

Raising Language Learners' Pragmatic Awareness and Intercultural Competence in Increasingly Multilingual Environments

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Abstract: Pragmatic fluency forms crucial part of a language user's competence. Norms of politeness, communicative styles, scripts and preferences differ between languages and cultures in describable ways, FL realizations of pragmatic functions are often unclear to the learner where the relevant contextual factors are not self-evident, or are ignored when they inconceivably grossly differ from the L_1 phenomena. Even positive L_1 transfer is not activated if the learner has not been trained, whereas handling pragmatic and discourse features of the TL in the classroom is conducive to increased operationality in the use thereof.

A promising perspective for successful intercultural and pragmatic training is the Interface Model, which proceeds from an *explication* of how relevant principles operate in the learners' L_1 (culture) through an *explanation* of pertinent L_2 norms and subsequent modification of the L_1 principle to accommodate L_2 data, to practice first expecting the learner to apply the appropriate FL strategies and speech acts against an L_1 (!) context. By such a gradual, multi-stage method the learner becomes 'pragmatically fluent' before commencing to use the operational principles in the TL itself. The juxtaposition and use of L_1 and L_2 principles alongside lead to successful automatization and internalization of the material and the development of pragmatic multicompetence – L_2 users differ significantly in their employment of pragmalinguistic strategies from monolingual speakers of either language, transferring similar speech acts back and forth between the tongues in their command. The Interface Model enables them to transfer those patterns of interactional behavior which will be appropriate.

Key Words: pragmatic fluency, interface model, explication, awareness-raising, pragmatic transfer

Like nature, the L1 creeps back in, however many times you throw it out with a pitch fork.
(Cook, 2001: 405)

Introduction

It is an empirically supported psychological fact that learning invariably progresses by relating new information to the already familiar, relying on existing knowledge to facilitate new learning (e.g. Kielhöfer, 1994; that is why we learn in terms of prototypes, and that is why the uptake and use of linguistic features are highly correlated with their input frequencies; N. Ellis, 2010; see also Bowerman, 2008; Kittredge & Dell, 2008; Taylor, 2008); the inherent comparative expectations evident in the very question "What does it look like?" From very early on, our brain organises our experienced and incoming information into categories (Vosniadou, 2008); the more narrow and restricted the cataloguing, the more effectual it seems to be (since broader categories make it easier to overshoot the mark; Bowerman, 2005). Meaning is constructed when the brain perceives relationships, relevant or consequential connections motivating it to focus and activate prior knowledge (Caine & Caine, 1994: 4). The very essence of learning lies not just in taking in new knowledge, but in integrating it with the already known knowledge structures, and subsequently—with time—extending it to new situations, refining its range of application, and employing it in appropriate ways. Constructing meaning involves the cognitive skills of:

- focusing;
- predicting;
- inferring connections;
- organizing information;
- generalizing;
- analyzing;
- sorting relevant and irrelevant information;
- evaluating; and
- labeling. (Jackson, 2002: 4)

Even a cursory analysis of the nature of these skills and strategies will reveal that crucial to all is the ability to draw upon prior knowledge. This general truth has been incorporated in Chapter 5.1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages under the label of *savoir apprendre*—the ability to learn, knowledge how to learn effectively—which is recognized as part of the general (i.e. not limited to the linguistic domain only) competences of a language learner/user:

In its most general sense, *savoir-apprendre* is the ability to observe and participate in new experiences and to incorporate new knowledge into existing knowledge, modifying the latter where necessary. (CoE, 2001: 106)

This transfer of general skills is, of course, no CEF discovery. As we will learn from Coe *et al.* (1983), for instance, in late 1970s and early 1980s skills and strategies used when performing a listening, speaking, reading or writing activity were frequently taught through specific materials, where the students were encouraged to recognize that they already possessed skills in their L₁ which they could transfer into the TL (Kedde, 2004: 45). By the same token, learners who are already bi-/multilingual are more aware of the learning and communication strategies which they had developed over time, and are able to apply these to yet another language.

The familiar in FLL

We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native language...
Language is not simply a reporting device for experience but a defining framework for it.
(Benjamin Lee Whorf, 1936; cf. also 1940/56: 212)

Thus, new knowledge is internalised by integrating it with the already available. The familiarity is equally vital in the process of foreign language learning (FLL). Here the familiar is, of course, the students' mother tongue, which is why—whether they are ordered or forbidden—they will inevitably try to explain a new L₂ item to themselves and make sense of it in NL terms and comparing it with their L₁, making a conscious (even if unarticulated) link to the L₁, as well as fall back on translation (especially at the earlier stages of proficiency). The L₂ is always mediated by the L₁, a base language which the learner strives to transform, rearticulate, reformulate (Filatova, 2010), and a clear vestige of concepts from the L₁ remains even in advanced L₂ users (Verspoor, 2008; Lowie, Verspoor & Seton, 2010). FL learners invariably attempt to incorporate the new language in the framework of the known one; they seek a safe passage from the TL to their mother tongue. These attempts are instinctive and made irrespective of the classroom methodology employed; learners compare languages with or without being instructed to do so, as proven by experiments from various disciplines (cf. e.g. Williams & Hammarberg, 1998; Franceschini *et al.* 2003; de Bot, 2004). Drawing on the learner's L₁ (or another mastered tongue) and showing comparisons and contrasts between the languages mirrors, facilitates and accelerates the processes which occur independently in his/her mind. If our learners had no benefit of having been raised in a multilingual environment, the teacher should be obliged to make them at least partially conscious of their L₁ competence through metalinguistic awareness-raising. The role of pedagogic intervention is unquestionable, as transfer of operations from the L₁ to the FL usually requires correction and clarification (cf. A. A. Leontiev, 1981):

the transition [from operations in the mother tongue to these used in the foreign tongue] is not automatic, and the learner will not immediately or without effort come up with the foreign equivalent to the utterance in the mother tongue, remember the rules, and successively apply them. (*op. cit.*: 27)

Yet, paradoxically, where most teachers are more than content when their students display the ability to transfer skills or extend strategies taught to new contexts, this has seemed not to concern language instructors, with late 20th-century ELT methodology discouraging the use of the L₁ in the classroom.

