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Cross-cultural and Intercultural Pragmatics

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1. Introduction

Since Leech's (1983, p. 10) characterisation of sociopragmatics as the 'sociological interface of pragmatics', many scholars have grappled with the issue of how to best conceptualise and research the ways that elements of the social structure interact with language use. As a field, sociopragmatics has generally aimed to reveal how patterns of language use interconnect with features of sociocultural context, and how participants in interaction interpret and evaluate linguistic actions with respect to notions such as appropriateness, politeness, and so on. The focus in this chapter is on 'cross-cultural' and 'intercultural' approaches to sociopragmatics, particularly drawing attention to areas of theoretical and methodological similarity and divergence, while considering the contribution of these approaches to sociopragmatic theorising as a whole.

The field of cross-cultural pragmatics has traditionally aimed to compare and contrast linguistic behaviours across different languages or different national varieties of the same language, with an emphasis on profiling linguistic realisation strategies and understanding the ways that aspects of social context influence linguistic choices. Intercultural pragmatics is a more recent disciplinary development which aims to account for the ways that individuals from different cultural backgrounds use, interpret and evaluate language use. In this sense, intercultural pragmatics can be seen as the domain of intercultural communication that focuses specifically on pragmatic phenomena. Within both of these fields, sociopragmatics is closely related to the ways in which culture influences perceptions of context and notions of appropriate language use.

In the section below, we briefly discuss some of the key concepts in the fields of cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics – culture, context, and the etic/emic distinction.

2. Key Concepts

This section critically discusses several key concepts and issues, as they relate to cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics.

2.1. Culture

Culture is notoriously difficult to define (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009, Chapter 2) and even though researchers (e.g. Blommaert, 1991; Bond, Žegarac, & Spencer-Oatey, 2000) argued many years ago that culture needs to be conceptualised more fully within pragmatics, little progress has been made. Despite such calls, and despite the centrality of the notion of culture to cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics, the theoretical relationship between language use and culture has tended to remain underspecified (Wolf & Polzenhagen, 2006). Within cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics, culture is often used as a proxy for national boundary, in the sense that linguistic patterns of a particular language prevalent within an individual nation are seen *ipso facto* as linked to national culture. Much research has aimed to establish the pragmatic norms for speech act realization strategies, politeness markers, and discourse organisation for individual language varieties (Blum-Kulka & House, 1989). Whilst there is work that links patterns of language use to perceptions of context and

underlying cultural values (e.g. Meier, 2010; Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2016; Wierzbicka, 2003), the link between pragmatic norms and culture is still in need of further theoretical and empirical development.

Within intercultural pragmatics, the notion of culture takes on slightly different significance due to the framing of communication itself as ‘intercultural’. In a sense, the notion of intercultural pragmatics is dependent on a view of communication in which individuals from different (usually national) backgrounds negotiate meaning and construct common ground by bridging differences in communicative preferences, attitudes towards directness/indirectness, and culturally defined role relations (Kecskes, 2014). In terms of understanding how culture is implicated in language use, attention to the sociopragmatic domain is crucially important, as it allows for insights into how cultural knowledge, assumptions, and values influence the contextual assessments of participants, particularly as pertaining to perceptions of rights and obligations in diverse interpersonal and interactional contexts (Spencer-Oatey & Žegarac, 2018).

We return to the interconnected issues of the conceptualisation of culture and how culture interrelates with language use towards the end of our article, where we consider the challenges facing this area of work. Here we turn next to the notion of ‘context’, which is central to unpacking the link between culture and language use.

2.2. Context

Context has been conceptualised in a number of different ways, including from social and cognitive perspectives and at different levels, such as: macro or societal level; exo or formal institutional level; meso or interactional setting level; and micro or discoursal level (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; see also Culpeper and Haugh, this volume). In cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics, the focus has traditionally been on the meso or interactional level, where context is seen in terms of sociocultural variables that influence language choices. More recently, however, it has become increasingly common to look at the relationship between language use and context from a more discursive perspective. In essence, this means adopting a view of language and context as co-constitutive rather than as one influencing the other (e.g. Duranti & Goodwin, 1992).

From a traditional social pragmatic perspective at the meso level, context is typically seen in terms of two main elements: the participants and the communicative or social activity. There has been a lot of classic work in this area and, in terms of participants, P. Brown and Fraser (1979) developed a very useful comprehensive taxonomy. They drew a fundamental distinction between the personal characteristics of the individuals involved in an interaction and the relationships between the various participants.

In terms of relational dimensions, attention is typically focused on ‘role and category relations’ and, in another classic study, R. Brown and Gilman (1960/1972) demonstrated that two dimensions, power (P) and distance (D), have a major impact on language use. P and D were included by P. Brown and Levinson (1978/1987) and Leech (1983) in their respective conceptualisations of politeness, and numerous subsequent empirical studies (e.g. Blum-Kulka & House, 1989; Holtgraves & Yang, 1990; Lim & Bowers, 1991) have supported this position. Most cross-cultural pragmatic research has operationalised P and D in terms of role relations that are identified within brief scenarios, such as teacher–student (unequal relations and distant), mother–child (unequal close), friends (equal and close), strangers on a train

(equal and distant). However, as Spencer-Oatey (1996) points out, there can be different interpretations as to what the P and D relations of a given role relationship actually are. Moreover, as P. Brown and Fraser (1979) also maintain, people’s sense of P and D relations are context specific, and current pragmatic thinking would also argue that they change dynamically within the duration of an interaction, as the communication unfolds.

