English Language Teaching
Vol. 1, No. 3, pp.18-36, 2014

Pragmatic Development in Early Bilinguals: Comprehension of Indirect Requests and Production of Requests

Saeed Mehrpour *
Department of Foreign Language and Linguistics, Faculty of Literature and humanities, Shiraz University
Seyyed Abbas Mousavi
Farhangian Beheshti University of Zanjan

Abstract

Unprecedented interest in pragmatic abilities of competent speakers of language has raised some questions regarding the nature of pragmatic competence in different languages. Acquisition of pragmatics in early bilinguals has the advantage of illuminating the similarities and differences of pragmatic competence across languages. The purpose of this study was to investigate the comprehension of indirect requests and the production of requests in early bilinguals which is underrepresented in literature on pragmatic acquisition. At the same time the secondary purpose of the study was to tackle another gap in similar studies of first language acquisition, that is, reflecting on the implications of research findings for teaching pragmatics. The participants of the study were two bilinguals aged 3.5 and 2.4 at the start of the study which lasted for 8 months. The data comes from diary notes and recordings of the children's interaction with their mothers and in some cases their peers as well as their responses to indirect requests made by the researchers. The data were analyzed both qualitatively (using Straus and Corbin's (1998) model) and quantitatively (using chi-square tests). The analysis revealed that their comprehension of indirect requests did not differ significantly in the two languages and their production of requests was similar regarding the types of requests in the two languages. The findings suggest that there might be one pragmatic competence for both of the languages which bilinguals draw upon in production of requests and comprehension of indirect requests. The implications for teaching pragmatics are also discussed.

Keywords: pragmatic development, request, indirect request, bilingual

---

* Department of Foreign Language and Linguistics, Faculty of Literature and humanities, Shiraz University
Received on: 27/10/2014 Accepted on:29/12/2014
Email: *smehrpur@rose.shirazu.ac.ir*

1. Introduction

Pragmatic competence, as one of the main components of communicative competence, has received growing interest in language teaching profession during the last decade. The idea of universal pragmatics proposed by Habermas (1976) from the vantage point of social philosophy has found its way into ELT by raising serious questions regarding transferability of pragmatic competence from one language to another as well as its teachability (Rose & Kasper, 2001). For example, a group of researchers from National Language Research Institute (Nihongo Dai, 1999 as cited in Yamashita, 2008) conducted an experiment to see whether individuals with different cultural backgrounds receive pragmalinguistic behaviors differently or universally. Also worth mentioning is considerable literature devoted to interlanguage pragmatic development (most notably collection of articles in Rose & Kasper, 2001 and Soler & Flor, 2008). As studies in first and second language acquisition have contributed to broadening our knowledge base about the nature of language, the studies in the acquisition of pragmatics can also have the role of paving the way for more informed theories on 'what' we are teaching (i.e. language). Though the studies on pragmatic development of second language has begun to flourish (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Pearson, 2006 & Runqing & Si, 2005 among others), pragmatic development in first language acquisition has not found its way into language teaching profession (Ninio & Snow,1996) and pragmatic development in early bilinguals is generally an under-researched area. What is also neglected is what the implication of such studies can possibly be for teaching practices. The purpose of this study is, on the one hand, to give a picture of development of some aspects of pragmatics in early bilinguals and, on the other hand, to show what implications, if any, it can have for language teaching. In other words, unlike mainstream literature in first language acquisition which is descriptive and at best explanatory, this paper is also concerned with implications of acquisition findings for language teaching and learning. The secondary purpose of the study is to contribute to the debate between the ideas of those who propose universality of pragmatic principles and the proponents of pragmatic variations across languages.

Given the same context, do bilinguals develop one pragmatic competence for the two languages or one competence for each of the languages? There seems to be a consensus on the fact that "a bilingual is not a combination of two monolinguals in one person, a bilingual has a linguistic system which may be characterized as a complex code repertoire which draws upon two codes" (Grosjean, 1985. P. 468). The question is whether in developing this complex code repertoire the pragmatics of the two languages develop hand in hand or there is one pragmatic competence which is drawn upon for both languages. In other words, bilinguals learning two languages simultaneously as their first languages are able to develop separate systems of semantics, syntax and lexicon for two languages, but to what extent do they develop separate pragmatic competence for two languages?

