



Linguistic and sociocultural aspects of pragmatic competence transfer: Requesting and apologising by Polish and Spanish EFL learners

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A great deal of cross-cultural misunderstanding can be put down to pragmatic failure. Inability to draw correct inferences or to appropriately weigh the illocutionary force of an utterance in a foreign language may lead to various communicative problems. Depending on the context these may range from less serious misinterpretations or blunders to highly consequential ones such as the reinforcement of cultural stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes. Understanding the mechanism behind learners' pragmatic choices and making them aware of the cross-cultural variation of pragmatic rules is thus essential for effective communication in English as a lingua franca. The present study is devoted to the analysis of rules governing pragmatic transfer on the example of requests and apologies produced by Polish and Spanish learners of EFL. The choice of American, Polish and Spanish respondents was partially determined by the fact that these three linguacultures differ to a considerable extent as far as values, attitudes and communicative styles are concerned. What singles out the present study is the fact on the analytical level it integrates the classical linguistic framework of Speech Act Theory (Searle 1979) with a thorough examination of sociocultural factors determining learners' linguistic behaviour. It has been evidenced (Wierzbicka 1985, Takahashi 2000, Spencer-Oatey 2000, Félix-Brasdefer 2003) that the perception of the different aspects comprising the context is highly culture specific, which is why the influence of learners' linguistic and cultural background is so significant in the interpretation of interlanguage empirical data (Kasper 2002). Consequently, as the present study exemplifies, only integrating the pragmalinguistic and sociocultural perspective can provide an adequate explanatory framework for the phenomena observed.

References:

- Félix-Brasdefer, J. César. 2003. "Declining an invitation: A cross-cultural study of pragmatic strategies in American English and Latin American Spanish", *Multilingua* 22: 225-255.