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Author: Agnieszka Solska

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chapter 5

PRAGMATIC ISSUES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Agnieszka Solska

5.1 Introduction

It is now recognized that becoming a proficient speaker of whether one's native or a foreign tongue requires more than mastery of that language pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax and depends crucially on the ability to use the language appropriately. This belief is reflected in the communicative approach in language teaching, which gives primary importance to the achievement of abilities allowing speakers to understand and produce utterances which are well suited to the communicative situations taking place in specific socio-cultural contexts. The emergence of this approach has to some extent paralleled the rise of pragmatics as a separate field of study within linguistics and developing learners' pragmatic competence has come to be seen as one of the major goals in teaching English as a foreign language.

The goal of this chapter is to discuss the relevance of pragmatic issues for foreign language learning, to present some examples of cross-cultural differences in both the comprehension and production of pragmatic aspects of language and to offer a few thoughts on how pragmatic issues should be taught. The structure of the chapter is as follows. In section 5.2, the key terms in interlanguage pragmatics will be defined. Section 5.3 will contain an overview of pragmatic issues which are of major significance in second and foreign language studies, namely: conversational implicatures, speech acts, politeness, conversational analysis and forms of address. Section 5.4 will focus on universal aspects of pragmatics knowledge, and section 5.5 on positive transfer of pragmatic rules from L1. Section 5.6 will deal with the consequences of inadequate pragmatic knowledge in L2 while the role of explicit instruction in developing pragmatic abilities will be considered in section 5.7. Finally, conclusions emerging from the discussion will be presented in section 5.8.

5.2 Pragmatics and interlanguage pragmatics

The term **pragmatics**, which has originated within philosophy of language (Morris 1938), is now extensively used in many disciplines and is understood in many ways reflecting particular scholars' theoretical interests. The term is generally applied to "the study of language from the point of view of the users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on other participants in an act of communication" (Crystal 2008: 379). As a linguistic discipline, pragmatics is concerned with "the meaning of linguistic utterances for their users and interpreters" (Leech and Thomas 1990: 94), in particular with "meaning in relation to speech situations," which, as noted by Leech (1983: 13–14), encompass such elements as the addresser(s) and the addressee(s), the context of the utterance, the goal(s) of the utterance, speech acts, and the utterance as the product of the verbal act.

In the domain of second and foreign language acquisition and teaching, pragmatics can be defined as "the study of communicative action in its sociocultural context" (Kasper and Rose 2001: 2). As specified by Kasper and Rose (2001: 2), "communicative action includes not only speech acts (such as apologizing, complimenting, and requesting), but also engaging in different types of discourse and participating in speech events of varying length and complexity." This vision of the discipline is grounded in Leech's (1983) distinction into three categories of pragmatic studies: (a) general pragmatics, (b) socio-pragmatics and (c) pragmalinguistics. **General pragmatics** refers to the abstract study of the general conditions of the communicative use of language in terms of conversational principles. **Pragmalinguistics** is concerned with the particular resources specific languages have for performing communicative acts and conveying interpersonal meanings. Among these resources we find such pragmatic strategies as **directness** and **indirectness**, conversational routines as well as diverse linguistic forms which can be used in a given language to intensify or soften communicative acts. For instance, both *I'm sorry* and *Kindly accept my most sincere apologies* can be used to make a apology but each conveys a very different attitude of the speaker towards the hearer and reveals a different social relationship between them. Finally, **socio-pragmatics**, which Leech (1983: 10) described as "the sociological interface of pragmatics," embraces culture-specific studies and is concerned with how the performance of specific communicative action is interpreted and perceived by members of different speech communities.

There can be no doubt that there is a close relationship between pragmatics and language learning. As observed by Bouton (1996a: 1):

> pragmatics and language learning are inherently bound together […] pragmatics provides language teachers and learners with a research-based understanding of the language forms and functions that are appropriate to the many contexts in which a language is used – an understaning that is crucial to a proficient speaker's communicative competence.

Scholarly interest in how learners with different L1 backgrounds deal with diverse aspects of language use has led to the emergence of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) as a new interdisciplinary discipline based on the theories of pragmatics and second language acquisition (Kasper and Blum-Kulka 1993; Kasper and Rose 2001, 2002). It can be described as "the study of the development and use of strategies for linguistic action by nonnative speakers" (Kasper and Schmidt 1996: 150), its research methods include analysing naturally occurring speech, using role-plays, discourse completion tasks (DCT) and ratings of appropriateness (Kasper and Dahl 1991), and its findings are of direct significance for foreign language teaching.

