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Editors' introduction to mixed method approaches in investigating pragmatic learning

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Since its inception in the early 1980s, pragmatics has established its place as an area of investigation. Different models of communicative competence (e.g., Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Canale & Swain, 1980) have situated pragmatic competence as an essential component of language ability. These models have emphasized that communication missteps can occur from not understanding social conventions and rules of communication, apart from grammatical, discourse, and strategic competencies. As pragmatics has begun to gain explicit recognition in the field of linguistics, a number of volumes on cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics (e.g. Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 2005; Economidou-Kogetsidis & Woodfield, 2012) have provided evidence on how language users develop pragmatics in foreign (e.g. Alcón and Martinez-Flor, 2008), second language (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Taguchi, 2012), and study abroad contexts (Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos, 2011; Barron, 2003; Ren, 2015; Shively, 2015; Taguchi, 2011). More recently, current research has moved to investigate pragmatics in multilingual (Alcón-Soler, 2012; Portolés, 2015; Safont & Alcón-Soler, 2012; Safont & Portolés, 2015, 2016), and lingua franca contexts (Baumgarten & House, 2010; House, 2013).

Looking at the research approaches in pragmatic-oriented research, the weaknesses of choosing between a quantitative and a qualitative approach have been acknowledged (Creswell, 2014). To date most cross-sectional and interlanguage pragmatics studies have been concerned with the problems of collecting authentic data, the types of tasks and activities useful to elicit data, and the cost and benefits of pragmatic focused tasks. More recently, the value of longitudinal research has been recognized to explain changes in the learners' pragmatic systems (see Taguchi 2012 review). In addition, different authors, such as Cohen (2013) suggest that there seems to be a need for research following mixed method approaches, that is to say, using quantitative and qualitative data to offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), triangulating results as much as possible. In a similar vein, the present thematic issue aims to focus on approaches to investigate pragmatic learning. More specifically, the volume gathers theoretical and empirical studies that draw on quantitative and qualitative data.

In the opening article, **House** presents an overview of the advantages and problems of authentic and elicited data, and of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The author suggests a sequential mixed method approach whenever feasible and illustrates it with examples taken from her own research conducted in the areas of cross-cultural pragmatics. In addition,

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the author argues against the quantitative-qualitative dichotomy and sustains that these approaches are not "mutually exclusive" but should rather be seen as part of a continuum. **Bardovi-Harlig** also provides us with an overview on data collection techniques but she focuses on the area of interlanguage pragmatics. Data collection techniques are evaluated on a range of features, including authenticity and consequentiality, modality planning time and access to conscious knowledge, and interactivity. The costs and benefits of the tasks are discussed and the possible influence on reported findings is evaluated. The author argues for the use of matched modality tasks in assessing the pragmatic competence and performance of language learners. In these two first contributions, the authors refer to the need to eliminate the written discourse completion task in the analysis of pragmatic learning.

In line with these two first papers in the volume, **Taguchi** examines existing methodological approaches in longitudinal studies. The author presents a discussion on mixed method research as a promising approach to describing and explaining changes in the L2 pragmatics systems. Using L2 pragmatics studies as examples, the author illustrates the strengths of the mixed method approach in acquisitional pragmatics research.

Five empirical studies are also included. They integrate quantitative, qualitative, authentic and/or elicited data to explain patterns of pragmatic change over time. **Black and Barron**'s study investigates how learners and native speakers orient to a pre-specified topic in one particular task during an eTandem meeting. After careful qualitative analyses of a collection of questions within detailed CA transcripts, a quantitative analysis is presented to uncover variation in the methods employed by the learners as opposed to the expert speakers. The authors provide evidence on how the sequential exploratory mixed method approach fit in the CA research tradition and in interlanguage pragmatics research.

Gesuato and **Martín-Laguna and Alcón-Soler** also follow a mixed method approach to investigate pragmatics in foreign language contexts. On the one hand, **Gesuato** examines L1 interlocutor's interpretation of and reaction to L2 discourse. Data come from written speech acts produced by English as a foreign language Italian graduate students as part of their final examinations, revealing that interpersonal reactions (emotional, cognitive, behavioural) are in line with perceptions of sociopragmatic norms. Besides, interlocutor's reaction to L2 discourse reveals deficiencies in communicative competence, highlighting areas for focused instruction. On the other hand, the study by **Martín Laguna and Alcón-Soler** examines learning trajectories of two types of pragmatic markers: textual markers used to guide the reader through the text, and interpersonal markers used to involve the reader in the argument. Quantitative analyses revealed significant changes in the production of textual pragmatic markers in English, while interpersonal pragmatic markers followed an irregular pattern. Findings also revealed variations in pragmatic marker learning trajectories that seem to be closely related to the nature of what happens to the learners in the instructional context, together with their personal experiences.

Portolés and Safont adopt a multilingual perspective in the analysis of request forms used by teachers and young learners of English as a third language in the classroom. The authors combine elicited and authentic data in their analysis of request forms in Catalan (L1), Spanish (L2) and English (L3). Participants were 196 young learners of English as a third language and 8 teachers. Findings reveal the inherent complexity and dynamism of multilingual systems, and they confirm the view that a monolingual approach to the study of multilingual learners' requests may provide us with an incomplete account of multilingual pragmatic development.

Finally, **Sánchez-Hernández** considers the effect of sociocultural adaptation on the development of pragmatic production in a study abroad setting. As other studies in this issue, the author employs a mixed method research approach in the analysis of her data. While her quantitative analysis pointed to a partial effect of sociocultural adaptation, the qualitative approach illustrates the interaction among several variables including background culture. Therefore, as the author concludes, this study provides evidence of the potential of a mixed method approach in longitudinal research.

Taken together, the articles, written by scholars with ample research experience in the area of pragmatics, contribute to a better understanding of the potential benefits and strengths of mixed method approach in exploring pragmatics learning across different contexts.

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