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Pragmatic accent: Sociolinguistic and pragmalinguistic examples¹

Abstract

In this chapter, it is postulated that foreign language users develop a pragmatic accent, which refers to the systematic occurrence of selected pragmatic features in their performance of communication functions in the target language. In the specification of this term, I refer to two related conceptualizations, one by Scarcella (1992) and the other by Yule (1996). I apply the expression coined by Yule to refer to a phenomenon which is parallel to Scarcella's discourse accent. In order to substantiate this concept, in later sections of this chapter, first a summary of the interlanguage pragmatic competence research which I conducted is presented. This empirical endeavour showed that even advanced Polish EFL speakers do not fully approximate the native speaker model and instead retain in their pragmatic output a set of pragmatic features which enables their easy identification as non-native users. In the subsequent sections, the title concept is further exemplified by means of evidence coming from research reports offered by other researchers or coming from other languages.

Keywords

pragmatic accent, pragmatic overgeneralization, pragmatic transfer, estimation of future social distance, camaraderie

1. Introduction

Early research on interlanguage (IL) focused on errors conditioned by differences between the mother tongue of the learner and the target language (L2) he or she is learning, based on the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (Lado 1957). In general, initially IL literature treated learner language as a deficient but necessary makeshift system on its way to an idealized native speaker (NS) baseline. Seen from this perspective, students' mother tongue (L1) was perceived as detrimental to their L2 full attainment. Recently, however, with the shift towards the learner

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as the focal agent in the process of foreign language teaching, the value and potential of the learner's language system is being re-evaluated. More and more researchers see it an effective means of communication, an approximative dialect, which is a natural outcome of learning and which should not be the object of scorn (Gomez-Laich 2016; Odlin 2016; Wach 2018).

This shift in the evaluation of IL has been taking place simultaneously with the re-formulation of the general attitude to bilingualism and multilingualism. While bilingual or multilingual speakers are increasing in number around the globe, monolingual native speakers are decreasingly often presented as the only norm-bearer, including in the area of pragmatics. Assuming that nowadays we "have to look to bilingual or multilingual speakers for a more appropriate norm in interlanguage pragmatics" (House & Kasper 2000: 102), in this chapter, it is postulated that foreign language users develop a pragmatic accent which refers to the systematic occurrence of selected pragmatic features in their performance of communication functions in the target language. However, one caveat is necessary. While some distortions from the NS baseline may be attributed to their insufficient knowledge of the target language and its communicative practices, or students' insufficient exposure to authentic language, this chapter argues that some of these differences are shared across larger groups of non-native speakers (NNS) and they cannot be explained on the grounds of lacking proficiency or exposure only. Instead, it is suggested that such features or preferences could be subsumed under the umbrella term pragmatic accent.

In the specification of the term pragmatic accent, which will be presented in the first section, I refer to two related conceptualizations, one by Scarcella (1992) and the other by Yule (1996). In detail, I apply the expression coined by Yule to refer to a phenomenon which is parallel to Scarcella's discourse accent. In order to substantiate this concept, in later sections of this chapter, first I present a summary of the IL pragmatic competence research which I conducted, and which showed that even advanced Polish speakers of English as a foreign language (EFL) do not fully approximate the native speaker model and instead "they display highly predictable, internally consistent patterns which recur systematically in the data" (Scarcella 1992: 128). In the subsequent sections, I exemplify the title concept by means of evidence coming from research reports offered by other researchers or coming from other languages.

2. Pragmatic accent defined

In linguistics, accent is a term which usually refers to pronunciation and means "the cumulative auditory effect of those features of a person's pronunciation which identify where he is from" (Crystal 1980: 7). Phonological accents can be

regional (e. g. rural, urban), national (e. g. Australian English), educational (e. g. the RP accent in Great Britain), or representing the impression of other languages (foreign accent) (Crystal 1980: 7).