5.3 Key issues in interlanguage pragmatics

Central topics of inquiry in pragmatics include such issues as deixis, presupposition, implicature and speech acts, though many scholars extend this list to include politeness phenomena and conversational analysis. Pragmatic issues which are of greatest importance in second and foreign language studies and teaching encompass speech acts, conversational implicature, conversational structure and conversational management as well as discourse organization and sociolinguistic aspects of language use, especially linguistic politeness and the choice of address forms. In this section we will take a brief look at some of these areas and their relevance for L2 learning.

5.3.1 Conversational implicature: conveying unstated meanings

Conversational implicatures are meanings "which a speaker intends to convey, but which he does not explicitly express" (Cruse 2006: 3). For instance, in exchange (1) Ron's reply will normally be understood as implying that Ron is not at leisure to go to the beach, even though he does not actually say that.

Although intended by the speaker, this meaning is not strictly part of "what is said" in the utterance, nor does it follow logically from what is said. Since it is not stated it must be inferred, in other words, deduced by the addressee based on his general knowledge and contextual information.

(1)
Kate: Are you coming down to the beach with us?
Ron: I've got some work to do.

Diverse explanations have been proposed of how conversational implicatures arise. The most widely known is the one proposed by the philosopher Herbert Paul Grice (1975), who argued that while engaging in conversation speakers attempt to be co-operative and tacitly agree to adhere to certain rules. Grice called the overarching principle which ensures the effective and rational communicative interaction the **Co-operative Principle** (CP), which he formulated in the following way:

> Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. (Grice 1975: 26)

Grice subdivided the Co-operative Principle into several **maxims of conversation**, which can be treated as guidelines for effective communication. In a nutshell, co-operative language users are expected to try to:

(a) say what they believe to be true (**Maxim of quality**),
(b) give the right amount of information (**Maxim of quantity**),
(c) be relevant, i.e. stay on topic (**Maxim of relation**),
(d) be clear (**Maxim of manner**).

According to Grice, some implicatures arise when a speaker tries to abide by the maxims to the best of his abilities and some implicatures are triggered when he **flouts** (i.e. deliberately and ostentatiously goes against) one or more of the maxims, in other words, when it is clear that he has good reasons for breaking the maxims. For instance, the assumption that Paul in exchange (2) is following the maxim of relation will enable Liz to deduce that she cannot talk to Betty. Ann's reply in exchange (3), which exploits the quantity maxim, implies that she does not know what subject Jack is taking. Bill's rejoinder in (4), which involves an obvious violation of the quality maxim, implies that he does not think Ted will keep his promise.

(2)
Liz: Can I speak to Betty?
Paul: She's out.

(3)
Josh: What subject is Jack taking?
Ann: He's not taking lingustics.

(4)
Ted: I'll pay you back tomorrow, I promise.
Bill: Yeah, and pigs might fly.

Although conversational implicature is a universal phenomenon, not all of its manifestations are equally common in different cultures. Consider such "figures of speech" as understatements, shown in (5), hyperboles (exaggerations), given in (6), and ironies, presented in (7):

(5) It's a bit of a nuisance. (said of a debilitating and painful chronic illness)
(6) I think of you a million times a day.
(7) Well done! (said to someone who has committed a blunder)

Such utterances can be regarded as violations of maxims of conversation, with understatement going against the maxim of quantity and both hyperbole and irony violating the maxim of quality. Understatements are more likely to be used in English, especially British English, than say in Arabic, which is sometimes described as the language of hyperbole. As for irony, in some cultures it might be less acceptable than in English. This attitude is reflected in the following comment made by a Japanese learner of English who participated in a cultural awareness project conducted by Murray (2011):

When someone talks to me especially ironically I always feel uncomfortable Probably it comes from my cultural background. In my background consideration for other people's feeling is priority than individual feeling. Therefore, before we say something we need to think if it makes people confortable or not. I think ironical speaking isn't harmonised with our culture. (original spelling retained)

5.3.2 Speech acts: utterances as actions

Speech acts are actions that people perform by producing utterances, for instance informing, promising, criticizing, apologizing, warning, thanking or requesting. Most often five categories of speech acts are distinguished, based on the functions which can be assigned to them, namely:

1. **Representatives** or **assertives**, which commit the speaker to the truth of the thought expressed in the utterance. They include asserting, claiming, reporting, boasting, concluding, etc. (e.g. *I'm a really good driver*).
2. **Directives**, which attempt to get the addressee to perform some action. They include asking questions, ordering, requesting, inviting, advising, begging, etc. (e.g. *Could you close the window?*).
3. **Commisives**, which place on the speaker the obligation to perform the action mentioned in his utterance. They include promising, offering, betting, warning, threatening, etc. (e.g. *I'll meet you after lunch*).
4. **Expressives**, which express how the speaker feels about something. They include thanking, apologizing, complaining, welcoming, congratulating, deploring, etc. (e.g. *I am sorry I didn't call you*).
5. **Declarations**, which change the institutional state of the world in an immediate way. They include dismissing from employment, bidding in the game of bridge, pronouncing someone guilty, declaring war, christening, etc. and often rely on elaborate extra-linguistic institutions (e.g. *We find the defendant guilty*, said by the jury foreman).

