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COMPREHENSIBLE PRAGMATICS:
WHERE INPUT AND OUTPUT COME TOGETHER

ABSTRACT
This chapter relates issues of comprehensible input and comprehensible output to an increasingly prominent field: second-language pragmatics, where the intended meanings often go beyond the literal ones. The chapter will take a close look at what comprehensibility of language at the level of pragmatics actually entails. In looking at both the comprehension and production of pragmatic material, we will consider briefly the negotiation of meaning and conversational repairs – modifications made to the interactional structure of discourse and to words, sounds, and syntax for the purpose of communicating pragmatics. We will first look at what comprehensible input means with regard to pragmatics, whether through language (e.g. lexical items – words and phrases, syntax – e.g. verb tenses, or discourse), through gestures, or through silence. Then we will consider what comprehensible output entails in order that the addressees interpret the intended pragmatics correctly. Finally, we will reflect on the implications for both the learning and teaching of L2 pragmatics in lights of these comprehensibility issues.

1. Introduction
This chapter relates issues of comprehensible input and comprehensible output to an increasingly prominent field: second/foreign-language (L2) pragmatics, where the intended meanings often go beyond the literal ones. Having pragmatic ability, in fact, implies that as listener or reader, you are able to interpret the intended meanings of what is said or written, the assumptions, purposes or goals, and the kinds of actions that are being performed (Yule 1996: 3-4). As speaker, pragmatic ability means that you know

1 For the purposes of this paper, L2 will serve as a generic label, including both the context where the language is spoken widely and the context where it is not. In principle, pragmatic development in an L2 will be faster in the former context than in the latter, but it depends largely on how the learner makes use of the available resources.
how to say what you want to say with the proper politeness, directness, and formality (for instance, in the role of boss, telling an employee that s/he is being laid off; or in the role of teacher, telling a student that his/her work is unacceptable). You also need to know what not to say at all and what to communicate non-verbally. As writer, pragmatic ability means knowing how to write your message intelligibly, again paying attention to level of politeness, directness, formality, and appropriateness of the rhetorical structure of the message (for instance, in the role of employee, composing an e-mail message to your boss requesting a promotion and a raise, or a paid vacation from the boss; or as neighbor, writing a note complaining about late-evening TV noise).

While native speaker pragmatic norms will be used as a benchmark for pragmatic ability in this chapter, it needs to be acknowledged that sometimes nonnative speakers can be as pragmatically appropriate as or more so than some natives. So where 'native speaker' is used, consider the term to encompass as well those nonnatives who are highly competent when it comes to the pragmatics of the language. The chapter will take a close look at what comprehensibility of language at the level of pragmatics actually entails. We will first look at what comprehensible input means with regard to pragmatics. We will also consider what comprehensible output entails in order that the addressees interpret the intended pragmatics correctly. Finally, we will reflect on the implications for both the learning and teaching of L2 pragmatics in lights of these comprehensibility issues.

2. Theoretical underpinnings for pragmatic comprehensibility

So, what needs to happen for nonnatives to achieve success at comprehending and producing language pragmatically? Let us look at the comprehension and production of pragmatic material, and consider briefly the negotiation of meaning and conversational repairs — modifications made to the interactional structure of discourse and to words, sounds, and syntax for the purpose of communicating pragmatics.

Krashen's input hypothesis (Krashen 1982) posited that learners progress along the natural order by understanding input that contains structures a little beyond their current level of competence (i+1). In addition, input becomes more comprehensible with the help of contextual and extralinguistic clues. This approach to acquisition sounds liberating especially in the pragmatics arena, in some ways — in that learners can relax and just absorb, and teachers can decrease their level of explicit instruction. Yet, in reality, applying the input hypothesis in the area of pragmatics is problematic in that much of the pragmatics of a language is not easily acquirable since it is not highly observable. Sometimes, in fact, it is very subtle (e.g. ways to complain in cultures where overt complaining is unacceptable, as in Japan), and other times the pragmatics are clear but the instances of pragmatic use are low-frequency (e.g. what people say at a funeral).

