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## RESEARCH METHODS IN INTERLANGUAGE PRAGMATICS

**Abstract:** *The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of various research methods used in interlanguage pragmatics to examine the development of pragmatic competence in foreign language learners. Data collection methods in interlanguage pragmatics are categorized into three main types: methods for researching spoken interaction, questionnaires, and oral and written self-reports. Methods for researching spoken interaction include the collection of authentic data as well as guided conversation and role-playing. Questionnaires (discourse completion tests, multiple-choice questions, and rating scales) are the most commonly used methods in interlanguage pragmatics research due to the ease of construction and implementation. The third type of data collection method includes oral and written self-reports (interviews, diaries, and verbal protocols). For each method, advantages and disadvantages are discussed, and research examples are provided. The paper concludes with a proposal for a potential study on the development of pragmatic competence among foreign language learners within the Croatian educational context.*

**Keywords:** *spoken interaction, questionnaires, oral and written self-reports, pragmatic competence, foreign language learners*

## INTRODUCTION

The main goal of learning and teaching a foreign language is communicative competence, that is, enabling students to communicate in the foreign language. The pragmatic component of communicative competence is often an “invisible” or “less apparent” aspect of foreign language learning and teaching. In the literature, pragmatic competence is usually referred to as the third (or fourth) component of communicative competence, following linguistic (grammatical) and sociolinguistic competence (CEFR, 2001). This component is also less frequently the focus of research compared to other components of communicative competence. The study of the development of pragmatic competence in foreign language learners is the domain of interlanguage pragmatics. Interlanguage pragmatics is called a “second-generation hybrid” (Kasper and Blum-Kulka, 1993) because it belongs to two fields: second language acquisition and pragmatics. Conducting research in interlanguage pragmatics is challenging, as such research examines the “secret rules” of language (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001), which are often less evident to non-native learners and researchers than, for example, syntactic rules.

This paper aims to present research methods in interlanguage pragmatics and examples of research to provide a systematic overview of these methods and encourage reflection on future interlanguage pragmatics research in the Croatian educational context. Research into pragmatic development in foreign language learners adopts its methodology from cross-cultural pragmatics and interlanguage pragmatics. These two fields derive their research methodology from various social sciences, such as descriptive linguistics, sociology, linguistic anthropology, developmental pragmatics, cognitive psychology, psycholinguistics, and social psychology (Kasper and Rose, 2002). In their frequently cited article, *Research Methods in Interlanguage Pragmatics*, Kasper and Dahl (1991) present research methods in interlanguage pragmatics as a continuum, based on the “constraints they impose on data” (1991, p. 216). These constraints refer to the extent to which data are predetermined by the research instrument used, as well as by the modality of language use. Kasper and Dahl (1991, p. 217) illustrate various data collection methods in interlanguage pragmatics as follows (Figure 1):

**Figure 1.**

*Data collection methods based on the degree of control and language modality (according to Kasper and Dahl, 1991).*

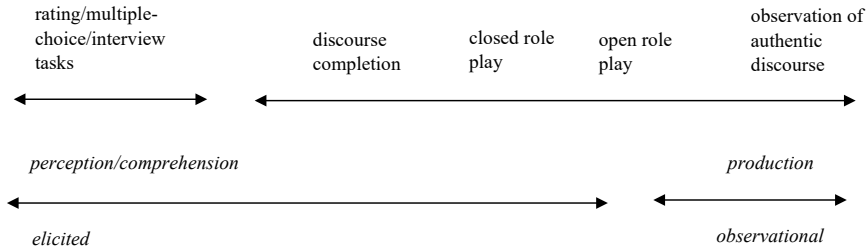


Figure 1 reflects “a tension between the desire for highly controlled production tasks that yield comparable language samples and the desire to integrate the investigation of authentic discourse into studies of interlanguage pragmatics” (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 2005, p. 1). The research methods shown on the left side of Figure 1 (rating/multiple-choice/interview) are used to collect data on how research participants understand the pragmatic aspects of a language (in the case of interlanguage pragmatics, this often involves speech acts). These methods are “strictly controlled” in the sense of careful and time-intensive preparation of instruments that allow participants minimal or no freedom in responding while the researcher maintains almost complete control over the methodological aspects of the research.

The central position in Figure 1 is occupied by methods such as discourse completion tests and closed and open role play. These methods also impose certain structural constraints on participants when responding, and the data they collect pertain to learners’ language production. The observation of authentic discourse, shown on the right side of Figure 1, also gathers data related to participants’ speech production. Unlike the other methods mentioned, observation, due to its structure and apart from the researcher’s presence, does not restrict learners’ language production. It is worth noting that Kasper and Dahl (1991) provided an overview of 39 studies in cross-linguistic pragmatics in their paper, contributing to the systematization of this scientific discipline by reviewing and categorizing research methods.

Kasper and Rose (2002) took a somewhat different approach than Kasper and Dahl (1991) did in categorizing data collection methods in interlanguage pragmatics. They divided the methods into three categories: spoken interaction (authentic discourse, guided conversation, role play), questionnaires (discourse completion tests, multiple choice, rating scales), and written and oral self-reports (interviews, diaries, verbal reports). This paper will describe these

methods in the specified order, outline their advantages and disadvantages, and provide examples of relevant studies.

## **SPOKEN INTERACTION**

The following data collection methods are used to research spoken interaction in interlanguage pragmatics: authentic discourse, guided conversation (discussion on a given topic and sociolinguistic interview), and role play. Kasper and Rose (2002) state that these methodological options share a common feature – namely, they are realized through interactive spoken language production, enabling the examination of various features of spoken discourse.

Authentic discourse refers to collecting real speech events within an institution, most often a university. This type of data is gathered through note-taking (field notes) and audio and video recording (Kasper and Rose, 2002). Cohen (1996) lists the following advantages of data collected by recording/filming natural speech:

- the researcher gains insight into the frequency with which a certain type of speech act appears in natural speech
- the data are spontaneous
- the data reflects what speakers actually say, not what they think they should say
- speakers react to a natural situation, not to a fabricated and likely unfamiliar one
- the communication event has real-world consequences
- the event may be a source of rich pragmatic structures.
- This approach to data collection also has certain difficulties:
- the speech act being studied may not occur frequently in natural speech
- it is difficult to control variables such as gender and knowledge level
- collecting and analysing data takes a lot of time
- there may not be enough examples of the discourse feature we are studying, or there may be none at all
- the use of recording equipment can be a disruptive factor
- using notes as a supplement or replacement for recordings relies on memory.