With the exception of declarations the speech acts we perform can be either **direct** or **indirect**, depending on the syntactic form of the utterance through which they are performed and its communicative form. A speech act is direct if the form of the utterance matches its function in the way shown in Table 1. If there is a mismatch between the two, the speech act is indirect. For example, the interrogative sentence *Can you pass the salt?* is rarely used to ask a question about the hearer's ability to pass the salt and typically functions as a request to do so.

Table 1 Form and function correlations in direct speech acts

Syntactic form of the utterance	Communicative function of the utterance	Examples
Declarative	asserting	*You stop at the red light.*
Interrogative	asking questions	*Do you stop at the red light?*
Imperative	requesting/ordering	*Stop at the red light!*

Numerous indirect speech acts have become highly conventionalized. For example, *Would you mind if I switch on the light?* is often used to request permission rather than ask a question about the hearer's attitude concerning some possible action, *You will do as I say* typically functions as an order, not as an assertion stating what the addressee will do, and *Who cares?* is normally said to express the speaker's lack of interest in some matter and not to ask a question about the identity of those who care. Note that these and indeed most cases of indirect speech acts can be treated as examples of conversational implicatures.

Indirect speech acts seem to be much more common than direct speech acts because they tend to be seen as more polite than their direct counterparts. Compare some of the possible ways the English language offers for asking someone to call a taxi, listed in (8), and ranging from the most direct (8a) through the increasingly less direct and more polite (8b), (8c) and (8d) to the most indirect and most polite (8e).

(8)
(a) Call a taxi, please.
(b) Will you call a taxi?
(c) Would you call a taxi?
(d) Would you mind calling a taxi?
(e) I wonder if you'd mind calling a taxi.

Thanks to the large-scale Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP), carried out in many countries and many speech communities (e.g. Blum-Kulka *et al*. 1989, Blum-Kulka and Ohlstein 1984), it was possible to establish that speakers of English are less direct in how they typically phrase their requests than speakers of German, who in turn are not as direct as the speakers of Hebrew and Argentinian Spanish.

The study of speech acts is of central importance in interlanguage pragmatics because the way speech acts are realized differs enormously across languages and cultures. The most glaring examples of intercultural differences can be observed in institutionalized speech acts used in public ceremonies and involving standardized formulas. For instance, in many Muslim cultures a husband can divorce his wife by simply saying to her *I divorce you* three times. Non-institutionalized speech acts too work differently in different languages and cultures. For example, in English-speaking countries, guests leaving a dinner party customarily offer thanks and compliments to their hosts. A similar custom exists in Poland, however a Polish native speaker may also say thanks to whoever he or she was sharing a meal with, regardless of whether they actually prepared or paid for the meal. In Japan however, after a dinner party the guests are more likely to offer their hosts an apology (*o-jama itashimashita*, i.e. 'I have intruded on you'). In fact, as observed by Coulmas (1981), in the Japanese society apologies are performed in many situations in which a native speaker of English would perform a different speech act.

Another fact which has generated a great deal of research in interlanguage pragmatics is that in different languages and cultures the same speech act can lead to different responses. Take responses to compliments. In English the most common response to a compliment is acceptance/thanks, unlike in Chinese or Japanese, where a more typical response involves rejection/self-denigration

(Chen 1993, Schneider 1999). The latter strategy used to be quite common in Polish, too, however, as noted by Arabski (2004), in recent years a growing tendency has been observed among Poles (especially young ones) to accept compliments and offer thanks for them.

5.3.3 Politeness

Linguistic politeness can be described as using language in a way that shows the speaker's awareness of the other person's public self-image, or **face**. This is generally achieved in two ways: on the one hand, speakers try to minimize the negative effects of what they say on the feelings of others, on the other hand, they try to maximize the positive effects of what they say on the feelings of others. The former is known as **negative politeness** and involves using various "deference strategies". These are utterances which acknowledge the hearer's **negative face** (his right to freedom of action and his need not to be imposed on by others). The latter is known as **positive politeness** and is realized through diverse "solidarity strategies". They involve using language in a way that acknowledges the hearer's **positive face** (his desire to be accepted and well-thought-of by the others).

