Co-Constructing Pragmatic Awareness: Instructional Pragmatics in EFL Teacher Development in Japan

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Abstract

While some recent pioneering work (e.g., Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Eslami & Eslami-Rasekh, 2008; Yates & Wiggglesworth, 2005) has begun to investigate the effects of instructional pragmatics in teacher education, little has been explored in depth as to the way in which teacher cognition develops in the classroom discourse of language teacher development. This ethnographic case study describes the co-constructed development of teacher cognition as it relates to pragmatic awareness documented during a professional development seminar that focused specifically on instructional pragmatics. The seminar was a five-hour component in an intensive 30-hour teacher development program for re-certifying secondary teaching licensure in Japan. Following Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Johnson, 2009), the pragmatics-focused seminar was built on interaction among participants and the instructor. Data consisted of seven of the participant teachers' documents, the instructor's field notes, and recordings of the teacher development seminar. The findings and analysis will place a particular focus on the process in which one of the teacher's pragmatic awareness was challenged, co-constructed, and reshaped in interaction through a critical learning episode (Kiely & Davis, 2010). Implications of this study include the effectiveness and limitations of the efforts to promote instructional pragmatics with an intention to further explore effective teacher development in this area.

Introduction

As pragmatic competence has become established as a vital constituent of communicative competence, knowledge of pragmatics has been viewed as an indispensable component of language teachers' knowledge base. A recent nationwide survey in the U.S. conducted by

Vásquez and Sharpless (2009) has shown that the majority of master's-level TESOL programs in the U.S. include pragmatics in the teacher education curriculum in some way or other. However, the same survey has also found that the treatment of pragmatics in teacher training courses often centers on theory (such as speech act and politeness theories) rather than on practical applications, which the authors call *instructional* or *instructed pragmatics* (i.e., "L2 teaching applications related to fostering pragmatic competence in language learners," p.17). Among the 94 graduate TESOL programs in the U.S. that responded to Vásquez and Sharpless's survey, only 20% reported having a course dedicated to pragmatics while approximately half incorporated pragmatics into other relevant courses. Of the 20% of the programs that had a course dedicated to pragmatics, more courses (56%) reported having a theoretical rather than an applied orientation (44%). As one of the quotes from the survey responses in the paper reveals (p. 17), it is sometimes assumed that as long as they are given theory, language teachers can devise instructional strategies on their own.

Opportunities to discuss pragmatics may be even more limited in language teacher education courses in EFL contexts such as in Japan.[1] Among the published methods textbooks written in Japanese for pre-service undergraduate teacher preparation, pragmatic (or sociolinguistic) competence is often minimally defined (JACET kyouiku mondai iinkai, 2009; Muranoi, Chiba, & Hatanaka, 2005; Takanashi & Takahashi, 2007) or not even mentioned (Mochizuki, 2010; Tsuchiya & Hirono, 2008), a situation similar to that of ESL methodology textbooks published in English (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2003). In the centralized nationwide curriculum in Japan, only a few courses in English language teaching are required toward initial licensure. Judging from this as well as from the syllabi that I have referred to, methods courses appear to largely center on such issues as: the history of English language teaching, the Course of Study (national curricular guidelines), the teaching of grammar, vocabulary, and general four skills, materials development, and assessment. Although little time seems to be allocated to the discussion of cultural understanding, it is unclear whether and to what extent pragmatics or interlanguage pragmatics is introduced. In her review of Vásquez and Sharpless (2009), Hagiwara speculates that "most of us [language educators in Japan] have never studied pragmatics as an independent subject or a course at the university we attended" (2010, p. 4). She goes on to state that the implementation of a survey like Vásquez and Sharpless' is in itself indicative of the more "advanced" status of language teacher education in the U.S. in the realm of pragmatics, which she describes as "enviable" (p. 4). It may be that pragmatics has not been recognized widely among language teachers and teacher educators in Japan. As a result, language teachers in Japan appear to be largely left to their own devices in their efforts to enhance learners' pragmatic competence.

