

PRAGMATIC TRANSFER OF ALGERIAN LEARNERS IN LEARNING ENGLISH AS A THIRD LANGUAGE

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Abstract: The recent developments in cognitive linguistics turn EFL research interest to investigate the role of pragmatic aspects in the learn ability of English instead of grammar-governed learning. Pragmatics becomes ever more essential to the success of the language learner for its focus on language-in-use tasks. Pragmatic transfer occurs when non-native speakers of English transfer their L1 pragmatic knowledge to the target language. The EFL Algerian learner is closely concerned with pragmatic transfer since he/she speaks two languages, the first, Arabic, exhibits language distance with English while the second, French, is pragmatically more related to English than Arabic. The aim of the present research is to investigate the aspects of the pragmatic transfer and find out which language do learners transfer more from. To investigate the pragmatic transfer in the EFL Algerian classroom, we selected to work on the speech acts of requests among second year English students at Annaba University, through the use of discourse completion task. The analysis of data indicated the dominance of negative transfer of requests from Arabic to English. Algerian EFL learners transfer from Arabic to English and not from French despite the factor of language distance between Arabic and English.

Keywords: *bilingualism; EFL; English; learning; pragmatic transfer; third language.*

INTRODUCTION

The study of pragmatic transfer becomes ever more central for the fact that L2 and foreign language learners transfer unconsciously from their L1. Pragmatic transfer addresses interlanguage studies and brings understanding of the learner's learning experiences. In the EFL classroom, it is a necessary stage in the acquisition of the new pragmatics knowledge and occurs when non-native speakers of English transfer their L1 pragmatic knowledge to the target language (Kasper, 1992).

Pragmatic failure is often recorded by teachers especially in those settings where the pragmlinguistic and sociopragmatic transfer are inappropriate within the L1/L2 and the target language; in that, pragmatic differences in the learner's languages may lead to unsuccessful communication (Thomas, 1983; Beebe & Takahashi, 1989). Besides, pragmatic proficiency correlates

with pragmatic transfer (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989; Blum-Kulka, 1982). Moreover, Thomas (1984) considers pragmatic failure as more problematic than linguistic errors. Pragmatic failure may occur as the result of learners' overgeneralizing the use of L2 to inappropriate settings which is linked to pragmlinguistic failure. Research on pragmatic transfer in the case of three languages is almost absent. A reason why an investigation in such a context is beneficial to predict where the pragmatic failure can occur.

Pragmatic transfer occurs when non-native speakers of English transfer their L1 pragmatic knowledge to the target language (Kasper, 1992). It is recognized in communicative tasks where learners perform a communicative behavior in the target language with a remarkable influence from the L1. Factors of pragmatic transfer are

varied. Pütz & Aertselaer (2008, p. 303) summarize them as follows:

Occurrences of pragmatic transfer may be influenced by various factors including learners' perception of language distance between their native and target language (e.g., Takahashi, 1996), learning context (e.g., Beebe & Taka-hashii, 1989), instructional effect (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Kasper, 1992), second language proficiency (e.g., Olshtain & Cohen 1989; Beebe & Taka-hashii, 1989), and length of time in the target community (e.g., Félix-Bradsefer, 2004; Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, 1982).

Languages differ from each other not only at the grammatical level but also at the pragmatic. Languages of the same family and which share lexical features may differ pragmatically, how about languages descending from different families. In other words, the function of languages is socio-culturally established and once coming in interaction, they become at the hands of their users. As Schmitt (2013, p. 83) notes that:

“The ways in which pragmatic differences are handled may need to vary according to whether they are primarily pragmalinguistic differences (that is, differences in the linguistic strategies typically used to convey a given illocutionary force) or primarily sociopragmatic differences (that is, differences in the social assessment, beliefs and principles that underlie language use.”

