participants, relationship between interlocutors, and potential preceding discourse.

It goes without saying that these variables are not static; that is, they cannot be viewed as “static extralinguistic realities” (Verschueren, 1995, p. 15), but are themselves subject to variation and negotiation. They may be viewed as indices for the construction of pragmatic meaning. As such, Green (2004) maintained that pragmatic information is “indexical information, that is, related to indices for speaker, hearer, time, and location of an act of uttering something” (p. 407). These indices impact the linguistic choices a speaker makes as well as inferences drawn by a potentially present hearer. Thus, context serves as a point of reference for the creation of pragmatic meaning by means of linguistic resources. In turn, the linguistic choices that generate pragmatic meaning also shape the situational context between interlocutors. Hence, the production and interpretation of utterances are constrained and mediated by context, while context is also created by encoding and decoding of meaning.

To summarize, pragmatic competence and action are anchored and situated in a set of fundamental principles of speaker intention, mutual presumptions of rationality and cooperation, and contextual characteristics. Language use needs to be viewed in relation to these fundamental principles in order to communicate in a pragmatically felicitous way. Hence, pragmatic competence has at its heart “understanding the *meaningful functioning* of language, i.e., to trace the dynamic construction of meaning in language use” (Verschueren, 1995, p. 16; emphasis in the original).

### **Pragmatic Knowledge as a Component of Communicative Language Ability**

Although these principles and contextual characteristics constitute necessary underpinnings and conditions for the generation of pragmatic meaning, linguistic pragmatic knowledge is also a fundamental component of language ability. It is integrated into a number of language components that a language user needs to be able to use accurately and appropriately in relation to external contextual factors. With regard to language use, Taguchi (2012) put forth empirical evidence

for a multicomponential setup of pragmatic competence that echoes the two components put forth by Bialystok (1993): knowledge and processing.

In terms of knowledge, the construct proposed here adopts a multicomponential view of language ability in general and pragmatic knowledge in particular for three reasons. First, the majority of reviews of the models above (nine out of 12 models) argued that pragmatic knowledge consists of several different subcomponents (e.g., Bachman & Palmer, 1996, 2010; Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia et al., 1995; Savignon, 1983). Second, empirical studies on the nature of language proficiency have repeatedly provided empirical evidence that language ability in general (e.g., Bachman & Palmer, 1982) and pragmatic competence in particular (e.g., Garcia, 2004; Grabowski, 2009; Timpe, 2013) consist of several distinct, but interrelated components. Finally, Taguchi (2012) recently introduced empirical evidence that supports the structure and components of the prior, theoretically conceived component frameworks. She contended that pragmatic knowledge is

required for comprehension and production of speech intentions, which encompasses a wide range of properties, including: knowledge about Grice's (1975) maxims of conversation and assumptions about relevance, linguistic knowledge, functional knowledge (form-meaning associations), knowledge of discourse (i.e., coherence and cohesions), sociocultural knowledge (e.g., notions of politeness and norms of interaction) and knowledge of linguistic and social conventions. (Taguchi, 2012, p. 242)

The construct proposed here is roughly depicted in Figure 2. The gray platform at the bottom represents the socio-cultural and situational context in which a communicative encounter between language users (here two interlocutors) is situated. Moreover, the context mediates meaning in that output as well as input is being encoded and decoded in reference to the contextual constraints. Within the context, each language user has more or less developed pragmatic competence. Each interlocutor's pragmatic competence comprises five distinct, yet related dimensions of knowledge: sociocultural knowledge, pragmatic-functional knowledge, grammatical knowledge, discourse knowledge, and strategic knowledge. *Sociocultural knowledge* is understood as being directly related to the situational context of a communicative encounter. As shown in Table 6 below, several component models have identified the following subcomponents as pertaining to sociocultural knowledge: topic, role of participants, setting, norms of conventions and interaction, power relations, gender, and age. Drawing upon Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor's (2006) work, these components are also understood in lieu of a cross-cultural perspective, that is, a perspective that encompasses both one's L1 language and cultural background as well as the conventions of the target language community. Sociocultural knowledge constitutes the basis that supports

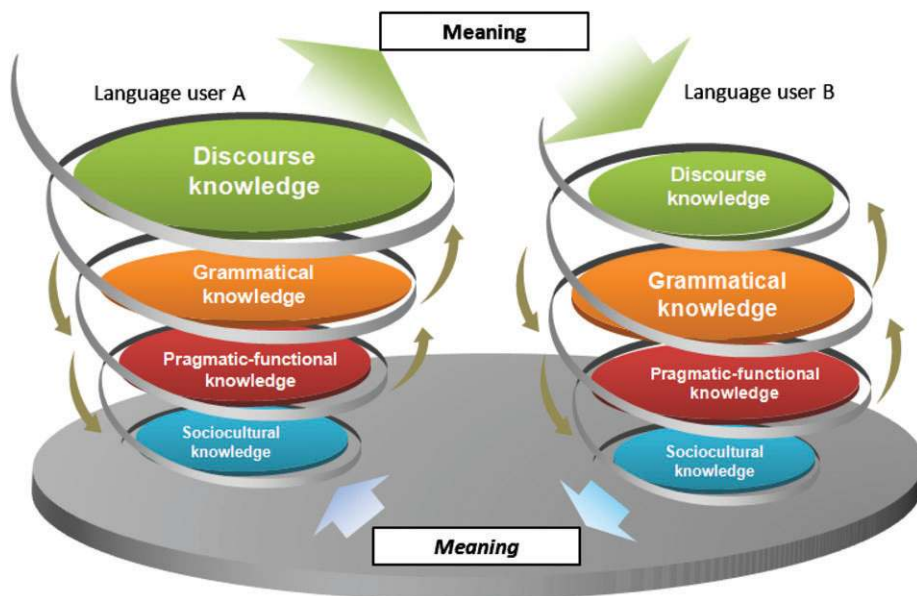


Figure 2 Proposed construct of pragmatic competence.

Table 6 Overview of Pragmatic Components Within Models Reviewed

	Models of communicative language ability											
	Halliday (1973)	van Dijk (1977)	Bialystok (1993)	Hymes (1972)	Canale and Swain (1980)	Canale (1983)	Savignon (1983)	van Ek (1986)	Bachman and Palmer (1996, 2010)	Celce-Murcia et al. (1995)	Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor (2006)	Purpura (2004)
Components of pragmatic-functional												
Speech acts		✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Functions	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cohesion			✓		✓							
Coherence	✓		✓		✓							✓
Register/ modality	✓		✓		✓	✓			✓			✓
Naturalness									✓			✓
Dialects/varieties	✓								✓			✓
Formulaic expressions	✓						✓			✓		✓
Cultural references and figures of speech									✓			✓
Genre									✓			✓
Sociocultural knowledge												
Topic					✓	✓	✓	✓				
Role of participants	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Setting	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Norms, conventions of interaction	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Power relations							✓	✓		✓		✓
Gender		✓					✓			✓		
Age							✓					✓



the evaluation of a given communicative situation and, thus, helps language users to tailor their speech intentions and utterance(s) to the characteristics of the situational context.