By contrast, the stated qualifications of an effective teacher of L2 pragmatics include (but are not limited to): an awareness of pragmatic norms and pragmatic variation (subject matter knowledge), the ability to provide pragmatic-focused instruction and assessment (pedagogical content knowledge), and a sensitivity to learners' cultures and subjectivity (knowledge of the learners and the educational context) (Bardovi-Harlig, 1992; Eslami, 2010; Hartford, 1997; Ishihara, 2010; Karatepe, 2001; Kasper, 1997; Meier, 2003; Rose, 1997; Yates & Wigglesworth, 2005; also see Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Shulman, 1987). Few of these qualities seem to come automatically to language teachers without specific preparation

focused on instructional pragmatics. Currently, at least a few programs in the U.S. offer pedagogically-centered courses in L2 pragmatics, either as required or elective courses. Not surprisingly, however, the effects of such courses and other teacher development opportunities in instructional pragmatics have hardly been researched, except for a few recent attempts.

Among these notable exceptions are published papers by Eslami-Rasekh (2005), Eslami and Eslami-Rasekh (2008), and Yates and Wigglesworth (2005). Yates and Wigglesworth (2005) provided two different types of teacher development opportunities to two groups of adult ESL teachers in Australia. In the first phase of their project, five teachers worked closely with the researchers in collecting and analyzing data to cultivate a deeper understanding of request mitigators in English and develop materials for subsequent teacher workshops. Although this first phase proved to be labor-intensive for both parties, the teachers demonstrated large gains in substantive, syntactic, and curricular knowledge. In focus group discussions and individual interviews, the teachers reported deeper appreciation and a strong sense of ownership of their newly-gained conscious understanding of how and why the mitigating devices functioned in context. During the project, their pedagogical beliefs also appeared to shift from justifying purely linguistic instruction of polite request formulae to realizing students' need to have a cultural and contextual understanding of these linguistic devices. Through a review of existing materials, they further became aware of the shortage of materials for teaching this particular aspect of English. Another group of over 100 teachers participated in the second phase of the project, which consisted of one- to two-hour workshops on the same topic. While their gains were far less considerable, a majority of the 84 participants who returned a post-workshop questionnaire commented that they had been aware of request mitigators but in a superficial way, or that they had sometimes neglected to pay attention to them especially in the classroom. Yates and Wiggleworth argue that this phase in the instruction process appears to help crystallize the teachers' implicit knowledge of mitigating devices and make it solid and explicit.

Eslami-Rasekh (2005) and Eslami and Eslami-Rasekh (2008) focus on enhancing the pragmatic competence of non-native English-speaking teacher candidates (NNESTCs) in an EFL context. They argue that NNESTCs tend to feel insecure about their English proficiency in general. Their pragmatic competence may be less developed than their organizational competence (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Eslami & Eslami-Rasekh, 2008; Pasternak & Bailey, 2004). In addition, Karatepe's (2001) Turkish teacher trainees did demonstrate awareness and appropriate use of certain modals in indirect requests, but they appeared to have difficulty with other modals and in assessing the effects of contextual factors. NNESTCs can also encounter interactional issues while learning to teach especially in the second language context (Ishihara, 2005). Considering these findings, teacher education for NNESTCs seems to warrant some focus on pragmatics.

In their quasi-experimental study, Eslami and Eslami-Rasekh (2008) implemented metapragmatic instruction for NNESTCs in Iran and examined its effects on the NNESTCs' pragmatic awareness and production. The instruction that the experimental group received included a number of readings of research articles in cross-cultural, interlanguage, and

instructional pragmatics and the teacher candidates' ethnographic research for the purpose of pragmatic awareness-raising. This metapragmatic instruction lasted for 30 minutes each week and was provided as a component of a methodology course for 14 weeks. The results of the error recognition and discourse completion tasks showed significant improvement in both pragmatic awareness and production among the 25 teacher candidates in the experimental group, as compared with the performance of the 27 candidates in the control group who did not receive the metapragmatic instruction. The study shows that L2 pragmatics can be amenable to instruction in EFL contexts. The authors contend that methodology textbooks should include pragmatic language use as an important component in language teacher education.

