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# **L2 socialization, construction of bilingual pragmatic competence and the Persian politeness system “ta’ârof”**

**Shima MOALLEMI**

*Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3 (France)*

## **Introduction**

This chapter addresses the Persian system of “ta’ârof ” as a significant factor in learning the pragmatics of Farsi (Persian) and a complicating element for Iranians learning the pragmatics of French. It has wider application, since *ta’ârof*-like practices are common in the Middle East, and possibly elsewhere.

More specifically, we will discuss the relationship between pragmatic competence and L2 socialization especially in an intercultural context. Given the differences between L2 and L1 socialization, especially in the development of pragmatic competence, the study seeks to show that contrary to that of L1, L2 socialization is not acquired merely by osmosis. We also demonstrate that the pragmatic competence acquired during L1 socialization has its origin in the identity of each speaker. Therefore, teaching such competence to adult L2 learners is of primary importance, since inadequacy, particularly in intercultural situations, can lead to misunderstandings or cultural insecurity. Based on a corpus of interviews with Persian speakers living in France and French speakers living in Iran, we examine the experiences related to *ta’ârof* in intercultural interactions in order to understand how bilingual pragmatic competence is acquired and developed through L2 socialization.

# 1. The notion of “face” and “ta’ârof” in Persian

## 1.1. Basic literature on the notion of “Face”

Ervin Goffman’s theory on social interaction introduced the concept of face and face work. The notion of face is defined as an individual’s “most personal possession and the centre of his security and pleasure” (Goffman, 1967:10). An individual’s face is a “loan from the society” and one will do one’s best to keep it, by adopting the appropriate behavior. Otherwise, it could be “taken away from him” (*Ibid.*).

Nevertheless, an individual is not only concerned about their own face; one also sympathizes with the desire of others to keep theirs. As a consequence, consideration must be shown for the feelings of others and they must be helped to keep face (Goffman, 1967:9-10). These mutual concerns and efforts are referred to as “face work” which serves to manage one’s own face and that of others. It also helps “to counteract “incidents” – that is, events whose effective symbolic implications threaten face.” (1967:12)

The Goffmanian notion of face inspired Brown and Levinson to develop their politeness theory. According to the latter, the notion of face can be divided into negative and positive. Negative face consists of “the want of every ‘competent adult member’ that his action be unimpeded by others” and positive face concerns “the wants of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others” (Brown & Levinson, 1987:62). The individual’s aim is to maintain both of these faces but some communicative situations or some communicative acts can result in the loss of face. These acts are called “Face Threatening Acts” or “FTA” (Brown & Levinson, 1987:65). In this perspective, politeness is conceived as the attempt of each person present in the interaction to manage the face of the other(s). Some communicative situations can be potentially threatening to some of the faces mentioned above. In such cases, interlocutors may attenuate the threat by using certain verbal or nonverbal strategies. For example, the request is a speech act that is potentially threatening for:

- The negative face of the hearer, who may be forced to do something they didn’t want to do.
- The positive face of the speaker, who may see their request refused and their desire to be approved by others declined.

According to Brown & Levinson, one of the strategies that the speaker may use to attenuate the threats is the use of some kind of indirect form.

Some scholars (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1992, 1994, Koutlaki 2002, 2009) propose to revisit the notion of FTA developed by Brown & Levinson. Kerbrat-Orecchioni considers that the Brown & Levinson FTA concept represents a pessimistic view of interactions; all communicative acts cannot

be just threatening, there are also some acts that are flattering or enhancing for the face of interlocutors, such as compliment and appreciation.

Although there are universal strategies, particularities exist in the way speakers of different languages manage one another's face in interactions and this can lead to different conceptualizations of politeness and interpersonal relationships.

## 1.2. *The notion of face in Persian*

According to Koutlaki (2002:1742), the notion of face in Persian consists of two concepts: "shakhsiat" and "ehteram". *Shakhsiat* corresponds to "personality", "character", "honor", "self-respect", "social standing" and *ehteram* to "respect", "esteem" and "dignity". The *shakhsiat* of an individual is related to the way one behaves in social interactions and influences the way one is perceived by others. It is directly related to socialization and one's familial education. Thus, someone who complies with social rules and is polite is called "ba shakhsiah" (literally: with *shakhsiat*) and a person who shows offensive behavior towards their interlocutor is called "bi shakhsiat" (literally: without *shakhsiat*). *Ehteram* or respect is expressed to others by using the appropriate address form and by acting through the politeness ritual or *ta'ârof*.

