Current Issues in Intercultural Pragmatics
Istvan Kecskes and Stavros Assimakopoulos (Eds.)

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Intercultural pragmatics is “a relatively new field of inquiry whose theoretical frame has been shaped by scholars from all over the world for more than a decade” (p. 1). With the theoretical framework of great explanatory power, intercultural pragmatics has attracted great attention in studies of communication among interlocutors from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

The present volume, in the Pragmatics & Beyond New Series, is divided into six parts and 15 chapters, covering recent studies within the field of intercultural pragmatics.

The first part comprises two chapters with a theoretical orientation. Robert Crawshaw discusses the socio-cognitive turn in pragmatics with a case study from an empirical, situation-based approach. According to the emergent approach, meaning in communication is “vested” neither in semantic logic nor in intention, but is rather emergent and adjustable in the course of communication. Despite the limitations of the representativeness or universality of the qualitative research method, this chapter sheds light on the socio-cognitive approach in the analysis of real-life data. Jörg Meibauer discusses the applicability of Grice’s theory to lying in different cultures, especially considering that mainstream pragmatics is governed by the monolingual approach (Kecskes, 2013). Through experimental

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analysis of the motivation behind lying, the relationship between the liar and the target of the lie, and values associated with lying, he supports the “pragmatic universals” view, that is, that Gricean maxims and the Cooperative Principle may be fine-tuned by different cultures but play a universal role for all cultures.

The second part comprises two chapters on lingua franca communication. Arto Mustajoki explores the reasons for more miscommunication in everyday life than in lingua franca conversation. He argues that insufficient linguistic and cultural knowledge of the lingua franca leads communicants, affected by their mental world components, namely, the communicative ability, the cultural background, and the cognitive system, to concentrate intensively on communication itself and to use simplified speech, which help to eliminate miscommunication. Fabienne H. Baider and Maria Constantinou merge the theories of the Dynamic Model of Meaning (Giora, 2003) and Proximisation (Cap, 2010) to analyse a transnational computer-mediated corpus by Golden Dawn, an extreme-right Greek political party. They hold that ideological common ground can define far-right discourse while salience of lexical units can define axiological values of far-right discourse. Research findings show the proximisation of positive emotions towards the Self and the proximisation of negative emotions towards the Other.

The third part consists of two chapters on business communication. Belinda Crawford Camiciottoli analyses the pragmalinguistic features used by participants in their relational work, and reveals that such features are mainly linked to directness vs indirectness and formality vs informality. The usage reflects both alignment and disalignment with the presumed cultural orientations under the influence of cultural background, professional goals, and the conditions imposed by the earnings call protocol. This chapter proves that culture is an influential factor in intercultural communication, but only to a certain extent. Sofie Decock and Anneleen Spiessens combine pragmatic and genre-analysis approaches to make a discursive analysis of the refusals of customers’ complaints and office sales employees’ responses (mainly disagreement) in their e-mail exchanges in the English and German languages. This chapter reveals high levels of directness and varied use of modification as a result of more emphasis on transactional goals rather than interactional goals.

The fourth part consists of three chapters which focus on cultural perceptions. Jessica Haß and Sylvia Wächter examine the mutual and self-perception of Germans and Spaniards and compare their auto- and hetero-stereotypes before the break-out of the economic crisis in Spain in 2008. The result of the 50 questionnaire-based interviews on the cultural impression is a more extreme, more positive, and less diverse hetero-stereotype instead of self-stereotype, which mainly results from the influence of the cultural stereotype, with a minor effect of the media. Ulrike Schröder analyses two filmed interviews with Brazilian and Ger-

man exchange students who talk about their cultural perception both shortly before and shortly after their arrival in the host country. She finds that the cultural key terms constructed by the interlocutors reveal their stock of pre-concepts and pre-theories by which the discourse is co-constructed. Metacommunication plays a crucial role in reflecting on key concepts and in calibrating cultural evaluations. Gila A. Schauer finds more similarities in the (in)appropriateness and (im)politeness perception, despite more differences in the severity ratings for inappropriateness scores through the questionnaire plus post hoc interviews with young British and German adults. Cultural phenomena such as (in)appropriateness and (im)politeness can be perceived in a similar way across cultures. The findings remain to be verified due to the small scale of this study, and the reasons for similarities and differences of cultural perceptions need further research.