The rare investigations into the effects of instructional pragmatics on teacher development also include the studies presented at the colloquium on language teacher education and L2 pragmatics at the 18th Pragmatics and Language Learning Conference held in Kobe, Japan in 2010 (Eslami, 2010; Ishihara, 2010 [2] ; Vásquez, 2010; Vellenga, 2010; Yoshimi, 2010). The panelists in the colloquium had been teaching and promoting instructional pragmatics in their teacher education programs in different contexts, and the panel discussed some of the challenges and achievements in these efforts. In her graduate program, Vásquez offered a required course focused on instructional pragmatics and retrospectively surveyed the perceptions of the students who took this course during the past five years. Eslami reported on her graduate students' online pragmatic instruction to EFL learners in Taiwan provided as part of the required ESL methodology course. Her content analysis was based on the teacher learners' reflections, online discussions, final papers, researcher's field notes, and other artifacts. Acting in the role of a researcher, Vellenga investigated reactions by her participant teachers, who received some training in teaching pragmatics and implemented it in their classrooms in the Midwestern and Southwestern U.S., Lithuania, and Japan. Both Yoshimi and Ishihara taught summer institutes in teaching pragmatics and ecologically (Yoshimi) or ethnographically (Ishihara) explored participant teachers' perspectives, using for example, researcher field notes, participant questionnaires, and participant-designed materials.

Among the findings of the colloquium papers, the perceived fruits of integrating instructional pragmatics into teacher development included first and foremost the teachers' enhanced understanding, awareness, and appreciation of pragmatics, and their recognition of its importance in language teaching. All panelists reported on teachers who taught or planned to teach pragmatics beyond the limits of the teacher education courses, using various instructional approaches such as role-plays, class discussion, jazz chants, student research, and awareness-raising language analysis in the spirit of learners-as-researchers. Vásquez, Vellenga, and Ishihara's teachers taught pragmatics in a lower-level class or viewed pragmatics as important at the elementary level and beyond. One of Vásquez's teachers went on to point out the highly complex nature of pragmatic code-switching or code-mixing for bicultural speakers. Teachers in Yoshimi's study expressed heightened motivation for teaching pragmatics in small-scale interventions and conceptualized pragmatics as accessible and systematic, rather than intimidating. Eslami also reported enhanced pragmatic competence and metapragmatic knowledge among teachers. The use of telecollaborative

technology allowed her teachers and learners opportunities to use language with experts of the target culture in a meaningful manner.

The panel also identified some common obstacles that would impede pragmatics instruction: time constraints, mandatory curricula, a perceived curricular misfit of pragmatics, and a dearth of appropriate instructional materials. Interestingly, Vellenga and Vásquez reported a few cases of teacher resistance to pragmatics instruction due to perceived difficulty in changing teaching styles (Vellenga), as well as students' perception that they could discover appropriate norms of behavior without receiving instruction (Vásquez, also see Takamiya & Ishihara, under review). From teacher educator's perspectives, Yoshimi and Ishihara observed teachers resorting to intuitions without empirical validation. Yoshimi's concern also included the effectiveness of the instruction without comprehensive training or a thorough instructional manual. In addition, Eslami's teachers' challenges often appeared to be compounded by use of technology, including insufficient participation in online discussion, delayed responses, and difficulty building collaborative rapport without face-to-face interaction. In order to overcome some of these challenges, Vásquez suggests different strategies to incorporate pragmatics into a variety of existing curricula, thus allowing pragmatics to work within current curricular constraints.

