

Possible contributions of Ethnopragmatics to second language learning and teaching

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore the possible pedagogical application of the theory of *Ethnopragmatics* in the field of second and foreign language learning and teaching with the purpose of promoting intercultural communicative competence. This theory has been developed in recent years by Anna Wierzbicka, Cliff Goddard and associates and can be seen as part of the broad paradigm of Cognitive Linguistics. Unlike other theories of pragmatics, its focus is on examining cultural aspects of language and communication from an insider's perspective, without relying on universal concepts such as politeness, directness/indirectness, etc. that can be foreign to many cultures. Its main methodological tool is Natural Semantic Metalanguage, a small number of very simple concepts that are found in all languages and which can be used to explain more complex and language specific concepts.

1. Introduction

For a couple of years I had the pleasure of sharing with Johanna Wood the planning and teaching of a course on Intercultural Communication. In this course, among other things, we focused on pragmatics from two different perspectives: an *etic* perspective represented by the universalist and "classical" theories of pragmatics by Grice, Austin, Brown & Levinson and Sperber & Wilson, and an *emic*¹ perspective in the newer and still

¹ *Etic* and *emic* refer to two opposite ways of studying culture: from an external, comparative point of view, on the one hand, and an internal or insider's point of view, on the other (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin 2009:16).

developing theory of Ethnopragmatics – sometimes called intercultural semantics/pragmatics – (Wierzbicka 1985, 1991, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2005, 2006a, 2010; Goddard 2004, 2006, 2010). Discussing with Johanna and working on this course with the emic perspectives on culture awoke my interest in exploring the pedagogical application of such theories in connection with an area that occupies a good part of my research: intercultural communicative competence in foreign language learning and teaching. Therefore, it is fair to say that I owe Johanna and our course on Intercultural Communication at least part of the inspiration for my present line of study.

The aim of this article is to present the possible applications of Ethnopragmatics to the area of foreign and second language learning and teaching and, in particular, its contribution to the development of intercultural communicative competence. For that purpose, I will start with a presentation of the concept of intercultural communicative competence, which is central to foreign language teaching today, and I will discuss the challenges that both teachers and learners are faced with, when learning a foreign language means much more than acquiring a “correct” use of the language in terms of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. I will give a brief introduction to the theory of Ethnopragmatics, including its main methodological tool, Natural Semantic Metalanguage, and I will present current and developing applications in the field of education. The article is exploratory and programmatic in nature, as much is still to be done in order to bring Ethnopragmatics into the language classroom.

2. Intercultural communicative competence

In the last decades, there has been a clear evolution in how foreign and second language learning and teaching are conceived. A shift can be traced from the previous focus on grammatical structures as organizing principle, through an interest in notional and functional content (i.e. functions of the language such as introducing oneself, asking for help, making an invitation), which acted as stepping stone to the more recent communicative approach, with its focus on *communicative competence*. Here, the goal is to allow learners/speakers² to use the language in authentic communication situations (Pozzo & Fernández 2008).

Communicative competence requires much more than a mere linguistic competence or ability to produce correct language. Although

² Learners are from the very beginning considered “language users” in this approach.

grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation rules still need to be acquired, they must be supplemented by other kinds of knowledge and competences: a pragmatic competence that implies knowing how to communicate adequately in a given context, a discourse competence, or ability to go beyond sentence level to create cohesive and coherent - oral and written, dialogic and monologic - text, and, finally, a strategic competence which allows foreign language users to compensate for lacking vocabulary or constructions by making use of resources such as body language, ad hoc translations or word coinage, help from others, etc.