In response to Krashen's input hypothesis, Long (1985, 1996) posited that the input needs to undergo interactional modifications through the negotiation of meaning for learners to gain control of a language. Yet given the demanding nature of communicative interaction for learners at the level of literal meanings, how much more demanding it may become at the level of pragmatics. Still, it could be argued that thrashing issues out in a back and forth with an interlocutor, through email, or through other formats can help learners to acquire pragmatics. Furthermore, native speakers may
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not call learners on even their more egregious faux pas pragmatically. Even if they take offense, they may feel uncomfortable about explicitly raising the issue with the learner.

Another refinement of acquisition theories would seem to contribute especially to pragmatics: Schmidt's (1990, 1993, 2001) addition of the noticing hypothesis. Schmidt would contend that in order for input to become intake on the road to acquisition, both L2 linguistic forms and contextual factors must be 'noticed'. Although noticing does not necessarily guarantee L2 pragmatic learning, it is claimed to be a necessary condition – that mere exposure to the L2 is unlikely to lead to learners' noticing of pragmatic features and understanding of general pragmatic norms (Kasper and Schmidt 1996; Kasper and Rose 2002). There is evidence especially in the study abroad literature that this is the case – simply going off to another country does not ensure that pragmatics will be acquired (see the review of literature in Cohen and Shively 2007). In fact, Olshausen and Blum-Kulka (1985) constituted some years ago with regard to positive politeness strategies in Hebrew that, left to their own devices, it can take L2 learners over 10 years or more to perform pragmatics in a way indistinguishable from natives.

A final theoretical refinement of the input hypothesis would be Swain's output hypothesis. Swain posits that output opportunities are likely to contribute to learners' acquisition of the L2 as the learners notice gaps in their linguistic system and look to the input around them (e.g. a conversational partner) for resource material that can assist them in articulating their message (Swain and Lapkin 1995; Swain 1998). She added that their output also reinforces retention of new information and enhances fluency. The output hypothesis is consistent with Long's concern for interaction as a means for language development, though in the case of Swain's hypothesis, the interactions can be with fellow learners, and not necessarily with natives. She has demonstrated how, for example, learners in a French immersion program and ESL students as well can progress in their learning of the target language by interaction with fellow students around issues of, say, grammar. In terms of pragmatics, however, it may well be that fellow students are not very good models for pragmatics. In fact, what may result in a failed request, for example, to a native speaker may be adequate with a fellow nonnative, especially with someone from the same speech community and sociocultural background.

In considering the role of input, interaction, noticing, and output, we need to bear in mind that learners differ in their learning styles, language strategy repertoires, and motivation for language learning (see Cohen and Weaver 2006). Consequently, what works for one L2 learner in terms of gaining pragmatic awareness and enhanced pragmatic performance may not work for another. Some learners may, for example, benefit from extensive observation of what natives do without much interaction with them, at least during an initial phase. Others may prefer to start interacting from the beginning, without an initial period of observation. Let us first consider what comprehensible input with regard to pragmatics might actually mean for learners, and then we will look at what learners need to do to produce comprehensible output pragmatically.
3. Comprehending the pragmatic messages in the input

The input could be through language (e.g. through lexical items, syntax, or discourse), though gestures, or through silence. Whether the input is pragmatically comprehensible to the nonnative depends on various factors, such as: (1) the functional proficiency of the nonnative in the target language and in other languages, (2) the age, gender, occupation, social status, and experience of the nonnative in the relevant communities of practice (e.g. talk on the shop floor), and (3) the nonnative’s previous multilingual/multicultural experiences. Table 1 relates these factors to a sampling of language and nonverbal behaviors in an effort to illustrate how such factors may contribute to the ease or difficulty which a nonnative has in interpreting the pragmatics of an interaction in a given situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of the input</th>
<th>Proficiency in L2/FL and in other languages</th>
<th>Age, gender, occupation, social status, communities of practice</th>
<th>Former cross-cultural experiences</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
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- **Lexical items (words or phrases)**
  - 'Bonjour'
  - 'No worries' – Australia
  - The ‘in’ words and how to use them – ‘cool’, ‘sweet’, ‘bad’, etc. Curse words in NZ