It was Yule (1996) who coined the term pragmatic accent. However, he uses it to refer to items/portions of meaning which are not verbalized. He states that “we all speak with what might be called a pragmatic accent, that is, aspects of our talk that indicate what we assume is communicated without being said” (Yule 1996: 88). He coins this term to signal that, despite the fact that he is in favor of universal pragmatic principles, he provides for “a different approach to the relationship between the maxims of quality and quantity in a more comprehensive pragmatics” (Yule 1996: 88). He illustrates his stance by evoking differences in the reactions to compliments between native American Indians and other inhabitants of the USA: “The typical American English style of complimenting creates great embarrassment for some Native American Indian receivers (it’s perceived as excessive), and can elicit a reaction similar to apologizing from some Japanese receivers (it’s perceived as impossible to accept)”. He concludes his discussion of pragmatic accent by underscoring that speech act realizations in particular cultures do not overlap: “it is unlikely that the division one cultural group makes between any two social actions such as ‘thanking’ or ‘apologizing’ will be matched precisely within another culture” (ibid.).

As can be seen above, Yule (1996) uses the term to talk about intra-language communication and perlocution, and/or a cross-pragmatic understanding of the term. My understanding of the phenomenon is closer to Scarcella’s (1983, 1992) concept of the discourse accent, which she uses with reference to extremely proficient Spanish EFL learners’ transfer of their L1 conversational management strategies into the TL. She posits that a group’s discourse accent is recognized by characteristic language features such as syntax (sentence structure), grammar, lexicon and phonology. It can include members’ topic choices, style of talking and conduct of particular speech acts. In writing, it can appear as a distinct pattern of cohesive devices or thought organization, including paragraph organization. Discourse accent has also been included by Claire Kramersch (2003) in her concept of ‘the third place’ in which learners of foreign languages find themselves. She suggests that it is “a speaking or writing style that bears the mark of a discourse community’s ways of using language”, which would embrace topic selection, information presentation, interaction style (Kramersch 2003: 7). Such clusters of features enable identification of a particular speech community and, when made conscious, may constitute a source of “strength and pride” for its members (Kramersch 2003: 65). By analogy, I apply the expression pragmatic accent to substantiate a set of pragmatic features which FL speakers reveal to a considerable degree, and which enables their easy identification as non-native users.

It is necessary to acknowledge that transfer is not the only process which shapes the pragmatic accent of a particular group of non-native speakers, with overgeneralisation playing a similarly significant role. (cf. Szczepaniak-Kozak 2018: 68–75). Some variations in the PC of foreign language learners may also be due to the contexts of L2 learning and individual differences (including learner agency, motivation, character traits, past learning history) (cf. the concept of *pragmact* proposed by Thomas 1983). And some learners may prefer not to change their L1 use patterns and, either consciously or not, transfer “their L1 sentiments into the L2” (Wyner & Cohen 2015: 528). A point in case, Gomez-Laich (2016: 252–256) postulates that learners’ different levels of pragmatic attainment may signal their autonomy and the desire to accentuate their linguistic self. She reaches this conclusion on the basis of a synthesis study conducted in a corpus of eleven refereed papers, whose aim was to discover “the reasons why learners opt to resist certain L2 norms” in the area of pragmatics (*ibid.*). The same author stresses that learners may react differently to target language pragmatic norms. Some of them “may adopt or resist those norms to index an identity that fits their L1 cultural values” (Gomez-Laich 2016: 256). Some others continue to rely on their L1 pragmatic system when they find TL practices inconsistent with their L1 values. Finally, patterns discovered in groups taught by the same teacher, or in the same instructional settings may be due to the instruction provided and instructional materials.

3. Concepts underlying pragmatic accent

What pragmatic accent shares with phonological accent is that non-native speakers’ pragmatic systems are partly conditioned by *pragmalinguistic* and *sociopragmatic* transfer. In this sense, what Major (2014: 31), applying Trubetzkoy’s (1939/1958) work on L2 phonology, claims to be characteristic of foreign accents is characteristic of foreign pragmatics as well: in general “L2 perception is ‘filtered’ through the ‘sieve’ of the L1 and the result of this filtering on linguistic production is most noticeable when one is said to have a language x accent, as it is largely recognizable due to L1 transfer”. Major (2014: 30–31) posits that when learning something new “the tendency is to transfer similar patterns already acquired to the new situation”.

