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Courtesy, adequacy, procedure: A brief account of the intercultural communication background

Abstract

The term *intercultural communication* (ICC, not explicitly distinguished in this paper from the concept of cross-cultural communication) is commonly used to refer to the instances of actual communication acts performed in and/or between heterogeneous communication environments. While the instances of intercultural encounters are usually viewed in terms of heterogeneous codes (languages), different communication environments require diverse linguistic competences and different patterns for their use. The codes, as such, may be regarded translatable and interpretable *in abstracto*. The patterns, however, usually require specific conditions for their evocation and complete (as well as effective) execution: the latter also requires the (prior) projection of actual goals and subsequent verification of actual changes in the communication environment, which result from a certain act of communication.

The subject of the usage patterns of actual codes will be described in this paper in terms of intercultural honorifics, with special emphasis placed on situations of communication and miscommunication typical of a Polish-Japanese communication/translation/interpretation environment, as well as the metalanguages used in the processes of their explanation. The selected instances of communication and miscommunication will be analyzed with respect to the gains and losses in the environment in which the communication acts are performed, including intricate issues of intercultural translatability/interpretability.

Keywords: (un)translatability, adequacy, honorifics

1. Introductory remarks

For the purposes of this paper, no specific distinction is made below between the notions of intercultural communication and cross-cultural communication.

In other words, the ICC acronym is consciously used to refer to both terms. This is mainly because most phenomena described below apply to any kind of communication taking place across inter/cross-cultural boundaries. The author remains aware of this simplification, convinced that it does not significantly alter the content of the examples and the analysis provided. Moreover, in the context of translation/interpretation processes and (un)translatability, it may be more effective to view some phenomena as having emerged from the collision of two heterogeneous communication environments, whether they are perceived in the inter- or cross-cultural perspective. This claim will be demonstrated in examples of some basic and simplified oppositions between the Japanese (JP) and Polish (PL) general convictions and schemes of behavior, analyzed below.

2. Basic terms and dilemmas

The titles of the works that have been published and discussed since the emergence of the field of applied linguistics show that the contemporary study of language has overcome the already classical postulate of the autonomous character of language and linguistics, raised by de Saussure. At the same time, deeper inquiry into the details of applied linguistic research reveals that numerous approaches appear to be based on an assumption that the use of language involves merely saying or expressing something, which is quite independent of the actual interaction context.

A good example of a phenomenon that should probably be explained on the basis of extra-linguistic facts is the intra- and intercultural research on honorifics that often seems to focus on ambiguous notions such as *respect*, *courtesy*, *face* or *politeness*. In a very similar manner, the researchers of the intercultural phenomena do not refrain from centering explanations around such unclear and inevitably-biased ideas as *expressing oneself* or *displaying one's feelings*. It is this author's conviction that these two trends in the applied approach to the study of communication pragmatics may be effectively reviewed, for the sake of emphasizing factors which are present, though often invisible, in the background of any instance of actual communication.

First of all, the implementation of a metalanguage does not automatically explain and solve the intricate multi-layered communication issues that lie behind any context of communication. Furthermore, the analysis of misunderstandings emerging in the process of communication on the borders of

heterogeneous cultures may deliver substantial evidence that the acts of ICC do not differ substantially in many aspects from communication in a nominally heterogeneous environment. Ineffective definitions and postulated solutions surrounding ICC may fail because intercultural properties are erroneously valued higher than properties related to communication universals – and not necessarily because those communication processes take place in an intercultural environment (whether intra- or intercultural (IC)). They will be reviewed in this paper with respect to IC honorifics.

2.1 Social deixis

Probably the most useful, universal definition of honorifics is provided by Levinson, described in a fairly unbiased manner as “socially deictic information” (1983: 89). The same author, along with a detailed classification of honorifics (not the primary subject of this paper), made the following remark on their nature:

[...] in many languages (notably the S. E. Asian languages, including Korean, Japanese and Javanese) it is possible to say some sentence glossing as *The soup is hot* and by the choice of a linguistic alternate (e.g. for *soup*) encode respect to the addressee without referring to him, in which case we have an addressee honorific system. In general, in such languages it is almost impossible to say anything at all which is not sociolinguistically marked as appropriate for certain kinds of addressees only (Levinson 1983: 90).

As can be seen, the definition of honorifics in terms of social deixis may be useful in a universal perspective, since it does not exclude any aspect of honorific modification from the scope of potential research. In fact, both in the intra- and intercultural studies of honorifics, as well as in the inherently intercultural studies of communication and translation/interpretation, the only universally valid premise may be that nothing (neither the relevant dimensions nor their actual parameters) can be taken for granted in a heterogeneous communication environment.

