

Intercultural (Mis)communication: The Influence of L1 and C1 on L2 and C2. A Tentative Approach to Textbooks

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ABSTRACT

Intercultural communication goes beyond interlanguage, the result of languages in contact, in the sense that it takes into account both linguistic and cultural aspects, and within the field of linguistics, pragmatics is probably the area where they more often interact. The Influence of L1 and C1 on L2 and C2 is undeniable and inevitable; one of the means by which this influence will take place is transfer, but transfer may lead to errors and failure at all linguistic levels, being most serious at pragmatic level. Many of the pragmatic strategies we use in everyday language are in fact routines or formulas that we have acquired more or less consciously. Transfer, failures and the routines we learn are often teaching-induced, therefore an analysis of textbooks for teaching English and how they deal with these issues would be useful; here we just present a general and tentative review.

KEY WORDS : *Intercultural communication, transfer, pragmatics, failure, routine, formula, textbooks.*

RESUMEN

La comunicación intercultural va más allá de la interlengua, el resultado de las lenguas en contacto, en el sentido de que tiene en cuenta tanto aspectos lingüísticos como culturales, y en el campo de la lingüística, la pragmática es probablemente el área donde con más frecuencia confluyen éstos. La influencia de la L1 y la C1 en la L2 y la C2 es innegable e inevitable; uno de los medios a través de los cuales esta influencia tendrá lugar es la transferencia, pero la transferencia puede llevar a errores y fallos a todos los niveles lingüísticos, siendo los más graves los pragmáticos. Muchas de las estrategias pragmáticas que utilizamos en la lengua diaria son en realidad expresiones ritualizadas o convenciones que hemos adquirido de manera más o menos consciente. La transferencia, los fallos y las frases hechas las aprendemos con frecuencia a través de la enseñanza formal, por lo tanto un estudio de los

libros de texto para aprender inglés y cómo tratan estos problemas se nos muy útil; aquí simplemente presentamos una revisión tentativa de los mismos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Comunicación intercultural, transferencia, pragmática, fallo, expresiones ritualizadas, convenciones, libros de texto.*

The term *interlanguage* was popularized by Larry Selinker in an influential article published in 1972; broadly speaking, interlanguage would be the result of the contact between two, or more, languages, a **separate** linguistic system which is not exactly one or the other. This concept has **been** retaken and reformulated by many other linguists **after** him; Shoshana Blum-Kulka, **for instance**, defines interlanguage pragmatics (1996: 167), a **further** development of the **original** idea, as the system developed when **two** languages come into contact; these two languages meet in the mind of a person who is **learning** them and the resulting intrapersonal system is interlanguage, learners **recreate** the language they are **learning** - the target language - incorporating influences from their mother tongue and **making** hypotheses about the target language. Interlanguage studies developed in the 1970s and were mostly concerned with learners' phonological, morphological and syntactic knowledge, that is to say their linguistic competence, but emphasis on **communicative** competence and especially its application to second language learning either as strategic or intercultural competence has expanded those studies so as to include interlanguage research on learners' pragmatic and discourse knowledge, giving rise to *interlanguage pragmatics* (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989: 9), a field developed in the 1980s that has **been** defined by Kasper as "the branch of second language research which studies how non-native **speakers** understand and **carry** out linguistic action in a target language and how they **acquire** L2 pragmatic knowledge" (1992: 203); **this** term, together with *cross-cultural pragmatics* and *intercultural pragmatics* are often **used interchangeably**. *Intercultural communication* also goes beyond the concept of interlanguage as it deals not **just** with an **intrapersonal** linguistic system, but with communication between people speaking the same language, either as their mother tongue, second language or *lingua franca*, although belonging to different cultures, and at the same time it embraces not **only** linguistic aspects but **also** the cultural aspects affecting language and that may **facilitate** communication or **interfere** and turn it into **miscommunication**. Although culture affects all aspects of language - Fredrik Brøgger speaks of cultural syntactics, morphology, semantics and pragmatics (1992: 49-58) -, it is probably in pragmatics, **in** language **in** use **and** context, that the influence of culture is most clearly **seen**, which **is** the reason why most of our comments and **analyses** will be about intercultural pragmatics rather than phonological or semantic influences.

