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**Teaching and Testing Sociopragmatics in the
Russian Language Classroom**

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Teaching and Testing Sociopragmatics in the Russian Language Classroom

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Abstract

Pragmatics is defined as the study of how we use language in interaction (e.g. Röver 2005, 3). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR 2001, 13) considers pragmatics together with linguistic (grammatical, lexical) and sociolinguistic knowledge as the components of communicative competence. In order to accomplish purposeful actions (or tasks) successfully, learners need pragmatic knowledge, which according to Bachman and Palmer (2010, 46) consists of functional and sociolinguistic knowledge. So, in other words, students need both illocutionary and sociolinguistic competence in order to create, interpret and react to utterances. Teachers will have to ask themselves what „kinds of semantic relation“ (CEFR 2001, 116) learners should be equipped with to build up appropriate discourse and how „qualitative progress“ in the sociopragmatic components can be made (CEFR 2001, 130). Kolotova and Kofanova (2012) understand linguistic competence as a matter of phonetics, grammar, semantics and pragmatics. They define the latter as „knowing the rules of verbal behavior in various situations“. In their opinion, this knowledge depends on the speaker's intention(s), the recipient's reaction(s) and on their choice of expressions. Apart from getting their utterances grammatically and organizationally correct, learners should relate the utterance to their communicative goal and to the features of the communication situation. Learners and students of Russian in Austria normally adopt this language as their third or fourth. The paper tries to answer the following questions:

- Can we assume that learners transfer pragmatic knowledge from their L1 or will it have to be facilitated by explicit teaching and awareness-raising?
- If functional and sociolinguistic techniques and strategies are taught, how can they be tested by setting tasks that require a certain range of functional and sociolinguistic items on a certain level, e.g. on the independent level?
- Which errors and mistakes can be marked as (socio---)pragmatic?

Keywords: Pragmatics, Sociolinguistics, Teaching and Testing Sociopragmatics, Communicative Competence, Authenticity.

Introduction

Pragmatics is defined as the study of how we use language in interaction (e.g. Roever 2011, 3). *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR 2001, 13) considers pragmatics together with linguistic (grammatical, lexical) and sociolinguistic knowledge as the core components of communicative competence. In order to develop and accomplish purposeful actions (or tasks) successfully, both teachers and learners need pragmatic knowledge, which according to Bachman and Palmer (2010, 46–47) amounts to functional and sociolinguistic knowledge. So, in other words, students need both illocutionary and sociolinguistic competence in order to create, interpret and adequately react to utterances. Teachers have to ask themselves what „kinds of semantic relation“ (CEFR 2001, 116) learners should be equipped with to build up appropriate discourse and how „qualitative progress“ in the sociopragmatic¹ component can be achieved (CEFR 2001, 130).

Kolotova and Kofanova (2012, 1) understand linguistic competence as a matter of phonetics, grammar, semantics and pragmatics. They define the latter as „knowing the rules of verbal behaviour in various situations“. In their opinion, pragmatic knowledge consists of the speaker’s intention(s), the recipient’s reaction(s) and their appropriate choice of expressions. Apart from getting utterances grammatically and organisationally correct, learners should relate their utterances to a communicative goal and to the corresponding features of the communication situation.

Learners and students of Russian in Austria normally adopt this language as their third, fourth or even fifth. The paper tries to answer the following questions:

- Can we assume that learners of Russian transfer pragmatic knowledge from their L1 or will it have to be facilitated by explicit teaching and awareness raising?
- If pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic techniques and strategies are taught, how can they be tested by setting tasks that require a certain range of functional and sociolinguistic items on a certain level, e.g. on the independent level?
- What role does authenticity play in the teaching and testing of sociopragmatic features?

Overview

Testing pragmatic and sociolinguistic features in the foreign language classroom would presuppose that we (can) teach sociopragmatics in the first place. Brock and Nagasaka (2005, 24) agree that the English Foreign

¹ For the sake of convenience, the term sociopragmatics is used in this paper, encompassing both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic components as understood and defined by Leech 1983 (see also Kasper 1997, Roever 2011).

