

## **EFL LEARNERS' PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE IN ADDRESSING THE INTERLOCUTOR<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:** Research into the pragmatic competence of adult foreign and second language learners has shown that grammatical development does not necessarily imply a corresponding level of pragmatic development (Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei, 1997) and that even advanced learners may fail to comprehend or to convey the intended intentions and politeness values. Drawing on this claim, the paper presents the results obtained in two experiments aimed at exploring the types of verbal abuse Serbian EFL learners direct at humans who have hurt them in some way. The research instrument was a questionnaire containing numerous real life situations in which someone has done something to hurt/ frighten/ surprise/ offend/ embarrass another person. The informants were asked to react to the situations by addressing the person who did something wrong to them without using swear words (e.g. *You idiot!* or *You stupid cow!*), first in their L1 and subsequently, with a time lapse of 3 months, in English. The situations involved participants who were inferior, equal or superior to the informants. The findings of this research confirm that lack of pragmatic competence can have serious consequences for second language learners and that a real challenge for foreign or second language teaching is to arrange learning opportunities in such a way that they benefit the development of pragmatic competence in L2.

**Key words:** pragmatic competence, addresses, EFL, applied linguistics

### **1. Introduction**

Pragmatic competence is a part of communicative competence that involves being able to use language in interpersonal relationships, taking into account such complexities as social distance and indirectness. For at least four decades now it has been clear that the development of pragmatic competence in language learners is of extreme importance since failure to use or interpret language in a way which is appropriate to a given situation may lead to misunderstanding or even to a

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complete breakdown of communication, paired with the stereotypical labeling of second language users as people who are insensitive, rude, or inept (Thomas, 1983). However, research into the pragmatic competence of adult foreign and second language learners has shown that grammatical development does not necessarily go hand in hand with a corresponding level of pragmatic development (Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei, 1997) and that even advanced learners show lack of mastery in comprehending and conveying the intended intentions and politeness values (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005). While a large amount of L2 pragmatic knowledge is universal, e.g. the basic organizational principles of a conversation, or can be transferred from the learner's L1, it is clear that pragmatic ability nevertheless requires special attention in language teaching given that learners often fail to use their universal or transferable L1 pragmatic knowledge in L2 contexts (Kasper, 1997).

Various studies have shown that advanced EFL learners tend to have poor command of indirect responses or implicatures (Bouton, 1994), discourse markers and strategies (House & Kasper, 1981), speech acts in different social contexts (Morrow, 1996, as cited in Kasper, 1997; for ESP learners see Halupka-Rešetar, 2013, 2014), etc. Other studies have examined the production and comprehension of speech acts by second language learners compared to that of native speakers to see to what extent language learners' pragmatic competence deviates or approximates native speakers (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; House & Kasper, 1987; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Trosborg, 1995; Rose, 2000; Hassall, 2001, 2003; Schauer, 2004; Woodfield, 2006; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008, 2009; as cited in Najafabadi & Paramasivam, 2012). Especially important in this respect was the large scale study initiated by Blum-Kulka et al. in the 1980s under the title *Cross-cultural speech act realization project* (CCSARP), the aim of which was to examine cross-cultural, sociopragmatic, and interlanguage variation in speech act realization in a large number of different languages.

Thus, it is clear that a plethora of EFL studies across languages have dealt with the concept of pragmatic competence in the past twenty-five years or so, mostly delving „into social-institutional, hence culturally-specific communication, and into how spoken interaction can be enhanced for the benefit of non-native speakers and classroom practitioners“ (Ifantidou, 2013: 93). The majority of these studies are descriptive, single-moment studies, comparing native with non-native output or performance at different levels of L2 learning, using role plays, discourse completion tasks, or multiple choice questions as the commonest research instrument, with longitudinal research resurging more recently (Ifantidou, 2013: 93).