Although this understanding of the term itself is relatively new, the assumptions which underlie the concept of pragmatic accent are based on general pragmatic principles. First of all, the existence of ‘pragmatic accent’ could be treated as a natural consequence of the existence of pragmatics of communication. Pragmatics is namely this branch of linguistics which studies differences in language performance due to the language users and the contexts in which

they speak. The differences can be captured under the term “contemporary pragmatic variation”, which Schneider (2017: 319) defines as differences between languages or differences across varieties of the same language. This shift in the interpretation of pragmatic universalism was sparked off by Wierzbicka’s famous paper “Different cultures, different languages, different speech acts” published in 1985. Although the existence of pragmatic universals is undeniable, nowadays it is generally accepted that there are significant cross-cultural differences in pragmatic production among speakers coming from different socio-cultural groups (e.g. Cenoz 2003; House 2005; Ogiermann 2009). Following this train of thought, what the idea of pragmatic accent underscores is that the differences continue to be expressed when speakers use a foreign language. In this sense, pragmatic accent touches upon the way culture-specific pragmatic features are visible in a foreign tongue.

Wierzbicka (1985, 1991/2003) was one of the very first to oppose universal rules of politeness or conversation, based on her observations concerning how cultural values shape linguistic interactions, particularly with regard to linguistic data from Australian English and Polish. Wierzbicka challenged Brown and Levinson’s (1987) strongly Anglo-centric emphasis on the value of personal independence and freedom from imposition and claimed that it is appreciated only in some world cultures (Wierzbicka 1991/2003: 29). She posited that “specific differences between languages in the area of indirect speech acts are motivated to a considerable degree by differences in cultural norms and cultural assumptions” (Wierzbicka 2003: 67), e.g. the significance of objectivism and affection in interaction. To illustrate this, when we want to understand the way English and Polish requests are formed, we need to take into account, the “autonomy of the individual and anti-dogmatism in Anglo-Saxon culture or cordiality and warmth in Polish culture” (Wierzbicka 2003: 64). Our understanding of the way locution is uttered in an IL pragmatic system can be heightened by Wilkoń’s (2002: 102) idea of ethnic presuppositions of the contextual-pragmatic type. He posits that, due to the acculturation process, individual speakers have tacit assumptions about speech acts and their felicity conditions which they share with other speakers coming from the same ethnic or national groups. According to Prokop (2000: 30–32), such assumptions are relatively stable and include, for example, shared values, knowledge of the world and systems of conversation rules, and how these underlie communication.

As mentioned above, one of the reasons why there are pragmatic accents is that, due to acculturation, members of a particular culture share mental sets, schemata and scripts, sociocultural norms, speech events, and linguistic etiquette which rely on the evaluation of sociocultural variables (Pohl 2004: 4, cf. Prokop 2010). These discourse-oriented macropragmatic elements govern, in an implicit way, speakers’ behavior in interactions or, more generally, in discourse

(Schneider 2017: 317). They also determine one's evaluation of the contextual factors involved in a given communication act. These elements are shared across a given community and are not totally dependent on the context. To illustrate this, different cultures treat differently a parent's request for an unexpected favor of babysitting rendered to his or her neighbor. In some cultures, asking for such a favor is considered impossible (due to a shared mental set). If such a request can be considered appropriate in a given community, most probably rendering it would take place during a (telephone) chat with a neighbor, which would follow an intuitively activated script. As far as the act of requesting itself is concerned, there are unwritten norms for the speech event involving requesting, e.g. how much explanation is necessary or how polite the request needs to be according to social conventions (knowledge of the speech event). Members of a particular culture also know whom they can ask for such a favor, judging not only the social distance between the persons involved (if the neighbors are on good terms) but also the degree of imposition which is attributed to babysitting. Furthermore, if the parent in need has recently performed a favor for the neighbor, his request would be treated not only as an act of goodwill but also as an act of paying back the favor (the ranking of rights and obligations, Thomas 1983). Finally, following the rules of linguistic etiquette would involve the evaluation of these sociopragmatic variables, jointly with other macro-social pragmatic factors like age, gender, social class.