The overwhelming majority of language course books and grammar reference materials on the market (with a few notable exceptions where contrastive grammar boxes are present) provide English-language explanations and totally ignore the relations holding between the students' L₁ and the TL. Such mainly Euro- or Americentric books moulded in the generic approach are, using James' (1980: 24) term, "universally valid [but] for purely commercial reasons." Many students—and teachers as well—are not fully aware of the common properties of the TL and their L₁, which could be beneficially put to use in the teaching and learning process. A truly pedagogical grammar should be contrastive (especially with linguistically homogeneous FL groups in mind). This entails that competence in the FL should be built by exploiting the common ground. As Singleton (2005) observed, even with the Audiolingual Method, where no occasions were provided for making semantic-associative links between L₂ and L₁ words, such links were undoubtedly forged anyway. This links with the observation made by Wolff (2005) that learners can only comprehend items which they can assimilate with the knowledge structures already available.

Noticing

Having mentioned the role of conscious processes in the internalisation of a FL one cannot but revert to the notion of noticing. In a detailed diary study of Robert Schmidt's (1990) 22-week stay in Brazil and his acquisition of

Brazilian Portuguese over that period, the author reported his conviction that he usually noticed—and subsequently began to acquire—forms in out-of-class input only *after they had been taught*. Schmidt and Frota (1986) substantiate the hypothesis that in order to acquire communicative aspects of linguistic competence, the learner's attention must first be directed to them, causing noticing. Their (1986: 310) "notice the gap" premise posits two kinds of noticing that are necessary for uptake of novel linguistic forms to occur:

1. in order for the input to become intake, learners must attend to the linguistic forms and features therein;³⁰³
2. in order to make progress, learners must notice the "gap" between their output (their developing IL) and the input (the TL system; *op. cit.*: 311; Swain & Lapkin, 1995: 388); what has also been called "matching" (Klein, 1986: 62) or "cognitive comparison" (Ellis, 1995: 90).³⁰⁴

Rephrased by Lewis (1993: 154), the "process of acquisition is best aided by making students aware of features of the target language, and, in due course, of how their production of the target language differs from its norms." This important point gains validation from Sajavaara's (1981: 115) remark that at the onset of SLA, the learner's perceptual ("cue detection") mechanisms are tuned to the phenomena and processes available in his/her L₁, and *not* to picking up relevant TL features! Thus, the learner will tend to hear the TL utterances in terms of categories and structures of his/her NL, and substitute its elements for the target ones.³⁰⁵ This belief was reiterated by White's (2000: 137) assertion that the L₁ functioning as an *active filter* may prevent aspects of L₂ input from being noticed (and hence lead to fossilisation) – thus presenting an L₁-mediated UG access perspective which, under this view, is practically tantamount to "no access"³⁰⁶ (Romuald Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, p.c., 2007, Feb. 19).

Noticing requires the allocation of focal attention and rehearsal in short-term memory (Robinson, 1997: 225); hence, detection alone without conscious registration is not conducive to learning (Schmidt, 1993; 1994: 17). Language tasks designed with the aim of promoting noticing should make the learner devote some attention to form, and facilitate comparisons between IL output and TL models. Reformulation, where students' flawed performance is weighed against a well-formed exemplar and where they obtain the chance to draw conclusions and learn from the comparison is very suitable here (Piechurska-Kuciel, 1999: 18). The dictogloss, where the learners reconstruct a previously heard (or read) text is another useful task, as it helps them attend to and recognise linguistic problems (Swain & Lapkin, 1995: 373).

Conscious attention also plays a role in the acquisition of TL pragmatics. Arguing that a connectionist framework is a suitable representation for such noncategorical knowledge Schmidt (1993) makes the case that conscious attention (explicit learning) is necessary to establish connections and acquire pragmatic competence in the L₂, with mere exposure to pragmatically significant experience *inconducive* to learning. Thus, the learner should not only have a knowledge of the linguistic resources available for realising particular communicative intentions and pragmatic effects, but also knowledge of their appropriate socio-contextual use.

Concentrating on foreign language learning

All the aforementioned factors are particularly consequential in FL *learning*, where the environment differs substantially from that in *SLA*, rendering direct evidence inevitable. Firstly, with a limited attention span, learners happen not to pay too much heed to what is going on in the classroom, and even if they do, they focus on the

³⁰³ This is why Ellis (1989: 305) uses the term "explicit instruction" interchangeably with "external manipulation of the input".

³⁰⁴ Widdowson (1978: 13; 1979) distinguished two kinds of rules: *reference rules*, *in absentio*, knowledge of the FL (imposed by the teacher) to which reference can be made when required, constituting the learner's linguistic competence, and *expression rules*, *in presentio*, assumed by the learner to be the norm in a given situation, which determines what the learner actually does with the language and allows him/her to generate linguistic behaviour meeting the communicative needs even without sufficient linguistic competence (Krzyszowski, 1977/81: 75). Consequently, with a constant deficit of reference rules, "a learner's errors are evidence of success and not of failure [because it is] the consequence of success in developing context rules" (i.e., IL; Widdowson, 1979: 190).

³⁰⁵ A similar hypothesis is now being entertained in explaining the difficulty of acquiring native-like pronunciation: it is conceivable that once the child becomes accustomed to a certain range of phonemes, his/her "mental phonetic perception grid" becomes filled, not allowing new forms to enter and seeking their closest retrievable equivalent for substitution.

³⁰⁶ Since resorting to L₁ mechanisms is less costly than preserving and accessing UG once the mother tongue has been established, and in most cases it is practically impossible to determine which of the two is at play during SLA (Romuald Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, p.c., 2007, Feb. 19).

propositional content of the utterance rather than form (VanPatten's Primacy of Meaning Principle; 2004: 18) and fail to retain the structure. This is our universal propensity: we listen to language predominantly to understand the message, paying little attention to the precise wording; in Wilberg's (1987) words, "we eat the sweet but discard the wrapper."

