Title

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Journal

L2 Journal, 10(1)

Author

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Publication Date

2018

DOI

10.5070/L210136653

Copyright Information

Peer reviewed

Reflections on a Career in Second Language Studies: Promising Pathways for Future Research[1]

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This article highlights a series of areas deemed worthy of attention by L2 researchers. In some cases the research effort would entail following up on studies initiated some years ago and in other cases the effort would involve relatively new research thrusts. The article includes ideas about research regarding: (1) *pathways to success in language learning* – language learners as informed consumers, the role of motivation in the L2-FL interface, orchestrating the inner voice for learning the L2, the impact of L2/FL error correction, the utilization and impact of websites accessed in support of language learning, and avoiding language attrition; (2) *language learner strategies* – the fluctuating functions of strategies, fine-tuning strategies for language learning, the language strategies of hyperpolyglots, and test-taking strategies; and (3) *the teaching and learning of L2 pragmatics* – attention to the less researched speech acts, the effects of explicit instruction in pragmatics, the learning of pragmatics in the L2 classroom from native- and nonnative teachers, and the teaching of pragmatics in World Englishes.

INTRODUCTION

One of my aims over the years has been to promote new research thrusts, and especially in the areas that I highlight in this article. In some cases, this reflective process has meant a return to areas where research was initiated many years ago. Perhaps this is one of the roles of senior scholars in the field, to remind younger colleagues about areas in applied linguistics that are worthy of continued attention. Of course, a danger in claiming that a certain research area has perhaps been neglected is that I may be proven wrong in that research may have been conducted without me being aware of it. As a retired professor, I am not as current in the research literature as I used to be. One of the fun things about being in academics is that being wrong about something usually provides an opportunity for a productive learning experience.

The research areas that I would like to address fall within three categories, which represent my major areas of concern in research over the years: pathways to successful language learning, language learner strategies, and the teaching and learning of second-language (L2) pragmatics. Bear in mind that L2 encompasses both second-language and foreign-language (FL) contexts. In principle, the first refers to a learning environment where the learner is more exposed to the language of focus, and the second to an environment in

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[1]An earlier version of this paper was presented with the title "Applied Linguistic Research on Language Teaching and Learning: Looking Backwards and Forwards" at the 4th *Languages in Focus Conference*, Famagusta, Turkish Cyprus, March 2-4, 2017.

which this is not the case. Clearly, the reality is far more complex than this. My intention in this article is to look at a number of specific areas, to give a rationale for why it is beneficial to pursue research in them, and to reflect on the benefits of doing so.

PATHWAYS TO SUCCESSFUL LANGUAGE LEARNING

In 1979 the owner of a company that operated EFL language schools in Rio de Janeiro met with me at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, Israel, to pick my brain as to the key to success in language learning. He had envisioned that successful English FL learning was something that all the learners who studied at his English language centers throughout Rio de Janeiro could achieve if he and his language school staff had a better understanding of how the mind worked. He entertained the thought that the key to success was in harnessing the know-how of neurolinguists. As a consequence of our meeting, I contacted a leading neurolinguist, Loraine Obler, and together we organized a special convocation in Rio de Janeiro to which we invited some of the world's leading experts at the time in order to discuss the issue. Needless to say, the meeting, which took place in 1981, made modest inroads but did not resolve the issue (see Vaid & Cohen, 1981). Since then, the field of neurolinguistics has come a long way, and perhaps eventually technology will arrive at a means for making people instant speakers and writers of whatever language they choose. Until that time, however, we still need to look at whatever clever means are out there to facilitate language learning.

In that spirit, the following are some suggestions I have as to possible research regarding successful language learning. Of course, we must bear in mind that "success" might mean different things depending on the characteristics of the learner, the language learning situation, the specific L2, and the skill area(s) required in that L2 at the time. For instance, at present, my measure of success in using Mandarin is to excel at journaling about all aspects of my mental and physical life in *pinyin*. This entails a successful grasp of the grammar of spoken Mandarin as written down in journal entries, as well as successful use of everyday and also more technical vocabulary in order to do so. I measure success by how much of the original black font remains in my journal entries after my two Chinese tandem partners have reviewed them.

Becoming an Informed Consumer of Language Learning

Over the years and especially during my 22 years at the University of Minnesota, I have observed that language learners could for the most part benefit from some coaching as to how to be informed consumers of L2s. How might we characterize truly informed consumers who are fortunate enough to have wide-ranging options when it comes to learning an L2? Let us bear in mind that such learners have not only become aware of alternate means for enhancing their L2 learning, but also have access to economic resources in order to do so. Realizing that no such consumers actually exist, how might we describe what these truly informed consumers might look like?

These informed consumers have shopped around and have located the approach to language learning that best serves their needs, much as a wise consumer these days may spend hours on the Internet assiduously cross-checking products and reading reviews written by other consumers. Not only have these prospective language learners determined

the method of instruction to which they want to be exposed, they have also selected the particular instructor(s), tutors, tandem partners, roommates, and other speakers of the L2 with whom they will regularly interact—all according to what works for them, given their learning style preferences, language learning strategy repertoire, and motivation for learning (Cohen, 2010). Given the knowledge that they have gained about classroom instructional methods, they are able to identify and describe each kind of activity that the instructor has them do, both in the classroom and outside of class. Furthermore, they have a sense of the purpose of each task and how it can contribute to their developing competence. Since they know what their options are and what is best for them in learning the given L2, when their instructor takes a particular approach to instruction in general or with regard to a specific a task, they know how to complement the instructor's approach with whatever else they need in order to produce the maximum benefit.

