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Wrongful Moves in Unfamiliar Meaning Spaces: Gesture Usage and Implications for Cross-Cultural Gestural-Pragmatic Failure

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Abstract: *Gestural expression whether accompanied by speech or not, is fundamental to human interaction. We are continuously enacting meaning (Zeuschner, 1997). These meanings are sieved through the cultural landscapes of the users who use them within a shared cultural-speech community without much disruption. Conversely, in cross-cultural and inter-cultural interactions, a much greater likelihood exists for pragmatic failure; that is an interlocutor misinterprets the intended pragmatic force of an utterance. This can account for an interlocutor to fail to achieve their speaking objective. This paper considers this socio-cultural framework to focus in on specific, culture-bound gestures in a Japanese L1 context, which can be problematic in the L2 (English). As a result, negative consequences arising from non-verbal, culturally-imbued 'sign-posts' can occur if not otherwise noticed and consciously applied (Schmidt, 1993). Therefore, a rich array of interactive, and 'real world' cross-cultural and intercultural experiences need to be provided that take into consideration opportunities existing in Japan for Japanese L2 learners to draw their attention to the importance of gestures and the pragmatic weight they can carry, outside their own cultural scope. By doing so, the broader gains can not only co-compliment pragmatic competence development but also intercultural and cross-cultural competence.*

Keywords: cross-cultural competence, intercultural competence, pragmatic (i.e., gestural) failure, pragmatic competence; gestural competence; pragmatic transfer; situational-based utterances (S.B.Us)

Introduction

"You can't *not* communicate" (Zeuschner, 1997, p. 86)

Picture the following EFL conversational situations in Japan. In a small group adult conversation at least one male student sits with his arms crossed whether speaking or not during much of the lesson. In another half-lesson, half casual conversation scenario outside the classroom at a coffee shop the same gesture is exhibited in a one-to-one encounter with the addition of the interlocutor removing their watch and putting it on the table (also frequently seen inside classrooms).

Back in another classroom, some students can be

seen doing pen-twirling actions repeatedly while otherwise seeming to pay attention. When one of them is called upon they raise their finger to their nose and say, "Me?" Meanwhile, a serious topic dealing with whether Japan should bear more responsibility for taking in more foreign refugees of conflict or not, mostly produces embarrassed smiles with silence or simply nervous laughter or perhaps a strained sounding 'cough' or two by those who are willing to produce some kind of 'oral reaction.'

These are just a handful of examples of how gestures as well as the mannerisms, or habitual ways of speaking or doing something which may accompany them, can arise in situations where they may not be entirely understood (i.e., misunderstood) or desired. Such occurrences can 'throw off' or otherwise adversely affect otherwise meaningful and positive communicative interaction, particularly where there are abrupt chasms between cultural values and assumptions as might be especially encountered in an

ESL environment of widely disparate cultural-linguistic communities (Hinkel, 2014). Conversely, such episodes that might be regarded as gestural and mannerism failure in a different speech community could be considered de rigueur and therefore acceptable or at worst possibly considered unsophisticated yet mostly tolerated (Brosnahan, 1990) in a Japanese cultural context (particularly within Japan) because they 'fit' the cultural-linguistic community space they arise from. However, the reverse may certainly not hold true in classrooms or non-classroom environments outside Japan, where the messages they may or may not intentionally be sending could jeopardize not only the opportunity for otherwise positive and effective communication, but also produce disadvantageous and serious setbacks to building stronger rapport and even empathy from the language community whom they might be having to interact with either in a temporary or long-term basis. What is clear beyond these observations, however, is the essential realization that culture for whatever effect it may have as it shifts from one cultural backdrop to another, is manifested throughout all facets of human experience, thought, and expression from not only non-verbalized gestural interaction but also much broader conceptual considerations such as notions of time and emotive-laden situations of particular importance to a given cultural-linguistic community (Hinkel, 2014). With such a fundamentally overarching realization, the stakes for consideration of just how important building not only pragmatic competence, here defined by Ellis (2008) as the knowledge base used by both listeners and speakers "to engage in communication" as well as the knowledge of how "speech acts are successfully performed"(p. 975) but also intercultural and cross-cultural competence, including the gestural knowledge that accompanies it, would therefore seem high. Both of the aforementioned terms are often used synonymously and hold similar concepts, that is, having the abilities and skills (i.e., socio-cultural as well as pragmatic knowledge base) to interact appropriately with members of different speech communities regardless of the confluence of cultures. It has been noted by Barrett, Byram, Gaillard-Mompoint, Lázár, and Philippou (2013) that possessing certain attitudes and attributes, such as understanding, respect and empathy among others, also plays into both intercultural and cross-cultural