Secondly, while in an immersion situation learners have ample opportunity and occasions for out-of-school interaction with NSs and repeated and varied exposure to a very robust linguistic environment and will, hopefully, ultimately absorb a lot (which is why Krashen dubs natural settings "acquisition-rich environments"), this is not readily available in the conventional classroom (educational settings constituting an "acquisition-poor environment"), not least because the time factor does not allow sufficient exposure.

And, thirdly, indirect linguistic evidence need not necessarily be 100% well-formed.

There is one more reason why I concentrate on language *learning*. The critical/sensitive period hypothesis claims that after puberty a language cannot be acquired *naturally*. At the same time, adolescent and adult learners are already holders of a "driving licence"³⁰⁷ in one language—their NL—and will have some assumptions and expectations concerning the highway code of the TL (Łukasiewicz, 2006: 8). If we agree with Schachter that Universal Grammar only controls core linguistic competence and that the bulk of language data, "up to two thirds of the contents of the pedagogical grammar" *cannot* fall within its scope (1996: 72), it follows that the overwhelming peripheral idiosyncrasy of language—whether in L1A, SLA, or FLL—simply has to be swotted anyway, irrespective of the age of the learner.

After prolonged debate, recent research has positively settled that while teaching should not be limited to formal instruction, formal instruction should not be excluded from the language syllabus either.

Without full access to UG and prolonged access to indirect positive evidence, the grammatical system of a FL will never be internalised without the compensatory remedy of formal instruction, a "catalyser" in the words of Maria Dakowska (p.c., March 12 2007).

The Language Interface Model

"Well," said Owl, "the customary procedure in such cases is as follows."

"What does Crustimoney Proseedcake mean?" said Pooh.

"For I am a Bear of Very Little Brain, and long words Bother me."

"It means the Thing to Do."

"As long as it means that, I don't mind," said Pooh humbly.

—Alan Alexander Milne *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926: Ch. 4: In Which Eeyore Loses A Tail and Pooh Finds One)

This is not, however, the end of the story. The basic reason why we look for familiar orientation points and similarities when in a new situation is our natural need for safety. We feel more comfortable and at ease at home, in our district and city, than at a new venue, even though the latter may be objectively better-appointed, more attractive and safer, just because in the former we could take more things for granted that would bother us elsewhere. This is also why the target language should *literally* be taught in the framework of the learner's L₁ – as in the Language Interface Model (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 2003a), which proves appreciably more successful than other approaches, with the results and enhanced retention preserved long after the instruction period has ended. The method bases on the model of pedagogical grammar charted in Gozdawa-Gołębiowski (*op. cit.*: 201–9; 2003b), with a couple of minor modifications and expansions on my part.

What is so new here? The model builds upon the long-known Contrastive Analysis, but in a novel, eclectic fashion, by forging an interface between the learner's L₁ and the TL, supplemented with an explication of the underlying grammatical system, thus leading to an enhanced understanding of the "how's" and "why's" of the material to be mastered. But let us first delineate the *modus procedendi* step by step:

1. The method usually commences by *initial exposure* (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 2003a: 196ff; 2003b: *passim*; James, 1994: 210; 1998: 261) of new language material in a natural context, accompanied by its direct translational equivalent, but without aiming at structural decomposition. Preferably—for the learner to pay

³⁰⁷ This knowledge of *language*, including some awareness of deep structure phenomena, may be called—extending Rusiecki's (1980) term beyond the realm of vocabulary—*latent bilingualism*. The learning difficulty would then be seen as lying in discovering the idiosyncratic rules whereby the L₂ relates DS to SS and the phonetic representations (Zybert, 1999: 24).

attention to the relevant grammatical information given the limited capacity to process information—the context should be a short sentence, as such are easier to process than discourse (Wong, 2004: 38–42);

2. *Imprinting* – the same invariant sequence of words will be exposed to the learner a few more times at reasonable intervals until TL-NL meaning equivalence has been established; for instance, moving from the sentence to a passage or connected discourse (as recommended by Wong, *ibid.*) into which the language point has been written. The new structure is intended for holistic (*gestalt*) processing and easy recall;
3. *Explication* of how the rules of a given grammar area operate in the learners' steady-state L_1 : examining, demonstrating, and bringing to the surface relevant facts and rules in the source language that are only subconsciously known to the learners, thus leading to L_1 awareness.³⁰⁸ That is, the learner is introduced to rules and particulars s/he intuitively knows and subconsciously applies in performance, but which s/he may have never consciously pondered upon. More attention here is being paid to higher-order rules of use than lower-order rules of formation.

Thus, the first major step is getting the learners to observe and notice patterns in their NL. This finds support e.g. in Gabryś-Barker's (2005) evidence that source language proficiency is influential on L_2 development. Things that have once been explicated have the preponderance of not becoming obliterated and can be recalled as the need arises. This has one more advantage: we can explicate only those L_1 items that are relevant to the L_2 , disregarding ones that may cause confusion. We should also bear in mind the fact that learners often cope with structures that are totally different from their equivalents in the students' native language precisely because they are so unexpected and "bizarre" and stick in the memory, which can thus further enhance retention.

