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L2 Pragmatic Advancement: The Interplay of Individual Differences

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Abstract

Effects on individual differences factors on second language (L2) pragmatic competence are of interest to researchers because advancedness in L2 pragmatic competence is directly related to learners' personal traits and their knowledge of contextual factors. In a study abroad (SA) setting, prior studies have found that despite the abundant learning affordances in an SA context, learners vary in their use of such opportunities, such as social contact, to increase L2 pragmatic competence. One possible factor is motivation. Adopting the recent theory on L2 motivation, this study examined the connections between L2 motivational selves and pragmatics in interaction. The participants were four U.S. learners of Chinese who studied and interned abroad in Fall 2021 and 2022. They completed a role-play task on pragmatics in interaction, a survey on learning background and social contact, a survey on L2 motivational selves, and a semi-structured interview on their study abroad experience. The results indicate that both L2 motivational selves and the quantity and quality of L2 social contact influence interactional pragmatics in an SA setting. By highlighting the joint effect of individual differences factors, the study makes theoretical and methodological contributions to the broader field of L2 pragmatics.

Keywords: Chinese as a second language; L2 motivational selves; individual differences; pragmatics; study abroad