In this study there is an attempt to compare and contrast the pragmatic development of two children in Turkish and Persian with a focus on their comprehension of indirect request speech act and production of requests as two aspects of pragmatic competence. Experimental and observational studies indicate that pre-school children can understand indirect requests as request for action (Shatz, 1978; Ervin-Trip, 1977), and this is considered to be a sign of the children's pragmatic development (Bryant, 2009).

Considering requests as an important part of pragmatic ability of the children which has been widely analyzed and studied in different languages (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989, for example), we try to investigate whether early bilinguals act similarly in response to indirect requests made in their two languages or their responses differ regarding the type of language the requests are made in.

Examining the production of requests, we also attempt to compare similarities between the production of two kinds of requests (i.e. direct and conventionally indirect formulation of requests) in Turkish and Persian. For the comprehension, it can be hypothesized that similar actions can provide some evidence in the support of the idea that children develop one pragmatic competence for both of the languages and if the responses differ, the idea of two pragmatic competencies is supported. Regarding the production, if there are similarities in the kinds of requests made in the two languages, the evidence will be supportive of one pragmatic competence for both of the languages or at least two very close or similar pragmatic competencies. So in this study, we try to deal with the following hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1: Actions performed in response to indirect requests in Turkish and Persian will be different.
- Hypothesis 2: Requests made in Turkish and Persian will not be different in terms of two kinds of requests: (a) direct requests (b) conventionally indirect formulations.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definitions of Bilingualism

Bilingualism is a phenomenon which is both societal and cognitive (Romaine, 1995), and traditionally it has been of three kinds: compound, coordinate, and sub-coordinate (D'Acierno, 1990). Compound bilinguals are individuals who acquire two first languages at the same time. It is claimed that they develop one system of concepts for two languages which speakers draw on in using both of the languages (D'Acierno, 1990). Coordinate bilinguals, on the other hand, acquire two languages in two different contexts, so the concepts developed for each language is different in their minds and in sub-coordinate bilingualism there is a domination of one of the languages. As implied from Pearson (2009), this classification benefits from too much simplification. Pearson first defines a bilingual as someone who uses two languages for his/her communication and offers a classification of bilinguals by skills, context and timing. Classification by skills constitutes a continuum, at one end of which is "the simultaneous interpreter at the UN who speaks both languages as well as a native and is fully literate in both. At the other end are newborns who hear two languages spoken to them, but who cannot speak or understand even one language, much less two" (Pearson, 2009, p. 380). There can be various proficiency levels in either language anywhere between these two extreme points. He also considers the context by which he means the relation of two communities of the languages as well as the environment in which the languages are made and used (i.e. home, school, etc.). Learning order and age factors, in his view, are related to timing classification.

These variations in bilingualism should be taken into account in conducting research in bilingualism for several reasons: First, when similar research yields different results, it can at least partly be accounted for by considering variation in definition and the context in which language is acquired. Second, giving an explicit definition of context and kinds of bilingualism we are studying, we can avoid sweeping generalizations about both the claim that is made and the implications that are drawn based on the findings. Following these points, there is a reference to characteristics of participants in this study and the context of their language acquisition below.

2.2. Some Insights into Pragmatics

Maybe the first logical step in analyzing pragmatic development is to define what is meant by pragmatics. Pragmatics was originally developed by

American scientist and philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce in 1870s. He is also known as the father of pragmatism. The heart of Peirce's pragmatism is that any expression must have practical effects in order to be meaningful. Peirce viewed the pragmatic version of meaning as a way of avoiding metaphysics and enhancing scientific inquiry (Arens, 1994). Since Pierce many philosophers have contributed to development of the notion of pragmatics (Morris, Habermas, Austin, and Searle, to mention just a few) and finally about a century after its original formulation, pragmatics found its way into language teaching profession (most notably by Austin, 1975; Searl, 1969 and Grice, 1975).

Different scholars have provided similar definitions of pragmatics among whom Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993, p. 3) refer to pragmatics as "the study of people's comprehension and production of linguistic action in context". Most cited definition of pragmatics is that of Crystal (1997, p. 301) who defines it 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". Another influential definition comes from Bachman and Palmer (1996, p. 69) who explain pragmatic knowledge as knowledge which "enables us to create or interpret discourse by relating utterances or sentences and texts to their meaning, to the intentions of language users, and to relevant characteristics of the language use setting". Yamashita (2008, p. 202) mentions that "Pragmatics deals with language users, constraints that they face and interaction effects with others in social interaction". Bachman (1990) believes that pragmatic competence consists of the knowledge that is used in performance in context of use and interpretation of socially appropriate speech acts in discourse, in addition to organizational competence. Interlanguage pragmatics, according to Yamashita (2008, p. 201), is "a non-native speaker's use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language". Similarly Roever (2006, 2012) views the task of Interlanguage pragmatics as developing knowledge of second language learners and their ability for using pragmatic skills of the target language.