4. A passage is subsequently made to the *explanation* of relevant L_2 regularities – something more novel this time, being the target proper of the instruction. Since the learners are already *au fait* with some representative exemplars of the construction in question, the anxiety before having to master some new principles is reduced appreciably, with the reassuring feeling of a *déjà vu* (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 2003b: 126) or *déjà entendu*. What happens now is raising the learners' *consciousness* of FL features—accumulating insight into what the learners do not yet know in the FL, without necessarily directly instilling the rules (Rutherford, 1987; James, 1998: 260)—revealing the underlying TL pattern and offering a rule, but without losing sight of the L_1 principle, showing parallels between both languages. New knowledge representations are not assimilated and stored in an isolated area of the brain, but will always be related (by neural circuits or other means) to areas storing some other information – for instance, implicit L_1 knowledge that has become explicated (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 2003b: 123). This is necessary for making the new knowledge structures available for effective and efficient recall. Unlike in isolated item-learning, the NL and TL facts are presented as systemically and systematically related (*op. cit.*: 126). Language-awareness tasks sensitize the learner to language phenomena which are present in both his/her L_1 and the TL, but whose overt realization in the two languages may differ. Learners discover whether the L_1 rules are operative in the L_2 and vice versa (*cf.* Fraser's (2008) point that teachers expect modelling to work, while imitation without prior comparing and contrasting is by no means simple, and Paradowski's (2007) concise overview of comparative linguistics rationale).³⁰⁹ The teacher's task is to demonstrate to the learners through comparative analysis that they already know something which they have so far regarded as mysterious. This eases the burden and is greatly facilitative in lowering the affective filter – a factor not to be disregarded.

It is essential to note at this point that at the two stages—especially at early levels of proficiency or where the subject-matter is complicated or would require the introduction of complex taxonomy otherwise—in order to maximize efficiency the explanations had preferably be formulated in the mother tongue of the learners “as a more accessible and cost-effective alternative to the sometimes lengthy and difficult target-language explanation” (Ur, 1996: 17; *cf.* also e.g. Wilen *et al.* 2004, or Temple *et al.* 2005). Using the learner's L_1 to provide examples and clarify explanation saves time, makes the input more comprehensible than might be possible with the “sink-or-swim English-only approach” (Temple *et al.* 2005: 498), and relieves frustration caused by not understanding classroom instruction presented in the TL only (Balosa, 2006). Humans are limited capacity processors – when learning to drive a car, we will not be taking a turn at a busy crossroads, glancing in the rear-view mirror, keeping a

³⁰⁸ Language awareness means sensitisation of the learner to the functioning of a mastered language, “an ability to contemplate metacognitively a language over which one has therefore developed a coherent and relatively stable set of intuitions: ‘implicit knowledge that has become explicit’” (James, 1994: 209; *emph. added*).

³⁰⁹ The use of mother-tongue exercises is also recommended to vividly help students realise that what works in their mother tongue may not work in the L_2 .

conversation going, operating the CD player, and applying mascara (the fairer sex) all at the same time,³¹⁰ unless our destination is massacre. When introducing a new concept or piece of information about the language system, care should be taken not to rock the boat too much, to ensure that the learners concentrate on the content of the rule, rather than direct all intellectual effort at painstakingly deciphering its metalinguistic wording. As a rule it is more important for the learners to understand a concept or grammar point than it is for it to be explained exclusively in the TL. A FL learner will—even at very advanced stages—still think in the L₁ when performing more and less complex mental operations, such as *e.g.* mathematical calculations (only 23% of the full-time first-year students at the Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw who were asked by the author in an anonymous questionnaire in which language they perform simple addition, subtraction or multiplication tasks when abroad, indicated English). Similarly, many errors had better be discussed in the L₁.

5. Once the relevant material has been explained, an *interface*—a contact area between the two language systems—is forged, usually consisting in modifying the L₁ rule to accommodate relevant L₂ data (Gozdawa-Gołębowski, 2003a: 206). This has already been advocated by Leontiev, though surprisingly the implications of the relevant passage have gone unnoticed in the literature and praxis:

As teachers, our task is to “get rid” of the intermediate stage as quickly as possible and to bring the psychological structure of the utterance in the foreign tongue as close as possible to that which operates in the mother tongue. This means providing the student expediently with a system of operations which will not only correspond to the real psychological structure of the speech act, and will be easy to convert and put into effect, but will also ensure maximum support from the habits for the construction of utterances in the mother tongue. ... The learner should not so much be acquainted with the rules of translation from the mother tongue to the foreign one ... as, more importantly, with the rules governing the *transition* from the speech operations of the mother tongue to those of the foreign one. (A. A. Leontiev, 1981: 27; *emph. added*)

The Language Interface Model meets this postulate successfully, allowing the language learner to link new language items with his/her present knowledge or experience; *i.e.*, placing it within his/her Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1934/1962), taken to denote “the layer of skill or knowledge... just beyond that with which the learner is currently capable of coping” (Williams & Burden, 1997: 40); “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1934/1978: 86), thus somewhat reminiscent of Krashen’s “i + 1” axiom. The rationale can be lucidly represented in the following manner:

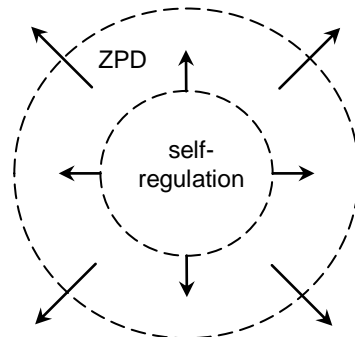


Figure 2: The Zone of Proximal Development

The inner circle of self-regulation denotes the learner’s *independent* mental capabilities, *e.g.* strategic behaviours engaged in by learners with the aim of helping them to guide and monitor their actions when confronted with difficulty in performing a task. Beyond this area lie activities which can only be performed with external assistance. In the case of language learning, a new item can be internalized when the learner is able to connect it with his/her present knowledge or experience; *i.e.*, when it lies within the person’s idiosyncratic ZPD; any goal beyond is inaccessible (van Lier, 1996: 190–1). Naturally, with the aid of pedagogical intervention, or scaffolding, the learner’s command and comprehension of the FL system gradually expands, s/he can carry out tasks at higher levels without the guidance of the teacher, slowly approximating to the TL system. Thus, pedagogic intervention ought to be tailored to the learner’s needs; a postulate which logically connects with the cognitive mediation theory of Israeli psychologist Reuven Feuerstein (Feuerstein *et al.* 1980), which takes the role of the mediator (teacher) to be the key factor in the process of learning, placing him/her between the learner and the material. His/her role is to select,

³¹⁰ Attention may be freed up to focus on these other matters while weaving through the traffic “non impediti ratione congitatonis” [unencumbered by the thought process; as goes the motto of radio show *Car Talk* aired from Cambridge, MA] only once the routine has been automatised.

sequence, pace, frame, highlight, compare, interpret, review, break down, synthesize and present stimuli in a way most apt to facilitate optimal learning, making them both accessible and meaningful; to diagnose the learning potential and then provide support in transforming it into performance (Salo, 2006). This includes taking into account the learner's current knowledge and past experiences³¹¹ (which also implies the mother tongue!).