When **speaking** about interlanguage, Selinker **also** introduces the concept of *fossilization*, **and** he defines **fossilizable** linguistic phenomena as "the linguistic **items**, **rules**, and subsystems which **speakers** of a particular NL [native language] **will** tend to keep in their IL [interlanguage] **relative** to a particular TL [target language], **no matter** what the age of **the learner** may be or amount of **explanation** and **instruction** he receives in **the TL**" (1972: 215). He then gives **several examples regarding mispronunciation and wrong word-order** or intonation in L2 learners, **mistakes** that **may reappear** even at an advanced stage, when they would be expected to **have** disappeared, **especially** when the learner's attention **is** focused on new and difficult aspects of the language or

when the speaker is in a state of anxiety or extreme relaxation. Although Selinker admits that these fossilizable items, mles and subsystems which take place in interlanguage may be a result of the influence of the native language, what he calls *language transfer* (1972: 216), he is convinced that the phenomenon of 'backsliding' by L2 learners from a target language norm is usually not towards the speaker's own language, but towards an interlanguage norm. Other authors however, speak more openly and adamantly about language transfer as "the incorporation of characteristics from L1 to the L2 system that the foreign language student is trying to build" (Jessner, 1996: 141) or as "the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously acquired" (Odlin, 1989: 27). Jessner compares language transfer as a learning process to other processes which include the use of L1 for communicative purposes such as translation, loans or code- and language-switching as a result not necessarily of the speakers' competence level but of sociocultural circumstances (status, family context...). Transfer will take place at all linguistic levels: phonological, semantic, syntactic and pragmatic. In Jessner's opinion (1996: 149), transfer is most common at the phonological level than at other levels and L1 has great influence on the accent acquired in L2; we can also very often find transfer at the lexical level and Jessner reports studies that prove that vocabulary acquisition is less problematic when two languages are closely related. The importance of pragmatic transfer lies in the fact that, as pragmatic failures involve violation of the conversational rules in L2, they are potentially more serious than syntactic or pronunciation mistakes. Pragmatic failure may have serious social implications and failure may be attributed to the personality of the speaker, who may be considered impolite, lacking in manners and uncooperative or censured as being an untruthful, deceitful or insincere person (Cenoz and Valencia, 1996: 227; Jessner, 1996: 150; Thomas, 1983: 107). It can also contribute to cultural, nationalist and even sexist stereotyping (Blum-Kulka and Olshain, 1986: 169; Thomas, 1983: 96-7), and that is the reason why fluent L2 speakers might retain some characteristics of their mother tongue which would present themselves as non-native (Blum-Kulka, 1996: 173), so as to avoid this prejudicing.

That is probably the reason why studies on pragmatic transfer have developed so much in recent years. Wolfson, for instance, says that the "use of mles of speaking from one's own native speech community when interacting with members of the host community or simply when speaking or writing in a second language is known as sociolinguistic or pragmatic transfer" (1989: 141). Kasper reviews several definitions of pragmatic transfer given by different linguists and, taking into account that transfer may come from any language acquired, she finally gives her own as "the influence exerted by learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information" (1992: 207). At this point, though, Kasper also wants to make the difference between transfer and what she calls *cross-linguistic influence*, while transfer would incorporate some linguistic behaviour, cross-linguistic influence would refer to other kinds of effect such as avoidance or L1 constraints on L2 learning.

Within pragmatic transfer, we can make a further distinction, that between *pragmalinguistic transfer* and *sociopragmatic transfer*. Stemming from Leech's idea of pragmalinguistics (1983: 11), Thomas defined pragmalinguistic transfer as "the inappropriate transfer of speech act strategies from one language to another, or the transferring from the mother

tongue to the target language of utterances which are semantically/syntactically equivalent, but which, **because** of different 'interpretive bias', tend to convey a different **pragmatic** force in the target language" (1983: 101). Kasper expanded this **definition** and included not **just** the illocutionary force, but **also** the transfer of politeness assignment (1992: 209). As for sociopragmatic transfer, **according** to Olshtain and Cohen (1989: 61), speakers may transfer their perceptions about how to **perform in** given situations from native language behaviour to a second language **situation**; it would affect their decision about whether to use a given speech act, how frequently and how much prestige they would afford other **participants** in the event. So, the decision whether, for instance, to apologize or to **provide** an account for an offence would be a **sociopragmatic** one; however, if we use a semantic formula **within** the speech act of apologizing, this is a pragmlinguistic choice (Kasper, 1992: 210).