Whether or not it is the *respect to the addressee* (which is an inherently biased notion and should be excluded from the scope of linguistic research) that must be encoded in Japanese, one may also interpret the above fragment as based on an implicit conviction that in the languages other than Asian

(among them most likely English), to paraphrase the above statement by Levinson, it is possible to say almost anything as long as it is not sociolinguistically marked as appropriate to only certain kinds of addressees. Levinson was probably aware that the perspective of English (apparently considered unmarked in some aspects, as can be read above) may seriously limit the scope of linguistic research, which may be seen in the following fragment of his work:

A [...] reason why grammarians should not simply ignore social deixis is that, while the study of English may suffer no obvious penalties from such neglect, there is scarcely a single sentence of [...] Japanese, Javanese or Korean, that can be properly described from a strictly linguistic point of view without an analysis of social deixis (Levinson, 1983: 93-94).

While the above seems to prove that social deixis may be invisible (transparent) in some languages rather than claiming that it does not exist in English, the perspective of intercultural communication research based on this concept may be viewed as promising. The basic prerequisite for such application of social deixis should be the neutral character of description, not contaminated by cultural bias. In this aspect, the idea is close to the concept of honorific modification (HM), proposed by this author elsewhere as a universal dimension of managing communication activities in an effective manner, and described in more detail below.

2.2 Honorific modification and the actual communication phenomena

Grice (1989), having commented on conversational implicatures and related maxims, includes the following passage on politeness: “There are, of course, all sorts of other maxims (aesthetic, social, or moral in character), such as ‘Be polite’, that are also normally observed by participants in exchanges, and these may also generate nonconventional implicatures” (p. 28), but it is only in order to conclude soon that: “The conversational maxims, however, and the conversational implicatures connected with them, are specially connected (I hope) with the particular purposes that talk (and so, talk exchange) is adapted to serve and is primarily employed to serve” (ibid.).

It is no wonder that also according to Leech (1983) the maxims of politeness are defined in terms of *tact*, *generosity*, *approbation*, *modesty*, *agreement* and *sympathy* (pp. 104-151). All of the labels may be culturally biased, and as such

should instead be defined as far from the concept of social deixis. Although they may be understood in the context of interpersonal rhetoric defined by Leech, it is still necessary to ponder on numerous and intricate details that a researcher concentrated on a 'strictly linguistic' point of view may fail to observe. Among them one can enumerate phatic properties of HM (cf. Jakobson, 1960: 350-377), which have been portrayed in the distinction between procedure and protocol by this author (cf. Jabłoński, 2012). The phatic background of HM, quite contrary to the classical concepts based on the labels of *courtesy* or *respect*, traditionally though misleadingly attributed to the phenomena, ensures the transparency of HM in any actual exchange, which does not negate dependency on context.

As Hymes (1974: 51) briefly and rightly pointed out, speech communities are based on common codes as well as shared patterns of their use. In other words, certain patterns are used under particular circumstances. For example, one needs a substantial social (not only linguistic) competence to say *Thank you*. But does this mean that *thanking* has only one pattern across different cultures? What comes prior to it and along with it during an actual communication event? How should children, who have not socialized (yet?) and their position in (homogeneous?) social reality be defined? These questions apply also to the notion of cultural strangers and their position in heterogeneous social reality.

Procedures may be defined in terms of gains and losses in actual (even homogeneous) communication. Below, the shape of the outside world before and after the message is generated and interpreted will be emphasized, instead of the exchange of messages itself. A simple example by Yngve (1975) focuses on situations and persons which are subject to change due to a simple (not to say trivial) act of inviting a person for the evening:

He decides to accept and knows how to do that. He does so. He is now a different person. His situational properties have changed again. He is a person who has been invited over for the evening and has accepted. I can predict with some degree of certainty that he will show up on my doorstep. And I am a different person, too. My situational properties are different. I now expect him to show up (Yngve, 1975: 61).

Since the slightly extended version of Yngve's statements may cover the actual acts of communication, pre-communication and after-communication, there is much more to the above short quotation that should be of interest for the ICC researchers. And, as Austin (1962) noticed before Yngve: "It was for too long

the assumption of philosophers that the business of a 'statement' can only be to 'describe' some state of affairs, or to 'state some fact', which it must do either truly or falsely" (p. 1).

Austin defined the performative sentences (p. 6) and pointed out that: "A. they do not 'describe' or 'report' or constate anything at all, are not 'true or false'; and B. the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not normally be described as saying something" (p. 5). He further proposed to use the notion of procedures: fixed interaction entities with fixed effect, to be performed by certain persons (roles) in certain circumstances (context), to be evoked according to certain conditions and to be executed correctly and completely (p. 14).