Subsequent carefully monitored practice first expects the learner to apply the FL rules to L₁ (!) examples. Precisely that: foreign rules are to be applied to mother-tongue texts. Focusing on the meaning *and* form at the same time overcomes the problem mentioned by Nizęgorodcew (2005) that form-oriented input (principally morphosyntactic, as lexical and phonological feedback are typically perceived correctly; Gass, 2008) is unsuccessful if not interpreted as such (see also Gass' (*op. cit.*) observation that feedback may fail to be accurately perceived, going over the learners' heads); the shift of focus to the linguistic code simultaneously results in a deeper semantic processing of the message's content (Heine, 2008).

This may look like building the L₂ on the L₁—which, to a certain extent, it is—but the mother tongue only acts as foundations upon which the construction proper is mounted, which with time become invisible, but remain present at all times.

6. Only then does the teaching move to more traditionally sanctioned TL exercises, but even then in a progressive, transitional fashion: the first assignments being translational equivalents of the L₁ examples (in order to preserve the familiarity appeal), subsequently moving on to entirely novel ones, where the learner tackles the tasks without the aid of a *déjà vu* – as in real-life contexts. Thus, the tasks are sequenced by escalation of their cognitive complexity on the resource-dispersing dimension (i.e. by increasing the performative/procedural demands) from simpler ones, whose aim is to stabilise the new elements of the IL system, to pushed output, conjectured by Robinson's (2001, 2005, 2010) Multiple Resources Attentional Model and his extension of Cromer's (1974) Cognition Hypothesis to promote control and automatization of the learner's existing L₂ resources by directing his/her attention to aspects of the language, thereby leading to enhanced retention.³¹² The resulting L₁:L₂ merger is expected to become automatized and—with sufficient frequency of use—proceduralised, thus conducive to accuracy-*cum*-fluency and compensating for the lack of native intuitions (Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, 2003b: *passim*). Additionally, such gradation of task complexity has been proven to diminish output processing anxiety (Robinson, 2010). The aim of this *competence expansion* stage, effected through the wisely constructed meaning-focused tasks, is making the learners collapse their already conscious knowledge of the FL system with their already explicit representations of their subconscious L₁ competence and integrate the rules, ultimately expecting submersion and subconscious absorption thereof, bringing about multicompetence effects and allowing for the obliteration of the rules governing the structure of the utterance from the learner's conscious mind (A. A. Leontiev, 1981: 23). This is consistent with James' (1998: 263) observation that “explanation is, in effect, comparative description: quite simply EA [error analysis].” Although formula memorization poses a lighter learning burden, rule internalization is undeniably more successful. Additionally, reflection about the best way to translate conceptual content into an adequate linguistic form in the problem-solving tasks promotes a deeper semantic processing of content, as it carries the potential of consideration of the semantic relationships between the concepts, an effect intensified by switching to the FL (Heine, 2008), as in this last stage of the LIM.

³¹¹ The teacher's task is, therefore, also to identify how to tap into the strengths within each learner's repertoire as well as the weaknesses. In the Feuersteinian approach emphasis thus shifts from product to process, where developing learning strategies assumes at least as crucial importance as the subject knowledge itself, with the goal of the qualitative teacher-learner interactions to equip the latter with skills and strategies strengthening his/her personal motivation and competence to learn, thereby helping him/her move along the continuum “from dependence *on* the mediator to independence *from* the mediator” (Levine, 2001: 4), when the learner has internalised the strategies taught and can apply them to contexts outside of the instructional content. Mediation can thus be seen as promoting learner autonomy, assisting him/her in the acquisition process (Williams & Burden, 1997: 67–8).

³¹² Basing on findings of air traffic communication studies, Robinson (p.c., March 11, 13, 2008) theorizes that gradual increase of the cognitive demands of tasks will push learners to greater accuracy and complexity in L₂ production also in situations when a car driver communicates with his/her pilot over route directions. However, there are three qualitative differences between the two situations. Primo, owing to an aircraft's cruising speed, decisions taken on board must be made in fractions of the time available on the road, where you can slow down or even pull over (which only choppers and the Mig-21 can do in the air, and even then for but three seconds). Secundo, an airline pilot has to take the vertical dimension into account, a coordinate largely irrelevant on the ground (even in F1 racing). Tertio, the fatal risks involved in a false manoeuvre are much higher in the air, with meagre chances of survival. Consequently, the former situation is in itself inherently more complex, therefore requiring precision of expression as repetition and reformulation may be costly; *cf.* the well-known case of the Spanish passenger plane nearly shot down when the pilot's announcement “Fire on board” was understood by the air traffic control as “Three men on board”, or the 2006 air crash on the Canary Islands owing to miscomprehension of the term “at take-off”.

Results

Winwood Reade is good upon the subject," said Holmes. "He remarks that, while the individual man is an insoluble puzzle, in the aggregate he becomes a mathematical certainty. You can, for example, never foretell what any one man will do, but you can say with precision what an average number will be up to. Individuals vary, but percentages remain constant. So says the statistician.

—Sir Arthur Conan Doyle *The Sign of the Four* (1890: Ch. 10. The End of the Islander)

The findings of a prolonged controlled classroom experiment indicate enhanced performance and retention in experimental population taught via the Language Interface Model over control groups even in a deferred post-test, 2 to 5 months after the instruction in the grammar areas taught was over (Paradowski, 2007: 149–200). The testing tools covered six distinct areas of English grammar, both structural and lexical in nature: articles, relative pronouns and adverbs, “reported speech”, preparatory “*there*” vs. “*it*”, “*as*” vs. “*like*”, and conditional structures (four of these, *sc.* articles, relativisation patterns, word order in reported questions, and existential constructions, are aspects which feature on Odlin’s (2005) list of points whose presence or absence in the NL of the learner impinges on the success of SLA). Where raw final test data are concerned, only one CTR group failed to yield results which would be significantly below the performance of the EXP group. With the analysis shifting to analyse progress counterbalanced against a pre-test baseline, all the results prove significant.