The aforementioned competences comprise many relevant aspects of language, but the approach has nevertheless been criticized for having merely an instrumental goal and for paying little attention to the cultural features of each particular language (Porto 2013). Something was still missing if language teaching was to contribute to creating “intercultural speakers” (House 2008) or citizens of the world who not only can make themselves understood in intercultural encounters, but also have a deep insight in other cultures and an open and receptive attitude to “others”. An additional competence dimension was needed to embrace this requirement and thus the concept of *intercultural communicative competence*, coined in the 1990s by Michael Byram (1997), became the key to a wholly new turn in language teaching. Particularly the Council of Europe (2001) adopted this intercultural approach in the cornerstone document *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR), where intercultural competence is defined to include knowledge, skills and attitudes. Among the skills, the CEFR mentions:

- › the ability to bring the culture of origin and the foreign culture into relation with each other;
- › cultural sensitivity and the ability to identify and use a variety of strategies for contact with those from other cultures;
- › the capacity to fulfil the role of cultural intermediary between one’s own culture and the foreign culture and to deal effectively with intercultural misunderstanding and conflict situations;
- › the ability to overcome stereotyped relationships (Council of Europe 2001: 103-104)

and as to attitudes,

- › openness towards, and interest in, new experiences, other persons, ideas, peoples, societies and cultures;
- › willingness to relativise one's own cultural viewpoint and cultural value-system;
- › willingness and ability to distance oneself from conventional attitudes to cultural difference. (Council of Europe 2001:105)

This proposal responds to the Council of Europe's expressed wish to defend European language diversity as a valuable resource that can contribute to mutual understanding and enrichment:

It is only through a better knowledge of European modern languages that it will be possible to facilitate communication and interaction among Europeans of different mother tongues in order to promote European mobility, mutual understanding and co-operation, and overcome prejudice and discrimination. (Council of Europe 2001:2)

This understanding of intercultural competence goes beyond the idea of "multiculturalism", which only implies knowing *about* other cultures (Cerezal 1999). Raising intercultural consciousness means favouring dialogue, positive curiosity and real exchange. In a sense, the speaker is not the same after the intercultural encounter or experience (Kumaravadivelu 2003). Byram's famous model (1997:34) shows how comprehensive this competence is and how many aspects of cognition, behaviour and emotion it affects:

	Skills Interpret and relate (<i>Savoir comprendre</i>)	
Knowledge of self and other; of interaction: individual and societal (<i>Savoirs</i>)	Education political education critical cultural awareness (<i>Savoir s'engager</i>)	Attitudes relativising self valuing other (<i>Savoir être</i>)
	Skills discover and/or interact (<i>Savoir apprendre/faire</i>)	

Figure 1 – Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence (1997:34)

The European document has of course resonated around the continent and in countries around the world, and Denmark has not been an exception. In the next section, a brief characterization of the Danish understanding of the concept will be presented.

2.1. Intercultural communicative competence in the Danish educational system

The first line of the ministerial study programs for all foreign languages at the upper secondary school³ level reads: “X [name of the language] is a subject of skills, knowledge and culture”.⁴ From the very beginning it is made clear that language subjects are much more than just learning the language. A close reading of the ministerial documents reveals that the culture aspect of the subject must be understood in terms of intercultural consciousness-raising rather than a mere multicultural approach. I base this conclusion on formulations such as the following (Undervisningsministeriet 2006):

Gennem arbejdet med tysk sprog opnår eleverne kompetence til at kommunikere på tysk og indsigt i kulturelle, historiske og samfundsmæssige forhold i tysksprogede lande. Dette giver lyst og evne til at reflektere over og med forståelse gå i dialog med andre kulturer.

(Through the work with the German language, students obtain competence to communicate in German and insight into cultural, historical and social conditions in the German-speaking countries. This gives the desire and ability to reflect on other cultures and, based on understanding, engage in dialogue with other cultures.)

Engelsk som kulturfag betyder, at faget er en døråbner til andre kulturer. Eleverne opnår i mødet med det fremmede en mulighed for at sætte deres egen kultur i relief. Færdigheder og viden erhvervet i engelsk udvikler elevernes forståelse af egen kulturbaggrund og

³ I choose to focus on this educational level as it is here where most foreign languages are introduced to the Danish student. English is introduced in the first grade of primary school and either German or French are introduced in the fifth grade, but it is in upper secondary school where the most systematic language work is done. At university level, unfortunately, only students enrolled in language studies are trained in foreign languages (with very few exceptions).