Language (EFL) classroom can be an ideal setting for learners “to begin developing pragmatic competence in English”. Kasper (1997, 1), on the other hand, argues that “[c]ompetence, whether linguistic or pragmatic, is not teachable“, later confining her statement by saying that “pragmatic ability can indeed be systematically developed through planful classroom activities” (Kasper (1997, 10). With their statements, both Brock and Nagasaka (2005) and Kasper (1997) imply that in order to (systematically) develop pragmatic competence it needs to be taught. It is correct, though, that we cannot test competences – be they linguistic, pragmatic or sociolinguistic – directly, but what we can do is to draw inferences about language proficiency from the sociopragmatic construct put to use. To my mind, this can only be achieved if authenticity plays a major role both in teaching and testing. In my paper I will try to show which role authenticity can play or should play when teaching and testing Russian sociopragmatic elements.

Most of the research on teaching and testing pragmatics focuses on second language acquisition (of English) (cf. Roever 2011)¹. In Austria, however, pupils at school or students at university acquire Russian mostly as their third, fourth, or even as their fifth language. This means pupils and students are communicatively competent in at least two other languages (or more) and supposedly know how to transfer this knowledge to Russian in use. Generally, as they develop receptive skills more quickly and easily, they can be challenged with and exposed to the understanding of authentic texts at an earlier stage than to producing speaking and writing performances adequate to native speakers’ authentic texts, which they produce with more difficulty.

The paper exemplarily shows, how with the use of both adapted and authentic texts, assigned for the classroom setting or coming from the real world, sociopragmatic awareness can be raised among students of Russian as a foreign language, and how the use of sociopragmatic features can be tested in the Russian language classroom.

Teaching Sociopragmatics

Teaching sociopragmatics calls for a construct that can be put to use at various competence levels. Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2003) define six areas of teaching sociopragmatics in the foreign language classroom: speech acts, conversational structure, conversational implicature, conversational management, discourse organisation, and sociolinguistic aspects of language use, as, for example, choice of address forms. As regards teaching methods, the authors recommend authentic language samples to be used as examples or models, and that input precede interpretation or production by learners. This means that the areas mentioned above need to be taught in awareness-raising situations before

¹See the Section on Interlanguage pragmatics research in Roever (2011, 465–467).

they can be taught in interaction. Pupils and students should be motivated to discover how language works, and they should be eager to explore which rules and conventions guide their use of language in context” (cf. Bardovi-Harlig 2013, 78). Even CEFR (2001, 13) suggests the “drawing on scenarios or scripts of interactional exchanges“ when teaching pragmatic competence. If the aim of communicative language teaching is, among others, “sociolinguistic finesse and pragmatic effectiveness” (CEFR 2001, 136), these sociopragmatics areas should better be included in the construct of teaching and testing. As already mentioned, we may, of course, assume that sociopragmatic knowledge from L1 is employed when putting rules into practice in the Russian language classroom, nevertheless, it helps to teach, to practise and set explicit tasks in order to develop and activate sociopragmatic knowledge and competence.

I will now present two models, one from Kursk University (Russia) and the other from Innsbruck University (Austria) to show how sociopragmatic features can be part of teaching situations in the Russian language classroom or lecture room.

The Kursk Model – An Example of Sociopragmatic Awareness-Raising

Kolotova and Kofanova (2012, 4) have developed an exercise which they use in class with students of Russian as a foreign language. Learners are given two dialogues in two situations that have obviously been written by the authors themselves for pedagogic reasons. Maxim has come to another town to visit his friend Andrei. On a very hot day he returns home after shopping, finding that he has left the flat without Andrei’s keys. Andrei is not home yet. So Maxim has to ask:

- a) a mutual friend, Ivan, who he knows very well and who is just returning home to the neighbouring flat (dialogue 1)
 - b) a very busy neighbour, Anatoliy Vasilyevich, who he has never spoken to and who he does not know at all (dialogue 2)
- whether he can ...
 ... use his cell-phone to ring Andrei
 ... wait in the friend’s / busy neighbour’s flat until Andrei returns
 ... have a glass of water

The exercise focuses on the different realisation of utterances, the relationship of the interlocutors, the amount of the favor or request, and the expression of politeness in dialogues 1 and 2.

In the exercise, students need to identify speech acts functioning as requests, copy them into a table and highlight the differences between them, estimate the amount of the request on a scale from 1 (very small) to 5 (very big), describe the relationship of the interlocutors on a scale from 1 (unacquainted) to 5 (very close), and define the expression of politeness on a scale from 1 (inadequate) to 5 (very adequate).

