



ASPECTS OF INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS IN THE TEXTS AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL

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Keywords: *intercultural awareness, sociopragmatics, pragmalinguistics, university level text.*

Introduction

The topic of *intercultural awareness* and *pragmatics* gained its importance in the past twenty years: globalization and worldwide contacts between countries and individuals evoked the necessity to communicate in the most successful way.

According to Byram (1997), the ways of being polite vary from one language and culture to another, but this is often reduced to the acquisition of particular formulae. Adequacy of communication is a complex phenomenon that involves the differences in beliefs, behaviours and meanings through which people interact with each other, differences which may be incompatible and contain the seeds of conflict unless relationships are maintained through politeness (Byram 1997).

The definition of intercultural awareness is derived from the following fundamental definitions: *communication* is an active relationship established between people through language; *intercultural* means a communicative relationship between people of different cultures, where culture is a structured manifestation of human behaviour in social life within specific national and local contexts, e.g. political, linguistic, economic, institutional, professional, and pragmatic.

Without good knowledge of the target language rules of usage, foreigners would have a great difficulty in acquiring the appropriate ways to communicate language functions and may fail in interactive communications with the native speakers of the language, unless they are well equipped with pragmatic knowledge of the target language (Bardovi-Harlig 2001).

Practical concerns helped to shift pragmatics' focus on explaining naturally occurring conversations which resulted in hallmark discoveries of the Cooperative Principle by Grice (1975) and the Politeness Principle by Leech (1983). Subsequently, Green (1989) explicitly defined pragmatics as natural language understanding. This was echoed by Blakemore (1990) in her "Understanding Utterances: The Prag-



matics of Natural Language” and Grundy (1995) in his “Doing Pragmatics”. The impact of pragmatism has led to crosslinguistic international studies of language use which resulted in, among other things, Sperber and Wilson’s (1986) relevance theory which convincingly explains how people comprehend and utter a communicative act.

Texts play an important role in providing with the grammatical, lexical and cultural knowledge, comprehensible explanations of how conversation works in English. Therefore, the role of texts in raising students’ intercultural and pragmatic awareness is very important. However, usually texts, chosen for university level students, fail to provide the necessary and appropriate input in the aspect of pragmatic and intercultural awareness.

Thus, *the aim* of this research is to identify and classify the instances of intercultural awareness in the texts at university level.

The objectives are:

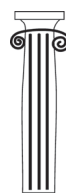
1. To define the conception of intercultural awareness;
2. To identify and examine the instances of intercultural and pragmatic information in the texts at university level;

The Conception of Intercultural Awareness

Intercultural awareness is needed as the basic ability for any interaction. It is not only necessary to have social skills, but also to improve the sensitivity and understanding for other values, views, ways of living and thinking, as well as being self-conscious in transferring one’s own values and views in a clear, but appropriate way.

Thus, intercultural communication may be defined as situated communication between individuals or groups of different linguistic and cultural origins. When two people communicate, they should be aware of their national identities. This influences *what* they say and *how* they say it because they see each other as a representative of a country he or she is from. In language acquisition at university level the implicit aim is to imitate a native speaker both in linguistic and pragmatic aspects. The concept of intercultural awareness emphasizes not only literature, arts, philosophy, but also the culture of sharing ideas, beliefs, and values. Consequently, the texts chosen for university level readers should promote mutual understanding of the multicultural world and, according to Byram (1994), have to reveal the following intercultural input: social identity and social groups, social interaction and levels of formality, beliefs and behaviours, socio-political institutions, national history and geography, national heritage and stereotypes.

“Interculturally aware students” may be defined as people who can “*establish a relationship between their own and the other cultures, to mediate and explain differences – and ultimately to accept that difference and see the common humanity beneath it*” (Byram 1997, 8). Intercultural communication may intervene into the real-life situations because of poor interlocutors’ pragmatic awareness and, consequ-



ently, lead to pragmatic failure, misunderstanding, miscommunication and can even leave the native speaker with the perception that non-native speaking interlocutor is either ignorant of pragmatics in language or is simply impolite.

Inclusion of intercultural and pragmatic elements into the texts at university level is crucial for, according to Crystal (1985) “Pragmatics is 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 interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication” (Crystal 1985, 240). In other words, the study of pragmatics explores the ability of language users to match utterances with contexts in which they are appropriate; in Stalnaker’s words, pragmatics is “the study of linguistic acts and the contexts in which they are performed” (Stalnaker 1972, 383).