⁴ My own translation of “[X] er et færdighedsfag, et vidensfag og et kulturfag” (see Undervisningsministeriet 2006).

danner grundlaget for, at de kan kommunikere på tværs af kulturelle grænser uden kulturelt betingede misforståelser.

(English as a culture subject means that the subject is a door opener to other cultures. The students get, in the meeting with the other, an opportunity to put their own culture in relief. The skills and knowledge obtained in English develop students' understanding of their own cultural background and provide the basis that allows them to communicate across cultural boundaries without cultural misunderstandings.)

Studiet af italiensk kultur og litteratur giver viden og indsigt, som bibringer eleverne såvel forståelse af italiensk samfund og kultur som øget omverdensforståelse og interkulturel bevidsthed. Italiensk A giver kendskab til en kultur, der spiller en væsentlig rolle i Europas kulturelle udvikling og skærper elevernes æstetiske opmærksomhed. Endelig sætter italienskfaget eleverne i stand til gennem kulturmødet at reflektere over egen kultur i sammenligning med den italienske kultur.

(The study of Italian culture and literature provides knowledge and insight that brings students both an understanding of Italian society and culture and increased understanding of the world around them and intercultural awareness. Italian A provides knowledge of a culture that plays a significant role in Europe's cultural development and sharpens students' aesthetic awareness. Finally, the subject Italian allows students, through the meeting of cultures, to reflect on their own culture in comparison with the Italian culture.)

Samtidig skal eleverne opleve spansk som en del af deres egen kulturelle bagage, som de kan anvende i deres møde med andre kulturer.

(At the same time, the students must experience Spanish as part of their own cultural baggage, which they can use in their meetings with other cultures.)

The ministerial documents define intercultural competence on the basis of a report from 2003 where the following four competences are mentioned as the cornerstones of language education:

- Foreign language as a window to the world
- Communication with L2-speakers relevant to the student
- Aesthetic understanding and response
- Intercultural transmission (Undervisningsministeriet 2003)

Interestingly, each of these competences covers one or more aspects of intercultural communicative competence as defined by Byram and the Council of Europe, which makes it clear that Denmark has adopted the intercultural approach recommended by the CEFR. The question is whether this declaration of intent is put into practice, and whether Danish foreign language teachers are equipped for the task, from the point of view of institutional support, training and availability of suitable materials. One visible problem arises already in the very same ministerial documents: the intercultural focus seems to be quite absent from evaluation criteria for foreign language subjects. These criteria do not seem to surpass the mere “knowledge” level regarding culture. At the time of evaluating learning in foreign language, the focus seems to lie on traditional linguistic performance and, at the most, on some kind of cultural contextualization.

In the next section, I will focus on the more practical aspects of implementing intercultural language learning and teaching and I will outline some of the challenges faced by both teachers and learners.

3. Focusing on culture – challenges and needs

One of the main challenges to the implementation of interculturally oriented language teaching is probably changing the mindsets of teachers and learners, who still picture the language classroom as a place for purely or mostly linguistic training. In two studies carried out in Denmark by Fernández (2009) and Andersen & Blach (2010), both learners and teachers rank “culture” as the least important aspect of language learning and teaching compared to the four skills, grammar and even translation.