While the studies reviewed above present important pioneering work investigating the effects of instructional pragmatics in general in teacher education, little has been explored with regard to how teacher cognition develops in the classroom discourse in depth. As teachers' (meta) pragmatic awareness constitutes the foundation of teachers' knowledge base in pragmatics, a close investigation of this process would have implications for how pragmatics can be effectively incorporated into the teaching strategies and the language teacher education curriculum. Teacher cognition is "the observable cognitive dimensions of teaching" (Borg, 2003, p. 81), namely, "what teachers think, know or believe in relation to various aspects of their work" (p. 86). Borg uses this term broadly to encompass the complexity of teachers' mental lives and include (albeit not necessarily) actual classroom practices and the relationships between cognition and these practices (2003, 2006). While teachers' actual practices are outside the scope of this paper, the data include classroom practices that teachers reflect on and envisage for the future. The data also explore the potential link between these projected practices and the teachers' cognition in the classroom discourse of teacher development.

Methods

This ethnographic case study describes the development of teacher cognition, or more precisely, the (re)construction of the teachers' pragmatic awareness as observed and documented during a professional development seminar offered in Japan. The study attempts to show the process in which one of the teachers' pragmatic awareness was negotiated and reconstructed in the classroom discourse. Below is the instructional background to this seminar, followed by descriptions of the participant teachers.

Background to the teacher development course

The seminar was a five-hour component in an intensive 30-hour teacher development program for re-certifying secondary teaching licensure. The program was required as part of the nationally centralized educational innovations that went into effect in 2009 in Japan. Since April 2009, secondary teachers have been required to have their licenses recertified every 10 years, for example, by attending a 30-hour summer program offered at universities nationwide. Although this system itself has been in transition under the current administration, at the time of the study, participation in this type of summer program (as well as passing the final exam) was almost obligatory if teachers were either 35, 45, or 55 of age if they were to continue their career. The first two days were dedicated to discussing educational issues in general, while the last three days, or 18 hours of instruction, were assigned specifically to a particular discipline, which in this case was teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Two other themes related to communicative language teaching were covered during the first two days of the EFL component, and I delivered a 5-hour teacher development seminar on instructional pragmatics on the final day. This session was followed by a one-hour exam in which participating teachers selected one of the three themes on which to be assessed, which represents a high-stake assessment as mentioned earlier.

Following Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning (Johnson, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978), all EFL seminars were built on interaction among participants and the instructor. The assumption was that the participants would create a community of learning teachers where they learned from each other as well as from the instructor through language-mediated interactive activities such as discussions and small-group work. The seminar in instructional pragmatics was delivered in Japanese to maximize teachers' understanding and interactions, while PowerPoint slides and other handouts were written in English with the intention of maintaining a sense of challenge for this group of highly motivated teachers.

Participants

The teacher development program was offered at a large private university in Central Tokyo, and eight secondary teachers participated from various locations around Japan. Seven of the eight teachers agreed to participate in this study by giving written consent. Four of them were high school teachers, two were junior high school teachers, and the other was an English instructor at a private English school planning to teach at the secondary level. Four of them were around age 35, one was around 45, and two were 55. Three were female teachers and four were male.

In the pre-instructional survey, five of the teachers indicated an interest in learning to (better) implement communicative language teaching in their classrooms. The teachers had varying levels of exposure to other cultures: three had never lived abroad except for occasional trips or a short-term home-stay, three had lived or studied in English-speaking countries for a year, and the other had lived in the U.S. for eight years in her childhood. In addition to studying in the U.K., one teacher had lived in South Asia for two years and spoke Bengali. A focal participant in this study, whose pseudonym is Mr. X, was at age 45 and teaching at a public

teijisei [part-time] high school in Tokyo. He had been teaching high school for 17 years and had lived in Australia for one year before teaching.