contexts. This would seem to bear out Zeuschner (1997) about how greater access to information towards positively connecting individuals does not necessarily guarantee the production of understanding, empathy, and good will.

From this assessment of the centrality which non-verbal communication holds over any kind of interaction, and more specifically, cross-cultural/intercultural encounters, it would now seem opportune to briefly outline some key areas which shall be looked at more closely in this paper. In the first section, a general overview of gestures will be discussed and followed up on again later in the paper for consideration of how certain gestures (and in some cases their accompanying mannerisms), which are commonly found and used in Japanese socio-cultural contexts, might induce problematic outcomes for learners, particularly in L2 cross-cultural and intercultural settings particularly outside Japan. There will next follow some considerations of various theoretical positions and concurrent research looking at how gestures have been approached, both from a wholly gestural (i.e. 'stand-alone') stance (Gullberg, 1998, 2010; Holler, Kelly, Hagoort & Ozyurek , 2012; Hoshino, 2013; Kendon, 2000; Kita, 2000; LeBaron & Streeck, 2000; MacNeill, 1992, 2000; Stam, 2006; Stam & Ishino, 2011) and a singularly pragmatic one (i.e., studies without specific gestural focus; Beebe & Takahashi, 1987). This has been attempted in order to try and highlight what seems a crucial nexus of two parallel systems operating under the same guise of making meaning. Therefore, the inclusion of some brief mention of possible implications that could be speculated upon to extend themselves to and accommodate gestural usage as an aspect of pragmatic competence (this author's viewpoint) would seem worthwhile. As such, an attempt will be made to try and view gesture with notions of consciousness (Baars, 1983) upon pragmatic knowledge (Schmidt, 1993) and thus perhaps extend gestural (this author) awareness to *situation-bound utterances* (SBUs) framed around pragmatic acts (Kecskes, 2010, 2014) and suggestions of transfer (Beebe & Takahashi, 1987). In the meantime, several distinct examples of Japanese gestural behavior that seem 'locked into' a Japanese speech community and others that are not will be used to demonstrate how 'transfer-like qualities' (Kecskes, 2014) might be applied via direct examples to pragmatic failure occurring in cross-

cultural/intercultural settings as a potential reason for its occurrence (Charlebois, 2003), and a further suggestion of interlanguage development upon gesture (Stam, 2006) will then follow. The final section will provide further thought for classroom learning and pedagogical implications as well as suggested ideas for teaching with room for some concluding remarks and suggestions. It is hoped that by following such suggestions, gesture usage could be given more prominence in EFL/ESL classroom instruction. Ultimately making learners more aware of the importance of gestural impact as it could be conceivably applied to pragmatic socio-cultural aspects, both cross-culturally and inter-culturally (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Bardovi-Harlig, Hartford, Mahan-Taylor, Morgan and Reynolds, 1991; Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Hinkel, 2014; Özüorçun, 2013; Thomas, 1983; Thornbury, 2005, 2013) could also serve to more actively and perhaps effectively draw them into more enriching communicative interaction.

Background of Relevant Gestures

Gestures have been defined in numerous ways which in all their semantic graduations will not be analyzed here in depth. (For a more concise and detailed description, the reader is advised to refer to Gullberg, 1998; Kendon, 1988; McNeill, 1992). However, generally speaking, it would seem fair to say that they involve bodily movement whether by the hands, arms, feet, legs, facial extremities or overall body posture. They can be non-verbal or can accompany speech. There are also varying forms of gestures, ranging from gesticulation (with no conventionalism, but speech attributable) to highly conventional (and speech attributable) such as sign language. This was put into illustrative form most famously by Kendon (1988) and subsequently coined as Kendon's continuum (McNeill, 1992, p. 37). Thornbury (2013) points out that along this continuum, it is possible to make a key distinction between what constitutes substitution for speech versus enhances speech.