According to Jessner, the idea that most difficulties encountered by L2 students were connected with their **first** language dates back to the days after World War II. It was thought then that the existing differences between L1 and L2 and the knowledge students had about their L1 would interfere with the development of the L2 (1996: 141), but, as **some** other authors **have** pointed out, it is still a general assumption in interlanguage pragmatics that there are transfer effects and that intercultural **miscommunication** is often **caused** by learners' **L1 influence** regarding sociocultural norms and conventions (Takahashi and Beebe, 1993: 154; Kasper and Schmidt, 1996: 156; Takahashi, 1996: 189). Contrastive **analysis** evolved **in** the late 50s and with it the idea that habits developed **in** L1 were **transferred** to L2: when elements in L1 and L2 were similar, L1 would actively help L2 **learning**: this is positive transfer; on the contrary, when L2 were different from L1 there would be negative transfer or interference (Jessner, 1996: 142). In our **opinion** though, what is called "positive transfer" **does** not always **have** a positive effect; we are **thinking** of very simple cases, for **example**, that of "false friends" **in** vocabulary. When **learning** a foreign language, who **has** not come up **against** deceitful words which looked like what they were not? If we **take** the case of Spanish-English, words like "actually", "sensible" or "constipation", **just** to give three words among **dozens**, are often **misunderstood** and **misused**. Another **instance** could be that of the present perfect in **syntax**, the **similarity** in the construction of this verb form and the connection with the past **make** students use it incorrectly on thousands of occasions and when saying "**I have** lived **in** Barcelona for two years", they will mean that they lived **in** this city for two **years some** time ago, **whereas** the native English speaker will understand that they are still **living** there; and the other way round, **on hearing** the expression "**I have** worked **in** a school for a month", the **Spanish learner** of English would probably understand that the speaker worked **in** a school for a month in the past and he is not **necessarily working** there any longer. Kasper **reports** a **study** (1992: 216) **in** which it was **shown** that Danish learners made **freer** use of their L1 when requesting in German **than** in **English**, as they perceived Danish as closer to German **than** to English; although she **does** not **specify** whether this led to more or fewer mistakes, we should understand **that unless** the **structures used** were very similar and **had** the same **functions**, the result would be **misuse** of the language and **miscommunication**.

Those who thought that negative **transfer**, differences **in structures between** both languages, were **mostly** to blame for students' mistakes **focused** their **teaching** on those **areas** which presented more **distant characteristics** and therefore greater difficulties. The audiolingual methods **and** drill-

type exercises, which repeated the same **structure introducing** slight variations with the aim of creating **good linguistic habits** in the L2 student, were of **great importance** (Jessner, 1996: 143). By **having** a look at **some textbooks**¹ for the **learning** of English widely used in the 70s and 80s we **find** that "drill" exercises were in fact **very** popular and structures ranging from **asking** one's name or age to verb tenses were **taught/learned** this way. Just by repeating the same question and **answer** over and over again, **Spanish** students would learn that they had to use the verb "to be" and not "to **have**" to ask about someone's age. This would be connected with ideas of **unconsciousness** and **subliminality** in the **speaking** of language, in the first place as **L1** speakers, but **also** as **L2** speakers, idea discussed by Schmidt in his article "Consciousness, **Learning** and **Interlanguage Pragmatics**" (1993), and **also** with the **learning** of routines, that we will discuss later. More modern **textbooks** do not **hammer** knowledge into students' heads by repeating **out-of-context** sentences, but **brief** role-play activities which are repeated several times are still a popular aid for language teaching, especially for everyday expressions that may be similar or not to structures in the learners' own language.

Regarding pragmatic transfer, there is another problem we should take into account, if we accept the idea that there are **some** pragmatic **universals** underlying **cross-linguistic** variation - there are no **reports** of **speech communities** that lack the basic **set** of speech acts, **although** they may be **realized** in different ways (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996: 155) -, it is **often** difficult to **distinguish** positive transfer from learners' application of **their** general pragmatic knowledge, or from generalizing prior interlanguage pragmatic knowledge (Kasper, 1992: 213; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996: 164; Takahashi, 1996: 190), **although**, according to **some** studies reviewed by Takahashi, it seems that transfer from **L1** to **L2** takes place when learners perceive **L1** pragmatic **features** as universal. This idea **could** be **supported** by the case study reported by Kasper, who found that "of 29 German learners **performing** a **variety** of linguistic acts in simulated face-to-face conversations with native speakers of English, no-one used the **mitigating** routine 'I mean', even though its **German** formal and functional equivalent ('ich mein(e)') was the most frequently used **cajoler** in **German** native speakers' production in comparable contexts. Informal interviews with **some** of the learners revealed that they perceived this routine as **language-specific**" (1992: 216).