Numerous speech acts are by their very nature face-threatening in that they pose a threat to:

- the positive face of the hearer (e.g. accusing, disagreeing, criticising, insulting);
- the hearer's negative face (e.g. advising, suggesting);
- the speaker's face (e.g. making confessions, expressing thanks, apologizing);
- both the speaker's and the hearer's face (requesting, threatening).

When forced to perform such acts speakers tend to phrase them in a way that will compensate or at least lower the threat to the hearer's face. In their seminal book Brown and Levinson (1987) distinguish a set of five strategies of performing face-threatening acts (FTAs), given in Figure 1, whose choice depends on such factors as the social distance between the speaker and the hearer, the relative power the hearer has over the speaker, and the absolute ranking of imposition in a particular culture.

The enormous amount of research which has been conducted on politeness has revealed that individual languages and cultures differ with respect to politeness strategies used to realize individual speech acts. Consider, for instance, refusals, which are face-threatening to the hearer and can easily result in causing offense. In their study comparing speakers of American English with speakers of Egyptian Arabic, Nelson *et al*. (2002) found that both groups exhibited a similar use of formulas, but speakers of Egyptian Arabic used more direct refusals when talking to their peers than speakers of American English. Another difference

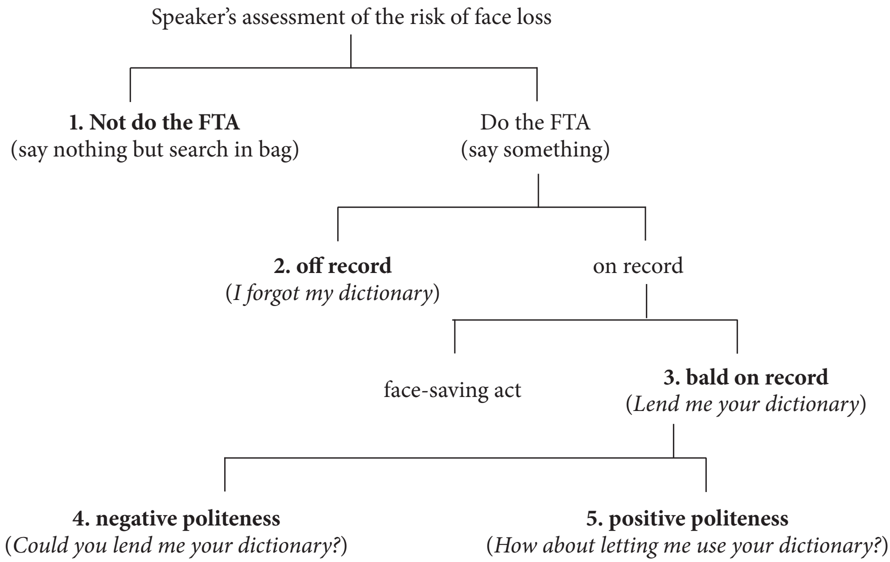

Figure 1 Strategies for avoiding FTAs (based on Brown and Levinson 1987: 60)

was that when talking to someone with unequal status, American English speakers tended to precede their excuses with a mitigating phrase, whereas Egyptian Arabic speakers tended to follow their excuses with a mitigating phrase or (depending on status balance) to produce a refusal followed by providing a reason for it. In another study, Beebe *et al.* (1990) investigated refusals in Japanese, American English, and the interlanguage of Japanese speakers learning American English. Their aim was to establish the order of semantic formulas used by the respondents in their responses (e.g. the utterances *I'm sorry, I have theater tickets that night. Maybe I could come by later for a drink* forming the pattern of regret – excuse – alternative). Overall patterns they identified were that native speakers of Japanese were more likely to express a positive opinion and show empathy when speaking to an interlocutor with a higher social status and the excuses they used tended to be vague. In contrast, native speakers of American English were more likely to express positive opinions regardless of whether they were speaking to someone with a higher or a lower social status than themselves. They were also more likely to express a regret at having to refuse and to give more specific excuses. When speaking (American) English, native speakers of Japanese continued to use vague excuses and would typically adopt their native pattern of expressing a positive opinion and show empathy when their interlocutor was of higher status.

