

Review of Taguchi, N., & Kim, Y. (Eds.). (2018). Task-based approaches to teaching and assessing pragmatics. John Benjamins Publishing Company

Yali Feng and Gyewon Jang

Volume 24, Number 1, Winter 2021

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1075530ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37213/cjal.2021.31199>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

University of New Brunswick

ISSN

1920-1818 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Feng, Y. & Jang, G. (2021). Review of [Review of Taguchi, N., & Kim, Y. (Eds.). (2018). Task-based approaches to teaching and assessing pragmatics. John Benjamins Publishing Company]. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics / Revue canadienne de linguistique appliquée*, 24(1), 205–207.
<https://doi.org/10.37213/cjal.2021.31199>

Copyright (c) Yali Feng and Gyewon Jang, 2021



This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

Taguchi, N., & Kim, Y. (Eds.). (2018). *Task-based approaches to teaching and assessing pragmatics*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Reviewers: Yali Feng, Gyewon Jang, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia, United States of America

This edited volume investigates the intersection of task-based language teaching (TBLT) approaches and second language (L2) pragmatics. Previously, this topic has not received much attention in the field of applied linguistics, but the pioneering efforts of two well-known researchers, Naoko Taguchi and YouJin Kim have made it possible with profound discussions on different ways of teaching and assessing L2 pragmatics through TBLT approaches. The volume consists of one introductory chapter and eleven content chapters, organized in three parts: the role of metapragmatic discussion in teaching pragmatics through tasks (Chapters 2-4), using tasks to elicit pragmatic language use (Chapters 5-8), and applying tasks to assessing pragmatics in L2 learning (Chapters 9-12).

In Chapter 1, the editors review TBLT approaches and research trends in L2 Pragmatics over the last two decades. In particular, they provide an overview for applying task-based approaches to teaching and assessing the two knowledge dimensions of pragmatic competence—pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics.

Part I explores pedagogical task designs and applications, focusing on promoting L2 learners' effective engagement in metapragmatic learning with tasks targeting certain pragmatic features. Chapter 2 by Kim, Lee, and Kim examines collaborative writing task effects on the pragmatic knowledge development of Korean honorifics between heritage and foreign language learners of Korean. The task had a positive result in improving receptive and productive knowledge of the target pragmatic feature in both groups, which supports combining these learner groups in the same classroom. Alcón-Soler in Chapter 3 also employs a collaborative writing task to explore the frequency of L2 English learners' use of request mitigators in two interaction types. The results indicate that a student-led interaction group engaged in greater metapragmatic discussion with a better understanding of the mitigators than a teacher-led group. In Chapter 4, Gomez-Laich and Taguchi investigate the impacts of task complexity in L2 writing, targeting persuasive pragmatic acts on learner interaction patterns in a whole-group classroom setting. They found that a more complex task promoted in-depth metalinguistic discussions and negotiation as well as a higher degree of learning of the target linguistic and rhetorical features. Overall, Part 1 successfully highlights the effectiveness of purposefully designed tasks in L2 learning and demonstrates the possibility of having different methodological orientations, such as pragmatic-related episodes (Chapters 2-3) and conversation analysis (Chapter 4), in analyzing learner interaction and engagement.

Part II attends to task-based approaches to develop L2 learners' pragmatic competence and performance. Reagan and Payant (Chapter 5) analyze the effects of task modality on the performance of Spanish learners in request speech acts. Unlike previous studies that argue more substantial effects of writing tasks than oral ones, they did not find significant effects across the different modalities. However, more frequent uses of the target structures were found in the oral group, while higher grammatical accuracy was present in the written group. Levkina (Chapter 6) measures the role of L2 proficiency with regard to the development of native Spanish speakers' pragmatic awareness in English.

