Cross-cultural pragmatics :
the semantics of human interaction / 2nd ed.

by Anna Wierzbicka.

Cross-Cultural Pragmatics

The Semantics of Human Interaction

Second edition

by

Anna Wierzbicka

Mouton de Gruyter

Berlin · New York 2003

Introduction to the second edition

I am very happy to see the demand for a new edition of my 1991 *Cross-
Cultural Pragmatics – the Semantics of Human Interaction.* I am also
happy to be able to say, in 2003, that since this book was first published
the field of cross-cultural pragmatics has advanced enormously; and
furthermore, that this progress has not only not made my 1991 *Cross-
Cultural Pragmatics* dated, but that, on the contrary, its tenets and its
overall approach have been essentially vindicated. A decade ago, the
"pragmatic" scene was still largely dominated by the search for the "uni-
versals of politeness" and for the "universal maxims of conversation".
The widely accepted paradigms were those of Brown and Levinson's
(1978, 1987) theory of politeness, which affirmed "pan-cultural interpret-
ability of politeness phenomena" (1978: 288), and Grice's (1975) theory
of conversation, which posited a number of universal conversational
principles. It is heartening to see to what extent the situation has now
changed.

In the nineteen eighties, and well into the nineties, the idea that inter-
personal interaction is governed, to a large extent, by norms which are
culture-specific and which reflect cultural values cherished by a particular
society went against the grain of what was generally accepted at the time,
and successive conferences of the Inernational Pragmatic Association and
other similar occasions were dominated by studies seeking to confirm
Grice's "maxims" and Brown and Levinson's "universals of politeness"
in this or that new area, and this or that new language.

In 1978, Brown and Levinson set out "to describe and account for
what is in the light of current theory a most remarkable phenomenon.
This is the extraordinary parallelism in the linguistic minutiae of the ut-
terances with which people choose to express themselves in quite unre-
lated languages and cultures" (Brown and Levinson 1978: 60). A quarter
of a century later, it is increasingly widely accepted that this "extraordi-
nary parallelism" was largely an illusion due to that "light of current
theory". (If you set out to show that everything can be described in terms
of "negative and positive face" you may indeed find that everything *can*
be so described.) What is seen as more remarkable today, is the extent of
cross-linguistic and cross-cultural differences in ways of speaking. Brown
and Levinson (1978: 61) described it as their goal "to rebut the once-fash-

ionable doctrine of cultural relativity in the field of interaction" and "to show that superficial diversities can emerge from underlying universal principles and are satisfactorily accounted for only in relation to them". Their major conclusion was that "interactional systematics are based largely on universal principles" (1978: 288). Today, it is increasingly accepted that those diversities in ways of speaking and interacting are not superficial at all and that they can be accounted for, above all, in terms of different cultural attitudes and values; and the "cultural relativity in the field of interaction" is increasingly seen as a reality and an important subject for investigation.

When in 1983 I presented, at the monthly meeting of the Sydney Linguistic Circle, a paper entitled "Different cultures, different languages, different speech acts: English vs. Polish" (Wierzbicka 1985), in which I argued that the supposedly universal maxims and principles of "politeness" were in fact rooted in Anglo culture, my ideas were regarded as heretical. When I argued, in particular, that the "freedom from imposition", which Brown and Levinson (1978: 66) saw as one of the most important guiding principles of human interaction, was in fact an Anglo cultural value, and that the avoidance of "flat imperative sentences", which Searle (1975: 69) attributed to the "ordinary (human, A. W.) conversational requirements of politeness", did not reflect "universal principles of politeness" but rather, expressed special concerns of modern Anglo culture, my claims were confidently dismissed. As a matter of fact, it was the hostile and dismissive reaction of that audience which was for me the initial stimulus for engaging in a long-term campaign against what I saw as a misguided orthodoxy of that time.

From the perspective of the intervening years, I must be grateful for the negative reaction of that Sydney audience to a paper which became the nucleus of my 1991 *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics*. I am even more grateful, however, to other linguists, who in that inhospitable post-Gricean climate were also raising their voices in defence of culture as a key factor determining ways of speaking, and in particular, to those who ventured to link language-specific ways of speaking with different cultural values. To mention just a few scholars, whom I saw in those early years, and whom I see now, as "comrades-in-arms": Ho-min Sohn, the author of a pioneering study "Intercultural communication and cognitive values" (1983); Tamar Katriel, the author of *Talking Straight: Dugri speech in Israeli Sabra culture* (1986); Yoshiko Matsumoto, the author of "Reexamination of the universality of face: politeness phenomena in Japanese" (1988); James Matisoff, the author of *Blessings, Curses, Hopes, and Fears:*

Psycho-Ostensive Expressions in Yiddish (1979); Thomas Kochman, the author of *Black and White Styles in Conflict* (1981); Sachiko Ide, the author of a study on the Japanese value of *.wakimae* or discernment (1989); Donal Carbaugh, the author of *Talking American* (1990); and closer to home, my colleagues: Cliff Goddard, whose numerous publications are listed in the References; Jean Harkins, the author of *Bridging Two Worlds: Aboriginal English and Cross-Cultural Understanding* (1994); Felix Ameka, the author of studies on Ghanaian conversational routines and the editor of a volume on interjections (see the References); and Michael Clyne, the author of *Intercultural Communication at Work: Cultural Values in Discourse* (1994). Last but not least, I would like to mention the important role of two open-minded and cross-culturally alive journals: Jacob Mey's *Journal of Pragmatics*, and Marcelo Dascal's *Pragmatics and Cognition*.

Outside linguistics, there were of course anthropologists who did not give in to the superficial and anti-cultural universalism of the time and who continued to focus on the language-particulars and to probe the links between ways of speaking, ways of thinking, ways of feeling and ways of living. To mention just a few names and works, particularly important from a linguistic point of view: Catherine Lutz, the author of the classic book *Unnatural Emotions: Everyday sentiments on a Micronesian atoll and their challenge to Western theory* (1988); Richard Shweder, the founder of "cultural psychology" and the author of *Thinking Through Cultures – Expeditions in Cultural Psychology* (1991); Dorothy Holland and Naomi Quinn, the editors of *Cultural Models in Language and Thought* (1987); and Roy D'Andrade and Claudia Strauss, the authors of *Human Motives and Cultural Models* (1992). I would also like to mention here two journals which I see as especially important: *Ethos* and *Culture and Psychology*.