Types of Gestures

McNeill (1992) mentions iconic gestures, which share semantic qualities with speech as well as metaphoric where more abstract concepts rather than concrete ones are depicted. There are also beats that utilize two movements, whereas a major-

ity of gestures rely on three, and pointing or deictics and lastly, pantomime and emblems discussed in further detail below. Certainly, this is only a very basic definition because manual movement is not always connected to language meaning, such as rubbing one's eye or scratching (Gullberg, 1998). Therefore, what would seem more important is that they are backed by communicative intent to the concurrent speech act (Gullberg, 1998). She has also claimed them to be "speech-associated movements of the hand(s) and/or arm(s), except self-regulators (i.e., gestures that have no language basis)" (p. 44). McNeill has also pointed out the predominant tendency of such gesticulation (i.e., iconic) defining gesture in his 1992 work, to be connected to speech acts rather than act alone. Stam and Ishino (2011) also proposed something similar but more adroitly by including "employed intentionally and meaningfully" (p. 4).

In addition, there are also pantomime and emblems, and the latter in particular warrants further discussion due to the distinctive nature especially the latter plays among several of the upcoming Japanese gestural examples. The role of emblems is to essentially act out and represent an entire concept and replace speech altogether. Thornbury (2013) makes a key distinction between mime and gesture, saying that the latter is not a speech replacement but rather co-acts alongside it. However, the gestures presented are still entirely meaningful (Stam & Ishino, 2011). Subsequently, unlike 'used-once' gesticulations, overlapping enactments can be created from mimed gesture (McNeill, 1992). Mime has also been called a gesture that draws upon a "conceptual strategy" to what it refers to (Gullberg, 1998, p. 34). Conversely, emblems are highly conventionalized and closer to approximating speech, often being highly lexical in meaning and clearly formed and "are consciously selected and performed" (Gullberg, 1998, p. 39) but rarely overlapping and without a grammatical framework (McNeill, 1992). Additionally, emblems are often strongly culturally referenced, or "culturally codified" (Stam & Ishino, 2011, p. 4). It is for this reason that, by and large, specific cultural knowledge would be most advantageous for learners to be aware of (McNeill, 1992).

Lastly, as the upcoming examples will illustrate, they should be highlighted as part of any pragmatic/socio-cultural awareness regime. Unlike most ges-

tures which are not easily taught due to their spontaneity and unconventionality, emblems relevant to the TL should be taught. Thornbury (2013) mentioned that they are not numerous among gestural usage, so learning them is feasible. (This will be addressed later in implications for pedagogy and activity suggestions).

Some Speech-Gestural Relationship Claims

In addition to defining gestures, there have also emerged some very interesting proposals as to the relationship existing between gesture formation and speech. McNeill (1992) has claimed that gestures are far from being random movements that act on their own. Kendon (2000) has echoed similar notions calling the relationship between speech as being "co-expressive" and "composed together as components of a single overall plan" (p. 60). Perhaps most daringly in contrast to proponents of the McNeill/Kendon position has been LeBaron and Streeck's (2000) claim that gestures are not mind-centered (i.e., cognitive-centered speech), but rather arise from the kinesthetic (i.e., tactile) and practical experiences that speakers naturally form as they work their way through 'hands-on' processes. In other words, by virtue of these experiences, our hands 'pick up' these natural embodiments of represented actions. Therefore, it would as McNeill (1992) mentions seem that having the 'know how' to read them could reveal their rich meanings that complement those of spoken language. Taking this into account, combined with heightened tendencies for gestural misunderstanding in intercultural/cross-cultural encounters to occur, otherwise well-meaning intentions, as well as potentially important opportunities can be quickly upended. At best, this could be a source of amusement and concurrent befuddlement. In the wrong situation, offense, provocation or worse might result depending on the severity of the perceived symbolism communicated by the gestural inference and/or mannerism(s).