At this point, despite Austin's statement that a performative sentence "indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action – it is not normally thought of as just saying something" (pp. 6-7), it seems justified to assume that in fact all actual utterances are more or less performative, since the very act of uttering them, based on the description by Yngve, leads to a change of communication environment. The fact that a communication activity may be viewed in the first place as a social activity is further confirmed by the fact that Austin mentions the infelicities, as well: "things that can be and go wrong" (p. 14). This makes procedures convenient tools to judge the projected and actual communication flow and results. They may and should be extended beyond verbal acts, as can be postulated on the basis of the following insightful remark made by Geis:

Austin (1962) seems to be responsible for the view that illocutionary acts are necessarily verbal acts. [...] However, it does not follow from the fact that one might have to use language to perform some action that what is most important about it is that it is performed verbally. One cannot kiss another person without closing one's lips together, drawing air into one's lungs, thereby creating a partial vacuum, and then releasing the bilabial constriction, but if we follow the suggested line of reasoning of Austin we will have to conclude that kissing is primarily, and most importantly, a bilabial, ingressive pulmonary act. It is a bilabial, ingressive pulmonary act, but it is also, and more importantly, a social action, ranging in significance from signaling sexual interest to showing affection, to communicating a greeting (the kissing that is done between celebrities on television shows), to communicating respect (as when someone kisses the hand of some royal woman). Kissing is, in short, a social action, even if it necessarily requires performance of a physical action. Precisely the same is true of requesting, offering, making threats, giving warnings, conveying information,

requesting information, or uttering verdictives and expositives, etc. And, once one has recognized that communicative actions are social actions and that many types of communicative actions can be performed non-verbally, the temptation to associate these actions with particular linguistic forms diminishes greatly (Geis, 1995, p. 14-15).

2.3 Between the procedure and protocol

The metalanguages used in the study of context-embedded events should be culturally unbiased. This is especially valid for their crucial elements functioning as key words. It has long been pointed out, for example, that the labels of *courtesy*, *respect* and *politeness* are not compatible with a coherent description of HM phenomena (cf., among others, Eelen, 2001). In other words, it may not always be enough to *be polite*, which may be explained on a trivial but potentially instructive example of an MMMP (Machine for Making Messages Polite, which is designed as useful only to make the messages “more polite”, independently of context) (cf. Jabłoński, 2007).

A more specific critique of the concept of *politeness* may be found in the threefold division of *politeness* into situation-based (some situations are considered *polite* while the others are not, which is far from satisfactory) (Jabłoński, 2007: 52-54), static (*politeness* is automatically opposed to *impoliteness*) (pp. 54-58) and semantic (*politeness* is encoded into the dictionary meanings of the allegedly *polite* phrase elements) (pp. 58-65). The definition of HM which could make it possible to abstract from the biased labels of *politeness* and *respect* should thus be focused on the situational properties of a message, which may not require explicit linguistic marking (Jabłoński, 2012: 79).

In other words, any communication act in any language ought to be validated in accordance with the HM requirements applicable to a given code, marked or not. While HM is not an informative phenomenon, it significantly changes the nature and results of actual communication acts (Jabłoński, 2012: 79). The actual HM parameters should be related both to the protocol properties of a code (the honorific paradigms specific to it) and to the predictable and repeatable activity patterns, recognized as procedural (Jabłoński, 2012: 113-115).

As can be concluded at this stage, the use of language is far more complicated than “saying something” or “expressing oneself”, and still even more complicated than “making messages polite”. Consequently, the intercultural

honorifics should probably be viewed more as effective ICC tools than means of smoothing intercultural tension, through *courtesy*, *respect* or *politeness*.

3. Inter/Cross-Cultural Communication

As a term, the ICC does not simply stand for any act of communication in a heterogeneous environment (below: mainly in the Polish-Japanese environment). This would be too broad, since past and contemporary phenomena of ICC do not need to include wars, crusades, conquest, colonialism, slavery, terrorism or the like. ICC equals achieving communication goals through equal(ly engaged) parties.

Accordingly, current trends in ICC, also in an environment of increasingly improved transport and communication (not to mention virtual communication), globalization, international co-operation and tourism, do not automatically foster better or more effective ICC processes and results. The increasing quantity of ICC acts does not necessarily imply their better quality in a direct and immediate manner. In other words, recent dynamically-rising trends in the quantity of ICC acts do not seem to undermine one of the most up-to-date Polish sources on ICC, claiming that “an intercultural communication is possible, while not indispensable” (Zaporowski, 2006: 153) and that it “does not take place [...] in all instances when different cultures cross” (p. 27).