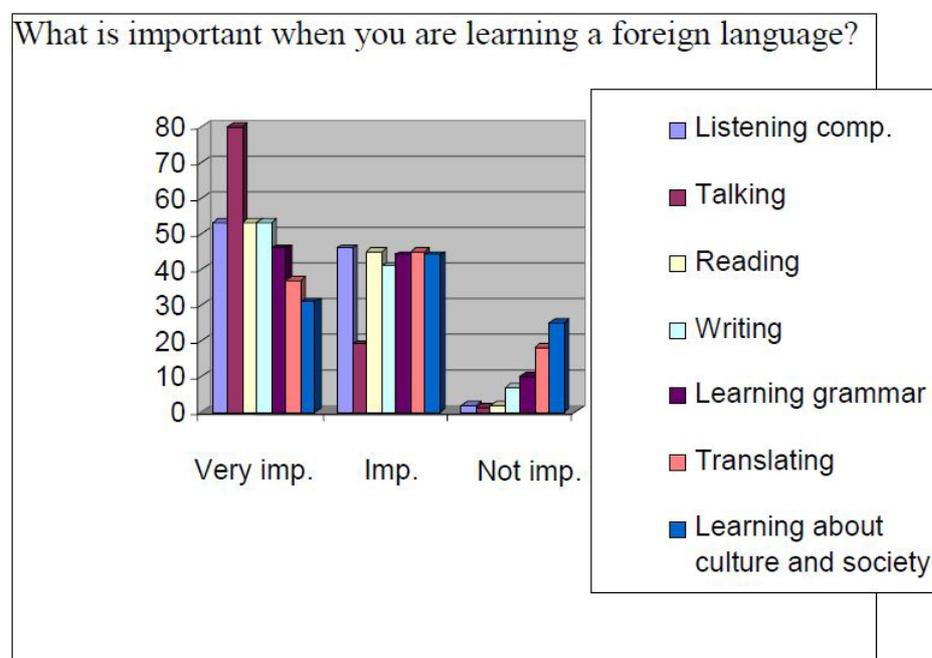


Figure 2 - Importance of the cultural component to (86 % of) students enrolled to start a foreign language study at Aarhus University in 2008/2009 (n=123) (Fernández 2009)

Also teacher cognition studies carried out around the world with focus on the intercultural aspects of language teaching – Aleksandrowicz-Pedich *et al.* (2003), Sercu, Méndez García y Castro Prieto (2005), Jedynek (2011), Young & Sachdev (2011), Koike & Lacorte (2014)⁵ – have revealed that language teachers have difficulties in either understanding the concept of “intercultural competence”, finding time or resources to implement it in the classroom or going beyond a mere “informational” approach (i.e. the sole transmission of information or facts about the target culture/society). Alleged explanations for these deficiencies are defective teacher training, disinterest on the part of the learners, lack of institutional support, lack of suitable classroom materials, reluctance to introduce controversial topics in the classroom, lack of sustained contact with the target culture by the teacher, etc.

⁵ For a more detailed presentation of these studies see Fernández (in press).

Fernández (in press)⁶ reaches a somewhat similar conclusion in a cognition study of Spanish teachers in Denmark. The main findings of this study are:

- Danish teachers of Spanish are well aware of the fact that intercultural competence goes beyond just learning about the target culture. For instance, they rank “ability to compare and reflect about different cultures, including one’s own culture” and “ability to accept that other people are different” as two very important aspects of intercultural competence. Nevertheless, some teachers declare themselves uncertain of the concept of intercultural competence.
- They have substantial difficulties in finding time and resources to implement an intercultural focus, as they are engaged in teaching the basic linguistic aspects of Spanish. An anonymous teacher participating in the study comments: “It is not because it is not important, but it soon becomes something that is set aside when you are under pressure because the students have to know a lot of grammar to pass the exam, etc.”⁷
- As could be read in the comment quoted above, it is the impression of the teachers that intercultural competence is not in focus in the official Danish exam, which may contribute to explain why they feel pressed to concentrate their efforts on other aspects of language learning.
- 58% of the participating teachers find that the available teaching materials are inadequate.
- 65% of the respondents state that intercultural competence was not in focus in their teacher education.

The last two aspects, teaching materials and teacher training, will be central to the purpose of this article, as it seems evident that, in order to achieve interculturally oriented foreign language teaching, teachers need to be endowed with suitable resources, both material and cognitive. Therefore,

⁶ This study was replicated in the city of Rosario, Argentina, with Spanish teachers of several countries. The results are somewhat similar to the ones obtained in the Danish study, and can be read in Fernández & Pozzo (2013 and 2014).