Within our own social group, we normally find it quite easy to use language appropriate to a variety of communicative *settings*. This is because language is used in fairly regular ways. One source of this *regularity* is that members of social groups follow general patterns of behaviour expected by the group. In social settings outside of our own social group, however, we are sometimes unsure whether the language we are using is appropriate and whether our interpretations of conversational events are accurate, even when we share the same language with the outside group. When speakers from outside a social group use inappropriate utterances, even though syntax, vocabulary and pronunciation are accurate, the inside group notices that the social outsiders communicate in unexpected ways.

According to Leech (1983), pragmatics as a separate study is more than necessary because it handles those meanings that semantics overlooks. The author proposes to subdivide pragmatics into a *pragmalinguistic* and *sociopragmatic* components.

Pragmalinguistics refers to the resources for conveying communicative acts and relational or interpersonal meanings. Such resources include pragmatic strategies like formality and informality, and a large range of linguistic forms which can intensify or soften communicative acts.

Sociopragmatics was described by (Leech 1983, 10) as ‘*the sociological interface of pragmatics*’, referring to the social perceptions underlying participants’ interpretation and performance of communicative action. Speech communities differ in their assessment of speakers and hearer’s socio-cultural contexts and social power, their rights and obligations, and the degree of imposition involved in particular communicative acts (Blum-Kulka and House 1989).

Summing up, pragmatic awareness is not a piece of knowledge additional to the person’s existing grammatical knowledge, but is an organic part of the intercultural awareness. In theories of language acquisition and textbook design conceptions pragmatics has often been de-emphasized. That tendency has begun to change significantly, however. Intercultural awareness “*exceeds the limits of memorizing vocabulary items and grammar rules*” (Canale 1983, 25). The texts provided for the university level students should develop not only linguistic competence and accuracy



of communication, but also should enhance students' interest in cultural differences (values, beliefs, customs, behaviours), and pragmatic transfer possibilities (cultural connotations of modern phrases, words, and idioms).

Empirical Research: Instances of Intercultural Awareness in the texts at university level

The textbook *The World Around Us* compiled by D. Roikienė and S. Sušinskienė (2004) is meant for the 1st year students at Šiauliai University, the Department of English Philology. The textbook consists of 88 pages and 7 Units.

The textbook was examined page-by-page for pragmatic and intercultural information in the content qualitatively. Quantitative data focuses on the amount of the above mentioned information contained in the textbook and the amount of variety of pragmatic-intercultural information. Qualitative data concentrates on the nature of pragmatic and intercultural information.

This empirical research combines Leech's (1983) classification of pragmatics into sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics and Byram's (1994) theoretical model of intercultural awareness into the twofold qualitative analysis of the texts intended for the university level students.