According to the authors, the objective of the exercise is to comprehend speech intentions. This is achieved by activating lexis and raising students’

language awareness so that they can select appropriate language material, when having to express themselves in similar situations. Kolotova and Kofanova (2012) agree that the aim of including pragmatics into the teaching of Russian as a foreign language lies in the fact that students should be equipped with knowledge of how to use language in order to achieve a corresponding impact on the interlocutor.

The exercise used by Kolotova and Kofanova (2012) consists of identifying pragmlinguistic functions and understanding sociopragmatic features, as no productive or creative activity like impersonating the dialogue or staging a similar role-play has to be carried out. The exercise can be seen as a pre-task and a prerequisite among many others for activating productive skills, but it can by no means be regarded as a replacement for them, as its main focus lies on form and meaning, and not on language in use.

The Innsbruck Model – An Example of Using Particles in Dialogues

In a seminar on *Literacy and Orality in the Russian Language Classroom* taught to pre-service teacher trainees of Russian at Innsbruck University, students were confronted with three types of dialogues among interlocutors having a close relationship to each other – one taken from a Russian course book (Level B1), the other from a collection of transcribed Russian conversations by native speakers, the third from a screenplay and its corresponding film scene. The students' task was to compare and contrast the three texts, the first written for pedagogic use, the second to demonstrate oral stylisation in written texts, and the third being an example of "staged communication" by actors on film. Having completed the task, the students discovered that the course book dialogue lacked authenticity in comparison with the other three texts, which, in their opinion, was due to the unnatural staccato tone and the missing intimacy among the interlocutors' speech. The apodictic and harsh tone of voice in the course book dialogue could be counteracted and improved by "using, with reasonable accuracy, a wide range of modification devices" (CEFR 2001, 36), since the students found these modification devices were most characteristic of the other texts. The active use of particles, interjections and modification devices is a skill which is not developed before C2 level but students at a lower level, e.g. at B1, are able to grasp and understand these function words intuitively.

After this critical awareness task, students moved on to rewriting course book dialogues to make them sociolinguistically more adequate, pragmatically more efficient and prosodically lighter in tone. In other words: the new dialogues seemed to be more authentic from the perspective of text authenticity but also from the perspective of voice authenticity (see Section 4 below), a fact that could be increased, if course book authors were willing to adapt language for classroom use in a more natural, i.e. sociopragmatically more refined and more efficient way.

Introducing Authenticity

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR 2001) equates authenticity of language with the concept of text authenticity, i.e. the use of authentic materials in contrast to adapted or pedagogic texts. Apart from text authenticity, CEFR also mentions authentic (work and study-related) situations, authentic (communicative) interaction, authentic discourse and authentic spoken utterances. Yet CEFR's main focus is definitely on the collocation *text authenticity* or "direct exposure to authentic use of language in L2", which includes spoken utterances and written (printed, typewritten, handwritten) texts (CEFR 2001, 143). Authentic texts are seen in opposition to texts "specially designed for teaching purposes, texts in textbooks or texts produced by learners" (CEFR 2001, 16).

Another conceptualisation of authenticity is presented by MacDonald, Badger and Dasli (2006). According to them, apart from *text authenticity*, there are three other concepts of authenticity that are frequently discussed in the literature of applied linguistics: *competence authenticity*, *learner authenticity* and *classroom authenticity* (MacDonald, Badger and Dasli 2006, 251–253). These four concepts are used in two senses of meaning – the meaning of correspondence (text authenticity, competence authenticity and learner authenticity) and the meaning of genesis (classroom authenticity). Text authenticity represented by collocations such as authentic text, authentic language and authentic material is not seen as the opposite of 'real world' language, texts and artefacts (MacDonald, Badger and Dasli 2006, 252) but as correspondent of classroom texts and 'real world' texts used outside the language classroom. Competence authenticity, to their mind, corresponds with Canale and Swaine's language competence model from the 1980s, which comprises grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic competence as enabling factors of communicative interaction among native (and non-native) speakers. Learner authenticity corresponds with the realisation of intention and the appropriate responding to it. Classroom authenticity, the fourth concept, derives from an authenticity of genesis, meaning that pedagogic texts must be considered authentic as they emerge from the classroom as "their point of origin" (MacDonald, Badger and Dasli 2006, 253).

