

**Shifting the outer layers of language context to the front:
developing pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic awareness
through languaging**

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Abstract

The article aims at presenting issues pertaining to developing language awareness beyond the traditional Knowledge About Language (KAL) conception. We explore the version of language awareness which trespasses core linguistics in the territory of socio-culturally contextualized language use. Evoking the sociocultural perception of language awareness (Van Lier 1995, Andrews 1998, Andrews 2007), we consider it in the context of teaching pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic issues. Further, capitalizing on the concept of languaging (Swain 2006) and languaging about language (Becker 1991), we support the claim that pragmatic language awareness necessitates rule formations as hinted by Schmidt (1990). Ensuing research pertains to the analysis of selected conversational chunks based on a class activity targeted to raise pragmatic consciousness in language learning in reference to selected strategies and mitigation.

Key words

language awareness, sociopragmatics, pragmalinguistics, languaging, metalinguistic knowledge, strategies and mitigation

1. Introduction

Modern language teaching initiated by the new teaching paradigm conventionally dubbed as the communicative approach (Richard and Rodgers 1999), for the first time incorporated pragmatic aspects into second language education in the 1980s. This pedagogical turn was undoubtedly inspired by new theoretical conceptualization of what language and language learning was (new linguistic awareness). On

the linguistic horizon there appeared new functional and interactional language theories debunking the myths and narrow-mindedness of structuralism and neostructuralism perceiving grammar as the central part of language, and language meaning solely as the result of morphological and syntactic combinations. Consequently, knowledge of language was perceived as linguistic competence of either implicitly (nativism) or explicitly acquired linguistic structures.

Dell Hymes (1971/2) was the first to account for the meaning with reference to context questioning the well-engrained, by this time, Chomskyan vision of language. Hymes accentuated the value of context in the production of meaning, thereby offering an alternative conception to language competence: communicative competence. This line of thinking, as well the contributions of other linguists and language philosophers such as Austin (1975), Halliday (1973, 1978), Bachmann (1990), who pushed the study of language beyond pure grammar relations. In most general terms, the name of a language study concentrated on the process of situated meaning making is pragmatics. This branch of linguistics brings forth the claim that language use and its meaning are conditioned by context – “the way the various elements are combined, how they are related to the world at large, and the purposes for which they are used (Van Lier 1995: 39). Thus, pragmatics assumes that “meaning does not come ready-made or ‘pickled’ in words or sentences, but is constructed by speakers and hearers through processes of interpretation, in the context in which the language is used” (ibid.).

The ecological and semiotic perspective (van Lier 2004), questioning the existence of language as a “fixed code”, and the concept of languaging in both sociolinguistic (Jørgensen and Juffermans 2011) and pedagogical view of languaging (Swain 2006; Lankiewicz and Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2014), inscribed well into the pragmatic dimension of language study. The latter idea of language as a form of mediating thinking is used in the present paper as a means of displaying learner cognition pertaining to the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic language awareness. Accordingly, language is not so much a vehicle for communication, “conveyer of meaning” (Swain 2006: 96), it is rather an agent in creating messages. Hence, the way one talks about language may offer insights into his or her process of thinking about language (language awareness). Positing that language awareness is mostly of a metacognitive and metalinguistic character

pertaining to explicit knowledge about language and its use, we decided to delve into students' exteriorization of cognitive process in developing pragmatic language awareness.

2. The concept of language awareness

The concept of language awareness (LA) appeared in the British context as a reaction to the dissatisfaction with the results of educational endeavors in the field of language education. As Andrews (2008: 288) points out, "LA came to prominence in the UK as a 'grassroots' movement in the late 1970's/early 1980s, as teacher frustration with learner under-achievements in both L1 and L2 led to the creation of local schemes aimed at inspiring learners' curiosity about language as a uniquely fascinating characteristic of human behavior. In the beginning, this term was used interchangeably with another one – "Knowledge About Language" (KAL) – associated mostly with explicit grammar knowledge. Hence, Mitchell, Hooper and Brumfit (1994: 2, after Andrews 2007: 10) dubbed KAL "as a new title for an old concern". It remains disputable whether the terms are synonymous (van Lier 1996), yet they "share a common assumption that there is a link between knowledge of formal aspects of language and performance when using that language (L1 or L2), and that therefore fostering learners' ability to analyze and describe a language accurately is likely to help them become more effective users of that language" (Andrews 2008: 288).