In reality, typical language learners are not necessarily aware of the ins and outs of language consumption. For starters, they may not know which languages they would have the best results in learning. A new and highly rigorous language aptitude measure, Hi-Lab, has been shown to help determine which US military personnel should be assigned to which languages (Linck et al., 2013). The main purpose for the military is to make sure that thousands of dollars are not invested in teaching so-called "security" languages to soldiers who do not have language aptitude to learn these languages easily. It would presumably be beneficial for non-military learners to know how they might fare if they were to tackle a more challenging language, like Mandarin. Whereas in civilian life, learners presumably have a choice with regard to the language they select, wise consumption would entail some forethought on this matter. Needless to say, in some cases, especially as relates to heritage language learning, the language of focus for learners may actually be predetermined so the issue of choice becomes moot.

Once learners have arrived at a choice of language, there is the further question of the most effective means for them to learn it. Having arrived at that insight, I developed a freshman seminar at the University of Minnesota entitled "Alternate Approaches to Becoming Comfortably Multilingual" (see Cohen & White, 2008). In that seminar students were exposed to numerous approaches to learning a language. Here are comments excerpted from the final paper of one of the students in the seminar, Chelsea:

> By taking "Alternatives in Becoming Comfortably Multilingual" I now know about many different types of language learning approaches and alternative instruction methods. I feel that the development of my awareness and knowledge in this subject has begun to shape my language-learning journey. The information and class discussions have changed the way I think about languages and how we learn them. I've learned about different programs, environments, techniques, methodologies, and theories in which languages are learned. By taking this course my understanding of my personal beliefs and learning styles has grown. I now feel equipped to make sound decisions based on the knowledge I've gained and I plan to meet my language learning goals. The process of observing different language learning environments and tools for this paper has served as an essential part of my journey to multilingualism...

When teaching this language consumer awareness seminar for the second time in 2007, my then freshman students asked what the aftermath had been for the freshmen who had

taken the seminar in 2003, so I checked back with that group and got responses from three of them who were still at the University of Minnesota. The feedback was heartening. The students were uniformly positive about the impact that awareness about how to become multilingual had had on their college experience. They reported that they had, in fact, benefited from the seminar in terms of the choices that they had made in their efforts to learn one or more languages. The seminar had helped to shape their language studies during their university career (Cohen, 2014, p. 279). As it turned out, the student cited above, Chelsea, went on to add Swahili to her language repertoire, which facilitated her work both while in the Congo and then back at home in the US, working with a church organization supporting community development there. She felt indebted to me for having offered the seminar and has reminded me of it over the years.

The bottom line is that more could be done to support language learners at the very earliest stages when they are considering learning language. To this end, research could be conducted involving the differential impact of various aspects of a language consumer awareness course. For instance, students could be asked to report back on the extent to which they were able to use their enhanced awareness in order to supplement the language instruction that they received with language input both in and out of the classroom during one or more of their college years. Research could also entail a systematic follow-up some years later to see the impact upon fledgling college students of a language consumer awareness orientation.

Maximizing Motivation in an L2 Situation

Before the advent of the Internet, it was generally assumed that motivation to use the language would be greater among learners living in the community where the L2 was spoken. Now in an increasingly globalized world there are new avenues for FL learners to become equally motivated or more so. Furthermore, it is possible to be in the L2 community and yet not to avail oneself of potential exposure to the L2. Research has demonstrated the significant role that learner motivation can play regardless of how supportive the context is for language learning (see, for example, Wyner & Cohen, 2015, for a review).

As with many areas of applied linguistics, the results of research are not definitive. One demonstrative study focused its attention solely on the relationship between motivation and pragmatic awareness among Japanese EFL learners (Tagashira, Yamato, & Isoda, 2011). This study set out to investigate just how motivation related to pragmatic development. The sample was comprised of 162 Japanese university EFL learners who were all at an intermediate proficiency level in English. Participants completed a questionnaire that helped to group them according to four motivational levels:

- moderate motivation (e.g., such as the average EFL student might have)
- self-determined (i.e., intrinsic) motivation
- lacking motivation (e.g., when learners were simply fulfilling a course requirement)
- externally-regulated motivation (i.e., extrinsic motivation, such as when motivation was more for a grade than for acquisition of knowledge)

The results showed that motivation accounted for differences in recognition of pragmatic

errors, but not of grammatical errors. The self-determined or more intrinsically-motivated learners showed the keenest perception of utterance appropriateness once they had decided an error was present (p. 19). The researchers surmised that motivation affected selective attention in that motivated learners seemed to value pragmatic aspects of language use more and "to be inclined to detect the stimuli containing pragmatic information and utilize this information for more elaborate analysis" (p. 20).

The current globalized learning situation that many learners find themselves in provides opportunities for fresh research on the workings of motivation. We are now light years beyond the rather simplistic distinction made by Gardner and Lambert (1972) between *integrative* motivation on the one hand and *instrumental* motivation on the other. Learners' motivation is now viewed as highly complex, rather than fitting nicely into a dichotomous "wanting to fit into the L2 culture" vs. "wanting to get a job there" distinction. In 2002, Dörnyei popularized the notion of motivation as a dynamic process undergoing continuous change. It was in the spirit of this dynamic view of motivation that he and I constructed an instrument in 2001, *Taking My Motivational Temperature on a Language Task* (see Cohen & Dörnyei, 2006), with the intention that it be administered before, during, and after a group of learners perform an L2 language task. More recently, Dörnyei and Ushioda have embraced a sociodynamic perspective on motivation, involving the interaction of motivation with numerous internal, social, and contextual factors (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, pp. 75–90).