Roberts and Cooke's categorisation distinguishes between two types of authenticity in language teaching contexts: the *authenticity of (pedagogic) materials*, on the one hand, and *authenticity of self-expression (voice)*, on the other hand (Roberts and Cooke 2009, 621–622). The authenticity of materials or texts needs to be questioned, though, when they are removed from their original context. This is why Roberts and Cooke in accordance with Widdowson (cf. Roberts and Cooke 2009, 622) prefer to talk about *authenticity of interaction* rather than ('pseudo-') authenticity of materials. Besides, too overt a focus on authentic materials may lead to an impoverishment of language in the Russian language classroom because authentic language used for lower levels might turn out either as

inappropriate, humdrum or one-sided. So it is more important what is done with the material and what it is used for in teaching and testing situations than whether it is authentic or adapted. *Authenticity of self-expression* means that learners should be motivated and sensitized to present their real self by developing an authentic voice in interactions, which is all the more important when teaching heterogeneous groups of learners and becomes even more complex when testing them.

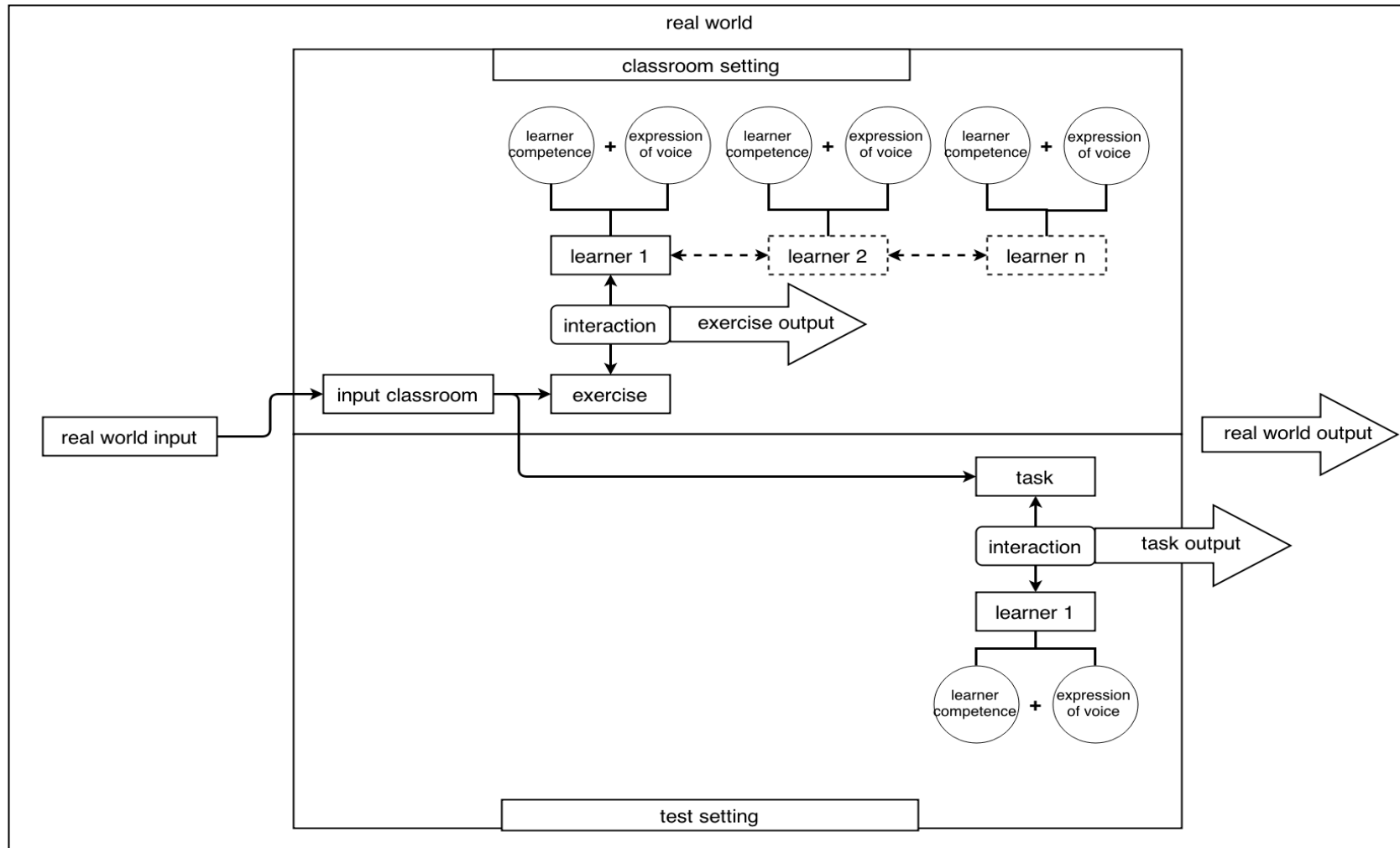
Hoekje and Linell (1994) treat authenticity from the point of view of language testing, once again referring to Bachman and Palmer's competence model and its two approaches of authenticity: a) to which extent test performances replicate 'real life' performances and b) to which extent the interactions between testee, task and context in test settings simulate interactions in target language use situations. The terms we have to deal with here are 'real life' authenticity, on the one hand, and interactional authenticity and situational authenticity, on the other hand.