There were also some philosophers who started to question the pragmatic theories of Grice, Griceans, and "neo-Griceans" from a philosophical as well as cross-linguistic point of view. In particular, Wayne Davis (1998) has argued in a book-length critique that "the Gricean theory has been barren" and that "the illusion of understanding provided by the Gricean theory has only served to stifle inquiry" (Davis 1998: 3). "The Gricean explanation of common implicatures" is, Davis argued, "undermined by the existence of nonuniversal implicature conventions" (Davis 1998: 183).

For example, Grice and his followers (e.g. Levinson 1983) have claimed that the correct interpretation of a tautology like *War is war* can

be calculated from some universal maxims of conversation. Davis points out (with reference to Chapter 10 of my *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics*) that this claim is refuted by the observation that such tautologies receive different interpretations in different cultures, and he concludes: "The moral is clear. Generalized tautology implicatures … are not explained by Gricean Maxims" (Davis 1998: 46). In a similar context, Davis (1998: 168) quotes and endorses my own observation that "from the outset, studies in speech acts have suffered from an astonishing ethnocentrism" (Wierzbicka 1985: 145).

Since the decline of the Gricean paradigm, which, as Davis puts it, has only served to stifle inquiry, defines to a large extent the difference in the context between this second edition of my *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics* and the 1991 one, I hope I can be forgiven for quoting at some length Davis' historical account, including his comments on my own work.

> Many of the criticisms I present have been known for some time. But the import and seriousness of the defects individually and collectively have not been widely appreciated, and the problems have had little impact on the general acceptance of Gricean theory. The best known critics of the Gricean theory have either expressed confidence that solutions would be found within the Gricean framework (Harnish 1976) or presented alternative theories with similar defects (Sperber and Wilson 1986). … Only one author (Wierzbicka 1987) has argued that the conception is fundamentally flawed. (Davis 1998: 3)

I hasten to add that Davis has reserved some critical comments for me too, and that I will quote these later. What matters at this point is the historical record, which the reader of this second edition is entitled to know.

From the historical, as well as theoretical, point of view, it is important to note that a powerful impulse for the rise of cross-cultural pragmatics in the last decade came from the growing field of studies focussed on cross-cultural (or inter-cultural) communication. I have quoted in the 1991 book Deborah Tannen's (1986: 30) statement that "the future of the earth depends on cross-cultural communication". At a time when every year millions of people cross the borders, not only between countries but also between languages, and when more and more people of many different cultural backgrounds have to live together in modern multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies, it is increasingly evident that research into differences between cultural norms associated with different languages is essential for peaceful co-existence, mutual tolerance, necessary understanding in the work-place and in other walks of life in the increasingly "global" and yet in many places increasingly diversified world.

The once popular assumption that the "principles of politeness" are essentially the same everywhere and can be described in terms of "universal maxims" such as those listed in Leech (1983: 132) flies in the face of reality as experienced by millions of ordinary people – refugees, immigrants, the children of immigrants, caught between their parents and the society at large, cross-cultural families and their children, and also by monolingual "stay-at-homes" who suddenly find themselves living in societies which are ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse.

In addition to their obvious untruth in relation to daily experiences of millions of people, the supposed "universals of politeness" and the supposed "universal principles of conversation" are clearly of no use in the practical task of furthering cross-cultural communication. When, for example, a well-meaning liberal Anglo-Australian says of her Chinese neighbours that "they are very good neighbours – but they are so rude … for example, they said to me: cut down that branch – we don't want it on our side of the fence" (Canberra 2002), if we as linguists tell her and others like her that the principles of politeness are essentially the same everywhere (recall Brown and Levinson's tenet of "pan-cultural interpretability of politeness phenomena" quoted earlier), we can only confirm her in her view that the Chinese neighbours are very rude (cf. Clyne 1994).

The tremendous practical importance of identifying, and describing, the culture-specific norms of "politeness" and, more generally, norms of interpersonal interaction, has been increasingly recognized by the field of language teaching. In this field, too, the realization grew steadily over the last decade or so that "Grice's Razor", which extols the economical virtues of concentrating on the supposed universality of the "underlying principles" and which cuts off "unnecessary" culture-specific explanations, spells out a disaster for the students' communicative competence and their ability to survive socially in the milieu of their "other" language. As Kramsch (1993) puts it in her book *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*:

> If … language is seen as social practice, culture becomes the very core of language teaching. Cultural awareness must then be viewed both as enabling language proficiency and as being the outcome of reflection on language proficiency. … Once we recognize that language use is indissociable from the creation and transmission of culture, we have to deal with a variety of cultures. (Kramsch 1993: 89)

A key question for Kramsch and many other contemporary theorists and practitioners of language teaching aimed at communicative competence is this: "How can a foreign way of viewing the world be taught via an

educational culture which is itself the product of native conceptions and values?" (Kramsch 1993: 9). Clearly, it is not a question that Grice's Razor or the supposedly universal notion of "positive" or "negative" "face" can help answer.

My own long campaign against the fictitious and harmful "universals of politeness" and "universal principles of human conversation" is rooted in my own experience as a "language migrant" (to use a term introduced by Mary Besemeres, 1998 and 2002) – from Polish into English, especially academic English, in which I have written many books and articles, and also, into Australian English, which has been my daily linguistic environment for thirty years. I have described this experience in some detail in an article entitled "The double life of a bilingual – a cross-cultural perspective" (Wierzbicka 1997b). On a very small scale, this article illustrates an important new aspect of cross-cultural pragmatics as it has evolved over the last decade or so: the new alliance between, on the one hand, linguistic pragmatics, based on "hard linguistic evidence" and rigorous linguistic analysis, and, on the other, the new field of study focused on the "soft data" of personal experience of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic living (cf. Besemeres 2002; Dalziell 2002).