Most language users are not aware that these sociopragmatic factors underlie communication and adjust their language production, following them in an unconscious and intuitive way (cf. House 2005). The cultural matrix, or to use Prokop's (2010) term 'ethnic presuppositions', which these rules of social conduct compose, is usually unnoticed. However, differences in culturally determined preferences usually appear in interactions between people who do not share the same culture, which often leads to inter-cultural pragmatic failure. Some evidence supporting this stance comes from researchers studying English as a lingua franca. To illustrate, House (2010: 365) notices that "Localized, regionalized or otherwise appropriated varieties – whose linguistic surface is English, but whose speakers creatively conduct pragmatic shifts in their use of this auxiliary language – are taking over the linguistic landscape".

The last issue worth mentioning is whether it is necessary to do away with one's pragmatic accent. Riley (1989: 234) puts forward: "Pragmatic errors are the result of an interactant imposing the social rules of one culture on his communicative behavior in a situation where the social rules of another culture would be more appropriate". Back in 1989, pragmatic infelicities were negatively perceived, which is expressed by the verb 'impose' in the quote by Riley. However, already by 1996 Kasper and Schmidt proposed that "total convergence with NS norm may not be desirable" (1996: 156). Nowadays, it is widely accepted that the aban-

doing of “the native speaker as the yardstick” principle is an option for some learners (Jenkins 2007: 175). Indeed, currently, we can observe a paradigm shift from the native speaker as a norm-bearer to the expert multilingual user (House 2010: 382) and a greater tolerance of divergent communicative practices. In fact, we can agree that the outcome of communication is not dependent on convergence with the target norm but rather on the ability to establish common ground and to seek consensus, related to the conversational adjustment and maintaining the sense of good spirit (House & Kasper 2000: 106). All in all, the expansion of English as a lingua franca is nowadays leading to greater acceptance of non-native speaker behavior in a foreign language, which renders total pragmatic convergence a rather idealistic, unattainable and unrealistic goal.

Even if some researchers prefer to assume a non-evaluative approach to the pragmatic output of EFL learners, it is reasonable to expect that their divergent pragmatic systems may cause difficulties in interactions between people representing different cultures. On one side there are native speakers who, as Schneider (2017: 319) claims, “are much less tolerant towards pragmatic errors, tacitly assuming that all humans share the same ideas about e.g. directness, politeness and appropriateness”. Native speakers tend to interpret pragmatic errors as rude behaviour, attributing them “to character flaws, rather than to pragmatic differences between languages and cultures”. On the other side there are non-native speakers who, as Kasper and Schmidt (1996: 156) advance, may opt for maintaining certain distance from the TL culture and use “pragmatic distinctiveness (sometimes, always, or depending on context) as a strategy of identity assertion”. Interestingly enough, “some differences between NS norms and L2 performance may result in negative stereotyping by NS message recipients, whereas others may be heard as somewhat different but perfectly appropriate alternatives” (Kasper & Schmidt 1996: 156). In an attempt to find the middle ground, we may postulate that while some indicators of our mother tongue pragmatics can be considered tokens of one’s national identity, it is optimal convergence, or “pragmatic fluency” (House 2010: 383), that is recommended and desirable (Kasper & Schmidt 1996: 156), with optimal standing for responding to learners’ needs.

4. First indicators of pragmatic accent: IL requests rendered by Poles

In the years 2012–2017, I conducted a longitudinal mixed-method study of the pragmatic competence (PC) of 206 Poles learning EFL at an advanced level (Szczeplaniak-Kozak 2018). Its aim was to outline their route of PC development

and assess the impact of predominantly implicit teaching in EFL learning settings on learners' PC, operationalized as uttering requests. The participants' pragmatic performance was measured by means of a discourse completion task (DCT). The DCT scenarios differed in terms of the values ascribed to the classic independent variables influencing pragmalinguistic realizations of requests: power distance, social distance, imposition, the ranking of the speaker's right to render the request and the hearer's obligation to render the service.

