



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](https://www.sciencedirect.com)

System

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/system](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/system)

## Development of discourse-pragmatic markers in a multilingual classroom: A mixed method research approach

Sofía Martín-Laguna<sup>\*</sup>, Eva Alcón-Soler

Universitat Jaume I, Av. Sos Baynat, s/n, 12071 Castellón de la Plana, Spain

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 16 February 2018

Accepted 9 March 2018

Available online xxx

#### Keywords:

Classroom pragmatics

Pragmatic markers

Multilingualism

Pragmatics

Discourse markers

Classroom research

L3 pragmatics

Longitudinal research

Mixed method research

### ABSTRACT

Research has shown that being multilingual is a valuable asset for learning pragmatics. By adopting a multilingual turn perspective, this study investigates patterns of pragmatic development in the multilingual classroom setting of the Valencian Community in Spain, where English, Catalan and Spanish coexist. Participants were 313 learners of English and 15 teachers. Each learner wrote three argumentative essays over one academic year in three languages: English, Catalan and Spanish. A mixed method approach was followed to examine learning trajectories of two types of discourse-pragmatic markers: textual and interpersonal markers. Quantitative results revealed significant gains in the production of textual discourse-pragmatic markers in English, while interpersonal discourse-pragmatic markers followed an irregular pattern. Findings also revealed variations in discourse-pragmatic marker learning trajectories in English, Catalan and Spanish: learning trajectories in the minority language (Catalan) and the L3 (English) were more fluctuating and the patterns interacted with each other, which contrasted with the linear development found in the majority language (Spanish). Qualitative findings are discussed to illustrate how factors such as learners' pragmatic awareness, teachers' practices and the sociolinguistic context of the study may interact in the process of pragmatic learning in the multilingual classroom.

© 2018 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

### 1. Introduction

Classroom pragmatics involves the study of pragmatic learning in instructional contexts. This type of research has been widely conducted in foreign language learning contexts, where opportunities for exposure or interaction outside the classroom are very limited. In the past three decades, most classroom-oriented research on pragmatics has mainly addressed the question of whether pragmatics can be learned and taught in L2 instructional contexts (see [Jeon & Kaya, 2006](#), pp. 165–211, [Taguchi, 2011a, 2015](#), and [Takahashi, 2010](#), for an overview of instructional studies in pragmatics) taking [Schmidt's \(1990, 2001\)](#) noticing hypothesis and the constructs of attention and awareness as the basis for pedagogical approaches. However, in today's globalised world, a variety of classroom environments have emerged, and the need for research into these new learning contexts from new theoretical perspectives has been capitalised ([Bardovi-Harlig, 2013](#)).

One learning environment that has motivated research in the last decade is the multilingual classroom. Despite the increase in studies on pragmatic learning in multilinguals (e.g. [Alcón-Soler, 2012](#); [Martín-Laguna, 2016](#); [Martín-Laguna &](#)

<sup>\*</sup> Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [martins@uji.es](mailto:martins@uji.es) (S. Martín-Laguna), [alcon@uji.es](mailto:alcon@uji.es) (E. Alcón-Soler).

Alcón-Soler, 2015; Portolés, 2015; Safont-Jordà, 2005; Safont-Jordà & Alcón-Soler, 2012; Safont-Jordà & Portolés, 2015), the process of pragmatic learning in multilingual instructional contexts remains rather underexplored. Research to date has reported the advantages of learning pragmatics in multilingual contexts over other instructional contexts (Alcón-Soler, 2012; Portolés, 2015) and has indicated that the languages in the multilingual's mind interact with each other at the pragmatic level (Safont-Jordà, 2011, 2012, 2013). Taking into account the scarcity of longitudinal studies on pragmatic learning in multilingual classrooms, the present work looks at the patterns of change in the process of pragmatic learning in a multilingual classroom context. Following a mixed method research approach, this article has two purposes: i) to explore the patterns of change and interaction between the languages of instruction of multilingual learners, and ii) to examine the reasons behind these patterns of change.