The 'interlanguage' aspect of ILP denotes the systematic but transient nature of learners' pragmatic knowledge about the target language, and implies the influence of factors that have been identified in SLA research to affect interlanguage systems: transfer, overgeneralization, simplification, transfer-of-training, amount and quality of input, attention and awareness, aptitude, motivation, and other individual differences (Roever, 2006, p. 230).

In a description of the major components of language users' pragmatic competence, Leech (1983) distinguishes between "pragmalinguistics", the linguistic tools necessary to express and comprehend speech intentions, and "sociopragmatics", the social rules that constrain speakers' linguistic choices and hearers' possible interpretations. Both sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistics are closely related, as a speaker's sociopragmatic analysis of a situation (in terms of politeness, possible meanings, and cultural norms and prohibitions) is linguistically encoded through pragmalinguistic choices. "Sociopragmatics focuses on socially appropriate language use: a sociopragmatically competent language user knows the social rules for 'what you do, when and to whom', especially with regard to such social variables as relative power, social distance, and degree of imposition" (Roever, 2006, p. 230). Competent users of language know taboos, mutual rights and obligations, and routines and conventions of language that are appropriate in their linguistic community. Crystal (2003) indicates that pragmalinguistics is concerned with 'the more linguistic "end" of pragmatics', especially the strategies which draw on linguistic abilities for applying speech intentions as well as it deals with "the linguistic items necessary to express these intentions" (Roever, 2006, p. 230). Clark (1979) uses the terms "conventions of means" and "conventions of form" to describe pragmalinguistics. For example, a linguistic strategy (convention of means) for politeness is conventional indirectness. The linguistic items that are used to implement this strategy (conventions of form) may be asking about ability of people (Can you pass the salt?'). According to Yuh-Fang Chang (2011, p. 786) "the existing literature still leaves us an incomplete picture of the nature of the relation between pragmalinguistic competence and sociopragmatic competence in the development of L2 learners' pragmatic competence, as the research findings suggest two conflicting patterns". He concludes in his paper that "the relation between sociopragmatic competence and pragmalinguistic competence is a complex and interwoven one rather than a simple, linear 'which-precedes-which' kind of relation" (p. 795). There is a growing interest in this area due to the important role of pragmatic competence in the development of communicative competence (Roever, 2012, 2013).

When it comes to knowledge of pragmatics, there are two different ideas regarding its universality. Austin (1975) and Searle (1969, 1975) and Habermas (1976) are in favor of pragmatic universals, and so is Grice (1975) in proposing cooperative principle. Habermas (1976) in proposing his theory of universal pragmatics (for which he later prefers the term "formal pragmatics" as an analogous to "formal semantics") claims that every utterance in any language makes three kinds of validity claims: normative rightness, theoretical truth and expressive or subjective truthfulness. Austin, Searle, and Grice in their theories almost always talk about 'language' not 'the languages' (or any particular language), while Green (1975) and Wierzbicka (1985) put forward the idea that there are variations in verbalization and conceptualization of pragmatics in languages which make it far less universal than what is claimed by proponents of universal pragmatics. The debate is still ongoing and neither side has found exclusive empirical supports in favor of their stance. There are some studies supporting the universality of at least some speech acts, others pointing their fingers to cross-language and cross-cultural variations of pragmatics. (Afghary, 2007; Beebe & Cummings, 1996; Duranti, 1997; Golato, 2000; Hinkel, 1997; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Rintell & Mitchell, 1989).

2.3. Studies of Requests in Child Language Acquisition

In analyzing pragmatic development, we have focused on speech acts that are present in both languages (Persian & Turkish). This makes the comparison for the purpose of the study possible. The speech act of requesting and indirect requests are employed in both Persian and Turkish. Analysis of requests is conducted in different languages (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989). As Searle (1975, p. 13) puts it, requests are "attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something. They may be very modest attempts as when I invite you to do it, or they may be very fierce attempts as when I insist that you do it".