5.3.4 Conversational analysis

Conversational analysis is an area of study which investigates the structure of natural conversations. The basic unit of description in conversational structure is the **turn**: "an uninterrupted contribution of one speaker to a conversation, followed and preceded by a change of speaker unless it represents the beginning or end of the conversation" (Cruse 2006: 37). Some turns typically come in pairs forming **adjacency pairs**, such as question and answer (*How's it going? – Fine*), greeting and response greeting (*Hello – Hello*), offer and either acceptance or refusal (*Have some coffee – Yes, please/No, thank you*), and apology and either acceptance or rejection (*I'm sorry – That's all right/So you should be*). Participants typically tend to take turns, with only one participant talking at any time. However, sometimes there can be long silences between turns or turns can **overlap** with both speakers trying to speak at the same type. A hearer may signal to the speaker that he is listening by nodding, smiling and by producing **backchannel signals**, such as *yeah, mmm, right*, which are not meant to interrupt the speaker's flow, nor to take over the turn. If a speaker starts to say something, then adjusts or corrects what is said, he performs a **repair**, as in (9):

(9)
Pass me the salt – I mean the sugar.

The way conversations are structured is affected by many factors, among them politeness considerations. For example, rather than simply utter a request, speakers often precede it with what could be described as a pre-request, such as the one in turn 1 in exchange (10):

(10)

1 Speaker A: Do you have a minute?	(pre-request)
2 Speaker B: Yeah.	(go ahead)
3 Speaker A: Take a look at this bill.	(request)
4 Speaker B: All right.	(acceptance)

If instead of a "go ahead" response the pre-request is met with a "stop" response, as in (11), the speaker may refrain from making a request that would not be complied with and thus can avoid performing a face-threatening act:

(11)

1 Speaker A: Do you have a minute?	(pre-request)
2 Speaker B: Sorry. I'm busy.	(stop)

Differences in typical patterns of turn taking can lead to misunderstanding between speakers from different cultures. For instance, some Native American speakers make longer pauses between turns than Anglo-American speakers. As a result, Anglo-Americans can be perceived by Native Americans as pushy and self-centered while to Anglo-Americans, for whom delays between turns signal that the conversation is not going well, Native Americans may seem unresponsive. On the other hand, Germans, Poles or New York Jews, who tend to interrupt one another or even speak at the same time and who consider interruptions and overlaps as signs of enthusiasm or interest, might be regarded as aggressive or rude.

5.3.5 Forms of address

The way people address each other constitutes another area investigated in interlangage pragmatics. Among the forms of address used in English we can find the forename (e.g. *Harry*), the surname (e.g. *Potter*), a combination of the two (e.g. *Harry Potter*), kinship terms (e.g. *aunt*), respectful or formal terms of address (e.g. *Sir*), ranks in certain professional groups (e.g. *lieutenant*), titles borrowed from names of occupations (e.g. *doctor*), combinations of rank/title/name of occupation and the surname (e.g. *Nurse Ratchett*), titles of respect prefixed to a person's surname (e.g. *Mrs Hopkins*) or position (e.g. *Mr President*). Common mistakes that speakers from other cultures can make when speaking English include being too formal (e.g. addressing one's workmate as *Mr Brown* instead of *Jack*) or transferring the native pattern into English (as in the inappropriate *Mrs Kate*, transferred from the Polish *Pani Kasiu*).

Generally, speakers of English tend to feel uncomfortable if they do not know or they have forgotten the name of their interlocutor, in which case they may try to establish "the identity" of that person by asking *What's your name again?* In this respect they differ from speakers of Japanese and Korean or even Polish, who feel quite comfortable even if they cannot remember the name of their conversational partner.

Unlike in English, in which one form, i.e. *you*, is used to refer to the addressee, in many languages there is one form reserved for the so-called familiar addressee and another "polite" form (or forms) for the so-called unfamiliar one. This distinction is known as the **T/V distinction** (from the French *tu* and *vous* forms). Some examples taken from selected European languages are listed in Table 2:

Table 2 T/V expressions in some European languages

Language	T forms	V forms
French	tu	vous
German	du	Sie
Spanish	tu'	Usted
Russian	ty	vy
Polish	ty	pan/pani
Greek	esi	esis

5.4 Universal aspects of pragmatic knowledge

It seems that pragmatic knowledge is to some extent universal, and many of its aspects do not need to be taught. For example, learners do not need to be taught that speech events have specific internal structures. They know that in conversations interlocutors are expected to take turns at talking and they are aware of the practices of back-channelling and the mechanisms of repair. Learners can also distinguish ordinary speech from institutionalized speech and they differentiate acts of speaking and writing. Moreover, they know without the benefit of instruction that in recurrent speech situations (greetings, leave-taking, starting a telephone conversation, etc.) speakers are supposed to employ conversational routines instead of creating totally novel utterances.

Another aspect of language use that is universally recognized is conversational implicature. As a result, there is no need to explicitly teach anyone that speakers' intentions can be conveyed indirectly and that when working out unstated meanings hearers rely on contextual information and whatever general knowledge they have. For example, language learners realize that saying *It's hot in here* can in some circumstances merely describe the conditions in a certain place, in others can convey an indirect request for someone to open the window, in still others it can be understood as a complaint implying that someone should know better than to keep the windows closed, and that the utterance can sometimes even count as an indirect refusal to close the window.