*Pragmatic-functional knowledge* is understood as knowledge regarding the associations between form and meaning. Following Bachman (1990); Celce-Murcia et al. (1995), and Taguchi (2012), pragmatic-functional knowledge is conceptualized as consisting of two subcomponents: illocutionary knowledge (i.e., speech acts and functions) and sociolinguistic knowledge (i.e., register, naturalness, dialect/varieties, genre, formulaic expressions, and cultural references and figures of speech). Echoing Leech's (1983) distinction between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics, pragmatic-functional knowledge with its two subcomponents was deliberately situated between grammatical and sociocultural knowledge in the model proposed here, thus emphasizing the sociocultural nature of elements such as register, dialect/varieties, or genre in contrast to the more linguistic orientation of speech acts and functions.

Although more recent models such as Bachman and Palmer (1996, 2010) tend to exclude the category of speech acts in favor of functions, a categorization according to functions may be problematic—especially in a model that is believed to provide “a valuable framework for guiding the definition of constructs for any language testing development situation” (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p. 67). It is, for example, debatable whether the functions put forth by Bachman and Palmer (2010) can be selectively operationalized to adequately discriminate between functions at the communicative level. Given that functions are highly flexible, open-ended, and usually co-occur in a single utterance, it is nearly impossible to produce, for example, two items that operationalize and then retrieve the exact same amount of functional knowledge. Moreover, the list of functions put forth in Bachman and Palmer (2010) is not exhaustive when compared, for instance, to the list of functions outlined by Verschueren (1987). Thus, as Halliday (1989) maintained, “[W]e can say that function equals use: the concept of functions is synonymous with that of use” (p. 17). However, while functions may be equal to the intent of language use, speech acts can be viewed as the overt linguistic representation of that intent. Hence, for the purposes of pragmatic instruction and assessment, it would seem imperative to maintain speech acts as a fundamental unit of pragmalinguistic-illocutionary knowledge.

With regard to grammatical, discourse, and strategic knowledge, the construct proposed here draws upon Canale and Swain (1980); Canale (1983), and Savignon (1983). Accordingly, *grammatical knowledge* is understood as knowledge of lexis and rules pertaining to morphology, syntax, semantics, phonology, and graphology. *Discourse knowledge* is understood as knowledge regarding cohesion and coherence. While discourse knowledge constitutes an individual knowledge component, it is visually represented in the model above sociocultural, pragmatic-functional, and grammatical knowledge, indicating that those three knowledge components are realized in discourse (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2006). That is, they are understood as constitutive elements that inform felicitous discourse in a target language. Finally, *strategic knowledge*, depicted as the spiral circling all knowledge dimensions, represents a connective support system that is available as a resource in case of insufficient knowledge and/or communicative breakdown (see also Clennell, 1999).

As previously implied and represented by the arrows in the model depicted in Figure 2, the various dimensions of knowledge are understood as being interconnected in processing, that is, when speakers implicate and hearers infer meaning. While all of the component models hypothesized an interrelation between the multiple dimensions, Purpura (2004) provided an example, arguing that in a given context, an interlocutor may

use a set of grammatical forms to convey one set of meanings, while the hearer may use the same set of forms to hear the same or a very different set of meanings. Larsen-Freeman (2002) described these ‘choices’ as the result of knowledge or awareness when to use a grammatical form over another to convey meanings that match our intentions in particular contexts. (p. 105)

Green (2004) further investigated this relation between grammar and pragmatics, analyzing how syntactic, tense, aspect, and voice features might impact and generate pragmatic meaning. While the interplay between the different language components in cognitive processing and meaning making is assumed, the empirical evidence thus far is still inconclusive with regard to how linguistic resources are processed when learners encode and decode pragmatic meaning (e.g., Grabowski, 2009; Kasper & Rose, 2002).

As a final point, the different knowledge dimensions can be developed to varying degrees in an individual. As expressed in the different sizes of the circles representing the different knowledge components in the model (Figure 2), it is assumed that a language user—be he or she an L1 or L2 speaker—can have varying levels of knowledge with regard to sociocultural,



grammatical, discourse, or pragmatic-functional knowledge. Thus, as Purpura (2004) emphasized, a language user “may be able to express an idea with perfect syntax, but in a totally inappropriate or unintelligible way” (p. 57). Studies conducted by Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) as well as Niezgoda and Roever (2001) also found different developmental stages between pragmatic and grammatical awareness when they asked learners to judge language use situations. In addition to differences in the development of the language components, Taguchi (2012) provided empirical evidence for idiosyncratic development patterns with regard to different components of pragmatic-functional knowledge as well as pragmatic processing time. Hence, although there may be interconnections between the language and pragmatic-functional knowledge components (e.g., a learner’s pragmalinguistic resources may increase parallel to his or her grammatical proficiency given that increased grammatical knowledge should provide the learner with a wider repertoire of linguistic resources for the realization of speech acts), form-function and function-form mappings yet constitute a separate ability.

To summarize, the construct of pragmatic competence proposed here is the first to take into account a wide variety of models, principles, and theories and synthesize them into a single framework. This construct proposes that pragmatic ability is made up of a conglomerate of multiple distinct, yet interrelated knowledge components. In the performance of pragmatic tasks, these knowledge components are employed in a form-function mapping process that is being carried out in relation to a range of external context characteristics. Thus, pragmatic competence is viewed as mastery of strategically relating linguistic and nonlinguistic contextual information in order to generate meaning beyond the grammatical level in oral, written, or a hybrid mode of communication.

### Pragmatic Competence: Implications for Instruction and Assessment

Adopting the proposed construct has some implications for teaching and assessment, including the development of learning materials and tasks. A primary challenge for pragmatics teaching and assessment has been the lack of a clear taxonomy as to what constitutes pragmatic competence and which subcomponents pertain to that domain (O’Keeffe, Clancy, & Adolphs, 2011). As outlined above, we consider pragmatic-functional knowledge to be the core component, which draws upon sociocultural knowledge (primarily for sociopragmatic competence) and grammatical knowledge (primarily for pragmalinguistics). Thus, the ability to map form and function constitutes the basis, which can then be fostered and assessed both in production and comprehension of the range of subcomponents such as speech acts, routine formulae, register, and so on (see Table 6 above).

Another issue in pragmatics teaching and assessment has been the definition of a benchmark to evaluate the pragmatic value of an utterance. McNamara and Roever (2006), for example, pointed out that most pragmatic assessments tend to focus on “testing appropriateness in the context of social relationships” (sociopragmatics) or “testing linguistic forms necessary to achieve communication” (pragmalinguistics) (p. 56). Moreover, they cautioned that “[j]udgements of what is and what is not appropriate differ widely among [speakers] of a language and are probably more a function of personality and social background variables than of language knowledge” (p. 57). However, in order to draw inferences about learners’ pragmatic ability, a yardstick or point of reference against which pragmatic meaning and meaning making utterances can be evaluated is inevitable. While acknowledging these concerns, we would like to point out a benchmark that can be employed in teaching as well as assessment.