My study indicated that the changes in the cohort's PC were relatively modest, both from a longitudinal and cross-sectional perspective. Interestingly, some of the fossilized pragmatic forms recorded are shared with other/non-Polish learners of EFL. More target-like strategies (need statements, conventionalized expressions) are displayed in the IL requests rendered in low-imposition scenarios (e.g. asking for a notepaper during a business meeting) than in high-imposition ones (e.g., borrowing a computer from a roommate who has an essay submission deadline a bit later than the speaker or asking a president of a university for an interview despite his or her tight schedule). A similar conclusion is drawn by Hudson (2001: 297) for Japanese learners of English and by Liu (2006: 160) for Chinese EFL students. However, some of the transferred and over-generalized forms could be labeled as typical of Poles only, for instance, the systematic absence of expressions of gratitude in contexts featuring the large speaker's right and a large power distance between interlocutors. Most characteristically, throughout the years of the investigation the following pragmalinguistic characteristics of rendering requests came to the fore (Szczepaniak-Kozak 2018: 314, 346–348):

- the four most frequent requestive strategies remained the same and they were ordered in the same ranking of top frequencies: the query preparatory, mood derivable (imperative), the permission question, the mitigated preparatory question,
- the students preferred to render head acts by means of the query preparatory and apply it across all contexts,
- they used *maybe* in suggestory formulas more often than native speakers of English,
- they inserted the politeness marker *please* in an unembedded sentence position,
- they also used characteristic external and internal mitigation devices, e.g. 'stressing the importance or urgency of the request' and the camaraderie *we*.

A few comments on the above list are due. Wierzbicka (1985) proposes that Poles treat 'please' as the equivalent of the Polish word *proszę* (lit. 'I ask'), which is a performative verb. This leads Polish EFL users to produce utterances such as: 'Please! Sit! Sit!' which are somewhat awkward in English (Bhatti & Žegarac 2012:

281). Wierzbicka posits that this pragmalinguistic realization cannot be explained by pragmatic universals but rather by the culture specific use of the Polish performative form *proszę*. Namely, in Polish it is a token of pragmatic force or intended politeness, rather than a conventional politeness marker (Szczepaniak-Kozak 2018: 350).

The IL data also indicates that Poles apply a characteristic external mitigation strategy called ‘stressing the importance or urgency of the request’, e. g., *it’s really important/urgent*, which has not been identified in the existing research reports. Instead of interpreting such sentences as providing reasons for the request proper (grounders) (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989), I prefer to treat them separately because they are indicators of the cultural and pragmalinguistic difference between Polish and English. In informal contexts and when asking a relative or friend for a favor, Poles are less concerned about the requestive imposition and are less hesitant to express the importance or urgency of the speech act (Szczepaniak-Kozak 2018: 150–151). This behavior may be related to Poles being more easily available to help others in public, especially when some repair action is necessary, including a linguistic one (cf. Szczepaniak-Kozak 2018: 184).

Apart from the pragmalinguistic features discussed above, in my research there also appeared sociopragmatic characteristics of Polish IL in EFL. Most importantly, it turned out that apart from the classic independent variables governing the use of requests in interactions (power distance, social distance, imposition, ranging of rights and obligations), there may be at least one more factor which influences the pragmatic output of Poles. In detail, there were two scenarios in the research instrument which were identical in terms of the sociopragmatic variables taken into consideration. In one Scenario, called Loud music (LM), one student asks his neighbor to turn the music down. The other scenario, called Blocking the view (BV), takes place during a basketball match. During this event, one man asks a person sitting in front of him to move to one side and thus stop blocking his view. Both LM and BV are interactions between two peers in which the speaker’s request, actually a demand, is a reaction to the possibly annoying behavior of the hearer. Both these scenarios feature the same values of the independent variables mentioned above, and yet the requestive output elicited in them differs considerably. This allows me to posit that there is some other independent variable which differentiates them. It could be the subjective evaluation of the chances of striking up a longer social interaction with the hearer, which I tentatively call ‘the estimation of future social distance’ (*F*) (Szczepaniak-Kozak 2018: 278; Szczepaniak-Kozak et al. 2020). *F* is higher with the neighbor than the fellow spectator. The statistical validity of this proposal is positively tested in Szczepaniak-Kozak et al. (2020). The analysis carried out by means of multinomial logistic modeling established highly significant values of *p* for *F*.