- **Syntax (e.g. verb tenses)**
  - Conditional in Spanish in request to friend

- **Discourse**
  - An apology extending over numerous turns in a corpus
  - Renting a car: ‘When was your driver’s license issued?’

- **Gestures**
  - Negative transfer of a gesture from one L2 to another (‘Wait’ in Hebrew)

- **Silence**
  - Silence in the L2 (moments in Japanese; hitchhiking in Israel).

Table 1: Comprehending the pragmatics of the input.

For example, to what extent do nonnatives understand the *illocutionary force* or function of ‘bonjour’ in a French-speaking community? The pragmatics of this apparently simple greeting may have subtle pragmatics attached to it, which the less savvy nonnative may miss. An American approaches a man on the street in Martinique, as I did in December of last year, and launches directly into a request for help in interpreting a confusing parking slip issued by a machine and intended to be put on the dashboard of the car. Instead of responding to the man’s question (asked in fluent French), he says, ‘Bonjour’. So an L2 speaker of French needs to know what that ‘bonjour’
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means. Perhaps it could possibly mean, 'What? I didn't hear the question'. It most likely meant, 'I was put off by your focusing immediately and exclusively on the parking slip, without going through the courtesy of extending a morning greeting' – an instance of negative transfer from US norms for requests of strangers.

As far as he was concerned, before we got into any matters of substance, an initial greeting was in order or even essential. After I greeted him properly, I proceeded to have a nice conversation with this man who was Martiniquais, living in Paris for over 40 years and working with the police there. His response to me was, 'No one will be checking parking for the next few days since it is a holiday period'.

The point here with regard to pragmatics is that knowing the word alone is not sufficient in comprehending the L2. It is crucial to know how competent speakers of the language are likely to use this word in such a context. In this instance, his 'bonjour' was telling me in no uncertain terms to use a greeting as a segue to further discourse. I was clearly operating from a US-based pragmatics mode and simply transferring this approach to this parking slip situation, rather than asking myself how a native French speaker would do it, observing how they do it, or asking how to do it. While such differences may be very pronounced in the foreign-language situation as in this case (where there were few Americans and little English is spoken), they may be more subtle and even blurred in L2 situations such as when French is spoken in a French-speaking community in the U.S. In this intercultural situation, perhaps the need for the greeting first is diminished given the influence of the mainstream language community where 'we get down to business' right away.

Other comprehensible pragmatics problems can be attributed to negative transfer from the L1, overgeneralization of material in the L2, or limited proficiency in the L2 (three categories to be elaborated on in the section on pragmatically comprehensible output, below). So at the lexical level, the first time a nonnative hears 'no worries' as used in Australia to mean 'you're welcome', she interprets it as an intrusion into her private life and her level of worry. I thanked an Ozzie in Melbourne for holding a man's room door open for me, and when he said 'No worries' in return, at first I wondered why he was 'messing' with my worries. How would he know just how many worries I might have. Then I realized what he intended by his response. At the level of syntax, the nonnative has to correctly interpret the role of grammar (e.g. verb tenses) in pragmatics. It has been seen, for example, that English-speaking study abroaders to Spanish-speaking countries misread their acquaintances' use of the conditional in requests (e.g. podrías 'could you...' instead of puedes 'can you') as being overly formal (Cohen and Shively 2007). Another language-related issue is that speech acts in real time may not show up in a neat, interpretable fashion, but rather be spread over a number of turns in a lengthy interaction, culminating in something like, 'Well, then, I'm sorry for that' (see Félix-Brasdefer 2006). It may be progressive enough and subtle enough that the nonnative does not even realize that an apology is taking place.