The benchmarks against which grammatical and pragmatic knowledge can be taught, assessed, and evaluated are (a) grammaticality and well-formedness and (b) accuracy and appropriateness (see Meier, 1997, or Fetzer, 2004, for detailed overviews). While grammaticality pertains to the primarily language-oriented evaluation of an utterance (whether it is grammatically correct and well-formed), pragmatic knowledge can be evaluated as accuracy of pragmatic comprehension and appropriateness of pragmatic production (Taguchi, 2012). Accuracy of pragmatic comprehension includes “the ability to comprehend speakers’ implied intentions accurately and in a speedy manner” (Taguchi, 2012, p. 79), that is, to decode the meaning which goes beyond what is literally said. In contrast, the appropriate encoding of an utterance needs to be “evaluated with regard to the nature of the connectedness between a communicative action, its linguistic realization and its embeddedness in linguistic and social contexts” (Fetzer, 2004, p. 19 f.). Hence, pragmatic accuracy and appropriateness are calculated in relation to illocutionary goal and force, coparticipants, and their social statuses and relationships, as well as the communicative setting. In short, as a theoretical construct, accuracy and appropriateness are informed by the contextual constraints of interlocutors, communicative action, communicative genres, and ethnographic norms and strategies of a speech community (Fetzer, 2004, p. 89).

Given that accuracy of comprehension and appropriateness of production are rooted in the dyad of at least two interlocutors or in reference to a collectively oriented framework (e.g., a lecture to an audience), context—the fundamental constituent of our model—is considered to be crucial for the instruction and assessment of pragmatics. Kasper and Ross (2013), for example, pointed out that “how the appropriateness of language-mediated action is evaluated depends in large measure on how context in the target domain and the test task is conceptualized and analyzed” (p. 7). Hence, tasks for either pragmatic instruction or assessment need to provide a high amount of contextual information as a point of reference. Although context is fundamental for the evaluation of appropriate pragmatic behavior, two key questions remain: (a) how can appropriate pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic behavior be taught if the appropriateness of an utterance varies from one language use situation to the next, and (b) given the dependency on the context and, consequently, the interlocutor, how can one draw inferences and generalize on the basis of pragmatic assessment tasks.

While we do not claim to hold the solution to these challenges, two approaches that are compatible with context as a flexible core point of reference shall nevertheless be discussed: (a) the raising of pragmatic awareness and (b) the use of authentic input and corpus linguistics. Given the lack of a clear-cut dichotomy of correct and incorrect pragmatic behavior, teaching may focus on the development of learners’ pragmatic awareness. Drawing upon Schmidt (1993) and Olshtain and Blum-Kulka (1985); O’Keeffe *et al.* (2011) have put forth short- and long-term teaching objectives: raising awareness, developing students’ noticing strategies, and building increasingly sophisticated receptive and productive pragmatic competence. Given the flexibility of context and the fact that pragmatic features need to be applied appropriately within a broad range of language use contexts, a systematic increase of sensitivity and orientation toward pragmatic components may result in more felicitous (intercultural) communication. Moreover, as discussed by Timpe (2013), English as a foreign language/English as a second language (EFL/ESL) learners and L1 English speakers alike are more often than not unaware of pragmatic features in language use. Thus, grammar or vocabulary mistakes are clearly perceived as an L2 speaker’s linguistic deficiencies in the target language whereas pragmatic failures, due to their social and contextual interrelation, tend to be attributed to an individual’s personality or manners rather than to cross-linguistic differences (Barron, 2003; Schauer, 2009; Timpe, 2013; Washburn, 2001). Both native and nonnative speakers of a given language may benefit from an increased pragmatic awareness. The taxonomy of pragmatics proposed in the model may thus be systematically employed (a) to sensitize students for pragmatic phenomena in language use and (b) to develop pragmatic-functional knowledge and its subcomponents in learners in order to foster their holistic ability of meaning making.

Several studies have provided evidence that authentic, highly contextualized forms of language input are needed to develop and assess learners’ pragmatic awareness (e.g., Safont Jorda, 2003; Timpe, 2012, 2013; Vallenga, 2004). Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2003) proposed two guidelines for teaching and assessment: (a) the use of authentic language samples and (b) input first, followed by interpretation and/or production. The authentic language samples are meant to approximate the richness of real-life context information. Although learners are passive overhearers of discourse in most teaching and assessment situations (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005, p. 89), they are by means of the contextually rich input placed into the given situation, which provides the sociocultural information they need in order to engage in appropriate form-function mapping. In order to approach systematically the development and design of authentic materials for pragmatic teaching and assessment, audiovisual media and linguistic corpora may be employed. Timpe (2013), for instance, provided empirical evidence that—in particular for EFL/ESL contexts—audiovisual input contributed significantly to L2 learners’ sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic competence with regard to speech acts, routine formulae, and culture dependent differences in lexis. In addition to audiovisual media, linguistic corpora as machine-readable spoken and written language samples may provide insights for teaching and testing in terms of relevance and frequency of particular speech intentions, speech acts, or routine formulae and how these components are produced and perceived in a given sociocultural context. For example, concordance searches for keyword collocations could be carried out, and the examination of contexts in which these collocations occur may then lead to exploring their pragmatic functions. In a following step, learners may create concordances for the most frequent items to see if any given items are predominantly used in a specific context or by a specific speaker (see Cheng, 2004, for such a study). Thus, corpora may serve as a basis to determine what is “pragmatically appropriate” in a specific context. Given that frequency of occurrence is indicative of frequency of use, corpora can constitute a good basis for evaluating the profile of a structure, expression, routine formulae, and others in relation to a norm or context (O’Keeffe *et al.*, 2011; Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). When applied to pragmatics teaching and assessment, frequency of an expression or a particular speech act in a given context may allow the identification of either absence or presence of items that may be characteristic of the pragmatic system of a certain

speech community. Hence, a corpus may provide justification for the benchmark of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic appropriateness underlying a particular scenario for teaching or assessment tasks. For formative assessment purposes, appropriateness may also be determined by piloting assessment tasks with a variety of speakers from a particular speech community and target language use (TLU) domain prior to administering the assessment. Thus, one could include only those items or tasks with high item facility values, that is, those items that all representatives of a certain speech community agreed on or behaved similarly (see Timpe, 2013). Hence, whereas these considerations have been quite abstract, the development of tasks for teaching and assessment needs to be rooted in the requirements of a specific target language use domain.

### Operationalizing Pragmatic Competence

Following Bachman and Palmer (1996, 2010), we have proposed a construct of pragmatics that can be applied to any language use situation. However, as a theoretical construct, the considerations underlying that framework need to be operationalized further within a particular TLU domain. As Bachman and Palmer (2010) maintained, when interlocutors

engage in language use, they do this in a specific situation, and thus interact with the characteristics of this situation, which can also include other language users. In other words, language users exercise their language ability, or capacity for language use, in various kinds of interactions as they perform language use tasks in a target language use (TLU) situation, or domain. (p. 33)

The language use domain called workplace shall be exemplified in the following as one potential TLU context that requires pragmatic competence and domain-relevant knowledge for successful (intercultural) communication.