Marková differentiates between *authentic* and *inauthentic verbal expression* being brought about by the recognition or disapproval of a complementary self/other relationship (Marková 1997, 272).¹

Let me summarize the role of authenticity in teaching and testing (see Fig. 1 below). On the one hand, an input, be it an adapted text (emerging in or from the classroom setting) or real / authentic material (coming from the outside world) is used for developing a pedagogic exercise to facilitate learning. On the other hand, setting a (pseudo-) authentic test task is used to assess the learners' achievement or their proficiency. Learners do the exercise by interacting individually or in pairs or groups, by making use of the teacher's help in the learning process, whereas in the testing situation they interact on their own, hereby producing an output due to their individual learner competence that has been developed both in the classroom setting and in the outside 'real' world. The output reveals the authenticity of their performance through self-expression (in oral or written form) generated by interacting in the classroom when working on an exercise or elicited by input and stimulus of a test task.

¹Since Marková's concept is embedded in the psychological discourse of social representations of democracy in Central and East European post-communist countries and not in an educational context, her concept will not be developed here any further.

Figure 1. *Authenticity in the Language Classroom*



For our purpose of illustrating the teaching and testing of sociopragmatics in the Russian language classroom, we will concentrate on competence authenticity and voice authenticity, the former derived from Bachman and Palmer's (2010) language competence model and the latter modelled on Roberts and Cooke (2009).

Bachman and Palmer's model is divided into two areas of language knowledge: organisational (= grammatical and textual) and pragmatic (= functional and sociolinguistic) knowledge. We will furtheron work with the rhetorical and conversational organisation of texts, one of the subareas of textual knowledge, and natural and idiomatic expression, a subarea of sociolinguistic knowledge. This seems justifiable since a) discourse competence is a subcomponent of pragmatic competence as defined in CEFR (2001: 123) and b) "authentic learning is always less about materials and more about how they are used" (Roberts and Cooke 2009: 622). The latter statement is close to Kolotova and Kofanova's (2012) definition of pragmatics: "knowing the rules of verbal behaviour in various situations". Although Bachman and Palmer's language competence model is rather complex, we have decided to use it both for teaching and testing since it is aligned to develop adequate tests of L2 learners' proficiency by using (parts of) the model as test construct. The feedback forwarded to pupils and / or students should be based on a valid interpretation of their test or exam performance. It is Piotrowski (2011: 222) who reminds us that classroom communication calls "the learners' focus on the [authentic] process of task performance". In other words: the relationship between test features and target language use context has to be high so that we can speak of test authenticity, which promotes construct validity.

Testing Sociopragmatics

Research literature on testing sociopragmatics in any language other than L1 mainly deals with the testing of English as a second language. There is comparatively little literature on the teaching and testing of sociopragmatics of Russian as a foreign language, apart from e.g. Narzieva (2005), Dykstra (2006) or Kolotova and Kofanova (2012) – to name a few exceptions. Narzieva (2005) deals with the instruction of pragmatics in a Russian language classroom from two perspectives: context-enriched and context-reduced (cf. Dufon 2008, 81), using drawings in the context-reduced and videos in the context-enriched setting to back up the learning and understanding of uttering apologies and requests respectively. By exposing learners to listening tasks, Dykstra (2006) investigates pragmatic awareness in the teaching of Russian as a second language, focussing on sociocultural dynamics and restraints expressed by the use of the personal pronouns *ты (ты)* / *вы (вы)* as address forms.