Pragmatic differences between languages are nowadays handled by “cross-cultural pragmatics” which explains differences not as misguided universalism but rather in reference to social and cultural factors. Wierzbicka (2003) notes the relevance of these factors by saying: 1) In different societies, and different countries, people speak differently; 2) These differences in ways of speaking are profound and systematic; 3) These differences reflect different cultural values, or at least different hierarchies of values; and 4) Different ways

of speaking, different communicative styles, can be explained and made sense of, in terms of independency established different cultural values and cultural priorities.

Culture, thus, acts upon language and directs its use towards cultural priorities which can even act upon the normative forms which display stability in their native context and becomes different in the multilingual context, yet a source of constraints to the learner who has more than two languages in her/his linguistic repertoire.

Research in interlanguage pragmatics settles on the assumption that pragmatic transfer leads to proficiency in the second language. Beebe and Taka-hashii (1989) propose that:

“The positive correlation hypothesis standing on empirical study, they advanced the generalization that negative transfer of form and meaning is more likely to occur with higher proficiency learners because they have the L2 morphosyntactic resources to utilize their L1 communicative knowledge and practices in the L2” (as cited in Belz & Vyatkina, 2006, p.361).

However, other studies came to refute Beebe and Taka-hashii's generalization. Dalmau and Gotor (2007) report that “an increase in L2 proficiency does not necessarily translate into a linear decrease in the number of non-optimal pragmatic performances” (as cited in Salgado, 2011, p.39). In the same line, Keshavarz, Eslami, and Ghahraman (2006) say that evidence contrary to Beebe and Taka-hashii (1989) proposition exist taking examples of the study by Maeshiba, *et al.* (1996) who study transfer of apology strategies of intermediate and advanced Japanese speaking ESL learners in Hawaii. The study's conclusion refutes the positive correlation hypothesis whereby advanced learners performed better than the intermediate group, showing more positive transfer and less negative transfer. Kasper (1992) comments on Maeshiba, *et al.* (1996) by saying that “transfer of apology strategies could be based on similarities and differences in assessment of contextual

variables, with positive transfer occurring with similar assessment, and negative transfer where assessment differed.” For the most part, these predictions were borne out (as cited in Ringbom, 2007, p. 66).

Ringbom (2007) suggests that a threshold level of proficiency combining both an extensive vocabulary and ideas about:

“The learner needs to have both a fairly extensive vocabulary and some idea of how these ideas can be joined together. Once this stage has been researched, assumed similarities at the pragmatic level may come into play. However, in other language areas, the effect of pragmatic transfer gradually weakens as proficiency develops” (p. 66-67).

Pragmatic transfer occurs necessarily in multilingual communication having speakers expressing their actions with the appropriate polite forms at their disposal: “it is significant that politeness is expressed by a large number of speech formulae and similar conventionalized verbal means which are tightly bound to the deep structures of the cooperative action” (Rehbein & Fienemann, 2004, p.260). Pragmatic transfer represents the influences of the L1 structures to the L2 under social measures:

“To generalize, in the domain of polite action, there are influences of pragmatic L1-structures on the forms of acting and speaking in L2, especially regarding social measures of polite action from different traditions, linguistic formulae, action patterns, illocutionary acts and linguistic procedures from different linguistic fields. In summarizing, we label these influences pragmatic transfer” (p. 264).

The influences exercise as the result of the pragmatic transfer may condition the appropriateness of the multilingual communication wherein some parameters come into consideration: 1) The language used; 2) The speech situation; 3) The roles of the participants; 4) The sociopolitical status of the languages involved; 5) The skills of the participants; 6) The typological distance

of the languages involved; and 7) The degree of languages separation, language mixing or switching (House & Rehbein, 2004, p. 3).

The language user, being a participant in a social speech situation or a language learner, is in general under the effect of pragmatic transfer. Of the above parameters, the last three ones are likely to condition the learner’s pragmatic transfer. In that, the skills of the participants in the target language may act upon the negative transfer; the typological distance may either lead to separate use of each language or wrong generalizations of speech acts; and the extent to which languages are separate or close and whether learners, consciously or unconsciously, can keep languages separate.