3.1 Methodology: language code and beyond

ICC may and should be viewed as an effective extension of communication skills used in a “homogeneous” (a non-ICC) environment. It is an act enabling one to cross one’s native culture boundaries (cf. Hida, 1990: 3-24). ICC is therefore a communicative challenge, which requires the employment of advanced problem solving methodology. In terms of effective mapping of the source and target cultural values in the process of understanding heterogeneous cultures, the conscious preparation for acts of ICC should be viewed as an important element of translation/interpretation training, not to mention the other participants of ICC acts. It is especially valid, given that ICC (similarly as non-ICC) is not only related to the language code, which means a definition based solely on communication across code boundaries is too narrow.

Let us review several factors (linguistic and non-linguistic) present in the background of any communication act, with special emphasis on Polish-Japanese (PL-JP) ICC acts:

1. not every tangible fact and parameter of the environment is always mentioned (i.e. there is no need to know the exchange partner's age and position in PL, contrary to JP);
2. some information must always be mentioned in some circumstances (i.e. in JP it is obligatory to mark both the starting and closing time of a meeting/banquet, contrary to PL);
3. certain heterogeneous objects may reveal unexpected properties (i.e. in JP it is self-evident that different slippers are used in the toilet, contrary to PL);
4. certain linear properties of objects may be important and not require further explanations (i.e. in PL soup is served before main dish, contrary to JP);
5. certain secondary object properties may be preferred over their primary properties (i.e. it is possible to eat almost every PL meal with a spoon, but it is not practiced).

Most of the above properties of an ICC act are not related to the use of language code. On the other hand, many of them may be misunderstood, considered unnecessary, or consciously neglected, with easily imaginable and immediate effects on the actual communication processes between the heterogeneous communication environments.

Communication environments differ and so do their communication patterns. Differences may be related to different conversational (or behavioral) conventions. According to the approach to pragmatics by Leech (1983): "the rules of grammar are fundamentally conventional; the principles of pragmatics are fundamentally non-conventional, *i.e.* motivated in terms of conversational goals" (pp. 24-30). The rules of ICC, however, cover both the former and the latter, with all possible consequences.

Concerning the above points, several interesting overstatements may be highlighted, relating to the fictional notion of an universal comprehensibility of communication acts. Pieńkos (2003) states that "translation practice since at least two thousand years has proven that translation not only exists, but also develops and is getting more and more important. [...] translatability

is a rule and the untranslatability – an exception. [...] the more exact analysis of the critique towards translation may make it clear that it applies to bad translations and bad translators” (p. 181). Hejwowski (2004) points out that “regardless of language differences, the human cognitive potential is very similar” (18), and Dąbmska-Prokop (2000) concludes that “Translatability depends on the (creative) decision of a translator” (p. 196). The quotations were selected purposely from Polish sources on the subject. In numerous other works and throughout even more numerous actual ICC acts, the universal comprehensibility of communication acts may function as a default tacit assumption.

As postulated below, the universal translatability may be assumed with no difficulty *in abstracto*; however, in the act of actual communication it may be more convenient to depend on a much more cautious statement, such as that made by Steiner (1975): “[...] [A] human being performs an act of translation, in the full sense of the word, when receiving a speech-message from any other human being. Time, distance, disparities in outlook or assumed reference, make this act more or less difficult” (p. 47).

3.2 On the transparency of keys and scaffoldings

One needs a certain “cultural key”, as mentioned by Sapir (1978: 151) to understand social events, be they of intercultural character or not. Accordingly, as Garfinkel (1972) puts it, it may be the usual practice to consider many situational properties invisible and trivial constituents of “commonplace scenes”; this approach may make their mere recognition difficult, not to mention the process of subjecting them to conscious reflection.

The adequacy of certain context parameters should thus be perceived as a feature of ICC acts which do not differ much from non-ICC. Some things are done in certain contexts. Not all things are done in all contexts. Some things are never done. Communication activity is therefore linked to social activity and repeatable (often trivial and transparent) patterns. Source and target contexts and activity patterns in the ICC environment may differ in virtually any conceivable way. It is mainly because of their transparency that fixed patterns, which may be treated as phatic scaffolding (i.e. not informative but crucial for the effective management of communication channel), require substantial effort by the parties involved in any exchange act.

3.3 Communication and miscommunication

What is visible to an expert may not necessarily be the focus of attention among regular actors on the ICC stage. Accordingly, since even the target text of translation is not decoded solely on the basis of its internal structure or the selection of isolated word units (but is embedded in a broader cultural and contextual environment), translation and interpretation, viewed in their narrow sense, may only function as limited tools of ICC.

In a quantitative manner, communication in a homogeneous environment requires certain competence in (one) language code, a (more or less) fixed pattern of context element interpretation, a (more or less) predictable goal achievement strategy as well as (one) pattern of proper selection of the socially deictic information. In ICC, the participants are usually forced to deal with different languages, different (and often unexpected) communication contexts, goals and deictic information patterns.