Learners also distinguish specific speech acts and identify major strategies for realizing them. They recognize politeness conventions and know without explicit instruction that depending on such factors as social and psychological distance between the interlocutors people modify the degree of imposition involved in a particular speech act by choosing different strategies of performing it. For instance, regardless of their native tongue, language users realize that different levels of directness can be involved in performing a directive speech act (e.g. requesting) ranging from direct (as in *Lend me your pen*), conventionally indirect (*Can you lend me you pen?*) and indirect (*My pen won't write*). Language users are also aware that requests can be toned down or intensified in various ways (*I was wondering if you would terribly mind watering my roses*) and modified by various supportive moves, for instance justifications (*I have to go away on business for a few days*) or imposition minimizers (*They only need to be watered once every other day*).

5.5 Positive transfer from L1

Not all pragmatics norms are universal though and there is ample evidence that when speakers of a foreign language lack knowledge of the pragmatic rules of the target language, they tend to draw on whatever pragmatic norms there are in their native tongue. Strange though it may seem, the more proficient a person is in a foreign language, the more transfer from the native language pragmatics can be observed in his or her linguistic behaviour. The reason is quite simple: more proficient L2 speakers have the linguistic knowledge allowing them to verbalize a wide range of meanings and to execute pragmatic strategies, some of which might be L1 pragmatic strategies.

In some cases the transfer can be positive, i.e. it can result in correct understanding and usage of pragmatic forms and strategies. Positive transfer from L1 takes place if there is a close form-function correlation between the learner's L1 and L2, allowing the learner to use forms in corresponding L2 contexts with effects similar to those they have in L1. For instance, speakers of German do not need to be instructed on how to formulate English requests in which a reference is made to the addressee's ability to perform a certain action, since the German modal verbs (*könntest* and *würdest*) and the English modal verbs (*could* or *would*) are formal, functional and distributional equivalents.

5.6 Consequences of inadequate pragmatic knowledge

In many cases however incorrect transfer of L1 pragmatic norms can have serious undesirable consequences both for the comprehension and the production of L2. Consider for instance the findings of a study which was conducted by Bouton (1988) on a large sample of advanced learners of English as a second language. The goal was to examine non-native speakers' comprehension of conversational implicature in L2 connected with different types of indirect responses, such as Anne's response in the following dialogue:

(12)
Sue: How was your dinner last night?
Anne: Well, the food was nicely presented.

In English indirect responses of this kind are quite common and are typically interpreted by native speakers as indirect criticism. It turned out that in 27% of the cases native speakers and non-native speakers understood implied meanings differently. Misunderstanding criticism for praise can sometimes merely bewilder the L2 learner and may even pass unnoticed. However, it can also lead to a breakdown in communication.

When it comes to L2 production, negative transfer will not pass unnoticed since unlike grammatical or pronunciation errors, which are recognized as such, pragmatic violations are often not perceived as errors, but as rudeness, insensitivity or dullness of mind. For instance, speakers of languages in which requests are typically expressed more directly than in English (such as German, Polish or Hebrew) run the risk of being regarded as impolite in an English speaking environment since their requests may be interpreted as orders. In some cases a non-native language user may be perceived as bad-mannered or dim simply because he fails to respond with the correct speech act, as in exchange (13), in which some response to the compliment is expected:

(13)
Native speaker: Your English is really good.
Non-native speaker: (no response)

In literature numerous anecdotal examples can be found illustrating non-native linguistic behaviour being interpreted as offensive. In her 1985 paper Wierzbicka portrays a Polish hostess saying *Sit! Sit!* to her Australian guests, unaware that the imperative form she has chosen is not an appropriate way of encouraging her friends to feel at home. Western travellers to China report being asked (in English) *Where are you going?* by their Chinese acquaintances who simply happened to meet them in the street. In Chinese the equivalent question (*Ni qu nar?*) is merely a cordial greeting, but English speakers are more likely to consider it an intrusion on their privacy than a sign of friendliness.

Discussing the grave consequences of such unconscious violations of pragmatic norms Kasper (1990: 193) observes that:

> When the non-native speakers violate speech act realization patterns typically used by native speakers of a target language, they often suffer the perennial risk of inadvertently violating conversational (and politeness) norms thereby forfeiting their claims to being treated by their interactants as social equals.