The present paper reports the results of yet another descriptive, single-moment study. Based on a survey conducted among 3rd and 4th-year students majoring in English at the University of Novi Sad, Serbia, the research is aimed at determining the degree of pragmatic competence of undergraduate students of English in addressing an interlocutor who has hurt them in some way. Given that this is an area in which EFL students do not receive pedagogical instruction, the initial hypothesis is that their performance in English will be the result of transfer from their L1 (Serbian

or Hungarian). Thus, forms of address are assumed to belong to those aspects of L2 pragmatics which Bardovi-Harlig (2001) claims are not acquired without the benefit of instruction, or in the best case, they are learned more slowly, which makes instruction at least facilitative if not necessary.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 discusses the status of vocatives in linguistics, Section 3 presents the research methodology employed, including the participants, the data collection instruments and the procedures, while Section 4 brings the results and findings of the research. Section 5 briefly recapitulates the main findings of the paper and gives pedagogical implications. Finally, Section 6 concludes the paper and suggests directions for future research.

## 2. Vocative as a linguistic form

According to the *Longman Online Dictionary of Contemporary English*, an invective denotes rude and insulting words that someone says when they are very angry. Linguistically, most invectives are morph syntactically realized as vocatives, vocative function, not vocative case, which, according to Levinson (1983: 71) are noun phrases that refer to the addressee, but are not syntactically or semantically incorporated as the arguments of a predicate. Rather, these highly idiosyncratic and complex forms, which belong in the larger class of deictic expressions, are set apart prosodically from the sentence that may accompany them.

There are two types of vocatives: (a) calls and (b) addresses (Zwicky, 1974; Levinson, 1983; Quirk et al., 1985: 773). Calls serve „to catch the addressee’s attention“ (Zwicky, 1974: 787) or to single „them out from others in hearing“ (Quirk et al., 1985: 773) and can be found at the beginning of an utterance. Levinson claims they can be regarded as independent speech acts (1983: 71). Addresses, on the other hand, are used to „maintain or emphasise the contact between speaker and addressee“ (Zwicky, 1974: 787) or to express „the speaker’s relationship or attitude to the person or persons addressed“ (Quirk et al., 1985: 773). Levinson likens addresses to parentheticals, stating that they „can occur in the sorts of locations that other parentheticals can occupy“ (1983: 71). The examples in (1-2), taken from Zwicky (1974) illustrate calls and addresses, respectively:

- (1) Hey lady, you dropped your piano.
- (2) I’m afraid, sir, that my coyote is nibbling on your leg.

Zwicky (2004), however, gives a more elaborate classification of isolated NPs, which can either stand alone (3) or interrupt sentences (4) but crucially, they do not serve as syntactic arguments:

- (3) Hey, idiot!
- (4) I’m afraid, you idiot, that your hair is on fire.

Namely, he says that they can have two kinds of uses: vocative/exclamative and telegraphic, shading off from fragment NPs, which covertly serve as syntactic arguments, as in the request, *Two linguists! Over here, and be quick about it*. In the first use, in addition to addresses, *Welcome, linguists, to the annual meeting*; and

calls, *Linguists! Stand on this side of the room*; we also find epithet exclamation, *You goddam linguist!*; dismay exclamation, *Mother! How can you say that?!*; and astonishment exclamation, *You linguists! I just never know what you'll do*. The degree of conventionalization for vocative expressions is very high (Zwicky, 1974), with different classes of expressions available as calls, as addresses, as exclamations, in telegraphic uses, and in integrated uses □ serving as syntactic arguments, as the following examples show (all taken from Zwicky 2004):

(5)

- a. Cabby, take me to Carnegie Hall. (call)
- b. \*I don't think, cabby, that the Lincoln Tunnel is the best way to go to Brooklyn. (address)
- c. The cabby drove me to Jersey. (integrated)

(6)

- a. You idiot, take me to Carnegie Hall.
- b. I don't think, you idiot, that the Lincoln Tunnel is the best way to go to Brooklyn.
- c. \*You idiot drove me to Jersey.

(7)

- a. \*I wonder, brother-in-law, if you recall the 1915 flood.
- b. My brother-in-law recalls the 1915 flood.