⁷ “No es que no sea importante, pero pronto se convierte en algo que se deja de lado cuando se está bajo la presión de que los alumnos tienen que saber mucha gramática para poder aprobar el examen escrito, etc.”

the rest of the article will discuss how the methodology and findings of a particular theory – Ethnopragmatics – can contribute to enriching both language teaching materials and the teachers’ own knowledge and perception of their target “languaculture” (Agar 1994, Risager 2004). The focus will be on reinforcing the presence of pragmatic aspects of language and, at the same time, engaging in a specific view of pragmatics that is particularly sensitive to and respectful of individual cultural differences.

4. Pragmatics in language teaching

Pragmatics has been defined as “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 1997: 301). Traditionally, pragmatics has been seen as comprising two different aspects, labelled *sociopragmatics* and *pragmalinguistics*, respectively. The former is defined as “one’s understanding of the sociocultural meaning potential of language in its contexts of use” (van Compernelle 2013:74), while the latter refers to the actual wording of speech acts. Sociopragmatics is a more subtle, intangible aspect of pragmatics and is therefore particularly tricky in a foreign language context. It can be difficult for speakers of any language to be aware of the cultural implications of their language use, as sociopragmatic rules are intuitive and implicit for native speakers. At the same time, they are not necessarily obvious to non-native speakers, who are possibly guided by different sociopragmatic rules. This, of course, may lead to intercultural misunderstandings. It has been proposed that foreign language learners, even when they know the pragmatic norms of the target language, can consciously choose not to follow them, as they do not wish to identify themselves with the foreign culture’s beliefs and values (Kinging and Farrel 2004, Kinginger 2008).

The importance of including sociopragmatic instruction in the foreign language classroom can thus not be overstated. Belz (2003) suggests that educators play a central role in making learners aware of cultural differences in order to avoid misunderstandings and stereotypes, which implies that educators have to be well-trained in these differences. It is not enough with simple exposure to the L2 culture in order for learners to acquire sociopragmatic awareness and, therefore, different teaching strategies have been tested. For example, van Compernelle (2014) insists

on the benefits of providing students with verbalization activities which allow them to mediate and regulate the understanding of sociopragmatic aspects of language. Takahashi (2010) concludes that explicit L2 pragmatics instruction is more effective than implicit instruction. Martí & Fernández (in press) employ non-native group discussion sessions after online intercultural exchanges (between natives and non-natives) as a tool for raising sociopragmatic awareness.

In spite of the fact that it has been strongly recommended in the literature that sociopragmatic aspects of language use are included in the foreign language classrooms⁸, both sociopragmatic and even pragmalinguistic contents remain scarce in many teaching materials, as pointed out by several authors (e.g. Miquel & Sans 2004, Pozzo & Fernández 2008, Peeters 2013, Ambjørn 2015). Arguably, they are also to a certain extent absent from language teaching education.

If pragmatics thus deserves a more central role in the foreign language classroom than it has had so far, the next question that has to be answered is what theory of pragmatics can best suit this need.

5. An introduction to Ethnopragmatics

The theory of Ethnopragmatics has been under development during the last thirty years in the work of Anna Wierzbicka (e.g. 1985, 1991, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2005, 2006a, 2010) and later also Cliff Goddard (e.g. 2004, 2006, 2010). Wierzbicka has written extensively about cultural specific words and cultural keywords, establishing an area of study that can be labelled as *intercultural semantics*. The work has extended also to *intercultural pragmatics*, with the description of *cultural scripts*, or ways of communicating and behaving verbally in a particular culture. Common to both areas of study is the belief that most concepts and socially established verbal behavior are language/culture specific, but can be explained to others by using a set of very basic, unanalyzable concepts, called *semantic primes*, that exist in all languages as word-meanings

⁸ Not only theoreticians demand an enhanced pragmatic focus. In a survey conducted in 2015 among 8 Danish university students of Spanish who had just returned from their semester abroad in a Spanish speaking country, the author of this article found that the students felt a lack of sufficient previous pragmatic knowledge in their interactions with native speakers. They expressed that training in rules of address and greeting, colloquial language and general communicative rules for a university student would have been useful prior to their trip.

