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

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ABSTRACT

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

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

RESUMEN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

According to Jessner, the idea that most difficulties encountered by L2 students were connected with their first language dates back to the days after World War II. It was thought then that the existing differences between L1 and L2 and the knowledge students had about their L1 would interfere with the development of the L2 (1996: 141), but, as some other authors have pointed out, it is still a general assumption in interlanguage pragmatics that there are transfer effects and that intercultural miscommunication is often caused by learners' L1 influence regarding sociocultural norms and conventions (Takahashi and Beebe, 1993: 154; Kasper and Schrnidt, 1996: 156; Takahashi, 19%: 189). Contrastive analysis evolved in the late 50s and with it the idea that habits developed in L1 were transferred to L2: when elements in L1 and L2 were similar, L1 would actively help L2 learning: this ispositive transfer; on the contrary, when L2 were different from L1 there would be negative transfer or interference (Jessner, 1996: 142). In our opinion though, what is called "positive transfer" does not always have a positive effect; we are thinking of very simple cases, for example, that of "false friends" in vocabulary. When learning a foreign language, who has not come up against deceitful words which looked like what they were not? If we take the case of Spanish-English, words like "actually", "sensible" or "constipation", just to give three words among dozens, are often misunderstood and misused. Another instance could be that of the present perfect in syntax, the similarity in the construction of this verb form and the connection with the past make students use it incorrectly on thousands of occasions and when saying "I have lived in Barcelona for two years", they will mean that they lived in this city for two years some time ago, whereas the native English speaker will understand that they are still living there; and the other way round, on hearing the expression "I have worked in a school for a month", the Spanish learner of English would probably understand that the speaker worked in a school for a month in the past and he is not necessarily working there any longer. Kasper reports a study (1992: 216) in which it was shown that Danish learners made freer use of their L1 when requesting in German than in English, as they perceived Danish as closer to German than to English; although she does not specify whether this led to more or fewer mistakes, we should understand that unless the structures used were very similar and had the sarne functions, the result would be misuse of the language and miscommunication.

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

type exercises, which repeated the same structure introducing slight variations with the aim of creating good linguistic habits in the L2 student, were of great importance (Jessner, 1996: 143). By having a look at some textbooks[1] for the learning of English widely used in the 70s and 80s we find that "drill" exercises were in fact very popular and structures ranging from asking one's name or age to verb tenses were taught/learnt this way. Just by repeating the same question and answer over and over again, Spanish students would learn that they had to use the verb "to be" and not "to have" to ask about someone's age. This would be connected with ideas of unconsciousness and subliminality in the speaking of language, in the first place as L1 speakers, but also as L2 speakers, idea discussed by Schmidt in his article "Consciousness, Learning and Interlanguage Pragrnatics" (1993), and also with the learning of routines, that we will discuss later. More rnodem textbooks do not hammer knowledge into students' heads by repeating out-of-context sentences, but brief role-play activities which are repeated severa1 times are still a popular aid for language teaching, especially for everyday expressions that rnay be similar or not to structures in the learners' own language.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Another kind of problem we can find is precisely lack of errors as a result of underproduction (Jessner, 19%: 148): if we do not use a structure, we cannot use it wrongly. Students may avoid linguistic structures in L2 that they consider difficult. This avoidance may have its origin in different sources: students are more or less familiar with a structure but are not confident, students know the structure, but find difficulties in using it in a specific context, students know the expression, but they cannot produce it in a specific context because it would go against their norms of behaviour.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NOTE

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

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