According to Koutlaki, in Persian, individuals adopt politeness strategies to express their *ehteram* to their interlocutor, and by using these strategies they not only manifest their own *shakhsiat*, but also enhance their interlocutor's *shakhsiat* by showing their respect for and interest in the other (2002:1742). *Shakhsiat* can correspond to the positive face described by Brown & Levinson, but while the positive face represents the person's desire to be respected and liked, *Shakhsiat* cannot exist independently of a social group: the social behavior of an individual can have an echo of the *shakhsiat* of one collectivity, especially the family. The public face of the family could be enhanced or put in danger (Koutlaki, 2002:1743). For example, a person who is considered as "bi shakhsiat" would be qualified as "bi pedar o mâdar" (literally: without father and mother), which means someone who has a deviant familial background and is strongly criticized for their inability to conform to the social norms. All of this demonstrates the importance of respecting social norms in Iranian society. *Ta'ârof* is one of the main factors in the maintenance of social harmony, since it represents the ability to comply correctly with the social norms.

## 1.3. *The notion of Ta'ârof*

Scholars such as Hymes (1962:24), Gumperz (1972), Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2002) have insisted on the importance of certain lexical notions in each language and culture that refer to certain values or social behavior. These lexical notions are not translatable, which is the case for *ta'ârof*. Kerbrat-

Orecchioni (2002:12) reformulates the positive politeness described by Brown & Levinson as “the systematic incursions into the territory of others (it is a matter of showing one’s various manifestations of sympathy and interest – questions, compliments, gifts, offers, invitations, etc.)”<sup>1</sup>. *Ta’ârof* corresponds exactly to this kind of politeness. Aryanpour & Aryanpour (1976 quoted in Koutlaki, 2002:1741), define it as “compliment(s), ceremony, offer, gift, flummery, courtesy, flattery, formality, good manners, soft tongue, honeyed phrases, respect”. They also define the verb “*ta’ârof kardan*” (to do *ta’ârof*) as “to use compliments, to stand upon ceremony, to make a present of, to speak with courtesy, to use honeyed phrases (soft tongue)”.

According to Sharifian the main goal of *ta’ârof* is to create a kind of social space for the participants in an interaction so that they can engage in face work, but it is also to provide the necessary communicative tool to “negotiate” and “lubricate” social relationships. For Sharifian, *ta’ârof*, gives speakers the opportunity to display a special kind of identity and self-image, for example, to show oneself as a friendly, “welcoming”, “hospitable” person (Sharifian, 2011:144).

Let us take the example of invitation, a situation where *ta’ârof* is very commonly used. Imagine two neighbors who run into each other at the bus station on their way home. They talk all the way and when the first one arrives at their front door, he or she (speaker 1) says to the other (speaker 2): “*befarmâyin shâm dar khedmat bâshim*” (please come have dinner with us). Speaker 2 refuses by thanking the neighbor for their invitation and says goodbye. In this interaction, speaker 1, not only expresses interest and respect to speaker 2 by inviting them (giving *shakhsiat* to speaker 2) but is also shown to be a generous and hospitable person (showing their own *shakhsiat*). Speaker 2 understands this and their refusal is not an FTA to the positive face of speaker 1 – as in Brown and Levinson’s theory – in fact, it is the contrary; they do not only save their own face but also that of speaker 1.

According to Koutlaki, *ta’ârof*, when it applies to ostensible offers or invitations, has a phatic<sup>2</sup> function, in other words, “what may seem as perfunctory or disingenuous on an instrumental level is a genuine expression of cordiality and warmth on a social level” (Koutlaki, 2002:1746). This means that both interlocutors know that the interaction is more about cordiality than a real offer or invitation.

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<sup>1</sup> My translation.

<sup>2</sup> Phatic communication, based on Malinowski’s (1936) definition, refers to “utterances that are said to have exclusively social, bonding functions like establishing and maintaining a friendly and harmonious atmosphere in interpersonal relations, especially during the opening and closing stages of social – verbal – encounters. These utterances are understood as a means for keeping the communication channel open. It is generally claimed that phatic communion is characterized by not conveying meaning, by not importing information [...]” (Senft, 2009:228).