Since that time the term has evolved from what Carter (2003: 64) calls the development in learners of an enhanced consciousness of and sensitivity to the forms and functions of language" and broadened its meaning to multifarious aspects benefitting learners "from developing a good knowledge about language, a conscious understanding of how languages work, of how people learn them and use them" ("ALA"). A more comprehensive view of what language awareness is, has been envisaged by Carter (1994: 5, after Andrews 2007: 12):

- (a) awareness of some of the properties of language; creativity and playfulness; its double meanings.

- (b) awareness of the embedding of language within culture.

Learning to read the language is learning about the cultural properties of the language. Idioms and metaphors, in particular, reveal a lot about the culture.

- (c) a greater self-consciousness about the forms of the language we use. We need to recognise that the relations between the forms and meanings of a language are sometimes arbitrary, but that language is a system and that it is for the most part systematically patterned.
- (d) awareness of the close relationship between language and ideology. It involves 'seeing through language' in other words.

It would not be an exaggeration to assert that the perception of awareness at the turn of the 21st century began to be juxtaposed with a narrow, grammar-oriented, approach towards a more pragmatic (Andrews 1998) or even more holistic, ecological approach to language and its learning (van Lier 1995, 2004). Both quoted authors point to the appalling misconception of what language is or to "depressing general ignorance of the nature of language" (Milroy 1985: 175, after Andrews 1998: 7). Thereby, language exploration and awareness is suggested as a counterbalance to a more "traditional curriculum" (Andrews 1998: 5) perceiving language "simultaneously, *both* [emphasis in original] as the medium and message" (ibid., 9). Consequently, language acquisition is comprehended not only in the psycholinguistic perspective of LAD (Language Acquisition Device), but also in sociolinguistic dimension of LASS (Language Acquisition Support System).

Larry Andrews' (1998) proposal overtly accentuates the pragmatic dimension of language awareness. Presenting prerequisites of language exploration and awareness (the alternative course for language arts, "curriculum by default"), he delineates activities "giving students opportunities to be participants in language lessons as they explore the uses of language in real-life settings", thus postulating "the central role of language in life" and underscoring "the inseparability of language and situations", perceiving language learning as a social activity with meaning and grammar "correctness" embedded in contexts (ibid., 66). Pragmatic awareness is frequently identified with sociolinguistic competence, i.e. a component of communicative competence put forth by Canale and Swain (1980) as construed by Kasper and Rose (2001: 1). It includes, inter alia, metalinguistic knowledge of "rules of use". Subsequently, one possible definition of pragmatics may be the one offered by Crystal (1997: 301, after Rose and Kasper 2001: 2): "the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interactions

and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication". In view of Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983), pragmatics is built of two components: pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. It encompasses, respectively, both "resources for conveying communicative acts and rational or interpersonal meanings" and "the social interference of pragmatics" comprehended as "the social perceptions underlying participants' interpretation and performance of communicative action" (Rose and Kasper 2001: 2). Rose and Kasper (2001: 2–3) exemplify the difference between the two components as follows. Pragmalinguistics recognizes the repertoire of resources in performing, e.g. the apologizing function. The language user/learner may choose to say "It was my fault" or "I won't let it happen again", indexing "a very different attitude and social relationship in each of the apologies". In contrast, sociopragmatics pertains to the realization by the speaker that his/her choice has social consequences. This way, in sociopragmatics functional grammar of pragmalinguistics trespasses upon the territory of social context marked with linguistic appropriacy since "speech communities differ in their rights and obligations and the degree of imposition involved in particular communicative acts" (ibid., 2–3). Yet, there are interpreters who ascribe pragmalinguistic failures to cross-cultural issues and reserve sociopragmatic ones to the social basis. Thus, "[i]f the friends were of the same culture(s), for example, pragmatic failure would likely fall within the sociolinguistic category" (Dash 2005: 193). Such a stance seems to be, however, very simplistic since pragmatics, in both of these aspects (cf. research results of Szczepaniak-Kozak, 2013, and in press), may constitute a source of non-target language production (a term proposed as a replacement for the more traditional *failure*).