Over the years, the college students in my course on learning language for international communication have productively administered the *Motivational Temperature Measure* to themselves as part of a midterm paper project and to peers as part of their final paper in the course.[2] The caveat is that some learners will be better able than others to describe how their motivation to perform a given task fluctuates as they perform it. While this measure gives only a partial picture of learners' motivation, its use in a given context may still provide helpful insights to learners and to their teachers as well, especially about those frustrating learning moments that dissuade a learner from forging ahead.

Orchestrating the Inner Voice for Learning the L2

A highly researchable topic is the differential effect of favoring the first language (L1) (or dominant language) or the L2 for private speech—what Tomlinson (2000) referred to as the *inner voice* (as opposed to social, or public, speech). The inner voice is seen to mediate thinking. Obviously, there are nonverbal thoughts, which involve images, actions, and feelings. The inner voice refers to the thoughts that are verbal. Whereas favoring the L2 as much as possible in their verbal thoughts has been considered the best way for learners to proceed in language immersion programs, research evidence from French immersion programs suggests that students in these programs benefit significantly from systematic access to their L1 (Swain & Lapkin, 2013). The view is that students should be permitted to speak their L1 during collaborative dialogue and that they should be encouraged to use it for their inner voice or in private speech (either orally or mentally) in order to mediate their understanding and generation of complex ideas as they prepare to produce an end product (oral or written) in the L2. These pronouncements come at a time when neurological

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[2] See "Learning Styles, Language Strategy Repertoire, and Motivation in the Performance of L2 Tasks, February 16, 2011" at https://sites.google.com/a/umn.edu/andrewdcohen/projects, accessed December 10, 2017.

bilingual studies would suggest that learners do not have a choice—that they activate their L1 whenever they hear a word in the L2, and that they need to suppress their L1 in order to obtain greater fluency in the L2 (Kroll, 2016).

A study some years ago in a Spanish full-immersion program in St. Paul, Minnesota, focused on the languages that grade 3-6 students reported thinking in while accomplishing classroom tasks (Cohen, 1994). What had prompted the research was concern that whereas the children ostensibly had extensive exposure to the L2 in their immersion classroom (in an FL context), the reality was that they were spending much of their time in the classroom actually thinking in their L1 (English). A team of five undergraduates from the University of Minnesota followed 32 grade 3-6 pupils in a Spanish immersion school in St. Paul, Minnesota for five months. By means of verbal report, they tracked the languages that the pupils used for processing math and science tasks. The study found that while the students used the L2 for simple verbal problems in math, they tended to switch to their L1 for conceptually complex problems. In fact, it was found that much of their mental processing was conducted in their L1. As an outgrowth of that study, an intervention was conducted at the same school in St. Paul, Minnesota to enhance the academic language of 5th-grade Spanish immersion students (Cohen & Gómez, 2008). The focus was on improving their knowledge of academic language in the L2—especially of academic terminology—for use by their inner voice. The students' development of their inner voice in the L2 appeared to assist them in solving problems in science and history.

Research on middle-school French-immersion students in Canada found that they used L1 English for vocabulary searches, for structuring for structuring activities, for effectively arguing their points, and for planning their presentations in French (Behan, Spek, & Turnbull, 1995; Behan, Turnbull, & Spek, 1997). A subsequent study found that students performed the following functions in the L1: focusing their attention, figuring out what was expected, developing an understanding of the task, looking for L2 vocabulary, and seeking information about an activity (Swain & Lapkin, 2000). In addition, use of the L1 for these and other functions was more frequent in French composition classes than in science classes. Also, there was more use of the L1 with peers, especially if the purpose was social, as in expressing feelings. Some years later, Turnball, Cormier, and Bourque (2011) conducted a quasi-experimental study to determine if, when, and how the L1 was used by late-immersion 7th graders talking about complex science concepts. The results showed that the L1 did act as an important cognitive tool to help students make sense of complex science content.

The reason why the choice of language for mediation makes a difference is that if learners are favoring their L1 when thinking before speaking or writing in the L2, it is not surprising that the students are not so fluent, so articulate, or native-like in the L2. It could be argued that what makes it possible for pupils to think comfortably in the L2 is that they are well-rehearsed at doing this. This was a major rationale for starting immersion programs in the first place. Clearly more research needs to be done along these lines to determine both how much use of the inner voice is going on in the L2 for children at various ages, as well as for adults, and also to determine the effect of this on their language performance. The empirical question of whether, in the long run, drawing on L1 resources provides a crutch or a benefit still remains, and may provide a fruitful avenue for future research.

Deriving Benefit from Explicit Attention to Errors

Over 40 years ago extensive research focus was given to the best way to correct learners' errors (e.g., Allwright, 1975; Cohen, 1975a). The intention was to arrive at a system whereby errors were to be judiciously corrected (i.e., if they affected intelligibility, occurred frequently, reflected a high level of generality, had stigmatizing or irritating effects, affected a large percent of the students, or were relevant to the pedagogical focus). Other factors included what was known about the errors and how easy it was to correct them, as well as how best to go about the correction (Cohen, 1975a). So, it used to be fashionable to consider language learning being about eradicating errors in programs where learners were viewed as error generators. In 1996, I had the experience while studying accelerated Japanese in a relatively traditional instructional framework, that every time I opened my mouth I felt like an error generator, and that the approach favored the eradication of grammatical errors (Cohen, 1997).