There is empirical evidence showing that even when non-native speakers are pragmatically appropriate in general, the subtle differences in production and comprehension may make them less successful in achieving their goals. Consider, for instance Bardovi-Harlig's (1996) investigation of the performance of native and non-native speakers of English during academic advising sessions. She discovered that unlike native speakers, non-native speaking students never volunteered any suggestions during the sessions and waited for the advisor to make them. As a result, they had to reject the advisor's course suggestions more often than the native-speaking students. Moreover, while both native speakers and non-native speakers tended to offer explanations for rejecting their advisor's suggestions, only the native speakers would also present alternatives *(How about I take x course instead?*). It was also found that the content of the rejections formulated by the non-native speaking students was often inappropriate, for instance they would reject the course suggested by their advisor on the grounds that it was "too easy" or "too difficult". Sometimes they would not even hesitate to describe their advisor's own course as "uninteresting". Finally, in contrast to native speakers, who would use mitigating forms (*I was thinking…, I don't know how it would work out, but…*) non-native speakers tended to be more assertive in how they formulated their suggestions and often failed to mitigate them appropriately *(I will take language testing…* or *I've just decided on taking the language structure).* Consequently, the non-native speaking students were less likely to obtain their advisor's permission to take the courses they were interested in.

Problems, even communication breakdowns in interethnic communication, can also result from the non-native speaker's lack of knowledge of the conversational rules involved in the production of speech acts and transferring the conversational norms of their first language into the second. Consider the following exchange between an American English speaker (speaker A) and an Iranian speaker of American English (speaker B). Notice that in conversational turns 2 and 3, as well as in turns 4 and 5, speaker A starts talking even though speaker B has not finished talking yet. These interruptions are indicated by square brackets:

(14)
1 Speaker A: Mary's invited us to lunch. Do you wanna go?
2 Speaker B: Sure [I'm not busy right now. [Why not?
3 Speaker A: [Good [I'll come by in about 30 minutes
4 Speaker B: Think we oughta bring [anything?
5 Speaker A: [No, but I'll bring some wine anyway. (Scarcella 1990: 338)

As pointed out by Scarcella (1990: 338), in Iran, where speaker A comes from, interruptions may be associated with friendliness and indicate the conversationalist's active involvement in the interaction. In American English, however, they are regarded as impolite. As a result, the native speaker (speaker B) inaccurately concluded that the non-native speaker (speaker A) is rude, which was rather unfortunate for his interlocutor.

Conversational difficulties of this sort may easily result in breakdowns in interethnic communication. Moreover, as noted by Scarcella (1990), learners who repeatedly experience conversational difficulties tend to cut themselves from speakers of the target community, withdrawing from them not only socially, but psychologically as well. They begin to cling to their own ethnic group, which limits their interaction with members of the target culture and increases the social distance between themselves and the target group. Eventually this may hinder their second language acquisition.

5.7 The role of explicit instruction in developing pragmatic abilities

It is still a matter of debate whether appropriate use of L2 can develop without explicit instruction (Bardovi-Harlig 2001, Alcón Soler 2005, Kasper and Rose 2007). Though researchers agree that pragmatic competence cannot be taught directly, they tend to believe that acquiring pragmatic abilities often requires some sort of pedagogic intervention (Kasper 1997, Rose 2005). On the one hand, the fact remains that even those learners who have achieved a high level of grammatical accuracy, excellent knowledge of target language vocabulary, almost native-like pronunciation and impressive fluency tend to keep making pragmatic errors. On the other hand, there is compelling empirical evidence that teaching L2 pragmatics brings about positive effects (House 1996, Tateyama *et al*. 1997, Kasper and Rose 1999, Kasper 2001, Takahashi 2001). Consider the findings of the following two studies. Olshtein and Cohen (1990) investigated apologies made by Israeli learners of English who participated in a series of lessons on the strategies native English speakers use to apologize. It was established that before these lessons the strategies adopted by the non-native speakers differed from those of the native English speakers. However after receiving instruction learners started to choose more native-like strategies. Bouton's (1988) study, described above, in addition to showing that implicatures can be understood differently by native speakers and non-native speakers, also made it evident that exposure alone was not enough to improve the students' understanding of some types of conversational implicatures and that comprehension of implied meanings can benefit from explicit instruction. In a re-test taken four and a half years later by 30 participants in the original study, the comprehension showed a success rate of over 90%. Findings of this sort provide arguments for incorporating pragmatic instruction in the language teaching curriculum.