It is obviously very difficult for an L2 learner of Persian to understand the pragmatic and communicative function of *ta'ârof* in all its complexity. Also, Iranian L2 learners may encounter pragmalinguistic failure/transfer in intercultural interactions because *ta'ârof* is part of their conceptualization of interpersonal relationships.

## **2. Pragmatic competence and intercultural communication**

There is a generally held belief that in L2 learning it is essential to learn the linguistic bases of the language such as vocabulary and grammar, while the cultural part of the language can be acquired by osmosis when the learner is in direct contact with native speakers. As a consequence of this belief, some teachers might think that L2 learning should focus on linguistic competence only.

After Hymes and, later, Chomsky, we know that this belief is erroneous because communicative competence cannot be limited to linguistic competence (vocabulary, grammar, phonology, etc.). In order to communicate, one also needs pragmatic competence, which is defined by Chomsky as “knowledge of conditions and manner of appropriate use, in conformity with various purposes” (1980:224). Pragmatic competence is not only the appropriate use of linguistic competence in order to accomplish specific communicative purposes and goals in specific contexts and situations, but also the ability to understand language in context (Thomas, 1983:92).

According to Liu (2004:14), “pragmatic competence consists of (at least) two components: knowledge of a pragmatic system and knowledge of its appropriate use. The former provides the range of linguistic options available to individuals for performing various acts, while the latter enables them to select the appropriate choice, given a particular goal in a particular setting”. In other words, pragmatic competence involves a knowledge of linguistic and non-linguistic communicative behaviors combined with an awareness of when and in which context to use these conventionalized formulae and the impact (emotional, relational, etc.) they may have in particular circumstances.

In a multicultural context of interaction, a lack of pragmatic competence can lead to miscommunication and “pragmatic failure”, to borrow Thomas’s (1983) terminology, especially in the very first contacts. When communication failure is caused by a lack of pragmatic system (as described by Liu), we have a pragmalinguistic failure. I will illustrate this failure with the anecdote of a young Iranian man living in Canada: his Canadian friend invites him to go over and have dinner with him and his wife and child, the Iranian replies with a conventionalized formula, common in such situations in Persian, which he translates into English: “I don’t want to bother your wife”. The Canadian then asks, confused and a bit hurt: “what do you want to do to bother my wife?”. This Persian formula is used in the invitational situation as

“face work” in order to thank the interlocutor for his invitation and kindness and at the same time to show gratitude to him; he is aware that the invitation could be burdensome for the wife, who will have to prepare a special dinner for him. The L2 speaker (the Iranian) does not know the appropriate conventionalized formula to use in this situation and just copies the Persian formula. In this case, we can talk about a pragmalinguistic transfer which is caused by a lack of pragmalinguistic knowledge.

Similarly, a lack of knowledge of the appropriate use of language can lead to sociopragmatic failure. Imagine an Iranian girl and a Chinese girl who meet at a tourist site in Iran. They talk and become acquainted. The Iranian takes out a pencil to write her address for her new Chinese friend who finds the pencil very beautiful. The Iranian girl then invites her to keep the pencil, which she accepts and thanks her in return. What the Chinese girl did not realize is that the Iranian girl did not actually want to offer her the pencil, but behaved as she would with Persian speakers, acting according to the social ritual of *ta'ârof*, which in this situation, requires that the complimented person offer the object for which she has been complimented (Sharifian, 2011:135).

According to Leech (1983:10-13), pragmalinguistics is language specific and has to do with language skills. Sociopragmatics, on the other hand, is culture specific and has to do with the knowledge of the cultural values of the L2. However, as Peeters states (2003:125), the line between the two pragmatic aspects (sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic) is not very well defined. Thomas himself points out: “I would not, of course, wish to claim that any absolute distinction can be drawn between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failure. They form a continuum and there is certainly a grey area in the middle where it is not possible to separate the two with any degree of certainty.” (1983:109)

Furthermore, it seems that pragmalinguistics is not culture free, as demonstrated by the above-mentioned example of pragmalinguistic failure. Unconsciously, the Iranian speaker uses the conventionalized form to express *ta'ârof* (not accepting the invitation the first time you hear it). Perhaps he knew that *ta'ârof*, as a cultural value popular in Persian, has no place in Canadian interpersonal relationships, but he nevertheless used the *ta'ârof* formula as an unconscious reflex.