This leads us to the second main element of a social pragmatic perspective on context: the communicative or social activity. A number of frameworks have been proposed for elucidating this, including Hymes’ (1974) SPEAKING mnemonic (Situation, Participants, Ends, Act sequences, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, Genre) and Levinson’s (1979) concept of activity type. Allwood (2007) has argued that social activities can usefully be analysed in terms of four main elements, as shown in Table 1. From a cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatic perspective, they provide a useful framework for considering the potential impact of cultural factors on people’s assessment of the context.

Purpose, function, procedures	Rationale for the event/activity taking place and the possible procedures that might exist to achieve the purpose and function.
Roles: rights, obligations, competence	The expectations (and sometimes formal requirements) which exist concerning the rights, obligations and competence needs that are associated with a particular role in an activity.
Artifacts, instruments, tools, media	The instruments, tools and media which are used to pursue the activity.
Environment: social, physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical aspects of the setting that could be influential, e.g. furniture, lighting, heating. • Broader social context, including national, organisational, setting.

Table 1: Allwood’s (2007) parameters for analysing social activities

A cognitive approach to context provides a complementary perspective to a social approach and provides us with greater insights into the impact of prior knowledge on interaction. We hold a large amount of information or knowledge in our brains, both declarative and procedural and, as Kecskes (2014) argues, this internal cognitive context is interwoven and inseparable from people’s perceptions of the current social situational contexts. He explains that meaning is produced out of an interplay between internal cognitive context based on prior experience and processes of co-construction within actual situational contexts. As will be discussed later in the chapter, one of the key issues in cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics is how individuals’ internal context influences their perception of sociocultural context and preferences for linguistic selection.

2.3. Etic and emic research perspectives

A fundamental issue in any study involving culture, including cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics, is the question of universalism: what aspects of context, language structure and language use are specific to particular cultural groups and what aspects are universal and apply to all. Since cross-cultural studies are by definition comparative in nature, it is essential to ensure that the features being compared are equivalent so that any comparisons are meaningful, and this requires the careful articulation of pragmatic features and underlying

sociopragmatic notions. The concepts of etic and emic research perspectives address this issue, and while there are different interpretations of their meanings (e.g. see Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2016), the following explanation by Triandis (1994) describes the key distinction:

Emics, roughly speaking, are ideas, behaviours, items, and concepts that are culture-specific. Etics, roughly speaking, are ideas, behaviours, items, and concepts that are culture general – i.e., universal. ... Emic concepts are essential for understanding a culture. However, since they are unique to the particular culture, they are not useful for cross-cultural comparisons. ... More formally, emics are studied *within* the system in one culture, and their structure is discovered within the system. Etics are studies *outside* the system in more than one culture, and their structure is theoretical. To develop ‘scientific’ generalizations about relationships among variables, we must use etics. However, if we are going to understand a culture, we must use emics. (Triandis, 1994, pp. 67-68)

It is important to take this distinction into consideration in cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics research, but it would be a mistake to regard them as completely unrelated. As Hall (2002) points out, emic observations can help form the basis of etic frameworks, and etic research can help identify and enrich emic concepts.

Having considered these three key concepts, culture, context and emic/etic research perspectives, we turn to the main lines of sociopragmatic research.

3. Summary of main findings

In this section, we provide a critical overview of research in cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics, highlighting conceptual issues and key findings that are most relevant to understanding the sociopragmatic domain.

3.1. Cross-cultural pragmatics: main perspectives and studies

Due to the emphasis on cross-cultural comparison, the field of cross-cultural pragmatics is uniquely positioned to contribute to wider debates within pragmatics regarding the universality of pragmatic phenomena such as politeness, particularly as researchers have looked at patterns of language use from the perspective of underlying conceptions of social relations and cultural values.

One of the first major projects within the field of cross-cultural pragmatics was the Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realisation Patterns (CCSARP), led by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989), which investigated requests and apologies. They collected data from eight different languages/language varieties – three varieties of English (American, Australian and British), Argentinian Spanish, Canadian French, German, and Israeli Hebrew – and used a DCT in order to ensure comparability. This comprised an initial description of a situation that would elicit the required speech act, followed by an incomplete dialogue. Participants of the study were asked to complete the dialogue, thereby providing contextualised examples of realisations of the speech act. Demographic information on the participants was also obtained so that the impact of individual variables, such as age, sex or level of education, could be examined.

Findings from the series of studies revealed a very complex picture. The focus was on levels of directness in performing the speech acts, and in relation to requests they found that five situational factors had particular impact: “degree of addressee’s obligation to carry out the act, the speaker’s right to demand compliance, the level of the speaker’s dominance over the hearer, the estimated likelihood for compliance, and the estimated difficulty” (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 150). In terms of cross-cultural variation, they found noticeable situational variation, in that differences across languages/language varieties in frequency of different realisation patterns were more marked in some contexts than others. For instance, there was very little variation in people’s use of impositives when asking someone living on the same street for a lift home (i.e. almost nobody chose to use an impositive), yet when asking a roommate to clear up the kitchen which they had left in a mess, there was considerable variation. About 75% of Spanish speakers chose impositives in this context while only 10% of Australian English speakers did so.