As previously mentioned, research on authentic speech events involving non-native speakers has focused mostly on institutional talk, such as academic advising sessions. Unlike everyday conversations, where participants typically have equal discourse rights and obligations, interaction within an institution occurs within the framework of institutional goals and tasks, which makes such interaction purposeful, structured, predictable, and often subject to repetition (Kasper and Rose, 2002; Kasper, 2008). This form of discourse – authentic but

simultaneously constrained by various social rules – is suitable for intercultural and cross-cultural comparison, as well as for developmental research (Kasper, 2008). One of the main reasons researchers avoid collecting authentic data is the inability to control different variables affecting communication and the long period needed to collect sufficient data, i.e., for the discourse feature being studied to appear enough times in the discourse. In institutional talk, most variables are already known, and there is an opportunity to investigate numerous discourse features. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (2005) state that the advantage of institutional discourse is that it resembles a natural experiment: it is partially “controlled”, meaning it is pre-structured, but the structure and “control” are the result of the participants’ actions within the institution, not limitations imposed by the research. Additionally, institutional interaction is part of the context and carries social consequences for the participants (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 2005).

Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford are the authors of many studies on institutional discourse, and here, we briefly outline the procedure and conclusions of two studies from 1996. Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996) analysed requests sent via email to the authors of the study (who were also participants’ professors). Data collection lasted a year and included both native and non-native speakers of English. The requests were analysed based on their emotional effect on the authors and then categorized into those with a positive emotional effect and those with a negative effect. The analysis also examined the linguistic form of each request, which included the use of modification, the level of imposition, the content of the request, the justification students provided for making the request, and the acknowledgement of the “cost” of fulfilling the request for the authors. The results showed no significant difference between native and non-native speakers in terms of the linguistic structure of the requests. In negative requests, the most commonly used strategy was with the verb “I want” (e.g., I want/I need). The use of this strategy leaves no room for negotiation and, in a way, amplifies the rights of the requester while increasing the obligations of the person to whom the request is addressed. The use of internal modification was consistent for positive and negative requests in the data collected from native speakers. Negative requests from non-native speakers, however, differed – they included, on average, fewer than one politeness marker (e.g., please) per request. Regarding the timeframe for fulfilling the request, in positive requests, it was either not mentioned or left to the professor to decide, while in negative requests, the students themselves specified the deadline. Acknowledgement of the “cost” was more frequent in positive requests for both groups. The authors concluded that many factors influenced whether a request was perceived as positive or negative and that students must consider these factors when formulating their requests.

In the second study from 1996, Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford analysed the characteristics of the linguistic input to which students were exposed, based on the results of a longitudinal study conducted in 1993 involving both native and non-native linguistics students. Data for the 1993 longitudinal study were collected during sessions with an assigned professor acting as an advisor. The purpose of these advising sessions was for the student, with the professor's specific guidance and information, to create a schedule for the next semester and choose courses that best fit their needs. The corpus was analysed concerning the realization of the speech acts of making proposals and requests. The results of the longitudinal study showed that the pragmatic competence of non-native speakers improved in terms of their successful participation in shaping their schedules. Over time, non-native students learned to make their own proposals and much less frequently rejected the professor's suggestions. Both groups learned the institutional rules in the meantime. On a micro-level, however, non-native speakers differed significantly from native speakers. Although they mastered the institutional rules, their pragmatic competence was not sufficiently developed to use these rules through linguistically and pragmatically well-formed requests and proposals. Non-native speakers showed no improvement in using internal modifications (mitigators, e.g., downgraders). Native speakers used mitigators in all their proposals (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1993).

In the article from 1996, Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford provide a detailed analysis of the role of language input in academic advising sessions, focusing on the progress or stagnation present in data collected from non-native speakers. This research, therefore, is a continuation of their 1993 study. The analysis was conducted with respect to the following aspects of input: the advisor's explicit teaching of the interview structure, the nature of the advisory act itself, which takes place in a one-on-one conversation (thus, students do not have the opportunity to observe other students who could serve as models), the advisor as a source of language input, the potential impact of stereotypical viewpoints on language input, and the limitations in the grammatical and pragmatic competence of the students themselves (which is why the available language input is unusable). The analysis showed that advisors almost always began each interview by asking students for a proposed schedule. During the interviews, advisors provided students with extensive information related to course selection. The authors observed that advisors never corrected linguistically incorrect proposals or rejections of proposals made by the students. The authors also suggest that it would be beneficial for non-native speakers to observe native speakers in situations where they need to propose or reject something. Certain parts of the advisors' statements could also serve as a direct source of input – the authors provided specific examples that non-native speakers could use in their responses. However, they concluded that this input did not necessarily translate into intake. It is also possible that some students hold a stereotypical belief

that Americans are not particularly polite, which may have led them to make less effort to be polite in conversations. Similarly, the grammatical competence of non-native speakers might have been at a lower level than their pragmatic competence, which could explain their failure to use some potentially useful constructions. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1996) emphasized the need for further research to determine how institutional discourse influences second language acquisition.

As mentioned in the introduction to the paper, elicited conversation is also used in the research of speech interaction in interlanguage pragmatics. Elicited conversation is defined as “any conversation staged to collect data” (Kasper and Rose, 2002, p. 84). Two variations of this data collection method are used in research studies: discussion on a given topic (conversation task) and sociolinguistic interview. In the conversation task, participants are asked to talk about a specific topic or achieve a goal set in advance by the researcher collaboratively. Depending on the research goals, instructions for this type of task can be more or less detailed.

Billmyer (1990) used a conversation task as the methodological framework for her research. The study involved non-native English speakers from Japan and native English speakers, and the author aimed to establish whether explicit teaching of formal speech rules would accelerate the development of complimenting and responding to compliments in second language learners. The participants were divided into two groups, a control group and an experimental group. The experimental group was explicitly taught the rules for giving compliments. Members of this group also met weekly during the semester with American students of the Japanese language to practice English conversation. The conversation between the students at these meetings had a specific goal: students were asked to perform a task, namely, to steer the conversation in such a way that they would receive a compliment from the interlocutor. For this purpose, the students showed each other pictures of their families and homes or boasted about their achievements. The analysis of the results showed that students who were explicitly taught the rules produced more appropriate compliments than the control group. These students were also better at identifying the appropriate topic and context for giving compliments. Thus, the group that was explicitly taught and participated in conversations with non-native speakers was closer to the speech norm of native speakers than the control group was. Billmyer (1990) concludes that formal teaching of language usage rules in the classroom can help students communicate appropriately with native speakers of the foreign language outside of the classroom.