Safont-Jorda (2011) indicates that the act of request involves two main parts: the head of the request, which does the function of the act of requesting as well as its peripheral segments which enhance or reduce the force of the request. Following this classification as well as Alcon (2008) and Safont-Jorda (2005, 2008), we considered direct requests (e.g. Ghashogh ro be man bede!), and conventionally indirect formulations (e.g. mituni ghashogh ro be man bedi?) as the focus of this study for production of requests. Request modifiers come along the request head act to show varying degrees of politeness and mitigate threatening conditions. These elements involve the modification of the head of the speech act and are very important in studying the requests (Safont-Jorda, 2008). As included in those typologies, direct request realizations involve the requester in explicating his illocutionary intent by means of performatives (e.g. ghashogho mikham), and imperatives (e.g. ghashogho bede be man). In the case of conventionally indirect requests, the requester specifies his/her goal while considering the threatening nature of their request.

Our analysis focuses on direct requests and conventionally indirect forms because of the fact that these categories have been widely employed in previous research on L1 and IL pragmatic development (Trosborg, 1995, Alcon, 2008; Brown & Levinson, 1987). Furthermore, some scholars attribute universal properties to these particular strategies realizing this speech act (Marquez Reiter, Rainey, & Fulcher, 2005). Both Turkish and Persian share the pragmatic property of conventional indirectness. Nevertheless, to our best knowledge, no study has compared the significance of the differences regarding the particular strategies and amount of modification items accompanying the request head act in early bilinguals. Requests have been widely investigated in adults and children's production of utterances. "While studies on bilingual and multilingual children's requests including ages 2-3 have mainly focused on the goal and function of the request, research on language learners has mainly dealt with those request strategies employed in performing this illocutionary function, thereby adopting an acquisitional perspective" (Safont-Jorda, 2011, p. 259). As our main goal concerns the investigation of the development of early bilingual pragmatic competence, we believe that the approach adopted in acquisitional studies may best serve our purpose. Additionally, we understand that pragmatic competence should be analyzed by considering its pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic components. As acknowledged by some researchers (e.g., Alcon, 2008), this may be achieved by considering the request strategies employed in verbalizing the illocutionary intent (i.e. direct and conventionally indirect forms). As mentioned before, these are the forms and routines that constitute the basis of our analysis for production of requests.

The rational for selecting comprehension of indirect requests for this study was (a) the existence of a concrete criterion for the fact that comprehension has indeed happened (this was evident by subsequent action that the participants conducted) and (b) to give a more comprehensive picture of requests by examining both the production and comprehension of requests in a single study.

3. Method

This is a case study in which we have employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze the data. Case studies provide the researchers with a means for an in-depth analysis of research topic. As Genesee (2009) mentions, they offer an opportunity to view the problem from many perspectives. Use of mixed methods design also provides the opportunity for the researchers to have a sort of triangulation (Ary, 2010).

3.1 Participants and Setting

The participants of the study were two early bilingual kids. Ramptin was two years and four months old and Narges three years and five months old at the start of the study which lasted for about 8 months. Both of the participants were simultaneous bilinguals, that is, they were learning two first languages; Farsi and Turkish. They also can be regarded compound bilinguals since they have learned two languages in the very same environments.

3.2 Data Collection Procedure

The data for participants' production of requests come from diary notes and recordings of their interaction with their mothers and in some cases their peers. For examining their comprehension of indirect requests a questionnaire of about thirty indirect requests were designed but some of the requests were made on the spot according to the environment in which the researchers and the children's mothers were interacting with them. None of the requests which were equivalent in the two languages was asked in the same day for comprehension of indirect requests.

3.3 Data analysis Procedure

Statistical analysis of data was conducted using Chi-square tests. Since the sets of data which were gathered in the two languages were from the same individuals (i.e. the data sets were not independent), Mcnemar's test was used to compare paired groups of data (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991). The purpose was to see whether the differences for comprehension of indirect requests in the two languages and the differences of production of the participant's two kinds of requests in the two languages were statistically significant or not. The qualitative analysis was also used to deal with data which could not be analyzed statistically. The rational for doing this was to have a better understanding of the processes leading to production or action by studying the responses in the context.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Comprehension of Indirect Requests

Our first hypothesis predicted that responses to indirect requests would be similar in Persian and Turkish. In order to test this hypothesis, we made a total number of 37 indirect requests with Narges and 40 requests with Ramptin in the two languages. As mentioned above, the requests were equivalent in the two languages but not two equivalent requests were made on the same day. Narges did the expected act when she was addressed indirectly, in 22 cases in Persian and Turkish. Ramptin also performed similarly, he did the same act in response to 19 indirect requests in the two languages (see tables 1 & 2).