Gestural and Pragmatic Research Conducted to Date

Gestural

Interest in gestural influences upon speech in both L1 speaker communities as well as cross-cultural communication issues has been looked at for some time. Perhaps one of the most famous early pioneers of gestural research in modern times has been David Efron. In the early 1940s, he examined the gestural usage of Jewish and Italian communities in New York to try and determine how much of their gestures were influenced by L1 and L2 environments, or ethnicity. In the end, he distinguished and grouped four main gestures: batons, pictographs, ideographs and emblems, and he found that gesture was not necessarily dependent on pictorial representation but also lexical ('linguistic') was important. In addition, he compared 'assimilated' and less assimilated groups and not surprisingly found that those who were more assimilated displayed less L1 gestural behavior (Tozzer, 1942, pp. 715-716). Other seminal research in the gestural studies field has been done by David McNeill and Adam Kendon, both of whom have extensively studied over a number of years about themes such as language and thought, gestures and language origins and gesture among others. In more recent times, a concurrently paralleled and robust interest in pragmatics and sociolinguistic-cultural related interests affecting ESL/EFL education seem to be well-matched and timely to the exciting and still unfolding importance that gestures are proving to have on how we communicate. In the following section, a selection of gestural studies will hopefully help to illustrate this ongoing and rich area which still continues to be widely open to rigorous inquiry. This will then be followed by a look at some complementary pragmatic-oriented studies.

Very much like McNeill ,whom he has had some influence on, Kendon (2000) feels "speech and gesture are co-expressive of a single inclusive ideational complex, and it is this that is the meaning of an utterance" (p. 61). Yet he goes on to suggest that though they work in tandem, their roles differ (i.e., speech sounds out what gestures might show). McNeill (1992) for his part has vigorously maintained numerous like-minded positions with his continuous central belief that while gestures and language hold numerous differences, they also contain numerous similarities which link them to a common expressive framework. He has also suggested that gestural-utterance formation arises from a single process where both gesture and linguistic components work together in a primed-like linkage of gestural preparation and image followed by an utterance which complements it both semantically and pragmatically.

Specific gestural behaviors have also been stud-

ied to further try and assess the potential impact they might hold over communication. This seems to return back to the integral conception of the speech-gesture-unit (McNeill, 1992) which is "assumed to be an integral unit" (Stam & Ishino, 2011, p. 8). Holler et al. (2012) looked at how gaze direction affected comprehension in co-speech encounters. They found that the demands put on cognitive resources are divided between watching a speaker and the iconic gestures they make. That is, there is no attention typically directed towards one or the other. When un-addressed participants tried to respond to a question or request, it took them longer due to what seemed to be the increased cognitive focus on only gesture rather than gaze. There was also an implication (termed by the authors, the fuzzy representation hypothesis), which seemed to suggest that an un-addressed recipient (whereby eye-gaze was averted by a speaker towards a listener) would process gesture differently than if directly addressed. Hoshino (2013) also considered gesture effects and self-repair attempts by looking at distinctions between pragmatic and iconic gestures. (This would seem perhaps to be an obvious redundancy, as she has stated that "gestures function as moves or acts by speakers in the accomplishment of speech" [p. 58]). Not surprisingly, what was discovered was a clear illustration of the fine boundaries between pragmatic and iconical gesture function. Or more specifically, iconic gestures can act as pragmatic gestures for facilitating self-repair. This was evident during turn-taking with her participants. Subsequently, the distinction Hoshino was initially questioning was not evident.

