REVIEW OF ISTVAN KECSKES.2014.
INTERCULTURAL PRAGMATICS.
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SYNOPSIS

The present volume, authored by Istvan Kecskes, explores a range of issues revolving around the notions of communication and interculturality, approaching them from the perspective of socio-cultural pragmatics. It opens up with *Introduction*, followed by 10 chapters: 1. *Current pragmatic theories*; 2. *The socio-cognitive approach*; 3. *Pragmatic competence*; 4. *Encyclopedic knowledge, cultural models and interculturality*; 5. *Formulaic language use*; 6. *Context*; 7. *Common ground*; 8. *Salience*; 9. *Politeness and impoliteness*; 10. *Methods of analysis*. Concluding sections of the volume are *Epilogue*, *References* and *Index*.

Having provided the reader with a succinct, yet comprehensive introductory section, outlining the goals of the volume and defining and contextualising the key concepts, the author goes on to provide a critical review of the current pragmatic theories (Chapter 1), starting with Gricean pragmatics, the "major source of development" (p. 21) for intercultural pragmatics. Pragmatics is defined as a study field exploring "how the language system is employed in social encounters by human beings" (p. 21) in an attempt to answer two main research questions: "why do we choose to say what we say?" (p. 21) and "why do we understand things the way we do?" (p. 21). In other words, when engaging in a communicative act the participants "manipulate language to shape and infer meaning in a socio-cultural context" (p. 21). Developing his argument further, Kecskes discusses the Gricean Cooperative Principle, explaining that what happens far more frequently is *egocentric* communicative behaviour, "rooted in the speakers' and hearers' own knowledge instead of their mutual knowledge" (p. 33). Interlocutors' prior experience, knowledge and their own understanding of the world takes priority in language production and comprehension in communicative encounters, being firmly "anchored in the assumption that that what is salient or accessible to oneself will also be accessible to one's interlocutors" (p. 33; also Giora 2003; Kecskes 2007, etc).

Chapter 2 elaborates on the socio-cognitive approach (SCA) to intercultural pragmatics, "tak[ing] into account both the societal and individual factors including cooperation and egocentrism that [...] are not antagonistic phenomena in interaction" (p. 42). SCA is an anchor point in intercultural pragmatics, "emphasiz[ing] the complex role of cultural and private mental models, how these are applied categorically and/or reflectively by individuals in response to socio-cultural environmental feedback mechanisms, and how this leads to and explains different meaning outcomes and knowledge transfer" (p. 46). Additionally and rather importantly, SCA moves away from the traditional approach to intercultural communication as the study field analysing communicative misunderstandings and failure and shifts the focus on "how people with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds act and react in intercultural discourse, how common-ground or intercultural understanding is established, and what new discourse structures result from intercultural communication" (p. 59).

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 discuss and elaborate on several important concepts, including pragmatic competence, encyclopedic knowledge, cultural models and formulaic language use from the viewpoint of socio-cultural pragmatics. Thus, pragmatic competence in this context is seen as "a very dynamic and flexible phenomenon whose development and functioning depends on several different variables including [...] age, individual motivation, quality and quantity of input, and socio-cultural environment" (p. 80). The interdependence of language and culture is quite central to SCA. Culture is characterized by fuzzy boundaries, changing constantly along both the synchronic and diachronic axes. Language, on the other hand, is deeply rooted in the conceptual system, the two inseparable pillars of which are encyclopedic and linguistic knowledge, "both playing a profound role in how human beings make sense in communication" (p. 81). In addition, cultural models, defined as "cognitive frames [...] of assumed or implicit knowledge that assist individuals in interpreting and understanding information [...]" (p. 87), become collectively internalized and shared, but it is important to note that in SCA individuals are not seen as mere "cognitive clones of culture" (p. 88). Instead, "collective cultural models are internalized and privatized by individuals through their own experience and developed into private mental models" (p. 88). They are prototypes that help us "interpret and assess conduct" (p. 88), but they are neither guiding it, nor directing it (p. 88). Finally, formulaic language use, still rather underrepresented in pragmatic research, is discussed at length specifically in the context of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), addressing in particular how ELF speakers deal with the difference between literal and non-literal meaning of the chosen aspects of formulaic phraseology (pp. 119 ff; also Kecskes 2007).

Central to research in intercultural pragmatics are three major concepts — context, common ground and salience — which are elaborated on in Chapters 6—8. In SCA context is "a dynamic construct that appears in different formats in language use both as a repository and/or trigger of knowledge" (p. 129), representing both sides of world knowledge: prior context, i. e. the knowledge in our mind, and actual situational context, existing in the outer world independently (p. 129). When interlocutors try to understand each other, they largely depend on background knowledge they share as their common ground. Defined by Clark (2009: 116) as the "sum of all information that people assume they share", common ground in intercultural communication cannot simply be assumed, but it actually emerges "in the process of creating intercultures" (p. 168). Salience, as the third major representative of the "big three" in intercultural pragmatics, can be defined as "the most probable out of all possible" (p. 176). It is highly culture-specific, therefore highly relevant to SCA, which distinguishes three important types of salience, namely inherent, collective and emergent situational.

Chapter 9 explores issues in politeness and impoliteness in the context of socio-cultural pragmatics, critically reviewing the state of the art in (im)politeness studies research and outlining relevant research questions for the current (im)politeness-SCA interfaces and integrations. The volume concludes with relevant methodological and analytical considerations (Chapter 10), suggesting that whichever approach the researcher chooses to analyse intercultural discourse, their "main focus should be on the discourse process rather than just on culture" (p. 219).

EVALUATION

The volume, being the first book-length publication on intercultural pragmatics, truly blazes a trail for researchers and practitioners in the field, defining the boundaries and profiling intercultural pragmatics in the context of tangent fields, as well as locating the place and identifying the role of the subject within and across a range of disciplines dealing with communication, culture and society. Having emerged as a field of inquiry in its own right just over a decade or so ago, intercultural pragmatics has already managed to attract a lot of spotlight within relevant scholarly circles, largely due to the efforts and activities of Istvan Kecskes, widely recognized as the founder of the discipline. *Intercultural Pragmatics* will, no doubt, become an indispensable reference to a range of scholars and practitioners alike. Written in clear and very accessible language while dealing with complex concepts, the volume engages the reader, allowing them to achieve deeper insights into the intricate interdependence of communication and interculturality. There will certainly be many more monographs on the subject in the years to come, but Kecskes' volume is quite possibly set out to become the manifesto of intercultural pragmatics.

REFERENCES

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