Table 1

Narges's Responses to Indirect Requests Made in the Two Languages

		Turkish		
		Yes	*No*	*Total*
Persian	Yes	22	5	27
	No	7	3	10
	Total	29	8	37

The P value equals 0.7728 in Narges's case and, 0.8026 in Rapmtin's performance. This difference is not statistically significant. That is, in their performance in response to the two languages there is no statistically significant difference and therefore there is an association between indirect

Table 2

Ramptin's Responses to Indirect Requests Made in the Two Languages

		Turkish		
		Yes	*No*	*Total*
Persian	Yes	19	9	28
	No	7	5	12
	Total	26	14	40

requests in the two languages. The P value was calculated with McNemar's teast with the continuity correction. Chi square equals 0.083 with 1 degree of freedom for Narges and 0.063 with the same degree of freedom For Ramptin.

4.2 Production of Requests

Our second hypothesis predicted that requests in Turkish and Persian would not be different in terms of the two kinds of requests and conventionally indirect requests. In production of requests when the participants made a request in one of the languages, they were asked indirectly to repeat their requests in the other language. The elicitation method adopted here was that when they made a request in Turkish, their mothers or the researchers asked (chi gofti?/ What did you say?) and they turned it into Persian and when they made their requests in Persian they were asked (nama didi?/What did you say) and their turned it into Turkish. (The automatic switching between the languages in response to the demand of interlocutor was also astonishing!) The total number of direct requests observed and recorded in Narges's production was 41(see Table 3).

The P value was 0.7728 and Chi-square for it turned out to be 0.083 with 1 degree of freedom. Therefore, there was an association between production of direct requests in Turkish and Persian. The odds ratio for this Mcnemar test was 0.714, with a 95% confidence interval extending

Table 3

Direct Production of Requests in the Two Languages by Narges

		Turkish		
		Yes	No	Total
Persian	Yes	29	5	34
	No	7	0	7
	Total	36	5	41

from 0.179 to 2.614. The analysis of the data from Ramptin turned out to be similar (see Table 4).

Table 4

Direct Production of Requests in the Two Languages by Ramptin

		Turkish		
		Yes	*No*	*Total*
Persian	Yes	22	3	25
	No	6	0	6
	Total	28	3	31

The P value equals 0.5050, this difference also is not statistically significant, and the Chi square equals 0.444 with 1 degree of freedom. The odds ratio is 0.500, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.081 to 2.341.The P value equals 0.5465 for production of indirect requests by Narges and 1.0000 for Ramptin. The Chi square equals 0.364 for Narges and 0 for Ramptin with 1 degree of freedom.

The odds ratio is 0.571, with a 95% confidence interval extending from 0.123 to 2.248 for Narges and 0.667, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.056 to 5.820 for Ramptin.

Table 5

Production of Indirect Requests in the Two Languages by Narges

		Turkish		
		Yes	No	Total
Persian	Yes	16	4	20
	No	7	0	7
	Total	23	4	27

Table 6

Production of Indirect Requests in the Two Languages by Ramptin

		Turkish		
		Yes	No	Total
Persian	Yes	9	2	11
	No	3	0	3
	Total	12	2	14

In sum, the statistical analysis of our data supports the above mentioned hypotheses; that is, there is not a statistically significant difference between production of the two kinds of requests in Persian and Turkish. In addition, there is no statically significant difference in comprehension of indirect requests in the two languages.

4.3 Qualitative Analysis of the Data

One of the problems of data analysis in child language acquisition in response elicitation and data analysis is that when the participants fail to respond appropriately, we cannot be sure whether this failure is because of their lack of competence or their lack of willingness or other contextual factors. Qualitative analysis of the cases in which the participants of this study failed to respond similarly in the two languages with taking the context into account helped us to determine some of these factors. For example, when Ramptin was playing in his room and his mother said:

Dare otaghet baz mundeh

(The door of your room is left open)

Ramptin did not close the door. The subsequent investigation of this issue revealed that he did not feel secure in the room with its door closed. Since his mother closed the door when he was playing in his room, a few days later he rushed to the door to open it. As another example, when Narges was asked:

Tu yakhcheletun angur darid?