Pragmatics draws heavily on Halliday's (1994) systemic functional linguistics by liberating linguistic description from the centrality of structure and foregrounding the pragmatic axis as the point of departure instead. The claim appears compatible with the socio-semiotic approach, promoted by van Lier (2004) and his vision of the levels of meaning, or layers of context (van Lier 1995: 39–54). Furthermore, Rose and Kasper (2001: 3), in reference to Thomas (1983), make a vital remark that "although pragmalinguistics is, in a sense, akin to grammar in that it consists of linguistic forms and their respective functions, sociopragmatics is very much about proper

social behavior” encroaching upon the outer layers of context. Briefly, van Lier (1995: 39–40), positing meaning making as the central function of language, perceives its making within three layers of context: linguistic, interactional and social. He visualizes them in the form of concentric circles with the central ones occupied by those pertaining to core linguistics (sound, word and utterance or sentence) and the outer ones standing for interactional or social aspects. At the same time he points out that in a meaning making activity it is always the outer layer that determines the interpretational conflicts.

The concept of language awareness, accentuating the need of attending to more than pure grammaticality of language use (cf. Andrews 1998), suggests that education’s goals in language teaching, including a foreign one, should also take account of the territory of pragmatics. Underscoring the value of the outer layers (learners’ background knowledge of interactional and socio-cultural knowledge), he expresses dissatisfaction with traditional language education.

This is curious, if we consider that in language teaching the inner layers (especially the three ‘core’ layers) have generally dominated lessons, materials, and teaching practices, often to the utter neglect of the outer layers. Meaningful learning, therefore, would hardly seem possible within a traditional grammar approach (van Lier 1995: 47).

Consequently, recognizing the need of developing pragmatic competence among second language learners, and assuming a sociocultural or ecological stance in language education, in the further part of the paper we elaborate on Schmidt’s understanding of awareness and apply this theory to teaching sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic aspects.

3. Awareness and teaching pragmatics

When we consider language awareness from interlanguage pragmatics perspective, Schmidt’s (1993) noticing hypothesis acquires special importance. Schmidt advances that noticing constitutes means of creating windows of opportunities for external manipulation of students’ attention to form and meaning. He maintains that for learning a target item, learners need to allocate some amount of attention combined with awareness. This hypothesis assumes that learners need to achieve a certain degree of “conscious registration”

(ibid.), in order for input to become intake and for learning to take place. Generally, students should be sensitized to the fact that the shape and effect of one's interaction in a second or foreign language will often depend on a multitude of factors, including cultural backgrounds of the interlocutors.

Raising pragmatic awareness of our learners is an especially tricky task because pragmatic rules for language use are mostly implicit, and even native speakers are unaware of them. It encompasses a number of aspects: 1) students' realization that pragmatics is relevant and useful, i.e. that pragmatic appropriacy pays off; 2) attentiveness to sociolinguistic factors conditioning pragmatic features, in other words, how they vary across speakers in different situations; 3) awareness of the repertoire of pragmalinguistic means available for speech act realization (e.g. expression of mood and imposition) (Schmidt 1990: 131–132). There is an ongoing debate whether this awareness includes rule formation or not. Schmidt (1995: 30) seems to include it in his hypothesis under the disguise of *understanding*, i.e. one level higher than *noticing*, both of which are elements constituting the hierarchy of consciousness as awareness.

Schmidt (1990) differentiates between three levels of consciousness as awareness: perception, noticing (or focal awareness) and understanding. For the discussion of learning pragmatics of a non-native language we need to be able to tell the difference between noticing and understanding. Schmidt (1990: 132) defines noticing as the level "at which stimuli are actively experienced" often making delivering verbal reports possible, except for cases when we are unable to express what we experienced due to lack of metalanguage or memory slips. Whereas understanding, in Schmidt's (1990: 132–133) view, can be equated with being aware of something in conjunction with some mental activity around the object of consciousness, e.g. an attempt to comprehend it, problem solving, metacognition. In pragmatics noticing stands for "awareness that on a particular occasion someone says to their interlocutor something like, 'I'm terribly sorry to bother you, but if you have time could you look at this problem?'" (Schmidt 1995: 30). The latter stands for "[r]elating the various forms used to their strategic deployment in the service of politeness and recognizing their co-occurrence with elements of context such as social distance, power, level of imposition and so on", which resembles rule-formation (ibid.). Schmidt (1990: 138, following

ideas of Baars 1988), was also able to put forward a concise explanation of the learning process: “Learning begins with the realization that something is to be learned, progresses through a series of stages that establish a context for understanding new material, and concludes with the new material fading out of consciousness as it becomes itself a part of the unconscious context that shapes the interpretation of future events”. In other words, initially learning new material or skills is a controlled process which becomes automatic as a result of practice (cf. Ur 2003: 20)

