Foreword:
Current Issues in Pragmatic Variation

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The papers in this thematic volume examine current topics in pragmatic variation from an interdisciplinary perspective. Although early studies on dialectology from a pragmatic view appeared in the late 1970s (e.g. Schlieben-Lange & Weydt, 1978), the field of pragmatic variation with a focus on regional varieties was formally introduced at the 9th *International Pragmatics Conference* in 2005 that took place in Riva del Garda, Italy, as part of a panel organized by Klaus Schneider and Anne Barron. These scholars later (2008) published an edited volume, entitled *Variational Pragmatics: A Focus on Regional Varieties in Pluricentric Languages*, which comprised 10 papers on different aspects of pragmatics across varieties of Dutch, English, French, German, and Spanish. Pragmatic variation looks at the intersection of pragmatics and sociolinguistics by looking at the impact of social factors (e.g. gender, age, region) on communicative language use. Research on pragmatic variation generally adopts an integrated approach, including different theoretical frameworks (e.g. interactional sociolinguistics, variational pragmatics, discourse analysis, conversation analysis, rapport management, and computer-mediated discourse) and a variety of data collection methods (e.g. ethnographic approach, corpus linguistics, production questionnaires, role plays, and online data). And although the main focus of variational pragmatics is intra-lingual pragmatic variation (Barron & Schneider, 2009), in this volume, various dimensions of pragmatic variation in cross-cultural and intra-lingual contexts are addressed.

The terms *pragmatics* and *discourse* have been defined in various ways (e.g. Huang, 2014; Levinson, 1983). In this volume, pragmatics is viewed as the study of meaning with actions that are accomplished and negotiated during the course of social interaction. The definition of pragmatics I adopt is 'meaning in interaction' that reflects a dynamic process "involving the negotiation of meaning between the speaker and hearer, the context of utterance (physical, social and linguistic) and the meaning potential of an utterance" (Thomas, 1995, p. 22). Pragmatics includes both a social component, which encompasses sociopragmatics and cultural expectations, and a cognitive component for the negotiation of meaning.

Discourse is concerned with the analysis of social action and interaction, with participants engaged in joint actions in institutional and non-institutional contexts. Specifically, I use a revised version of the term *discursive pragmatics* to refer to the analysis of social action through joint actions that are co-constructed and negotiated according to the sociocultural norms dictated by the members of specific communities of practice (Kasper, 2006; Félix-Brasdefer, 2015).

The present volume

Following Fried (2010), the papers in this volume examine pragmatic variation from either the local perspective, within a single language, or the global one, across languages. The 10 papers in this thematic issue address current issues in pragmatic variation; specifically, cross-linguistic variation in three languages (English, Spanish, and Russian) and intra-lingual variation across language varieties: US and British English and four varieties of Spanish (Argentinean, Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Uruguayan). They also analyze communicative action produced by Spanish heritage speakers in the US, learners of Spanish as a foreign language, as well as data in different online environments in intracultural and intercultural interactions. This volume is divided into four sections: three papers look at pragmalinguistic variation (Elias, Taylor, and Filimonova); two papers examine pragmatic and discourse variation in face-to-face interactions in the context of political discourse (Escalona-Torres) and service encounters (Yates); three papers address pragmatic variation within the field of computer-mediated discourse (Glide, Merino-Hernández, and Zahler); and the final two papers analyze pragmatic variation from sociolinguistic (Shively) and syntactic (Houppert) perspectives. The 10 papers in this volume were conceptualized and completed in my undergraduate (S429: Pragmatics/Sociolinguistics) and graduate courses (S508: Introduction to Pragmatics and S612: Current Issues in Pragmatic and Sociolinguistic Variation). The undergraduate papers represent revised senior theses by three diligent undergraduate researchers: Houppert, Shively, and Yates.

Although many other papers written in these courses are of high quality, the papers included in this volume were selected based on the novel contributions they make to the field and on the willingness of the authors to revise the final project into a publication. All papers were reviewed by at least two external reviewers, the Associate Editors, and the Editor. The final versions in this volume are the result of arduous revisions based on the reviewers' detailed comments and suggestions.