(Do you have grapes in your fridge?)

She did not understand it as a request for fetching grapes, because she did think that it was her mother's duty to bring fruit for the guest(s), not hers. When one of the researchers after 15 minutes told her, I wanted to eat grapes but you did not bring them to me, she said her mother did not let her take unwashed fruit from the fridge.

Of course not for all of the two participants' failure we could find reasons. No matter in which language and how many times Ramptin was asked,

Mikham televizyun negah konam or
Estram tilvizuna bakham.
(I want to watch TV)

he did not respond appropriately, and we speculated that maybe in their family the kids were not allowed to turn on the TV, or maybe, adults always did it themselves by the remote control.

In sum, observation of the participants' behavior in the context and the way they interacted with their interlocutors and interviewing their mothers, we understood that in the context in which the participants are living they speak Persian or Turkish according to the person they are interacting. Generally, with elderly people and their grandparents they spoke Turkish and with their peers and younger interlocutors they spoke Persian. They also switched between languages according to the language others addressed them no matter who they are. Regarding the focus of our study, both the understanding of indirect requests and production of requests seem not to be different in the two languages. Our interview with their mothers and further observations confirmed this finding.

5. Conclusion and Implication

Some may argue that the same action performed in response to requests in the two languages may be due to parallel activation of two pragmatic competencies (Shook & Marian, 2012). The strong association of comprehension and production of requests as well as qualitative analysis of the cases that the participants failed to act similarly in the two languages (in comprehension of requests) and produced similar requests in the two languages revealed that there might be some pragmatically irrelevant factors which contributes to their performance. We argue that taking into account the principle of parsimony, one pragmatic competence is preferable to two. Those who argue for two competencies should support their claim with enough evidence from early bilingual acquisition data. Our claim here is closely related to the controversy between proponents of universality of pragmatics (e.g., Habermas, Austin, etc.) and those who emphasize pragmatic variation across languages (e.g., Green, 1975). Though some undeniable pieces of evidence exists regarding the variation of some aspects of pragmatics in different languages and cultures (Wierzbicka, 1985), two claims can be made here: (a) Claims of universality can be made in a more general and abstract way and not denied all together, and (b) Variations in performance in pragmatics of two languages may simply be due to different contexts for which pragmatics is just one aspect. In other words, intra-language variation in pragmatic performance of individuals in different context should also be taken into account when we are talking of inter language pragmatic differences. As our study reveals, when the context is the same for the two languages, some aspects of pragmatics in the languages do not differ significantly.

If we can claim for universality of some aspects of pragmatics which may have some different local representations, there will be some repercussions for teaching pragmatics. Practices of teaching pragmatics should lean more toward pragmalinguistic aspects of language which serve as a linguistic resource for conveying the meanings of the speakers. At least, some parts of sociopragmatic competence are already acquired by individuals of different cultures when they acquire their first language and they learn how languages work, so in designing materials for pragmatics teaching and in pragmatics teaching practices, pragmatic universals can help us not to teach redundantly what students already know. Let's have an example from testing (because testing pragmatics is so well-documented and has clear relation to teaching pragmatics):

Jack is talking to his housemate Sarah about another housemate, Frank.
Jack: 'Do you know where Frank is, Sarah?'
Sarah: 'Well, I heard music from his room earlier.'
What does Sarah probably mean?

1. Frank forgot to turn the music off.
2. Frank's loud music bothers Sarah.
3. Frank is probably in his room.
4. Sarah doesn't know where Frank is. (Roever, 2006, p. 238)

This test claims to be testing pragmatic ability of the tesstees. To what extent is this claim justified? If we can show that the implication embedded in this question is a universal one, we can conclude that it is testing only the lexico-grammatical ability of the testees and not their pragmatic ability. In like manner, some teaching practices aimed to teach pragmatics (whose teachability has now been a general consensus) can have more plausibility in what they aim to do if they come to understand that there are some aspects of pragmatics which students always already know (Apel, 1972) and they do not need to be taught directly.