In recent years, the advent of sociocultural theory and the interactionist approach to L2 teaching and learning has served to downplay the traditional focus on how best to correct errors (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). More attention is now paid to the nature of the class instruction (e.g., fluency-oriented or accuracy-oriented) in terms of the type of correction used during the completion of tasks, if any at all (Ellis, 2013). For instance, the rather unobtrusive teaching strategy of providing a recast of what was said with the error corrected has been found to be popular among instructors in accuracy-focused lessons (Lyster & Mori, 2006). In keeping with sociocultural theory, dynamic assessment would encourage viewing a student, especially when acting as a respondent in a testing situation, as a co-constructor of responses along with the teacher or administrator (Poehner, 2008). This approach is clearly a departure from that of the respondents having to perform on their own and to be "solely" responsible for their language output on an assessment measure.

So, is the research question "How best to correct errors?" still a viable one? We have come to see that language-teaching methods do not necessarily result in learners gaining control over learnable rules that can improve their language performance in cases where control of grammar does make a difference. While the importance of grammar is played down these days in numerous settings, it could still be argued that control over verb tenses and agreement in gender, number, or person might make a difference in an oral job interview or in writing a letter of application for a job. A fascinating area for exploration here is the role of grammar in the handling of pragmatics. It would be nice to see a grammar textbook that focuses precisely on this aspect of grammar. So, for example, the past progressive in English, "I was wondering if…" can be used pragmatically to make a request for something to happen in the future. More will be said about pragmatics below.

Learning style preferences also play a decided role in that certain approaches to correction simply do not work for learners whose learning styles do not make them receptive to particular kinds of corrections, as seen in a study where metalinguistic feedback was effective with those who had a preference for language analysis (Sheen, 2007). In other words, more analytic learners who can learn from a more deductive, rule-based, explicit approach may benefit from a well-timed presentation of a grammar rule that provides order in what seems to be chaos. A recent example for me was with the particle *de* in Mandarin. Left to my own devices as an autonomous learner of Mandarin, I had not figured out when to apply it after an adjective until a rule was supplied by one of my tandem partners. A learner who prefers a more intuitive, inductive, implicit approach may just want to see a lot of examples of forms in action, rather than being provided a rule.

Using Websites Effectively in Language Learning

While many websites have been constructed to facilitate language learning, it would not appear that much systematic research has been done to determine how well such websites actually work on a daily basis. The main effort seems to be expended in the construction of the website and not in understanding how different types of learners utilize the website, what material they access, and what the impact that this use has on their language performance over time. So an excellent area for research would be that of determining the actual effectiveness of websites constructed with the aim of improving language learning. One approach would be having users provide verbal report while engaged in accessing the website or retrospectively—as a means of checking the impact that accessing this website has had on their language learning.

After two years of creative work by a research assistant under my guidance, Angela Pinilla-Herrera, a Spanish grammar strategies website emerged at CARLA. First, 72 specific grammar strategies were identified by analyzing over 45 hours of students' videotaped testimonies. Before these strategies were placed on the website, the students reporting them had their Spanish grammar checked to ensure that they actually produced the grammar form or forms in question correctly. Two of the strategies had to be thrown out because the students did not successfully demonstrate control over those grammar forms. Then, along with two undergraduates who helped to collect the data, Pinilla-Herrera and I did a follow-up study to determine just how the website was being used (Cohen, Pinilla-Herrera, Thompson, & Witzig, 2011). We followed 15 students at different Spanish proficiency levels for 6-8 weeks, paying them to keep track of the strategies from the website which they used and the self-perceived impact that their use had on their Spanish performance. The results provided some evidence that students at different proficiency levels and with different learning style preferences could use the strategies on the website to improve their control of Spanish grammar (e.g., the *ser-estar* 'to be' distinction and when and how to use the imperfect and subjunctive forms of the verb). Just which strategies appealed to individual learners depended on various factors such as, on the one hand, what they needed to learn or improve their control of and, on the other hand, their preexisting language strategy repertoire, their learning style preferences, and their personality. The results were encouraging, given that the website provided specific strategies for the learning of grammar, catering both to the grammar topic and to the learning style preferences of the particular website user.

Avoiding Language Attrition

While lots of attention is given to language learning, it may be beneficial to focus more energy than we currently do on strategies for avoiding language attrition. The justification for this would be to alert learners to the challenges involved in maintaining language skills over time. For many years I have been concerned about language attrition. My interest started in observing Spanish immersion children and noticing what they remembered and what they forgot during summer recess (Cohen, 1975b). I then looked at attrition in Portuguese experienced by our daughter (13) and son (9) the longer that they were away from Brazil after spending a full twelve months there (Cohen, 1989). Since we were living in Israel at the time, I was able to use both Hebrew and English as points of comparison.

In recent years there have been some surveys of L2 attrition research. One found attrition

to be greater in speaking and writing than in listening and reading, with the onset of literacy helping to impede attrition. In addition, there was more attrition in vocabulary than in grammar (Bardovi-Harlig & Stringer, 2010). Another review noted that there was less attrition after puberty and, not so surprisingly, if the learner had attained greater proficiency in the language. In addition, the length of exposure to the language was found to be significant, as well as any continued contact with the language (Schmid & Mehotcheva, 2012).