The transfer from the L1 to the L2 in a bilingual context is inevitable unless learners’ language proficiency in the second language enables learners to develop positive transfer, or they have separate use of languages. In the case of a third language, the transfer cannot be predicted or generalized as it depends the most on the mastery of the second language (bilinguality), language distance between the three languages, and the developed pragmatic competence in the L3.

Research on pragmatic transfer in multilingual contexts is limited if compared to bilingual and ESL contexts; and the available one focused more on syntactic features’ influence on the target language. The question becomes then which language learners rely on in their pragmatic production? The literature on the topic, though not enough to support the varied multilingual contexts, suggests some useful views. Fouser (1997), as a case of illustration, studied the pragmatic transfer in adult Korean/English learners of Japanese as a third language. The participants were set to mixed research method involving a Japanese C-Test, a translation task, a Discourse Completion Test, a Discourse Evaluation Test, a short writing task, and a language learning-experience questionnaire (as cited in Jordà, 2005). Fouser (1997) predicts that language transfer would occur from the language perceived as closest (Korean) to the

target language (Japanese). The results confirmed his hypothesis wherein the language distance affected pragmatic transfer, that is, subjects resorted to the L1 (Korean) regarding the pragmatic features of the target language (Japanese) (as cited in Jordà, 2005).

The present research focuses on the speech act use of requests by Algerian EFL learners at the University of Annaba. The case of Algerian learners is that the pragmatic transfer is subject to two different languages and not just an L2 influencing the pragmatic knowledge of the target language. The aim is to see how pragmatic transfer occurs: 1) Is it from the L1 or L2? and 2) Is it positive or negative transfer? It is assumed that language dominance affects pragmatic proficiency which is manifested in English pragmatic proficiency.

The research methodology presents a study of requests among EFL learners of intermediate level (2nd grade) at the University of Annaba. It adopts DCT wherein learners are asked to fill in a discourse completion task (DCT) on requests presented in the form of a questionnaire. Another questionnaire is used for the aim to evaluate language dominance, and see from which language the participants transfer requests.

METHOD

To examine EFL learners' pragmatic transfer, two research tools had been used. The first was a language dominance questionnaire aiming to know what language dominated the informant; that was, Arabic or French. The second tool was a discourse completion task (DCT) aiming to test the pragmatic transfer. The two tests were administered to a randomly selected group of twenty learners from the 2nd grade of the Department of English at Annaba University.

The sample that contributed in the present research was a group of undergraduate students learning English as a foreign language. The choice had been on the 2nd grade was for the reason that English

learners in the Algerian University study three years (LMD) whereby the second year was the middle where the learner was supposed to have acquired a language proficiency in the first year and developed it further in the third year.

The method used for collecting data was Discourse Completion Task. The choice had been on requests as they occupied an important part in interlanguage pragmatics, and mark pragmatic transfer. Depending on the role of instruction in communicative tasks, learners might use different requests strategies in the target language. In that, they might transfer the L1/L2 to the target language and might also use native-like request strategies. The test represents eight situations of different request forms, reflecting daily speech situations taken from the Algerian context. The informants were told to ask a request corresponding to the situation in English. A request was considered appropriate if it was polite and went with the language's social norms and corresponded to speech acts of English requests.

Concerning data analysis, the pragmatic transfer was evaluated as positive or negative. The latter occurred when the same structure and meaning was transferred from one language to another. If the two forms of requests were accepted in the two languages, the request was to consider as a positive transfer. If the transfer transcended the norms of the English and results in inappropriate use of English, it was, then, considered as negative. Correlations were established in relation to language dominance test to find out the source of the pragmatic transfer, that the source language.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Language dominance questionnaire

The first research method aimed at investigating the informants' language dominance. That was, the language that the informants made much use of. This was done by administering a bilingual background questionnaire for Arabic/French speakers.