But regardless of the positive or negative effect of transfer, when **is** transferability likely to take place? Takahashi, in a study about the transferability of five Japanese indirect request strategies to corresponding English request contexts, defines it as "the probability with which a given **L1** indirect request strategy **will** be transferred **relative** to other **L1** indirect request strategies" (1996: 195); of course, we can extend the **definition** and **speak** about strategies in general. The **important** idea in this definition is that it **emphasizes** the probabilistic **nature** of pragmatic transferability, in the **sense** that one specific item is more likely to be transferred than another. The definition offered by Takahashi incorporates **two criteria**: (a) how **L2** learners assess the **contextual** appropriateness of an **L1** pragmatic strategy and (b) how they assess the **equivalence** of the **L1** and **L2** strategies in **terms** of **contextual appropriateness**. Criteria derived from studies on second language acquisition transfer and which suggest that frequency and **similarity** are the **crucial** requirements for **L1** transfer (Takahashi, 1996: 196). Regarding the **first** criterion, the assumption is that if the **L1** strategy is perceived to be appropriate and therefore frequently used, this **L1** strategy would more likely be transferred to the **L2** context; on the contrary, if the **L1**

strategy is perceived not to be appropriate and consequently not frequently used, L1 is not likely to be transferred to the L2 context. As for the second **crit**erion, equivalence has **been proved** to be a **crucial** factor for transfer, **here**, equivalence refers not so much to **structural** equivalence but to the perceived equivalence of **L1-L2 structures** in **terms of contextual** appropriateness. Pragmatic transferability is then the interaction of these two criteria in which contextual appropriateness is superordinate to contextual equivalence.

Kasper, in her **study** about pragmatic transfer, goes over **several** factors that **may** determine transferability, either positively or negatively (1992: 217-21). First, she refers to an aspect we **have already** mentioned above, that of closeness between **languages**: it seems that the closer they are, the more **likely it is** that transfer will take place. **After** commenting on a study on apologies in Hebrew as L2 by Russian and English speakers, she **also** refers to the possible influence of highly automatized **L1 response** panemes or the speakers' wish to set themselves apart from the target **community** to retain and transfer L1 linguistic forms or strategies. The next factor she mentions is context; it makes a difference to perform a request for the **first** time or the second; transferability, apart from being highly context-dependent, is **also** influenced by the **learner's** familiarity with the context. Kasper then moves on to what she calls "nonstructural factors", which include the learning context and development **aspects**. Regarding learning context, Kasper goes over **several** studies which **prove** that **instruction** has a **major** role in shaping learners' **perceptions** of what is **transferable** or not at the pragmatic level. Selinker, in the abovementioned article, already spoke of transfer-of-training as the "fossilizable items ... [resulting from] ... identifiable items in **training procedures**" (1972: 216) and he gave the example of Serbo-Croatian speakers' **difficulties** at all levels of English proficiency to distinguish the pronouns "he/she". As the **same** distinction is made **regarding** pronouns in Serbo-Croatian as in English, we **cannot** speak of language transfer and Selinker comes to the conclusion that this difficulty was the result of textbooks **and** teachers **almost** always presenting drills with "he" and never with "she", the student then felt that there **was** no need for this distinction in order to **communicate** (1972: 18-19). We are sure Selinker must **have been right** at the time, but this **kind** of problem would not, or at least should not, take place any longer in **U teaching** because, in **spite** of the use of this technique even nowadays, textbook writers and publishers take great pains to introduce a great variety of pronouns, as well as other elements, in their **drill** exercises.

Talking about pragmatic **knowledge**, Kasper and **Schmidt** say that it should be teachable and they add that, in fact, studies on language **socialization** make it very clear that parents and **peers** actively instruct in **child** pragmatic learning by means of model routines, prescribing "**rules**" or **providing** negative feedback (1996: 160), but they **also** agree on the fact that although communicative activities, for **instance**, may help **learning**, they will not **generate** the **type** of sociolinguistic input that learners need. **They also** give **several** examples of how defective presentation of pragmatic information, either by the teacher or textbooks, may be a **source** of transfer of **training**. **The importance** of modern textbooks for the learning of English give to pragmatic information can be **seen in the amount** of "**functions**" they try to cover, especially at **beginner** level; if we **have** a look at a very popular **textbook** in the late 80s **and** early 90s in Spain, and **focusing only** on the more **traditional** speech acts studied by **pragmatics**, we **find items** such as "apologise", "**distinguish** levels of **formality**", "**complain**", "express politeness", "make and

reply to offers and requests", "invite and reply". How **this** information is presented and to what extent **it is successful** is another **matter**. **Taking** into account how much pragmatics **is** influenced by **culture**, one possible solution for the correct teaching of pragmatic information would be the use of "specific culturally contrastive examples", a suggestion made by Wallwork (1981: 7) for a wider context of L2 teaching, but perfectly applicable **here** as well. He **also warns** us about the material we use **in planning** and teaching a **lesson because** it is **often** the case that the teacher inevitably **makes** intuitive cultural **assumptions regarding** the contents of a text or activity and if they do not coincide with the students' there may be problems both in understanding and production (Wallwork, 1981: 2).