Using a sociolinguistic interview, Sawyer (1992) examined the acquisition of the particle *ne* by 11 learners of Japanese as a second language. The particle *ne* is frequently used in Japanese, typically at the end of a sentence, and means “Isn’t it?” or “Don’t you think so?”. The interview was structured, but the

students could, if they wished, deviate from the topic of the question in their answers. The study lasted one year, and the students were interviewed four times at regular intervals. The analysis of the students' responses showed that the acquisition of the particle *ne* began with its use in formulaic expressions. The analysis also showed that after a year of living in Japan, the students had acquired the language to such an extent that they could appropriately answer questions about themselves and their country of origin. However, only one of the students used the particle *ne* productively, which made it impossible to confirm the existence of a developmental order for this particle. Explaining the limitations of the research, the author notes that the interview format is not a natural situation for collecting conversational data, since the exchange of information was one-sided, and the students answered very similar questions on four occasions. The "asymmetry" of the interview is, according to Kasper and Rose (2002), the main drawback of this data collection method.

Another way of collecting data related to the study of speech interaction in interlanguage pragmatics is role play. Kasper and Rose (2002, p. 86) define role play as "simulations of communicative encounters based on role descriptions". Role play is most often conducted in pairs, with instructions given to students either orally or written on cards. Depending on the degree of interaction, role play is divided into closed role play and open role play (Kasper and Dahl, 1991).

In closed role play, students are required to respond to a described situation or, depending on the type of speech act being studied, to a standardized introductory remark by the interlocutor/researcher. The student's response is thus organized as a "single-turn speech act" (Kasper, 2008, p. 288), at which point the closed role play ends. Since this format does not allow for multiple exchanges between interlocutors, the applicability of closed role play is "quite limited" (Kasper, 2008, p. 289). In open role play, there is an initial description of the situation and an assignment of roles, but the course and outcome of the interaction are in no way determined (Kasper and Rose, 2002). Kasper and Dahl (1991) state that interaction in open role play is "real" within the context of that activity. Kasper (2008) believes that open role play, in terms of the course and communication goals, can be more or less complex. The least complex open role play requires participants to communicate in certain routine speech situations, achieve a common goal, and use formulaic language. Much more complex is a role play that places participants in unfamiliar and unstructured situations where they must use complex linguistic constructions and negotiate to achieve agreement on divergent communicative goals. The complexity of the task, of course, depends on the research objectives.

The most important difference between open and closed role play is the fact that open role play takes place through "many turns and discourse phases" (Kasper and Rose, 2002, p. 87) or "in its full discourse context" (Kasper

and Dahl, 1991, p. 228). Unlike authentic discourse, open role play enables researchers to analyse conversational aspects independently of the context and goals of communication, while also allowing them to use roles and contexts in which participants will perform precisely specified speech acts based on the research objective or a specific description of the situation and the role division (Kasper and Rose, 2002). Furthermore, Kasper and Dahl (1991) state that an important advantage of open role play is that it resembles authentic conversations in terms of turn-taking, making improvised decisions about the further course of communication depending on the interlocutor's contribution, negotiating local and global goals, sequential organisation of speech acts, and selecting strategies depending on the course of communication. The difference between authentic data and role play lies in the fact that, at its core, role play reflects the goal of the researcher, not the participants in communication. Golato (2003), however, presents a range of shortcomings of role play as a method of collecting "quasi-authentic" data:

- although participants in role play interact with each other, the context of their interaction is usually fictional, i.e., not real; the situations in role play are entirely constructs of the researcher, designed according to the research goals, not authentic communicative needs of students
- if we assume that the context of role play is not real, then participants become actors who act out a situation as they imagine it; participants only present their beliefs about roles that they (most often) have never had in real life
- role play lacks sociolinguistic variables that are highly important in authentic communication
- unlike real-life conversations, verbal interactions and actions performed within role play have no real-world consequences for participants
- translating, transcribing, and analysing role play requires a lot of time.

Liddicoat and Crozet (2001) analysed student performance in a role play activity where participants were asked to answer the following question: "Did you have a pleasant weekend?". The participants were Australian students of French, and the question about the weekend was chosen due to the interesting cultural difference in interpreting this question. In Australian English, this question is formulaic and represents merely a ritual greeting at work after the weekend, so the answer is also formulaic. The question is asked only out of politeness and typically does not result in a deeper discussion. In French, however, the situation is diametrically opposite – for them, this question is genuine, often marking the beginning of a detailed conversation. Since this study focused on teaching pragmatic aspects of a foreign language, the cultural difference in interpreting the same question by the French and Australians was repeatedly presented and explained to students in a module about spoken language and culture. Liddicoat and Crozet (2001) recorded student responses

to this question before the start of the module, during the module, and a year after students completed it, in order to assess the impact of explicit teaching on the acquisition of interactional norms. They chose role playing as their data collection method because they believed it was the only method that, in a situation where students use French solely in a pedagogical context, would allow them to gather a corpus of comparable spoken data. The data analysis showed that immediately after teaching, students integrated elements related to the “French” interpretation of the weekend question into their speech, meaning elements that were not formulaic. They developed “the awareness of the system” related to the cultural expectations of speakers of the target language. However, students did not equally acquire discourse features. Although they adjusted their responses to align with the cultural norms of the foreign language in terms of content, they were less successful in terms of linguistic form. The authors concluded that such activities, which raise students’ awareness of conversational style and content, could result in changes in students’ interlanguage. Interactional norms can and should be part of foreign language teaching and learning.

Tateyama (2001) investigated the effect of explicit and implicit teaching on the use of the formulaic expression *sumimasen* (meaning “excuse me” or “sorry”) among beginner learners of Japanese as a foreign language. The author noted that apologizing, expressing gratitude, and gaining attention were the three primary functions of this formula. Over the course of eight weeks of lessons, the explicit group received detailed explanations of the three functions of *sumimasen* on four occasions, and participated in a series of explicit metapragmatic activities, including watching videos. The implicit group did not participate in such activities, except for watching the same videos with instructions to pay attention to formulaic expressions in speech. Along with role playing, other instruments were used in the study, including multiple-choice tests, discourse completion tests, and interviews. The analysis of results showed that, in terms of the role play and multiple-choice tests, there were no significant differences between the explicit and implicit groups. The author suggested that the period of teaching might have been too short to show the effectiveness of the different teaching conditions. The author also noted other factors that might have influenced the results, such as student motivation, the use of Japanese outside the classroom, and generally better academic performance among the implicit group.