To sum up, the majority of the pragmatic infelicities in the corpus collected by me are either systematically overgeneralized forms or instances of negative pragmatic transfer – or, to use Hasselgren’s (1994: 237) metaphor, the pragmatic ‘teddy bears’ of these students. Hasselgren (1994: 252) defines learner preferences in the area of lexicon as words or phrases of perceived equal meaning, out of which one spreads its use to the contexts in which normally the other word or phrase would be used in the TL. ‘Teddy bears’ in the IL pragmatic competence of Polish EFL speakers are safe, all-purpose pragmatic features, which they use regardless of context, and which give them away as foreigners.

5. Pragmatic accent: examples from other studies

It is argued throughout this chapter that the interference errors which are characteristic of larger groups of NNS from a particular culture cannot be treated as accidental, but rather as pattern-indicating. It seems that an element which could be treated as a litmus paper for pragmatic accent could be the evaluation of sociopragmatic features which govern the use of honorific titles, the frequency of their use and understanding of their social connotation. In Polish, German, Italian and Spanish, honorifics are more extensively used than, for example, in British or American English. Woodward-Smith’s (1997: 172–187) study of greetings in English indicates that, in fact, although English does not render the T–V distinction (*tu–vous*) by means of pronouns or verb forms, it features other items which convey the degree of formality between interlocutors. Specifically, English people use first and last names, titles, honorifics and more formal/educated vocabulary to mark the distance. At the same time, the same pragmatic features used to express formality may have a wider or narrower scope of situated meaning. For example, in Polish culture honorifics, apart from rendering the power distance or social distance between interlocutors, can also be used to convey respect politely. Therefore, some Poles remain on formal terms even when they know each other well and they are on good terms. For example, even if I have known my gardener for many years and we are very friendly to each other, I continue to call him by the honorific title Mr. (Pol.: *Pan*) to show him my respect and appreciation of his services. In this sense, being on V-terms in Poland does not always mean that the interlocutors are distant in hierarchy or social network. Relatedly, the availability of V- and T-forms in Polish makes Poles “more aware of and attentive to status differences in everyday interaction than are British people” (Ogiermann 2009: 33; cf. Jakubowska 1999: 47). This indicates that English NSs and Poles assess interpersonal relationships in different ways, which is enacted also when Poles speak English. In particular, Poles “assign divergent

values to the variables of P[ower distance] and D[ocial distance]” when compared to English speakers (Ogiermann 2009: 34).

Because Poles are very class- and status-conscious, there exists an intricate system of honorific titles in their mother language and sociopragmatic rules of its use. For example, throughout all levels of the Polish educational system, students are obliged to call their teachers by their formal, professional titles or formal terms of address (e.g., miss, mister, professor). What may puzzle foreigners is that teachers are often referred to by higher titles than they actually hold. For example, all high school teachers are called professors, even if the overwhelming majority of them are M.A. degree holders. This discourse practice is transferred to English classes in Polish schools. Polish teachers extremely rarely are called by their first names, or simply the typical English address form ‘teacher’. The lesson observation study offered by Majer and Salski (2004) corroborates my assumption. The scholars notice that Poles learning English often use a honorific title followed by the teacher’s first name, e.g., *Panie Adamie* (Eng.: Mr. Adam), *please go on*, or *Mr. Tomasz, what is the next answer?* (Majer & Salski 2004: 59). These examples include an address term which is typical of Polish and transferred literally into English. Hence, students prefer to express sociopragmatic nuances by means of pragmalinguistic means typical of their mother language, e.g., honorific titles. On top of that, it is a frequent practice in Polish to address an adult man by the honorific title Mr., followed by the name of the occupation and the degree he holds. For example, in professional contexts, a male engineer who has completed a post-bachelor degree can be called and, in fact, frequently is: Mr. MSc. Engineer Nowak (Pol.: *Pan Magister Inżynier Nowak*). This is why sometimes Poles in English wrongly address others: Mr. Engineer Smith.