Similarly to non-ICC, no inherent value in ICC appears independent of its context. Potential differences in context parameter interpretation may consequently be recognized as risks to ICC, and indeed ICC is quite often defined as a “field of increased risk”, causing “disorder in communication processes” with its impact on both “immediate communication effects” and “future contacts of whole social and ethnic groups” (Duszak, 1998: 332). Should miscommunication be defined as a phenomenon inevitably present in the background of any communication stage, it is even more visible in the background of ICC. One of the sources on ICC between Japanese and non-Japanese mentions “embarrassment”, “tension”, “anger, frustration”, “communication breakdown”, “negative stereotyping” among the factors that appear on the stage of communication (Hidasi, 1999).

Paradoxically, the most visible issues of miscommunication in ICC might be the least visible in an instance of non-ICC, undertaken in comparable circumstances. Lack of readiness to abandon one’s native interpretation schemes, one’s insufficient intercultural competence, uncertainty in intercultural contact, or even factors like negative stereotypes and xenophobia are potential phenomena which participants of ICC and translators/interpreters encounter on a regular basis. Unreasonable expectations towards communication partners, incompatible aims of communication, consequences of decisions and units of information exchange are also typical problems emerging on the stage of ICC.

3.4 Intercultural communication and translation/interpretation

In the light of the above statements, the scope of inherently intercultural and phatic activity of the translator/interpreter may be defined as multi-layered, and there is significant responsibility involved in proper ICC flow. At the same time, the translator/interpreter is unable to solve by default all possible communication problems. Moreover, the very presence of the translator/interpreter element (or, according to other communication models, hop or node) in communication models may bring about further incompatibilities between the communication parties, such as a longer path of information exchange (due to the increased number of nodes and and/or noise sources, a direct quantitative consequence).

Just as in non-ICC, on the level of each node the information is not only delivered and sent, but undergoes elaborate processes of interpretation. It is rational to ask how much can be achieved in the process of ICC in the presence of a translator/interpreter or, in other words, whether one hundred percent efficiency may be a rational estimate for an act of communication undertaken in a heterogeneous environment. Information loss (or its unauthorized gain) may also occur due to the insufficient qualifications of a translator/interpreter. However, since this issue has already been covered by numerous translation/interpretation theories, it seems reasonable to focus below on the problematic issues of translation/interpretation processes related to more advanced levels of communication.

It is mainly due to limitations of translation/interpretation processes that this author has postulated the research of these phenomena in terms of *homeostasis of a text* (cf. Jabłoński, 2013). Homeostasis in this specific meaning is understood as the process of generating a target text that should preserve as many relevant properties of a source text as possible. As this may be hard to achieve, the homeostatic activity of a translator/interpreter in actual communication circumstances is related to preserving the maximum amount of original content and supplying it with minimal additional information, in order for it to function in the target environment. This may also come down to the act of recognition of untranslatability of a certain text or its particular elements, should potentially incomprehensible elements emerge, or even to abandon the act of translation/interpretation of some or all elements of an exchange. The latter act is especially demanding for interpreters, for whom a decision to abandon the stage of interpretation or to interpret only selected messages may prove difficult, if even possible.

Along with recognition of translation/interpretation activities as significant efforts by the individuals professionally involved in them, their actual influence on the final result of a communication act in a heterogeneous environment should not be overestimated. It takes also effort from other participants of such acts to socialize towards ICC, which is again not much different from socializing towards non-ICC.

The most basic (IC)C prerequisites include, among others, the fundamental *conditio sine qua non*: recognition of common points of interest. Should this be observed, all parties will experience fewer emerging difficulties, while observing other important rules of interaction; these rules include viewing the heterogeneous culture as a system (not relying on meanings isolated from context), abandoning normative statements (ignoring isolated meanings for the sake of systematic rules, with emphasis on adequacy in a forest vs. trees approach), as well as not automatically linking homogeneous and heterogeneous contexts. This requires significant and constant effort which not every member of a given speech community is able and ready to undertake.

4. Incompatibility gradients

Probably the least optimistic example of the fact that a certain “cultural key” is indispensable in order to understand social (and language) events may be found in Sapir’s birth place; according to traditional or contemporary place name traditions it may be named *Lauenburg* (German) or *Lębork* (Polish), according, at least, to various language versions of Wikipedia. Consequently, a question arises as to where Sapir was actually born: in the former or the latter? Or perhaps “in Germany”, as one of contemporary sources puts it in a fairly neutral manner (Sapir, 1978, inner front cover). The evidence that Sapir was (unfortunately?) right about the complex relations between the linguistic and extralinguistic reality may also be found in the complicated historical events taking place in his birthplace after his (Jewish) family had emigrated to the United States. It used to be a flourishing German town at the end of 19th century. During the World War 2, Lauenburg was invaded by Soviet troops, who, perhaps to take revenge on Germans, went as far as to steal the rail lines and transport them to the USSR, not to mention the random destruction of the town, although it was not a location of fighting at the time.