Using interactive role play, Hassall (2003) researched how Australian students of Indonesian formulated requests in everyday situations compared to native speakers. The analysis revealed that both students and native speakers used the same types of strategies to make requests (direct, conventionally indirect, and unconventionally indirect strategies). Students frequently used the strategy, which the author named “Want statement” (a subtype of direct strategies), which native speakers rarely employed. A difference also appeared

in the use of the imperative form, which native speakers often used, while students did so rarely. Both groups used conventionally indirect requests in more than 40% of the cases, though they differed in their use of modal verbs: native speakers primarily used “can” for their requests, while students used “may” or “be allowed”. Additionally, students tended to use unconventionally indirect strategies more often than native speakers. Hassall (2003) suggested that the use of conventional indirectness as the primary strategy among non-native speakers was a direct result of positive transfer from their native language and the formal simplicity of this question type. The frequent use of the “Want statement” among Indonesian language students was attributed to a preference for efficiency and simplicity. The rare use of the imperative was explained by transfer from the native language – the author noted that native speakers of Australian English avoided using the imperative for request-making. The unconventionally indirect strategies used by the students were essentially pseudo-strategies. The author explains the use of the verbs “may” and “be allowed” as being influenced by textbooks, where “can” is always associated with ability and “may/be allowed” with permission. Hassall (2003) concluded that the analysis supported the notion that features of learner interlanguage (in this case, illustrated by the speech act of requests) always have multiple explanations.

## QUESTIONNAIRES

In comparison with the study of spoken interaction, the types of research questions that can be addressed using questionnaires are necessarily limited:

*Excluded from investigation are precisely those pragmatic features that are specific to oral interactive discourse – any aspect related to the dynamics of a conversation, turn taking and the conversational mechanisms related to it, sequencing of action, speaker – listener coordination, features of speech production that may have pragmatic import, such as temporal variables, and all paralinguistic and nonverbal elements.* (Kasper and Rose, 2002, p. 89).

Kasper and Rose (2002) point out that, despite their limitations, questionnaires are the most commonly used data collection method in interlanguage pragmatics. Notably, other authors focusing on the methodological aspects of interlanguage pragmatics research have echoed this claim (Kasper and Dahl, 1991; Golato, 2003; Kasper, 2008). One reason why questionnaires are often used is that they are often seen as a convenient and quick solution for collecting large amounts of data; however, Kasper and Rose (2002) argue that this is a mistaken reason. Questionnaires should only be used when their use is justified by the research objectives.

The most used questionnaires in interlanguage pragmatics are the Discourse Completion Task (DCT), the Multiple-Choice Test (MCT), and

the scaled-response questionnaire. These questionnaires differ in the type of response expected from research participants. The Discourse Completion Task implies an “open” response – participants are asked to write an answer they consider coherent and appropriate for a given situation. In the multiple-choice and scaled-response formats, participants are provided with pre-set answers and are asked to choose the one they find most appropriate. This section will examine these types of questionnaires in more detail.

In literature, the Discourse Completion Task is often referred to as the Discourse Completion Test, and the two terms are used interchangeably (Blum-Kulka, 1982; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Rose, 1994; Rose and Ono, 1995; Fukushima, 2003; Liu, 2006; Barron, 2003). Kasper and Dahl (1991, p. 221) state that the DCT is a “much-used and much beleaguered” data collection method in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993), seeking to highlight the dominance of this type of questionnaire, supported this claim with a simple statistical analysis: of the 39 interlanguage pragmatics studies compiled by Kasper and Dahl (1991) in their article, 11 studies (31%) used the Discourse Completion Test as the sole source of data, and an additional 8 studies used it as one of the instruments. Thus, the DCT was used in 19 of the 39 studies (54%). The observation of authentic speech was used as a method of data collection in only 2 of the 39 studies.

Kasper and Dahl (1991, p. 221) define the discourse completion task (DCT) as a written questionnaire that includes a certain “number of brief situational descriptions, followed by a short dialogue with an empty slot for the speech act under study”. Participants are asked to write the response they think fits the given context. The context is structured in such a way that the participant responds using the specific speech act that is the subject of the investigation. The “conventional” or “classic” form of the DCT also includes the interlocutor’s response, which is another element of the context that makes the planned illocutionary act of the speaker explicit. Here is an example:

*At the professor’s office*

*A student has borrowed a book from her teacher, which she promised to return today. When meeting her teacher, however, she realizes that she forgot to bring it along.*

*Teacher: Miriam, I hope you brought the book I lent you.*

*Miriam:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Teacher: OK, but please remember it next week.*

(Blum-Kulka et al., 1989).

In his classification of pragmatic tests, Brown (2001) also mentions the oral discourse completion task (ODCT). The oral discourse completion task consists of a series of situations recorded on a tape recorder. The participants are asked to listen to the recording and verbally state what they would say in that situation, also recording their responses. In his cross-sectional study of

interlanguage pragmatics development among primary school students from Hong Kong, Rose (2000) used a variant of the oral discourse completion task, which he called the cartoon oral production task (COPT). The basis of each situation in the COPT was an illustration of the situation accompanied by a short description. A common character in each illustration was a boy, described to the students as their peer, who, through the illustrations in the task, encountered the same everyday situations that the research participants experienced (school and family situations such as asking for help with homework, borrowing a book or game from a brother or sister). Data collection proceeded in the following way: students were first told to look at each illustration, then a brief description of the situation was read to them, after which they were asked to record their response on the tape recorder. It should also be noted that native Cantonese speakers also participated in the study in order to examine the presence of pragmatic transfer from the first language. To make the context as familiar as possible to them, native speakers were told that the boy whose everyday situations were presented through the instrument was a student at one of the primary schools in Hong Kong, while students learning English as a foreign language were told that the boy was from Hong Kong, emigrated to Canada, and now attended school there where, of course, he spoke only English. Rose (2000) noted that this situation was familiar to most people in Hong Kong, including primary school students. A similar context appeared in the questionnaire used for the continuation of this research, except this time the participants were secondary school students (Rose, 2009). In this instrument, however, due to administrative reasons, illustrations could not be used, although this had been the author's original intention. Therefore, the questionnaire was contextualized in this way so that the instrument would appear more authentic, allowing students to better identify with the boy in the questionnaire. Another advantage of this instrument was that it allowed the inclusion of language learning beginners in the research. Namely, students did not have to read situational descriptions and provide written answers in a foreign language. This is why Flores Salgado (2008) used a modified COPT as the primary instrument in her dissertation to examine the development of request speech acts and apology speech acts among Mexican students at three levels of English language learning.