Ever since the publication of this pioneering project, there have been numerous studies comparing the performance of speech acts in different languages and contexts (Barnlund & Yoshioka, 1990; Chen, He, & Hu, 2013; Ogiermann, 2009). For many years, the DCT was the most frequently used method, since it allows for maximum control of contextual variables. Yet a major criticism of the DCT is that the data collected is not necessarily what people would actually say; on the other hand, the counter argument is that it yields intuitional data and thus probes people’s conceptions of normative behaviour in those contexts. Needless to say, a range of other data collection methods have also been used, including field notes, recordings of authentic interactions and elicited conversations (for a review, see Kasper, 2008), with an increasing desire for authentic data. The focus of interest has also expanded from speech acts to other phenomena.

House (2006) has compared Anglo-English and German discourse for communication styles, and identified four additional dimensions, such as verbal routines/*ad-hoc* formulations and orientation towards content/orientation towards addressees. Recent studies have also used authentic data to examine pragmatic phenomena beyond the sentence level, such as leadership, humour, teasing and other relational practices constructed over multiple turns (e.g. Schnurr & Chan, 2009; Sinkeviciute, 2017a). Such work helps illuminate the ways that relational practices evident in particular communities of practice serve to instantiate or contest more broadly shared pragmatic norms and underlying sociopragmatic assumptions about power and distance, as well as identity-related sensitivities.

From a sociopragmatic perspective on cross-cultural comparisons, there are three key questions: (a) to what extent and in what ways do cultural factors influence people’s assessments or interpretations of the various contextual variables; (b) are there cultural differences in the extent to which contextual assessments influence people’s choices of realisation patterns; and (c) are there cultural differences in the extent to which contextual assessments influence people’s evaluations of different realisation patterns?

There has been surprisingly little systematic research on the first issue. Within cross-cultural psychology, research by Hofstede (2001), Schwartz (2011) and others indicates that there can be variation across cultural groups in people’s attitudes towards power differentials, with strong egalitarian beliefs being more prevalent in some cultural contexts than others.

However, there can also be substantial variation both across individuals and across situations within the same cultural context.

One contextual factor that mediates this is people's conceptualisations of role rights and obligations, as this necessarily influences the perception of '(un)reasonable' behaviour. For example, while a teacher might be able to set homework or ask students to work together without further justification, expecting the students to clean the whiteboard or pick up items for the teacher from the library might be seen as unreasonable, depending on the context. People's assessments of the legitimacy of such favour requests are likely to be influenced by culturally shaped perceptions of the nature of the teacher-student relationship and the scope of rights and obligations associated with this relationship, as well as ideologically grounded perceptions of power and distance (Kádár 2017). It might be expected that there would be as much individual and contextual variation within any cultural group in members' conceptualisations of role rights and obligations as there is over values such as hierarchy/egalitarianism. However, there has been little empirical research into such questions (for an exception, see Spencer-Oatey, 1997), and this is an area that very much needs substantial further research.

The second issue – the extent to which contextual assessments influence people's choices of realisation patterns – has been explored in more detail. More than 30 years ago, Hill, Ide, Ikuta, Kawasaki, and Ogino (1986) conducted a study that compared Japanese and American assessments of which phrases could be used to ask to borrow a pen when speaking with a range of different people. They plotted their results in a chart and for both nationality groups there was a clear association between role and choice of phrase. However, for the Americans many expressions could be used with a wide range of people, whereas for the Japanese there was a much closer association between role relation and choice of expression. On the basis of their findings, they proposed a distinction between 'volition' and 'discernment' politeness. In volition politeness, speakers can choose actively from a wide range of options, while in discernment politeness (also known as *wakimae*) people are expected to conform to the social norms prevalent in the society, which are closely associated with the occupation of a 'place' in particular social and interactional contexts. Ide (1989:230) explains that "to behave according to *wakimae* is to show verbally and non-verbally one's sense of place or role in a given situation according to social conventions. Hill et al. (1986) conclude that both discernment and volition operate in both American and Japanese sociolinguistic systems, but that discernment accounts for a greater share of language choices among Japanese speakers than it does for American English speakers.

This volition/discernment distinction seems to have some synergy with a concept in cross-cultural psychology known as societal tightness–looseness (Gelfand, 2018). Gelfand and her colleagues have argued that the strength of social norms (number and clarity) and the sanctions for breaching the norms (i.e. how far deviance is tolerated) can vary across cultures. Like Hill et al. (1986) and Ide (1989), they suggest that the extent to which people's behaviour is typically constrained or even controlled by contextual factors can vary noticeably across cultural groups. Within pragmatics, the distinction between volition and discernment has been criticised for leading to a polarised view of politeness systems (Pizziconi, 2003) and to analytical stereotyping (Kádár & Mills, 2013). Kádár and Mills (2013) go on to propose that discernment should be approached through the paradigms of

convention/ritual research and that “what we can critically compare across cultures is normative ideological representations of language usage” (p.154). Interestingly, this could be compatible with Gelfand’s approach, insofar as those normative ideological representations may be stronger or weaker in different contexts.