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2 Claire Kramsch reported in a talk a few years ago a similar experience with a station master in France where she rushed up to him and asked what track a certain train was on, and before he would respond to that query, he responded with 'Bonjour, madame', in order to signal to her that a preliminary greeting was in order before discussing train locations.
A rather obvious case of miscomprehension would be with a gesture such as the one for ‘wait’ in Hebrew, which consists of extending the forearm with the fingers and thumb bunched and pointing upwards without moving the hand. It is used to mean, ‘Just a second and I’ll be with you’, or ‘Please wait and let me cut in’ (when on a bike, in a car or whatever vehicle). Such a gesture does not exist in American English but does (with the hand moving) in European languages and has a different, sometimes obscene, meaning. So seeing this similar version in Europe may wrongly be interpreted as ‘wait’, when it actually means something obscene.

Finally, the use of silence itself can have a pragmatic function that is lost on a nonnative speaker who is unaware of the norms. So, for example, an American English speaker may interpret silence in a Japanese speaker as meaning that the person is relinquishing the floor when this may not be the case. As chair of a session at an academic meeting, I once led a round of applause for a Japanese speaker of English when I interpreted his extended pause as meaning he had ended his remarks when he had not. Another example of silence would be when hitchhikers get a ride in Israel: they are expected to remain silent, not to entertain the driver with their conversation, which may be the norm in the U.S.

With regard to demographic variables and community of practice, pragmatics can play itself out in terms of the ‘cool’ or ‘in’ words that people use in communication. Nonnatives may be hard put to correctly interpret just what the use of ‘sweet’ or ‘that rocks’ actually means in terms of how formal or informal, friendly or unfriendly the interlocutor is choosing to be. In addition, nonnatives may misinterpret the role of curse words in the discourse. They may find them offensive, without realizing that in the particular community of practice, they serve a crucial role, perhaps providing an important bonding between employer and employee, and among the employees. So, for example, as part of a Language in the Workplace project at Victoria University of Wellington, Holmes and her colleagues collected over 2,000 interactions in English (mostly L1) in the workplace in New Zealand (Holmes 2003). Extensive analysis of their corpus yielded insights into what was necessary for fitting in and becoming an integrated member of the workplace, with the focus being specifically on small talk, humor, complaints and whinges (i.e. indirect complaints or complaints to the wrong person), and refusals. The findings were that speech acts may be highly indirect and dependent on both the personalities of the interlocutors and on their actual relationship with others in the workplace, sometimes established over long periods of time.

With regard to previous multilingual experiences, the nonnative may come to a situation with expectations based on pragmatic experiences in numerous other speech communities, only to find that the norm for this situation is distinctly and perhaps surprisingly different. Such was the case when my wife and I arrived at the InterRent shack a ways from the airport in Martinique last December and the French-speaking clerk asked me when my license was issued. I promptly tell her ‘February of 2007’, reading the date of issue from my Minneapolis driver’s license. The clerk then looked very perplexed and informed me that she could not rent me a car since the driver must have at least a year’s experience driving before renting a car. What she meant in her question was when I was issued my first driver’s license. But that is not what she said. Then what followed, once we determined the misunderstanding, was that she
needed to calculate the year that I in fact first started driving, which was probably about 1960, but for safety sake, I just arbitrarily said at age 18, which would mean 45 years ago. She was relieved and then proceeded with the rental agreement.

