

# A Study of Pragmatic Failures in Cross-Cultural Communication

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**Abstract:** as international exchanges become more frequent, intercultural communication, as an emerging discipline, is receiving more and more attention. Language learning is actually a culture of language learning, with the ultimate purpose of communication. This article mainly discusses pragmatic failures in cross-cultural communication and analyzes the causes of pragmatic failures.

## 1. Introduction

Different countries and nations have formed specific cultural backgrounds due to different historical sources and different social customs, and specific cultural backgrounds have formed different value orientations, ways of thinking, social norms, and pragmatic rules. Barriers to communication in cultural communication, inefficient communication, mutual misunderstandings, and possible cultural conflicts will all cause unnecessary trouble for communicators.

## 2. Concepts

### 2.1 Cross-Cultural Communication

The English name for “cross-cultural communication” or inter-cultural communication refers to the communication between native speakers and non-native speakers. It also refers to the communication between any people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In layman's terms, if you deal with foreigners (due to differences in language and cultural background), what problems should you pay attention to and how should you communicate decently.

### 2.2 Pragmatic Failure

British linguist Jenny Thomas points out that pragmatic failure refers to errors in which people do not achieve a full communicative effect in verbal communication. Based on Leach's classification of pragmatics, Jenny Thomas divides pragmatic failures into pragmatic failures in language and socio-pragmatic failures.

## 3. Analysis of the Causes of Pragmatic Failure

According to the British linguist Jenny Thomas, the causes of cross-cultural pragmatic failure are usually communicative ways in which communicants use inappropriate language to express their habits or neglect or understand the social habits and areas of the objects in which they communicate cultural background. The specific reasons are as follows:

### 3.1 Different Values

The values of a nation are fully reflected in the language expression and behavior patterns of the nation. The difference between the values of the east and the west is a major factor in the pragmatic failure of cross-cultural communication. Affected by traditional Confucianism, Eastern culture values the concept of the supremacy of collective interests, emphasizes individual obedience to the collective, and restricts the development of individualization. Therefore, the average Chinese person usually owes his achievements to the collective he belongs to, and ignores his hard work and hard work. In China, the persons of “strong personality” are never welcomed by everyone. Western

culture focuses on the realization and protection of personal values and rights. It emphasizes liberation of individuality, advocates equality and freedom, and values personal privacy. In Western culture, affirming one's talent is a manifestation of self-confidence. In addition, Westerners emphasize self-dominance and are not constrained by outsiders. In communication, whether to respect and maintain the freedom of others is regarded as a criterion to test the politeness of the communication object. Therefore, Westerners are very disgusted with the goodwill of the Chinese. For example, the Chinese remind them: "Keep warm and be careful of the cold!" This kind of reminder is understood as disrespect for him, even an insult to him.

### **3.2 Different Thinking Modes**

The different cultural backgrounds of the Chinese and Western nations have shaped two different thinking modes of Chinese and English, which in turn determines the differences in the expression of the two languages. For example, when I heard that my friend's family was sick, in order to relieve the anxiety of friends, the Chinese usually comforted them with a soothing tone. This practice is a manifestation of caring for friends in Chinese culture and persuading friends to "don't be anxious, nothing will happen!". Westerners often express sadness or regret when they hear that their friends' home is ill, to show their love for their friends and sympathy for the sick. Therefore, when a Westerner tells his Chinese friend about his family's illness, if the Chinese friend applies the Chinese thinking mode and comforts the Westerners with "It doesn't matter. Don't worry!". It will cause communication failure due to pragmatic failure. In this case, the Chinese friend should show his love to Western friends from the English way of thinking, that is, "I'm sorry to hear that."

### **3.3 Different Cultural Practices**

Chinese and Western cultures and customs are very different, and they have special feelings for their own cultures and customs, and consider their own cultures to be sacred and inviolable. Differences in cultural practices affect language communication behaviors subtly. Many Chinese English learners, because of their lack of understanding of the differences between Chinese and English cultures, often communicate with Westerners based on Chinese culture and customs in the process of cross-cultural communication, embarrassing both sides of the communication. For example, fast-paced Westerners have a strong sense of time and will never allow others to occupy their time without prior agreement or consent.