Another attempt to explain the manner in which pragmatic competence is achieved by adult second language learners was Ellen Bialystok’s (1993) two-dimensional model. Bialystok puts forward that the process of pragmatic competence development involves two separate cognitive components: 1) acquiring knowledge in the form of an increasingly explicit understanding of L2 pragmatic features, and 2) acquiring control over attention to this knowledge; that is, automaticity in use of this knowledge. The first prediction this model includes is that because adult language learners rely on universal or their first language pragmatic knowledge, they have at their disposal a range of pragmatic options to choose from. In particular, she postulates, L2 learners “do not begin with a childlike naiveté about the social uses of language” (Bialystok, 1993: 47). In other words, they do not have to progress in L2 from the simplest to more elaborate forms but can be guided to produce more adequate, often more complex forms of, e.g. politeness, basing on their L1 or universal notions of politeness.

Another prediction of Bialystok refers to the problem which L2 learners experience when it comes to recalling and processing speech acts in interactions. She argues that “adults make pragmatic errors, not only because they do not understand forms and structures, or because they do not have sufficient vocabulary to express their intentions, but because they choose incorrectly” (Bialystok 1993: 54). This is while attending “to the contingently evolving interaction” and designing “their contributions in a sequentially appropriate fashion”, learners need to concentrate on “accessing the linguistic forms”, which can be accomplished in “an incremental, one-segment-at-a-time procedure” which makes their speech “dysfluent and choppy” (Kasper 2001b: 16–17). What constitutes the greatest challenge for them is to be able to control their attention, i.e. the other cognitive component

mentioned above, during the process of selection of the appropriate strategy (Kasper 2001b: 15). In other words, adult learners' incorrect choices are due to their "lacking ability to control attentional resources" (Kasper and Schmidt 1996: 157). This becomes a serious challenge in real-time interaction conditions, i.e. pressure of time, consequences of misunderstandings, lack of opportunities for repetition or clarification. And indeed, Bialystok's claim is corroborated by research results of Szczepaniak-Kozak's (2013, and in press). In her investigation of Polish EFL learners' interlanguage pragmatics she noticed that advanced learners know and understand biclausal strategies to express less direct requests in English, because they provide correct forms in context-free exercises during General English classes, but they do not provide them in a discourse completion task (DCT) filled in under time-pressure conditions. EFL speakers produce pragmatically (in)appropriate utterances not because their pragmatic knowledge is too low or deviant. Instead, they are unable to draw on their pragmatic knowledge when they need it, or to access it quickly enough to produce appropriate utterances in real time.

Most research including interventional teaching indicates that incorporating structured input tasks and drawing learners' attention to target features during tasks through, for example, explicit feedback in the form of metalinguistic comments and elicitation, are vital to prompt learners into using the target forms (Takimoto, 2006: 395–396). And Takahashi (2001: 171), referring to her own study of input enhancement, states that "conscious noticing is the necessary and sufficient condition for converting input to intake". Takahashi (2005: 2) implies that "if higher levels of awareness are assured by manipulating input, then learners' intake of target forms could be greatly enhanced, even in implicit input conditions". With regard to Polish learners of English and formulaic expressions, Jaworski (1994: 11) suggests that teachers draw students' attention to 1) the importance of phatic communion and linguistic routines in language in general, 2) highlighting language specific nature of formulaic expressions; and 3) discussing the potential problems of miscommunication resulting from the transfer of L1 routines to L2.

According to Rod Ellis (1994: 159–161 and 1999), there are two types of unobtrusive input-based approaches in teaching grammar: structured input and consciousness-raising. Both can be

adapted to teaching pragmatics in EFL classroom. Structured input tasks, which require learners to listen (less so to read) to a specially designed input including plentiful examples (flood) of one target structure, are of a special importance. In order to strike a balance between obtrusiveness and salience, Ellis suggests that students should attend to the target element and understand its meaning in focused tasks. This may be done in the form of a gapped text from which words containing the target structure were removed, true-false statements, checking boxes, selecting the correct picture, drawing a diagram, performing an action. Ellis argues that in properly designed tasks of this kind the target forms are frequent and their meaning is clear. Additionally, correct understanding of these forms must be a condition to understanding the meaning of the entire text. Ellis stresses the importance of nonverbal or, minimally, verbal response to such tasks. Moreover, his preference for oral input is a result of the fact that oral texts require real-time processing, which creates better conditions for acquisition (Ellis 1999).