Since the discourse completion task, or some form of it, is an instrument frequently used in interlanguage pragmatics research, the validity of this instrument has been the subject of numerous studies. The first study aimed at examining the validity of the DCT was conducted by Beebe and Cummings in 1996. The authors compared data collected through the discourse completion task with data obtained from telephone conversations, focusing on the speech act of refusal. The theme of the telephone conversation used to design the situation in the DCT was authentic: one of the authors called English language teachers to ask them to volunteer at a TESOL conference in New York. The

analysis showed that there were significant differences between the authentic data and the data collected through the DCT. The data collected through the DCT differed in terms of speech quantity, style of expression, and the range of semantic formulas used. In the telephone conversations, four times more words were spoken than were written in the discourse completion task. Beebe and Cummings explained this by the very format of the Discourse Completion Test (DCT). The instrument consists of a description of the situation and several blank lines for writing responses, which forces participants to condense their answers. The format of the instrument resembles a test, and the situations are most often fictional. All of this results in shorter and more concise answers, where the key formulas needed to fulfil social requirements are used all at once, most often without clarification or modification of statements. The authors state that “written role plays bias the response toward less negotiation, less hedging, less repetition, less elaboration, less variety and ultimately less talk” (Beebe and Cummings, 1996, p. 71). The results also showed that telephone conversations were more diverse than written responses in terms of the different formulas and strategies used by participants. However, content analysis revealed that written questionnaires accurately reflect the content expressed in natural speech. Beebe and Cummings (1996) believe that these results legitimize the use of the DCT in research since it has been shown that native speakers respond to the DCT by writing stereotypical answers that contain “an almost formulaic core of semantic content” (1996, p. 75). At the end of the article, the authors conclude that the DCT is a “highly effective” instrument as a means for:

- quickly collecting large amounts of data
- creating an initial classification of semantic formulas and strategies that are likely to appear in natural speech
- studying stereotypical conditions for a socially appropriate response
- gaining insight into the social and psychological factors that are likely to influence speech and performance
- determining the canonical form of speech acts in the mind of a speaker of a given language.

It should be emphasised that these arguments – supporting the continued use of the DCT for data collection – have been later used by numerous authors, particularly those who have employed the DCT in their studies, where the advantages of this instrument aligned with the goals of their research (e.g., Hill, 1997). The authors also emphasise that instruments like the DCT do not reflect natural speech in terms of the way of expression in real interactions, the range of formulas and strategies used, the length of responses and the number of statements, the depth of emotions shaping the response in real communication, the number of modifications, and the frequency of a particular speech act in discourse. Beebe and Cummings (1996, p. 80–81) note that discourse completion tasks “do not give us natural speech, nor do they claim to do so” but

they “do seem to give us a good idea of the stereotypical shape of the speech act”.

Yuan (2001, p. 272) notes that “limited efforts” have been made to assess the validity of the discourse completion task. In her extensive research, Yuan evaluated the following data collection methods in speech act studies: written discourse completion tests, oral discourse completion tests, notes, and authentic communication (interviews with participants). Yuan (2001) also mentions that, given the limited number of studies on data collection methods, there is no conclusive evidence showing that the discourse completion task is an accurate, valid, or appropriate method for collecting data on speech acts. The speech act in the focus of her study was the compliment (and responses to compliments), and the participants in the study were speakers of the Mandarin Chinese dialect spoken in the city of Kunming, China. The discourse completion task used in the research was based on observations of authentic speech. Some of the participants provided written responses to the test, while others gave oral responses, which were recorded with a tape recorder. Yuan (2001) recorded authentic data immediately after hearing them or at the end of the day, thus collecting a total of 256 authentic speech events. To determine the validity of the data collection methods, the mean values for the following variables were calculated: response length, number of particles indicating surprise or hesitation (e.g., *umm*, *ah*, *well*, etc.), number of repetitions, number of inversions, and number of omissions. The results of the t-test for all five variables showed that all these variables were significantly more frequent in oral responses than in written responses, both for compliments and for responses to compliments. The oral responses to the discourse completion task were twice as long as the written responses. The other features were also much more frequent in the oral test than in the written one.

Authentic data were analysed based on the same variables. In authentic speech events, inversions, repetitions, particles indicating surprise or hesitation, and omissions were very common, much more than in any form of the DCT. However, regarding the frequency of these features, responses in the oral test were much closer to natural discourse than written responses, which, Yuan (2001) argues, is certainly an advantage of the oral DCT. The main drawback of this instrument is the limitation imposed by its format. Namely, there is no possibility for negotiation between the “interlocutor” in the test and the person completing the questionnaire, which forces the participant to make all their statements in a single utterance. This situation is rare in natural communication, where replies are multiple, shorter, and exchanged rapidly.

Regarding notes and interviews, Yuan (2001) provides an interesting example where she shows that the main drawback of notes is their dependence on the researcher’s memory. Specifically, two participants were giving oral responses to the DCT and, during informal conversation, they made several

compliments which were also recorded on a tape recorder. The author then noted the same compliments in her notes. A comparison of the actual conversation and the notes showed that the author's notes were shorter than the actual conversation and incomplete. The author concludes that data collected through oral discourse completion tests more closely resemble natural speech in terms of the examined features and that the DCT is a better methodological option if the focus of the research is on natural speech. The author also points out that, generally, the choice of methodology depends on the research questions and objectives of the study.

Golato (2003) conducted a study in which he compared recordings of natural speech and discourse completion tests in the context of responses to compliments. The situations in the test were shaped based on recordings of real conversations. After a detailed analysis of examples from the authentic corpus and statistical comparisons of data collected through the discourse completion test and data from authentic conversations, the author concluded that the DCT was not an appropriate instrument for studying real speech. Golato also highlighted an important difference between the discourse completion test and authentic data: the DCT is a task in which there is a kind of delay, meaning that students have time to think about what they will write, while authentic discourse is necessarily spontaneous and unfolds in real time. Therefore, the discourse completion test is more suited for studying what people think they would say rather than what they actually say. The author concluded that the discourse completion test could not be used to study authentic speech.