I have referred to my own cross-linguistic and cross-cultural experience in a number of publications, both before and after the 1991 *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics.* Here, I will permit myself to adduce several long quotes from that 1997 cross-cultural memoir, which deliberately takes a personal rather than "objective" perspective. I believe that such a personal perspective legitimizes the insistence with which proponents of cross-cultural pragmatics have been challenging, in the last decade or so, the earlier paradigm. Commenting on my life in Australia, to which I emigrated from Poland in 1972 (having married an Australian) I wrote:

> I had to start learning new "cultural scripts" to live by, and in the process I became aware of the old "cultural scripts" which had governed my life hitherto. I also became aware, in the process, of the reality of "cultural scripts" and their importance to the way one lives one's life, to the image one projects, and even to one's personal identity.
>
> For example, when I was talking on the phone, from Australia, to my mother in Poland (15,000 km away), with my voice loud and excited, carrying much further than is customary in an Anglo conversation, my husband would signal to me: 'Don't shout!' For a long time, this perplexed and confused me: to me, this 'shouting' and this 'excitement' was an inherent part of my personality. Gradually, I came to realise that this very personality was in part culturally constituted. (Wierzbicka 1997b: 119)

The realization of the close links betweeen my ways of speaking, my personality and my Polishness raised for me the question that countless other immigrants are constantly confronted with: to what extent was it desirable, or necessary, to change myself in deference to my new cultural context?

> Early in our life together, my husband objected to my too frequent – in his view – use of the expression *of course.* At first, this puzzled me, but eventually it dawned on me that using *of course* as broadly as its Polish counterpart *oczywiście* is normally used would imply that the interlocutor has overlooked something obvious. In the Polish 'confrontational' style of interaction such an implication is perfectly acceptable, and it is fully consistent with the use of such conversational particles such as, for example, *przecież* ('but obviously – can't you see?'). In mainstream Anglo culture, however, there is much more emphasis on 'tact', on avoiding direct clashes, and there are hardly any confrontational particles comprarable with those mentioned above. *Of course* does exist, but even *of course* tends to be used more in agreement than in disagreement (e. g. 'Could you do X for me?' – 'Of course'). Years later, my bilingual daughter Mary told me that the Polish conversational expression *ależ oczywiście:* 'but-EMPHATIC of course' (which I would often replicate in English as 'but of course') struck her as especially 'foreign' from an Anglo cultural point of view; and my close friend and collaborator Cliff Goddard pointed out, tongue in cheek, that my most common way of addressing him (in English) was 'But Cliff...'. (Wierzbicka 1997b: 119)

Thus, I had to learn to avoid overusing not only *of course* but also many other expressions dictated by my Polish "cultural scripts"; and in my working life at an Anglo university this restraint proved invaluable, indeed essential.

> I had to learn to 'calm down', to become less 'sharp' and less 'blunt', less 'excitable', less 'extreme' in my judgements, more 'tactful' in their expression. I had to learn the use of Anglo understatement (instead of more hyperbolic and more emphatic Polish ways of speaking). I had to avoid sounding 'dogmatic', 'argumentative', 'emotional'. (There were lapses, of course.) Like the Polish-American writer Eva Hoffman (1989) I had to learn the use of English expressions such as 'on the one hand..., on the other hand', 'well yes', 'well no', or 'that's true, but on the other hand'.
>
> Thus, I was learning new ways of speaking, new patterns of communication, new modes of social interaction. I was learning the Anglo rules of turntaking ('let me finish!', 'I haven't finished yet!'). I was learning not to use the imperative ('Do X!') in my daily interaction with people and to replace it with a broad range of interrogative devices ('Would you do X?' 'Could you do X?' 'Would you mind doing X?' 'How about doing X?' 'Why don't you do X?' 'Why not do X?', and so on). (Wierzbicka 1997b: 119–120)

As I discussed in that 1997 memoir, these were not just changes in the patterns of communication, these were also change in my personality. I was becoming a different person, both in the context of my cross-cultural family and in the context of my work as a university teacher.

> Students' course assessment questionnaires have often thrown light on my cultural dilemmas. Thus, while often very positive and praising my 'enthusiasm', for a long time they also often included critical accents referring to my 'intensity', 'passion' and 'lack of detachment'. I was coming from a language and culture system (Polish) where the very word *beznamiętny* (lit. 'dispassionate') has negative connotations, but I was lecturing in a language (English) where the word *dispassionate* implies praise while the word *emotional* has negative connotations. I had to learn, then, to lecture more like a 'spokesman' and less like an 'advocate' (in Kochman 1981 terms). I had to learn to become less 'emotional' and more 'dispassionate' (at least in public speaking and in academic writing). (Wierzbicka 1997b: 120)

And yet, while I saw some cultural adaptation as necessary I did not want to adapt too much; I felt instinctively that the social benefits of such an adaptation needed to be balanced against the personal cost involved in it.

There were therefore limits to my malleability as a 'culturally constituted self'. There were English modes of interaction that I never learnt to use – because I couldn't and because I wouldn't: they went too much against the grain of that 'culturally constituted self'. For example, there was the 'How are you' game: 'How are you?' – 'I'm fine, how are you?'; there were weather-related conversational openings ('Lovely day isn't it?' – 'Isn't it beautiful?'). There were also 'white lies' and 'small talk' (the latter celebrated in a poem by the Polish poet and professor of Slavic literatures at Harvard University, Stanisław Barańczak).

The acute discomfort that such conversational routines were causing me led me to understand the value attached by Polish culture to 'spontaneity', to saying what one really thinks, to talking about what one is really interested in, to showing what one really feels. It also led me to contemplate the function of such linguistic lubricants in Anglo social interaction. Why was it that Polish had no words or expressions corresponding to 'white lies' or 'small talk'? Why was it that English had no words or expressions corresponding to basic Polish particles and 'conversational signposts' such as *przecież, ależ* ('but can't you see?') *ależ skądże* (lit. 'but where from?' i.e. where did you get that idea?), or *skądże znowu* ('but where from again?') – all expressions indicating vigorous disagreement, but quite acceptable in friendly interaction in Polish?