A useful example of an explicit teacher-fronted explanation of pragmatic rules is presented in Takimoto (2006: 416–417). Elsewhere, Takimoto's (2007: 10) offers a study with a group of EFL Japanese learners who received three pragmalinguistic-sociopragmatic connection activities and three reinforcement activities. When the students checked their intuitive guesses against the recorded material, the reinforcement phase followed, which aim is to provide students with more chances to notice and understand how the sociopragmatic variables influence the way propositional content of a particular request is expressed by means of pragmalinguistic devices. The students read dialogues aloud and listened to their oral recordings. They were also asked to rate the level of appropriateness of each underlined request on a 5-point scale taking into account sociopragmatic variables of the relationship between the participants and their judgment of politeness level. Takimoto's (2007) study lends a clear support for the conclusion that, in most instances, students learn, remember and use a target element better when they work out the rules of its use on their own. Ellis recommends for that purpose consciousness-raising tasks in which learners are provided with data to get a feel for the meaning and use of the structure followed by verbalizing the rule. This can be enhanced when learners compare what they have noticed in the input with what they have produced (cf.

Takahashi 2001 and 2005) or to which they need to make a personal response. Thus, Ellis (2002) supports the explicit L2 didactics as most scholars nowadays consider any type of instruction in which rule formulation takes place overtly. Norris and Ortega (2000), after a meta-analysis of 77 studies on the effectiveness of language instructional treatments, published between 1990 and 1998, conclude that explicit instruction involves rules explanation by the teacher (deductive and metalinguistic) or the type of learning in which learners were told to “to attend to particular forms and to try to arrive at metalinguistic generalizations on their own” (Norris and Ortega 2000: 437).

Advantages of explicit instruction are also noticed by Kasper (2001) who remarks that explicit instruction is more effective than the implicit one for success in pragmatic competence development and fostering noticing strategies of learners by systematic instruction is of the utmost importance. During a lesson ensuring learner’s mental processing (noticing and interpreting meaning) may be done in the following sequence (Ellis 1999):

- Listening task – students listen to a text that they process for meaning.
- “Noticing” task – students listen to the same text, which is now gapped, and fill in the missing words.
- Consciousness-raising task – students are assisted in their discovery how the target grammar structure works by analyzing the “data” provided by the listening text.
- Checking task – students complete an activity to check if they understood how the target structure works.
- Production task – students are given the opportunity to try out the target structure in their own sentences. The aim of the production task is to encourage students to experiment with the target structure, and not its mastery.

Production tasks can take the form of a problem-solving activity as well, which constitutes a more overt way of raising students’ pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic awareness than structured input tasks (Takimoto 2007: 4). Takimoto adapts this task to teach pragmatics by designing activities which concentrate on a

specific pragmatic feature in the target language, promoting engaging of learners' intellectual effort and verbalization of their understanding of the particular feature. The intervention including the problem-solving component was fashioned using the same instructional content as in the above-presented structured-input task. It took the form of a series of activities in the following order. First, students read two dialogues differing in terms of request forms and decided what the form differences were. They also answered questions concerning the social variables that influence the differences.

The above type of L2 instruction subscribes to what Norris and Ortega (2000: 420) subsume under the term of weak interference position arguing that "certain instructional techniques, which contextualize the new L2 material within meaningful episodes in a manner that is relatively unobtrusive but salient enough for further cognitive processing, may help learners direct their attention to the relevant features in the input, and thus may expedite the acquisition process". In our opinion, such tasks should also include or be followed by pair, group or class discussions during which students talk about their observations, impressions and interpretations. The whole process can take the form of the Description-Interpretation-Evaluation model ("D.I.E"). By verbalizing these the students show their understanding of a particular matter or participate in exchanges which enable them to gain such an understanding.

All in all, research conducted by Takimoto (2006) indicates that L2 pragmatic competence may be enhanced by manipulating input and stimulating retention of the material by allowing students opportunities for a deeper mental processing of the target structure data. Elsewhere, Takimoto (2007: 22) mentions that teachers need to be aware of the importance of providing learners with opportunities for deep "process[ing of] both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features of the target structures". In our opinion, to test whether students are well-aware of these and in order to do it in an effective and interesting way for learners, we can, for example, stage an activity in which students are asked to produce language which is inappropriate. This exercise cannot be exploited frequently, because students learn best by doing things right, but occasional production of inappropriate responses adds fervor to classroom mood. In order to do such an activity "well", students need to know the rules well and due to the exotic character of the activity they may remember them for

longer, capitalizing on the impact of affect. A follow-up activity may be peer- and/or teacher correction and feedback on the incorrect samples. All in all, instruction in pragmatics is desirable to help prevent the consequences of pragmatic failure, especially because pragmatic competence does not appear to develop in conjunction with grammatical competence (O’Keeffe et al. 2011: 139).