Kolotova and Kofanova's (2012) work, which is considerably less extensive than Narzieva's or Dykstra's, but bears the advantage of presenting concrete examples of pragmatic exercises, refers to Ščcukin's understanding of pragmatic competence: "Прагматическая компетенция – это готовность и

умение оперативно ориентироваться в ситуации общения и строить высказывание в соответствии с коммуникативным намерением говорящего и возможностями собеседника, умение выбрать наиболее эффективный способ выражения мысли в зависимости от условий общения и поставленной цели“ (Šćcukin 2007, 140). In the centre of this definition we encounter ‘authenticity of expression’, which is brought about by the speaker’s ability to plan his utterances most effectively in accordance with his / her intention and the conditions of the communication situation.

Roever (2011: 475) indicates that in dealing with monologic and dialogic extended texts, discursive and interactional abilities have rarely been included into the assessment of second language pragmatic competence. The construct tested so far has been based on speech act and politeness theories, including the comprehension of implicature and formulaic sequencing. The predominant test formats are written and oral discourse completion tests (DCTs), multiple-choice DCTs, role-plays and self-assessment procedures (Roever 2011: 467).

It is understandable that various test formats should be used in order to do credit to construct validity. However, in classroom-based assessment (be it at school or at university) exercises, tasks and test formats are often taken from course books or developed by the teachers themselves and usually their main concern is to follow practicality. A limited choice of assessment tasks and a small range of exercises preceding them undoubtedly affect the outcome and interpretation of test results and their generalisation. It seems easier to pay attention to isolated grammatical, lexical and semantic features in the first place than to discourse structure and speech style elements, which both cause problems to learners but need to be tested differently and often with varying effort. So it is explicable, albeit inexcusable, that classroom constructs of sociopragmatic ability are restricted, when more complex and time-consuming test formats such as open role-plays, video chats or face-to-face interaction are neglected. The use of contextualisation clues, the organisation of consecutive sequencing, the repertoire of speech styles, the production of routine formulae or the estimating of one’s effect on the interlocutor is hardly tested, since these formats are difficult to deal with in classroom-based assessment although they should find their place in pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic tests.

Some of the above mentioned speech acts in 3.1 may easily figure as item models for a discourse completion test (DCT), even if different situations would have to be found for the testing process. It is necessary to add here that the following examples were used with advanced and adult learners in teaching and testing situations at university. So, for classroom use, items would have to be chosen that match the age group, the learners’ interests and their competence as described in the test specifications for the particular group or level to do justice to the learning and testing construct.

Table 1. *Тестовая Единица 1 (Test Item 1)*

Вы приехали к своему другу в другой город и живёте у него в гостях. В третий день вашего пребывания вы возвращаетесь из магазина и обнаруживаете, что вашего друга нет дома, а ключи вы забыли. Вам придётся попросить телефон у общего друга из соседней квартиры, с которым вы хорошо знакомы.
Что Вы скажете в этой ситуации?
 Вы: _____

Similarly, turns from the dialogues mentioned in 3.2 above could also be used as test item (see Tab. 2) or test task (Tab. 3.):

Table 2. *Тестовая Единица 2 (Test Item 2)*

Прочитайте первую реплику диалога между матерью и отцом.
 — Ты уже знаешь, что наш сын сказал сегодня, что он женится!

Как Вы отреагируете в этой ситуации?
 Отец: — _____

Table 3. *Тестовое Задание 1 (Task 1)*

Прочитайте диалог между супругами. Определите, какая из данных частиц (А–Ж) лучше всего подходит в пропуск (1–7). Вы можете использовать частицу несколько раз. Две частицы вам не понадобятся. Примеры [0] и [1] уже заполнены.

А. ведь Б. вообще В. даже Г. ли Д. ну Е. разве Ж. только

— Ты уже знаешь? Наш сын сказал сегодня, что он женится!
 — [0] Ну и что?
 — Как [1] «ну» и что?! Ему [2] _____ только 18!
 — [3] _____ он сказал, на ком он женится?
 — Да, на Маше. Или на Ире.
 — О! [4] _____ они обе согласны выйти за него замуж?!
 — Не знаю. Кажется, он их об этом [5] _____ еще не спрашивал.
 — [6] _____, вот видишь. Всё не так серьезно. Он даже не знает, на ком [7] _____ хочет жениться. И я не думаю, что Маша или Ира захотят выйти за него замуж ...