As I meditated on my experience, and as I discussed it with other immigrants, I developed a strong theoretical interest in the problems of cross-cultural understanding and a deep conviction that the universalist theories of human interaction dominant of the time were fundamentally flawed.

> Clearly, the rules for 'friendly' and socially acceptable interaction in Polish and in English were different. Consequently, I could never believe in the "universal maxims of politeness" and in the universal "logic of conversation" promulgated in influential works such as Grice (1975), Leech (1983) or Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). I knew from personal experience, and from two decades of meditating on that experience, that Polish "maxims of politeness" and the Polish rules of "conversational logic" were different from the Anglo ones. (Wierzbicka 1997b: 120)

As these quotes make clear, the personal knowledge derived from such personal experience was not purely theoretical: above all, it was practical. I had no doubt that the insistence on cultural differences was not only theoretically justified (because these differences were real) but also that acknowledging them, and above all, describing them, was vitally important for the practical purposes of cross-cultural communication and understanding; and in the case of people like myself, of daily living.

The 1991 edition of my *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics* was an attempt to challenge the Gricean and Brown-and-Levinsonian paradigms, and to expose the anglocentric character of various supposedly universal maxims, principles and concepts (including the key concept of "face", which was the linchpin of Brown and Levinson's theory of "politeness"). Twelve years later it can be said that tide has changed and it may seem unnecessary and unkind to press the same charges again.

In response I would say that, first of all, many linguists who are out of touch with the developments in the fields of intercultural communication and language teaching are not aware of this change of tide and assume that the Gricean and neo-Gricean paradigms are still held by "those in the know" in the same esteem as they once were. But there is also another reason why some of the old charges still need to be pressed. This second reason has to do with the fact that, paradoxically, while the universalist pragmatic frameworks developed in the seventies were gradually losing their appeal, the program of actually *describing* the different ways of speaking and thinking linked with different cultures continued to encounter a great deal of resistance and criticism.

As the differences between cultures and subcultures were increasingly celebrated, there was also a growing suspicion of any generalizations as

to what exactly these differences might be. Diversity was seen as beautiful but also as inherently elusive and indescribable. With the growing emphasis on diversity, the view gradually developed that diversity was everywhere, and that while those differences could and should be celebrated they could not be described. Thus, in many quarters, there developed a great fear of the notion of culture (especially, "a culture"), and attempts to identify any differences between particular cultures came to be seen as "static culturologies" (cf. Darnell 1994).

For example, the anthropologist Eric Wolf, writing of "the heterogeneity and the historically changing interconnectedness of cultures" (Wolf 1994: 5), argued that "notions of a common cultural structure underlying all this differentiation sound a bit too much like a little cultural homonuculeus built into everyone through the process of socialization" (Wolf 1994: 6). Another anthropologist, Immanuel Wallenstein, spoke in the same vein in his commentary on Wolf's paper, for example: "races, cultures, and peoples are not essences. They have no fixed contours. They have no self-evident content. Thus, we are all members of multiple, indeed myriad, 'groups' – crosscutting, overlapping, and ever-evolving" (Wallenstein 1994: 5; for discussion, see Wierzbicka 1997a).

There can be no quarrel with the claims that "cultures are not essences", that "cultures are not monads", and that "cultures have no fixed contours". But to conclude from this that cultures cannot be discussed, described, and compared at all – because they have no substance at all – would be a spectacular case of throwing the baby out with the bath water. It would also be a conclusion denying the subjective experience of immigrants, and, as I have argued in detail elsewhere (Wierzbicka, forthcoming), one going against their vital interests. To deny the validity of the notion of culture-specific cultural patterns (including "Anglo" cultural patterns) is to place the values of political correctness above the interests of socially disadvantaged individuals and groups.

At this point, it will be apposite to return to Davis' (1998) critical comment on my own work, to which I have alluded earlier. Characteristically, this comment refers especially to my remarks on Anglo culture. To quote:

> To the extent that norms for polite, cooperative, efficient communication vary from culture to culture, so should implicature conventions. Thus Wierzbicka (1985) offered the "heavy restrictions on the use of the imperative in English and the wide range of use of interrogative forms in performing acts other than questions" as "striking linguistic reflexes" of the Anglo-Saxon cultural tradition, one that "places special emphasis on the rights and on the autonomy

> of every individual, which abhors interference in other people's affairs," and so on. She observed that languages such as Polish, used by speakers with opposed cultural traditions, have different conventions involving imperatives and interrogatives. The fact that Wierzbicka is fighting ethnocentrism with cultural stereotypes does not diminish her point. (Davis 1998: 174–175)

The fear of "cultural stereotypes" has been as great an obstacle in the development of cross-cultural pragmatics as has the fear of "essentialism" and the "reification" of cultures. Giving in to this fear, Davis seems to be doing something analogous to what he himself criticized Brown and Levinson for, when he said that they "note the evidence but insist the 'underlying principles' are universal, derivable from universal face assumptions and rationality" (Davis 1998: 167). Similarly, Davis notes the evidence concerning the language-specific character of pragmatic conventions but he rejects off-hand any possible links between different pragmatic conventions and different cultural attitudes and values. He accepts that those conventions are not universal and he himself calls for "historical and sociolinguistic research … which did not and could not arise when the Gricean theory held sway" (Davis 1998: 3). At the same time, however, he feels compelled to dismiss cross-cultural generalizations as "stereotyping".

Yet from the point of view of effective cross-cultural understanding and intercultural communication it is essential not only to know what the conventions of a given society are but also how they are related to cultural values. For example, the Chinese immigrants in Canberra need to be told not only to be careful with the imperative when speaking to their Anglo neighbours, but also, why the imperative (e.g. "cut down that branch – we don't want it on our side of the fence") can be perceived as offensive and "rude" in Australia. Similarly, the Anglo-Australians need to be told not only that they should be "tolerant" to their Chinese neighbours, but also, that their own imperative-avoiding conventions reflect special historically-shaped concerns of their own culture rather than any natural and universal principles of politeness.