Organization of the volume

This volume is organized into four main sections: pragmalinguistic variation, pragmatic/discourse variation, pragmatic variation and computer-mediated discourse, and pragmatics and its interfaces.

The first section includes three papers on **Pragmalinguistic Variation**, which refers to the linguistic resources that are used in the service of pragmatics. In the first paper, entitled "Pragmalinguistic and Sociopragmatic Variation: Refusing

among Spanish Heritage Speakers," Elias looks at the strategies that Spanish heritage speakers utilize when giving a refusal to invitations and to suggestions. The author also examined how the heritage speakers perceive insistence in Spanish and English. The data were triangulated using open-ended role plays and retrospective verbal reports (Cohen, 2012). The results from the production data revealed that the participants preferred the use of indirect refusal strategies (e.g. giving reasons and indefinite replies). The findings from the retrospective verbal protocols showed that heritage speakers are aware of cultural differences and in some cases are susceptible to these differences, thus, accounting for sociopragmatic variation with regard to appropriateness of insistence and the selection of the language of thought during the delivery of the speech act. In the second paper, entitled "*I Need a Coffee:* Pragmalinguistic Variation of Starbucks Service Encounter Requests According to Interaction Modality," Taylor examines pragmalinguistic variation in requests for service in café service encounters. Using a revised variational pragmatics framework (Barron & Schneider, 2009; Félix-Brasdefer, 2015; Schneider, 2010), the author analyzed 820 instances of request forms produced in a Starbucks café in the northwestern United States. The data were analyzed according to the gender of the participants involved (customer/barista) and according to the modality of the discourse (face-to-face/drive-through microphone). The quantitative analysis showed that both participant gender and the modality of interaction affect the request forms produced in café service encounters. Unlike these papers which examined intracultural pragmatic variation, in the third paper, entitled "Russian and Spanish Apologies: A Contrastive Pragmalinguistic Study," Filimonova offers a fine-grained pragmalinguistic analysis of Russian and Spanish apologies. Both languages are associated with positive-politeness cultures and orientation toward the hearer. The data were collected from Mexican and Russian-Ukrainian university students using a production questionnaire in comparable situations. Results showed that the two groups show similar use of pragmalinguistic strategies when apologizing in eight situations. The findings suggest, however, that Russian-Ukrainians exhibit a slightly higher level of positive politeness than Mexicans.

The second section of the volume, **Pragmatic/Discourse Variation in Face-to-Face Interaction,** includes two papers with interactional data in two different settings. In his paper, entitled "*¡No seas cobarde!* Discursive/Pragmatic Variation of Impoliteness in a Multi-Party Political Debate," Escalona-Torres investigates the discursive/pragmatic variation in impoliteness as a discursive strategy in political debates. The interactions were analyzed according to a participation framework (Levinson, 1988) in monologic multi-party political interactions and a classification of impoliteness strategies (Blas-Arroyo, 2001). The results showed that the participants attacked each other's face rights and sociality rights with the interactional goal of maintaining superiority over their opponents. With regard to the participation framework, the candidates preferred to select their opponents and their respective parties as indirect targets and the audience as the interlocutor. In the second paper, entitled "Pragmatic Variation in Service Encounters in Buenos Aires, Argentina," Yates analyzes pragmatic variation in public service encounters

with 97 transactions at corner stores (*kioscos*) in Buenos Aires. Drawing on a revised framework of variational pragmatics (Barron & Scheider, 2009; Félix-Brasdefer, 2015), the study examined three levels of pragmatic variation: the interactional level (openings and closings), the actional level (request types), and stylistic level (address forms and pronouns). The findings showed a preference for direct questions and elliptical requests, the presence of short and informal openings and closings, informal-you (*vos*), the use of nicknames, and the absence of lexical downgraders in both requests and relational talk. Both studies make a substantial contribution to discursive pragmatics in two different genres, political debates and service encounters, and in two varieties of Spanish that have not received much attention in pragmatics research, Puerto Rican and Argentinean Spanish.

