

# PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE AND SOCIAL ACTION IN INTERACTION

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## Abstract

When learning a second language (L2), we are learning how to use that language to do things in the world. Yet despite significant advancements over the past few decades, many studies in L2 pragmatics remain focused on a relatively narrow range of speech acts and continue to rely on frameworks that are conceptually rather than empirically motivated. While there has been moves to integrate different approaches to pragmatic competence from CA (Roever, 2021) or SLA (Taguchi, 2019), and to examine a broader range of actions beyond the scope of 'requests' and 'apologies' that are typically examined (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig, 2015; Bardovi-Harlig & Su, 2021), there are arguably still significant gaps in our theorisation of pragmatic competence and application in situated contexts of L2 learning and use. In this presentation I suggest that we can start to address those gaps by drawing more heavily on empirical data to identify the various dimensions that constitute pragmatic competence from the bottom up, rather than attempting to develop a theory of pragmatic competence in a solely top-down fashion. I exemplify this approach through a focus on troubles-remedy sequences, where Saudi L2 English speakers deploy troubles-complaints to mobilise some form of remedy or assistance from their interlocutors across various kinds of institutional settings (Alshammari & Haugh, 2024, 2025a, 2025b). Through examining the different dimensions and layers of these troubles-remedy sequences, the paper aims to lay the groundwork for the development of a more interactionally grounded approach to L2 pragmatic-interactional competence.



## Bio.

Dr Michael Haugh is Professor of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics at the University of Queensland and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. His research lies in pragmatics, focusing on how language is used in context and shapes social interaction. He examines spoken and digitally mediated interactions across languages, showing how pragmatic phenomena vary within and across cultures, and emphasizes the emerging role of corpora and digital tools in advancing the field. He also leads the Language Data Commons of Australia and the Australian Text Analytics Platform, and co-directs the Language Technology and Data Analysis Laboratory.