### Pragmatic Competence in the Language Use Domain “Workplace”

Several researchers have pointed out the social and technological changes and transformations in Western societies that have impacted language use in the workplace (e.g., Duff, 2008; Li, 2000; Myles, 2009; Newton & Kusmierczyk, 2011; Roberts, 2010). High-technology manufacturing, service-oriented industries, and new forms of organization have implications for language use and communication surrounding these contexts. Duff (2008), for instance, argued that

new forms and means of (tele)communication in the service industries and other professions, coupled with intensive globalization, migration, and market pressures, are associated with the development of new literacies, new measures of sociolinguistic control and new expectations about language learning and use. (p. 268)

Thus, communicative demands in the workplace have broadened, ranging from traditional formal communication such as written memos, formal letters or supervisors’ orders all the way to informal, oral, and interpersonally sensitive forms of language use (Myles, 2009). Gunnarsson (2009) summarized these trends as follows:

Professional discourse can occur in different types of communicative events involving different constellations of participants: single person communicative events (individual writing and reading), two-person events (face to face interaction, written dialogues: letter exchange, e-mails, chat) and group events (small group meetings, written group correspondence, collaborative writing, collaborative presentations, discussions, large group meetings, debates). It includes both communicative events in which all participants are in the same room as well as communication at a distance, via telephone, internet, video, mail, etc. (p. 7)

Gunnarsson’s description of professional discourse clearly echoes the three fundamental principles in which pragmatic competence is anchored and which, in turn, require a learner’s pragmatic awareness. First, professional discourse, like any form of communicative interaction, is concerned with meaning making. Language, as the carrier of meaning, has to be used appropriately in an increasingly broad variety of situations that in turn feature an even broader range of interlocutor constellations. Thus, a language user has to be able to (co)construct meaning in the different contexts, taking into account a variety of interlocutors, situations, and modalities. Moreover, the consistent implementation of new media into workplace environments provides a particular challenge because these new media constitute ever new contexts and

modalities that require language users to adapt their communication. Hence, as Roberts (2010) asserts, “[T]he new work order has become a new word order, and the workforce has become a ‘wordforce’ [. . .] with new genres of language and communication” (p. 211).

As a “holistic communicative environment” (Newton & Kusmierczyk, 2011, p. 76) with a range of communicative demands, the workplace holds particular social and linguistic challenges for (second) language learners and users. For example, Holmes (2005) argued that

[w]hen we join a new workplace we need to learn not only the technical terminology and the in-group jargon, we also need to acquire the norms for interaction — the appropriate ways of addressing and referring to people, the acceptable levels of formality for use in meetings of different sizes, and involving people of different status. Joining a new workplace entails learning how to use language to negotiate new meanings with new colleagues. (p. 348f)

Thus, the workplace constitutes a special context that — from a linguistic perspective — can be described as being located at the intersection of language for specific purposes and language socialization. That is, the workplace represents a complex and dynamic setting in which L2 learners in particular experience a double socialization. L2 English speakers, for instance, who enter the job market and have to perform their job in an English-medium workplace environment,

face the challenge of not only having English language and literacy skills commensurate with technical demands of the job, but also of understanding how to operate in a new work culture where the norms and expectations relating to good communication and how teams work together may be very different. (Yates, 2008, p. 13)

Hence, English learners have to learn (a) how to perform their jobs in a target language and (b) “how to use language as a social practice [while] through language [they learn] the sociocultural knowledge that is ‘wired into’ language use” (Roberts, 2005, p. 118).

In their seminal study, *Talk at Work*, Drew and Heritage (1992b) propose a range of criteria that distinguish institutional or workplace talk from ordinary conversation, which is usually considered the neutral benchmark for comparison. Reminiscent of the fundamental principles of pragmatics pointed out previously, Drew and Heritage argued that language use in the workplace is

1. . . . goal oriented.  
The most significant feature is “goal orientation” which is described as following “an orientation by at least one of the participants to some core goal, task or identity . . . conventionally associated with the institution” (Drew & Heritage, 1992a, p. 22). At a linguistic level, this feature echoes the fundamental principle of interlocutor intention.
2. . . . set within special and particular constraints.  
This second distinguishing parameter refers to constraints on allowable contributions, that is, it determines what is considered appropriate to say or write in a workplace setting/situation given the existence of special inferential frameworks, which refer to ways of interpreting discourse that are particular to the institutional or workplace setting (Drew & Heritage, 1992a, pp. 21 – 25).
3. . . . embedded in special inferential frameworks and procedures.  
This third feature, as Heritage (1997) maintained, refers to workplace interactions as frequently being asymmetrical; that is, there may be differences in the distribution of institutional power or expert knowledge between the participants.

In addition to these three criteria, which characterize the basis of any workplace communication, several studies have identified further characteristics of communication in workplace settings. First, a number of researchers highlighted a distinction between two subdomains of workplace communication: social and business related (e.g., Holmes, 2000; Koester, 2010; Marra, 2012; Roberts, 2010). Social communication or what Marra (2012) has labeled “people-oriented, relational talk at work” (p. 179), is a form of communication that functions as “social glue” in a workplace. That is to say, it is used primarily to build positive (business) relationships and rapport with coworkers and, thus, may also help to achieve work-related goals (Koester, 2010; Marra, 2012). Newton and Kusmierczyk (2011) emphasized that “[m]ore than ever in the workplace, success depends not only on the ability to perform work but also on managing social aspects of interaction at work in order to participate fully in the life of the workplace” (p. 80).

A particular form of social workplace communication that has been investigated in detail by Holmes (2000) is small talk. As a strategy for managing interpersonal relations and distance, small talk, or phatic talk, is used in multiple interactions and settings in the workplace, such as a conversation starter during a random meeting in the company's common-use kitchen, a conversation opener before the start of a business meeting to avoid awkward silence, or at the end of a formal meeting to soften the parting and affirm the relationship between the two business partners. Holmes, for instance, showed that small talk is “an important component of workplace interaction, and using small talk appropriately, getting the content, placing, amount, and tone ‘right’ can be a crucial and complex aspect of achieving workplace goals” (p. 126). Moreover, she found that small talk poses “many potentially problematic areas for those who do not share the same sociolinguistic and pragmatic rules concerning the appropriate topics, distribution and functions of small talk at work” (p. 136). She identified the following noncontroversial topics as appropriate for small talk in English-medium workplaces: the weather (e.g., lovely day; it's freezing today), ritualized inquiries about health (e.g., how's it going?), sports (e.g., that was a great game on Saturday), family (e.g., my kids had a hockey game last night), positive comments on appearance (e.g., you are looking great!), out-of-work social activities (e.g., we went to yoga practice last night), and complaints about the amount of work (p. 129). Moreover, the linguistic realizations of communicative action in small talk situations—such as inquiries about health or positive comments on appearance—are highly routinized, thus requiring knowledge of routine formulae and discourse sequences. Hence, EFL/ESL learners need to be made aware of the potential topics as well as when and how to use which pragmalinguistic features in order to implement small talk appropriately in a given situation and for a particular purpose.