Thus, the notion in Thomas's theory concerning pragmatics in cross-cultural contexts, which is of particular relevance here, is that some linguistic formulae and norms are culture-based structures and as such it is crucial for the L2 learner to understand the pragmatic meaning behind them. Furthermore, it is essential that the L2 learner should apprehend the cultural values and conceptualizations on which the linguistic formulae are founded. Through socialization in L2, by observation and direct intercultural contact, the L2 learner can understand (partly) the pragmatic system of the L2. However, the L2 learner may not necessarily be able to access the ideologies and value systems that generate the pragmatic system. This lack of deep

understanding can result in a superficial interpretation of the L2 norms and in some cases to a negative judgment of these norms. This in turn could influence the learner's motivation and lead to a refusal to assimilate the pragmatic norms of the L2.

### **3. Socialization in L2 and the development of pragmatic competence**

In language socialization, pragmatic competence is dynamic, it is a life-long process and may vary according to the context and the situation of interactions. This is true in L1 as well as L2 socialization; every time individuals enter new sociocultural environments and situations or meet new challenges, changes may occur in their pragmatic competence as a result of their need to adapt to these new social conditions (Kecskes, 2013:66). Nevertheless, pragmatic socialization in L1 and L2 present certain differences, especially for adult learners.

The main difference may be related to age: language socialization begins at birth, whereas late socialization in L2 generally occurs in ~~the adult~~. As the child grows up, the speech community is assimilated linguistically and socially. Language and culture are acquired synchronously and the development of one is dependent on the development of the other (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1982:310). Moreover, this is a non-conscious or subconscious process, insofar as one may not even be aware of the specificities of the practices and norms of one's language and culture (Ortega, 2009:238).

For Kecskes (2013:67), L2 socialization is mainly conceptual, which is why he calls it "conceptual socialization". When adults learn a new language, or are exposed to a new linguistic and cultural context, they have already developed a conceptual system in their L1 that will influence their understanding and expectations in communicative situations. Through L2 socialization, they may develop or change their conceptual system, but they will not develop a separate non-interfering cultural system, but rather expand the existing one and develop their bilingual communicative competence.

Depending on the L2 learner's mode of learning and the direct or indirect context of socialization (in the classroom context or during intercultural contact), one may become more or less familiarized with the values underlying the pragmatic norms of the new language. Most commonly though, when learning takes place far from the sociocultural context of the language and culture being taught, familiarization will be limited to "linguistic materials they need [to communicate], but not to the socio-cultural background knowledge that gives sense to the particular linguistic expressions in the L2." (Kecskes, 2013:69).

Thus, Kecskes (2013) suggests studying conceptual socialization according to a "content side" and "skill side". For Kecskes, the skill side means that "conceptual socialization will be reflected in the actual language skills: struc-

tural well-formedness, language manipulation, sentence-structuring, lexical quality, formulaic language use” (2013:69). It seems that in an authentic contact with the linguistic and cultural community, the chances of developing the skill side are greater than through learning language in the classroom.

But even when the learner has access to cultural patterns, norms and beliefs related to discourse practices, one may choose not to adopt them and to act according to the learner’s L1 norms. Conceptual socialization is a conscious (or partially conscious) process. After acknowledging that differences exist in the pragmatic norms between the learner’s L1 and L2 or Lx, the learner may decide whether or not to adopt them. Kecskes notes that “according to several researchers, non-native speakers make deliberate, conscious choices about pragmatic strategies and/or features of the target language” (2013:68). To give an example, a female Iranian student in France who is accustomed to using the formal “vous” to male classmates she meets for the first time, knowing that it is more common to use the informal “tu” in this context, may choose to use “tu” in order to conform to French norms or she may prefer to do as she does in Iran and use the formal pronoun “vous” to address her classmate. According to Kecskes, “the important thing here for intercultural pragmatics is that non-native speakers may know target language norms and expectations but do not wish to act accordingly”. (*Ibid.*: 69).

I suggest that the degree of consciousness is mainly influenced by four factors: i) the duration of contact with the L2 linguistic and cultural context or of socialization in L2, ii) the quality of the speaker’s experience (positive or negative) of socialization in the new linguistic community, iii) representations of self or other and iv) the motivation and the willingness to assume or not the L2 sociocultural beliefs and norms.