The studies described in this section of the paper (Beebe and Cummings, 1996; Yuan, 2001; Golato, 2003) point to the shortcomings of the discourse completion test. However, the discourse completion test has an important advantage for examining pragmatic features and the development of pragmatic competence in the interlanguage of foreign language learners. This advantage is related to examining the features of students' pragmatic knowledge. Specifically, we cannot expect authentic and natural speech from foreign language learners, who are learning the language in a non-authentic environment from teachers who are also non-native speakers of that language, which is mentioned by the authors of nearly all studies that deal with the methodological validation of the DCT. Kasper and Rose (2002, p. 95–96) argue the following:

*Nevertheless, when carefully designed, DCTs provide useful information about speakers' pragmalinguistic knowledge of the strategies and linguistic forms by which communicative acts can be implemented, and about their sociopragmatic knowledge of the context factors under which particular strategic and linguistic choices are appropriate. Whether or not speakers use exactly the same strategies and forms in actual discourse is a different matter, but the questionnaire responses indicate what strategic and linguistic options are consonant with respondents' understanding of L2 pragmatic norms and*

*what context factors influence their choices. In L2 developmental pragmatic research, we may be interested in finding how L2 learners' knowledge develops as opposed to development in performance under the much more demanding conditions of conversational encounters. For such research purposes, DCTs are an effective option, regardless of whether the data they yield are representative of face-to-face interaction.*

Rose and Ng (2001) note that, in some cases, it is possible to observe foreign language learners' interactions, but the context in which a language is learned as a foreign language generally does not offer such opportunities. A researcher wishing to observe communication in a foreign language classroom will encounter two types of problems. The first type concerns administrative and technical issues, ranging from difficulties finding schools, teachers, and students willing to participate in the study to organisational challenges related to class schedules and the potential disruption of lessons for research purposes. The second type of problem pertains to communication within the classroom itself. Indeed, experience, as well as numerous studies, have shown that communication in the classroom typically follows an initiation-response-feedback (IRF) pattern, and examples of "true" spontaneous communication are very rare. A discourse feature or speech act that the researcher wishes to study may appear very infrequently or not at all in classroom communication. Because of all this, Rose and Ng (2001, p. 154) conclude that the use of written instruments is "inevitable": "We would like to make clear, however, that we are fully aware of the limitations of questionnaires, particularly regarding the sort of information they yield. It is crucial to understand that questionnaires are indirect measures..." Furthermore, Rose and Ng (2001) highlight that questionnaires are subject to a certain degree of reductionism, as it is simply not possible to include all the social variables that influence similar situations in real life within the brief situational descriptions that make up the DCT. The authors (2001, p. 155) also emphasize that it is very important to point out that questionnaires are "inherently artificial":

*Many researchers using DCTs have worked under the (often implicit) assumption that the data they yield are (or can be) representative of what people actually say or do in face-to-face interaction, just as those who have criticized discourse completion as a viable data collection procedure have done so on the assertion that it is not representative of actual language use. Both the advocates and critics of DCTs miss the point entirely. Questionnaires do not directly measure social (or linguistic) action, so they can neither be expected to do so nor criticized for not doing so.*

Like the classic form of the discourse completion test, the multiple-choice test is also filled out in writing. This type of questionnaire consists of brief descriptions of situations, and for each situation, several possible responses are provided. Students must choose the response that they believe best fits the

described situation. Thus, the number of possible responses is limited, which means the number of potential strategies for shaping the communicative act being studied is also limited. Below is an example from a study conducted by Rose and Ono in 1995:

*Your friend gave you a ticket for a concert next Saturday, but unfortunately, you have to work at your part-time job that day. Your senior (senpai) in the club you belong to also works part-time at the same place. You know that she doesn't have to work on Saturdays. What would you say or do?*

*a) I would say, "Can you work instead of me next Saturday?"*

*b) I would not go to the concert.*

*c) I would say, "I can't work next Saturday, and I don't know what to do."*

*d) I would say, "Please work instead of me next Saturday."*

In the field of interlanguage pragmatics, multiple-choice tests are used to study pragmatic understanding of utterances (Fukushima, 2003), the productive use of speech acts and routines (Rose and Ono, 1995), and to conduct metapragmatic assessments (Koike, 1989). Brown (2001) points out that the advantage of this instrument lies in the fact that it is a written questionnaire, which requires little time from the participants. Additionally, calculating the responses is not a problem. However, the main drawbacks of this instrument are that it only assesses written receptive language production, and it does not encourage spoken production or self-reflection. Liu (2006) highlights that, unlike other formats where multiple-choice questions are used, the choice of answers in this type of questionnaire is based on appropriateness, rather than accuracy. In other words, distractors in the multiple-choice discourse completion test are not correct or incorrect, but rather more or less appropriate based on the described situation. Based on the results of research conducted by Rose (1994) and Rose and Ono (1995), Fukushima (2003) concludes that the advantage of a multiple-choice test is that it expands the range of possible responses. For example, among the options, there may be a response that participants consider most appropriate for a given situation, but that they could not recall themselves. This type of questionnaire also requires much less cognitive engagement than the "classic" discourse completion test. In the multiple-choice test, participants are only asked to assess which of the limited number of responses is most appropriate, considering the contextual factors described and their own practical experience. In contrast, the classic discourse completion test requires participants first to select a strategy for shaping a speech act, and then express or write it in a linguistically and pragmatically acceptable form.

The rating scale, as the third type of questionnaire mentioned in this paper, consists of a detailed description of a situation, including the contextual variables. After the description of the situation, a series of questions follows, asking participants to evaluate the value of certain variables. Although Kasper and Rose (2002) note that rating scales are not commonly used in

interlanguage pragmatics research, this instrument has several applications in such studies. First, scales can be used as a preliminary step in the development of a main research instrument. Tateyama (2001), for instance, conducted three preliminary studies to construct the main questionnaire for research on pragmatic transferability. Among other things, using a rating scale, she examined how participants perceived the contextual appropriateness of five Japanese indirect request strategies. Kasper and Rose (2002) consider the use of rating scales for metapragmatic assessment particularly valuable because they provide insight into how participants evaluate the contextual variables that will later be applied in the main instrument (sociopragmatic assessment). These insights help researchers shape the instrument, improving control over those variables. Kasper (2008) emphasizes that such information should not be based on the intuition of the researcher. Rating scales often supplement data collected by other instruments (usually some form of a discourse completion test). Barron (2003) points out the main disadvantage of this type of questionnaire: the fact that the contextual factors in the rating scale are reduced to static values, whereas in reality, these factors are “fluid, sometimes changing within a particular interaction” (2002, p. 95).