Second, with regard to business-oriented communication, several studies have identified a range of tasks in business interactions (e.g., Clyne, 1994; Evans, 2013; Flowerdew & Wan, 2006; Holmes, 2000; Koester, 2010; Lan & MacGregor, 2010; Marra, 2012; Powers, Kim, Yu, Weng, & VanWinkle, 2009; Singh & Shamsudin, 2009; Wenger, 1998; Willing, 1992, 1997). Although it is impossible to provide an exhaustive description, as each workplace has its own genres and communities of practice, several studies have identified and examined tasks that range across a broad variety of professional and business contexts. For example, by means of case studies, interviews, and surveys, Evans (2013) investigated communicative tasks and key task characteristics in an English-speaking workplace setting in Hong Kong. He found the following activities to feature most prominently in business contexts: writing and reading of e-mails and reports, formal, and informal meetings, telephoning, conferences, seminars, and presentations. Similar tasks were identified by Singh and Shamsudin (2009) in their analysis of written workplace communication in Malaysia as well as by Powers et al. (2009) who asked 3,814 test takers who took the *TOEIC*® assessment which tasks they were usually engaged in and able to do in their respective workplace settings. Moreover, Holmes (2000), who focused on oral means of communication in professional contexts in New Zealand, identified meetings, telephone conversations, and social talk as crucial workplace tasks. Table 7 presents an overview of the communicative tasks and activities that were investigated in the studies underlying this paper and found to feature prominently in different workplace settings across various English-speaking countries. Given their prominence across diverse professional settings, tasks may constitute the fundamental unit of analysis in workplace communication (e.g., Holmes, 2005; Long, 2005; Marra, 2012).

Pragmatic-functional competence has been identified as an important aspect in accomplishing these communicative tasks in workplace settings (e.g., Candlin, 2002; Clyne, 1994; Geluykens & Pelsmaekers, 1999). In a well-known study of English in multilingual blue- and white-collar workplaces in Australia, Clyne (1994) found that “intercultural communication breakdown occurs at the discourse and pragmatics levels, rather than being caused by phonological, lexical, and morphosyntactic questions” (p. 211). Gumperz (1999) added that pragmatic misunderstandings tend to have more serious consequences than grammatical and lexical mistakes. While grammatical mistakes are commonly attributed to the speaker's deficiencies in a target language, pragmatic infelicities are more likely to create subconscious negative impressions about the speaker (e.g., Gumperz, 1999; Timpe, 2013; Washburn, 2001). Along those lines, Holmes (2000) reported in her interview study that

[s]ome employers are aware of the importance of sociolinguistic and pragmatic proficiency—though they do not identify them as such. They comment that workers have all the skills necessary to do the job, but that they seem unfriendly or uncomfortable at work; they don't seem to fit in smoothly. (Holmes, 2000)

Hence, it is important for ESL/EFL learners as well as for L1 English speakers who work in international contexts to be aware of these functional-pragmatic phenomena of language use when engaging in tasks at the workplace.



Table 7 Tasks in Workplace Settings

	Reading and writing tasks				Listening and speaking tasks								
	Business letters				Reports, memos, proposals, contracts, minutes, manuals	Chats	Telephoning/ phone messaging	Informal			Presentations/ speech	Service encounters	Discussions/ debates
	E-mails	(e.g., complaint letters, sales letters etc.)	Formal meetings	(social) meetings (e.g., small talk, office gossip)				Seminars					
Powers et al. (2009)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Evans (2013)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Singh and Shamsudin (2009) <sup>a</sup>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Holmes (2000) <sup>b</sup>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lan and MacGregor (2010)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Koester (2010)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Marra (2012)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gunnarsson (2009)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Generoso (2013)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

<sup>a</sup>Studies focused on oral language skills. <sup>b</sup>Studies focused on written communication only.



With regard to listening and speaking tasks, Powers *et al.* (2009) pointed out that it is essential for an employee to be able to understand a client's request made on the phone, understand the implicature in a business offer made in a presentation, explain to a coworker how to operate a machine (e.g., photocopier, computer, audio player), or have small talk with a guest about topics of general interest before discussing business. Employees need to convey instructions, seek advice, provide feedback, request information, make suggestions, or give compliments (Evans, 2013; Holmes, 2000; Koester, 2010; Riddiford & Joe, 2010; Wigglesworth & Yates, 2007). In short, while drawing upon their sociocultural knowledge—that is, interpreting the social distance, degree of imposition, hierarchies, as well as genre- and context-related factors of a situation—employees need to be able to understand and realize speech acts and functions in a manner that is appropriate to a given situation.

Similar to oral communication, speech acts and functional language use are also central to writing and reading tasks insofar as the texts constitute “communicative events in which an author (or authors) addresses a reader (or readers) with an action-directed purpose” (Gunnarsson, 2009, p. 42). In other words, every text has some kind of goal-directed structure. Lan and MacGregor (2010), for example, found that writing an e-mail can include actions as different as requesting information about hotel accommodations, confirming receipt of a business proposal, clearing responsibility, thanking a client, refusing an offer, or promoting the company (p. 15). Moreover, openings and closings in e-mails, as means of reinforcing status relationships and underlining positional expectations, were often found to not be worded in a manner appropriate to e-mail as a medium. Furthermore, contractions and colloquial language were reported as frequently used inappropriately with regard to pragmatic phenomena such as register, style, genre, or formality. Thus, Lan and MacGregor (2010) concluded that “familiarity with email is not enough. Users need to be aware of the norms and rules which govern the appropriate use of English in the specific context” (p. 22).

Hence, both written and oral workplace communication are at the core task oriented, that is, employees need to be able to use language in a goal-oriented way to perform certain tasks. In particular, speech acts and functional knowledge have been identified as crucial pragmatic phenomena across both written and oral communicative action in the workplace. A specific focus in research has been placed on face-threatening speech acts such as requests, refusals, complaints, disagreements, and apologies (e.g., Holmes & Riddiford, 2011; Riddiford & Joe, 2010; Riddiford & Newton, 2010; Yates & Springall, 2010). Newton and Kusmierczyk (2011) explained this particular focus as follows:

Request [and other face-threatening] speech acts warrant this attention because not only are they pervasive in the workplace, but they are also quite risky to perform (because they involve asking someone to do something) and, in English, involve a wide range of devices and strategies for mitigating imposition and building rapport. (p. 82)

In addition to speech acts and functions, employees need to be able to decode and encode colloquial expressions, cultural connotations, and different styles and registers within the constraints of particular genres and context characteristics. Thus, learners need to be able to manage ongoing, dynamic social interaction in a wide range of settings, which entails (a) the ability to accurately analyze the relative weight of different dimensions such as power, solidarity, formality, and function and (b) the ability to tailor their linguistic output accordingly. In sum, language users and especially L2 speakers need to be made aware of pragmatic-functional factors and, thus, develop an understanding of the relationship between linguistic realizations produced and a speaker's intentions specified in them (Crandall & Basturkmen, 2004; Louw, Derwing, & Abbott, 2010).