As for the last factor mentioned by **Kasper** (1992: 219), developmental aspects, she **reports** the hypothesis defended by Takahashi and Beebe (1987) about the fact that L2 proficiency is positively correlated with pragmatic transfer, a hypothesis **later revised** by many linguists, Takahashi **among** them. **About a decade later**, Takahashi **retakes** the whole idea again (1996: 193-5); she first refers to the U-shaped **curve** that second language acquisition studies establish for interlanguage development **in** the sense that we can find **three** stages characterizing behaviour in language performance. At stage 1, learners show **target-like** performance in **some** limited linguistic domain; at stage 2 performance **deviates** from the **target** model and at stage 3 **structures** present in stage 1 appear again. Transfer studies do not always find **this** U-shaped behaviour in interlanguage development and **two contradictory** views appear. On the one hand, it is argued that less proficient learners rely more on **L1** transfer, whereas errors produced by more advanced learners reflect **overgeneralization** from **already acquired** interlanguage **features**; on the other hand, the stance is that **L1** transfer occurs in the performance of **very** advanced L2 learners who may rely on their native language **in** the **areas** of basic grammatical contrasts. Takahashi and Beebe's **initial** hypothesis **implying** that low-proficiency learners are less likely to transfer **L1** pragmatic knowledge due to their limited L2 proficiency has **been** contested by other studies that **have** demonstrated that lower proficiency learners are more likely to transfer **L1** strategies than **high**-proficiency learners. **One** of the **aims** of her 1996 **study** was precisely to investigate "which of the two views - the positive correlation hypothesis or the negative correlation hypothesis - is more tenable in **accounting** for the development of learners' pragmatic competence as **manifested** in their perception of **pragmatic** transferability" (1996: 195), the conclusion being that "there was little proficiency effect on **the** learners' transferability perception of the **L1** request strategies as a whole. **Both** low- and **high-proficiency** learners equally relied on their **L1** request conventions or strategies **in** L2 request **realization**" (1996: 210), and to conclude she suggests that learners' **familiarity** with the **L2 context may** be a more crucial **determinant** for transfer and transferability at the pragmatic level. It is **interesting** to **notice** though, how **little attention, explicitly** at least, textbooks for advanced levels pay to pragmatic competence; **in** comparison to the amount of **activities** devoted to it **in** books for **beginners**, upper-intermediate and **higher level books** do not mention **any** of these **functions** and a section devoted to offers and requests **only** appears as part of **the explanation** and **further** practice of **modal** verbs.

As Jessner states (1996: 148), the positive **influence** of **L1** has often **been** forgotten and studies **have** focused on errors and negative effects, which is probably the reason why we **have**

until now often **linked** the **term** transfer to the idea of **misuse** and **miscommunication**. Quoting Richards (1971), Jessner (1996: 146) **points out three** sources for errors:

- i) **Interference errors**. They are the result of the use of elements of one language when the speaker uses a different one.
- ii) **Intralinguistic errors**. These errors reflect the general characteristics of **learning** rules such as **incorrect** overgeneralization, incomplete application of rules, that is to say, problems that arise when **learning** the conditions under which those rules are applied.
- iii) **Development errors**. These errors take place when the **L2** students **try** to build a hypothesis about **L2** based on their **limited** experience of the language.

This **third** type of errors is sometimes included in the second, **intralinguistic errors**. Jessner (1996: 146-7) presents a further classification of **intralinguistic mistakes**, which is as follows:

- * **Overgeneralization**. Students take **L2** structures to **create** new structures which **deviate** from the norm, for **instance adding an "s"** to **all third person singular verb forms** regardless of **the kind of verb or tense** ("he cans", "she wents").
- * **Ignoring rule restrictions**. Rules are used **in contexts in** which they do not apply ("you asked me to go" is correct, but "you made me to go" is not).
- * **Incomplete application of rules**. Errors resulting from developing an incomplete form of a structure ("you like to cook?" instead of "do you like to cook?")
- * **Hypotheses based on wrong concepts**. Students **have** not fully understood a difference **existing in L2 and this results in a mistake** ("he is goes", based on the idea that the use of "is" is compulsory for present forms).

Another kind of problem we can **find** is precisely lack of errors as a result of underproduction (Jessner, 1996: 148): if we do not use a **structure**, we cannot use it wrongly. Students may avoid linguistic **structures** in **L2** that they consider difficult. This **avoidance** may **have** its origin in different sources: students are more or less familiar with a **structure** but are not confident, students know the **structure**, but **find** difficulties in **using** it in a specific context, students know the expression, but they cannot produce it in a specific context **because it would go against** their norms of behaviour.