Having laid out a number of possible misunderstandings, the question remains as to the factors which will determine whether pragmatic failure will actually occur in the case of a given individual? Presumably it is more likely to occur among the less proficient and more inexperienced users of the L2, those unfamiliar with the language of the aged or the very young, those less familiar with how the L2 deals with social status, or those with more limited contact with members of certain communities of practice. But let us assume that two speakers have the same amount of background knowledge and exposure to the language. What might contribute to one of them understanding the pragmatics of the situation better than the other one? Learning style preference may play a role, such as the relative introversion of the nonnative. Learners who are more extroverted may be more into their speaking than into careful observation of native-speaker pragmatic behavior. Keen powers of observation may assist learners in getting the pragmatics of a message despite the fact that most of the vocabulary and grammatical structures in the message are incomprehensible to them. They simply take the clues that they perceive (e.g. tone of voice, facial expression, body posture, elaborateness or curtness of the utterance) and intuit or infer the rest from there. Strategy repertoire may also play a role in that some learners select among their strategies that of being more consciously aware of how pragmatics works in the given speech community and specific situation, even to the extent of asking locals whether they have interpreted a speech act correctly or not.

4. Producing pragmatically comprehensible output

What do learners need to do in order for their output to be comprehensible pragmatically to their interlocutors? It helps for the nonnatives to accommodate to the local speech community’s norms for pragmatic performance, such as in, say, making a request. There are at least five factors that can stand in the way of acceptable accommodation (Ishihara and Cohen in press), possibly leading to the pragmatically inappropriate output: (1) negative transfer of pragmatic behavior from their L1 or some other language they know, (2) overgeneralization of pragmatic behavior to a situation where it is inappropriate, (3) limited L2 grammatical ability, (4) the effect of instruction or instructional materials, and (5) resistance to target-language norms for pragmatic behavior (see Table 2).

4.1. Negative transfer

In this instance, the nonnatives transfer the patterns for how they would conduct the interaction in their L1 or dominant-language speech community, most likely unknowingly but sometimes knowing it is probably wrong but the only thing they know how to do. Let us suppose that a Korean learner of English responds to an American friend’s compliment about nice looking clothes saying ‘No, that’s not true’. Whereas this would be appropriately modest behavior in Korean culture, in U.S. culture this response to such a compliment may make it sound as if she were flatly rejecting or questioning the
friend's judgment, and hence creates a somewhat awkward situation or even sounds insulting. Another example would be when a Japanese student requests that a professor read a paper he wrote by saying, 'Professor, read this paper please'. Such a request may come across as too direct, even though the student said 'please' which would probably make the request polite enough in Japanese.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of the output</th>
<th>Negative transfer</th>
<th>Overgeneralization of L2 norms</th>
<th>Limited L2 grammatical ability</th>
<th>Effect of instruction or instructional materials</th>
<th>Resistance to local norms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Phrases</strong></td>
<td>Rejecting a compliment with 'No, that's not true'</td>
<td>Using a formal request or refusal when the given situation calls for greater informality</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sentences or groups of sentences</strong></td>
<td>Request to read a thesis: 'Dr. X, please read this'</td>
<td>Being overly frank – asking for salary information</td>
<td>Making a request that sounds like an order</td>
<td>Giving the actual reason for a refusal in a situation where not appropriate</td>
<td>Avoiding 'Did you eat yet?' as a greeting in Indonesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gestures</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Overusing hand gestures in Italian</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Silence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Using filled pauses too much rather than silence</td>
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</table>

Table 2: Producing pragmatically comprehensible output.

4.2. Overgeneralization of L2 norms

Some learners may generalize pragmatic norms acceptable in one situation to another situation where that behavior is not appropriate. So, for example, a Korean learner of American English perceives Americans as being very direct and frank about things, a perception that is reinforced when the American male passenger sitting next to him on a flight shares some intimacies. Consequently, the Korean is surprised when the fellow passenger is clearly reluctant to answer a question about how much he makes a month. While the Korean would not ask that question in his home culture, he just assumed that American frankness in discussing intimacies would carry over to other topics as well.

Another example would be that of the American who has heard that Italians talk with their hands so he makes an effort to use a lot of hand gestures to make his
points in Italian while studying in Rome. An Italian friend takes him aside to tell him that he is gesturing too much, and also that some of his gestures mean something different from what he intends them to mean.