Table 1. *The result of the language dominance questionnaire*

| | P' orig | Parents' Lge | Parents' educ | Early lge acqui | Early Bili | F lge before 5 y | Parents' lge | Infor mant's lge | GP lge |
|---|----------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| A | ALG | AR/FR | M:ES F:MS | AR6 FR7 | No | AR FR | AR | AR | AR |
| B | ALG | AR/FR /KA | M:HS F:HS | AR3y FR7 | Yes | AR FR | AR FR | AR | AR FR |
| C | ALG | AR FR | M:GS F:GS | AR3y FR7y | Yes | AR FR | AR FR | AR FR | AR FR |
| D | ALG | AR/BR | M:GS F:GS | AR6y FR7y | No | AR/BR FR | AR/BR | AR/BR | AR |
| E | ALG | AR/FR | M:GS F:GS | AR6y FR7y | Yes | AR FR | AR FR | AR FR | AR |
| F | ALG | AR/FR | M:GS F:GS | AR3y FR3y | Yes | AR/FR | AR/FR | AR/FR | FR |
| G | ALG | AR/FR | M:GS F:GS | AR4y FR6y | Yes | AR/FR | AR/FR | AR/FR | AR/F R |
| H | ALG | AR/FR | M:HS F:HS | AR3y FR5y | Yes | AR/FR | AR | AR/FR | AR/F R |
| I | ALG | AR/FR | M:C F:HS | AR5y FR7y | NO | AR/FR | AR/FR | AR | AR |
| J | ALG | AR | M:ES F:HS | AR4y FR8y | No | AR | AR | AR | AR |
| K | ALG | AR/FR | M:HS F:ES | AR4y FR9y | No | AR | AR | AR | AR |
| L | ALG | AR | M:MS F:ES | AR6y FR9y | No | AR | AR | AR | AR |
| M | ALG | AR | M:C F:C | AR5y FR7y | No | AR/FR | AR/FR | AR | AR |
| N | ALG | AR | M:HS F:C | AR6y FR7y | No | AR/FR | AR/FR | AR/FR | AR |
| O | ALG | AR | M:ES F:ES | AR3y FR5y | No | AR/FR | AR | AR/FR | AR |
| P | ALG | AR/FR | M:MS F:HS | AR3y FR9y | No | AR/FR | AR/FR | AR/FR | AR |
| Q | ALG | AR/FR | M:HS F:HS | AR4y FR7y | No | AR/FR | AR | AR | AR/F R |
| R | ALG | AR/FR | M:C F:C | AR5y FR7y | No | AR/FR | AR/FR | AR | AR |
| S | ALG | AR/FR | M:HS F:HS | AR5y FR7y | Yes | AR/FR | AR/FR | AR/FR | AR |
| T | ALG | AR/FR | M:C F:C | AR6y FR7y | No | AR/FR | AR/FR | AR | AR |