Data

The data consisted of the seven participant teachers' documents, the teacher educator/researcher's field notes, and audio-recordings of the entire five-hour seminar in instructional pragmatics. The documents included the seven teachers':

1. Responses to a background survey submitted prior to the program

2. Their written reflections on class activities and the course exam

3. Their responses to a course evaluation completed at the end of the program

4. Two of the teachers' responses to the course exams[3] in instructional pragmatics.

Through deductive analysis of the documents, audio-recorded class interactions, and transcribed classroom interactions, I first identified critical learning episodes (CLEs) (Kiely & Davis, 2010, pp. 282-283) that demonstrated the participant teachers' pragmatic awareness and its development. CLEs focus on the details of interactions in which teachers engage in dialogue with teacher educators and peer teachers. The episodes are important for teacher learning in that they can assist in resolving any problems encountered in teaching, develop teachers' new understanding, or assist social or affective aspects of learning. While Kiely and Davis's CLEs are instances of direct language teaching practice, this study uses the notion more broadly to include teachers' projected practice, including their reflections on past and ongoing practice as well as the classroom practices that teachers envision for the future. The selected CLEs were triangulated with the observations noted in the teacher educator/researcher's field-notes and the documents that teachers produced before, during, and immediately after the seminar. As the classroom interactions were originally conducted in Japanese, the transcriptions were later translated into English for presentation in this paper using the back translation technique. Among the several CLEs that indicated the teachers' varying degrees of pragmatic awareness found throughout the seminar, I present the case of Mr. X, in which his pragmatic awareness, as well as that of others, was made explicit, challenged, questioned, co-constructed, and reshaped in a series of interactions. I attempt to describe this process in detail below by analyzing how teacher learning was supported in the classroom discourse.

Findings

In the third hour of the seminar on teaching pragmatics, the class was discussing the authenticity of textbook materials and possible ways in which they could be adapted. First, a dialogue from a government-authorized textbook, *New Crown 1* published in 2006 was introduced and compared with Kakiuchi's (2005) research findings with regard to the expressions used in greetings in English. The class agreed that this textbook dialogue was a typical one in EFL textbooks in Japan introduced at a very early stage in the instruction. In this short encounter, two young speakers around the age 12 exchange every-day greetings in language that seems overly formal and stilted. In addition, there was little explicit explanation about the relationship between the characters other than the introduction, which included their

pictures, names, and nationalities. These general characteristics about textbook materials being deprived of contextual information and pragmatic/discursive authenticity were no news to most teachers, as is often pointed out in the literature (e.g., Basturkmen, 2001; Diepenbroek, 2010; McConachy, 2009) and empirically demonstrated (e.g., by Bardovi-Harlig, Hartford, Mahan-Taylor, Morgan, & Reynolds, 1991; Boxer & Pickering, 1995; Nguyen, 2011; Usó-Juan, 2008; Vellenga, 2004). The textbook dialogue was then contrasted with another naturalistic role-play between pragmatically competent speakers of American English in a similar context. Then, the class was invited to discuss teachers' observations of how they taught greetings (see the excerpt).

Excerpt (TE: teacher educator; X: Mr. X; T1, T2, T3: other teachers)

1 | TE: so, what do you think? How do you teach greetings?
2 | T1: about "what's up," I recently went to XX School, then for the first time, um,
3 | in the cram school textbook … [inaudible] "what's up" came up.
4 | TE: right, it's important to also know how to respond to "what's up?" "What's up?"
5 | "Nothing much" or "What's up?" "What's up?" because sometimes it's just a
6 | greeting where they don't expect an answer much, a greeting without much
7 | meaning.
8 | X: we teach by building up [students' knowledge gradually] – so it's natural to
9 | think that we need to begin by giving the simplest expressions possible…
10 | TE: right.
11 | X: as far as the editing goes, I think foreign experts take part, so I think there
12 | should be some kind of solid principles in editing the material.
13 | TE: Yes, I wish I could believe so, but even ESL textbooks published in the U.S.
14 | written by native speakers, when they are analyzed — I'd like us to analyze
15 | some of them later if time allows — they have a number of unnatural language
16 | uses. Um, ESL teachers say textbooks are no good. This is because
17 | textbook writers imagine in their heads how people speak and write textbooks
18 | by relying on that intuition. That way, textbook conversations end up being
19 | very inauthentic. Even [when the textbook writers are] native speakers. So, um,
20 | when you take a look at a textbook to teach as you do, "what, what's this
21 | English!" Um, we use the word, "stilted" and there are many frozen
22 | conversations in textbooks. And, um, this is a serious problem, indeed. If we
23 | teach that way, students will begin to speak that way too. So, I think we can say
24 | this is a very serious issue.
25 | X: but there is no [nationally implemented] authorization [of textbooks] in the
26 | U.S., is there?
27 | TE: no, not in the US. But even if Japanese textbooks are [nationally] authorized,
28 | what they check during the inspection is probably grammar, not pragmatics at
29 | all. I say this because if a native speaker, or a non-native speaker who knows
30 | English to some degree, takes a look at this dialogue, they see that this is a type
31 | of conversation that's not realistic. Um, it's very formal for a dialogue between
32 | friends. It can be between a teacher and a friend [student] but cannot be between
33 | friends, seventh-graders, I don't think. So we can say this is a conversation that