As to how L2 pragmatics should be taught, researchers (e.g. Ohlstain and Cohen 1991, Bouton 1996b, Kasper 1997, Takahashi 2001) in general advocate awareness-raising and providing practice. The teaching techniques they propose include:

- assessing learners' level of awareness of the pragmatic issued to be taught;
- exposing learners to samples of authentic L1 and L2 in use and helping them identify linguistic, situational, and social differences in the ways the two languages are used;
- reinforcing the learners' pragmalinguistic awareness by encouraging them to decide what speech acts are appropriate in specific situational contexts and what strategies for performing them are most native-like;
- reinforcing the learners' sociopragmatic awareness by making them compare and contrast the way differences in the speakers' social status affect the realization of specific speech acts in their native and in the target language;
- practicing selected aspects of L2 pragmatics via activities simulating real-life situations;
- arranging authentic opportunities in which learners' pragmatic knowledge can be put to use;
- developing learners' meta-pragmatic awareness by discussing and providing feedback on their perceptions and expectations of what counts as appropriate L2 behaviour.

Whatever methods are used it is recommended that:

- examples or models should involve authentic language;
- interpretation and/or production by learners should take place after they have been exposed to appropriate TL input;
- though both L1 and L2 can be used during pragmatics instruction sessions, classroom instruction ideally should be in L2 since this provides tangible evidence of L2 in its communicative function.

5.8 Conclusions

Based on what has been said in this chapter is it possible to decide how much success in developing pragmatically appropriate TL use we can hope to achieve in a FL teaching context? Traditionally pragmatic issues have not been addressed in language teaching curricula, nor has pragmatics received much attention in language teacher training programs. As a result, language classrooms tend to provide rather poor input environments for fostering FL learners' pragmatic abilities. The target language is typically treated as an object of study, not as a medium for socialization or a tool for communication. Teachers often lack adequate knowledge of L2 pragmatics and in the classroom they tend to rely on the teacher-fronted initiation – response – follow-up (IRF) pattern, which is unproductive as the format for the developing their students' pragmatic abilities. Moreover, since in most cases the target language and culture are far from being homogenous, there is often more than one set of pragmatic norms involved. FL students can hardly be expected to become familiar and follow all of them. Finally, it has to be remembered that perfect conformity to pragmatic norms may not always be desired. On the one hand, native speakers of a given language could find totally native-like pragmatic behaviour exhibited by foreigners disquieting and unacceptable. On the other hand, non-native speakers might want to retain their pragmatic distinctiveness as a means of asserting their cultural and national identity. Ultimately, one can hardly disagree with Rueda's (2006: 178) observation that "the aim of instruction in pragmatics is not to force the learners to adopt native speaker pragmatic choices, but to expose learners to positive evidence, making them aware of a variety of linguistic resources."

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Agnieszka Solska

ZAGADNIENIA PRAGMATYCZNE W UCZENIU SIĘ JĘZYKA OBCEGO

Streszczenie

Celem rozdziału jest omówienie znaczenia zagadnień pragmatycznych w uczeniu się języka obcego. Autorka przedstawia podstawowe terminy z zakresu tzw. pragmatyki międzyjęzykowej (ang. *interlanguage pragmatics*) i opisuje aspekty użycia języka, które w sposób istotny decydują o tym, czy dana osoba posługuje się językiem obcym w sposób poprawny, a więc implikaturę konwersacyjną, akty mowy, uprzejmość językową, analizę konwersacyjną oraz formy adresatywne. Omówione zostają uniwersalne aspekty wiedzy pragmatycznej, zjawisko pozytywnego transferu reguł pragmatycznych z języka ojczystego, a także konsekwencje niedostatecznej kompetencji pragmatycznej w języku obcym. Podniesiona zostaje też kwestia, na ile możliwe jest rozwinięcie pragmatycznej wiedzy i umiejętności podczas lekcji języka obcego.

Agnieszka Solska

PRAGMATISCHE FRAGEN BEIM FREMDSPRACHENLERNEN

Zusammenfassung

In dem Kapitel hat ich die Verfasserin das Ziel gesetzt, die Bedeutungen von einigen bei dem Fremdsprachenlernen erscheinenden pragmatischen Fragen zu erörtern. Sie nennt die Hauptbegriffe aus dem Bereich der sog. zwischensprachlichen Pragmatik (*interlanguage pragmatics*) und gibt solche Aspekte des Sprachgebrauchs an, die darüber entscheiden, ob eine Person die Fremdsprache richtig gebraucht, also: konversationelle Implikatur, Sprechakte, Sprechhöflichkeit, Gesprächsanalyse und Adressierformen. Besprochen werden auch universelle Aspekte des pragmatischen Wissens, das Phänomen des positiven Transfers von pragmatischen Regeln aus der Heimatsprache und Folgen einer unzureichenden pragmatischen Kompetenz in der Fremdsprache. Die Verfasserin berührt auch die Frage, inwieweit sich pragmatisches Wissen und pragmatische Fähigkeiten im Fremdsprachenunterricht weiter entwickeln lassen.