Jessner (1996: 145), **quoting** Corder (1967), **makes** a difference between errors and mistakes. Errors would be deviations that take place when there is lack of competence, but, on the **other hand**, **mistakes** are problems arising in performance, the result of a processing problem and **also common in** native speakers' production. When **speaking** about pragmatics, Thomas (1983: 94) makes a further **distinction** between error and failure; **in her opinion**, we can **speak** about **grammatical** error, **since grammar** can be **judged according** to prescriptive rules, whereas pragmatic competence **implies** probable rather than categorical rules, so the idea **is** not that an utterance is wrong, but that it **failed** to **achieve** the speaker's goal. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain consider that **pragmatic** failure takes place "whenever **two** speakers **fail** to **understand** each other's

intentions ... regardless of whether or not they share the same linguistic and cultural background ... [although] ... it is more likely to **occur** between speakers from different cultural and linguistic background" (1986: 166), and Thomas applies the term to "**misunderstandings** which arise, not from any inability on the **part** of the H[earer] to **understand** the intended **sense/reference** of the speaker's words **in** the context **in** which they are uttered, but from an inability to recognize the force of the speaker's utterance when the speaker intended that **this** particular hearer should **recognize** it" (1983: 94). Blum-Kulka and Olshtain **draw** attention to the difference between "intentional violations", when a speaker **in** a normal **communicative** interaction seems to **provide** irrelevant or **superfluous information** with the likely purpose of conveying more than **he/she** says, and "**unintentional** violations", which take place when interlocutors do not share the **same norms** of conversational interactions (1986: 167-8).

Within pragmatic failure, and following the same **division** we applied to transfer above, Thomas (1983: 99) makes a **further** distinction between pragmalinguistic failure and sociopragmatic failure. **Pragmalinguistic** failure "occurs when the pragmatic force mapped by S[peaker] onto a given **utterance** to a linguistic **structure** is systematically different from the force most frequently assigned to it by native speakers of the **target** language, or when speech act strategies are inappropriately transferred from L1 to L2", and sociopragmatic failure refers "to the social conditions placed on language **in** use". In Thomas's **opinion**, while pragmalinguistic failure is a linguistic problem and it would have its origin **in** teaching-induced errors and **pragmalinguistic** transfer, **socio-pragmatic** failure **stems** from cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour.

We should bear in **mind** that pragmatic **principles** are subject to intercultural as well as intracultural variation and that the pragmatic **systems** of different cultures include culturally specified **norms** for the way **in** which the Gricean **maxims** are expected to be realized. Whereas the **principle** of **cooperation** is a universally respected norm without which **communication** could not take place, the maxims of **quantity, relevance, quality, manner** might be interpreted differently by members of different cultures (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1986: 167; Coperías Aguilar, *forthcoming*). Factors such as **size** of imposition, **cost/benefit**, social distance and **relative** rights and obligations are different **in** different cultures. Regarding **size** of imposition, **asking** for a **specific** favour (to borrow **some** money or get a **lift**) **may** be more or less **imposing** depending on the culture; we **may also** come across **taboo** subjects, **sexual, religious** or whatever, that will make **asking** a **question** or **talking** about a specific subject completely inappropriate; social **distance** also differs cross-culturally and the way **in** which we address our parents, the elderly, teachers, students, **masters** or **servants** **may** change completely depending on the culture we are involved in at the moment. **Another** cross-cultural difference is value judgements: **some forms** of offer, invitation, **praise** or **criticism** **cannot** be taken seriously **in** the **sense** that **in** some cultures they are **part** of a **ritual**. In the **Ukraine**, for instance, **during** a **meal** you are offered more food up to **seven** or eight times whereas in **Britain** not more than twice (Thomas, 1983: 108).