It would seem beneficial for research to look at the best ways for learners to maintain their control of the L2 rather than to attrite. As a hyperpolyglot (i.e., someone who has learned 12 or more languages), I have also watched myself attrite in many languages. Particularly helpful research may be pedagogically-focused studies on what learners should do to avoid attrition, especially at an advanced age (i.e., over 65). Memory experts have provided numerous suggestions for how to retain vocabulary, such as through the use of the mnemonic keyword device (e.g., a Spanish speaker remembering the Hebrew word *me'arbolet* 'whirlpool' by envisioning a tree [*árbol* in Spanish] spinning around in a whirlpool) (for more on the keyword mnemonic, see Cohen & Aphek, 1980). Not so surprisingly, CARLA's Spanish grammar strategies website features numerous strategies employing mnemonics.

The reviews of the literature on attrition would suggest that learners vary greatly in their memory patterns. My personal issue in learning Mandarin over the last five years has been that my memory is not what it used to be. At the age of 73, I am not able to learn vocabulary as effortlessly as I used to in the past. For example, using the electronic flash card feature in BYKI (Transparent Language), I tried to memorize, among other things, adverbs of frequency such as *jīngcháng* 'frequently,' *píncháng* 'normally,' *ǒu'ěr* 'occasionally,' and *cóngbù* 'never.' Whereas I had some short-term success, after a week or so I had forgotten most of the words. Part of my problem is that I do not have regular contact with these words. But more importantly, Mandarin is a challenging language since the words tend to be short and many sound the same to my ear.

Now let us move on to a second and related research area: language learner strategies.

A CLOSE LOOK AT LANGUAGE LEARNER STRATEGIES

With Rubin's (1975) landmark article over 40 years ago, the field of language learning began to look in earnest at the contribution that language learner strategies (LLS) could make. At the time, it was revolutionary to focus exclusively on learners since the perception amongst language educators was that the focus needed to be primarily on teachers. The intervening decades have shown us that much of the effort must be made by the learners themselves and that the application of LLS is not a panacea for language learning. My own perception is that part of the problem is in assuming that anything with the label "strategy" will be helpful in providing language learners what they need. Rather, we need to take a closer look at just what LLS are and how learners can best employ them to their advantage in the language learning process.

A Description of How Strategy Functions Fluctuate

The field of LLS has been criticized for lack of precision in the way that strategies have been described and operationalized in research. Most recently, there has been research that would

suggest that there is fluctuation across the four functions of LLS—metacognitive, cognitive, social, and affective. What is exciting about this avenue of research is that it offers greater precision in understanding how strategies actually function in the performance of language tasks.

A recent study, for example, investigated the strategies used by six Chinese learners of English on an individually-administered vocabulary task. The focus was on the activation of moment-to-moment functions when strategies were being used during this task (Cohen & Wang, forthcoming). The task called for the respondents to fine-tune their understanding of the meaning of three roughly synonymous words ("substantiate," "verify," and "confirm"), drawing on the following resources: (1) the Cambridge online English-Chinese dictionary, (2) a sample sentence for each of the words, (3) co-researcher Wang as a more proficient non-native speaker (NNS) of English, and (4) each respondent's own mental lexicon. Whereas strategies often tend to be described in isolation, the first finding was that the learners reported using strategies mostly in combination (i.e., strategy sequences, strategy pairs, and strategy clusters) rather than in isolation. Secondly, whereas strategies are often described in the literature as monolithic—that is, having just one function for a given strategy—there was moment-to-moment fluctuation across functions (whether metacognitive, cognitive, affective, or social) during the use of a single strategy and also when learners moved from one strategy to another in sequences, pairs, or clusters.

The view that strategies have more than one function is not new. LLS experts have suggested the existence of a fluid movement across strategy functions for some time (see Oxford, 2017 for more on the history of LLS). What is new is the effort to collect empirical data to confirm this view. So, there is now an open invitation to researchers to follow up on the Cohen and Wang (forthcoming) study with other studies involving subjects having varying language backgrounds, differing learning style preferences, and who are engaged in a variety of tasks.

The Fine-Tuning of Strategies to Fit the Specific Skill Area

When I first published an article suggesting the possible categorization of strategies just for the learning and performance of pragmatics (Cohen, 2005), the article drew criticism from some experts on pragmatics (e.g., Garces-Conejos, 2006), which I responded to at the time (Cohen, 2006). The criticism was primarily to the effect that there was insufficient empirical evidence to support the categorization scheme. The intervening 12 years have provided a decent amount of empirical evidence in support of this fine-tuned strategy categorization, and it is fair to say that the field of L2 pragmatics has benefited from this effort to categorize strategies specific to that area of language learning.

The construction of a grammar strategies website for learning Spanish has also met a felt need in that it has served as a repository for empirically validated strategies for enhancing the learning of Spanish grammar (Cohen & Pinilla-Herrera, 2010). Another area that might benefit from close-order analysis and categorization of strategies would be that of vocabulary. Given the current use of Google Translate, as well as numerous online electronic dictionaries, it would appear that research on vocabulary learning strategies and their effectiveness could be beneficial. The reality is that learners in the trenches rely on a host of different vocabulary learning and use strategies, as demonstrated in a detailed description through case studies of six ESL students' efforts to strategize in their learning of vocabulary

(Wang, 2018).

Lessons to be Learned from Hyperpolyglots

Given immigration patterns and the nature of globalization, it is no longer possible to view the United States as a largely monolingual English L1 society. Rather, United States college students may now have studied some five languages by the time they have finished their college degree. This means that the bilingual paradigm as a model for language learning is out-of-date. Instead, we need to consider multilingual configurations as more accurately reflecting the current situation in numerous speech communities both in the United States and elsewhere in the world. In fact, in parts of Europe it is a given that, for example, business associates will need to function in a number of different languages in order to do their job effectively.