Given that the aim of this research was to explore how advanced EFL learners would react verbally to being hurt either physically or emotionally, the expectation was that at least in some cases examples of verbal abuse would surface. The fact that verbal abuse is an available linguistic resource in every society suggests that it must be functional as a part of human existence. And yet, in spite of the numerous anthologies of insults which have been published in the past four decades, the area of pragmatic competence often referred to as verbal abuse or insults is an area of study which may be said to be largely uncharted territory. Linguists have probably ignored the topic due to its emotion-ladenness and its unquantifiable nature. Admittedly, it has been well-known at least since Brown and Levinson (1978) that politeness is one of the major underlying motives or principles organizing human discourse. And as politeness conventions are realized linguistically, it follows that the effort to be polite, or impolite, determines the linguistic forms to be used in a given context

However, more aggression seems to be carried out today using linguistic means than by nonlinguistic means, and given that cultures intertwine in a way and to a degree never documented before, the need arises for devoting serious critical attention not only to various forms of verbal abuse within a language but also to the ways in which languages differ with respect to this area, especially in relation to English, the global language of today. It is in this respect that the present research hopes to advance the field of interlanguage pragmatics.

### 3. Research design and materials

Given that to the best of the author's knowledge, no research has so far been conducted into the pragmatic behaviour of Serbian and Hungarian L1 speakers in addressing an interlocutor who has hurt them in some way, in order to establish the degree of pragmatic competence of the research participants, who were advanced EFL students, and whether their L2 (English) competence would show transfer from their L1, two experiments had to be conducted. Using a questionnaire containing numerous real-life situations, the aim of the first experiment (E1) was to explore the use of invectives in the subjects' L1, Serbian, Hungarian, or both, while in the second experiment (E2), conducted with a time lapse of 3 months, the goal was to test the subjects' competence of refraining from the use of invectives in L2. A comparison of the results obtained in the two experiments was expected to give an answer to the following research question: Do advanced EFL students know how to address someone who has hurt them or is their pragmatic competence and production in L2 a reflex of their L1 pragmatic knowledge? The results of the research were also expected to provide arguments for introducing a course in developing EFL pragmatic competence.

Advanced EFL students' responses were elicited using the form of an open-ended written discourse completion test (WDCT), i.e. a questionnaire containing written prompts, brief descriptions of real-life situations, followed by a space in which the respondent was required to produce a response, in this case, a verbal reaction to a situation in which another participant in the discourse has hurt them physically or emotionally. The questionnaire used in this research involved twelve situations, with varying values for the sociopragmatic variable of social power, concerning the power of the interlocutor over the research participant □ more power, equal power or less power. The subjects were asked to react to the situations by addressing the person who has hurt, frightened, surprised, offended or embarrassed them, without using swearwords, i.e. without using complete sentences, especially verbs.

An example of a task is given below:

You are walking down the street when suddenly, two boys jump out from behind the corner, screaming at you. They frighten you to death.

You: \_\_\_\_\_

In the first experiment, the questionnaire was in the subjects' native tongue. There were 42 native speakers of Serbian (S), 25 native speakers of Hungarian (H), as well as 19 balanced bilingual (Skutnabb-Kangas 1984) subjects tested on two different occasions and with the situations ordered differently. All the participants were students at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad. The performance of the last group of respondents will be ignored in this paper due to the fairly limited size of the sample but also because it is beyond the scope of this work.

The second experiment was conducted with a time lapse of three months. This time, the questionnaire was in English, but the situations it contained and the power relations between the interlocutors were exactly the same as in the first experiment. This time there were a total of 35 subjects, all of them 4<sup>th</sup> year students of the

Department of English and at an advanced level of general linguistic competence in English, C1 or C2 according to CEFR. Only three respondents were native speakers of Hungarian, which is why in presenting the results of this experiment no difference will be made between the participants based on their L1.

In the next section I present the findings of the research.

#### 4. Results and discussion

The participants in this research were instructed to imagine finding themselves in the 12 situations described in the questionnaire and were asked to write down how they would address the person who has hurt them. They were also encouraged to put their address into parentheses if they would prefer not to verbalize their thoughts. Nevertheless, in presenting the results of the research only the explicit addresses were taken into account.