The third issue – the extent to which contextual assessments influence people’s evaluations of different realisation patterns – has also been rarely explored, despite acknowledgment within pragmatics that this entails evaluative judgements. In the occasional studies that have investigated this, most have used Leech’s (1983) politeness maxims as a conceptual framework. Leech (1983) has proposed that there are a number of politeness maxims or constraints (e.g., tact, generosity, modesty, agreement) that influence people’s behaviour, and that the relative importance of a given politeness maxim can vary across cultures. For example, he suggests (1983, p. 137) that the modesty maxim is more powerful in Japanese society than it is in English-speaking societies, and that this has an impact on how people respond to compliments, with Japanese speakers more likely to deny a compliment than English speakers. In line with this, Spencer-Oatey, Ng, and Dong (2008) explored whether there would be differences between British English, Hong Kong Chinese and Mainland Chinese speakers in their evaluations of acceptance and rejection responses to compliments. They found that indeed there were both statistical and qualitative differences for rejection responses. Nationality had a statistically significant effect on people’s evaluations of the appropriateness, level of conceit and impression conveyed (favourable–bad) by the rejection responses, and accounted for 38%, 27% and 35% of the variance respectively. In terms of the open comments, British participants had difficulty understanding why someone would reject a compliment that was clearly accurate, and tried to attribute meaning to it, such as lack of confidence or fishing for more compliments. The HK and Mainland Chinese respondents, on the other hand, were less negative about the rejection responses, interpreting them in relation to the traditional social requirement to appear modest, even though some felt the responses were too modest.

However, this data was collected with questionnaires, so this once again raises the question of potential discrepancies between these artificial judgements and ones that might occur in real life. Nevertheless, as with DCT data, such data can indicate (some of) the parameters that people pay attention to when making their evaluations. In particular, it helps generate insights into the role of cultural values (such as modesty) in informing pragmatic judgments. The specific link between values and language use has been taken up in detail within research on ethnopragmatics.

Ethnopragsmatics is an area of cross-cultural pragmatics research that has made a particular contribution to understanding the sociopragmatic domain from an emic perspective. This area has developed over the last few decades, predominantly based on the cultural scripts approach to pragmatic analysis (e.g. Goddard & Wierzbicka, 1997, 2008; Goddard & Ye, 2015; Wierzbicka, 1985, 2003, 2010). The cultural scripts approach assumes a close relationship between patterns of language use and “tacit norms, values and practices, widely shared, and widely known (on an intuitive level) in a given society” (Wierzbicka, 2010, p. 43). The research therefore aims to explicate the links between pragmatic behaviors and the norms and values that underlie them in terms of ‘cultural scripts’ that represent insider views (Wierzbicka, 2010). In part, this is a reaction to universalist theories within the

field of pragmatics (e.g. P. Brown & Levinson, 1978/1987; Grice, 1989) which have been criticized for taking Anglo cultural premises as universal ones. Wierzbicka (2003) argues that sociopragmatic terms which are frequently used to describe and compare pragmatic strategies across cultural groups, including adjectives such as ‘formal/informal’ or speech act terms such as ‘apology’, tend to represent Anglo cultural categories and thus can lead to ‘terminological ethnocentrism’ (2003: xviii) when applied to non-Anglo languages and cultures. The cultural scripts approach therefore utilizes the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) developed over the last three decades by Anna Wierzbicka and Cliff Goddard to represent culture-specific meta-pragmatic logic in neutral descriptive language. The NSM utilizes around 60 semantic primes – concepts that are purported to exist as distinct lexemes within a large number of distinct languages – within a mini-grammar to formulate cultural scripts by explicating the component semantic elements. (Goddard & Wierzbicka, 1997, p. 236) provide the example below to represent a Japanese cultural script.

if something bad happens to someone because of me
I have to say something like this to this person:
‘I feel something bad because of this’

The authors suggest that the English term ‘apology’ tends to embody the assumption of fault by the speaker and therefore cannot be unproblematically used to describe other languages, such as the Japanese example here. Instead, the aim of this script is to capture the cultural logic that an ‘apology’ is expected whenever one person is implicated in a negative situation experienced by another person irrespective of whether or not ‘fault’ can be attributed. As in this example, the authors argue that the NSM allows cross-cultural researchers to explicate emic perspectives on speech practices in terms of universal terms which will make these perspectives more transparent and avoid the imposition of Anglo-centric meta-pragmatic terminology. Ethnopragsmatics places particular importance on the NSM analysis of linguistic data representing a variety of speech practices across languages and cultures, combined with insights from ethnographic studies and (anecdotal) insider accounts (Goddard & Ye, 2015).