The fifth part is focused on the topic of translation. Monika Pleyer applies Toury's (1980) Descriptive Translation Studies Framework to the analysis of the German translation of impoliteness token structures in the *Harry Potter* series. Being more oriented towards the target culture, the translation adopts translation strategies to simplify impolite utterances, such as omission, purification, substitution, explication, and simplification, which facilitate cultural learning but influence the identity construction of the characters. Olaf Immanuel Seel examines presuppositions and non-verbal means in three cases of translation and interpreting between German and Greek. He argues that misunderstanding or communication failures may be common due to the asymmetric nature of source and target languages, including the use of presuppositions, paralinguistic, and visual kinesics. From an educational perspective, this chapter indicates that training on competence-in-cultures and competence-between-cultures is beneficial for translators/interpreters.

The sixth part mainly talks about pragmatic development. Naoko Osuka investigates the role of the linguistic environment on the development of second language learners' pragmatic competence. She finds quite limited development of pragmatic routines in Japanese learners of English both before and after their one semester study in the United States. This chapter suggests the insufficient role of exposure to the target language and the impeding effect of other factors, such as dependence on familiar expressions, L1 language transfer, and insufficient input and output opportunities. Ziyad Ali and Helen Woodfield find that the use of the request modification by Syrian learners in a written discourse completion task is obviously different from that by English native speakers. There are both linear and non-linear developments towards or away from the English native speakers' norms. Influential factors are mainly language proficiency, language differences, and the difficulty of learning. Phyllisienne Gauci, Elisa Ghia, and Sandro Caruana investigate Maltese student-teachers' pragmatic competence in

Italian. Subjects' high-level pragmatic performance in Italian benefits from long-term language learning and especially exposure to Italian in various contexts, but their oral productions are rated lower than the written ones mainly due to lack of availability of processing time. This chapter suggests that enhancing pragmatic awareness should be an essential aspect of language teaching. Laura Maguire and Jesús Romero-Trillo explore the role of adaptive management in teacher talk in a bilingual school setting on the basis of a longitudinal corpus of classroom interaction over six years. They find a decreasing tendency in the use of topic-starters and attention-getters, two subtypes of operative adaptive management, both presenting the peak in the first year, which is mainly because of an improvement in students' proficiency and understanding. This chapter carries implications for the training of teachers' pragmatic competence in realistic L2 learning situations.

Presenting a comparatively holistic picture of current intercultural pragmatic studies, this volume is inspiring and enlightening for the following reasons. First, this volume covers a wide range of research topics, including different forms of communication (oral and written) and different fields of communication (such as business, translation, education, etc.). Such a multi-topic, multi-perspective and multi-aspect study undoubtedly broadens the scope of intercultural pragmatics. Second, the linguistic data involve various languages rather than English only. Since the universality of English-based pragmatic studies has already been challenged, this volume presents research on languages such as Italian, Spanish, and German, among others, which proves the applicability of intercultural pragmatic theory in a multilingual and multicultural background. Third, the feasibility and effectiveness of varied methodologies, such as case study, questionnaire, interview, Discourse Completion Test, etc., guarantee the validity of data and facilitate the research.

However, there are also some issues to be considered for future study. First, it would be better if the delineation of intercultural pragmatics, especially the differentiation between intercultural pragmatics, cross-cultural pragmatics, and interlanguage pragmatics, be kept in mind. Kecskes (2013) makes elaboration on such differences, but the boundary of the three fields may be a little fuzzy in some chapters of this volume, such as the comparison of presupposition and (im)politeness, and the development of pragmatic competence. Second, there are more synchronic than diachronic studies in this volume. However, the longitudinal study is quite helpful, especially for certain topics such as the pragmatic competence development. Third, many of the studies make a detailed analysis based on statistics but have insufficient discussion on the causes of the phenomena. More elaboration on the causes may present a clearer picture of the complicated linguistic phenomena.

All in all, this volume provides various topics and methodologies as reference for intercultural pragmatic study in the future. This volume is inspiring both in its theoretical speculation and experimental practice.

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