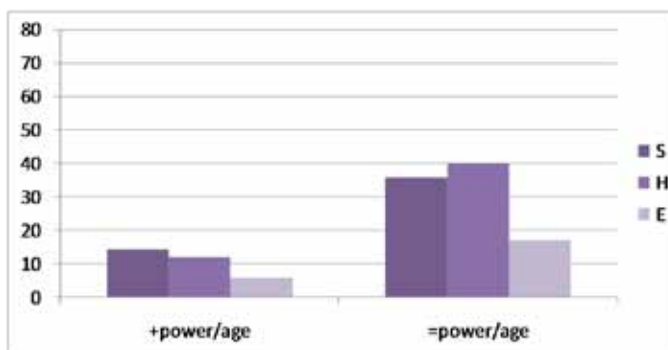
Also worth noticing is that there were five scenarios □ hurt, frighten, surprise, offend, embarrass □ and there are three values for power relation between the interlocutors □ superior respondent, equal interlocutors, inferior respondent □ but there were only twelve situations in the questionnaire; thus, not all not all the power relations were exemplified in all five types of situations.

The initial hypotheses of the research were the following:

- In their L1, subjects are likely to use explicit terms of abuse if the other participant is equal or inferior to them.
- With participants who are superior to them, informants are not expected to use invectives explicitly but may well use them „silently“.
- In L2, in lack of explicit instruction, subjects are likely to transfer their L1 pragmatic competence to L2.

In what follows, I present the results of the research in percentages, for each scenario individually, but by comparing the L1 production of the two groups of participants labeled S for Serbian and H for Hungarian and their L2 production coded simply as E for English. The labels +/-power/Age refer to the social status of the research participant's interlocutor.

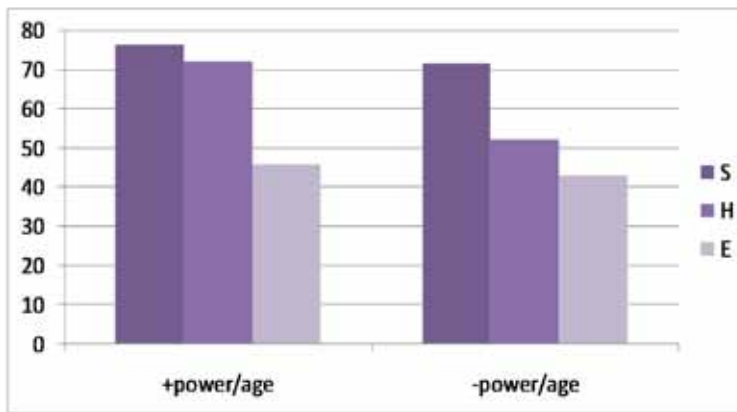
##### 1. HURT scenario



**Figure 1.** Frequency of occurrence of invectives in the HURT scenario

In this scenario, the difference in the number of explicit addresses in the research participants' L1 as opposed to their L2 is quite large in both situations. It seems that whether the interlocutor is superior in power or age to the research participant or whether the interlocutors are equal with respect to this variable, invectives occur more than twice as often in the respondents' native tongue than in their L2. Overall, the use of invectives is much more restricted in the first situation, suggesting that people of similar age and equal power are more likely to use abusive terms of address. However, the fact that invectives are used considerably more rarely in L2 than in the respondents' L1 challenges the initial hypothesis that transfer from L1 will be observable in the respondents' pragmatic production in English.

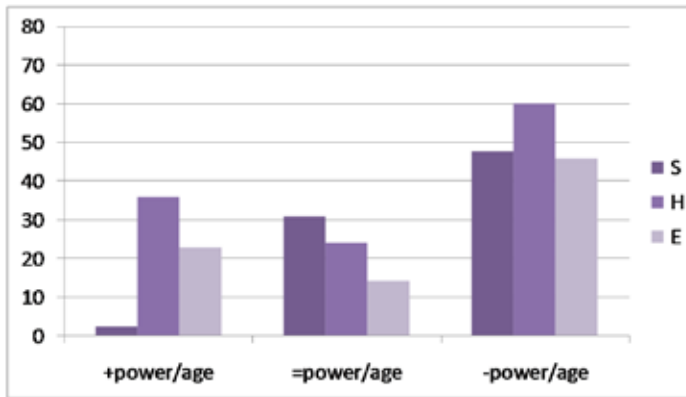
## 2. FRIGHTEN scenario



**Figure 2.** Frequency of occurrence of invectives in the FRIGHTEN scenario

A very high percentage of Serbian speakers decided to react with an invective in this scenario, regardless of the power relations involved. This is very surprising, especially in the first column, given that the interlocutor in this situation is socially superior to the research participant. With Hungarian L1 speakers, the situation is partly similar only: while 72% of the respondents in this group would address abusively a superior interlocutor, only 52% would do so if the interlocutor were socially inferior, another result which is contrary to the initial hypotheses of this research. In English, the research participants were somewhat more reluctant to use invectives than in their L1, but nearly every other questionnaire contained an abusive address in this situation, unlike the HURT scenario described above.