### **Model Tasks to Raise Pragmatic-Functional Awareness for Language Use at the Workplace**

To foster awareness for these pragmatic phenomena, tasks set within an English-speaking workplace may be used to promote pragmatic-functional awareness both in EFL/ESL learners as well as in L1 English speakers. It needs to be emphasized that both ELLs as well as L1 English speakers may profit from awareness-raising activities given that they will increase the sensitivity for both—oftentimes interacting—groups of interlocutors. According to Donna (2000), pragmatic awareness-raising activities

form an important supplement to all other language practice done in the Business English classroom because when adults are consciously aware they can participate more fully in changing their performance . . . [they] take the initiative to fill in gaps in their knowledge and develop strategies for improving in areas where they are weakest. (p. 111)

Hence, both ELLs and L1 English speakers may benefit from this type of activity as an increased sensitivity for these language phenomena may support more willingness to change one's language use as well as to accommodate for potential linguistic challenges in cross-cultural interaction.

The following tasks and example modules were conceptualized to be implemented in the context of an online learning platform. Developed around the domain called workplace, this implementation encourage learners to interact with the tasks individually and according to their own pace. Moreover, the tasks to promote pragmatic-functional awareness are created so they can be used for (a) individual learning, (b) guided EFL/ESL instruction, and (c) diagnostic purposes in EFL/ESL contexts.

### ***Example 1: Speech Acts—Asking for Permission in Formal and Informal Meetings***

#### *Part 1—Introduction and Outline*

Provide the learner with background information on the difference between “ordinary” and workplace English when asking for permission. Next, highlight that learners will need to consider the following sociocultural phenomena, which directly affect the amount of politeness learners will need to use in their language production:

- Aim of a request for permission (i.e., the function of the communicative act)
- Position of the person whom they will ask for help (i.e., a superior vs. a coworker)
- Nature of the relationship they have with the person they are asking (i.e., someone they know closely and may be friendly with vs. a more distant associate)
- Degree of imposition of what you are asking for (i.e., a small request or a large one)

Touching upon the general, basic principles necessary for felicitous pragmatic behavior (context, interaction, and meaning making), Part 1 ends by outlining what this module will specifically teach, maybe also explaining why it will be taught (i.e., stressing the face-threatening nature of a request for permission in a workplace setting), thus creating a general foundation for raising the learner's pragmatic awareness.

#### *Part 2—Diagnostic Assessment*

Give the learner an opportunity to provide output. For example, two different meeting scenarios could be presented via video. The first one would show the learner's supervisor in his or her office, meeting with the learner. The second video would show a coworker during an informal meeting with the learner. In both scenarios, the camera angle could be used to simulate the learner's view. The learner's tasks could be the following:

1. Ask your supervisor, Lisa Green, if you can work remotely for 3 days next week.
2. Ask your coworker, Daniel Cole, if you could use his laptop for 3 hours tomorrow.

The scenarios—featuring (a) interlocutor constellations in two conceivable roles and (b) permission requests of different degrees of imposition—would require learners to adapt their strategic approach and language use accordingly. For example, in order to be pragmatically appropriate, they may want to use conventionally indirect request strategies while drawing upon routinized formulae for permission requests such as “I was wondering” or “Would you mind.” On the Web site, the learner's language output could be audio-recorded for later use in the lesson.

#### *Part 3—Instruction*

Similar to the example, Asking for Permission in (Business) English (available on YouTube at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEBI8xv\\_XXo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEBI8xv_XXo)), learners will be provided with a video lecture, that is, an audiovisual presentation of the specific speech act (here, requests for permission) embedded in a given task and situation (i.e., formal and informal meetings). Drawing upon the two example scenarios from Part 2, the presentation will provide explicit instruction about (a) the speech act (i.e., permission requests in meetings) and its functions, (b) exploration of sociocultural factors such as the age of or power relations between interlocutors, (c) pragmatic strategies specific to permission requests, and (d) pragmalinguistic features, including wording, grammar, and pronunciation. To highlight the different aspects, authentic, contextually relevant workplace-related further examples of permission requests (i.e., beyond the scenarios from Part 2) should be provided.

#### Part 4—Practice and Instructional Content Review

This section can be done in a variety of ways, depending on the modus of communication (i.e., a written, oral, or hybrid form of language use). For an oral form of language use, such as would be natural in face-to-face meetings, and a beginner or intermediate level, learners could be provided with audiovisual situational judgment tasks (SJTs) in which they are given various detailed situations and must then choose the most appropriate request for permission. After each question, immediate feedback may be provided on whether it was correct and why, reinforcing the instruction from the previous section. These SJT questions can be modified in different ways to address a range of foci:

- Be more grammar specific (i.e., can the user identify the pragmalinguistically correct form?)
- Have a pronunciation focus for speaking practice (i.e., can the user choose the option that has the most appropriate rhythm and stress and thus creates the intended meaning?)
- Be more sociolinguistically focused (i.e., can the user choose the most appropriate response based on the degree of register required for the specific situation?)

For a focus on written permission requests, such as in an e-mail, chat room, or company chat software, written multiple choice questions could be used instead of SJTs in order to represent the form of communication in a more authentic manner. Moreover, selected-response (SR) or limited-production (LP) tasks could be employed. So instead of simply choosing a fully displayed answer choice as in multiple choice items, an LP task might look more like a cloze where the user must type his or her proposed answer into an input field. For example, after a situation is given, the user can be presented with the following:

\_\_\_\_\_ if I could have a look at the sales report. (Key: I was wondering)

\_\_\_\_\_ if I opened the window for some fresh air? (Key: Would you mind)

The blank spaces can indicate how many words are missing (the top one) or not (bottom). Again, this design choice is dependent upon how much scaffolding is to be given.

#### Part 5—Application

The final part will use the learner output gathered in Part 2 (the diagnostic assessment) and have the user apply what he or she has learned to make critical corrections to the original utterance or written response. Thus, the user would be able to reflect upon his or her output as well as upon a potential knowledge gain. Sample responses from a range of different L1 speakers could be provided as examples. These native speaker responses could serve two purposes: They could be used to highlight tendencies of pragmatic behavior while also showing variational aspects in pragmatic language use. In a second step, learners could be given opportunity for practice. They would be provided with new situations in which they have to produce permission requests (i.e., a scaffolding option may be provided here as well). Thereby, they should have the opportunity available to audio-record or save their utterance so that they can self-check their pronunciation and/or their written response with correct, model responses. Moreover, they could be provided with a number of multimedia-based permission requests that they have to categorize as either appropriate or inappropriate for a given situation. The focus could be adapted to either be on pragmatic strategies or sociolinguistic features such as register.