With the increasing domination of English in the world, both Anglos and non-Anglos need to learn about various Anglo "cultural scripts". To try to describe these scripts, and to explain the values reflected in them, is not to indulge in stereotyping, but on the contrary, it is to help Anglos to overcome their inclination to stereotype Chinese (or, for that matter, Polish) immigrants as "rude", while at the same time helping the immigrants to better fit in, socially, and to improve their lives. As more and more often noted by bilingual and bicultural theorists such as, for exam-

ple, Young Yun Kim (2001), for millions of people in the modern world cultural adaptation is necessary for survival; and liberal monocultural Anglos fixated on fighting "stereotypes" are not helping the cause of that adaptation and of increased inter-cultural understanding.

In this context, I would like to emphasize again the new light thrown on problems of cross-cultural pragmatics by the new field of studies focussing on the experience of bilingual and bicultural persons, and in particular, on the immigrant experience. It is becoming more and more obvious to those concerned with cross-cultural understanding that in addition to objective methods usually employed in social sciences (data collection, statistical tables, diagrams, and so on), the voices of flesh-and-blood people crossing linguistic and cultural boundaries need also to be taken into account. "The immigrant experience of having to 'translate oneself' from one's mother tongue into a foreign language and losing part of oneself in the process" (Besemeres 2002: 9) can expose what Davis (1998) calls the stifling effect of universalistic accounts of human conversation better than many scrupulous objective studies of linguistic competence or behaviour. It can also show more clearly than purely theoretical debates that cultures are real and that they can influence and even shape people's lives and people's selves. If this or that theoretical framework is not helpful in describing cultural differences in ways of speaking, thinking and feeling, it can only blame itself for its irrelevance to cross-cultural understanding, intercultural communication, language teaching, and what John Locke called "human understanding" in general.

In my 1991 *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics* I did seek to describe and compare different cultures, and I did use expressions like "Vietnamese culture", "Japanese culture", "Anglo-American culture", "Polish culture", and so on. Given the potential for misunderstanding that such terms carry with them I would now prefer to avoid them, as far as possible, and to use instead terms like "cultural patterns", and especially, "cultural scripts". Both these terms were used in the 1991 text of the book, but along with, say, "Japanese cultural scripts" or "Anglo cultural scripts" I was also using quite freely terms like "Japanese culture" or "Anglo culture". Given present-day sensitivities, it will be in order to warn the reader explicitly that by using such terms I did not mean to imply that I see those cultures as immutable essences, self-contained monads, or "bounded, coherent and timeless systems of meaning" (Strauss and Quinn 1997: 3). Rather, I was using such terms as convenient abbreviations, referring to complexes of shared understandings or, as colleagues and I have been calling them for years, "cultural scripts". To quote Strauss and Quinn (1997) again:

Our experiences in our own and other societies keep reminding us that some understandings are widely shared among members of a social group, surprisingly resistant to change in the thinking of individuals, broadly applicable across different contexts of their lives, powerfully motivating sources of their action, and remarkably stable over succeeding generations. (Strauss and Quinn 1997: 3)

In the twelve years which have elapsed between the first and the present edition of his book, colleagues and I have been increasingly moving from the language of "cultures" to that of "cultural scripts". Since we have never thought of cultures as "timeless monads", this is above all a change in the style of exposition. The formulae included in this book under headings like "Polish culture" or "Japanese culture" would now be presented explicitly as "cultural scripts". Although this would be only a change in presentation, not in substance, it would be an important change. Since for logistic reasons this change is not being made in the text of this book, the reader of this second edition is asked to bear this point in mind: this book is not seeking to describe whole cultures, let alone to imply that these cultures are immutable, but rather, to articulate certain specific "cultural scripts".

At the same time, I would like to point out to the reader that since the publication of the first edition, the idea of "cultural scripts", implicit in this book, has come into its own as a full-fledged theory – the theory of cultural scripts, which has by now resulted in many descriptive studies, across many languages and cultures (or "lingua-cultures", cf. Attinasi and Friedrich 1995). Since the idea of cultural scripts has now been developed into a theory of cross-cultural pragmatics, inter-cultural communication and indeed cross-cultural understanding in general, the reader of this second edition may wish to follow up the development of this theory and its applications in descriptive studies. For this, the starred references listed at the end of this introduction may be particularly useful.

The theory of cultural scripts is an offshoot of the NSM (Natural Semantic Metalanguage) theory, on which all the analyses in this book are based. In a nutshell, this theory postulates that semantic analysis should be based on empirically established universal human concepts, that is, simple concepts realized in all languages as words or word-like elements, such as GOOD and BAD, KNOW, THINK, WANT and SAY, DO and HAPPEN and fifty or so others. In relation to cross-cultural pragmatics, this means that cultural norms of speaking should be formulated neither in technical or semi-technical English terms like "formal" and "informal" or "direct" and "indirect", nor in terms of English folk categories like

"apology", "compliment", "sarcasm", "understatement" and so on, but rather in terms of simple words which have equivalents in all languages, such as those mentioned above (in small capitals).

The use of such concepts can free us from what Goddard (2002c, in press a, b, c) calls "terminological ethnocentrism" and give us a neutral, culture-independent metalanguage for describing different cultural norms. At the same time, the use of such concepts allows us to capture the native speaker's point of view, without distorting it through the application of descriptive tools rooted in the English language or Anglo academic culture.

On this point, NSM-based approach to cross-cultural pragmatics differs radically from that characteristic of works like Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies* or Kasper and Blum-Kulka's (1993) *Interlanguage Pragmatics*. While the works in this tradition must be appreciated for their attention to cultural differences reflected in ways of speaking, they cannot escape the charge of terminological, and not only terminological, ethnocentrism. Given that words like *requests* and *apologies* stand for conceptual artefacts of the English language, using them as analytical tools inevitably involves imposing an Anglo perspective on other languages and cultures. To describe ways of speaking across languages and cultures in terms of folk categories encoded in English is like describing English talk in terms of Japanese, Hebrew or Russian folk categories (e.g. the Japanese *wakimae*, cf. Ide 1989; the Hebrew *dugri*, cf. Katriel 1986; or the Russian *vran'e*, cf. Wierzbicka in press). But of course nobody would dream of describing English in such terms.