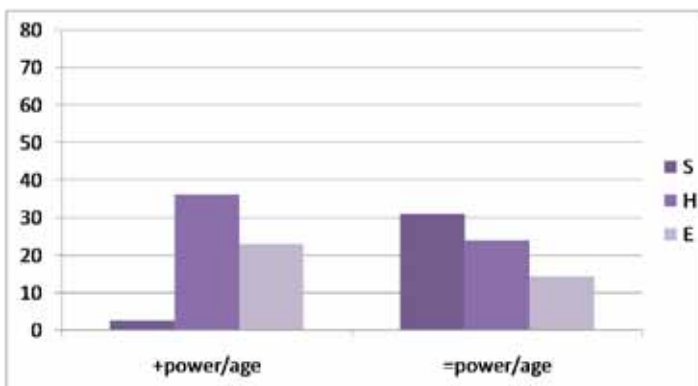
### 3. SURPRISE scenario



**Figure 3.** Frequency of occurrence of invectives in the SURPRISE scenario

The results obtained for this scenario are puzzling. Serbian native speakers appear to be „well-behaved“ with respect to the initial hypotheses of the research as they used the fewest invectives with a socially superior interlocutor and the highest number of these terms in responding to a socially inferior interlocutor. Interestingly, Hungarian L1 respondents also used many more abusive address forms in addressing a socially inferior interlocutor than in either of the other two situations, though this number is higher in addressing a superior interlocutor than when responding to someone who is socially equal to them. The L2 results only partly meet the researcher’s expectations: namely, while the highest percentage was expected in the last column, or the middle and the last, it is unclear why there were some many invectives used in responding to a socially superior interlocutor in English but not in Serbian; note that only three of the research participants in experiment 2 were native speakers of Hungarian.

### 4. OFFEND scenario

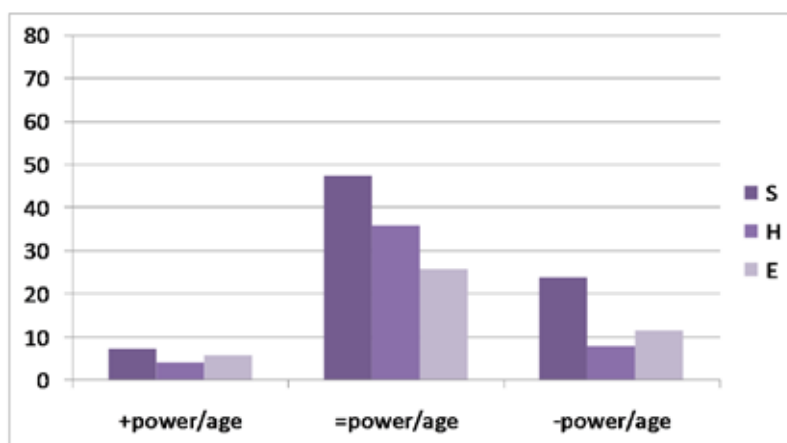


**Figure 4.** Frequency of occurrence of invectives in the OFFEND scenario



In this scenario, the performance of the Serbian native speakers was exactly as expected: only 2% of them used an invective with a socially superior interlocutor, as opposed to the 30% in the equal interlocutors situation. However, the results of the Hungarian native speakers call for an explanation we cannot offer at this point. The fact that 36% of them entered an invective in the questionnaire in the situation which involved addressing someone who is socially superior but only 24% of the respondents did so with someone who is their equal in power is no less surprising than the fact that this tendency can also be observed in the L2 data. As pointed out earlier, the number of Hungarian speakers in the second experiment was relatively low – only 3 out of 35, i.e. about 8,5% of the total research participants, and thus the observed similarities in the production of the two groups cannot be due to the number of Hungarian L1 speakers in this experiment. Note also that the results obtained for this scenario resemble the results of the SURPRISE scenario and differ significantly from the results of the HURT scenario reported in Figure 1.