This view of gestures and language belonging to the same underlying system has essentially been upheld to varying degrees by more recent research. Gullberg (2010) has examined the connection of gesture to SLA and bilingualism, with an interest towards knowledge and its gestural representations as a language product, as well as their deployment in real time and how they might be altered during acquisition. A similar interest has been to try and discover what characterizes gestures in different languages and how they can be interpreted. More recently, it has been shown how gestural usage will be affected differently by essentially the same lexical item (2015). For example, the verb 'put' has three different ways of being expressed in Swedish. This is basically expressed with one gesture in Eng-lish, whereas in Swedish it is done several different ways to express how and where something is put. Thus, this helps to illustrate the "language specificity of representational gestures" (Kita, 2000, p. 167) which has been demonstrated in similar work by Kita and others. It also helps to provide new evidence contrary to Kita's information packaging hypothesis (2000), which was thought to predict a representation of spatio-motoric thinking that would produce the same type of gestures among speakers due the same spatio-motoric experience, but, as has been shown, does not always occur. Stam (2006) has looked at gesture from the perspective of how it relates to SLA in order to try and get a more concise picture of "learners' thought processes in action" (p. 3). Using Slobin's (1987) thinking for speaking hypothesis as a chief influence (which will not be elaborated on here other than to say that it suggests learners do not simply learn a language based on rules and the constraints they impose, but instead, each language has its own unique imposition which is placed on how meaning is construed by its users and in effect influences our 'thinking for speaking'), she examined gestural expressions of path between monolingual Spanish and English speakers recounting narratives of motion as well of those of learners learning English. It was found that gestural manifestations of both the L1 and L2 were apparent to varying degrees in the learners' accounts, demonstrating the possibility for gesture to provide a glimpse of learners' acquisition processes as reflected by their thinking processes. Ellis (2008) has referred to the same phenomena as gesture interlanguage. With this in mind, might it be equally possible to try and get closer to understanding where L1 and L2 visible (gestural) communication crosshatches itself in failed pragmatic attempts arising from L1 culturally-imbued, thinking-for-speaking processes? Thus, perhaps pragmatic acquisition in all its forms might also be better 'tracked' and paid attention to not unlike more scrutinized aspects of acquisition involving lexical, phonological and syntactical development have been.

Pragmatic

As has been brought up previously, what seems to be a valid co-joining of pragmatics and gesture will now be given some attention to some of the work that might provide relevant bearing on gesture research and the highlighting of gesture as an impor-

tant and more recognized contributor or perhaps even 'sub-discipline' of pragmatics (this author). Such work might include themes of consciousness and other pragmatic-oriented areas of interest such as through the usage of formulaic language tied to SBUs (Kecskes, 2010, 2014) or pragmatic failure due to transfer-oriented effects, (to be discussed in more detail in the implications for pedagogy and suggested activities section) as typically either in the classroom (Charlebois) or as a cross-cultural issue (Thomas) or as an issue to address and provide instruction for in order to build up pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Hinkel, 2014; Johnson & Rinvolucri, 2010; Thornbury, 2005, 2013) or provide certain advantages for learners to achieve it. Each will now be considered in more detail before moving onto some examples of gestures encountered in a Japanese socio-cultural context.

Pragmatic Implications for Consciousness

In Schmidt (1993) the question arises if pragmatic knowledge (i.e., competence), is gained consciously or not. In fact, he acknowledges that we often can not go back and consider why we may or may not have inferred something. As a result, not everything becomes part of our conscious knowledge, for sometimes even when it is readily available, we still do not notice. When applied to pragmatics, Schmidt has said about his own language learning experiences that "each case of successful learning also involved more than just noticing the forms used, but also an application of their functional meaning" (p. 31). This might very well carry over to gestures as well and will be brought up again in possible implications for pedagogy and suggestion activities. Baars (1983) took a more cognitive-informed position with consciousness and although he did not take pragmatics specifically into consideration, there are certain interesting parallels with Schmidt in terms of notions of noticing or not. However, his reasoning for stimuli going unnoticed was due to a lack of becoming incorporated into what he has called a global data base which he equated to a central interchange or something very similar to 'working memory' (p. 42). That is, when information becomes widely available to all neural processors, or in other words, a global representation, it is considered to then become global informa-

tion. The potential downside from this may allow for such global information, if experienced repeatedly, to produce subsequent redundancy, and stimuli may then go unnoticed either due to being undefined (i.e., irrelevant) to specialized processors or due to being hyper-stabilized as global input. Again, there could be some interesting claims drawn to Baars ideas which might help to provide another point of reference for viewing a possible trajectory between consciousness (i.e., noticing) and gestural acquisition for L2 learners.