The unshakable conviction shared by so many semanticists and pragmaticists that it is all right to try to describe all languages through English terms untranslatable into the language of speakers whose ways of thinking those terms are supposed to explain and illuminate shows the same astonishing anglocentrism as the Gricean and post-Gricean maxims, principles, and "conversational postulates" (cf. Gordon and Lakoff 1975) once did. By contrast, words like *good* and *bad* or *say, think, know* and *want*, which as evidence suggests have morpho-lexical exponents in all languages, free us from an Anglo perspective, while allowing us at the same time to retain a mini-lexicon of sixty or so English words as a practical lingua franca for articulating different culture-specific conventions, norms and values.

Judging from some reviews, and some other responses to the first edition of this book which have been reported to me, I was understood by

some readers of that edition as claiming that "semantics should swallow pragmatics". This is a misunderstanding that the theory of cultural scripts should effectively dispel. What I did and do claim is, first, that a great many subjective and attitudinal meanings are indeed semantically encoded, and second, that since all observations on language use have to be themselves formulated in some language, their descriptive and explanatory power depends on the adequacy of that (meta-)language. For example, claims that in many societies people are guided in their ways of speaking by principles like "don't impose" or "be relevant" depend on the English words *impose* and *relevant*, which have no equivalents in other languages. To say that speakers of those other languages are deeply concerned about some values which – "as it happens" – can only be formulated in English means to give English a curiously privileged position in humankind's mental world. (To quote my colleague Cliff Goddard's ironic comment on such methodological practices, "thank God for English!".)

The theory of cultural scripts rejects those practices, and seeks to formulate norms, values and principles of language use in words which, unlike *impose* or *relevant*, have equivalents in all other languages, that is words which can be said to stand for universal human concepts. These "universal words" (or word-like elements) are the same words in which semantically encoded meanings can also be explicated.

The terminological distinction between "explications" and "cultural scripts" can help clarify the boundary between those aspects of language use which are semantically encoded and those which are not. Not everything is semantically encoded but everything can be described in universal human concepts. For example, "pragmatic" meanings encoded in "diminutives" like *doggie* and *birdie,* in interjections like *wow!* or *gee!,* or in tautologies like *war is war,* can be explicated in those concepts; and cultural norms which are not encoded in any particular expressions can be articulated in those concepts as a culture's "cultural scripts".

The main point is that neither conceptual artefacts encoded in the English language nor Anglo "cultural scripts" can be legitimately used as analytical tools for the interpretation of language use throughout the world. The use of the Natural Semantic Metalanguage can free us from such ethnocentrism and enable us to capture, in every case, the cultural insider's point of view, while at the same time making that point of view intelligible to the outsider.

Both explications and "cultural scripts" seek to articulate, in a rigorous yet intelligible way, shared cultural representations. To quote from Enfield (2000):

The very idea of the English language is a cultural and metalinguistic artefact. So when we work with categories like English or Lao, this must be kept in mind. And the same goes for 'Anglo' or 'Lao' culture. What we are really talking about is some set of cultural representations – private representations which are carried, assumed-to-be-carried and assumed-to-be-assumed-to-be-carried – among some carrier group. … if we really want to characterize what cultural representations unite groups of people, we had better start with the cultural representation in question, and ask what group of people are united by their sharing it, rather than starting with some group … and asking what cultural representations are shared among members. (Enfield 2000: 57)

To "start with the cultural representations" we need to have a framework within which such representations can be identified – "from a native speaker's point of view" (cf. Geertz 1984) and yet through concepts accessible to cultural outsiders as well. The NSM theory, with its set of empirically established universal human concepts, provides such a framework.

The search for universals is of course important, but it must go in the right direction. This book is based on the assumption that what is universal are the conceptual building blocks which we find in a tangible form in all languages, and not some putative principles of "natural logic", "conversation" or "politeness".

It is important to point out to the reader of this second edition that the NSM semantic theory has developed considerably since the publication of the first edition – largely as a result of the theoretical as well as empirical input from Cliff Goddard. Goddard himself has commented on this development as follows:

In the thirty years since the publication of *Semantic Primitives* in 1972, the mode of operation of the NSM research program has been akin to that of so-called "normal science" (cf. Kuhn 1970; Lakatos 1970, 1978). There has been internal consensus on the hard core of fundamental goals and assumptions – the quest to identify the indefinable semantic elements in natural language and to use these as a basis for a "self-explanatory" system of meaning representation. On the other hand, a number of auxiliary hypotheses have been revised or replaced in the light of empirical work and the "model NSM" has passed through a series of progressive refinements and expansions. (Goddard 2002a, vol. 2: 314)

The expansions mentioned in the last sentence include the development of the theory of cultural scripts and the new field of "ethnopragmatics" (Goddard 2002b, in press a, b, c, and forthcoming), and the "refinements" – the enlarged set of the universal semantic primes (roughly, the double of that outlined in the first edition) and the construction of a more or less complete model of universal grammar, presented in our re-

cent edited book *Meaning and Universal Grammar* (Goddard and Wierzbicka 2002). If the present book were to be rewritten in the light of these developments, the formulae included in it would be refined.

Since the new expanded set of universal human concepts constitutes the major outcome of the NSM research over the last decade or so and may be of interest to the reader of this second edition, I will include the current set in Chapter 1, alongside with the 1991 version.