Table 1

Sociopragmatic instances of intercultural awareness

Pragmatics	Types of pragmatic information	Examples	Commentaries
	Social identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Lithuanian arrives an hour early, waits for a while, then leaves. The foreigner comes an hour later. Both are annoyed because they think they have been stood up.</i> (J. Everatt, Unit 3, p. 27) <i>Americana can be a strange experience for a foreigner....we compiled an A-to-Z explanation of why Americana can be such a foreign country to those who arrive here from Europe.</i> (M. Dobbs, Unit 3, p. 30) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author writes for the English-language magazine "Lithuania in the World" and, although ironically, but presents the regional specificities of Lithuania to the people visiting this country. The text in an attractive way acquaints with the regional peculiarities of the US, such as insurance, visas, medical services, socio-political institutions as well as provides with perfect examples of American national identity.
Sociopragmatics	Beliefs, behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Suddenly he bent down and kissed her twice hard on the mouth. Then he shoved her away in sudden shame, his face flushing.</i> (S. O'Casey, Unit 1, p. 13). <i>The American habit of conducting business at breakfast has really reached Europe, but I doubt that it will ever really catch on. In France and Britain, breakfast is too much a family affair</i> (M. Dobbs, Unit 3, p. 31). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extract from the text reveals moral values of the Irish nation as regards showing intimacy in public places. Both American and European business making habits and behaviours expand the intercultural communicative competence of the readers, and trigger students' interest in comparing different cultural contexts.
	Socio-political institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>There's no use of harpin' on the Blue-coat School, for me mind's made up-the boy won't go into it.... She brought back a Superseeded Spelling-book, by Sullivan...</i> (S. O'Casey, Unit 1, p. 9–10). <i>Visas. Americans don't need visas to visit Great Britain. To get my entry for the United States, I had to sign a document promising that I would not overthrow the government force, had never been a member of the Communist Party, and was not wanted for crimes. I had to provide details of my affiliation to labor unions as well as affidavits from four countries stating that I had no criminal record</i> (M. Dobbs, Unit 3, p. 32). <i>Too often the scene in the dentist's waiting room has been described for me.... They are all alike. The antiseptic smell, the ominous hum from the operating rooms, the ancient Digests, and the silent, sullen group of waiting patients</i> (R. Ch. Benchley, Unit 5, p. 71). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This extract provides both sociopragmatic or intercultural information about the schooling system in Ireland and pragmalinguistic elements of contracted, irregular tense forms specific of the conversational style prevailing among children of a working class. The text acquaints with the institution of Customs in Great Britain and the USA. This intercultural information might be useful not only for university students but also for the prospective tourists. Visiting medical institutions abroad almost always is a challenge, despite the level of one's linguistic competence. The description of dentist's waiting room serves as a good example of the intercultural information for the readers who could get a deeper insight into how dentist's services look like and function in Great Britain.

Continued to Table 1

National history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loved and were loved, and now we lie in Flander fields. (J. McCrae, Unit 7, p. 80). Propoganda and patriotic campaigns help to motivate to fight. (A. Burley, Unit 7, p. 76). Red carnations may signify a political allegiance, and will be seen most in evidence in the buttonholes of war veterans on Victory day on 9 May (J. Everatt, Unit 3, p. 28). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Extract describes the sights of the World War I battlefields. This was the case in World War II (when the Nazis exterminated the Jews) as well as in American Revolution (when the American colonists fought against the British). This extract is of special value as regards intercultural awareness. It reminds our students of the World War II and the Soviet times that they know only from their history books.
National geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> She was spending the morning at the Luxembourg and would give her a little luncheon at Foyot's afterwards. Foyot's is a restaurant at which the French senators eat... (W. S. Maugham, Unit 4, p. 4). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extract enriches students' intercultural awareness explicitly mentioning exact locations popular among politicians of the Western Europe.
Formality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "What is the subject of your essay? Expediency? Splendid. Then will you read your essay? (D. Balsden, Unit 1, p. 6). Lectures are sometimes in fashion (and in the English School even glamorous; lectures as such are never in fashion. (D. Balsden, Unit 1, p. 5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text reveals formal Oxford University language specific of the interaction between tutors and students in 1900s. The extract presents not only highly flown language specific of Oxford university academic society, but also a specific sense of British humour, irony, in particular.
Informality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He'd be well fed an' clad, anyway, retorted Ella. (S. O'Casey, Unit 1, p. 9) Y'know the river Liffey? he asked (S. O'Casey, Unit 1, p. 12). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text reveals a remarkable tone and expressive speech of the Irish. Reference to both sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics: colloquial formation of a question.
Politeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traveling on crowded buses has its own etiquette. If somebody puts a ticket in your hand you are meant to stamp it or pass to someone who will. It is customary for younger people to give up their seats to older (J. Everatt, Unit 3, p. 28). Passengers make their way towards the exit before their stop asking Lipsit čia? (Pronounced tcha. "Are you getting off here?"; which explains the joke about the buses being like a Latin American ballroom (Lipsit ča-ča-ča) (J. Everatt, Unit 3, p. 28). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extract develops students' intercultural awareness through revealing the beliefs and values of Lithuanians (behaviour on the means of transportation, in particular). The extract serves as an expression of polite Lithuanian behaviour and speech on the bus, although frequently interpreted by foreigners as somewhat funny. It has direct implications to sociopragmatics and is more related to politeness behaviour, habitual actions of a nation than to conversational patterns of a country.