This study is limited in several aspects. First and foremost, the limited number of participants in the study makes it hardly generalizable (Deuchar & Quay, 2000; Barnes, 2006). However, case studies can be a source of challenge to existing paradigms and put forward new theories to test (Cruz-Ferreira, 2006). The second limitation comes from restriction of the scope, that is, it only studied comprehension of indirect speech acts and performing requests among many other speech acts as well as other aspects of pragmatics, so the findings need more research support.

Findings from this study call for further research on the pragmatic competence of early bilinguals by studying other speech acts or pragmatic dimensions and also by analyzing participants from various linguistic backgrounds. No time related statistically significant difference was observed during the study, so their pragmatic development during the research span was not analyzed. Some longitudinal studies on pragmatic request production and comprehension development can give us a better picture of the pragmatic development of early bilingual children.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Ramptin and Narges and their families who received us so warmly and spent their time on taking diary notes. We are also thankful to Mr. Ahmad Nasiri for his fruitful comments during this study.

References

Afghary, A. (2007). A sociopragmatic study of apology speech act realization patterns in Persian. *Speech Communication, 49(*2), 177-185.

Alcon, E. (2008). Investigating pragmatic language learning in foreign language classrooms. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, *46*(3), 173-195.

Apel, K. O. (1972). The a priori of communication and the foundation of the humanities. *Man and World*, *5*(1), 3-37.

Arens, E. (1994). *The logic of pragmatic thinking: from Peirce to Habermas*. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press.

Ary, D., Jacobs, L.C., & Sorensen, C. (2010). *Introduction to research in education.* Belmont: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning

Austin, J. L. (1975). *How to do things with words*. USA: Harvard University Press.

Bachman, L. F. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S. (1996). *Language testing in practice: Designing and developing useful language tests* (Vol. 1). USA: Oxford University Press.

Barnes, J. (2006). Early trilingualism. A Focus on questions. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Beebe, L. M., & Cummings, M.C. (1996). Natural speech act data versus written questionnaire data how data collection method affects speech act performance. In S.M. Gass & N. Joyce, (Eds.), *Speech act across cultures: Challenges to communication in a second language* (pp. 65-86). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G. (1989). Investigating cross-cultural pragmatics: An introductory overview. In S. Blum-Kulka, J. House, & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies* (pp. 1-34). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Universals in language use: Politeness phenomena*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bryant, B. J. (2009). Pragmatic development. In L. Bavin (Eds.), *Child language* (pp.339-354). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chang, Y. F. (2011). Interlanguage pragmatic development: the relation between pragmalinguistic competence and sociopragmatic competence. *Language Sciences, 33*(5), 786-798.

Clark, H.H. (1979). Responding to indirect speech acts. *Cognitive Psychology, 11*, 430-77.

Cruz-Ferreira, M. (2006). *Three is a crowd? Acquiring Portuguese in a trilingual environment*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Crystal, D. (Ed.). (1997). *The Cambridge encyclopedia of language*. (2nd ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Crystal, D. (2003). *A dictionary of linguistics and phonetics*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

D'Acierno, M. R. (1990). *Three types of bilingualism*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (24th, Dublin, Ireland, March 27-30, 1990).

Deuchar, M., & Quay, S. (2000). *Bilingual acquisition: Theoretical implications of a case study.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Duranti, A. (1997). *Linguistic anthropology*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & J. Morgan, (Eds.), *Speech acts*, Vol. 3. Academic Press, New York.

Hatch, E. M., Lazaraton, A. (1991). *The research manual: Design and statistics for applied linguistics*. New York: Newbury House Publishers.

Ervin-Tripp, S. (1977). Wait for me, roller skate! InS. Ervin-Tripp&C.Mitchell-Kernan (Eds.), *Child discourse* (pp. 165-188). New York: Academic Press.

Ervin-Tripp, S. (1979). Children's verbal turn-taking. In E. Ochs & B. Schieffelin (Eds.), *Developmental pragmatics* (pp. 391-413). New York: Academic Press.

Genesee, F. (2009). Preface. In J. Cenoz (Ed.), *Towards multilingual education. Basque educational research from an international perspective* (pp. 1-2). Toronto: Multilingual Matters.

Golato, A., 2000. Pragmatic interference and compliments. Paper presented at the AAAL Annual Convention: Crossing boundaries in Vancouver, British Columbia, 11–14 March 2000. Green, G., 1975. How to get people do things with words. Syntax and Semantics. In P. Cole & J. Morgan, (Eds.), *Speech acts*, Vol. 3. Academic Press, New York.