Furthermore, being on first-name terms implies different linguistic behavior in Polish and English, but Poles learning EFL do not necessarily realize that. In Polish, being on first-name terms is considered a token of close social distance, Poles wrongly interpret being on first-name terms as nullifying power distance. When speaking English, Polish EFL speakers tend to use (unmitigated) direct requestive strategies because directness is a marker of closeness/familiarity for them. In other words, unconsciously they attach greater attention to the positive politeness typical of Polish. NSs of English may consider this language use overfamiliar and/or inappropriate due to the violation of the right to be free from (more directly expressed) imposition and a greater attention paid to the right for privacy typical of negative-politeness cultures. They continue to use mitigated indirect strategies in such interactions because terms of address do not overlap with directness strategies in the way they do in Polish.

Another feature of ILP of Poles is the use of the camaraderie *we*, a type of external mitigators in requests. Poles use this pronoun in requests to create inclusivity and solidarity or to create an out-group consisting of the speaker and

others that are not present in the conversation (Szczepaniak-Kozak 2018: 147). This strategy appears in Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) investigation of AuE and BrE as both (1) a politeness strategy: 'Equality or camaraderie' (Act as though you and the addressee were equal or friends/make him feel good; Lakoff 1977: 103), and (2) a means of claiming common ground/membership in a group (Brown & Levinson 1987: 103). However, these scholars do not treat this pronoun use as a separate category of external modification. A somewhat similar extension, under the name 'bonding', was proposed by Glaser (2014: 272) in her study of disagreements conducted among German EFL students. Camaraderie was also noticed in the study offered by García (2009), which delves into how female speakers respond to requests rendered by English NSs and Venezuelan EFL speakers. García (2009: 387) was able to identify an interesting occurrence: in the same situations, speakers coming from different sociocultural backgrounds behaved differently. Native English speakers preferred deference, while Venezuelans opted for camaraderie, which caused that their interactions were disharmonious.

Despite the fact that so far I have mostly underscored characteristics of the pragmatic accent of Poles in EFL, evidence of accents in other languages can be found as well. For example, in Shively's (2011) investigation of the data collected during service encounters, in which seven US students of Spanish took part. It turned out that they avoided using the turn "Can you give me X" typical of NS conversation initiation. Instead, they formulated service requests by means of imperative sentences or elliptical constructions. Despite their realization that other forms are more frequent in Peninsular Spanish, they continued to initiate the exchange by means of the how-are-you-inquiry and formulated their requests as want statements, which are more standard pragmalinguistic practices in American English.

Traces of pragmatic accent can even be found in more formulaic speech acts, e. g. compliments, expressions of gratitude and responses to thanks. Evidence for this stance comes from Bhatti and Žegarac (2012: 288), who offer a contrastive Polish-English investigation of compliments and refusals. Their findings reveal significant systematic cross-cultural differences relating to refusals, while the differences relating to compliments are fewer and more subtle (Bhatti & Žegarac 2012: 279). With reference to refusals, the researchers posit that Polish participants' responses to refusals were more negative and the refusals they made were more elaborate than those of English participants. Poles were also more verbose in Polish refusals – so it is not only their feature of interlanguage, but perhaps a feature of Poles when communicating in general (Bhatti & Žegarac 2012: 293). Apart from this conclusion, their study indicates one more aspect characteristic of pragmatic production by Poles. They postulate that, in comparison to the