34 | completely disregards its social and cultural contexts. So, this can be an example
35 | of how stilted a dialogue could sound in context even if the grammar is correct.
36 | Now, this, yes, please.
37 | T2: our school started having ALTs [assistant language teachers] – how about getting
their help?
38 | TE: yes, yes.
39 | T2: we see and hear every year how strange our textbooks are, and there are
40 | published books on this. But this is obligatory – I didn't choose textbooks. The
41 | city does. We practitioners have no say…
42 | T3: we check [dialogues], since we think some dialogues are impossible…
43 | TE: how do you do that?
44 | T3: native-speaking teachers change greeting exchanges. They say we need to take
45 | the context into consideration; otherwise it gets strange…
46 | TE: they say it's strange, of course.
47 | X: isn't there this sort of arguments in authorizing the textbooks [at the national
48 | level]?
49 | TE: probably not. So this is a good example of how much pragmatics has been
50 | neglected… Um, we discussed an ideal classroom yesterday, but what do you
51 | think is an ideal way? How do you think we should edit our textbooks? …

In Line 1, the teacher educator opened the discussion by asking how the participants taught greetings in their classrooms. After one teacher (T1) volunteered to discuss the use of a common informal greeting expression that he saw for the first time in a textbook, Mr. X spoke somewhat in defense of the textbook in Line 8. He maintained that because we needed to accommodate learners' level of proficiency, it was reasonable to start with simple greeting expressions. Mr. X continued in Line 11 and revealed his confidence in government-authorized English textbooks published in Japan. He implied that because "foreign experts" had edited those textbooks, the language material should be authentic. To this, the teacher educator responded in Line 13 that even some ESL textbooks written by native speakers of English in the U.S. had stilted conversations because textbook writers often relied excessively on their intuition.

In Line 25, Mr. X protested that those textbooks published in the U.S. were not centrally directed. He was implying that Japanese government-approved EFL textbooks, which had undergone government's textbook inspection, might better reflect natural language use than commercially available ESL textbooks published in the U.S. In the class discussion that preceded the excerpt, the teacher educator had already contrasted a sample of inauthentic textbook dialogues with some data from naturally-occurring and naturalistic greetings in order for the teachers to notice the gap. Yet, Mr. X did not seem to have been convinced. The teacher educator explained in Line 27 that the government inspection perhaps focused on grammatical accuracy rather than on pragmatic appropriateness and that, as a result, the language in the sample dialogue might be acceptable for a teacher-student interaction but proved to be overly formal for an interaction between 12-year olds. Then she reiterated in Line 33 how such language presentations neglected the sociocultural context of language use.

Then another teacher (T2) volunteered the view in Line 37 that Japanese teachers of EFL could use native-English-speaking ALTs in order to improve the pragmatic language use in the textbook. In Line 39, he continued to express his dilemma. While he was well aware of the inauthenticity in the language materials in the textbooks he used, practitioners like him had no choice over adopting other materials. This statement clearly demonstrates his pragmatic awareness of the fact that many textbook dialogues in government authorized EFL textbooks fell short of desirable authenticity. Another teacher (T3), added in Line 42 that she and her colleagues checked the authenticity of textbook dialogues and found some highly unnatural. In Line 44, she stated that her native-English-speaking colleagues modified greeting exchanges, saying that they needed to take the context into consideration in order for the dialogue to sound natural. Apparently, at least these two teachers were already familiar with the inauthenticity of language in some Japanese EFL textbooks. Through their contributions, Mr. X's initial faith in the credibility of the government-authorized textbooks was being explicitly challenged in interaction, not only by the teacher educator but also by his peer teachers, who were equally or more professionally experienced than he was.