Yet another example would be of an American study-abroad student who has a sense that Spanish speakers are more formal in their commands. So if she wants a glass of water from her host-family mother, she asks for it in a most polite way, 'Would you be able to give me a glass of water, please'. Her host mother finds her style overly formal since in their Barcelona home they just say the equivalent of 'Water, please' or 'Give me a glass of water, please'. Finally, there is the example of the English-speaking learner of Japanese whose close Japanese friend offers her more food at an informal dinner meal at her apartment. The learner knows an expression, 'lie, kekkoudesu', an equivalent of 'No thanks' in Japanese and uses it. However, she is unaware that this expression is usually used in formal situations and sounds funny or awkward if directed to a close friend.

4.3. Limited L2 grammatical ability

Lack of knowledge of certain grammatical forms, or more likely lack of knowledge of how to use them functionally in a given target-language situation, may inadvertently lead to producing language that is pragmatically gauche. A beginning learner of English, for example, might request that a clerk in a repair shop fix an item, with 'Do this for me now' because the learner has not yet learned how to be more indirect and consequently sound more polite (e.g. 'I was wondering how soon you might be able to repair this for me'). Such a request (interpreted as an order) may, in fact, draw the ire of the clerk, particularly if the nonnative has relatively good pronunciation.

4.4. The effect of instruction or instructional materials

Learners might also be led to pragmatic failure as a result of somewhat misleading information that they receive either from the teacher or for from the course materials. So, for example, a learner of English may have read in an ESL textbook that Americans tend to give the precise reason for why they cannot attend a party that they are invited to. Yet when the learners do the same, they find that in the particular instance (say, an important work-related party) it may be interpreted as an unacceptable excuse (e.g. 'I can't come because I have a dinner date with a friend'). As another example, an American learner of Japanese may be taught in class to fill a pause with 'eeto' (more informal) or 'ano' (more formal), and so does his best to fill as many pauses as he can that way. His native-speaking interlocutor is annoyed by this overuse of these pauses and eventually tells the learner that he is filling his pauses too much – that natives prefer to use silence or non-verbal cues more. Whereas in part this could be considered a case of overgeneralization, it originates from instruction regarding the filling of pauses. What is misleading is that in Japanese silence is favored more than in English, and the teacher neglected to point this out as well.
4.5. Resistance to local L2 norms

Another source of pragmatic failure may be an intentional desire not to abide by the L2 speech community's norms in the given instance despite having full knowledge of what is expected — which sets this category apart from the other four. So for example, an English-speaking learner of Indonesian hears natives use the equivalent of 'Did you eat yet?' as a regular greeting but avoids using it herself because it does not really seem like a greeting to her. Or an American learner of Japanese has learned the honorific verbs that are required when speaking to or about people of higher status even if they are not present at the time (e.g. asking if the higher-status person has eaten by using 'meshiagarimashitika' instead of 'tabemashitika', the non-honorific verb), but refuses to use them, feeling they are excessive.

Obviously whether or not a message leads to pragmatic failure depends not just on the nonnative sender but on the recipient as well. It is possible and often the case that the native speakers of the L2 will go the extra distance to comprehend the nonnative-speaker, even if the nonnative’s behavior misses the mark by a long shot in terms of pragmatic appropriateness. In fact, the native-speaking interlocutor often has the wherewithal either to cut the nonnative slack or to lower the boom, depending on factors that may have little to do with whether the intended message was understood. On the other hand, a perceived breach of pragmatic etiquette may itself be enough to result in pragmatic failure for the nonnative. For example, several years ago while I was a visiting professor in New Zealand, a Japanese student who had recently graduated from the department came to my office, put her MA thesis on my desk, and said, 'Dr. Cohen, read this please', an example of negative transfer mentioned above. I hesitated for a moment but then had a visceral reaction and responded, 'No, I won't. I'm on sabbatical here and they don't pay me to do this. Sorry'. I did take a glance at it but no more than that. Had she said, 'Dr. Cohen — I was wondering if you might just take a look at my MA thesis and let me know what you think of...?', I may very well have read through it.