Grosjean, F. (1985). The bilingual as a competent but specific speaker-hearer. *Journal of Multilingual & Multicultural Development*, *6*(6), 467-477.

Habermas, J. (2000). *On the pragmatics of communication*. Mit Press, Cambridge: Massachusetts.

Hinkel, E., (1997). Appropriateness of advice: DCT and multiple choice data. *Applied Linguist*, *18*(1), 1-23.

Kasper, G., & Blum-Kulka, S. (Eds.). (1993). *Interlanguage pragmatics*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Kasper, G., & Rose, K. R. (2002). Pragmatic development in a second language. *Language Learning: A Journal of Research in Language Studies*, *52*(1), 17-21.

Leech, G. N., & Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. London: Longman.

Marquez Reiter, R., Rainey, I., & Fulcher, G. (2005). A comparative study of certainty and conventional indirectness. Evidence from British English and Peninsular Spanish. *Applied Linguistics*, *26*, 1-31.

Ninio, A., & Snow, C. E. (1996). *Pragmatic development*. Westview Press.

Olshtain, E., Cohen, A. (1983). Apology: A speech act set. In N. Wolfson & E. Judd, (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language acquisition* (pp. 23-40). Newbury House, Rowly, MA.

Pearson, L. (2006). Patterns of development in Spanish L2 pragmatic acquisition: An analysis of novice learners' production of directives. *The Modern Language Journal*, *90*(4), 473-495.

Pearson, Z. B. (2009). Childeren with two languages. In L. Bavin (Eds.), *Child language* (pp.379-397). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rintell, E., Mitchell, C.L., (1989). Studying requests and apologies: An inquiry into method. In S. Blum-Kulka, J. House & G. Kasper, (Eds.), *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies* (pp. 123-138). Ablex, Norwood, NJ.

Rose, K. R. (2005). On the effects of instruction in second language pragmatics. *System*, *33*(3), 385-399.

Rose, K. R. & Kasper, G., (Eds.). (2001). *Pragmatics in language teaching*. Ernst Klett Sprachen.

Roever, C. (2006). Validation of a web-based test of ESL pragmalinguistics. *Language Testing*, *23*(2), 229-256.

Roever, C. (2012). What learners get for free: Learning of routine formulae in ESL and EFL environments. *ELT journal*, *66*(1), 10-21.

Roever, C. (2013). *Assessment of pragmatics: The encyclopedia of applied linguistics*. Wiley Online Library.

Romaine, S. (1995). *Bilingualism*. Oxford: Blackwell publication.

Runqing, L., & Si, L. (2005). Cognitive features and influential factors of pragmatic acquisition. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, *3*, 1-8.

Safont-Jorda, M.P. (2005). *Third language learners: Pragmatic production and awareness*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Safont-Jorda, M.P. (2008). The speech act of requesting. In E. Alcon (Ed.), *Learning how to request in an instructed language learning context* (pp. 41-64). Berlin: Peter Lang.

Safont-Jorda, M. P. (2011). Early requestive development in consecutive third language learning. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *8*(3), 256-276.

Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge University Press.

Searle, J. (1975). Indirect speech acts. Syntax and Semantics. In P. Cole & J. Morgan, (Eds.), *Speech acts*, Vol. 3. Academic Press, New York.

Shatz, M. (1978). Children's comprehension of their mothers' question-directives. *Journal of Child Language*, *5*(01), 39-46.

Shook, A., & Marian, V. (2012). Bimodal bilinguals co-activate both languages during spoken comprehension. *Cognition*, *124* (3), 314-324.

Soler, E. A., & Flor, A. M. (Eds.). (2008). *Investigating pragmatics in foreign language learning, teaching and testing* (Vol. 30). Multilingual Matters Limited. Great Britain: Cromwell Press Ltd.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998) *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques* (2nd ed.) Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Trosborg, A. (1995). *Interlanguage pragmatics: Requests, complaints and apologies*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Wierzbicka, A. (1985). Different cultures, different languages, different speech acts: Polish vs. English. *Journal of pragmatics*, *9*(2), 145-178.

Yamashita, S. O. (2008). Investigating interlanguage pragmatic ability: What are we testing. In E. A. Soler, & A. M. Flor, (Eds.). *Investigating pragmatics in foreign language learning, teaching and testing* (pp. 201-223). Multilingual Matters Limited. Great Britain: Cromwell Press Ltd.