ASSESSING EAP LEARNERS’ PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE IN SPEAKING AT B2-C2 LEVELS

EDIT FICZERE-WILLCOX
CRELLA, UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE
APPROACHING A TUTOR?

• Why you gave me like that?
FRAMEWORK FOR TESTING: SA
(CCSARP, 1989)
INSTRUMENT: DCT

S/active
H/passive?

Discursive side? (Roever, 2011)

Framework: CA

Sequential organization? (Kasper, 2006)

Online processing skills?

Instrument: monologic/dialogic tasks
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

◆ **Task format:** To what extent and in what ways do the monologic and dialogic speaking task formats allow test takers to display their pragmatic competence in terms of appropriacy, discourse organisation and pragmalinguistic devices?

◆ **Proficiency:** To what extent and in what ways are these pragmatic features utilised differently by B2-C2 level learners?
# METHODOLOGY

## Research instrument

Monologic and dialogic tasks.

Video recorded / transcribed (Heritage, 1984).

## Semi-structured interviews

Learners’ perceptions of task situations

## Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALITATIVE:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CA (Schegloff, 2007)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUANTITATIVE:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>categories from CCSARP (Blum-Kulka et. al., 1989)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conversational routines (Myles et al., 1998:325)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## PARTICIPANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupation</strong></td>
<td>University students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nationalities</strong></td>
<td>ARABIC (e.g. Kuwait, Saudi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EUROPEAN (e.g. Italy, Slovakia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ASIAN (e.g. Japan, China)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ages</strong></td>
<td>20-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>15 males + 15 females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proficiency</strong></td>
<td>10 B2 / 10 C1 / 10 C2 (IELTS 5.5-9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task 1</td>
<td>request (+ apology) – professor (S&lt;H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 2</td>
<td>request (+ apology) – classmate (S=H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 3</td>
<td>request – professor (S&lt;H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 4</td>
<td>request – classmate (S=H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 5</td>
<td>request - professor (S&lt;H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 6</td>
<td>request – flatmate (S=H)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TASK: YOU HAVE A UNIVERSITY ESSAY DEADLINE TOMORROW YOU ARE STILL NOT READY BECAUSE YOU HAVE BEEN ILL. YOU NEED TO GET AN EXTENSION ON THE DEADLINE TODAY. YOU DECIDE TO CALL PROFESSOR TAYLOR IN HIS OFFICE BUT HE IS NOT THERE SO YOU LEAVE A MESSAGE ON HIS ANSWER PHONE.

**Account + request + request call back + closing**

- **Hello (0.1) Taylor.** I’m Su. Because I:: (0.1) was ill (.). so:: (0.1) my essay:::y, (0.2) can I got a:n (0.2) extension (0.1) on (0.1) >my essay deadline< today? So:: (0.2) yeah >can you ring me< (0.1) after you (.). heard this (.). message? Thank you very much.

**Project upcoming request + account + request + request call back**

- **Good evening, professor Taylor.** Erm the university essay deadline (.). is tomorrow, however, erm I wanted to inform you that (.). I have been very ill(.). during the last few days erm a::nd I erm need (.). to get (.). an extension (.). on the deadline. Erm >I wanted to ask you whether< that would be (.). possible. A::nd yes erm (0.2) thank you very much. Please call me back.

**Project upcoming request + account + problem statement + request + request call back**

- **Good afternoon professor Taylor.** This is (full name). I’m I’m calling you about the essay, which is (.). due tomorrow. Erm I’ve been quite sick for the past week a::nd (.). I couldn’t work (.). as much as I planned to work (.). for that reason I would really like to ask you for (.). e::rm for an extension (.). to (.). an extension of the deadline basically. If I could have a few more days to complete the assignment (.). that would be much much appreciated. So:: (.). please could you get back to me cause of the deadline. Thank you. Bye bye.
PRAGMALINGUISTIC DEVICES

Mean of occurrence per person
DOWNTONERS

Downtoners / B2
- just: 72%
- maybe: 22%
- may: 6%

Downtoners / C1
- just: 86%
- maybe: 8%
- perhaps: 6%

Downtoners / C2
- just: 49%
- maybe: 27%
- might: 11%
- possibly: 3%
- others: 5%
- perhaps: 5%
- perhaphs: 3%
CONVERSATIONAL ROUTINES (CR) IN REQUEST STRATEGIES

Percentage of individual request strategies
### LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B2</th>
<th>C1</th>
<th>C2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interrogative</strong></td>
<td>Can I...?</td>
<td>Can I <em>please</em>...?</td>
<td>Can I ask for <em>possibly</em>...?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conditional clause</strong></td>
<td>I’m wondering if...</td>
<td>I <em>was</em> wondering if...</td>
<td>I’ve <em>been</em> wondering <em>whether</em>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘need’</strong></td>
<td>I need...</td>
<td>I <em>just</em> need to...</td>
<td>I <em>actually</em> need...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bare infinitive</strong></td>
<td><em>Please, let me know</em>...</td>
<td><em>Just</em> let me know...</td>
<td><em>I mean just</em> let me know...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>appreciation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>I’d really appreciate <em>(your opinion)</em></td>
<td>…that would be much appreciated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SENSITIVITY TO CONTEXT

B2

• Can I got an extension on my essay deadline? (S<H)

• We can go to the coffee shop to do it together. (S=H)

• I want your help. Can you give me some opinion on my draft? (S<H)

• Can you please give me one more day? (S=H)

C2

• I would really like to ask you for an extension to the deadline basically. If I could have a few more days to complete the assignment that would be much appreciated.

• this is quite crucial that you do it if you could just make sure that you finish it today.

• I've been wondering if whether you could have a look at the draft that I've prepared so far. That would be great.

• I was wondering whether I could have a look at the book for one more day. It would be great if I could keep it for one more day.
OVERALL:
TASK FORMAT & PROFICIENCY
sequential organisation + linguistic devices + appropriacy

B2:
1. Some elaboration
2. Limited number and range of pragmatic devices
3. Some adjustment of language to context

C1:
1. Good elaboration
2. A good number and range of pragmatic devices
3. Language adjusted well to context.

C2:
1. Very good elaboration
2. Very good number and range of pragmatic devices
3. Language adjusted very well to context.
AN INTERCULTURAL SPEAKER…

• ‘Making learners aware of the underlying behaviour behind language will help them to develop their own “personality” in an L2…’ *Thomas 1983:98*
REFERENCES

THANK YOU!

- Acknowledgements:
- This presentation draws upon PhD research sponsored by Trinity College London. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this presentation are those of the presenter’s and do not necessarily reflect the views of Trinity.
- This research was funded and supported by the British Council (ARAGs grant/award)
- This research was funded by TOEFL Grants and Awards Committee (Small Grants for Doctoral Research in Second or Foreign Language Assessment)

e.ficzere@brookes.ac.uk