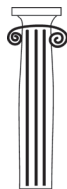




Table 2

Pragmalinguistic instances of intercultural awareness

Pragmatics	Types of pragmatic information	Examples	Commentaries
<p>Pragmalinguistics</p>	<p>Opening a conversation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>But he remained an English lord in repose as he said: "Thank you, Mrs. Belmont. Would you come into the living room"</i> (I. Asimov, Unit 6, p. 56). • <i>"Morning, sir", I said. "Morning" said the younger man</i> (J. Steinback, Unit 2, p. 22). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extract acquaints with the extremely high flown aristocratic style of speech. • A perfect example of a typical polite informal greeting.
	<p>Expressing opinion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"What is the subject of your essay? Expediency? Splendid. Then will you read your essay?"</i> (D. Balsden, Unit 1, p. 6). • <i>"I'll tell me mother," she cried out. "Tell her; then, I don't care whether you do or not"</i> (S. O'Casey, Unit 1, p. 13). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extract shows the students the typical pattern of formal Oxford University language specific of interaction between tutors and students in 1900s. • The extract presents informal conversation between Irish teenagers with particular contracted forms and irregular grammatical patterns.
	<p>Controlling and changing a conversation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Give me a hand, will you?... "Is there anything else I can show you or tell you?"</i> (I. Levin, Unit 4, p. 38). • <i>"The doctor will see you now... Doctor, and if it gives me anymore pain shall I call you up?"</i> (R. Ch. Benchley, Unit 5, p. 71). • <i>"Well, it's many years since we first met. How time fly. We're none of us getting any younger. Do you remember the first time I saw you? You asked me to luncheon"</i> (W. S. Maugham, Unit 4, p. 42). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This instance extends the limits of pragmatic competence through the formal and polite conversation while renting an apartment. • The extract expands students' pragmatic awareness about formal but polite interaction at the dentist's clinic. • This is the case of informal interaction full of contracted forms, grammatical discrepancies showing the possibilities of communicative act control.

The empirical research has proved that Lithuanian authors, when choosing texts for university level students, focus on the development of sociopragmatic awareness more frequently. 29 instances are explicitly linked with the such intercultural elements as: national identity, behaviours and beliefs, national history and geography, politeness, formality and informality. The following assumptions can be made: the readers of the above-analysed texts will acquire curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own; they will perceive how general processes of societal and individual interaction can be critically interpreted and compared in the real-world contexts. 11 instances were ascribed to the facet of pragmalinguistics (opening, maintaining and controlling conversational acts). The presupposition can be made: the input of the texts refers to the logical representations of meanings in different conversational acts implying that by each utterance a speaker not only says something but also gives information, asserts a fact or an attitude as well as controls the the speech content. Summing up, the input of the textbook *The World Around Us*, compiled by D. Roikienė and S. Sušinskienė (2004) contributes effectively to the development of university students' intercultural awareness.

Conclusions

1. Intercultural communicative competence can be developed, but only through the lens of person's cultural background, i.e. through becoming familiar with values, views, ways of living and thinking of his own language and culture.

2. Pragmatics is an organic part of intercultural communicative competence, consequently, the absence of pragmatic knowledge leads to misunderstandings and miscommunication.

3. The empirical research has shown that the textbook "The World Around Us", compiled by D. Roikienė and S. Sušinskienė (2004), provides an adequate amount of information relevant to pragmatics and culture. The above mentioned textbook contains texts enhancing students' intercultural and pragmatic awareness in the following facets: national identity, social groups, social interaction at different levels of formality, social beliefs and behaviours, national history, and etc.

4. The texts under research reflect not only intercultural and pragmatic realias of English-speaking countries, but also provide local Lithuania-specific pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic information which is a rarely encountered phenomenon among Lithuanian authors. Sociopragmatic and intercultural information prevails in the texts at university level. 11 examples were allocated to pragmalinguistics. 29 examples contain intercultural or sociopragmatic information.