All languages have a wide **range** of set expressions used **in** very specific situations (phone calls, **greetings, saying** goodbye, **apologizing** or **asking** for a favour), **routines** or formulas which are used more or less automatically, although they are **often** pragmatically **conditioned** and its use is motivated by the **characteristics** of the social **situation** (House, 1996: 225). Linguists distinguish

between routines and patterns, in the sense that routines are whole memorized **chunks** of speech, such as "How are you?" or "**See you later**", and **patterns** are partially **analyzed** stretches containing one or more open slots, "**Can/Could** you do...?", "Would you **mind**...?" Linguists see routines as "a **significant** factor in early second language acquisition" (House, 1996: 226) and as "indispensable to the acquisition of communicative competence in the language" (Davies, 1987: 75); they can both **improve** the learner's productive and receptive **performance** and develop understanding of the **target** culture. To the self-question of why **some** knowledge of the formulaic politeness markers used in a speech community may be of particular **usefulness** to a learner of the language concerned, Davies (1987: 76) answers by saying that politeness formulas can be learnt as indivisible and invariable **units**, easy to memorize and not difficult to produce, and at the **same** time, routines are so **frequently** and commonly used that when exploited **cunningly** by the learner who **memorizes some** basic formulas for **greeting, thanking**, etc., they can very well disguise a poor **command** of the language. House (1996: 226) **first** points out that routines are useful only for beginner second language learners as a **kind** of "stepping stones", which **compensate** for the **learners'** lack of automatic processing ability, and **become less important** and less necessary at **later** stages, but then she adds that "linguistic behaviour is ritualized to such extent and routines as memorized stretches do **indeed** form a **high proportion** of the fluent stretches of adult native speakers' everyday conversation" that the acquisition of pragmatic competence involves **memorizing** large **numbers** of routines and therefore **learning** them may **also** be important in **later** stages of second language **learning**. Schmidt wonders

whether it **is necessary** to notice what is said in a language in order for that information to be stored in memory **and** to play a role in language **learning**, or whether it **is also possible** for **some** learning to be based on unnoticed information, information that **is** perceived at **some level** and perhaps processed subliminally without being consciously registered (1993:25).

Although it will very much depend on the presentation the teacher makes of the material, it **often** seems as if textbooks, especially those for beginners, would function on the **basis** of this "unnoticed information" that will be "processed subliminally" at **some** stage. In spite of this **self-questioning**, Schmidt **also points** out that pragmatic knowledge is not always used automatically and **unreflectively** and that there are **many** occasions (a special telephone conversation, **writing** or **addressing** a particular **person**) that will involve a great **deal** of **conscious** deliberation (1993:23).

We should **also bear in mind** that routines embody the societal knowledge that members of a given speech community **share**, as **cultures** differ greatly in everyday **situations** for which formulaic expressions are available, and **in** which **their** use **is** appropriate, and routine formulas are **thus essential in** the **verbal** handling of everyday **life**. **According to Kasper** and Schmidt (1996: 155), the **use** of routine formulas is a universal pragmatic **strategy**, but at the same **time** pragmatic formulas are **part** of the **lexicon** of a particular language **and their** use **is linked** to the **communicative practices** of a speech community, so they differ **cross-linguistically** in both form and function. In a **contrastive** study about politeness formulas, Davies (1987: 76-7) **warns** us about the **apparent** value they **have** as language learning aids, **especially** in the early stages of **mastering**

a language, as **shown** by phrase-books or many **textbooks**; however a pair of similar formulas in two languages very seldom turn out to be completely equivalent in **all** respects as the **true significance** of a **formula** is **determined** by a complex of cultural and social conventions. First, we should **make** a distinction between the semantic content of a formula and its pragmatic function, that is to **say**, between its **propositional** content and its illocutionary force potential; then we must take into **account** that a **successful learner** must know not only which formulas can be used for the performance of a particular illocutionary act, such as greeting or **thanking**, but **also** the **kinds** of context where such acts can be appropriately performed.

When contrasting similar formulas in different languages we may come across many cases of non-equivalence, as **Davies** shows (1987: 80). We may find a situation that requires a formula in one language while in the other the same message would be appropriate, but it would not be conveyed by means of a fixed formula; for instance in Moroccan Arabic there is a formula used to wish a sick person a **quick** recovery, whereas, although in English there is the written formula "get well soon", there **is** not such formula **in** speech, or it is very seldom **used**. Another case would be when a formula is required in one language while in the other no remark is required at **all** in the **corresponding** situation, for instance, the expression "with health" said **in** Moroccan to one who has **just taken** a bath or "que aproveche" said **in Spanish** to one who is about to eat or **found** eating, and which **have** no equivalent **in** English. **Then** we can find formulas used **in** relation to **certain** culture-specific **occasions**, such as religious celebrations ("Merry Christmas" in English) which **have** no correspondence in the other language.