### 5. EMBARRASS scenario



**Figure 5.** Frequency of occurrence of invectives in the EMBARRASS scenario

Finally, the EMBARRASS scenario is quite in line with the initial hypotheses of the research, with the smallest number of invectives occurring in all three languages when the interlocutor is socially superior. In this situation, the L1 and the L2 data are very similar, unlike any of the previous scenarios. In the equal interlocutors situation, just under 50% of the Serbian L1 informants decided to use an invective, as opposed to 33% in the situation which involves an inferior interlocutor. Though the numbers differ, the tendency is the same with Hungarian L1 participants (36% vs 8%) and English L2 production, too (26% vs 11%).

The analysis of the participants' responses reveals that the invective terms most frequently used in both the participants' L1 and in their L2 fall into one of the following three categories:

1. words referring to intellectual capacity:

S - *kreten* 'idiot', *idiot*, *moron*, *retard*, *debil* 'mildly retarded person',

*šupljoglavac* 'rattle brain'

H - *idióta* 'idiot', *hülye* 'moron, retard'

E - *idiot, jackass, jerk, moron, fool, retard*

2. animal names:

S - *krava* 'cow', *majmun* 'monkey', *stoka* 'cattle', *konj* 'horse', *magarac* 'donkey', *skot* 'animal'

H - *majom* 'monkey', *barom* 'livestock', *liba* 'goose'

E - *bitch, cow, pig, primate*

3. words referring to primitive behaviour:

S - *seljak* 'boor', *šaban* (!) 'yokel'

H - *tahó* 'yokel', *bunkó* 'boor', *paraszt* 'bumpkin', *köcsög* 'uncouth person'; descriptive adjective with elided noun *neveletlen* 'ill-bred', *szemtelen* 'insolent'

E - *wanker, bastard, creep, asshole, prick, savage, douche*

The structures employed in L1 and L2 also show a large degree of similarity. In Serbian, the vocative case marked noun is optionally premodified by adjective and also optionally postmodified by the indefinite pronoun, in the corresponding gender and number, and/or an adjective. In Hungarian and in English, the vocative can optionally be preceded by the pronoun *you* and/or an adjective. The patterns are shown in the following table:

<i>Kretenko!</i> idiot <sub>F.VOC</sub> 'You, idiot!'	<i>Veštice matora!</i> witch <sub>F.VOC</sub> old <sub>F.VOC</sub> 'You old witch!'	<i>Kretenu jedan nenormalni!</i> idiot <sub>M.VOC</sub> one <sub>M</sub> abnormal <sub>M.VOC</sub> 'You crazy idiot!'
<i>Majom!</i> monkey ' Y o u , monkey!'	<i>Hülye köcsög!</i> crazy uncouth person 'You crazy pillow biter!'	<i>Te elkényeztetett liba!</i> you spoiled goose 'You spoiled goose!'
<i>Idiot!</i> <i>You, cow!</i>	<i>Lying bastard!</i> <i>Old crow!</i>	<i>You spoiled brat!</i> <i>You stupid old witch!</i>

**Table 1.** The structures used in addressing the interlocutor abusively

In addition to these structures, occasionally there occurred some language-specific structures, too, such as the vocative of the augmentative in Serbian, optionally post modified by an adjective or the pronoun one □ *Lažovčino jedna!* - liar<sub>FEM.AUG</sub> one<sub>FEM.AUG</sub>; the invective term, noun or adjective; premodified by *you little*, as a form of attenuation □ *Te kis majom/pimasz!* „you little monkey/insolent“; and in English, the phrase *What a...* preceding the invective, optionally premodified by an adjective □ *What a jerk! What a silly old woman!*