Table 2. *The result of the language dominance questionnaire*

| | TV lge | Lge of read stories | AR Overall ability | FR Overall ability | AR skills | FR skills | Lge pref | Lge dominance |
|---|--------|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|---|---|------------------|---------------|
| A | AR FR | AR | Native | Unders & speak well | Native speaker | VG list & read G spea & writ | Depends adreseee | AR |
| B | AR FR | AR FR | Native | Unders & speak | Native speaker | G list read & spea needs work in wri | Depends adreseee | AR-FR |
| C | AR FR | AR FR | Native | Native | NSC | NSC except wri | AR FR | AR-FR |
| D | AR/FR | AR/FR | Native | Native | NSC wri | NSC wri | FR | AR/BR FR |
| E | AR FR | AR FR | Native | Unders & speak well | VGread & Spea G list & wri | VG read G spea & list NW wri | AR FR | AR-FR |
| F | FR | FR | Native | Native | NSC | NSC except wri | AR/FR | AR-FR |
| G | AR/FR | AR/FR | Understand & speak well | Native | VG list G read & spea NW wri NSC | VG in all skills G wri NSC in rea & lis | Depends adreseee | AR-FR |
| H | FR | AR/FR | Understand & speak well | Unders & speak well | read & list VG spea & wri | VGspea & wri | Depends adreseee | AR-FR |
| I | AR | AR | Understand & speak well | Unders & speak well | NSCread VG speak list & wri | VGread & list G spea & wri | AR | AR |
| J | AR/FR | AR | Understand & speak well | Unders & speak well | VG read G spea & list NW wri | NW read & spea P wri & list | AR | AR |
| K | AR/FR | AR | Native | Unders & speakgreat | NSC | Gread & list | AR | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|-----------------------------|-------|
| | | | | difficu | | NWspea & wri | | AR |
| L | AR | AR | Native | Unders & speak some difficu | NSC | VG list NW remain skills | AR | AR |
| M | AR | AR | Native | Understand & speakgreat diffi | NSCexcept wri | G read NWremain skills | AR | AR |
| N | FR | FR | Understand & speak some diffi | Native | VG list G read & spea NWwri | NSC except wri | Depends adrese | AR/FR |
| O | AR | AR | Native | Unders & speak great diffi | VG all skills G read NSC list | G except spea VG read | Depends adrese | AR |
| P | AR/FR | AR | Native | Unders & speak some diffi | VG read & spea G wri | G list NW spea wri | Depends adrese | AR-FR |
| Q | AR/FR | AR/FR | Unders & speak little diffi | Unders& speak some diffi | NSC read & list VG spea & wri | NSCread VGremain skills | AR/FR | AR/FR |
| R | AR/FR | AR/FR | Unders & speak little diffiy | Unders & speak some diffi | NSC | G except wri | AR/FR | AR/FR |
| S | AR/FR | AR/FR | Native | Unders & speak little diffi | NSC except read Native speaker | VG list Gremain skills VG read | Depends on the adrese | AR/FR |
| T | AR/FR | AR/FR | Native | Unders & speak some diffi | Comand | NW remain skills | AR | AR |

Notes:

Arabic monolinguals: A, I, J, K, L, M, O, T
Equal bilinguals: B, C, D, E, G, H, N, P, Q,
R, S

Bilinguals dominated by French: F

Eight informants were monolingual speakers speaking Arabic while the twelve remaining ones were Arabic-French Bilinguals. From the results, the informants' bilingualism could be grouped into three categories: Arabic monolinguals, equal

bilinguals, and bilinguals dominated by French.

The results of the questionnaire point to what the informants thought their language state was. It was estimation about their language used in general but their real bilinguality could be confirmed only by measuring their bilingual proficiency. The language dominated questionnaire, therefore, indicated the language(s) that the informants use in different domains of

language. The majority of the informants, 12, were Arabic-French bilinguals of which 11 were equal bilinguals, and one informant was a bilinguals dominated by French.

whether it was negative or a positive transfer, either from Arabic or from French. In a third case, it could be an English request which was a performance of the speech act of request done in the same way as a request performed by a native English speaker