## WRITTEN AND ORAL (SELF-)REPORTS

Most studies of speech acts within interlanguage pragmatics are based on some form of discourse completion test (Yamashita, 1996). However, instruments such as discourse completion tests cannot examine the cognitive processes underlying second language learners’ linguistic production. Consequently, in most studies, the learners’ voices remain “unheard”. Written and oral (self-)reports collect metalinguistic or metapragmatic data that help us better understand the cognitive processes learners undergo while formulating speech acts (Cohen and Olshtain, 1993). According to Cohen (2004), the use of such instruments can yield “unique data” on cognitive processes. The primary purpose of using (self-)reports is to uncover what information learners focus on during task performance and how their perception of the situation influences their responses (Cohen, 2004). Kasper and Rose (2002) include interviews, think-aloud protocols (verbal reports), and diaries in this type of data collection.

An interview is defined as a method in which data is collected by “asking participants about how and when they use a particular language feature in a given task” (Martínez-Flor, 2004, p. 138). Kasper and Rose (2002) describe research interviews as a specific type of speech event that varies depending on the interview’s structure, duration, and medium (face-to-face, telephone, electronic media). However, all variations share two fundamental characteristics: interactivity and the influence of contextual factors. Both features must be considered when interpreting the data. Since an interview consists of questions

and answers, Kasper (2008, p. 296) emphasizes that responses are always shaped by the questions, resulting in a co-constructed process between the researcher and participant. Thus, interviews cannot be treated as “externalizations of stable, decontextualized beliefs and knowledge.”

Tateyama (2001) used interviews alongside role plays and multiple-choice tasks to triangulate data. The interview questions addressed the planning process for responses during the role play, learners’ evaluation of the teaching process they were exposed to, and their suggestions for alternative approaches to teaching pragmatics. The analysis revealed that students who did not plan their responses performed worse in the role play. Some students carefully planned their responses, but what they said differed from what they had planned. It also emerged that performance was influenced by familiarity with the task, specifically whether students had encountered similar situations in real life. During the planning process, students thought in both their native and foreign languages (English/Japanese). Regarding the teaching process, students in the explicit instruction group emphasized that explicit explanations of routine expressions were crucial for understanding their use.

In contrast to interviews and diaries, which collect data on past or hypothetical decontextualized events through self-reporting, verbal reports are “participants’ concurrent or retrospective verbal account of thought processes during problem-solving activities” (Smagorinsky, 1998, p. 157). There are two types of verbal reports: think-aloud protocols, conducted simultaneously with task performance, and retrospective reports, provided after the activity. Kasper (2002, p. 298) provides a concise overview of the theory underlying verbal reports:

*The information processed in short-term memory while a participant is carrying out a task is reportable and veridical. In contrast, information that is not processed in short-term memory, such as perceptual processes, motor processes, and all automated processes, is not available for report. Veridical report is also possible immediately after task completion, when the attended information is still in short-term memory. Once out of short-term memory, information will be lost or encoded in long-term memory. Since storage in and retrieval from long-term memory entail further processing, the most valid reports are concurrent or immediately consecutive verbalizations.*

When discussing introspective methodology in interlanguage pragmatics research, Robinson’s 1992 study is frequently cited. In this study, the author combined a discourse completion test with concurrent and retrospective verbal reports. The study was guided by the following research questions:

- Can verbal reports provide data to describe learners’ pragmatic knowledge and its sources?
- Does the type of data obtained through verbal reports differ depending on the learners’ level of language proficiency?

- What categories of information can be derived from verbal reports concerning interlanguage pragmatic knowledge of the speech act of refusal in American English?

The study involved twelve Japanese female students. The discourse completion test consisted of six situations, and participants were asked to articulate their thoughts aloud while writing their responses, using their native language if it reflected their thought processes. The participants received training that included written and oral instructions and opportunities to practice providing verbal reports. Immediately after completing their responses, accompanied by think-aloud protocols, Robinson (1992) conducted interviews with all the participants. The retrospective interviews included questions related to their think-aloud protocols, and the author played recordings of the protocols to remind participants of their verbalized thoughts. Robinson developed categories for data coding inductively, meaning that the categories emerged from the data. These included: situational features, evidence of statement planning, evaluation of alternative statements, indications of pragmatic and linguistic difficulties, statements about knowledge of the speech act of refusal in American English and its potential sources, indications of methodological challenges, and the language of thought. Based on the analysis, Robinson concluded that introspective data offered insights into language processing strategies that were inaccessible through analysis of discourse completion test responses alone. She also found that combining think-aloud protocols with retrospective interviews enhanced the informational value of introspective data. Robinson (1992) considers verbal reports to be a practical means for generating and testing hypotheses about the acquisition of second-language pragmatic knowledge. The study also revealed qualitative differences in data between learners at different proficiency levels. Analysis indicated differences in the information provided through concurrent and retrospective verbal reports. Participants occasionally struggled to recall what they had articulated in think-aloud protocols, while their responses in retrospective interviews were more detailed, often reflecting considerations of social relationships that influenced statement planning. The participants also reflected on both the pragmalinguistic aspects of their statements (possible strategies for formulating responses) and the sociopragmatic aspects (evaluation of social relationships to select the most appropriate strategy for the situation).

Cohen and Olshtain (1993) note that pragmatic literature provides detailed descriptions of realization strategies for a wide range of speech acts but rarely addresses the processes involved in producing these acts by non-native speakers. They aimed to describe how non-native speakers evaluate, plan, and execute complex speech acts such as apologies, complaints, and requests. Fifteen English learners participated in role plays across six different situations, two for each speech act type (apology, complaint, request). All activities were

recorded. After completing two role plays involving the same speech act, participants underwent retrospective interviews in which they were asked about the factors influencing their responses. The retrospective verbal reports were analysed in terms of the following aspects: the extent to which statements were pre-planned, the choice of language used for thought (L1, L2, or L3) during planning and execution, the recall/selection of linguistic forms, the degree of attention paid to grammar and pronunciation, and the sources of the language used. The results showed that participants planned a general “direction” for their statements but not the specific vocabulary and structures they would use. Statements regarding recall and selection of appropriate linguistic forms were categorized by Cohen and Olshtain (1993) as follows: “noise” in the head, monitoring, use of formulaic expressions, skipping or abandoning a message, lexical simplification or avoidance, similarity, self-debate, reconsideration, partial articulation of thoughts, and articulation of different thoughts. Participants paid some attention to grammar, but most paid little to no attention to pronunciation. The authors also discussed methodological considerations at the end of their study, including the use of role plays as simulations of real-life situations, the inclusion of situations unfamiliar to participants, the level of detail in situational descriptions to create role play context, and the use of technology in research.