While most people do not study 12 or more languages as have hyperpolyglots, it may still be beneficial to do research on these exceptional learners who do, in fact, achieve a certain level of success at numerous languages (see Erard, 2012). It would appear that much can be gleaned from their experiences that could be applied to the learning of languages by others as well. Among other things, hyperpolyglots take advantage of their learning style preferences, make conscientious use of their robust LLS repertoire, complement formal language instruction through sessions with tandem partners and other L2 speakers, continually rely on checklists, know how best to utilize the time available and how to manage the space in which they are learning, make wise choices with regard to support from electronic devices and the Internet, and find ways to remain motivated all the while (Cohen, 2014). A key motivator for me is to have at least two tandem partners that I meet with every week to support me in my learning—currently of Mandarin.

The Role of Strategies in Test-Taking

There is value in doing research on the strategies that respondents actually use in order to produce responses on language assessment measures, such as on tests of summarizing, reading comprehension, grammar, listening comprehension, writing, and speaking. Number-crunching is certainly one way to determine how effectively assessment instruments are working, but to better understand how particular items in tasks function on a test, it can be useful to see what respondents actually do to produce their answers. Fortunately, even large testing corporations like the Educational Testing Service (Princeton, NJ) have come to realize the benefits of these kinds of studies, and consequently have commissioned research projects aimed at determining the validity of subtests in major tests such as the Internet-based TOEFL exam through this line of research (e.g., Cohen & Upton, 2006). Even classroom teachers can benefit from this line of research to determine whether certain classroom tests are, in fact, assessing what they are intended to measure. Such investigations usually call for the use of verbal report—for instance, in order to determine whether student respondents use the expected resources to produce answers to tests rather than using some deviant means.

There is, however, another reason to look at test-taking strategies, namely, that some learners are so good at the use of strategies that they can hide the fact that they lack language skills by using clever responses to perform relatively well on tests when they actually are

deficient in the language. I remember two instances in my career of doing well on tests by using test-wiseness strategies. In one case, I was responding to a multiple-choice take-home placement test of my Hebrew ability. At the time it would have been appropriate to place me in an intermediate-level Hebrew class in an intensive summer program. Using every strategy I could, I maxed the test and was informed that I did not need to study Hebrew. At my insistence, I was placed in the very highest level, which was far beyond my capabilities. In another case, I was trying out a computer-adaptive, multiple-choice listing comprehension test of Hausa, a language that I had never studied and did not know at all. The items were in English with the listening segments presented orally in Hausa. I was able to psych out a certain number of the multiple-choice items in order not to be ejected from the online test for some time. For example, there would be a picture of two men standing by a car and the oral prompt had in it the word *auto*, which was all that I needed to select my response. It would be up to the test constructor to ensure that no items on an instrument being constructed would be a giveaway (see Cohen, 2013, for an article providing suggestions on how to construct these kinds of items).

Let us now move on to the third and final research area highlighted in this article, L2 pragmatics.

THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF L2 PRAGMATICS

The final topic of concern is that of the crucial role that pragmatics plays in both the teaching and learning of an L2. At times it is like the elephant in the room. For example, it is possible to learn vocabulary and grammar without having a clue as to how to use them in a pragmatically appropriate way. Having studied so many languages over my lifetime, I have become especially aware that classroom language materials do not necessarily focus very much on pragmatics at all. Pragmatics is often left to learners to pick up by themselves, and in reality they do not necessarily notice pragmatic norms unless they are pointed out to them explicitly either by teachers or by others.

This final section of the article then is intended to promote research on L2 pragmatics in areas that seem to warrant additional attention, rather than being shoved under the rug. While it is heartening to see the large quantity of L2 pragmatics research that has been generated in the last 30 years, there is still much research to be done. I begin by giving some suggestions for areas of speech act research worthy of investigation. Next, I focus on the effects of explicit instruction in L2 pragmatics. Third, I examine the learning of pragmatics from native and nonnative teachers (NTs and NNTs) in the L2 classroom. Finally, I explore the teaching of pragmatics in World Englishes (WEs), an issue that has come to the fore in the last decade.

The Less Researched Speech Acts

A popular focus for research on L2 pragmatics has been that of speech acts, with the research tending to look at certain speech acts and not at others. For example, numerous studies have dealt with requests, apologies, compliments, and responses to compliments. Many fewer studies have looked at speech acts such as criticism, beyond a few exploratory studies (e.g., Nguyen, 2013), even though people are often criticizing each other for matters of hygiene, dress, hairstyle, or behavior. Likewise, little focus has been given to just when

and how to curse, although within the last decade there has been increasing concern for how to be impolite (e.g., Mugford, 2008, 2016). This interest in impoliteness is a result of scholars rightly observing that at times pragmatics is not about how to be polite, but how to be impolite to obtain the appropriate effect (see, for example, Fernández-Amaya et al., 2012).

The Effects of Explicit Instruction in Pragmatics

Whereas in the early stages of L2 pragmatics research, there was a reluctance to promote explicit instruction in pragmatics, more recently there have been adequate numbers of studies demonstrating the importance of explicit instruction in pragmatics so as to warrant making this case (Rose, 2005; Taguchi, 2015). Nonetheless, there remains a need to conduct research, especially in order to determine what kinds of explicit instruction have the greatest impact in the long run. Since effective performance in L2 pragmatics depends on the relative age of the speakers and listeners, their language proficiency, their relative social status, and the context of the interactions, there are numerous variables to examine.