Test of pragmatic transfer

The test's questions were displayed in Q1, Q2, etc. Every question was evaluated

Table 3. *The results of DCT based on requests*

| | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q5 | Q6 | Q7 | Q8 |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| A | NTA | NTA | ER | ER | NTA | ER | ER | NTA |
| B | NTA | NTA | ER | ER | NTA | NTA | NTA | NTA |
| C | ER | ER | PTA | ER | ER | PTA | ER | ER |
| D | NTA | NTA | PTA | PTA | NTA | NTA | NTA | NTA |
| E | NTA | PTA | NTA | NTA | PTA | NTA | NTA | NTA |
| F | ER | ER | ER | ER | ER | ER | PTA | PTA |
| G | NTA | NTA | PTA | PTA | NTA | NTA | NTA | NTA |
| H | NTA | NTA | NTA | PTA | NTA | NTA | NTA | NTA |
| I | NTA | NTA | NTA | NTA | NTA | NTA | NTA | NTA |
| J | NTA | NTA | NTA | NTA | NTA | NTA | NTA | NTA |
| K | NTA | NTA | PTA | NTA | PTA | NTA | NTA | NTA |
| L | NTA | NTA | PTA | ER | ER | ER | NTA | NTA |
| M | NTA | NTA | PTA | NTA | NTA | NTA | NTA | NTA |
| N | PTA | NTA | NTA | NTA | NTA | NTA | PTA | ER |
| O | ER | NTA | PTA | NTA | PTA | NTA | PTA | PTA |
| P | ER | ER | PTA | ER | ER | ER | PTA | ER |
| Q | NTA | NTA | PTA | ER | NTA | NTA | PTA | NTA |
| R | NTA | NTA | PTA | NTA | NTA | PTA | NTA | NTA |
| S | ER | NTA | NTA | ER | ER | PTA | PTA | PTA |
| T | NTA | NTA | ER | ER | ER | ER | PTA | PTA |

The number of the performed requests was 160, 89 represented negative transfer from Arabic, 34 had a positive transfer from

Arabic, and 37 performed English requests. It could be represented diagrammatically as follows:

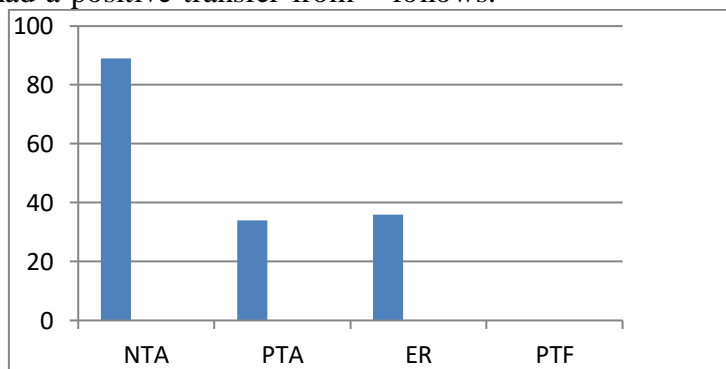


Figure 1. *The result of DCT based on requests*

The results point to the existence of pragmatic transfer in the use of the English language. Transfer occurred from Arabic to English and not from French to English. The amount of negative transfer from Arabic was higher than positive transfer from Arabic. The amount of transfer from French to English, positive and negative was null.

The informants' requests needed to be analyzed individually to see their quality and the nature of transfer. For example, if we took randomly informant A, we found that he/she had the first request realized from a direct transfer from dialectical Arabic and which sounds impolite in English as it used the strategy of direct addressing. The second

question was a transfer from Arabic but which used a polite strategy “sorry but could you please” and results in positive transfer from Arabic. The third question was performed with an English request where the informant used a polite strategy for asking about help. In this question, the informant was in need of help and this could be the reason why his/her request strategy was English-like. The same thing for question 4, question 5 was a negative transfer from Arabic because it lacked polite forms such as “can you please”. It might be because the speech situation was within close friends that was why the informant avoided polite forms (register). Question 6 & 7 were performed as an English request because the informant needed something and his language was purposeful; therefore, it was polite and performed in an English tone. Question 8 was a positive transfer from Arabic because the last expression “can I do that” was a translation from dialectical Arabic.

Just four informants had requests performed in an English way (C, F, T and P). The remaining had variability in their requests ranging generally between NTA (Negative Transfer from Arabic) and PTA (Positive Transfer from Arabic). To

understand the variability, we needed to analyze the informants’ answers in terms of the different performed speech situations. The questions vary in their purposes. In that, questions one and two were about complaints and had almost all been performed with a negative transfer from Arabic. The remaining speech situations were about services where the informant needed help or something. There was a move from NTA to PTA along questions one and two, and questions three and four. This included eleven informants: A, B, D, G, H, K, L, M, Q, R and T. The positive transfer occurred when the informant needed a service but when he/she was in an unpleasant situation, the transfer from Arabic was negative.