The third section of this volume includes three papers that address **Pragmatic Variation within the Emerging Field of Computer-Mediated Discourse (CMD)**, which studies language use in online interaction. Participants interact through verbal language that is typed on a keyboard and read on a computer screen, as is the norm for email, chat, Facebook, or negotiated through live video and audio (e.g. Skype) (Herring & Androutsopoulos, 2015). In her paper on e-service encounters, entitled "*Tianguis Friki*: Intracultural Pragmatic Variation of E-service Encounters in a Northern Mexican Community," Merino-Hernández examines 100 e-service encounters that occur in a *Facebook* group *Tianguis Friki* (literally 'freaky flea market') in a Mexican community, where people sell and exchange goods and services (e.g. electronics, clothes, and cars). The transactions were analyzed based on two levels of pragmatic analysis (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015; Schneider & Barron, 2008), namely, actional (variants of the request for service) and interactional (request sequence). The findings showed that participants in e-service encounters are task-oriented and show a lack of relational talk. In the second paper, entitled "*¿Cuáles son sus recomendaciones?*: A Comparative Analysis of Spanish and English Advice Given on a Mexican Subreddit," Glide takes a fresh look at how advice is realized in the Mexican community on Reddit and how this advice is perceived via comment karma. Based on previous studies in online advice (e.g. Locher, 2006) and CMD research (Herring & Androutsopoulos, 2015), Glide analyzed the meaning level of advice-giving and advice-seeking and the interactional level of advice-giving. The results showed that direct strategies containing unmitigated imperatives are preferred advice realizations in this Mexican community. According to the voting system, English and Spanish advice threads positively evaluate direct strategies with supporting acts, such as general information or personal experience. In the third paper, entitled "Pragmalinguistic Variation in Electronic Personal Ads from Mexico City and London," Zahler investigates variation in online personal advertisements in Mexico City Spanish and London English. The findings revealed that despite overall linguistic similarities between the two languages, social patterning of variation differed. The canonical variant was employed more often in personal ads directed toward men in Mexico City Spanish, while it was used more frequently in ads directed toward women in London. Overall, the three studies in this section

advance our understanding of pragmatic variation in the discourse of three subgenres of CMD: Facebook, Reddit, and online personals.

The last section of this volume comprises two papers written in Spanish that examine the **Interface of Pragmatics with Sociolinguistics and Syntax.** In his paper, entitled "*Voseo, Tuteo y Ustedeo en el Español Uruguayo: Uso, Variación Pragmática y Cambios Generacionales*," Shively looks at pragmatic variation in pronominal address (*Vos / Tú* ['you'-informal] and *Usted* ['you-formal]) in Montevideo Spanish conditioned by social and contextual factors and individual variation. The data were taken from semi-structured sociolinguistic interviews with native speakers of Spanish from Montevideo. The data revealed that the following social factors condition the selection of pronominal choice: age, social power, and degree of intimacy between the interlocutors. The pronominal form *vos* predominates in the data, while *tú* seems to be used in less formal contexts. Stylistic variation was also observed with regard to the selection of *vos*, *tú*, and *usted* in the same interaction with the same speakers. The last paper in this volume addresses pragmatic variation conditioned by syntactic factors. In her paper, entitled "*La Variación Sintáctica del Sujeto en Español como Segunda Lengua,*" Houppert examines syntactic variation with regard to the position of the subject (SV/VS) among intermediate learners of Spanish. Results showed that syntactic variation is conditioned by the type of the verb (with unaccusative and unergative verbs) and the presence or absence of the focus of the subject. The data were collected through a grammaticality judgment task and learners were asked to choose the grammatical syntactic order based on hypothetical scenarios. The results revealed that these learners did not approximate the syntactic variation of native speakers of Spanish in comparable situations. Both studies highlight the need to broaden our understanding of pragmatics and its interfaces, including sociolinguistic and syntactic variation.

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