SBUs

Situational influence bears what would seem to be a clear impact over gestural usage. Therefore, it would seem reasonable to posit a possible relationship to SBUs, which are "highly conventionalized, prefabricated pragmatic units" (Kecskes, 2010, p. 2891) and are "tied to particular social events and situations" (Kecskes, 2014, p. 71). As their name implies, they are lexically oriented with a pragmatic function. Although this author is not aware of any direct studies linking SBUs to gesture, might there perhaps also just as easily exist the possibility of a gestural compliment to SBUs, or what might now be termed by this author as SBGs? That is, are there gestures which arise under the same conditions (i.e., formulaic patternings)? Since "formulaic language use makes language use native-like" (p. 71), it might therefore seem to warrant more scrutiny to closely examine and discover what type of gesture might parallel such highly ritualized speech conventions.

Effects of Transfer

Effects of pragmatic transfer have also been researched. One well-known earlier study by Beebe and Takahashi (1987) found that Japanese learners of English (both inside and outside Japan), when compared with NS of English, exhibited transfer effects for refusals, especially at the higher proficiency levels. Conversely, this was not as prominent with lower proficiency learners. Lastly, transfer effects in both ESL/EFL situations occurred with more arising in the latter. The authors surmised that the higher-level learners with more overall L2 knowledge found themselves compromised by their abilities becoming the "rope to hang themselves with" (p. 151). In contrast for lower level learners, more limited L2 proficiency meant less self-exposure to the likelihood of failing pragmatically.

Charlebois (2003) has also cited pragmatic transfer as a potential source for failure with the aim for more pragmatic cross-cultural instruction.

Gestures as Pragmatic Failure

Some Japanese Non-Verbal Examples and Analysis

In the beginning of this paper, a typical classroom scenario that can be found playing itself out in countless classrooms across Japan illustrated various non-verbal communication examples and some of their accompanying mannerisms. Looking back at some of them again briefly to see how they might loop back to some previously mentioned theoretical concerns is important for developing broader aims of (a) demonstrating the importance of gestural competence (this author) or an ability to gauge appropriateness of gestural usage from contextual cues vis-á-vis the sociocultural background they occur in and the impact it might have upon social interaction, to learners as both communicative enhancer and facilitator and subsequently, and (b) giving more robust consideration and recognition to gestural competence that situates it squarely within an overall pragmatic competence framework, needs encouragement and to be taken up as an area to draw attention to when considering pragmatic aspects for instruction. To not do so otherwise, would seem to have the potential for setting up learners for situations whereby "not understanding the sociocultural expectations can negatively impact learners' ability to function in an L2 community" (Hinkel, 2014, p. 3). Pragmatic awareness then of the impact our gestures and other non-verbal behavior can have in an L2 environment (or in the case of Japan, happenstance episodes with non-Japanese), is where attention will now be focused by looking at various potential cases of gestural failure for Japanese EFL learners. It is hoped that this might further help set in motion additional thought and action towards actual 'contingency plans' for avoiding the sort of gestural failure that underlies the pragmatic failure hovering over it.

As an immediate disclaimer, it first needs to be stated the following behaviors represent perhaps some of the most visible ones especially inside classrooms, but there are equally just as many out-side and even these often will overlap between environments. The five examples chosen have been ranked by their perceived 'violation severity' (one being least and five being most) in regards to a cross-cultural/L2 environment from least likely to provoke serious repercussions to most likely. They are as follows:

1) Pointing towards one's face (particularly nose) to confirm oneself as the recipient of information. This deictic gesture seems to occur anywhere as it is commonly part of any sort of conversation. It is not bound to cause any serious problems cross-culturally and when accompanied by "me?" bears little chance of being misunderstood. What then might be cause for concern? In this instance, the biggest drawback for learners might be a certain amount of bemusement and/or confusion by another non-Japanese English speaker at why someone would not seem certain of who they were, as this particular gesture at first glance might seem to convey. Taken in a more serious context, it could appear as if the individual were not perhaps taking things seriously enough (i.e., at a job interview) and with the wrong interviewer, the non-Japanese NS/NNS might feel as if they were being 'played for a fool' and our learners could lose both credibility and chances to the job in a second.