It was to say that the current sample of English learning set to the evaluation of the source of pragmatic transfer in a multilingual context revealed the transfer from Arabic and not from French. Now, let’s draw lines between the request form, the affecting language and the type of transfer. From the previous analysis, we got informed that NTA was the highest. To understand this more, we established the following correlations presented in the table below:

Table 4. *Correlations between the type of bilingualism and the type of pragmatic transfer*

| Informants | Type of Bilingualism | Type of Transfer |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| A | AR | NTA ER |
| B | AR-FR | NTA |
| C | AR-FR | ER |
| D | AR/BR FR | NTA |
| E | AR-FR | NTA |
| F | AR-FR | ER |
| G | AR-FR | NTA |
| H | AR-FR | NTA |
| I | AR | NTA |
| J | AR | NTA |
| K | AR | NTA |
| L | AR | NTA ER |
| M | AR | NTA |
| N | AR/FR | NTA |
| O | AR | PTA NTA |
| P | AR-FR | ER |
| Q | AR/FR | NTA |
| R | AR/FR | NTA |
| S | AR/FR | PTA ER |
| T | AR | PTA NTA ER |

The correlation between the type of bilingualism and the type of pragmatic transfer revealed null correspondences because both of the informants who were dominated by Arabic (monolinguals) and the bilingual informants had variable pragmatic transfer. Informant A, for example, was dominated by Arabic and had yet a NTA and ER. Similarly, informant T, who was Arabic-French bilingual, had pragmatic transfer of the type PTA NTA ER.

This was an indication that the negative transfer originated from Arabic as the majority of the informants were Arabic-French bilinguals dominated by Arabic. Language dominance affected pragmatic proficiency in case the informant had a mixed state of the three languages and one of affects English pragmatic proficiency more than the other. The current sample had the majority of informants made a negative transfer from Arabic and a small minority made English-like requests. The first group could be said to not having distance between their native language (Arabic) and the target language (English). Besides, they had not well developed pragmatic competence in English which could be due to the instructional effect and the length of time in the target community. The second group, by contrast, performed English requests as the result of pragmatic proficiency they had in English. Their functional proficiency in English allowed them, as suggested by Gass and Neu (2006) to rely less on their native language. However, the two groups lack proficiency in French pragmatics as there was the total absence of pragmatic transfer from French because they lacked second language proficiency and their use of the French was superficial.

The reasons of pragmatic transfer could be attributed to three interrelated factors: learners could not make distance between Arabic and English in the way that they transfer unconsciously forms and strategies from Arabic to English without being aware of whether English allowed for such transfer. It occurred as the result of the role of instructional effect. English learners in

Algeria did not reach pragmatic proficiency and kept focusing on grammatical proficiency, a factor resulting from the limited teaching and practice of pragmatics in general. A last factor had to do with the length of time in the target community. Algerian learners had a limited contact with the English native community expected those who rely on computer-mediated communication. Real contact with English native speakers fosters the development of pragmatic proficiency and could decrease negative transfer from Arabic.

Forms of Arabic pragmatic transfer

The present section dealt with the forms that the informants used in performing the different situations of English requests. Grouped as communication strategies by House (2007), we dealt with strategies resulting in positive as well as negative transfer. In that there were some forms the informants took from Arabic and tried to perform requests with in English. It was an overgeneralization from Arabic.