English, Poles display a higher concern for solidarity. Bhatti and Žegarac postulate (2012: 295):

Polish culture seems to place a rather high value on others' needs and wants (in the types of everyday situations described in our DCT scenarios). It seems that in Poland acting in a way which is desirable to others in these types of situation has a comparatively higher weight than in England, where an expression of regret and giving a rational justification for refusing is adequate. Polish respondents' emotional reactions to refusals and their verbal responses to refusals did not provide evidence that they followed conventional culture-specific strategies. Their responses were similar in the comparatively high level of concern for the affective emotional impact of refusing on the hearer, and can be explained in general pragmatic terms, without positing special strategies for refusing.

Finally, I would like to refer to House's (2005) argument that English and German differ in their degree of 'formulaicity', with English having more formulas and expected realization patterns than German. In other words, languages can even differ with regard to whether there are routine formulas in a particular situation, which means that characterizing a certain speech act as 'formulaic' is also language-bound (e.g. here Anglocentric). This tendency can further be transferred into a foreign language and make the accent more pronounced.

We are still far from indexing features which are characteristic of a particular group's pragmatic accent. However, it seems that certain sociopragmatic features can be nominated as relatively possible. We can include here the sociopragmatic elements which Kasper and Schmidt (1996: 156–157) list as those which language learners tap into: "learners' assessment of use of situation and the contextual variables in it, their assessment of whether it is appropriate to carry out a certain speech act" and preferences for pragmalinguistic realizations of particular speech acts.

6. Final remarks

From my own research, it is clear that pragmatic accent is a hybrid system relying on transfer and overgeneralization which Poles have developed as their 'third way' in-between the pragmatics systems of English and Polish. The existence of pragmatic accent should not be surprising; just as Poles as a national group speak English with a phonological accent, we may safely assume that the pragmatic level of their performance may be 'tinted' with Polish characteristics as well. It is undeniable that conversation conventions differ across cultures, and a set of such conventions which is characteristic of a given culture, when revealed in a foreign language, can be called pragmatic accent. The fact that some of the forms characteristic of pragmatic accent are overgeneralized tokens originating in the

TL can also be related to preferences originating in the MT. This, however, has not been proven and definitely requires further investigation.

Two issues could be the subject of further research with reference to pragmatic accent. First of all, it is worth investigating what learning conditions enable losing one's pragmatic accent, for those speakers who wish to do so. It seems that this requires higher levels of pragmatic awareness and some proficiency in the orchestration of pragmalinguistic forms, Gricean maxims, semantic strategies, sociocultural conventions, and situational requirements (cf. Taguchi 2012). What is more, demonstrating such expertise in an ongoing interaction demands the expenditure of mental processing effort, especially higher-order inferential processing and operational control (cf. Bialystok 1993; Timpe-Laughlin 2017). The fact remains that even if language learners have a considerable stock of formal knowledge of the TL and are metacognitively mature, they are very often not capable of using it spontaneously, and need more time to develop control over their cognitive processes. The other aspect worth further investigation could be whether one's pragmatic accent can influence the comprehension of pragmatic output by speakers coming from other cultures. According to Bhatti and Žegarac (2012: 283), "relevance theory predicts that relatively small differences in culture-specific factors which systematically influence communication will also influence the production and the interpretation of particular types of speech act systematically and significantly". The data collected in my longitudinal research (Szczepaniak-Kozak 2018: 352–356) indicates that pragmatic accent may influence the comprehension of pragmatic input because pragmatic data collected in a multiple choice test (that is, reception questionnaire) did not indicate a greater pragmatic attainment than data collected in the discourse completion test (that is, a production questionnaire). Pragmatic comprehension tends to be lower in EFL learning contexts, with very limited possibilities for language contact, and consequently very few opportunities for testing hypotheses pertaining to the pragmatics of the foreign language. Corroborating or contradicting this prediction, i.e. testing the effect of pragmatic accent on the comprehension of pragmatic output, could be the aim of further studies.

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