2) "Hands up" gesture is an emblem most often seen by this author in the classroom, but it is suspected that it might arise whenever perceived or actual intervention occurs. Essentially, it also could be viewed as a 'give up' sign. The usual circumstances are such moments as leaning over a student's desk to place something in front of them, add a comment and so forth. Similar to nose pointing, the overall effect towards pragmatic failure is not severe and might be more likely to produce reactions of amusement or perhaps mental notes of "why are you doing that?" Again, if some speculation is allowed, there frequently seems to be a strong inbuilt 'impulse' (as I have heard enough in English) to "give up" among our learners that unfortunately can seem to be pre-set for instant activation during moments of perceived difficulty whether imagined or not! Perhaps this also is a sign that many learners simply lack confidence and have not found the means to be intrinsically motivated enough.

3) Putting one's watch on the table or desk As both a metaphoric (?) gesture and mannerism, which can commonly be seen most often in classrooms, it

appears to be a seemingly practical function. In the experience of this author, I have seen it done in classrooms without clocks. Therefore, it would seem that removing it and having it directly in front of oneself 'saves a step' of having to avert the eyes or pull up a sleeve from time-to-time. (Interestingly, and perhaps as an aside, I have seen it done more by males than females). In and of itself, it seems harmless enough, and yes, practical as well as widespread and seemingly tolerated in Japanese classrooms by instructors (myself included). However, a potential problem lies with how it might be interpreted in a cross-cultural environment. In fact, it could be sending the wrong message to the effect of suggesting impatience and boredom. A professor or interviewer or even a new potential friend might think they are being told to "get on with it" because "my time is precious." It would seem therefore to come across too abruptly and thus give the impression of appearing rude. A case in point outside the classroom: This author had the personal experience of meeting an acquaintance at a coffee shop in Japan, for what was meant to be part lesson and part non-lesson. Surprisingly, the watch nevertheless came out and stayed upon the table the whole time. Imagine the effect if it were done in an actual L2 environment in such otherwise casual settings. So this begs to ask why? While this author has no clear answer beyond the practical ones mentioned earlier, I would like to tentatively re-postulate the possible socio-cultural implication of chronomics, (that is how a culture perceives time and expresses it non-verbally) (/en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronemics – accessed 5 Dec 2015). If looked at more closely, Japan reveals itself as a taking monochrome nature to time interpretation. More exactly, such a society tends to exhibit less risk taking tolerance and a greater desire to 'stick to plans' (/en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intercultural_competence – accessed 5 Dec 2015). Regardless of the reasoning, this would seem to be a non-verbal behavior (gesture + mannerism), that Japanese learners in certain L2 environments or cross-cultural encounters might be mindful of.

4) Folded arms across the chest There are different positions for holding one's arms some higher, some lower. If arms are folded across a table, it might just seem a person is relaxing and neutral. Conversely, arms held higher across the chest tends to seem more defiant and perhaps giving the impression of wanting to remain inaccessible. How-

ever, Brosnahan (1990) has pointed out that in actuality, the lower held, crossed arm pose, which this writer in fact has more rarely noticed among Japanese learners, could be due to the opposite in meaning. Nevertheless, while it is possible that arm crossing (again witnessed numerous times particularly in smaller classes, with again, more oftentimes male learners than female), might simply serve as a "psychological protection(s) in moments of nervousness" (p. 85), it very much creates a similar potential outcome for gestural-pragmatic failure to give perhaps an unintended negative impression in L2 cross-cultural settings.

5) Giving the middle finger There is no mistaking the strongly insulting value of this emblem which by all accounts is perhaps safe to say internationally recognized. This aside, it is also a very curious example of how such a visible and obviously powerful gesture does not always carry the same degree of semantic weight cross-culturally. A rather astounding example of this was seen by this author in a Japanese junior high school. In said example, done openly in the teacher's room, a PE teacher 'flipped off' a student all seemingly in good banter, during the course of some animated exchange between them. While it is difficult to provide with any certainty any attempt to try and quantify the seeming neutrality of using this gesture in Japan, I would like to put forth a possible tentative implication for future research, that might draw attention to a generally more permissive and even lighthearted attitude towards issues such as sexuality as more of a whimsically grotesque spectacle, rather than as something weighted down by western immorality. Such a culturally-imbued attitude can be seen throughout Japanese history. Despite this possibly interesting cultural backdrop, for our learners the need to address this potential misuse cannot hold out for such analysis as it could result in the severest forms of pragmatic failure (i.e., threatening situations including perhaps even bodily injury).