Hassall (2008) conducted a study in which he combined oral role play and retrospective verbal reports. The study included 19 students of Indonesian from an Australian university, divided into two groups (low-level learners and advanced learners). Data analysis showed that low-level learners thought less about pragmatics and often focused on linguistic planning of speech acts. Hassall provides two explanations for these results. The first relates to cognitive “overload”, that is, the fact that low-level learners are still unable to perform certain simple linguistic actions automatically and subconsciously. Such actions require conscious effort and take up most of their language processing capacity. The second explanation relates to the process of foreign language teaching itself, which is traditionally focused on propositional clarity and accuracy. Advanced learners, on the other hand, thought about pragmatics more often than linguistic planning. Hassall (2008) again provided two explanations. The first explanation was that, given their advanced level of language knowledge, these students performed certain simple linguistic actions automatically and thus had more time to think about pragmatics. The second explanation was that this group spent one year studying in Indonesia, which undoubtedly raised their awareness of the importance of appropriate language use. The results also showed that both groups of students possess solid sociopragmatic knowledge, which was, however, more complete in some situations for advanced-level students of Indonesian. In some situations, it was also shown that students possess knowledge but cannot access it to use it correctly. The opposite

situation also appeared, where students appropriately used a linguistic feature, but their knowledge was superficial and incomplete. Hassall (2008) concludes that verbal reports are a useful instrument for uncovering the mental processes underlying pragmatic performance.

Additionally, owing to the assumption that research in interlanguage pragmatics lacks sufficient studies investigating cognitive processes learners undergo during the production of speech acts, Félix-Brasdefer (2008) investigated the cognitive processes and perceptions of Spanish language students through the example of the speech act of refusal. Two methods of data collection were employed: open role playing and retrospective verbal reports. The data analysis was conducted with respect to three categories: cognition (cognitive information participants focused on while formulating the speech act), the choice of language in which participants thought, and students' perceptions of the interlocutor's insistence after they had already refused their invitation. The results showed that during the process of planning their statements, learners most frequently thought about grammar and vocabulary, which led to interference in communication. Félix-Brasdefer (2008) concluded that learners excessively used the "monitor" (Krashen, 1982), meaning they were overly focused on the accuracy of their statements. Although all study participants had resided in Spanish-speaking countries and were aware of certain cultural nuances in the formulation of this speech act, their pragmatic-linguistic knowledge proved to be insufficient. The author concludes that explicit instruction in pragmatics would be beneficial for students, as it would contribute to the development of their sociocultural competence. Félix-Brasdefer (2008) also believes that retrospective verbal reports are crucial for gathering information about students' metalinguistic knowledge and their perceptions of sociocultural information.

The fundamental characteristic of the diary method is that data are typically recorded by the research participants themselves, making this method entirely unstructured and fully participant-centered (Mihaljević Djigunović and Matijašević, 2002). Kasper and Rose (2002) note that the diary method shares a focus on past experiences and subjective theories with interviews. Diaries allow students to freely reflect on all aspects of language learning, thereby offering a form of retrospective reporting. Studies using the diary method as the primary data collection tool are rare in developmental pragmatics. One notable example is Cohen's (1997) study, in which the author kept a diary documenting his accelerated learning of Japanese as a foreign language, focusing on pragmatic development. In his diary, Cohen (1997) describes various challenges encountered during language learning. These challenges include sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic transfer from American English and other languages he had studied (as Japanese sociocultural norms were not explicitly taught due to time constraints), the lack of or avoidance of genuine communicative situations

for using Japanese, occasional mismatches between his learning style and the teaching style, difficulties in using appropriate sociolinguistic expressions, issues with providing an adequate amount of words and information (as he often wanted to be more verbose than his Japanese proficiency allowed), limitations in pragmatic development due to the course being conducted in an academic setting with little interaction with native speakers, and challenges in learning expressions for different levels of formality. In his conclusion, Cohen (1997) emphasised that he managed to learn the course material according to formal requirements but also noted that his conversational ability, or the ability to apply what he had learned in real communication, remained very low.

## CONCLUSION

This paper provides an overview of different methods used in research on interlanguage pragmatics to examine the development of pragmatic competence in foreign language learners. Each method is explained in detail, including the definition of the method, its advantages and disadvantages, a review of relevant studies, and, where necessary, examples of research tasks. To the authors' knowledge, there has been no similar overview in the Croatian scientific and professional literature to date.

The first part of the paper describes methods for studying spoken interaction. It begins by discussing the collection of authentic spoken data, which is, on the one hand, the least influenced by researcher control and therefore likely the best source for describing the development of learners' pragmatic competence. On the other hand, such data is the most challenging to collect, and the primary drawback of authentic discourse is that a specific pragmatic structure (often a speech act in the case of pragmatic competence research) may not occur in speech at all. Variables related to conducting research using elicited conversations or role-play methods can be controlled to varying degrees, depending on the research objectives. The advantage of these methods lies in their targeted collection of necessary data. The paper then outlines various types of questionnaires used in interlanguage pragmatics research, with the most common being the Discourse Completion Test (DCT). The final section discusses the use of different types of self-reports to explore the cognitive processes underlying learners' language production in a foreign language.

All the instruments discussed are crucial in researching the development of pragmatic competence, as they allow for the collection of corpora (typically of speech acts in a foreign language) that can subsequently be used in foreign language teaching as examples for analysing and teaching various pragmatic situations. Particularly useful is the Discourse Completion Test, which enables the rapid collection of large amounts of data. However, the DCT is often cited in the literature as one of the less authentic ways of collecting data in

interlanguage pragmatics research. This type of questionnaire cannot and does not aim to provide information about how Croatian foreign language learners would perform a speech act in real communication. Nonetheless, this need not be the goal of future research. The results obtained from the DCT can provide insights into students' current knowledge and attitudes (Rose, 2009) related to performing a speech act in a foreign language and offer an impression of how Croatian learners might navigate situations requiring speech act formulation. This impression may not correspond to learners' actual language production in real communicative situations, as such situations are difficult to replicate in the context of foreign language learning in Croatia. As previously mentioned, the fundamental goal of interlanguage pragmatics research in the Croatian educational context should be to examine learners' knowledge and attitudes regarding speech act formulation in a foreign language, which could indicate their development of pragmatic competence. Furthermore, the DCT can be used as a research tool across all levels of language proficiency, including with the youngest learners. This is particularly important given the rarity of studies on the development of interlanguage pragmatics in younger learners (beginners), both globally and in Croatia.

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