Those who made a negative transfer from Arabic made a wrong use of "Sorry" which rendered their requests a translation from Arabic yet unacceptable in English. "Sorry" was usually used to apologize for mistakes in general. In Algerian Arabic "sorry" was, too, used for apologizing and also for taking attention when there was a need to have somebody did something. In the analyzed requests, "sorry" had more wrong generalizations than just apologizing because the main aim of DCT was requests not apologies. For example, in question four a lot of informants started it with "sorry" while a salutation form was required as the speaker made a call to ask for help and not to apologize. In Algerian Arabic it occurred as the speaker apologizes for interruption. In this case, "excuse me" after a salutation would make the request sounding English. This was an example for illustration from question eight (Appendix B): "Sorry could I change this shirt please?". The informant could first use an introductory phrase instead of "sorry". Another similar ill-use of sorry

was “I’m sorry but I want to change the shirt I bought earlier is it possible?” Similar cases of word-to-word translation from Arabic had been found in a similar research by Dendenne (2016) who studied the performance of the speech acts of request and apology by Algerian EFL learners as part of their interlanguage-pragmatics. Dendenne’s collected sample presents interesting examples of direct translation from Arabic: *jazaaka lahu khayran/May God increase your bounty* (p.179).

Another over generalization from Arabic was the typical translation of Arabic polite forms. It included typical translations from Algerian Arabic by translating words directly from Algerian Arabic like the following example: “Could you please tell me the nearest station? I am not from here, please” “تقدر من فضلك تقلي أقرب محطة ؟ من فضلك”. The translation resulted in syntactic mistakes (lack of about before the nearest) and the repetition of the word “please”. Another translation was seen in the following example: “Pardon me, I am new in town. If you are not very occupied could you please guide me to the nearest station?” “سامحني أنا جديد في البلاد كان ماكش لاتي بزاف تقدر “يعيشك دلني على المحطة القريبة”. The request resulted in negative transfer due to the ill-use of the expression “pardon me” which was a typical translation from Algerian Arabic. The learners might not be aware of the performed speech act as they went straightforward to translation from Algerian Arabic which resulted in cases of negative and positive polite forms. This strategy was used in an intimate way since the user ignores the right equivalent in English or she/he had thought of its counterpart, yet resulting in a pragmatic negative transfer. However, it should be noted that the negative polite forms did not aim at creating impolite acts in themselves, as suggested by Brown and Levison’s theory (1987). They were rather unconsciously performed resulting from the high influence of Arabic and ignorance of the pragmatic rules of the English language.

Another way of negative transfer from Arabic was the use of Arabic words co-

texting with English words, that was a kind of code-switching. Examples included the following: “Salam alikom. Do you know where the nearest station from here?” “السلام ؟ عليكم تعرف أقرب محطة منا ؟” and “Hey mam, I think this shirt is too large for me, so can I change it?” “أما تبتانلي هاد تركو كبير علي، نقدر “تبدلو؟”. The first example made a salutation in Arabic while the second used the word “mam” which was typically cultural in the sense that when Algerians address an old woman, they used the word “mam” for showing respect for her. However, such a language alternation was considered as unacceptable though resulting from the speaker’s language proficiency (Guerini, 2006, p. 216).

CONCLUSION

The present study deals with pragmatic transfer in a multilingual context of Algerian Arabic-French bilinguals learning English as a third language. The results reveal the existence of pragmatic transfer in the use of the English language. Transfer occurs from Arabic to English and not from French to English. Moreover, requests are realized from a direct transfer from dialectical Arabic and which sounds impolite in English as it uses the strategy of direct addressing. There is also positive transfer from Arabic but its amount is limited if compared with negative transfer. The absence of transfer from French to English indicates that the informants lack pragmatic proficiency in this language despite its status and use in Algeria.

The correlation between pragmatic transfer and bilingualism points to the existence of negative transfer from Arabic as the majority of the informants are Arabic-French bilinguals dominated by Arabic. Language dominance affects pragmatic proficiency in case the informant has a mixed state of the three languages; and Arabic, the dominant language, affects English pragmatic proficiency.

Finally, the reasons of negative pragmatic transfer from Arabic can be attributed to the low effect in the teaching of pragmatics in EFL classes. In that, the lack of

pragmatic awareness in English makes the EFL learners relying on their Arabic pragmatic proficiency by transferring from Arabic to English and transcending, therefore, the pragmatic norms of English.

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