Based on the above data, one may conclude that abusive terms, mostly animal names and words referring to intellectual capacity or primitive behaviour, are most frequently used to address people who have frightened us, even if they are of a higher social status. This holds not only of the research participants' L1, but also their EFL production. In the other scenarios, the majority of the informants refrains from using an invective. With regard to the social status of the interlocutors, invectives appear to be used most often to address an interlocutor of equal or inferior status, as initially hypothesized, though in the SURPRISE and OFFEND scenarios both the Hungarian L1 data and the EFL data show a higher percentage of invectives in addressing a socially superior interlocutor than an equal or inferior interlocutor. Thus, the initial hypotheses are only partly confirmed and the results of this research, aimed at determining the level of correspondence, which can be observed in the way the subjects react to the same situations in these languages, S/H vs EFL appear to lack a pattern. Obviously, invectives are one of those areas of language in which learners do not receive explicit instruction, which is why the expectation was that subjects would be likely to transfer their L1 pragmatic competence to L2. However, the research participants showed varying degrees of readiness to use abusive language in their L1, to start with. On the other hand, one of the very first things any learner of English is taught is that the English are very polite, which could be one of the reasons why the invective production of the research participants was generally lower in EFL than in their L1. However, the significant cultural differences between English and Serbian/ Hungarian with respect to what is meant as opposed to what is said are shown to be virtually non-existent in the tested subjects' use of invectives, i.e. the frequency of use of invectives, the situations they are used in, as well as the terms employed, reflect to a very large degree the subjects' pragmatic competence in their L1, demonstrating a case of pragmatic failure, which occurs when learners transfer first language (L1) pragmatic rules into second language (L2) domains.

In order to attain a clear picture of the pragmatic competence of the participants in this research, as a follow-up experiment, the same questionnaire was also distributed to 10 English L1 respondents, all studying at the University of Kent.<sup>2</sup> In the total of 120 situations, there were only 2 examples of an invective being used, both in the FRIGHTEN scenario, namely *Stupid idiot!* +power/age interlocutor and *Idiots!* -power/age interlocutor. Once these results were obtained, there could no longer be any doubt that the EFL invectives the participants in experiment 2 used were the result of transfer of pragmatic competence from L1.

Given that invectives are shown to be used quite freely among students who are native speakers of Serbian and Hungarian but should by all means be avoided in English, in the next section we turn to the pedagogical implications of the study reported here.

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<sup>2</sup> The author wishes to express her gratitude to dr Vikki Janke from the University of Kent for her help in collecting data from native speakers of English.

## 5. Pedagogical implications

The results of the research aimed at studying the verbal reaction of advanced EFL students in addressing an interlocutor who has hurt them physically or emotionally, reveals that their pragmatic competence in refraining from the use of invectives is significantly below their linguistic competence. Even though in their L1 the research participants used abusive terms quite frequently, it must be noted that in English they did so less often, with the exception of the socially superior interlocutor in the SURPRISE and OFFEND scenarios, where more invectives occurred in English than in Serbian.

Invectives and abusive language generally are not dealt with in coursebooks, nor should the results of the research presented here be taken to suggest in any way that they should be included in EFL teaching materials. However, it is clear that sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic instruction is required in this culture-specific domain. Thus, the pedagogical implications of the present study are obvious: the amount and type of materials contained in most syllabi for advanced EFL learners need to be supplemented with explicit instruction regarding the pragmatics of English. Especially relevant in this respect are those areas that have already proven to be problematic for learners, such as indirect responses or implicatures, discourse markers and strategies, speech act behaviour, realization, and, as shown in this study, refraining from verbal aggression. Special focus needs to be put on the differences between the learners' L1 and the L2, a goal which is best achieved by using authentic audiovisual input from both L1 and L2 (video, films and TV), followed by various tasks such as discussing, interpreting, analysing the input, role play, various discourse completion tasks, etc. (cf. Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003). Since pragmatic competence is thought to be difficult to teach but at the same time, it can have serious consequences for second language learners, the results of the paper confirm Kasper's (1997) findings that a real challenge for foreign or second language teaching is to arrange learning opportunities in such a way that they benefit the development of pragmatic competence in L2.

## 6. Summary

The present study examines advanced EFL learners' pragmatic competence in using abusive language to address an interlocutor who has hurt them physically or emotionally. The data analysed in the paper were elicited from the participants using the Written Discourse Completion Test with 12 situations involving five different scenarios □ hurt, frighten, surprise, offend, embarrass □ in which the variable of social power varied between superior interlocutor, equal interlocutors, and inferior interlocutor. The informants were asked to react to the situations by addressing the person who did something wrong to them, first in their L1 and subsequently, with a time lapse of three months, in English.