As an orientation to cross-cultural pragmatics, ethnopragsmatics illuminates the sociopragmatic dimension of language use by representing the cultural thought patterns and assumptions that underlie how speech practices are expected to be carried out. Yet there is some critique of this work which questions whether the complexity of cultural meanings can be reduced to linguistic representations within the NSM (e.g. Quinn, 2015; Riemer, 2006). Additionally, given the tendency to treat culture as a monolithic entity, it is possible to question whether approaching sociopragmatics through the lens of lexical semantics might lead researchers to overlook the contextual variability of language use and therefore reify cross-cultural differences. However, ethnopragsmatics does help address a legitimate need in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics to decentre from Anglo-centric concepts and terminology when carrying out research and carefully clarify the comparability of key terms and notions (e.g. speech acts such as apologies or thanks) related to pragmatic behaviors and associated values (Haugh & Hinze, 2003).

In summary, then, work in cross-cultural pragmatics has attempted to compare pragmatic strategies across languages and draw links between observable linguistic patterns, features of context, and elements of cultural cognition and values. It is evident that cross-cultural pragmatics embodies a tension between etic and emic perspectives -- the need to

develop rigorous ways of describing pragmatic features to allow for commensurable comparisons and the need to understand pragmatic features as part of unique sociocultural systems.

3.2. Intercultural pragmatics: main perspectives and studies

Compared to the cross-cultural research tradition, the paradigm of intercultural pragmatics has flourished comparatively recently. Whilst there is a certain degree of overlap, relevant work tends to orient towards (socio)cognitive, interactional, or critical perspectives (Haugh, 2017). The sociopragmatic domain is conceptualized and operationalized in different ways depending on the perspective. Below, we deal with each of these in turn.

3.2.1. (Socio)cognitive perspectives

In the last 15 years, a strong ‘sociocognitive’ tradition has developed within the field of intercultural pragmatics, particularly deriving from the work of Istvan Kecskes (e.g. Kecskes, 2014, 2017). One of the major theoretical assumptions of the sociocognitive perspective is that intention-based theories of pragmatic meaning that place ‘common ground’ as the foundation of understanding are limited in their ability to account for meaning-making in intercultural communication, as common ground cannot be assumed (Kecskes & Zhang, 2013). Rather, it is argued that the construction of meaning within intercultural communication is largely dependent on interactive processes whereby participants collaboratively construct common ground and understanding in situ, drawing on their respective cultural knowledge and multilingual repertoire derived from prior experience.

Within the sociocognitive perspective, individuals are continually drawing on cognitive resources such as schema, scripts, presuppositions and cultural models associated with multiple languages as the basis for interpreting and constructing meanings. Rather than seeing the influence of L1-based cultural schema on L2 use in terms of ‘transfer’, therefore advocates a view of intercultural pragmatics which embodies a “multilingual, intercultural, socio-cognitive, and discourse-segment (rather than just utterance) perspective” (Kecskes 2014:1). Reflecting a discursive orientation, Kecskes emphasizes the need to take into account the ways participants’ culturally shaped knowledge is activated and negotiated as speakers work to construct understanding over multiple turns in interaction, drawing on linguistic resources from multiple languages as necessary. This synergy between existing cognitive resources and interactive processes represents the essence of the ‘sociocognitive’ perspective which he espouses. Within the process of interaction, the prior knowledge and cognitive resources of individual speakers are articulated and negotiated in a synergistic way that serves to establish what Kecskes calls ‘intercultures’ – a collaboratively constructed frame of reference constituted by emergent shared knowledge and behavioural conventions.

Running along a different trajectory to the research above, there is an increasing amount of work which approaches intercultural pragmatics from the perspective of cultural linguistics, particularly aiming to map more direct links between culture-specific conceptualisations and patterns of language use (e.g. Palmer, 1996; Sharifian, 2013; Wolf & Polzenhagen, 2006). Cultural linguistics has its roots in cognitive linguistics, particularly the work of Robert Palmer, who emphasized the need to understand the co-constitutive relations between culture, cognition and linguistic structures within a broadly relativistic framework. Cultural linguistics makes particular use of culture-specific schemas, conceptual metaphors and cultural models for understanding the cognitive bases of language use, including the

interfaces between language use and semantic representations of cultural values (cf. Nishida, 2005; Wolf and Polzenhagen 2006). Applied to intercultural pragmatics, research aims to show how L1-based value orientations influence the use and evaluation of pragmatic features in an L2. As an example of this research, Sharifian and Jamarani (2011) examined how the Persian cultural schema of *sharmandegi* (shame/ashamed) influenced the production of L2 English speech acts in interaction with L1 speakers of Australian English. The authors found that explicit statements of feeling ‘ashamed’, which are common in Persian, were prominent in participants’ strategies for expressing gratitude, apologising, offering and requesting. The authors present the reconstructed example below:

Lydia and Mahin (Iranian) are neighbours and their children go to the same school.

The following interaction happened between the two mothers on school day:

Lydia: I can pick your daughter from school today and this way I can spare you a trip.

Mahin: You make me ashamed, I don’t want to bother you. But it would be great if you could do that.

Adapted from Sharifian and Jamarani (2011, pp. 236-237)

The authors argue that the cultural schema of *sharmandegi* typically embodies awareness of imposition incurred by an interlocutor and is therefore conventionally used to index gratitude in Persian, but this can lead to misunderstandings in intercultural communication. The authors draw on interview data from Australian respondents, who generally interpreted the use of ‘ashamed’ literally and thus did not necessarily understand the indexical meaning of ‘gratitude’ which was more salient in the minds of the Persian L1-speakers. The authors suggest that when important culture-specific schemata from an L1 manifest in L2 talk, they can lead to confusion and negative relational outcomes.