The Learning of Pragmatics from Native or Nonnative Teachers in the L2 Classroom

In some ways whether a teacher is a native or nonnative speaker (NS or NNS) of the language of instruction is irrelevant. Yet in the realm of pragmatics there are actually areas where being a native or nonnative teacher (NT or NNT) has been seen to be beneficial, as suggested by an international survey with 30 NTs and 83 NNTs with regard to their handling of L2 pragmatics in their classrooms (Cohen, 2016, 2018). The NTs and NNTs not only represented many different L1s and L2s, but also many different regions of the world. While the NTs and NNTs had similar experiences and challenges in teaching L2 pragmatics, there were also certain differences. For one thing, the NNTs reported feeling less knowledgeable about the teaching of L2 pragmatics and trended towards feeling less comfortable at it as well. In addition, the NTs' intuitions about pragmatics reportedly assisted them in teaching learners how to be effectively critical and sarcastic, as well as how to respond appropriately to criticism and sarcasm. The caveat here is that relying on intuition may be misleading, which is why both NNTs and NTs in this survey indicated that they gathered data from other sources if they were in doubt about some area of L2 pragmatics.

The NTs also reported a greater use than the NNTs of digital media, perhaps because their NS status afforded them greater facility at finding and utilizing L2 media (an empirical question to investigate). Likewise, NTs indicated more of a willingness to use their students as data gatherers in cases where they were unsure of some issue in pragmatics than were the NNTs, though both groups reported this teaching strategy. What is encouraging about this finding is that it would indicate that, at least with regard to this self-selected sample, the NTs were not just relying on their intuition, however much it did help them.

The NNTs reported more coverage of cursing than the NTs, which can be an important area over which learners would want to have some control. A case in point would be that of female study-abroad students who find themselves in a culture where properly understanding off-colored catcalls may be important for their safety. The NNTs also reported relying on their L1 when they were not certain of the L2 pragmatics, which could possibly be a source of misinformation regarding the L2 if they engaged in negative transfer

in the process (see Ishihara & Cohen, 2014). In addition, the survey responses included suggested activities to be used in teaching L2 pragmatics both in FL and L2 situations. Furthermore, survey responses included ideas about how to motivate learners to study this material, as well as indications as to areas in pragmatics about which teachers would like more information.

Given the extensive research in the field of computer-mediated communication looking at the pragmatics of NS-NNS exchanges (Bardovi-Harlig, 2015), it seems that a fruitful area for further research would be follow-up work on the ways that NSs and NNSs deal with pragmatics when in the role of teacher.

The Teaching of Pragmatics in World Englishes

Due to the increased interest in World Englishes (WEs), the moment may be propitious for studies that look at just what elements of a given WE might be taught in the local pragmatics for that language. Proponents of WE have described and promoted educational approaches that favor these varieties of English (Marlina & Giri, 2014; Matsuda, 2012). The case is eloquently made that there is a need to recognize regional varieties of English in their own right (e.g., Korean English, Malayan English, Thai English, and Japanese English), rather than applying US and British standards for what is considered acceptable. For example, if Japanese and Korean business associates are conversing among themselves in English in Seoul, to what extent might they rely on their own respective L1 pragmatics in their interactions?

That said, I have yet to find any guidelines for how to teach one of these WEs, which would presumably include teaching its pragmatics. For instance, there does not appear to be textbook material expressly written for the purpose of teaching Japanese English pragmatics to Japanese speakers. In Saudi Arabia, for example, would teaching the pragmatics of an Arabic variety of English mean that ritualistically polite flourishes in greetings and other speech acts would be a part of English language instruction? What might entries in a local English textbook actually look like if the intention were to reflect the pragmatics of the local Arabic-speaking community in terms of catering to local norms for politeness? Since current textbooks do not cover pragmatics very much under any circumstances, perhaps modifications to cater to Arabic English pragmatics would be modest. Probably it would still be the role of the instructor to augment the textbook with material on pragmatics, but whose pragmatics would be featured in such textbook entries? If the local variety has certain sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic features particular to it that are not common in mainstream varieties of English in the United States, the United Kingdom, or elsewhere, then what would be the impact of teaching these? That would be an empirical question worthy of research.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this article has been to highlight certain areas for L2 research. It has looked at three main thrusts. The first focuses on how to get people to be more successful at language learning. Six research areas were discussed under this topic, the first being to get learners to be more informed consumers since people often go into language learning with little or no awareness of what the options for L2 learning actually are and which of these

options might benefit them the most. The idea of assisting learners in becoming better informed about the options for learning language is, in my opinion, right in line with the current marketing craze to get consumers better informed about what they are purchasing. In the field of language learning, this means not simply going with the instructional approach that has slick marketing behind it, such as Rosetta Stone. Note that these highly advertised programs often do not publish findings to support their claims in the academic literature. It would be good to see rigorous research on programs claiming to teach an L2 expediently and effectively.

The second research area of focus in this article was that of means for enhancing learner motivation. A case in point would be that of keeping motivation high when living in an FL context where it may be a challenge to find local speakers of the language with whom to interact. Motivation may not be everything with regard to gains in language ability, but research and practice have found that it helps. I would suggest moving more into the moment-by-moment approach to motivation in terms of making sure that learners are aware of what really motivates them to stick with the learning of a given language, rather than dropping it.