## **4. Strategies for Avoiding Pragmatic Failure**

To learn English, we must not only learn the language itself, but also pay attention to the cultural knowledge closely related to the language. Based on the analysis of the manifestations and causes of pragmatic failures in Chinese English learners in the process of intercultural communication, the following strategies for coping with pragmatic failures are proposed to improve the intercultural pragmatic competence of English learners.

### **4.1 Enhance Cultural Introduction in Language Teaching**

The strength of English teachers' cultural awareness plays a vital role in the cultivation of students' cross-cultural communicative competence. Many English teachers do not have a strong sense of cross-cultural communication, and the teaching focus is completely on the teaching of English language knowledge to ensure students' progression rate and grade rate. For this reason, English teachers urgently need to change their previous teaching concepts and teaching methods, enhance cultural teaching awareness, actively participate in the learning and training of cross-cultural communication courses, read more and read more about contemporary newspapers and periodicals and film and television works in English-speaking countries, and constantly improve their own Cross-cultural communication skills, and enhance cultural knowledge introduction in teaching practice, encourage students to learn and accumulate cultural background knowledge in various aspects, help students accurately grasp the cultural information reflected in the English language, and train students to perform appropriately in various cultural scenes

Language communication skills.

#### **4.2 Strengthen the Comparative Study of Mother Tongue Culture and Target Language Culture**

An analysis of the actual situation of cross-cultural communication pragmatic failures shows that most cross-cultural pragmatic failures are caused by the interference of mother tongue culture, including both the mother tongue language itself and the mother tongue language and culture. Therefore, English teachers and English learners must only start from the realities of cross-cultural communication, carefully compare the similarities and differences between the mother tongue culture and the target language culture, strengthen their understanding of the differences between the two languages and cultures, and correctly analyze the misunderstandings and differences between the two cultures. The reason for the conflict can be to the greatest extent to avoid a pragmatic failure in cross-cultural communication.

#### **4.3 Enhance Pragmatic Awareness and Eliminate Negative Pragmatic Transference**

The cultivation of pragmatic consciousness can be carried out step by step in many ways. Regarding the lack of pragmatic knowledge and the lack of pragmatic consciousness, college students often experience the phenomenon of negative language transfer in their language expression. The more students with strong language skills are more prone to such problems if they have no pragmatic awareness. For example, when encountering an European or American, they may say hello like this, "Have you eaten?" Or "where are you going?" This greeting is widely accepted in China, and it reflects each other's sincere concern. But in Western countries, such greetings are seen as a snoop on the other party's privacy, which causes the other party to be unhappy. In Western countries, people greet each other by asking about the weather and talking about their favorite sports. These topics are small in terms of privacy, and everyone can transfer to other topics that are of interest to each other. In view of similar problems, we should cultivate students' awareness of intercultural communication and avoid the influence of national cultural centralism on intercultural communication.

Through continuous learning, students need to realize that the world is diverse, that people of different national and cultural backgrounds have the same worldview and values, and that their behaviors are diverse, not uniform. Therefore, in the process of cross-cultural communication, students also need to learn how to think from the perspective of each other, and small is thinking from the perspective of their own culture. Only in this way can they understand, accept, and even appreciate each other's culture, and then in the process of communicating with the other party, to leave a good impression on the other party, to achieve better communication results.

### **5. Conclusion**

Pragmatic failures constitute a very important and much neglected source of cross-cultural miscommunication. In short, Western cultural backgrounds are different, and differences in thinking patterns, customs, and communication methods are also the causes of pragmatic failures in cross-cultural communication. In cross-cultural communication, you should fully understand the similarities and differences between the mother tongue and the second language, and be good at comparing the two languages; read extensively, accumulate knowledge, and improve the knowledge of the target language and culture; In this way, we can try to avoid bringing the language knowledge features and thinking patterns in the mother tongue into the target language, resulting in unnecessary pragmatic errors, which will affect the communicative effect. The above descriptive study of the nature of pragmatic failures of Chinese students of English and the pragmatic differences between English and Chinese, through by no means complete and exhaustive, will give insight into the necessity to incorporate pragmatic information into English teaching and learning, especially with the shift of emphasis of EFL(English as a foreign language) teaching from grammar to the cultivation of students communicative competence.

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