The contemporary place name is *Lębork*, located in Poland. The inhabitants are Polish people having once been resettled by force (another interesting

event related to ICC) from the Polish territories taken over by the Soviets after the war. They lost their former homes and identity and it may come as little surprise that they are not ready to advertise their town as Sapir's birthplace. While they probably have nothing against Sapir himself or the heritage of the former Jewish community in Lauenburg, they lack a cultural key to understanding why they should care for the history of the town, which is probably still not fully considered their own. As a result, while it is a common Polish practice to commemorate someone's birthplace, the lack of phatic scaffolding for the initiation of this pattern of behavior effectively impedes the evocation of such a procedure.

Trivial everyday activities may also reveal allegedly 'innocent' incompatibilities, based on the symmetry and asymmetry in the adaptation of source elements in a target context. Various source elements very often cannot be properly interpreted in their target usage without a cultural key. Simple phrases may be missing their complicated background, which is visible in the following three incompatible English borrowings (word-for-word Polish translations from English) currently present in Polish communication environment:

1. EN *Have a nice day!* vs. PL *Milego dnia!* (a PL phrase with exactly the same meaning as its EN counterpart has not existed so far);
2. EN *No problem!* vs. PL *Nie ma problemu!* (a previously existing PL phrase with analogous usage: *Nie ma sprawy!*) seems to be gradually displaced by this new EN import);
3. EN *I like it!* vs. PL *Lubię to!* (the phrase has for long existed in PL, although the circumstances of its usage were different; the new import has been implemented – and seems to be doing quite well, at least when it comes to the frequency of its usage – by new social electronic media, including Facebook, instead of its more appropriate version: *Podoba mi się [to].*)

In the Polish communication environment it is enough to say *do widzenia* 'good bye' to end virtually any social encounter, without a need to express wishes for a nice day ahead. It is not usual to mention *problems*, when no problems are present in the context of interaction. Similarly, *liking* (communicated with the Polish verb *lubić*) is more of a long-term process than a short-term, spontaneous act (communicated with the verb *podobać się*). As such, the incompatibility of the (rather thoughtless) usage of such phrases in Polish communication environment is related mostly to the lack of their relation to actual communication procedures.

4.1 Procedures, labels and metalanguages

Based on the (valid) assumption that labels are not compatible across cultures, Wierzbicka (1991) once provided the following comparison of *thanking* in Japan and elsewhere, depicted in Table 1. below:

<i>thank</i>	<i>kansha suru</i>
(a) I know: you did something good for me	(a) I know: you did something good for me
(b) I feel something good towards you because of this	(b) I feel something good towards you because of this (b') I know: I couldn't do something good like this for you (b'') I feel something bad because of this
(c) I say this because I want you to feel something good	(c) I say this because I think I should say it

Table 1. A comparison of Japanese and non-Japanese *thanking* postulated by Wierzbicka (1991: 157)

Whether or not the elements of comparison quoted above have been selected properly from a purely semantic and pragmatic point of view, there are substantial differences in the ways the non-Japanese (English) and Japanese procedures of *thanking* are perceived and rooted in communication practice.

Surprisingly, there is no explanation by Wierzbicka on why the above differences emerge. Their relation to the widely alleged peculiarities of Japanese discourse properties has been mentioned, among others, by Martin (1964), who rather hastily described “the feeling that Japanese conversation is all formula, with no content” (p. 407) or Coulmas (1981), who apparently felt no objection to concluding that “in Japanese culture the need for original expressions is not strong” (p. 88).

It is hard to understand why the English “(b) I feel something good towards you because of this” given by Wierzbicka above is opposed both to the Japanese “(b) I feel something good towards you because of this” and “(b'') I feel something bad because of this”. At the same time, it is unclear why the English “(c) I say this because I want you to feel something good” is opposed to the Japanese “(c) I say this because I think I should say it.” Furthermore, the example in Table 1 above seems to be based on the notion of *expressing oneself*, used

by Goddard and Wierzbicka (1997) in other sources, and based on the rather biased statement that “Japanese culture is often characterized by its suppression or distrust of verbalism” (p. 237). The authors seem to be convinced that “The high sensitivity to other people’s feelings is linked with the often noted tendency for the Japanese to withhold explicit displays of feeling” (p. 238) and, as a consequence of reasoning based on this claim, they propose the following metalanguage definition of the act of *expressing oneself* as valid exclusively in Japanese culture:

often it is good not to say anything to other people
 it is not good to say things like this to other people:
 ‘I want this’, ‘I don’t want this’
 ‘I think this’, ‘I don’t think this’
 if I say things like this, someone could feel something bad
 before I say something to someone
 it is good to think something like this:
 I can’t say all that I think
 if I do, someone could feel something bad
 (Goddard & Wierzbicka, 1997: 238).