In summary, work in the (socio)cognitive tradition primarily orients towards the sociopragmatic domain of language use in terms of the underlying knowledge, assumptions and values that lead speakers to attribute meaning and interpersonal significance to language forms within intercultural interaction. Whereas work in the sociocognitive tradition of Kecskes emphasises the interplay between existing and emergent cognition within interaction, work in cultural linguistics is more focused on explaining the link between language use and culture-specific values which are situated within the broader cognitive structures shared by cultural groups.

3.2.2. Interactional and interpersonal perspectives

Research within an interactional/interpersonal perspective aims to understand the role of pragmatics in constructing and maintaining interpersonal relationships between individuals and groups from different cultural backgrounds. Haugh (2017) explains that this perspective “treats culture as recurrent or preferred ways of doing, thinking, and categorizing people, and focuses on describing how such practices are implemented and evaluated in intercultural encounters” (p. 3). John Gumperz (e.g. Gumperz, Jupp, & Roberts, 1979; Gumperz & Roberts, 1991) was one of the early pioneers of this approach and, through analyzing authentic data such as workplace interviews and cafeteria service encounters involving people from different ethnolinguistic backgrounds, he and his co-authors argued that

communication difficulties and negative evaluative judgements often derive from culturally specific contextualization conventions.

Since then, many other researchers (e.g. Holmes, 2018; House, 2000; Miller, 2008; Tyler, 1995) have taken a broadly similar approach. Tyler (1995), for example, analyses an interaction between a US American student and a Korean teaching assistant (TA) that ends problematically, with each complaining to a supervisor that the other was uncooperative. The student was enrolled in an introductory computer programming class and the Korean TA was a graduate student in Computer and Information Science who was offering free tutoring in his area of expertise as part of an advanced elective course in oral English skills. The student wanted help with an assignment that required her to write a program to score bowling and went to a tutoring session for help. The interaction started as follows:

- 1 S: we have to write a program that scores bowling right?
 - 2 T: mhm
 - 3 S: the game of bowling and he want us to be able to put in like how many pins well do you know how to score the game?
 - 4 T: yeah approximately
 - 5 S: OK cause he he has a little thing that tells you how (shows pages on handout) See I don't know how to score
 - 6 T: Oh you don't know how to score the bowling game?
 - 7 S: unhuh I'm like just I've played like I've scored a couple times but I'm not too good on it
- (Then the student asks the tutor to read the assignment to himself)
- 8 T: uhmm open, spare, strike
 - 9 S: OK that has to do with the bowling game
 - 10 T: OK can you guess the amount you have to figure out?
 - 11 S: that's what I need to know

(Tyler, 1995, p. 149)

Tyler points out that a key interchange takes place in turns 3 and 4, where the student asks the TA whether he knows how to score the game of bowling. He replies with 'yeah approximately', which the student interpreted at face value; in other words, that the TA only had a rough idea about it. This interpretation is evidenced in turns 8 and 9, when she clearly feels the need to explain what the terms 'open, spare, strike' refer to. As it turns out, the TA was quite an expert at bowling, but he explained afterwards that he did not reveal this for two reasons: (a) in Korean society "it would be considered rude to baldly state that one is an expert in an area" (p.136), and (b) "that it might be embarrassing to the student for a foreigner to openly say he knows more about a game from her own culture than she did" (p.138). In other words, the TA reported being influenced by a need to display modesty (cf. Leech's (1983) modesty maxim) and concern for the US student's face (cf. P. Brown & Levinson, 1978/1987), yet the student was completely unaware of this.

As the interaction unfolded, the student spoke as though she was more knowledgeable about bowling than the TA, repeatedly challenging his interpretation of procedures. It seems the student felt justified in doing this, because she thought she had established her superior knowledge of the topic. However, for the TA it was highly offensive and inappropriate for a student to speak in such a manner to her tutor. This is a good example of the ways that self-

presentation strategies and the perception of such strategies are closely intertwined with perceptions of roles and associated power differentials (cf. Allwood's (2007) parameters for analysing social activities, outlined earlier).

Other researchers have pointed to cultural differences in the practices or procedures of communicative activities that surface in intercultural interactions. For example, Holmes (Holmes, 2018; Holmes & Marra, 2011) reports the impact that rules for speaking in meetings have on Pākehā–Māori interactions. Holmes & Marra (2011) point out that when a person is speaking, a certain amount of accompanying noise is normal in Māori public meetings, and that this conveys approval, support and trust in the speaker. In fact, if there is silence when someone else is speaking, as is typical of many Pākehā meetings, this signifies opposition, dissent and mistrust. Holmes (2018) develops the concept of the culture order to help account for the impact of culture on interaction. She explains that “the concept of the culture order encourages analysis of taken-for-granted presuppositions about appropriate cultural behavior which impact interaction, especially in intercultural contexts” (p.34) and, in relation to Māori and Pākehā cultures, she identifies the following key cultural elements: egalitarianism–status; modesty; group–individual. She then reports on the impact that these elements of the culture order have on interactions in New Zealand workplaces, including the following:

- Meeting openings
- Speaking rules within meetings
- Criticism and complaint
- Modesty
- Responding to praise
- Doing being an expert

From the discussion above, two (further) fundamental questions for cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics can be raised: (a) how can culture be conceptualized beyond simply treating it as nationality? (b) how can we theorise the impact of culture on people's evaluations of others' behavior, beyond simply relating it to expectations and appropriateness? In relation to the first question, Holmes' (2018) concepts of egalitarianism–status and group–individual correspond to work in cross-cultural psychology on values (Hofstede, 2001; Schwartz, 2011), yet modesty could be seen as of a different order. Psychologists such as Schwartz see values as “trans-situational goals ... that serve as guiding principles in the life of the person” (Schwartz, 2011, p. 464). In Leech's (1983) terms, it is a politeness maxim or in Spencer-Oatey's terms, a sociopragmatic interactional principle (Spencer-Oatey, 2008; Spencer-Oatey & Jiang, 2003) that is more relationally or contextually based than a life value. Yet there are clearly interconnections and more conceptualisation is needed to ascertain whether or not they should be treated differently.

In relation to the second question, pragmatics scholars (e.g. Haugh, 2013; Kádár & Haugh, 2013; Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2016) have recently started paying more attention to the concept of the moral order. Haugh (2013, p. 57), building on the work of Garfinkel (1964), explains that “the moral order is what grounds our evaluations of social actions and meanings as “good” or “bad”, “normal” or “exceptional”, “appropriate” or “inappropriate” and so on, and of course, as “polite”, “impolite”, “over-polite” and so on.” However, further

elaboration of the moral order is needed in order to take into account the distinction between two types of norms: descriptive norms that refer to what is typically done, and injunctive norms that refer to what is typically approved of or disapproved of by members of a social group (Cialdini, 2012). The moral order seems to relate to the latter. Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2016) propose turning to Haidt's (e.g. Graham et al., 2011; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Haidt & Kesebir, 2010) moral foundations for more insight and this could be a useful starting point. However, it is a fairly broad-brush framework and may not be fine-tuned enough to allow the detailed analysis required for meaningful insights into intercultural interactions. Further suggestions are made by Spencer-Oatey and Xing (2019) which offer promising new analytic avenues.

3.2.3 Critical perspectives

There is an increasing amount of work informed by post-structuralist and constructionist perspectives that is critical of the ways that the notion of culture has been used in intercultural pragmatics research (e.g. Schnurr & Zayts, 2017). Such work is particularly critical of the tendency in early research to posit national culture as an explanatory variable for interactional behaviour simply based on the national belonging of individuals. Very early on, Sarangi (1992) pointed out that when researchers define a communicative situation as 'intercultural' in advance, there is a strong tendency for any misunderstandings or other negative outcomes to be attributed to cultural differences. This kind of 'analytic stereotyping' (p.413) therefore perpetuates the reification of cultural differences, as well as an overemphasis on 'misunderstanding' rather than the achievement of 'understanding'. In moving away from the notion of culture, Scollon & Scollon (2001) make the notion of discourse central to their analyses of intercultural communication, pointing out that norms for language use are shaped by complex contextual factors relating to discourse needs rather than being uniformly shaped by national culture. Similarly, Verschueren (1999:92) suggests that, "a truly pragmatic approach to linguistic behavior does not place social variability at the level of idealized groups, but along a range of intersecting dimensions contributing to interlocutors' *social identities*" (italics in original). Critical scholars therefore call for more nuanced treatment of the notion of culture, caution in treating any particular interaction as 'intercultural', and a greater responsibility for researchers to make explicit their assumptions about culture when operationalizing this term within analysis.

In investigating intercultural pragmatics, recent work from a critical perspective has devoted attention to the ways that first-order notions of culture conflict with empirical accounts of interactional behaviour. Schnurr and Zayts (2017) examine interactional phenomena such as politeness, leadership and decision-making within workplace discourse, pointing out the gap between participant's first order notions of cultural difference and actual interactional practices observed in the data. This is in line with Mills and Kádár (2011), who point out the stereotypical links individuals tend to construct between culture (whether in a national or regional sense) and pragmatic features. Angouri (2018) focuses on how notions of culture are mobilised as an ideological resource to construct identities and achieve interactional effects. She shows how individuals in workplace contexts tend to construct accounts of problematic workplace interactions through the lens of cultural essentialism, frequently attributing behavior to national culture, and the cause of interactional or relational problems to cultural differences (cf. Dervin & Machart, 2015). The combination of detailed linguistic analysis and ethnographic methods in these works not only allows for the assumed

relationship between culture and pragmatics to be interrogated, it also allows for attention to how stereotypical notions of culture are used as an interactional resource to position the other as deficient, evade responsibility, and/or construct a positive identity for oneself.