4. Research

4.1 Objectives and hypothesis

In our proposal of developing pragmatic awareness we decided to present an activity based on students’ interaction guided by the principle of the three “AAA” standing for: awareness, autonomy and authenticity (van Lier 1996), boiling down to foregrounding learner agency. This proposal is inscribed into a research framework to additionally support the claim that awareness necessitates rule formation. An approach based on interaction presupposes a more central position of the learner and allows for more discovery oriented learning so that learners perceive the difference and discover the rules for themselves. The development of students’ awareness, as Danilewicz (2011: 20) points out, “is directly connected with employing cognitive strategies, such as noticing, hypothesis testing, problem solving and restructuring.” In this vein, he duly continues that language awareness should be more a process than a product-oriented approach “in which one is told the rules” (ibid.). Hence, we incorporate an activity in which students are expected to negotiate the meaning to sort out linguistic problems from the pragmatic domain. Assuming Schmidt’s (1990) stance on awareness, we expect that through the process of languaging we are able to get insights into the relation between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects in building their general pragmatic awareness. We hypothesize that rule formation is an integrative process of developing pragmalinguistic awareness.

4.2 Method

Positing that pragmalinguistic awareness involves more than pure noticing of differences, e.g. understanding (Schmidt 1990), we decided to draw on the idea of languaging as worked out by Swain (2006) in which language is not perceived in its conduit metaphor –

communicating messages and thoughts but rather as “an agent in the making of meaning” or “a cognitive tool” (Swain 2006: 96). Thus, instead of relying on the more traditional concept of interaction based on teacher presentation and feedback, or reflection on action, we thought it would be insightful to get into the process of thinking in the form of reflection in action (cf. Schön 1983, 1987; Lankiewicz, forthcoming). In our case, we target the metalinguistic dimension – languaging about the pragmatic dimension of language (cf. languaging about language, Becker 1991, after Swain 2006). Using Vygotskian terminology, we try to identify moments of ontogenesis (instances of integrating linguistic mediational means in a short span of time to reorganize thinking, Lantolf 2001: 3).

4.3 Target group and research design

Since the point of convergence for our otherwise diverse professional careers is teacher education (at a local teacher training institution), we decided to carry out an expository study on teacher students. The study presented here is a section of a lesson devoted to raising pragmatic competence among prospective teachers. We selected one activity and, due to methodological restrictions imposed by languaging, we intended to limit our observation to three pairs of students (Adam and Maria, Robert and Philip, Anna and Rita – the names have been changed to allow for anonymity). The interaction/languaging within the selected pairs was audio-recorded (one researcher per pair) while the rest of the students performed a similar activity which aim was to look for pragmatic cross-cultural failures since, as Poole (2000: 11, after Dash 2005: 193) points out: “the disparity between what we intend to communicate and what we actually say is central to pragmatics”.

All students were presented with a dialogue containing cross-cultural pragmatic gaffs and its improved version (see Appendix). The students’ task was to set out the problematic areas pertaining to the abuse of linguistic measures in a given context. In a sense, this activity was used as a warm-up for considering pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic inadequacies in L2 language use to demonstrate the sociocultural burden of language and the need to be a more sensitive language user “to the nature of language and its significance in everyday life” (Danilewicz 2011: 16). Due to space limitations, we do not discuss the latter part of the course.

4.4 Languageing and pragmatic awareness

Since the subjects of our teaching intervention are student teachers, we decided to initiate our pragmatic lecture with an illustrative case delving into pragmatic issues, which is considered vital for developing L2 teacher language awareness (Glasgow 2008), pertaining directly to the teaching profession. The two short dialogues are materials made for educational purposes informed by Anna Wierzbicka's volume on *Cross-cultural pragmatics* (1991), accentuating possible pragmatic failures of Polish speakers of English as a second/foreign language.