While this pragmatic-functional learning module constitutes just one example of how awareness-raising activities for the workplace context may be structured and operationalized, a number of adaptations could be made to this prototype module to adapt it to a range of purposes and objectives. First, this module can be modified to deal with or focus on speech acts, functional uses of language, register, and formulaic or cultural expressions both from a sociopragmatic as well as a pragmalinguistic angle (e.g., suggestions, requests, giving an opinion, asking for a raise, leading a business meeting). Moreover, it may be varied in terms of workplace-related tasks, modes of communication, and amount of scaffolding provided. Finally, students may select whether they complete consecutively the different sections included in this module or whether they want to skip, for example, the introduction and instruction and only do the exercise and training opportunities in Part 5.

#### Example II: E-Mail Puzzle

As shown in Table 7, writing e-mails is a core task that is predominant in a large variety of workplaces. This task could be embedded into an online learning platform in a game-oriented fashion—a puzzle.

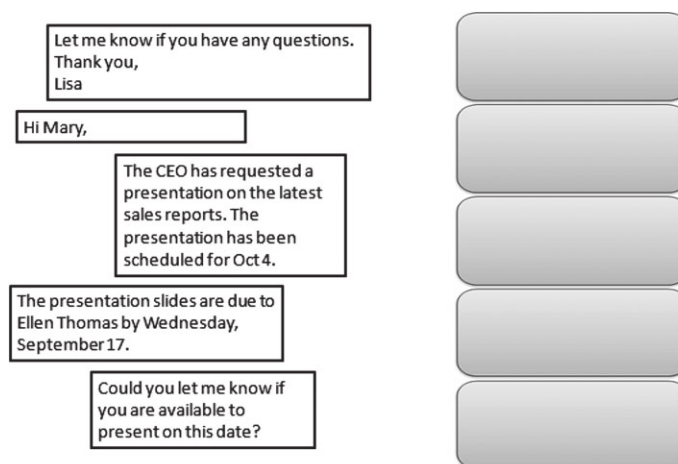


Figure 3 E-mail puzzle.

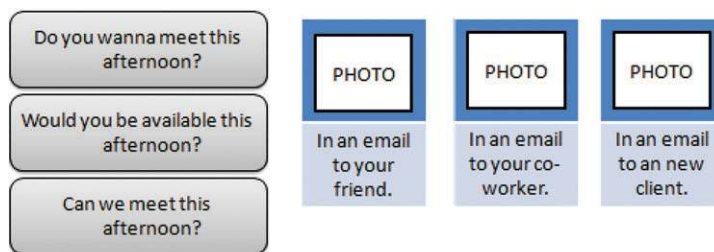
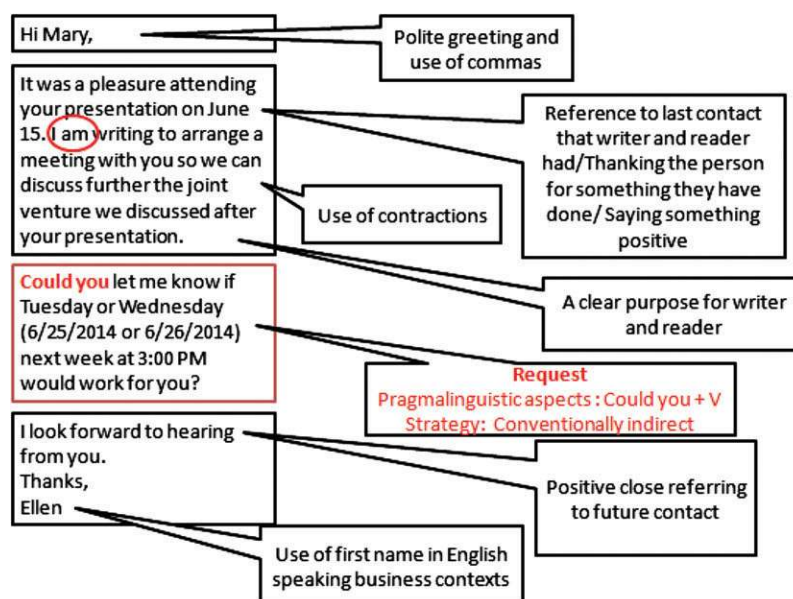
### Part I—The Puzzle

As presented in Figure 3, a formal request e-mail can be provided in a scrambled form. The learner receives the task to put the pieces into the correct or appropriate order by means of dragging and dropping the fragments into the boxes provided on the right hand side of the screen. In order to sequence the components appropriately, learners would be required to apply discourse and pragmatic-functional knowledge. Scaffolding and feedback can be provided for different learner levels. For advanced intermediate ELLs, feedback can be provided once all e-mail puzzles were placed into the rectangles, whereas beginner-level learners may choose to obtain immediate feedback and hints for every piece they place into a given box on the right. The level of difficulty for the puzzle may be varied or increased by means of length of an e-mail, complexity of the communicative task, or mixing pieces from two or more e-mails, such as a formal and an informal e-mail.

After ordering the e-mail components, the learner would be asked to identify the request in the e-mail by clicking on the box on the right that holds the actual request (i.e., *Could you let me know if you are available to present on this date?*). This final identification task could be used as a diagnostic device. For instance, if the learner clicks on the third box, the Web site could launch a pop-up box that requires the learner to give an explanation as to why he or she identified this box as the request. This explanation could be embedded in a learning platform in two different ways, depending on the usage of the Web site. For example, in a classroom context, the learner could be asked to provide a short description in the form of an open-ended response, explaining why he or she identified the third box as the request. The open-ended response could provide teachers with insights into a learner's pragmatic awareness. For a self-access Web site, the explanation could be implemented by means of multiple choice options so users would have to check one of four explanations provided. The distracters could be designed to represent different levels of L2 pragmatic awareness.

### Part II—Explanatory Lecture

Given that several studies have found explicit instruction to be more beneficial to pragmatic learning than implicit instruction (e.g., Jeon & Kaya, 2006; Kasper, 1997), an audiovisual introductory lecture should be provided. As shown in Figure 4, the e-mail from the previous part could serve as an example to systematically explain features of workplace-related request e-mail. First, the structure of the e-mail needs to be explained as subdivisions: greeting, previous contact/introduction/background, purpose, main body (advise, authorize, request, refer to attachments, promise action, etc.), closing (e.g., positive reference to further action), and signing off. Thereby, formally relevant features such as the appropriate use of contractions or commas could also be addressed briefly. Moreover, culture-specific and sociopragmatic information such as polite greetings and the use of first names could be presented. Thus, the learner's attention would be drawn to the (sociopragmatic) discourse structure of a request e-mail. In a second step, the explanatory lecture would need to focus on the pragmatic-functional knowledge and, in particular, written requests. It would thus need to contain information about contextual information, such as the recipient or reader and the purpose of the request e-mail. Then,



**Figure 5** Mix and match item.

pragmalinguistic aspects of making a request, such as routinized sequences (e.g., “Could you . . . ?”; “Would you mind . . . ?”; “I would appreciate if . . .”) or use of modals and tenses, would need to be addressed in reference to particular realization strategies to highlight aspects such as level of formality or politeness. The language commonly used in formal request e-mails to an employer could be addressed, for instance, in contrast to an informal request e-mail to a friend.