The third and the fourth factors are closely related to identity issues. Pragmatic norms, as they are representative of certain values and ideologies, are rooted in the identity of the speakers. Being exposed to new pragmatic norms may destabilize the coherence in the conceptual system of one’s own L1, causing a feeling of “cultural insecurity” in relation to the pragmatic choices to be made. The (identity) question concerns whether to adopt an attitude of resistance to the new norms and practices of the L2 or rather to accommodate the dominant cultural context. This feeling of insecurity or hesitation is more common in the early stages of conceptual socialization where the L2 learner is not familiarized enough with pragmatic norms and their impact in specific situations, but is aware of the differences that exist in their L1 and L2 contexts. But as socialization develops, the conceptual system expands and the understanding of the L2 norms, values and ideologies underpinning them becomes clearer. Thus, they may more easily choose between becoming a figure of resistance or one of integration-adaptation-blending into the new culture. However, it should be pointed out that identity(ies) must be understood as dynamic and socially constructed entity(es) which in certain conditions can even be contradictory (Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004 in Ortega, 2013: 242). As Goffman says, we all have different masks

and in interactions one can decide to reveal just one part of one's identity (e.g. Iranian) while in other situations and with different interlocutors, one may decide to show another side of one's identity (e.g. European, French, well-integrated immigrant).

#### 4. From cultural insecurity to identity change

In this section, we will see how the choice of doing or not doing *ta'ârof* in intercultural interactions can encourage the interviewees to talk about their identity<sup>3</sup>. For the first interviewee, Niloufar<sup>4</sup>, who had been in Paris for three months, it was very difficult just to do things without *ta'ârof* and express directly what she desired:

*When I am invited to some friends' house and they offer me something to eat, they ask me for example, do you want to eat that? Then, I am confused and I ask myself if I have to say: "yes, I would like to" (laugh) because in Iran, we don't say yes, I would like to, we say no thanks and then they bring it anyway. But here, I don't know if I have to accept the first time. I explain my hesitations to them. I say in Iran we have to insist but here I don't know whether I have to accept when they offer me something to eat, and say: "YES, I WOULD LIKE TO". That's what bothers me here. (31-year old woman, master's student)*

The insecurity and doubt that Niloufar feels is related to her awareness of the differences that exist in the pragmatic system of her L1 and the L2 she is exposed to. The lack of sociopragmatic knowledge makes choosing problematic for her. The caricatural way she said at the end "YES, I WOULD LIKE TO" shows her concern for her positive face, which might have been in danger in an equivalent conversation in Persian. If one accepts the offer the first time, one may be accused of being "por rou" which means literally "a person with too much faces". The adjective *por rou* is more a criticism than an insult, and it is attributed to someone who is shameless, brazen and insolent. Although Niloufar knew that *ta'ârof* does not exist in the L2 and she was not being criticized for her acceptance of the offer, she was still very much guided by her L1 conception of politeness and she could not discard her L1 communicative habits.

When I interviewed her the following year, she was proud of her capacity to diminish her attachment to *ta'ârof*. It had been very difficult for her

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<sup>3</sup> Between 2013 and 2014, I conducted interviews with some Iranians living in France and some young Frenchmen living in Iran. I asked them about their representations of communication in an intercultural context and the difficulties that they might have met since they were in France or in Iran. For this chapter, I collected some anecdotes that were related to *ta'ârof* and their relation to it in intercultural communicative contexts. In France, the interviews were in Persian and in Iran in French. The interview excerpts presented here are translations that I have done for this article.

<sup>4</sup> The names have been changed to keep the interviewees anonymous.

at the beginning because she felt that not doing *ta'ârof* in requests and invitations, or saying “no” directly to someone might display a “shameless” and even “insolent” attitude. But as time went by, Niloufar seemed to be quite satisfied with the change that occurred in her character and identity. The change of identity was brought about by the circumstances of her life in France (“most of the time, I didn’t have a choice and I had to put up with being hungry or thirsty; I couldn’t blame my poor host who didn’t know anything about *ta'ârof* and for whom a “no” really meant no”) and the consequence of a conscious decision to change. After two years in France, she has begun to behave more and more spontaneously in situations where, in her L1 she was used to doing *ta'ârof*. Nonetheless, this evolution in her pragmatic conception is not only apparent in the L2, but has also affected her L1 pragmatic competence. She presents herself as doing less *ta'ârof* with her Iranian friends too and instead has developed other verbal strategies (for example, using conditional forms, as she is accustomed to doing in French) to make polite requests in order to compensate for the lack of *ta'ârof*.