The findings of the research only partly confirm the initial hypotheses that in their L1, subjects would use explicit terms of abuse if the other participant is equal or inferior to them, but with participants who are superior to them, informants would not use invectives explicitly. It appears that this holds true of Serbian speakers in all scenarios but the

FRIGHTEN scenario, while L1 speakers of Hungarian used more invectives in addressing a socially superior interlocutor in three of the five scenarios: FRIGHTEN, SURPRISE and OFFEND, i.e. in 58% of the situations. The third initial hypothesis, that in lack of explicit instruction, subjects would transfer their L1 pragmatic competence to L2, is also largely confirmed. Namely, the results of this small scale, single moment research show that advanced EFL learners use invectives in various situations and with interlocutors of various social power. While it is true that generally speaking, the research participants used fewer invectives in English than in their L1, though there were exceptions to this in the SURPRISE and OFFEND scenarios, a comparison of their production with the results of English native speakers proves that transfer from L1 was indeed what governed the pragmatic behaviour of the non-native respondents in experiment 2.

Invectives are a cultural phenomenon and therefore research into the use of invectives within a language community or in languages in contact may shed light on the politeness conventions operative in a language. The benefits of studying invectives for language teaching lie in developing learners' pragmatic competence, in spite of the numerous features of the EFL context which hinder pragmatic learning, including but not limited to the narrow range of speech acts and realisation strategies included in the syllabi, the typical interaction patterns which restrict pragmatic input, large classes, limited contact hours, and little opportunity for intercultural communication. The conclusions of the research presented here can hopefully be used by researchers to focus on the numerous areas of interlanguage pragmatics that are still understudied in EFL, but also to show EFL educators and curriculum developers the importance of teaching L2 pragmatics.

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## **PRAGMATIČKA KOMPETENCIJA UČENIKA ENGLESKOG JEZIKA U OSLOVLJAVANJU SAGOVORNIKA**

### **Rezime**

U radu se istražuje stepen razvijenosti pragmatičke kompetencije studenata engleskog jezika na primeru verbalne agresije u oslovljavanju sagovornika. S obzirom na velike kulturološke razlike između maternjeg jezika ispitanika (srpski ili mađarski) i ciljnog jezika (engleski) u pogledu onoga što se može reći u određenim situacijama, početna hipoteza istraživanja bila je da će ispitanici češće upotrebiti invektiv u obraćanju sagovorniku koji je istog ili nižeg stepena društvene moći od ispitanika, te da će ova tendencija biti uočljiva i u ciljnom jeziku, budući da nastava stranog jezika ne uključuje osposobljavanje učenika za upotrebu verbalne agresije.

Izvršena su dva eksperimenta, sa ukupno 87 ispitanika (42 u prvom eksperimentu, 35 u drugom, te 10 ispitanika koji su maternji govornici engleskog jezika). Podaci su prikupljeni pomoću testa nadopunjavanja diskursa, koji je obuhvatao dvanaest situacija u kojima je sagovornik fizički ili psihički povredio ispitanika, uz variranje vrednosti za promenljivu društvene moći.

Rezultati istraživanja u velikoj meri potvrđuju početne hipoteze, jer su ispitanici u velikom broju slučajeva i na engleskom jeziku reagovali vrlo slično kao na svom maternjem jeziku. Ovakav rezultat kosi se sa rezultatom dobijenim iz upitnika izvornih govornika engleskog jezika i potvrđuje da je pragmatička produkcija studenata engleskog jezika u (verbalno agresivnom) oslovljavanju sagovornika u potpunosti rezultat transfera sa maternjeg jezika. Pedagoške implikacije ove studije su jasne: nastava stranog jezika u znatno većoj meri mora uključivati i njenu pragmatiku, naročito onda kada postoje velike razlike između maternjeg jezika učenika i ciljnog jezika. Pored govornih činova, diskursnih markera i implikatura u red problematičnih oblasti svakako spadaju i invektivi, čije je izbegavanje u engleskom jeziku, kako smo pokazali u ovom istraživanju, gotovo imperativ.

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