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TARPKULTŪRINĖS SAMPRATOS RAIŠKA UNIVERSITETINIO LYGIO TEKSTUOSE

Santrauka

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: *tarpkultūrinė samprata, sociopragmatika, pragmalingvistika, universitetinio lygio tekstas.*

Tarpkultūrinės ir pragmatinės sampratos raiška tapo ypač aktuali pastaraisiais dešimtmečiais. Globalizacijos ir pasaulinio bedradarbiavimo tarp šalių bei individų plėtotė privertė visus atsigrežti į sėkmingos komunikacijos priežastis bei prielaidas. Tarpkultūrinė komunikacija – tai susikalbėjimas tarp skirtingas lingvistines ir kultūrinės šaknis turinčių šalių ar individų. Šis apibrėžimas yra dvilypis, susidedantis iš dviejų komponentų: komunikacijos, t. y. aktyvaus kalbinio bendravimo tarp žmonių, ir tarpkultūrinės sampratos, t. y. adekvataus komunikacinio ryšio tarp skirtingoms kultūroms atstovaujančių žmonių. Kultūra šiame kon-



tekste yra suprantama kaip struktūrizuota žmonių elgsena įvairiuose socialiniuose, nacionaliniuose bei lokaliniuose kontekstuose.

Be gerų užsienio kalbos taisyklių mokėjimo ir taikymo praktikoje, dauguma bendraujančiųjų su užsieniečiais, kuriems ta kalba yra gimtoji, susiduria su pragmatinės kompetencijos ir žinių stoka kalbos funkcijų raiškos srityje. Įveikti šiuos sunkumus padeda gerai parinkti tekstai, suteikiantys ne vien tik gramatinių, leksinių, bet ir socialinių kultūrinių bei pragmatinių žinių. Dauguma lietuviškų vadovėlių aukštosioms mokykloms autorių mažai dėmesio skiria tarpkultūrinės ir pragmatinės sampratos plėtotei. Šiame straipsnyje pateikiama D. Roikienės ir S. Sušinskienės vadovėlyje „The World Around Us“ esančių tekstų turinio analizė sociopragmatiniu ir pragmalingvistiniu aspektais. Pavyzdžiai buvo klasifikuojami remiantis Byram (1994) ir Leech (1983) teoriniais modeliais bei reikalavimais, keliamais tarpkultūrinę ir pragmatinę sampratą plėtojantiems tekstams. Straipsnyje pateikiami pavyzdžiai susiję su nacionaliniu identitetu, įsitikinimais ir elgsena, socialinėmis institucijomis, tautos istorija ir geografija, mandagumu, formalumu, pokalbio palaikymo strategijomis. Tyrimas parodė, jog tekstuose gausu pavyzdžių, plėtojančių anglų filologijos studentų tarpkultūrinę sampratą – aptikti 29 pavyzdžiai, plėtojantys sociopragmatinę arba tarpkultūrinę sampratą, ir 11 pavyzdžių, orientuotų į pragmalingvistines, arba kalbos funkcijų, studijas.

Reda Baranauskienė

ASPECTS OF INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS IN THE TEXTS AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL

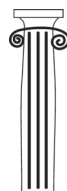
Summary

Keywords: *intercultural awareness, sociopragmatics, pragmalinguistics, university level text.*

The topic of *intercultural awareness* and *pragmatics* gained its importance in the past twenty years: globalization and worldwide contacts between countries and individuals evoked the necessity to communicate in the most successful way.

Intercultural communication is derived from the following fundamental definitions: *communication* is an active relationship established between people through language, and *intercultural* means a communicative relationship between people of different cultures, where culture is a structured manifestation of human behaviour in social life within specific national and local contexts, e.g. political, linguistic, economic, institutional, professional, and pragmatic.

Without good knowledge of the target language rules of usage, language learners would have great difficulty in acquiring the appropriate ways to communicate language functions and may fail in interactive communications with the native speakers of the language unless they are well equipped with pragmatic knowledge of the target language. One of the means to assist the development of foreign language students' pragmatic and intercultural awareness is a text (Bardovi-Harlig 2001).



Texts play an important role in providing with the grammatical and lexical knowledge, comprehensible explanations of how conversation works in English, cultural knowledge etc. However, usually the texts, provided for university level students, fail to provide the necessary and appropriate input in pragmatic and intercultural knowledge.

The empirical research examined the texts found in D. Roikienė and S. Sušinskienė's textbook "The World Around Us" (2004) as regards intercultural and pragmatic information. The examples were classified according to Byram (1994) and Leech (1983) and focused on the following areas: social identity, beliefs and behaviours, socio-political institutions, national history and national geography, formality, informality, politeness, opening and controlling conversational acts. The findings of the research proved that examples with implications to sociopragmatics prevail: 29 examples, 11 examples were identified as being of pragmalinguistic origin.