Such an explanatory lecture could be presented via video in order to target both audio and visual learner types.

### *Part III—Practice and Application*

More request e-mail puzzles with varying degrees of formality may be provided for practice. They may or may not be coupled with explanatory feedback or scaffolding options. In addition to e-mail puzzles, mix and match items could support the sensitivity for sociopragmatic aspects of making requests. As presented in Figure 5, learners could be provided with different meeting requests that vary in terms of formality, directness, and strategic realization. By means of drag-and-drop, they would have to match the request appropriate for an e-mail to a given interlocutor. The difficulty of such a task could be varied by increasing, for example, contextual complexity.

To summarize, tasks such as the two examples presented here need to be aimed at raising learners’ awareness, contain explicit instruction, and provide learners with the opportunity of interacting with the content at their own pace while using their individual learning strategies. Pragmatic phenomena in language use can be roughly described as a moving target; that is to say, they strongly depend on a given sociocultural context as well as the linguistic choices made by and personalities of the interlocutors involved in a communicative encounter. Thus, there may oftentimes be no clear-cut correct/



incorrect distinction, but rather a gradation of appropriateness that a language user needs to estimate and interpret in every communicative situation. Learning tasks such as the speech-act training or e-mail puzzle may increase learners' awareness, thus helping them interpret a given sociocultural context and adapting their language more easily to a particular situation. Although aimed at raising pragmatic awareness, the learning modules contain lecture components given that a number of studies have found explicit pragmatic instruction to be more effective than implicit teaching (e.g., Jeon & Kaya, 2006). Finally, the modules should provide learners with opportunities to apply and practice knowledge they have acquired and potentially to reflect on what they have learned. Thus, embedding pragmatics learning into interactive, learner-centered tasks related to learners' everyday activities may raise their awareness for pragmatic phenomena in workplace communication.

### Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

Throughout this paper, we pointed out a number of aspects that require further, empirical investigation if this construct is to be used on a large scale in teaching and assessment. Before we outline future directions for pragmatics research, we need to acknowledge two main limitations of this paper. First, each of the components of pragmatic competence included in the proposed construct would require a book-length treatment to fully outline their nature, intricacies with other language use components, and their role in form-function mapping processes. That is to say, each of the concepts referred to and reviewed in this paper can be discussed in much more detail. For example, speech acts as a component of illocutionary knowledge can be discussed further in reference to speech act theory. Moreover, meaning making could further be related to Schmidt's (1993) noticing hypothesis, Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness, or Sperber and Wilson's (1995) relevance theory. However, given this paper's focus on pragmatic components in frameworks of CLA, these further connections to branches of philosophy of pragmatics may be added and elaborated on in future scholarly work on pragmatic theory. Second, while the construct proposed in this paper strives to account for a variety of languages across a broad range of language use contexts, it is based on research that focused on ELLs. Schneider (2010), for instance, has criticized that "[s]cholars working in the Anglo-American tradition of pragmatics [...] are primarily interested in pragmatic universals, i.e., the fundamental workings of human communication" (p. 249). Given the focus on ELLs in systematically selecting the underlying body of literature, this approach may be equally criticized for an ethnocentric view of seeking pragmatic universals. However, this focus was chosen due to the ultimate goal of the larger project: the development of a theory-based learning and (formative) assessment tool that promotes pragmatic awareness in ELLs.

In addition to these two main limitations, a number of crucial directions for further research—primarily in relation to the pragmatic construct proposed here—shall be acknowledged. Among the many aspects to be investigated are the following:

1. A number of implications with regard to pragmatic learning and assessment were outlined; however, an in-depth discussion and examination of the development and acquisition of pragmatic competence is beyond the scope of this paper (for more detailed studies on pragmatic learning, see Kasper & Rose, 2001; Kinginger, 2008; Taguchi, 2012; Timpe, 2013). From a developmental angle, detailed (empirical) investigations of the various sociopsychological factors and their influence on pragmatic learning, form-function processing and use, and L1 influence needs to be conducted.
2. Although this proposed construct is based on some empirical findings and results from validation studies (Bachman & Palmer, 1982; Grabowski, 2009; Taguchi, 2012), the empirical evidence is scarce and a large number of components still require validation. For example, research on cognitive processing of form-function mapping processes may shed light on the interconnectedness of pragmatic-functional knowledge and other language components. Moreover, rhetorical and interpersonal meanings as put forth by Purpura (2004) were included in the proposed construct. However, these types of meaning have not been empirically validated yet.
3. The construct of pragmatics proposed here focuses exclusively on verbal communication skills. However, as Savignon (1983, 2002) argued, the nonverbal dimension of communication needs to be considered as well in order to account for the multimodality of language and, thus, provide for a holistic form of interactive language use. Hence, the construct may eventually require some elaboration to also include other modalities.
4. Pragmatic phenomena in language use situations, for example, when English is used as a lingua franca (ELF) or as an international language (EIL) require further research as they may provide additional insights that have not been



accounted for in enough detail in this model (e.g., the impact of an L2 speaker's native language). Some first steps into that direction were explored by Kuchuk (2012) and Knapp (2011).

5. To implement pragmatic learning and (formative) assessment, a more thorough understanding of different TLU domains is required. For instance, foundational research regarding the probability of occurrence of pragmatic phenomena and relevance to L2 learners' communicative needs is essential. For the TLU domain, workplace, an investigation and thorough analysis of sociolinguistic phenomena, both within as well as across different tasks, could provide further insights that can be used to design learning material and tasks to foster EFL/ESL pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic awareness.
6. The need to develop learning materials and test formats that are (a) grounded in a framework for learning such as the Universal Design for Learning (for more information see <http://www.cast.org/udl/>), (b) administratively feasible, and (c) aid (instructed) learning and assessment. For example, many textbooks have been accused of not providing the rich and adequately contextualized input needed to facilitate pragmatic learning (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, Hartford, Mahan-Taylor, Morgan, & Reynolds, 1991; Boxer & Pickering, 1995; Gilmore, 2004; Usó-Juan & Ruiz-Madrid, 2007). In addition to the lack of adequate materials, Thomas (1983) has argued that pragmatic phenomena provide a particular challenge with regard to language teaching. For instance, correcting pragmatic infelicities that stem from sociopragmatic miscalculation is much more delicate than correcting a grammar mistake because sociopragmatic decisions are social before they are linguistic. Although language learners are susceptible to being corrected with what they view as linguistic, they are much less amenable to being corrected in terms of their social judgment (see also O'Keeffe et al., 2011). Thus, learning material with a rich contextualization that learners may use independently while obtaining feedback may be a means to providing pragmatic instruction.

Hence, a large amount of foundational research needs to be conducted in order to inform the instruction and assessment of pragmatic competence and further develop the construct of pragmatics proposed in this paper.

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## Appendix A

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