It thus seems that overall the Language Interface Method does perform its task satisfactorily, even though not many students from the treatment population declared independent attempts at metalingual reflection. Even if the effectiveness is not necessarily supreme in all areas of grammar, it is, at least, rarely significantly inferior to other methods (enjoying an average advantage of 13.1 per cent for the EXP UP progress and 21.38 per cent for the admittedly patchier EXP ADV data), and the participants’ performance was maintained several months following the treatment; facts not to be ignored by language teachers and methodologists alike. The method seems particularly suited to teaching traditional systemic areas requiring manipulation of form (such as “reported speech” and conditionals), although it also proceeds fairly well where the task merely demands the insertion of a lexical item (expletives, relativizers, and “*as*” vs. “*like*”). One area where amelioration is clearly needed is the procedure for enhancing learners’ awareness of the article system.³¹³

The essential benefit of the LIM is that the results of the instruction hold when the learners have ceased receiving it for some time – a long-term pedagogical goal certainly more desirable, commendable and far-reaching than just short-term retention displayed in an immediate follow-up test. Importantly, the method turns out to be particularly successful for less-advanced learners as, despite strong correspondence between the participants’ initial and final proficiency ($r = .5356$ for EXP UP and $.6281$ for EXP ADV), progress correlated negatively with the initial proficiency in both groups ($r = -0.3907$ and -0.4235 , correspondingly)! Thus—barring articles—LIM appears to be more effective in helping FL learners master the relevant properties of English than other approaches.

The model’s potential

Now this is not the end. This is not, even, the beginning of the end.

—Winston Spencer-Churchill’s (1942, Nov 10) speech given at Lord Mayor’s Luncheon, Mansion House, London, in response to the Allied victory over the German Afrika Korps at the Second Battle of El Alamein

The model can successfully be implemented in other fields of FL communicative competence. Thus for instance in a course on L₂ writing conventions, discourse organization, structure of information and information packaging, the learners could first experimentally be taught the principles and asked to apply these in their mother tongue—say, a guided composition or two—before struggling with composing a FL text, which will probably provide several other challenges than just requiring to remember the principles that were mentioned during one or two classes at most. If the learners manage to successfully apply L₂ strategies in L₁ texts, thus becoming better trained in learning to “think” in the way preferred in the target language, success lies within reach. By such differences I mean for instance, in terms of clause combining, the preference for coordination in English contrasted against more intensive use of subordination devices found in French, as pointed out by Chuquet and Paillard (1987), or the English preference for non-finite clauses vs. tensed ones in French, mentioned by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958).

³¹³ The findings might suggest that inasmuch as articles need to be employed in nearly every utterance, each speaker’s idiosyncratic usage is so entrenched that it is resilient to change (the variation between the initial and final measure—per group—rarely exceeded 5 per cent in a test containing 122 gaps). It is also conceivable that where the rules of grammar may seem ephemeral, intangible or conflicting—as it may seem in many instances of article usage—participants’ performance becomes erratic and not quite reflecting their competence. Alternatively, the weaker results over this one area of grammar might actually validate the LIM showing that it is most effective where you have something to transfer from (rather than a functional category nonexistent in the learners’ L₁; Romuald Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, p.c. 2007).

Similarly, if not more importantly, a crucial part of expertise in ELF is “pragmatic fluency” (House, 2006). The importance of developing pragmatic competence—the ability to employ TL resources in an appropriate way for particular contexts—has been ascertained in current models of communicative competence. The suggestion that contrastive analysis include a pragmalinguistic dimension is by no means new – cf. e.g. Gleason (1968), Hartmann (1977), Sajavaara (1977/81a), or Riley (1979/81). House (1997) argues that the notion of TL awareness be extended beyond aspects of the linguistic system to the communicative use of the language in context. She calls forth several enjoyable examples from both authentic interaction and role-plays between native speakers of English and German to demonstrate how not only words and idioms, but also lengthier formally analogical constructions can turn out to be deceptive *faux amis*, leading to inadvertent misunderstanding and irritation on the part of the interlocutor (2003:129-130). She thus emphasises the necessity of the acquisition of linguistically and culturally contrastive knowledge, of knowledge about the diversity of languages in general, and the worth of multilingualism and multiculturalism, so emphatically promoted especially in the CEF ideology.

If communicative behaviour—e.g. Grice’s (1967) conversational maxims or Lakoff’s (1976) rules of politeness—were of universal nature across different languages (as assumed by critics of the Communicative Approach in late 1970s, cf. e.g. Müller 1977), the universality of communicative skills and the possibility of their transfer from the L₁ would void any discussion of the benefits or necessity of awareness in FLL. Yet, a succession of research studies in the last three decades indicate that communicative norms, scripts and preferences differ between languages and cultures in certain, describable ways (House 1997:70). Thus, for instance, Brown and Lewinson’s (1987) claims to the universality of their model of politeness quickly drew flak, especially from researchers dealing with non-western languages and cultures (e.g. Watts *et al.* 1992; Ide *et al.* 1992), who demonstrated that e.g. Anglo-Saxon and Japanese norms of politeness differ so profoundly that in no way can universality be invoked: the Japanese being characterised by the obligatory choice of a linguistic indicator and so-called ‘discernment’, through which the speaker is obliged by certain social conventions to use ‘polite’ speech, while Anglo-Saxon speakers are free in their choice of linguistic means. Further examples of this sort abound; e.g. a French compliment is never followed by an expression of thanks (a ‘*Merci beaucoup*’ might sooner be interpreted as an ironic commentary; Riley 1979/81:122). Also Leech’s (1983) Politeness Maxims cannot be taken as universal communicative principles, as demonstrated by Thomas’ (1995) numerous examples of their culture-specific realisations. For instance the Tact Maxim, though central to western concepts of politeness in that certain speech acts such as requests or summons are customarily emasculated by a proposal of ‘optionality’, this is not so in e.g. Chinese (Spencer-Oatey 1992). Several differences were proven even between so closely related languages and cultures as English and German, e.g. concerning the Agreement Maxim and indirectness in the realisation of various illocutionary acts (cf. e.g. House 1996a, House & Kasper 1981, 1987). Even within one language, interactive behaviour may clearly differ: Riley (1979/81:135) contends that it is the case with meetings, business negotiations, telephone calls, causal encounters and other situations on either side of the English Channel.