But we can **also** find cases of what **Davies** calls **partial** equivalence (1987: 81), one of which would be when we **have** formulas with the same function but different **semantic** content; for example in Arabic many formulas involve **references** to religious concepts, so to someone about to take an exam we would say in Arabic the equivalent of "may God help you" instead of the English "good luck", or to someone who has rendered us a service "God bless you" instead of "thank you", which **again** shows not just linguistic but cultural differences between languages. Another case of **partial** difference is when we **have** **semantically** similar routines which differ **in** the **functions** they can fulfil; for instance, the equivalent expression in Moroccan Arabic to the English "**congratulations**", "**blessed and fortunate**", is used not only to acknowledge that someone has **successfully** achieved **something**: **getting married**, having a baby, passing an exam, **etc.**, but **also** in situations where no notion of achievement **on** the part of the addressee is present: a feastday or **on** the occasion of a rainy day when rain has **been** long awaited for (**Davies**, 1987: 83). **Finally**, we can **also** find differences **regarding** situations of use, formulas may be restricted with **regard** to the **kind** of speaker who **may** use them, the **kind** of addressee involved, the **medium** - speech or writing-, and place or time. **Davies** (1987: 84) gives **some** examples of expressions which can only be used when addressing a child and another group that **can** only be used by women, and she then moves **on** to **analyse** **four** formulas used to take **leave** of someone: "goodbye" **in** English, which is used when either the speaker or addressee **is** **leaving** for a long or **short** period of time, "adieu" in French, which - **in** contrast to "au revoir" - is only used for a **permanent parting**, "ciao" in **Italian** which is used for both greeting someone **and parting** and the Moroccan Arabic formula transcribed as /lla j?awn/, which can be used to open, **continue** or end an **exchange**, but only when addressed to someone who at the time of **speaking** is engaged in

some kind of work or about to start it. There may also be problems when the first language has a formula which can be used in a wide range of situations, whereas the second language has different expressions for different contexts: for instance, the expression "perdón" in Spanish and the corresponding "sorry", "excuse me" or "pardon" in English depending on the situation, or "thank you" in English and the many corresponding varieties of this expression in Moroccan Arabic (Davies, 1987: 85). On the other hand, the British tend to say 'thank you' in response to the smallest service, whereas in Moroccan Arabic small gestures would not warrant thanks at all, and to use an equivalent formula in response to a trivial service might seem ironical or sarcastic instead of polite; while English-speaking learners of Arabic who distribute thanks as they would in English might be perceived as insincere or stilted, a Moroccan who applies the Arabic conventions for thanking when speaking English would often appear impolite or unappreciative. These examples, as well as many others, prove that House is right when she says that "errors on the part of foreign language learners result from re- or misapplication of stored chunks and from yet not fully developed and automatized scripts at the learners' disposal" (1996: 227) and therefore many failures made by advanced and fluent speakers would stem from inappropriate use of routines.

If most textbooks for beginners present routines and formulas that have to be memorized and used almost automatically by students, we might wonder whether these routines actually facilitate, or hinder, the acquisition of L2 grammar. House (1996: 226) presents both views: as a facilitative device, routines are considered to be a basis for subsequent creative speech, once learners have recognized the meanings and functions of the originally unanalysed wholes; on the other hand, some linguists think that routines and creative speech are unrelated and learners internalise L2 rules independently from them. Then she moves on to analyse (House, 1996) whether pragmatic fluency can be better acquired by advanced adult foreign language learners through input and practice alone, or whether giving them additional explicit instruction in the functions and use of conversational routines is more profitable for foreign language learning in the classroom. One of the conclusions to this study is that "explicit teaching of routinized communicative behaviour makes it less likely for negative pragmatic transfer to occur" and that

metapragmatic information is essential in counteracting negative pragmatic transfer and promoting the use of a more varied and more interpersonally potent repertoire of different discourse lubricants, discourse strategies, and speech act realizations, thus increasing learners' pragmatic fluency (House, 1996: 247, 249).

Both similarities and differences in language structures and cultural assumptions between L1-C1 and L2-C2 may interfere in language and culture acquisition. Not acknowledging that there is a difference in structures or style may create problems when trying to communicate, and taking for granted that vocabulary, style, indirectness, social imposition or any other element involved in a communication event are the same or similar may lead to serious problems of misunderstanding and miscommunication. Some linguists consider that learning routines and formulas is a useful technique in everyday life for non-native, as well as for native, speakers in order to avoid mistakes in grammar and failure in performance, but not all communication events

are predictable and **fall within** established frameworks, therefore **training** in more general knowledge of **context**, **variation** in formulas and use of **creative language is necessary**. Textbooks for **the learning** of foreign **languages** should **provide all** this and a **future** thorough study of **their contents** should show **us** if they are **successful in doing so**.

NOTE

1. Although we have examined several textbooks for the learning of English during the research for this article we prefer not to give any specific examples or names of textbooks, as this has been a tentative approach and the seed for a future, more thorough analysis.

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