The doubling of the inventory of universal semantic primes must of course be seen not only as a "refinement" but also as a major development. In his insightful and generally very positive review of the 1991 *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics* James Matisoff (1996) has expressed some scepticism with regard to the explanatory power of an inventory of only 27 elements, as it was at the time. The doubling of this set in more recent NSM work vindicates Matisoff's scepticism. At the same time, I would like to point out that most of the "new" post-1991 set of primes belong to semantic domains which are less relevant to cross-cultural pragmatics than the old ones, and also, that the actual analyses in the 1991 edition of this book rely on more than 27 elements, although those additional elements were regarded at the time as semantic "molecules" rather than as semantic "atoms". Among the new primes which *are* relevant to many "cultural scripts", the most important no doubt is TRUE (cf. e. g. Wierzbicka in press). In any case, I would encourage all those interested in adopting the NSM framework for their own work on cross-cultural pragmatics or indeed on any other aspect of language and culture to consult also our 2002 edited book *Meaning and Universal Grammar* (Goddard and Wierzbicka 2002).

In an article entitled "Cross-Cultural Literacy: A National Priority", Luce and Smith (1987) wrote:

"Cross-cultural literacy" means that our citizenry knows how culture influences perceptions and actions. It no longer accepts cultural stereotypes and clichés about other nations. It recognizes that American culture takes its place beside other national cultures as one contruct within the spectrum of human societies. Most importantly, cross-cultural literacy requires that Americans know how to read the cultural cues of other nations and decode their meaning. Within this decade, cross-cultural communications skill will become increasingly an indispensable tool for every citizen. Cross-cultural literacy must be a priority on our national agenda as we approach the end of the decade of the 1980s and near the 21st century. (Luce and Smith 1987: 4)

If "cross-cultural literacy" was justly seen as a priority in 1987, it is all the more so in the post-September-11th world of 2003 – and not only as

a priority for the national agenda of the United States but also in Europe and in many other parts of the world. Cultural stereotypes and clichés are indeed no longer acceptable, but a wide-spread cross-cultural literacy must be seen as more important a goal than ever. The NSM semantic theory based on universal human concepts offers a framework within which the "cultural scripts" of different nations and different "lingua-cultures" can be effectively articulated, taught and explained.

Canberra, January 2003
Anna Wierzbicka

References

[The articles on "cultural scripts" are marked with an asterisk]

Ameka, Felix
1994   Areal conversational routines and cross-cultural communication in a multilingual society. In: H. Pürschel (ed.), *Intercultural Communication*, 441–469. Bern: Peter Lang.
1992   Interjections: The universal yet neglected part of speech. *Journal of Pragmatics* 18 (2/3): 101–118.

Attinasi, John and Paul Friedrich
1995   Dialogic breakthrough: Catalysis and synthesis in life-changing dialogue. In: Bruce Mannheim and Dennis Tedlock (eds.), *The Dialogic Emergence of Culture*, 33–53. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Besemeres, Mary
1998   Language and self in cross-cultural autobiography: Eva Hoffman's "Lost in Translation". *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 40: 3–4.
2002   *Translating one's self: Language and selfhood in crosscultural autobiography.* Oxford: Peter Lang.

Blum-Kulka, Shoshana, J. House, and Gabriele Kasper (eds.)
1989   *Cross-cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Brown, Penelope and Stephen Levinson
1978   Universals in language usage: politeness phenomena. In: Esther Goody (ed.), *Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction,* 56–310. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
1978   *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Carbaugh, Donal
1988   *Talking American. Cultural Discourses on DONOHUE.* Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Clyne, Michael
1994   *Intercultural Communication at Work: Cultural values in discourse.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dalziell, Rosamund (ed.)
2002   *Selves Crossing Cultures: Autobiography and Globalization.* Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing.

D'Andrade, Roy and Claudia Strauss
1992   *Human Motives and Cultural Models.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Davis, Wayne A
1998   *Implicature: Intention, Convention, and Principle in the Failure of Gricean Theory.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Darnell, Regna
1994   Comments on Wolf's "Perilous ideas: Race, culture and people." *Current Anthropology* 35.1: 7–8.

Enfield, Nick J.
2000   The theory of cultural logic: how individuals combine social intelligence with semiotics to create and maintain cultural meaning. *Cultural Dynamics.* 12.1: 35–64.

Geertz, Clifford
1984   From the Native's Point of View: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding. In: Richard A. Shweder and Robert A. LeVine (eds.), *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion.* 123–136. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goddard, Cliff
1992   Traditional Yankunytjatjara ways of speaking: A semantic perspective. *Australian Journal of Linguistics.* 12.1: 93–122.
1996   The social emotions of Malay (Bahasa Melayu). *Ethos.* 24.3: 426–464.
*1997   Cultural values and cultural scripts of Malay (Bahasa Melayu). *Journal of Pragmatics* 27.2: 183–201.
*2000   Cultural scripts and communicative style in Malay (Bahasa Melayu). *Anthropological Linguistics* 42.1: 81–106.
2001   Cultural semantics and intercultural communication. In: D. Killick, M. Perry and A. Phipps (eds.), *Poetics and Praxis of Languages and Intercultural Communication,* 33–44. (Proceedings of the conference at Leeds Metropolitan University December 1999). Glasgow, Scotland: University of Glasgow French and German Publications.
2002a   The on-going development of the NSM research program. In: C. Goddard and A. Wierzbicka (eds.), *Meaning and Universal Grammar: Theory and Empirical Findings.* vol. 2: 301–322. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

2002b   Ethnosyntax, ethnopragmatics, sign-functions, and culture. In: N. J. Enfield (ed.), *Ethnosyntax: Explorations in Grammar and Culture*, 52–73. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2002c   Overcoming terminological ethnocentrism. *IIAS Newsletter* 27, 28. Leiden, The Netherlands: International Institute for Asian Studies.

in press a   An ethnopragmatic perspective on active metaphors. *Journal of Pragmatics*.

*in press b   "Cultural Scripts": A new medium for ethnopragmatic instruction. In: Michael Achard and Susanne Niemeier (eds.), *Cognitive Linguistics, Second Language Acquisition, and Foreign Language Teaching*. Berlin/ New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

*in press c   Directive speech-acts in Malay: An ethnopragmatic perspective. In: Christine Béal (ed.), *Les Cahiers de Praxématique*.

*Forthc.   Introduction to Cliff Goddard (ed.), *Ethnopragmatics: Understanding discourse in cultural context*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Goddard, Cliff and Anna Wierzbicka

1997   Discourse and Culture. In: Teun A. van Dijk (ed.), *Discourse as Social Interaction*, 231–257. vol. II of *Discourse: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*. London: Sage Publications.