(Goddard 2010). This set of so far⁹ 63 concepts (see Table 1 below for the English version), together with the grammatical rules that allow their combination, have been termed *Natural Semantic Metalanguage* (NSM). It constitutes the theory's main methodological tool and can be seen as a non-technical and culturally neutral minilanguage for cultural description, a kind of conceptual lingua franca (Goddard & Wierzbicka 2007). Since 2006, the term *Ethnopragmatics* has been used to encompass this whole line of study.¹⁰

Table 1 – Semantic primes, English version (from Goddard 2010)

Primes exist as the meanings of lexical units (not at the level of lexemes). Exponents of primes may be words, bound morphemes or phrasemes. They can be formally complex. They can have combinatorial variants (allolexes, indicated by ~). Each prime has well-specified syntactic (combinatorial) properties.

I, YOU, SOMEONE, SOMETHING~THING, PEOPLE, BODY	substantives
KIND, PART	relational substantives
THIS, THE SAME, OTHER~ELSE	determiners
ONE, TWO, SOME, ALL, MUCH~MANY	quantifiers
GOOD, BAD	evaluators
BIG, SMALL	descriptors
THINK, KNOW, WANT, FEEL, SEE, HEAR	mental predicates
SAY, WORDS, TRUE	speech
DO, HAPPEN, MOVE, TOUCH	action, events, movement, contact
BE (SOMEWHERE), THERE IS, HAVE, BE (SOMEONE/SOMETHING)	location, existence, possession, specification
LIVE, DIE	life and death
WHEN~TIME, NOW, BEFORE, AFTER, A LONG TIME, A SHORT TIME, FOR SOME TIME, MOMENT	time
WHERE~PLACE, HERE, ABOVE, BELOW, FAR, NEAR, SIDE, INSIDE	space
NOT, MAYBE, CAN, BECAUSE, IF	logical concepts
VERY, MORE	intensifier, augmentor
LIKE	similarity

⁹ The list has been under development for some years through a trial and error process, and new primes have been added along the way.

¹⁰ *Ethnopragmatics* is the title of an edited volume by Goddard (2006).

Cultural keywords are salient words from a particular language that act as “guiding words”, as they embody a particular value or a set of values that is central to the culture in question (Levisen 2012:70). They are defined by Goddard (2005:78, quoted in Levisen 2012) as “highly salient and deeply culture-laden words which act as focal points around which whole cultural domains are organized”. These words are frequent, relatively simple and derivationally and phraseologically productive. They often appear in book titles, songs, set-phrases, proverbs, slogans and the like. Although there is no established “recipe” for identifying such words, one way to approach the task is doing corpus analysis in search for linguistic evidence. Other methods like questionnaires, discourse-completion tasks, role-plays, etc. have also been used (Goddard & Wierzbicka 2007). Levisen (2012) has made a thorough analysis of some Danish cultural keywords, including *hygge*, *tryghed* and *lykke*.

Cultural scripts do not describe the semantic content of particular words, but rather focus on shared values, beliefs and ways of behaving and speaking in a given society. In Wierzbicka’s words (2006b:35) they are “shared understandings (of a given community of discourse), especially evaluative, prescriptive or proscriptive ones, articulated in universal human concepts”. Cultural keywords and cultural scripts share the fact that they are articulated using the same Natural Semantic Metalanguage, which has the advantage of allowing non-experts to understand the descriptions, as no technical words are used (i.e. obscurity is avoided because complex cultural concepts are not explained by even more complicated or technical concepts). NSM also contributes to overcoming ethnocentrism and anglocentrism, as the NSM has no cultural bias (as opposed to technical words used in other lines of pragmatics, such as “politeness”, “face”, “autonomy”, etc.). The use of the common NSM makes it viable to link cultural keywords and scripts (Goddard 2006:11), and this is particularly interesting as many cultural keywords give rise to related cultural scripts. In order to exemplify this, the “semantic explication” (also called “reductive paraphrase”) of the Danish cultural keyword *hygge* is presented as example 1), and two related cultural scripts are reproduced in examples 2) and 3).