All these and several other studies quoted in House (1997:71*f.*) provide evidence that norms of politeness, communicative styles and preferences vary depending on language and culture. It is therefore *de rigueur* for learning FL in use and for the development of communicative competence to recognise that these norms form an essential component and as such should be explicitly taught. Crucially, in Schmidt and Frota’s (1986) ‘notice the gap’ principle, it is not merely the linguistic forms that require attention, but also—simultaneously—the relevant contextual factors (functions) and pragmatic principles (context) regulating the application of these forms in a certain cultural macrocontext. This channelled attention brings the contextualised and regularly used forms to awareness. Schmidt (1993:31) hypothesises a close connection between noticing what is in the input—the linguistic form and its broadened context—and the corresponding intentional learning (where consciousness as ‘intentionality’ plays a role). Thus, necessary for the acquisition of L₂ pragmatic factors is directed attention to the linguistic form, its functional meaning, and the relevant contextual factors. For a thorough learning and retention of these, the learner’s attention should be consciously directed at certain pragmatic phenomena in the input and s/he should try and analyse their meaning for deeper linguistic and conceptual generalisations. Schmidt (*op. cit.*:36) emphasises that FL realisations of pragmatic functions are often unclear to the learners, insofar as the relevant contextual factors that require attention are not self-evident (are ‘non-salient’), or are ignored because they so inconceivably grossly differ from the L₁ phenomena³¹⁴. It may thus happen that the FL learner will pass years without directing his/her attention at the important pragmatic factors and realising the pragmatic differences between the L₁ and the TL. Contrary to what Schmidt (*ibid.*) proposes, House (1997:82) argues that the fact this is not so during the acquisition of the mother tongue, when children together with lexico-grammatical competence *pari passu* acquire communicative competence, cannot be explained away by the positioning of a ‘Pragmatic Acquisition Device’, whose strength weakens with age to become inert after a critical period, but it stands in direct connection with the continual effort on the part of the parents and other caretakers to explicitly *teach* this communicative competence. If, however, one did

³¹⁴ Although consider for instance the shift from rejecting to accepting compliments, visible among young Poles (probably as yet another aspect of globalisation).

assume the existence of such a 'PAD' and of an early and sustained contact with the target language and culture as a precondition for acquiring native pragmatic competence (many studies document the non-native pragmatic behaviour of advanced language learners), this would at least show that positing a NS norm for post-pubescent learners again misses the point (House & Kasper 2000:115).

While mere transfer of knowledge and skills from the L₁ does not warrant development of appropriate communicative competence in the L₂, handling pragmatic and discourse features of the TL in the classroom has been proven to be conducive to increased operationality in the use thereof. Thus, House calls for promoting communicative awareness, i.e. knowledge of communicative act, comprising not just the so-called 'acts of speech' (e.g. apologising), but also the weaving of these acts into the whole discourse (1997:68). Equally important is the fact that this is what learners themselves appreciate. An experiment carried out by House and Kasper (1981), in which a communicative course was run in two versions, an 'explicit' one raising awareness of the communicative phenomena that were being imparted, and an 'implicit' one, without the benefit of metalanguage or directed attention, only increased input and practice in a wider range of scenarios, revealed that only the former corresponded with the advanced adult FL learners' expectations. Also Tateyama *et al.*'s (1997) study of learners of Japanese confirms the hypothesis: the groups taught explicitly performed overall better, and the participants of both (explicitly and implicitly taught) declared unequivocal preference for the explicit teaching method, where forms, functions and distribution of language routines is brought to consciousness.

In a longitudinal, 14-week study of two university groups in a communicative course House (1996b) investigated whether 'pragmatic fluency' (appropriacy and fluency in the realisation of communicative acts) can be achieved in the FL classroom through mere provision of input coupled with intensive and extensive practice opportunities (including teacher correction; implicit course variant), or whether additional, explicit, consciousness/awareness-raising conveyance of language routines (oral explanation and detailed handouts on their form, function and distribution) and the use of metalanguage in conjunction with input and TL practice leads to improved results. An important factor in the explicit variant of the course is a contrastive juxtaposition of the norms of interaction in the L₁ and the TL (*cf.* e.g. House 1996a, 1997). The explicitly, metapragmatically taught group superseded the other in the use of *opening gambits* in that they could realise a repertoire of speech acts that was richer, more varied, norm-sanctioned and interpersonally effective (i.e. referring to the interlocutor), while the group taught implicitly displayed a visible orientation at the content of the message, and less consideration of their interlocutor. However, when it came to *responsive expressions*, both groups displayed similar deficits (unconventional, non-customary expressions and unexpected, non-normative, minimalist 'impolite' expressions). House (1997:78-80) puts forward three plausible hypotheses which can account for this lack of attestable impact of metapragmatic awareness on the improvement of responsive behavior of the learners in everyday interaction:

1. Through the Auto-Input Hypothesis (Sharwood-Smith 1988), which posits that raising awareness of one's own output is conducive to competence expansion in the FL (those learners who were regularly invited to confront their own output with metapragmatic explanations eventually displayed improved 'pragmatic fluency');
2. The underrepresentation of interpersonally focused routines in the realisation of gambits and discourse strategies could be explained through pragmatic transfer from the learners' L₁ (German). Although pragmatic transfer occurred in routine usage of both groups, it was less pronounced in the explicit one, whose classes included the promotion of analysis and contrastive juxtaposition of the use of the routines in the L₁ and the TL. Thus, pragmatic transfer can be counteracted and reduced through directed attention at and awareness of L₂-specific routines, also in the conviction of the students themselves (House 1996b);
3. Through cognitive overload during responding. Möhle (1994) proposed that the biggest problem for advanced adult L₂ learners in the development of communicative competence and the acquisition of representations in the mental lexicon is not the representation of pragmatic and discursal knowledge in the first place, but deficits in procedural knowledge. Thus, the deficits in response routines evidenced by House's learners could be accounted for by the lack of 'control of processing' on their part, in the sense of Bialystok's (1993), i.e. underdeveloped control strategies, with whose help input must be efficiently processed and knowledge representations summoned. Such strategies are of utmost importance for the achievement of communicative competence: the provision of metapragmatic knowledge alone is insufficient; the acquisition of procedural know-how and the availability of 'executive mechanisms' must come in as a prerequisite for spontaneous, ready-to-use FL communicative competence in the form of a corresponding procedural representation of means of speech.

Still, the study indicated that consciousness (as 'attention', 'awareness', and 'control') plays a judicious and beneficial role in the development of pragmatically appropriate and fluent communication in the FL, and that the provision of metapragmatic information and the raising of awareness of pragmatic and discursal phenomena is

essential as counterpoise to transfer from the L₁, as a means of acquiring a differentiated, interpersonally potent repertoire of linguistic routines, and of promoting ‘pragmatic fluency’ (House 1997:80-81). It seems insufficient to expose FL learners to sociolinguistically appropriate varied input and to trust that pragmatic and discursive knowledge will develop by and of itself. FL learners do not activate universally pragmatic competence or even positive L₁ transfer, if these have not been taught reaching their attention and awareness. For the transmission of such knowledge a classroom setting is, according to House (*op. cit.*:81f.) very well suited.

The importance of this area of language also gains support from other authors. In an empirical study Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1997), for instance, reveal the difference between the role of the thus far largely neglected awareness-raising of pragmatic-discursive phenomena in the learning of ESL and EFL. Rather than these, in the latter setting, teachers and students were more cognizant of grammatical phenomena, and they evaluated grammar mistakes as more severe, which was the opposite in the case of ESL. The authors thus emphasise that, especially in the EFL context, “awareness raising and noticing activities should supplement the introduction of pragmatically relevant input and structured L2 learning” (*op. cit.*:27).

Even though this may be more difficult to implement in linguistically heterogeneous classes, with the increasing importance of ‘intercultural competence’ House insists on bringing learners’ awareness of linguistic and cultural similarities and differences, differences in value systems, mentalities, communicative preferences and conventions to the foreground of FL teaching. Her examples demonstrate that even in so closely related languages as English and German, the communicative styles differ markedly – to what extent would that have to be between typologically distant languages, with totally different cultural traditions to boot (2003:131)? Thus, the awareness of pragmatic and discourse phenomena in FLL should include an understanding of the contrasts and similarities in these areas between the TL and the L₁ (L₂, L_n...). Pragmatic competence would yield perfectly to the language-interface rationale; an appropriate research project is being prepared in this regard. If the learners transfer pragmatic patterns anyway, let us enable them to transfer ones which will be appropriate. Moreover, research proves that the provision of explicit pragmatic information is only beneficial when it is not merely based on unreliable NS intuitions, but on the results of contrastive-pragmatic research (*cf.* e.g. House 1994, 1995, 1997), especially as comparison of course and authentic dialogues revealed frequently discomfitingly gross discrepancies (*cf.* e.g. Bardovi-Harlig *et al.* 1991), thus once again reinforcing the contrastive rationale. Of beneficial influence on the development of communicative competence is the combination of intensive communicative practice with explicit awareness-raising, e.g. observation tasks wherein the learner’s attention is directed at specific characteristic communicative features of interactional FL behaviour (*cf.* e.g. Bardovi-Harlig *et al.* 1991; Rose 1997), especially at the pragmatic contrasts between linguistic behaviour in the L₁ and the TL (House 1997:82f.).

What is important, House (*ibid.*) emphasises, is that the pragmatic norms should merely be brought to the learners’ awareness so that—if they so wish for themselves—they know when and how they contravene them in given circumstances, and can predict the repercussions and sanctions of such deviations; not necessarily accept and adopt these NS norms. Through awareness-raising learners should in no way be expected to become “like the L₂ NS”; rather, they should be empowered to actively indicate their distance or proximity (consciously create their own “sphere of interculturality,” Kramsch 1993), and to form their subjective decisions concerning what is appropriate for them, so that they are not forced into—as Harder (1980) aptly called them—adapted crippled “reduced personalities,” desperately attempting to be like indigenous native speakers to whom they will never belong. Thus, rather than adaptation and convergence with the NS norm, the FL learner had better be conceived as someone in-between. Such a move away from the dominating (and frustrating) norm, advocated in the previous chapter of this dissertation, is easier to effect when the learner is aware of it (House 1997:83). In this way, communicative awareness helps the learner be more efficient cognitively, more flexible socially, and more enriching personally (*ibid.*).

While incipient research in IL pragmatics focused on the learners’ deviations from NS norms, blaming pragmatic failure on interference from the L₁, evidence shows that L₂ users differ significantly in their employment of pragmalinguistic strategies from monolingual speakers of either language (Ewert & Bromberek-Dyzman 2006), hence indicating IL → L₁ transfer at the pragmatic level. Recognised as the Intercultural Style Hypothesis (Blum-Kulka 1991), this states that the influence between the L₂ and L₁ is bidirectional, which is why advanced L₂ learners will employ similar pragmalinguistic strategies in relevant situations in either language. If so, this offers a promising perspective indeed for an interfacial model of TL pragmatic training of the learners, where appropriate strategies and speech acts would first be practised on the grounds of the L₁.

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