Similarly, Alireza who came to France 5 years ago, says that when he went back to Iran after a couple of years, his parents had found him impolite because he refused to do *ta'ârof* and just said what he desired and thought in a direct manner. Unlike Niloufar, he does not talk about hesitation and doubt, but he felt offended by the directness he observed especially in requests and the possibility to refuse them openly. He felt that his interlocutor was disrespecting him and saw his positive face threatened by the negative answers to the requests he made. However, he quickly found out that such directness was “normal in here” and as he “appreciated” this frank talking, he decided to adopt it. Once again, the change and evolution in pragmatic competence was the consequence of the conscious choice of the L2 speaker.

## 5. Resistance to change as an identity issue

Change is not always well perceived and some L2 learners or some bilingual speakers may consciously refuse to change their L1 pragmatic habits in interpersonal relationships. This was the choice of Majid, who after 7 years in France still prefers to do *ta'ârof* in some situations, such as offering to share his food. For him, *ta'ârof* represents cordiality and he prefers to keep this “Iranian way” of expressing his sympathy to his interlocutor. Therefore, *ta'ârof* can be understood in different ways and this is related to the complexity of the concept. Let us see how two young Frenchmen, who lived in Iran for a year and a half, understand it.

Both of them consider it as a kind of “hypocrisy” or “hyper politeness” which wastes time and is completely useless in interactions. Indeed, they refuse to practice it with Persian speakers:

Marc: *Never! For me it's a kind of hypocrisy. French people... you know the French people are... they don't like hypocrisy. At the same time, it's a code that Iranians master more or less, and sometimes it's, it's, it's hypocrisy; people say the opposite of what they think. So, I do not do ta'ârof at all, never!* (30-year-old man, master's student and French teacher)

Jules: *As a European, I have the courtesy of letting a woman go before me but for the rest I think it's abusive, 10 times in front of the elevator, please enter, no you enter first...* (32-year-old man, manager and French teacher)

As we can see from these two comments, both insist on their identity as “European” and “French” to explain their refusal to practice ta'ârof. It is clear that they have a superficial understanding of the concept. They do not recognize its function as face work, nor the values underpinning it. In the absence of sufficient sociopragmatic knowledge, L2 learners tend to interpret the new L2 communicative norms literally. According to Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1992:310), “It is absurd to reduce the ritual formulae to their informational content, and even more so to their literal meaning. Their meaning is firstly relational, and their common function is primarily to attest to the social goodwill of the speaker, their openness to others, and their concern for the convivial functioning of the interaction.”<sup>5</sup>

In fact, the paradoxical nature of ta'ârof goes some way to explaining this rejection of it. If the L2 learner is not aware of the relational function of ta'ârof, it is understandable that they should refuse to participate in it, as they may be too conscious that what they are saying is not true. If a non-native Persian speaker tries to use ta'ârof with native speakers, they may take it literally because they do not expect that a non-Persian speaker would have the competence needed to do ta'ârof. On the other hand, an L2 learner of Persian who is aware of the existence of such a ta'ârof concept among Iranians, may be confused when one Iranian friend invites them to dinner; They cannot know for sure whether the Iranian friend really wants to spend time with them or is just doing ta'ârof. This can give rise to feelings of doubt and cultural insecurity.

## Conclusion

During L2 socialization, the bilingual speaker discovers a new pragmatic system. Nonetheless, they do not acquire new pragmatic competences by osmosis, the L2 speaker consciously (or partially consciously) chooses whether to adopt or to resist the L2 pragmatic norms. As the examples have shown, the politeness system and the values and ideologies that constitute its bases are grounded in the identity of each person. Consequently, the acquisition of the L2 politeness system or the abandonment of (some of) the L1 pragmatic norms may not always be acceptable and easy going as related to

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<sup>5</sup> My translation.

identity issues. These are crucial notions that are unfortunately too often not taken into consideration sufficiently in L2 pragmatic (competence) teaching.

As Kecskes points out (2015:430-431), pragmatic competence in L2 is not about the construction of a completely new pragmatic system but rather a development of the L1 pragmatic conceptualization and the growth of a bilingual pragmatic competence. Bilingual pragmatic competence, like intercultural competence, is never completely acquired but it is constantly being developed and negotiated within the context of interaction. L2 pragmatic teaching should, therefore, be more about increasing awareness of and reflexivity in both one's own and the other's pragmatic system.

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