- 1) *A semantic explication for hygge*
something
people can say what this something is with the word *hygge*
someone can say something about something with this word when
this someone thinks like this about a place:

- a. it can be like this:
 - b. good things are happening in this place, because people are with other people now in this place for some time
 - c. during this time people want to do some things with the other people in this place, they don't want to do many things they want to say many things to the other people in this place
 - d. people in this place think like this at this time:
"people here are like part of one thing now
people here want all people here to feel something good now
bad things cannot happen to people here now"
 - e. when it is like this in a place, people in this place can feel something good,
like people can feel something good when they are somewhere
warm "warm, hot" [m]¹¹
because of this, these people want this place to be like this for some time
 - f. it is good if it can be like this in a place for some time (Levisen 2012: 91-92)
- 2) *A Danish hygge social script against, roughly, "being verbally dominant"*
many people think like this:
when there is *hygge* [m] in a place,
it is good if everyone in this place can say something all the time
it is bad if one someone in this place wants to say something all the time
it is bad because if it is like this, other people can't say what they want to say (Levisen 2012:103)
- 3) *A Danish hygge script against, roughly, "raising sensitive issues"*
Many people think like this:
When there is *hygge* [m] in a place, it is bad if someone says something, if this someone knows that some people in this place can feel something bad because of it (Levisen 2012:105)

¹¹ [m] stands for "molecule", a more complex concept than a semantic prime, but which has been or can be explained through a reductive paraphrase (semantic explication) by means of semantic primes and can therefore participate in the definition of other concepts.

6. Discussion of pedagogical implications

To my understanding, the area of interest and the methodological approach proposed by Ethnopragmatics offers a number of interesting perspectives for second and foreign language teaching which will need to be further explored and exploited in the future.

In the first place, so far, little systematic attention has been paid outside this theory to central culturally-laden words that crucially represent aspects of self-understanding of a given group, although knowledge and understanding of such words seems intuitively indispensable for a second language learner and user – particularly because one’s own native cultural keywords can easily be misunderstood as universal, or at least as cross-cultural, and lead the L2 user to communicational misunderstanding and, at worst, conflict (think for instance of the so called “Mohamed cartoon conflict” that arose in 2005 because of the clash between the Danish cultural keyword “freedom of expression” and opposing religious values in the Moslem world).

Likewise, cultural scripts offer invaluable insight into what to expect when communicating across cultural boundaries. It can be argued that working with cultural scripts surpasses what can be achieved with a mere speech act approach, as not only the speech act itself but the reasons and underlying assumptions behind the speech act (or a group of speech acts) can be readily grasped in the cultural script. For instance, the Anglo-English cultural script of “personal autonomy”¹² can have an impact in the wording and interpretation of various speech acts, such as requests, invitations and refusals. Therefore, explanations of both cultural keywords and cultural scripts would be a welcome way of introducing more pragmatic content in foreign language teaching materials.

Secondly, working with NSM, a “core or basic vocabulary” (Goddard & Wierzbicka 2004:105), appeals, at least intuitively, to its application in the L2 classroom, where lack of advanced linguistic resources on the part of the learners is often stated as one of the reasons why little attention is paid to cultural aspects of language, particularly at beginning levels. It can be argued that much of the NSM vocabulary will be known (or can be taught) to the L2 learner already after a few lessons, and this seems to offer a pedagogical advantage to be explored. Nevertheless, it has been

¹² An Anglo English cultural script for “*personal autonomy*”

Many people think like this:

When someone does something, it is good if this someone can think like this:

“I am doing this because I want to do it”. (Goddard 2010:109)

pointed out that reading semantic explications or cultural scripts written in NSM can at first sight seem odd and unnatural (as the reader perhaps experienced when reading examples 1-3 above) and, therefore, Goddard himself (2010:114-115) has proposed a series of adjustments that can be done to cultural scripts in order to render them more reader-friendly in a pedagogical context. He suggests making an explicit reference to the L2 country, switching to directives, replacing peculiar constructions like “this someone” with “he/she” and adding contrasting information with L1 culture as possible solutions. An example of such a pedagogical script is given in 4).