Task 1 (Tab. 3) could also be designed as multiple-choice task by giving three to four options for each gap, e.g. [2]: Ему [А] *ведь* / [Б] *даже* / [В] *разве* только 18! with [А] being the correct answer. A second task for more advanced learners could be to leave out the bank of particles and ask the students to fill them in independently. Another task would use an authentic text not an adapted or pedagogic one to elicit an emphatic utterance (see Tab. 4):

Table 4. *Тестовая Единица 3 (Test Item 3)*

<p>Прочитайте начало диалога между мужем (А) и женой (Б). А: — <i>Привет!</i> Б: — <i>Здравствуй!</i> А: — <i>Ну как ты?</i> Б: — <i>Ой/ вообще не могу!</i></p> <p><i>Как муж реагирует в этой ситуации?</i> А: — _____</p>

A fourth task could be added in which the learner has to imagine that he overheard the conversation between his parents. How would he react? What would his first replica to his father or mother be? Students could be asked to either write down the utterance or record it on tape or their cell-phone.

The idea is to show how we can move from understanding sociopragmatic features in adapted texts to applying these features independently in various speech acts such as oral or written requests and using them autonomously in role plays. Role plays, according to Kasper and Dahl “represent oral production, full operation of the turn-taking mechanism, impromptu planning decisions contingent on interlocutor input, and hence negotiation of global and local goals, including negotiation of meaning” (Bardovi-Harlig 2013, 71). Such tasks – from the receptive to the productive type – result in sociopragmatic language variation, depicting various forms of authenticity, from text authenticity (e.g. authentic conversational organisation) to voice authenticity (e.g. authentic idiomatic expression).

The question of how to assess or grade the students’ answers unfortunately has to remain unanswered within the scope of this paper.

Conclusion

The Russian language classroom will want to use both adapted and authentic texts to teach pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features. An empirical study carried out by Crossley, Louwse et al. has shown that there exist “no significant differences between simplified and authentic texts in their abstractness and ambiguity” (Crossley, Louwse et al. 2007, 27). As regards cohesion and coherence as well as frequent vocabulary and syntactic complexity, simplified texts win over authentic texts. They lose in the fields of diversity and causality and they “depend less on complex logical operators” (ibid.). Another reason not to rely exclusively on authentic material is that authentic texts do not necessarily generate authentic tasks. Yet authentic texts, be they written for native speakers or a language learner group, communicate information, and their language helps to develop and improve the learners’ ability to express themselves authentically. Most of the time, the message of a text is more important than the goal to teach authentic language *per se*. A sample review of literature on teaching and testing sociopragmatics has shown

that both the construct and the assessment devices are limited. What is regarded as teachable and testable falls mainly into the paradigms of speech acts (e.g. *apologies, compliments, complaints, requests, refusals*); discourse markers, pragmatic routine formulae and pragmatic fluency as well as into the realm of implicature comprehension (cf. Kasper 1997 and Roever 2011). Despite the limitations, it is understandable that these fields should be part of the teaching and testing of sociopragmatics in the Russian language classroom, since teachers can make use of the research results and adapt them to or improve their teaching methods and assessment procedures.

Both the teaching and testing of sociopragmatics must start from an awareness level at an early stage, focusing on receptive skills before moving on to productive skills. The construct for the various competence levels needs to be modelled and broadened by making use of the scales of CEFR and their illustrative descriptors, ranging from sociolinguistic appropriateness (CEFR 2001, 122) to flexibility, turn taking (124), thematic development, coherence and cohesion (125), spoken fluency and propositional precision (129).

If the goal in the Russian language classroom is to build up communicative and transcultural competence – apart from grammatical and lexical competence, then more consideration must be given to the implementation of pragmalinguistic awareness and sociocultural competence in the teaching and testing process. This includes the writing of Russian course books. Authors of text books and teachers of Russian *may wish to consider* the sociopragmatic construct carefully: which knowledge to teach, which discourse features to develop, which strategies to activate, which interaction schemata to present, which functions and registers to equip their learners with, which politeness conventions to introduce and which authenticity to expose their learners to so that they master the rules of communicative behaviour in various situations.

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