It needs to be made clear that the concept of the research was inspired by the one undertaken by Swain and Lapkin (1998, 2002, 2006, as reported in Swain 2006) in which students compare their original stories with a more acceptable version rewritten by teachers. In our case, the students were supposed to compare two dialogues with regard to pragmatic aspects. The highlighted phrases helped the students perceive the problem. In a way, we conformed to the recommendation that "the teacher's job is to mediate [...] new material so that it appears in a form that is most accessible for initial learning" (Ur 2003: 11). A close look at conversations supported by instructional guidelines was supposed to channel the students' attention and activate noticing of the pragmalinguistic diversity of certain grammar structures (Kasper and Rose 2001) in a given situation. Subsequently, through the process of languageing, i.e. "talking it through", rule formation was expected to occur, pertaining also to sociolinguistic features since deep contextualization requires considerations of the outer circle (van Lier 1995).

The analysis of the recorded and transcribed languageing of the three pairs, which fluctuated between 9–16 minutes, exhibits the students' varying reflective abilities and the level of language awareness. We intentionally selected pairs with the expectation to obtain diverse samples of languageing about language, judging subjectively on their former class performance.

The first pragmatic feature to be noticed was the use of the form "Mr." with the first name, which Wierzbicka (1991: 27) puts forward as one of the arguments for incompatibility of speech acts and their realization across cultures (for criticism, see Kalisz 1993). The use of a very formal honorific in this case may be quite misleading for a native user. For example, although in American culture this alerter

signals respect and formality, in Polish culture it does not prevent the interlocutor from showing affection. As Wierzbicka (ibid., 57) maintains, in Polish “the formality of such forms of address does not prevent the show of emotions, and affectionate diminutives of the first names are very freely combined with titles, as they are with hand-kissing”. The students’ languaging demonstrates that some of them (Robert and Philip) were not initially aware of this cross-cultural difference, however, they were able to construct the tentative pragmatic rule for themselves:

R: What is the problem here, with “Mr. Brian”?

P: It sounds OK to me. It is a formal situation at school. We normally refer to the teacher “Mr.”

R: yeah, and [the name of the teacher has been erased]
calls me Mr. Robert.

(...)

R: Yeah, but maybe it’s wrong to say so, think about movies, they use only names.

The next pragmatic feature in focus pertains to the differences in realization of self-assertion between Anglo-American and Polish culture (Wierzbicka 1991: 77). A more pragmatically appropriate version would be to ask the student “Could you read two texts ...”, rather than “I want you to read two texts” which, as Wierzbicka (ibid., 76) asserts, stands in conflict with the concept of autonomy, cherished by the Anglo-Saxon culture. In turn, the problem of the question “Do you want to join us at the film discussion student circle this evening at 6 p.m?”, seems to exemplify indirectness or “polite pessimism” characteristic of the Anglo-American culture (ibid., 30). Hence, a more suitable option might be to form the proposal with “would”. The students’ languaging on these two functions (ordering and inviting) was multifarious. All of them articulated the general rule that American politeness relies on degrees of modality, yet their conceptualizations also pertained to sociopragmatic aspects such as imposition or social distance, obligation (Rose and Kasper 2001: 2), as exemplified by this chunk:

A: Well, but is it so bad if you as a teacher ... you simply state what you want the student to do? In my opinion it is fair enough.

M: Right, but he’s a foreigner and the teacher speaks in his language, shouldn’t he be more sensitive?... You do not have to demonstrate so much power.

The last pragmatic problems incorporated into the dialogues were conditioned by transfer from Polish, i.e. the overuse of “of course”, thus producing an effect of a reprimand to an English ear and the fact that advice is typically offered by an imperative in Polish while in English it is “formulated more tentatively” by means of, e.g. lexical modality. The dilemma of the option “of course” vs. “certainly” has been languaged with regard to the rules of unidentified politeness, social inadequacy rather than the implicature of annoyance with a hidden meaning (what a stupid question you are asking). Here we offer an illustrative example:

A: That one is difficult, I guess, it is nicer to say “certainly”, I would say so, it a very elegant British word.

R: But Brian is American so maybe it is better to say “surely”, [giggling]. Hmm, anyway the teacher does not have to speak American to an American speaker.

A: Maybe it is too Polish.

R: Well, I don’t know, I think the teacher in the dialogue is sometimes nice, sometime not, there is something wrong with this conversation.

The final quote illustrates that an overall pragmatic inadequacy of the conversation was intuitively observed. In most cases interaction with a partner and mediational material helped them figure out cross-cultural pragmatic failures. Languaging on pragmatic issues initiated by reflection in action constituted a motivation for a more detailed analysis which followed and aimed to support the raising of students’ linguistic awareness with reference to metalinguistic resources.