5. Strategies for negotiating meaning and making conversational repairs

Some learners are better at getting the L2 pragmatics right then are others. Part of it is due to their strategic ability as a language learner in general and especially in terms of their strategic ability with regard to pragmatics (see Cohen 2005). These individuals are strategic both in how they go about learning pragmatics and in their L2 performance so that both their comprehension and production of language are pragmatically appropriate for the given situation. They also have strategies for evaluating metapragmatically how well they understood the pragmatics of a given message and also how effective their pragmatics were in producing a message. Such strategies can make the difference between pragmatic failure and pragmatic success since in some cases nonnatives can take strategic action to avoid pragmatic failure or remediate once it has happened. For example, nonnatives can check to make sure that they interpreted a message (such as a key request from a co-worker) correctly, 'So let me see if I understand your request, George. You want me to speak to the boss on your behalf?' Non-
natives could also include an alerter before a delicate speech act so that the addressee will be lenient in interpreting the intent of the message: 'Hi, George. I want to make apology but not so sure it is OK. I try now...'.

In Krashen's (1982) terms, some nonnatives are better monitor users than others when it comes to pragmatics. In Long's (1985) terms, some nonnatives are better at making sure there is rich interaction that serves to clarify the intended pragmatic meaning in both the input and the output. In part this can be a function of the personality-related style preferences of the learner, such as being more extroverted or more closure-oriented (i.e. less tolerance of ambiguity; see Cohen and Weaver 2006). In Schmidt's (1990) terms, some nonnatives are better at noticing the pragmatic aspects of discourse, both in classroom settings and out in the real world. And there are some nonnatives who more actively create situations where they can check to see if they, in Swain's (1998) terms, are producing output that is comprehensible pragmatically. As I suggested at the outset of this chapter, what works for one L2 learner in terms of gaining pragmatic awareness and enhanced performance may not work for another. Some learners may, for example, benefit from extensive observation of what natives do without actually engaging in interaction with natives very much, while others start interacting extensively from the very start.

6. Conclusion

The purpose for this exploration has been to take a pragmatically-oriented look at both the input and output sides of what is comprehensible. Ideally, this chapter will provide teachers and researchers with ideas for what needs to be considered both pedagogically and from a researcher's perspective in order to better deal with the issues of comprehensibility in the pragmatics arena. So, returning to the question posed at the outset, what needs to happen for nonnatives to achieve success at comprehending and producing language pragmatically? It would appear that part of an L2 learner's pragmatics is acquired without explicit instruction. Nonetheless, as this chapter would suggest, there are numerous pragmatic features that most likely would benefit from explicit instruction (whether from a teacher directly or through a website such as the three posted at http://www.carla.umn.edu/speechacts/) if the intention is to have the learners achieve relative control over them within a reasonable amount of time.

REFERENCES


Andrew D. Cohen was a Peace Corps Volunteer in rural development with the Aymara Indians on the High Plains of Bolivia, taught at the University of California at Los Angeles and at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, was a Fulbright Scholar in Brazil and a Visiting Scholar at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, and has been teaching in the Program in Second Language Studies at the University of Minnesota, where he was Scholar of the College of Liberal Arts (2002 to 2005). Cohen was the recipient of the 2006 American Association for Applied Linguistics Distinguished Scholarship and Service Award. He has published numerous research articles on language teaching, language learning, language testing, and research methods, as well as books on bilingual education, on language learning strategies, and on language assessment and research methods. He co-edited Studying speaking to inform second language learning with Diana Boxer (Multilingual Matters, 2004) and Language learner strategies: 30 years of research and practice with Ernesto Matauro (Oxford University Press, 2007), and is co-author of Teaching and learning pragmatics: Where language and culture meet (Pearson Education, in press). He is also author of an online course on assessing language ability in adults and young adults in the ELT Advantage series with Heinle Cengage Learning.