Goddard, Cliff and Anna Wierzbicka (eds.)

2002   *Meaning and Universal Grammar: Theory and Empirical Findings.* 2 vols. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Gordon, David and George Lakoff

1975   Conversational Postulates. In: Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan (eds.), 83–106. *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press.

Grice, H. P.

1975   Logic and conversation. In: Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*, 41–58. New York: Academic Press.

Harkins, Jean

1994   *Bridging Two Worlds: Aboriginal English and cross-cultural understanding.* Brisbane: University of Queensland Press.

Harnish R. M.

1976   Logical form and implicature. In: T. G. Bever, J. J. Katz, and J. Langendoen (eds.), *An Integrated Theory of Linguistic Ability*, 313–392. New York: Thomas Crowell.

Hoffman, Eva

1989   *Lost in Translation: A Life in a new language.* London: Heinemann.

Holland, Dorothy and Naomi Quinn

1987   *Cultural Models in Language and Thought.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ide, Sachiko

1989   Formal forms and discernment. *Multilingua* 8: 223–248.

Kasper, Gabriele and Shoshana Blum-Kulka

1993   *Interlanguage Pragmatics.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Katriel, Tamar

1986   *Talking Straight: Dugri Speech in Israeli Sabra Culture.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kim, Young Yun

2001   *Becoming Intercultural: An Integrative Theory of Communication and Cross-Cultural Adaptation.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Kochman, Thomas

1981   *Black and White Styles in Conflict.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kramsch, Claire

1993   *Context and Culture in Language Teaching.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Kuhn, Thomas

1970   *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* 2nd ed. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Lakatos, Imre

1970   Falsification and the methodology of scientific research programmes. In: I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave (eds.), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, 91–196. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Republished in J. Worrall and G. Currie (eds.), *Imre Lakatos: Philosophical Papers*, vol. 1: 8–101. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.]

1978   Introduction: Science and pseudoscience. In: J. Worrall and G. Currie (eds.), *Imre Lakatos: Philosophical Papers*, vol. 1: 1–7. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Leech, Geoffrey

1983   *Principles of Pragmatics.* London: Longman.

Levinson, Stephen

1983   *Pragmatics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Luce, Louise Fiber and Elise C. Smith

1987   Cross-cultural literacy: a national priority. In: Luce and Smith (eds.), *Toward Internationalism*, 3–10. Cambridge: Newbury House Publishers.

Lutz, Catherine

1988   *Unnatural Emotions: Everyday Sentiments on a Micronesian Atoll and their Challenge to Western Theory.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Matisoff, James

1979   *Blessings, Curses, Hopes, and Fears: Psycho-Ostensive Expressions in Yiddish.* Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.

Matsumoto, Yoshiko
  1988   Reexamination of the universality of face: politeness phenomena in
            Japanese. *Journal of Pragmatics* 12: 403–426.
Shweder, Richard
  1991   *Thinking Through Cultures: Expeditions in Cultural Psychology.*
            Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Searle, John
  1975   Indirect speech acts. In: Peter Cole and Jerry Morgan (eds.), *Syntax
            and Semantics 3: Speech acts,* 59–82. New York: Academic Press.
Sohn, Ho-min
  1983   Intercultural communication in cognitive values: Americans and
            Koreans. *Language and Linguistics* (Seoul) 9: 93–136.
Sperber, Dan and Deirdre Wilson
  1986   *Relevance: Communication and cognition.* Cambridge, MA: Har-
            vard University Press.
Strauss, Claudia and Naomi Quinn
  1997   *A Cognitive Theory of Cultural Meaning.* Cambridge: Cambridge
            University Press.
Tannen, Deborah
  1986   *That's Not What I Meant! How conversational style makes or breaks
            relationships.* New York: Ballantine.
Wallenstein, Immanuel
  1994   Comments on Wolf's 'Perilous ideas: race, culture and people'.
            Current Anthropology. 35.1: 9–10.
Wierzbicka, Anna
  1985   Different cultures, different languages, different speech acts: Eng-
            lish vs Polish. *Journal of Pragmatics* 9: 145–178.
  1987   Boys Will Be Boys: "Radical Semantics" vs. "Radical Pragmatics."
            Language 63: 95–114.
  *1994a   "Cultural Scripts": a new approach to the study of cross-cultural
            communication. In: Martin Pütz (ed.), *Language Contact and Lan-
            guage Conflict.* 69–88. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
  *1994b   Emotion, language and 'cultural scripts'. In: Shinobu Kitayama
            and Hazel Rose Markus (eds.), *Emotion and Culture: Empirical
            studies of mutual influence.* 130–198. Washington D.C.: American
            Psychological Association.
  *1996a   Contrastive sociolinguistics and the theory of "cultural scripts". In:
            Marlis Hellinger and Ulrich Ammon (eds.), *Contrastive Sociolin-
            guistics,* 313–344. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
  *1996b   Japanese cultural scripts: cultural psychology and "cultural gram-
            mar". *Ethos* 24.3: 527–555.
  1997a   *Understanding Cultures through their Key Words: English, Russian,
            Polish, German, Japanese.* New York: Oxford University Press.

  1997b   The double life of a bilingual: a cross-cultural perspective. In:
            Michael Bond (ed.), *Working at the Interface of Cultures: Eighteen
            Lives in Social Science,* 113–25. London: Routledge.
  *1998   German cultural scripts: public signs as a key to social attitudes
            and cultural values. *Discourse and Society* 9.2: 241–282.
  *2002   Australian cultural scripts – *bloody* revisited. *Journal of Pragmatics*
            34.9: 1167–1209.
  *in press Russian cultural scripts. *Ethos.*
  Forthc.   *The English Language: Meaning, History and Culture.*
Wolf, Eric R.
  1994   Perilous ideas: race, culture and people. *Current Anthropology*
            35.1: 1–7.

Acknowledgements

Contents

此为试读，需要完整PDF请访问：www.ertongbook.com