


Cross-Cultural Pragmatics and Foreign Language Learning

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Cross-Cultural Pragmatics and Foreign Language Learning		
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Research on cross-cultural pragmatics examines how sociocultural norms shape language use in intercultural communication. This field is important for foreign language learning as second language (L2) learners need more than linguistic competence to communicate effectively; they also need pragmatic competence, which refers to the ability to use language appropriately in diverse sociocultural contexts (Blum-Kulka, 1982). Despite its significance, pragmatic failure remains a persistent challenge, particularly when authentic interactions are not systematically integrated into L2 instruction. Thomas (1983) points out that unlike grammatical errors, pragmatic failure frequently goes unnoticed by the speaker, making it even more challenging to address. For instance, Jaworski (2009) found that Polish learners of English often misinterpreted formulaic expressions such as *how are you?* as literal inquiries rather than social greetings. As a result, their responses deviated from native speakers' expectations and led to communication breakdowns. However, research on this topic has not been systematically integrated into L2 instruction, leaving a gap between empirical findings and their pedagogical implementation. In response, Juliane House and Dániel Z. Kádár explore how L2 learners navigate the complexities of cross-cultural interactions and offer context-based instruction in their book *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics and Foreign Language Learning*.

The book is organized into 11 chapters that systematically explore the relationship between cross-cultural pragmatics and L2 learning. It begins by introducing foundational concepts such as linguaculture, which refers to cultural norms reflected in the ways communities employ language, and a bottom-up framework for examining cross-cultural interactions. Chapter 2 explores the historical development of cross-cultural pragmatics, with a focus on how conventionalization shapes language use. It also discusses the contributions of the “Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP)” as a landmark in cross-cultural speech act studies. The authors also present a corpus-based contrastive framework that identifies speech acts as the primary analytical unit of the book (Chapter 3). Through minimalist and replicable

typologies, the authors examine key elements such as illocutionary and interactional values to understand intercultural communication patterns.

Chapters 4 to 7 progressively discuss expressions as the smallest pragmatic units, including requests and apologies, as well as interactional acts like criticizing and congratulating. The analysis highlights the challenges for L2 learners when navigating cross-cultural norms, particularly between Chinese and British speakers—two significantly different linguacultures. The authors then go on to analyze more complex pragmatic interactions, including greeting patterns, conversational closings, and types of talk transitions, such as the move from informal into formal conversations (Chapters 8 to 10). The book ends by summarizing the main findings (Chapter 11), such as the importance of contrastive analysis and the need for real situation-based pragmatic simulations to enhance L2 learners' pragmatic competence.

This book significantly contributes to expanding cross-cultural pragmatics discussions by providing a pertinent framework for L2 learning. Through discourse completion tasks (DCTs), House and Kádár explore how sociopragmatic parameters such as social distance, power, and private versus public interactions affect speech act strategies in multicultural settings. The authors also successfully show that L2 learners frequently face pragmatic transfer barriers from their native language that lead to the inappropriate interpretation of speech acts. Thus, this book offers an applicable instrument to help develop the student's performance in cross-cultural communication. For example, its findings about differences in communication forms could be used to design a context-based classroom simulation, such as expressing a request in both formal and informal settings.

An additional strength of this book is its ability to elaborate on the complexity of speech act realizations in various cross-cultural interaction contexts. By combining corpus-based analysis and ritual frame indicating expressions, the authors analyze Chinese and British speakers' expressions such as requests, apologies, criticizing, and congratulating as cross-cultural communication phenomena that serve as the foundation for exploring more complex interactional patterns in various linguacultures. Hence, this book provides a new perspective on how cultural norms are reflected in language choices, conversational structures, and the speech acts social functions. In addition, the book highlights how the expressions may shift across different conversational phases when analyzed through corpora of DCTs, particularly when the interlocutors are constrained by different social norms.

Nevertheless, the restricted scope of the study to Chinese and British speakers limits the generalizability of its findings to other language communities with different linguacultures. Although its analysis is in-depth, the lack of representation of other cultures, such as minority languages or bilingual communities, remains a gap in understanding broader cross-cultural pragmatic norms. Moreover, its corpus-based analysis focuses on quantitative analysis, neglecting qualitative dimensions such as speaker intentions, emotions, and social perceptions in cross-cultural interactions.

Overall, this book enriches academic discussions and advances more critical reflections on how to learn, teach, and conduct pragmatics research. Its integration of a theoretical framework and in-depth empirical analysis is highly relevant for ESL/EFL teachers looking to enhance students' pragmatic competence through context-based instruction, which may be more responsive to student needs. It also offers a well-structured framework for teacher educators to design more effective teacher training programs, identify pragmatic gaps among students, and develop targeted teaching interventions. Additionally, the book's exploration of sociopragmatic variables opens ample opportunities for further studies to explore the often overlooked pragmatic dimensions, particularly in underexplored linguacultures. It also reminds readers that cross-cultural pragmatics is a dynamic field. To this end, this work serves as an excellent

resource for future research and L2 teaching to improve pragmatic competencies across cultural boundaries.

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