However, Mr. X was still skeptical. He wondered in Line 47 whether government authorities ever discussed the issue of pragmatics. However, even with some skepticism remaining, the other teachers' already-developed pragmatic awareness may have had an impact on his new realization that was only emerging in this interaction. Although the audio-recorded discussion beyond Line 51 did not include evidence of Mr. X's belief in this area any further, the interaction presented in the excerpt may have prompted him to acutely realize the inauthenticity of some textbook materials and the importance of teaching pragmatics in the language classroom. As the teacher educator's field notes showed, Mr. X later expressed his shock in finding that the government-authorized textbooks, which he considered of impeccable quality, in fact often had less-than-authentic representations of how English is used pragmatically. The field notes also included a record of Mr. X coming to the teacher educator after the seminar to express how eye-opening it was to have gained this new pragmatic awareness.

Taking this pragmatic awareness a step further, the seminar encouraged the participants to use empirically-established information to help improve the authenticity of the language materials they use, rather than relying on their own or the material developers' intuition alone. After examples of empirically-established pragmatic language uses and applications to instruction were presented, teachers were asked to outline in small groups some instruction tailored for their classrooms incorporating pragmatics. Mr. X paired up with another high school teacher and attempted to create a naturalistic (i.e., not *natural*) dialogue that would be used as the basis of their instruction. Interestingly, they did this by imagining what the characters would say, depending solely on their own introspection. Although their pragmatic awareness about dialogue authenticity was at work, they somewhat missed the point of the seminar by not utilizing research-supported information. This discrepancy was noted in the teacher educator's field notes. In the entire class discussion that followed the report on the instruction designed by each group, the class brainstormed on other ways to inform their adaptation, such as utilizing empirical information and sampling role-played interactions among pragmatically competent English speakers.

Discussion

Considering the fact that Japanese EFL textbooks are known among practitioners and researchers for often lacking pragmatic authenticity (e.g., Kakiuchi, 2005; McGroarty & Taguchi, 2005), Mr.X's initial level of pragmatic awareness and confidence in nationally authorized textbook materials may be characterized as rather naïve. However, for some non-native English-speaking foreign language teachers like him in Japan who remain in an Expanding Circle country (Kachru & Nelson, 1996) for most of their lives, more sophisticated intuition or pragmatics-focused resources may not always be available.

When Mr. X's initial approval of the government authority was revealed in the seminar interaction, his awareness was first challenged by the teacher educator. Mr. X repeatedly defended the credibility of government-authorized materials at different points in the interaction with her. Mr. X may have gradually warmed on this issue as his peer teachers later joined the discussion to demonstrate their better informed pragmatic awareness. Mr. X may have felt challenged, or perhaps even disturbed, not so much by the teacher educator's observation alone but rather by the realization that his peer teachers shared the same awareness as the teacher educator and had already taken action to improve the quality of the language materials. By encountering the new perspective recurrently from different sources, Mr. X's pragmatic awareness appeared to be questioned and reflected upon, gradually co-constructed, and reshaped through negotiation as the interaction progressed. As recorded in the field notes, Mr. X had come to more critically evaluate textbook language by the conclusion of the seminar.