4.5 Discussion and conclusion

Summing up, it was observable that languaging exhibited the students’ thinking pertaining to pragmatic aspects of language use. In the process of comparing different pragmalinguistic and functional grammar issues, highlighted phrases visually facilitated perception and triggered noticing of diversity which, in turn, automatically raised their level of understanding – rule formation (Schmidt 1990). In accordance with Swain’s study, “their languaging articulated and transformed their thinking into an artifactual form and as such became available as a source for further reflection” (Swain 2006: 106). The

artifact in question was their own conceptual maps delineated by language paths, or verbalized thinking. It was to be the subject for further languaging and reflection upon the elicitation session which took place later during the lesson. Rule formulation, even if it may have been inaccurate, laid the foundations for understanding which requires a degree of reflection – a deeper form of consciousness beyond pure noticing. Additionally, languaging on pragmalinguistic issues entailed a discussion on sociopragmatic accuracy. Perceived differences initiated the creation of “new meaning and understandings – that is, they learned both through language and about language” (ibid.).

There is, however, an essential shortcoming of teaching cross-cultural pragmatic failures: Wierzbicka (1991: 88) also questions some pragmatic notions, e.g. directness. Nonetheless, awareness is only a step in Schmidt’s hierarchy of consciousness to get a deeper understanding of how language works in its full multifaceted contexts. One should also allow for the “ambiguity in describing cross-cultural pragmatic failure from that which may be more related to individual character and beliefs” (Dash 2005: 195).

Appendix

The is a conversation between a Polish teacher of social and political science a student from America (the only black gay at the university) who came to see the teacher during his duty hours. Compare the two versions of the conversation. Version A presents the actual conversation and version B, an improved one, is more acceptable to a native speaker. Discuss the differences in pairs.

Version A:

S: Good afternoon... [interrupted].

T: Afternoon... Oh, you’re **Mr. Brian** from US? Oh, good to see you. So you’ve have finally found me.

S: Indeed, my name is Brian Atteburry. Well, I am afraid I’ve received a version of the timetable, hmm... which most probably has changed.

T: It might have been the case. We have really changed the schedule recently, so it is possible that you have been given the wrong one. I am very sorry for the confusion it caused.

S: Would you be considering any possibility of my making up for absences?

T: We have just stated, you've missed only two classes so, Mr. Brian, **I want you to read two texts...** there you go...[handing the texts in] for the next week and see me during my duty hours. By the way, **do you want to join us at the film discussion student circle this evening at 6 p. m?** We're watching and discussing "Matrix".

S: Well, it's a pity because Matrix is one of my favourite movies but I am afraid I have already made an appointment at 6 today, so possibly next time. I hope there are more meetings to come.

T: **Of course!** We meet once a fortnight. **I strongly advise you to come,** you can meet lots of nice Polish girls and learn about cross-cultural differences.

S: Well, certainly, I can. But let me clarify, your tutorials on "European integration" take place on Monday at 10.45, in room 24. Is that correct?

T: Right, so see you next time and have a nice stay in Poland.

Version B.

S: Good morning... [interrupted].

T: Oh, you must be **Mr. Brian** from US? Right? Oh, good to see you, finally you've found me.

S: Indeed, my name is Brian Atteburry. Well, I am afraid I've received a version of the timetable, hmm... which most probably has changed.

T: It might have been the case. We have really changed the schedule recently, so it is possible that you have been given the wrong one. I am very sorry for the confusion it caused.

S: Would you be considering any possibility of my making up for my absences?

T: We have just stated, you've missed only two classes so, **Brian, would you mind reading two texts...** there you go...[handing the texts in] for the next week and see me during my duty hours. By the way, do you want to join us at the film discussion student circle this evening at 6.p.m.? We're watching and discussing "Matrix".

S: Well, it's a pity because Matrix is one of my favourite movies but I am afraid I have already made an appointment at 6 today, so possibly next time. I hope there are more meetings to come.

T: **Certainly,** we meet once a fortnight. **Maybe, you ought to come one day,** you can meet lots of nice Polish girls and learn about cross-cultural differences.

S: Well, certainly, I can. But let me clarify, your tutorials on "European integration" take place on Monday at 10.45, in room 24. Is that correct?

T: Right, so see you next time and have a nice stay in Poland.

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