Again, quite apart from the fact whether *expressing oneself* is most important in communication, it is good to ponder on the levels of abstraction on which such labels as *distrust of verbalism* and *high sensitivity to other people’s feelings* actually function. How are these phenomena related? Are the English culture and structures of behavior natural and transparent, while Japanese culture is incoherent (one may feel something good and bad at the same time) and incomprehensible (one may feel “something bad” while thanking)? Is the suppression of verbalism exclusive to Japan and the Japanese? Last but not least, can the (non-Japanese=English?) culture in which one can *say anything* exist and function? To answer these questions, it is necessary to define not only procedures, but also the common convictions and schemes that lie behind them. For the sake of simplicity and reliability, this author will demonstrate below some basic and simplified oppositions between the Japanese (JP) and Polish (PL) general convictions and schemes of behavior he has himself encountered and verified as useful in translation/interpretation and ICC training activities.

4.2 JP and PL convictions

Common convictions are surely among the most difficult data to collect in any speech community. A fieldwork survey may not prove effective, since native informants (probably surveyed by Goddard and Wierzbicka in the course of their research) may not operate on the level of generalizations suitable for this purpose or be unable to recognize own convictions. Simple (albeit far-reaching) convictions gathered in the course of long-term ICC practice and training include the following presented in Table 2 below:

JP	PL
a. People are basically different (including especially stiff formal regulations, never to be neglected). Most relations are asymmetrical. Lower rank is no shame. In any case, it is better than indefinite rank.	a. People are basically equal (except stiff formal regulations, which in most cases can be neglected). Most relations are symmetrical. Lower rank is a shame. Higher rank may arouse envy.
b. Free exchange of views reveals rather undesirable individual differences.	b. Free exchange of views enables the interaction partners to know each other.
c. Group relations are more important.	c. The group is not that important.
d. It is better to hide one's personal views, especially towards one's vertical senior.	d. Hiding one's personal views makes communication difficult, regardless of ranks.
e. Sincere behavior depends on context. It may be allowed within one's own group.	e. Sincerity means that one always acts in the same manner, regardless of context.
f. Outside one's group only predictable role play enables effective interaction. Role standard violation is incomprehensible.	f. Should people like to play roles, they ought to be creative. Role standard violation is creative.

Table 2. A set of JP and PL convictions considered typical in a given communication environment (modified after Jabłoński, 2010 and Jabłoński, 2013: 219-220)

4.3 Behavior schemes

The notion of behavior schemes is postulated in this paper on the basis of patterns of Japanese predictable behavior proposed by Sugiyama-Lebra (1976: 112). There are basically two (not many) patterns in JP: RITUAL and INTIMATE, since it is not possible to act in a private manner on an official stage. Accordingly, the ANOMIC (*public + unofficial*) patterns are perceived by the same author as avoided and attributed in JP solely to the situations of open conflict or marked with a high level of uncertainty, as presented on Table 3 below:

JP	<i>official</i>	<i>unofficial</i>
<i>private</i>	- (non-existing)	INTIMATE
<i>public</i>	RITUAL	ANOMIC (no rules)

Table 3. JP behaviour schemes according to Sugiyama-Lebra (1976: 112)

Should the INTIMATE pattern be inapplicable, the RITUAL pattern is used. The RITUAL pattern is strongly preferred at the initial stages of interaction. With no pattern recognized, an instance of no communication or communication breakdown may arise.

On the contrary, in a Polish communication environment at least four (relatively many) schemes of behavior may be defined, according to the parameters quoted above after Sugiyama Lebra: SINCERE, INTIMATE, RITUAL and HONORABLE, as proposed in Table 4. below:

PL	<i>official</i>	<i>unofficial</i>
<i>private</i>	SINCERE	INTIMATE
<i>public</i>	RITUAL	HONORABLE

Table 4. PL behaviour schemes according to Jabłoński (2013: 217)

In PL, all situational properties (*private vs. public* and *official vs. unofficial*) may be combined, in a manner unthinkable in JP. Contrary to JP, the RITUAL pattern is avoided and whenever the INTIMATE pattern is not applicable, the SINCERE pattern (unknown in JP) is attempted (or even forced). Furthermore, the

HONORABLE pattern (= *do more or less than expected*, interpreted as offensive in JP) is often used in case of uncertainty in PL.