Thus far, we have seen some evidence of the development of teacher cognition that was negotiated and reconstructed in interaction with others through relevant class discussions. However, this, of course, does not mean that the teachers would actually implement pragmatics-focused instruction in their future classrooms. Even if they did, it is unknown whether they would design instruction by drawing on the awareness and insights developed in the seminar. As described earlier, two of the teachers, including Mr. X, were observed to resort solely to their introspection in attempting to create authentic language materials, which had previously been discouraged in the seminar. Many researchers have argued convincingly that actual language use is not identical to language elicited through introspection (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 1992; Judd, 1999; Kasper, 1997; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Wolfson, 1989; Rose, 1997). Thus, a warning has been issued against relying merely on one's own intuition when writing instructional materials. Unfortunately, hearing this warning may have been insufficient for teachers to change their practices that perhaps penetrated their entire careers. At the theoretical level Mr. X became able to think critically about government authorities and develop a pragmatic awareness of language authenticity through interactive negotiation. Yet, he and his peer teachers appeared to fail to apply that research-informed critical thinking to their language teaching practice, in this case, to the preparation of authentic language materials for teaching empirically-based pragmatics. Research in teacher education has sometimes identified teachers' disengagement from research evidence (e.g., Ellis, 2010; Johnson, 1996; Keily & Davis, 2010), which Barkhuizen and Borg (2010) consider "an issue of wide current relevance" (p. 239). In the particular seminar being investigated in this study,

empirical readings in interlanguage pragmatics were only recommended prior to the seminar but not assigned because of the short-term nature of the course that included a number of topics. Thus, the challenge of encouraging teachers to apply research-based language analysis to their practice may have been more serious than in typical courses in which research-oriented readings are assigned. In any case, the present study seems to lend support to this phenomenon of teachers failing to relate their practice to research-informed insights.

Pedagogical implications

While this study has revealed a process of development with regard to a teacher's pragmatic awareness as seen in classroom discourse, the co-constructed nature of the process cannot be assumed to be a common characteristic of similar professional development courses. Even in this small-scale study, teachers' initial levels of pragmatic awareness varied. In addition, the way teachers co-construct an understanding of pragmatics may be unique for each group of teachers. Moreover, such processes may or may not be entirely observable by teacher educators or researchers. What this study suggests is that it was the focal teacher's interaction with his peer teachers that probably contributed to his enhanced pragmatic awareness. It was not just his interaction with the teacher educator or the presentation of seemingly convincing data that contributed to his learning. This point may assist in making a case for the importance of interaction as an effective teaching strategy in teacher development courses.

Other limitations of this study overlap with those of this particular teacher development seminar, which was provided for the short term. As the present investigation was based on the data collected over a short period of time, the long-term impact of this teacher development effort is unknown. Further investigation into teachers' real-life concerns about whether or not to teach pragmatics would make a valuable contribution. Some master's programs already incorporate particular areas, such as grammar, vocabulary, and writing, into the language teaching practicum. Pragmatics should join such efforts, allowing teachers and researchers to examine authentic issues that teachers encounter and achievements they attain as they learn to teach pragmatics.

Conclusion

In the early 1980s, Thomas (1983) asked the rhetorical question: "Is pragmatics the little icing on the ginger bread?" (pp.109-110). With increasing attention being paid to pragmatics in the L2 curriculum, the answer has tended to be "no" in recent years. Twenty-eight years later, however, we may still be asking the same question in the context of language teacher education. On a positive note, instructional pragmatics may be gaining a higher profile in the language teacher education curriculum. In Vásquez and Shapless' (2009) survey, almost all of the teacher learners in MA TESOL programs were found to take applied pragmatics elective courses, while the enrollment for the theoretical equivalent was typically 50% or less. Because teachers are the primary agents in advancing instructional pragmatics, they are entitled to be more informed about interlanguage pragmatics and professionally prepared to teach pragmatics, as well as to reflect on their own practices effectively. Needless to say, systematic investigation into such teacher education practices will be increasingly important if pragmatics is to truly play a key role in language instruction.

Notes

[1] This tendency excludes the situation at a few US-based universities located in Japan, which do offer courses focused on instructional pragmatics.

[2] Part of the colloquium presentation has been incorporated into this paper, along with an earlier version of my presentation at the annual conference of Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) in 2010.

[3] As mentioned earlier, the participants were asked to choose one theme from the three given in the EFL seminars. Instructional pragmatics was one of them, and two of the participant teachers selected it.

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