4) *A pedagogical script for how not to make a “request” in English*

In America/Britain/Australia, when you want someone to do something good for you,

at many times you can't say something like this to him/her:

“I want you to do something good for me. I think that you will do it because of this.”

If you say something like this to someone, he/she can feel something bad. (Goddard 2010:115)

Cultural scripts are already present in intercultural communication courses (Goddard & Wierzbicka 2007) and in manuals on intercultural communication (e.g. Jackson 2014), but, as mentioned above, they appear to be absent from foreign language learning manuals, at least the ones available in Denmark, to my knowledge. Therefore, exploring the drafting of “pedagogical scripts” as proposed by Goddard (2010) and testing their usage in the L2 classroom seems like a pending task. This implies, at the same time, exploring cultural scripts in a broader number of languages, as little systematic work has been done so far in some of the foreign languages taught in Denmark, such as Spanish (see Travis 2006, though), German, Italian or Chinese (but see e.g. Ye 2006). It also implies, of course, adding Ethnopragmatics to the language teacher training curriculum, as teachers’ understanding of this area is crucial for their classroom performance.

Lastly, another point to consider is applying the technique of reductive paraphrase and cultural script drafting as an instrument of thought and cultural self-evaluation on the part of the learner. So far, this technique has been used by researchers to create publishable descriptions. My proposal is to consider its application not only as a finished product to be read in printed materials, but as a classroom technique with potential to promote

learner's awareness. I have applied this technique in several contexts (with university students of Spanish and of intercultural communication as well as at training courses for pre-service and in-service language teachers) by asking the learners/attendants to draft NSM-based reductive paraphrases of cultural keywords or cultural scripts belonging to their own culture. These experiences have had surprisingly positive results (surprising in the sense that learners did not receive extensive training in the use of NSM prior to the task, but were still able to produce interesting and insightful descriptions). As an illustration of this, consider example 5) below, which reproduces the semantic explanation of the Danish keyword *højskole* produced by a group of bachelor students in the subject "Intercultural Communication" in 2012:

- 5) A place that you move to for some time to know something more about something.
People are there because they want to.
People at this place are part of one thing.
Good things happen in this place because you are with other people.
People at this place think like this:
I want to know something about people and things
I want to think about big things and small things
I want to be with other people
I want to feel and have good moments

Taking into account the importance of having self-awareness as to the peculiarities of one's own culture as a first step in the pursuit of intercultural communicative competence, this application of the NSM approach rather as a process (of thought) than as a product deserves further exploration in the future.

7. Conclusion

In this paper I have discussed the importance of raising intercultural communicative competence in foreign and second language learning and teaching and I have, with particular focus on the Danish context, sketched some of the difficulties faced by teachers when pursuing this task, including lack of adequate training and teaching materials and presence of other more pressing concerns like teaching basic language skills. I have argued that the work developed in recent years by the theoretical approach labelled *Ethnopragmatics*, a branch of Cognitive Linguistics, can probably inform foreign language teaching in fruitful ways if work is done to develop a more

pedagogically oriented version of ethnopragmatic descriptions in a wider number of languages, and this is put to test in classroom interventions and the elaboration of new teaching materials. The potential of this theoretical approach for the promotion of intercultural communicative competence lies in its effort to unravel the mechanisms, values, beliefs and norms that control the verbal behavior of a particular cultural group and in doing so without a predetermined cultural bias.

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