4.4 Schemes and their immediate effects

In JP environment, the execution of RITUAL behavior scheme is in most cases obligatory. This may explain why one may behave as if they *felt something bad* (in terms of the English culture, not the Japanese, however) in situations of *thanking*, when the “*thanker*” is automatically granted the lower vertical rank to the favor beneficiary. He thus recognizes the trouble he makes to the “*thankee*” with the favor received. Quite apart from how big the favor actually is, on the level of verbal behavior it cannot be interpreted as easily returnable, since this would diminish the “*thankee’s*” higher vertical rank of benefactor. Should no ready RITUAL pattern be available, communication may simply be avoided.

In PL, quite similarly to an English environment, the lack of a RITUAL (= *observe ready schemes of behavior designed for fixed vertical ranks*) pattern may be creatively and relatively freely substituted with the SINCERE (= *be frank*) or even the INTIMATE (= *be friends*) pattern. When Poles thank someone for something, they usually prefer to think that they actually *mean it* in the SINCERE manner, quite apart from the RITUAL pattern of behavior and ranks. It is also why they do not perceive the procedure of thanking as based on the asymmetry of ranks – there is no reason to *feel something bad* because of it. Even some RITUAL activities may, at least in some cases, be perceived as avoidable in a SINCERE manner (not perceived as obligation) in PL.

In JP, the execution of RITUAL is viewed as the ultimate guarantee of safety. Much (including individual convenience and the alleged acts of *expressing oneself*) may be sacrificed for it (cf. the JP *Shikataga nai*. attitude, ‘Nothing can be done about it [but persevere].’) In PL, SINCERE pattern is governed purely by individual convenience. A threat to it may be explicitly perceived as oppressive (cf. *Ale ja nie lubię/nie chcę*. ‘But I do not fancy/want that [and I do not care].’) Such behavior is in most cases going to be perceived as childish in the JP environment.

As a consequence of the above, in JP much can be communicated in an almost automatic and thoughtless RITUAL manner, while in PL numerous activities may even be improvised, when no pattern is available (a method unknown

in JP). This further fosters the preference for ready patterns of behavior and rank recognition (or even the preference to avoid any communication-related behavior, should a pattern be unavailable) in the JP environment, while in PL the lack of pattern is viewed instead as a challenge, usually supplemented by individual creativity. Many RITUAL patterns of JP behavior are neglected by Poles, to the advantage of the PL SINCERE patterns, unknown in the JP environment. It is not hard to imagine problems related to this, which do indeed emerge frequently in actual JP-PL ICC situations.

A brief review of communication patterns proposed in this section reveals substantial differences in JP and PL attitudes, including the recognition and interpretation of certain social deixis patterns (virtual ranks). Also, the patterns known and implemented in a given environment may be subject to specific limitations, which are not obvious to a cultural intruder.

4.5 Certain limitations

Procedures are ready schemes, and are easy to use. As such, the procedure core, its evocation circumstances and goals are basically constant. While certain procedure details may be prone to changes or further interweaving and merging – as the exceptions from procedures may constitute further procedures, the basics may be defined easily, with simple labels.

At the same time, procedures are nothing more than schemes. Researching them does not equal predicting or automating human behavior. Not everything is communicable and not everything is predictable. In some instances, communication on the level of procedures may prove impossible, due to the lack of phatic scaffolding for interaction.

Furthermore, in some cases, the very context of ICC may foster unexpected procedure alterations (i.e. the very presence of heterogeneous elements on the scene of an exchange may influence its actual content). The actual instances of ICC may be further influenced by certain properties of context, also related to communication logistics through the idiosyncratic properties and attitudes of its parties.

5. (Instead of) conclusions

ICC does not differ from non-ICC in terms of being embedded in a specific context. They are both related to the (phatic) readiness and motivation of parties to communicate, as well as to the projected (intended) results and recognized schemes of social relations (social deixis). The research on ICC acts (intentionally described above in terms of intercultural honorifics) may be performed only on a suitable level of abstraction.

The acts of ICC cannot be translated/interpreted in an automatic manner outside a certain context frame. Although their linguistic content may probably be rendered (with necessary approximation), specific properties of communication context are usually multi-layered and difficult to process outside their primary source interpretation frame. Neither the actual presence of a translator/interpreter nor the process of globalization change this fact.

Procedures (not only those related to actual communication, but including the pre- and after-communication convictions and projection of potential results) are predictable entities in the first place. They are easy to label, which is convenient, although certain precautions should be observed: simple labels may also be subject to translation/interpretation, with all related consequences. The actual meanings of procedure constituents may be defined and the result of their implementation verified only in actual (IC)C contexts. Thus simple labels of *expressing oneself*, *displaying one's feelings* or *feeling something good/bad* may, quite unexpectedly, prove to be culturally biased. As such, they may be ineffective or even counter-effective in explaining context-embedded ICC patterns.

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