The paper is structured as follows. First, the background section provides an overview of research on pragmatics in multilingual contexts with a focus on written production, and then, synthesises the defining features of discourse-pragmatic markers, the pragmatic target of this study. Next, the method section explains information about research participants, data collection instruments, and data analysis in the present study. After that, results related to the first and second research questions are presented, the latter including teachers' and learners' perspectives on the reasons behind patterns of change of discourse-pragmatic markers over time. This section is followed by a discussion of results, and the paper finishes highlighting the main conclusions, limitations and pedagogical implications.

## 2. Background research

### 2.1. Pragmatics in multilingual written production

Research on pragmatic learning in multilingual environments is still in its initial stages. In fact, only a few studies have adopted a multilingual perspective to explore pragmatic comprehension (Portolés, 2015; Safont-Jordà & Portolés, 2015) and production (Portolés & Safont-Jordà, 2013; Safont-Jordà, 2011, 2012, 2013). Research from a multilingual perspective has also provided evidence for the interaction between languages in multilinguals. For instance, Cenoz and Gorter (2011) adopted a "Focus on Multilingualism" approach for the analysis of Basque, Spanish and English compositions written by 165 Basque/Spanish bilingual secondary school learners of L3 English. The study found positive relations between the three languages in four out of five dimensions analysed (content, grammar, vocabulary, mechanics), and only between English and Spanish regarding organisation. With a focus on argumentative writing, Kobayashi and Rinnert (2012) analysed several text features in five multilingual Japanese university students (L1 Japanese, L2 English, and L3 French, Spanish or Korean). The results showed that discourse marker use and the construction of arguments were consistent across the three languages, which the authors relate to the development of a personal style that is shared across languages. The lowest frequency of discourse markers was found in L1 Japanese writings, in comparison with L2 and L3 essays. The study also identifies developmental sequences in the ways of constructing arguments and highlights the influence of L1 or L2 writing instruction and experience on choices in text construction. Kobayashi and Rinnert (2013) also conducted a 2.5-year case study of one multicompetent writer (L1 Japanese, L2 English and L3 Chinese). Data were collected from multiple sources: argumentation essays in the three languages known by the participant, retrospective stimulating recall, interviews and natural observations. Findings from this study revealed that while many text features overlap across the three argumentation essays, some others remain language-specific.

The above-mentioned studies illustrate the connections between the languages in multilinguals in the grammar and rhetoric of texts, but pragmatic dimensions have remained underexplored in written production (Kuiken & Vedder, 2016). Martín-Laguna and Alcón-Soler (2015) examined pragmatics in learners' written production. The authors performed a cross-sectional analysis of the use of metadiscourse markers in the compositions written by Catalan-Spanish bilingual learners of English in secondary education. The study found that multilingual learners tended to use the same textual metadiscourse marker categories in Catalan, English and Spanish, and mostly relied on the forms present in the input available, which were correctly used in the three languages. Likewise, Martín-Laguna (2016) also provided evidence on cross-linguistic interaction in multilinguals in the production of textual pragmatic markers.

Although previous studies on learners' use of metadiscourse markers show some relations between languages (English, Spanish and Catalan), to our knowledge, no studies to date have analysed how this relation between the three languages develops over time. As far as we are aware, the only longitudinal studies taking a multilingual perspective are those by Safont-Jordà (2011, 2012, 2013), which were conducted outside the classroom. In particular, the author examines the development of requests by a trilingual child (L1 Catalan, L2 Spanish, L3 English). Oral data in these three languages obtained from play and mother-child interaction provided evidence that the three languages interact and modify one another. In particular, the results show a decrease in the use of direct requests in the participant's L1 and L2 as a result of the introduction of English at an early age.

Finally, we acknowledge that a mixed method approach may provide a more comprehensive understanding of learners' pragmatic development. To date, few longitudinal studies have used a mixed method approach to examine pragmatic development. In an immersion setting, Taguchi (2011b, 2012) reported quantitative gains in the participants' ability to produce speech acts in English over time, although the qualitative analyses revealed that learners' experiences in the learning context may influence pragmatic change at the individual level. In a study-abroad context, Alcón-Soler (2017) and Sánchez-

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6849280>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6849280>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)