The third research area I presented deals with avenues for having learners be more in charge of their thought processes while learning an L2. It would strike me that learners who really wish to become fluent in an L2 would want to pay more attention to the role played by language in their thought process, and to encourage themselves to use this language more in their inner voice—akin to what we did with the fifth graders in St. Paul, Minnesota. In their case, we coached them in talking to themselves about topics in science in the L2, using a pocket mirror, a picture of themselves on a popsicle stick, and a cardboard cell phone. We also had them write postcards to themselves in the L2, which were actually mailed to their homes (Cohen & Gómez, 2008). So, further research in this area could explore the impact of interventions on the use of inner voice and the way that these interventions impact L2 development.

The fourth area looks at how best to benefit from error correction since corrections may ultimately have few long-range benefits. There are at least two directions to take with regard to research. One would be to track the acquisition of forms that are not learned during the period of formal L2 instruction, either because they were not taught or, more likely, because learners did not learn them. I was amazed to find that grammar rules for Hebrew that I had assiduously copied into my notebooks while formally learning the language and had never actually learned at the time were, in fact, part of my language proficiency after living in Israel for 10 years and having to use the language on a daily basis. So, somehow these forms had taken care of themselves, though at the time it appeared like a daunting task to ever gain control of them, such as the past passive form of the verb (*ze huxlat* 'it was decided'). Another form of research quite common in this area involves charting the effects of efforts to eradicate problematic grammar errors, especially errors caused by negative transfer from the L1. For example, I find my Chinese tandem partners have persistent difficulties with the use of articles, the copula verb, and various complex forms. As a student of Chinese, it is clear to me why these areas persist in Chinese speakers of English. My personal preference would be to study efforts to eliminate errors in thorny areas of L2 pragmatics behavior. Of particular interest would be errors committed while attempting to criticize, curse, or be sarcastic—since faulty production of any of these speech acts could lead to communication failure.

The fifth area has to do with the use of websites intended for language learners in that

their developers may not necessarily gather specific information about how the websites are actually being utilized, nor about how effective such utilization actually is. I would recommend checking out precisely how language learners are using these websites since what they are intended for and how they are used may not be the same thing by any means. Once it is clear how they are being utilized, then the website designers and others can take appropriate action if action is called for.

And finally, perhaps the most perplexing issue of all is how language learners can avoid language attrition. It is curious that so little attention has been given to language attrition given its magnitude, especially for the many learners who wind up having little contact with the L2 subsequently. It would be helpful to expend more energy in the area to determine just what attrition entails among L2 learners and to uncover effective ways to counteract it.

The second broad research thrust I have outlined takes a close-up look at language learner strategies. I began by describing how strategy functions fluctuate in the use of the very same strategy or across strategies. The interest here is in dispelling what is largely a myth that strategies are somehow monolithic. This would appear to be a rich area for further research. Secondly, the view was offered that it could be helpful to refine strategy categorizations in order to make them useful for learners interested in, say, specific skill areas such as the learning of vocabulary or the learning of grammar in a particular L2. It seems that for too long what have been suggested to learners are relatively general and sometimes vague so-called strategies that really are not very beneficial for the completion of a given language task (e.g., "use inference"). In fact, many of these "strategies" are more like skills in need of operationalization by strategies (e.g., strategies to actually operationalize the skill of making inferences). In the third area under language learning strategies, I suggested looking at hyperpolyglots to see what can be gleaned from their experiences in the effort to enhance the strategies used by average language learners. Finally, I discussed strategies used in test taking, mostly as a deterrent to having language learners do remarkably well on language tests just because they know how to outsmart the tests. Ideally, sterling performance on a test would indicate good control of the material rather than mere cleverness on the part of the test-taker.

The third and final research thrust I have offered falls within the area of pragmatics since it plays a crucial role in successful L2 interactions. In the first subsection, I suggested increasing the study of less-commonly-researched speech acts, as well as initiating new studies of languages that have not yet been looked at. Such studies would be especially interesting in the case of languages having characteristics which are likely to make pragmatic behavior in those languages distinct from the behavior in more commonly researched languages (such as the special role of honorifics in Asian languages such as Japanese). In the second subsection, I looked at the effect of explicit instruction in pragmatics since this is now being recommended more than it has been in the past. It would be helpful to see just how such instruction impacts learners in the more problematic areas, such as in understanding and producing sarcasm or criticism in the L2. In the third subsection, I considered differences between NTs and NNTs since recent research would suggest that not only are there similarities, but there are also meaningful differences. Such comparisons could prompt action to compensate for gaps in the knowledge of NTs and NNTs alike with regard to their pragmatics instruction. The final area addressed in this thrust was the teaching of pragmatics in WEs, which could also apply to the teaching of pragmatics in other languages with distinctive local varieties that help to characterize the pragmatics for that variety. Perhaps what is called for is interventionist research where efforts are made to teach this

local variety of pragmatics and to investigate the benefits and detriments of such an approach.

Hopefully, this article will serve to provide ideas for researchers looking for research topics. As has been pointed out here, there are numerous areas in which profitable research can draw on previous research areas. In fact, there is often a need to further investigate areas where to date the findings are relatively preliminary. It can also be beneficial to study areas where much work has been done. In my experience, there are things to be learned from any new research project, especially given that each research study has its pluses and minuses, its quirks, and its limitations (see McKinley & Rose, 2017). The underlying issue for me has been and will continue to be that of improving the experience of language learners, especially with increasing needs for language competence in an ever-growing number of languages on the global stage.

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