4. Challenges and opportunities

4.1. Challenges

Based on the discussion thus far, we identify a number of key challenges in theorising and researching cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics. The first challenge is how to identify an ‘intercultural’ encounter in a principled way. Given the multicultural composition of most nations, as well as the international mobility of the current age, it is difficult to justify the labelling of a particular encounter as ‘intercultural’ simply based on the nationality profiles of participants. Research demands that scholars carefully articulate the assumptions about cultural difference they bring to the analysis of an interactional scenario which they define as ‘intercultural’.

The second challenge relates to how to conceptualise the relationship between culture and language use. It is now very widely accepted within pragmatics that the impact of culture is dynamic, yet there is still surprisingly little unpacking of what is actually meant by culture, especially by those who call for it to be studied (solely) in terms of how it is enacted/constructed in interaction. For instance, while Schnurr and Zayts (2017) illustrate differences between first-order claims about (national) cultural behaviour and specific incidents that contradict such claims, they do not unpack the notion of culture itself and its relationship to language. Similarly, sociocognitive approaches refer to concepts such as schema or frame, yet offer little in the way of clear conceptualisation of the types of elements or behaviours that they interface with. Although Holmes (2018) has started to address this issue through her notion of ‘the culture order’, her depiction is brief and clearly more work needs to be done in this area.

The third challenge concerns ways of researching cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics that provide reliable insights into the role of culture in communication. In fact, this challenge entails a number of elements. The first is the difficulty of collecting suitable data. Research that relies on data collected through instruments such as DCTs or retrospective comments can be expected to have less validity than research which combines analysis of naturally occurring data and participants’ direct views on that data. Yet the latter can suffer from the weakness of being small-scale and local, with many idiosyncratic features at play, making it difficult to put forward any reliable claims about cultural factors. The second is the related difficulty of dealing with the inherent variability in behaviour that occurs within any cultural group (Žegarac, 2007). From an analytic point of view, it makes it difficult on the one hand to substantiate links between culture and behaviour, and on the other to use individual encounters to make claims about the (lack of) validity of the existence of general cultural patterns. A third element is the influence of the researcher’s own cultural perspective. As Haugh (2017) points out, the analysis of intercultural encounters relies on a large degree of interpretation by the researcher, whose own cultural and professional background inevitably has an impact on what is regarded as significant within interactional data. For this reason, Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009, pp. 269-270, 288) argue for the importance of decentering and the value of collaborating with people from different cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, when researching the relationship between culture and language use, there is

also a need to critically evaluate the ways that the notion of culture is mobilised to account for differences or misunderstandings within a communicative encounter and whether this can be justified.

4.2. Promising areas

Promising areas in cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics involve theoretical and methodological innovations within these fields, as well as the application of insights from these fields to applied linguistics.

One area of particular promise for developing insight into the sociopragmatic domain is metapragmatics, which focuses on the evaluative and explanatory comments that language users articulate in relation to particular features of interaction or communicative episodes. Metapragmatic analysis is particularly suited to revealing the ideological basis of evaluative judgments that surface in a range of contexts such as online comments (Davies, 2018), interviews (Sinkeviciute, 2017b; Spencer-Oatey, 2011), newspaper articles and media reports (Davies, 2018; Kádár, 2017), and language learning contexts (McConachy, 2018). Corpus approaches to investigating the meta-communicative lexicon (e.g. Haugh 2018), are particularly suited to revealing the clusters of evaluative terms that signal how pragmatic behaviours are situated in relation to the moral order. There is also potential from interdisciplinary perspectives, such as combining insights from pragmatics with those from moral psychology on morality and person perception (Haidt, 2013; Janoff-Bulman & Carnes, 2018).

There is also increasing interest in synergies between emotion research and intercultural pragmatics. Chang and Haugh (2017) report on emotional difficulties faced by L2 learners of Mandarin Chinese due to encountering interactional behaviours that challenged their own cultural assumptions. They call for more discussion of the affective dimensions of managing intercultural encounters. This links with recent work by Dewaele (2018), who has examined the challenges faced by intercultural couples in the communication of emotions. This research reveals that sociopragmatic issues are most at play when assumptions diverge as to the desirable expression of verbal affection. Once again, theorising within psychology (e.g. Parkinson, Fischer, & Manstead, 2005) may be of value.

Recently, there is also a strand of work that aims to incorporate theoretical and empirical insights from intercultural pragmatics into language education (e.g. Liddicoat, 2006, McConachy, 2018, 2019; McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016). McConachy (2018) examines the ways that language learners mobilise cultural frames of reference and assumptions about interpersonal relations when reflecting on L1 and L2 pragmatics. He particularly focuses on the role of collaborative reflection in helping learners problematise taken-for-granted assumptions and stereotypes of self and other that lead to negative interpersonal evaluations. This work thus helps reveal the ways that learners perceive the sociopragmatic norms and broader ideologies that pertain to different languages.

5. Concluding comments

Cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics are rather disparate fields, with contributions from various pragmatic approaches, including sociocognitive, interpersonal/interactional and critical perspectives. Adherents to these various approaches differ in their interpretations of both context and culture, and of the ways in which both these elements impact on (linguistic) behaviour, and this necessarily results in noticeably different accounts of the sociopragmatic

domain. Hopefully, though, these debates will gradually lead to more insights, especially with the benefit of interdisciplinary insights and new research approaches.

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