The analysis of learners' email writing using various speech acts, including apology, justification, and thanking demonstrates positive outcomes in both groups' pragmatic knowledge development, however, did not correlate with their proficiency scores. Chapter 7 (Gilabert and Parés) reports on a quasi-experimental study that investigates teacher perceptions and assessments of task sequencing, task complexity, and learners' interlanguage pragmatic performance. The teachers identified only two levels of task complexity instead of four as designed, and L2 learners experienced minor effects of task sequencing on their pragmatic performance. These results indicate a need for a careful consideration of task complexity in designing tasks. Meanwhile, Chapter 8 (González-Lloret and Ortega) surveys existing literature to highlight relations among pragmatics, tasks, and technology. They suggest that future studies on technology-mediated TBLT approaches need more attention to task authenticity. More authentic tasks could facilitate L2 pragmatic learning and technology types that would fulfill pragmatic-specific demands based on task complexity. Overall, the studies in Part II provide robust discussions on different areas of task-based approaches, including modality, task complexity, sequencing, and technology, to enhance L2 learners' pragmatic language uses but does not provide a specific definition of certain concepts (i.e., interlanguage pragmatics).

Part III explores the development of valid, reliable assessment criteria to measure task-based L2 pragmatic performance. Youn (Chapter 9) used a set of rating categories for learner interaction to assess L2 learners' pragmatic competence during a role-play task that is designed to elicit interactional features. These results suggest that adopting interactional organizations (i.e., pre-sequence, adjacency air, preference organization) in rating categories is imperative to having a valid assessment of task-based pragmatic performance in learner interactions. Ekiert, Lampropoulou, Révész, and Torgersen (Chapter 10) discuss L2 learners' discourse appropriacy, or ability to pay attention in context, in oral production, regarding three different tasks and four L2 proficiency levels. Their results indicate that discourse appropriacy is enacted increasingly as the learners' proficiency level increases; however, the task types (i.e., refusals) affected the level of performance among L2 learners with less advanced proficiency.

Kuiken and Vedder (Chapter 11) developed and tested a rating scale designed to assess functional adequacy, perceived as successful task completion of L2 spoken and written tasks. The test result of the scale implemented by non-experts indicates its high inter-rater reliability and effectiveness in measuring contextual adequacy of utterances across four functional dimensions—content, task requirements, comprehensibility, and coherence and cohesion. The last chapter by Timpe-Laughlin reviews different task-based assessments of L2 pragmatics, concerning task designs and rating criteria, such as generalizability of large-scale tests and interaction between task characteristics. Despite those challenges, it emphasizes using TBLT approaches in the evaluation of L2 pragmatics because tasks could generate a simulation of authentic communication contexts. The studies in Part III examine the concerns and possibilities of task-based assessment for L2 pragmatics. However, further studies are anticipated to investigate effective ways to evaluate L2 learners' task completion abilities in authentic contexts.

The editors delivered an exceptional book with robust discussions on the interconnections between L2 pragmatics and TBLT. It provides a well-integrated collection of studies that showcase the application of task-based approaches to L2 pragmatics pedagogy and assessment with persuasive evidence of how tasks should be designed and

utilized. Different pragmatic targets are examined (i.e., Korean honorifics, email request mitigators, persuasive essay) across various L2 languages (i.e., Korean, English, Spanish, Dutch, and Italian). The book covers a wide variety of task types (i.e., collaborative writing, role-plays) that are constructed with a wide range of task implementation factors, including task complexity (simple or complex), task modality (oral or written), and task sequence (simple-to-complex or random).

Nonetheless, we observed a range of task definitions, which seems related to the epistemological understanding of authenticity if the integration of task-based approaches in pragmatic learning is to engage L2 learners in authentic tasks to develop real-world communication ability. Moreover, limited attention is given to speaking- and technology-oriented tasks that highlight the need for L2 teaching and learning in the current digital era. It would be encouraging to have further studies on input-based tasks and sociopragmatic competence development which are essential to enhance L2 learners' social and interpersonal skills. Despite these concerns, we highly recommend this edited volume for novice and experienced researchers who seek to broaden their theoretical and empirical knowledge of effective task design and its implementations for teaching and assessing L2 pragmatics. Various pedagogical implications addressed in the book would help experts in L2 education to reconceptualize task-based instruction and curricula for L2 learners' pragmatic competence development.