Teacher Gestural Usage

One final note worth mentioning for gestural examples in the Japanese context are those that the teacher may make, which, if they are non-Japanese, can affect learning flow, rapport and other classroom dynamics essential for a positive and productive learning experience. Kusanagi (2015) has pointed out the benefits of 'teacher gesture' which

teachers tend to use to help guide learners. She mentions that among other things, clarification, speech reinforcement and speech redundancies can be lessened through their usage. Students and teachers can and do also rely on gestures as mediational aids. On the other hand, if teachers are not aware or mindful of their own L1 gestures and mannerisms, students can also be left with negative impressions. Such examples include postural behavior. Traditionally, Japanese learners are not used to seeing teachers lean against furniture or sit on desks or tables or even walk around the classroom while lecturing (Brosnahan, 1990). Fortunately, the last example does not seem to be an issue anymore for most students in L2 courses.

Implications for Teaching and Some Possible Activity Suggestions

From the previous section, it was shown how certain selected gestures that feature commonly in Japanese classrooms as well as daily life could place learners in the unwittingly unfortunate position of what this author has termed gestural failure and thus be drawn into pragmatic failure. Unquestionably, this is a situation which teachers should try and prepare their students for. However, to do so requires some foresight and perhaps a multiple approach for trying to work out what cross-cultural issues might be at stake. Initially, it would seem that it might be necessary to try and assess what might produce gestural-pragmatic failure. Culture, being as complex as it is, connects individuals deeply whether visibly or not. As teachers we often do not realize the unviable impact that our own cultural assumptions and values make upon the classroom any more than our learners do (Hinkel, 2014). As a result, cross-reciprocity of an unceasing wash of differing cultural values, norms and ideas becomes juxtaposed and when there are attempts made at understanding and empathy is allowed in, a 'good class' may result, but when they abut each other and minds are not ready or willing to draw in broader perspectives, everyone faces having the prospect of the dreaded 'bad class.'

Learning about how others live and, more importantly, think about life should be a logical place to start for any L2 course. Nevertheless, this not as simple as it might seem, particularly in an EFL learning environment which, from the onset, lacks any real resemblance of a multicultural citizenry and society, such as Japan's still overwhelmingly appears to be and perhaps remains distant from. Stepping into another culture can be bewildering, challenging and even threatening, but these things can all be changed by attitudinal shifts to varying degrees if windows in the mind are opened and allowed to be released of their accumulated hubris of stereotypes and other 'lock-step' mind blockages. How would be the best way to take on this? Without meaning to entertain an idealistic chimera more than necessary, I would suggest as a first step that students should be given ample consciousness raising (CR) activities that allow them to actively explore outside the classroom as much if not more than in the classroom. This means chances would need to be created for students to interact with speakers outside their own language communities. In a sense, perhaps somewhat ironically, our learners in Japan seem to need to experience more communication breakdowns as doing so might actually produce more benefit towards putting them more closely in touch with those scattered pockets of NS/NNS of whatever L2 they are learning.

By learning firsthand how gestural misinterpretation is an illustration of not being familiar with issues of cross-cultural diversity (Özüorçun, 2013) and the complexities it involves, new ways of thinking might in turn open our students up towards potentially gaining more intercultural competence. This ties in with several ideas suggested by Bardovi-Harlig et al. (1991) which are aimed at CR for pragmatic competence. The first deals with having a surprise 'guest' enter the classroom, whereby students can just happen to witness how their teacher might happen to interact (i.e., model) using the appropriate pragmatic features of the interactional situation. Another example worth mentioning for its approach towards trying to strive towards authenticity is through data collection where they must go outside the classroom to find authentic samples of the TL 'in use.' This writer suggests something similar to a 'fact-finding mission,' whereby learners might go do interviews with immigrant communities. In Japan, perhaps trying to talk interview-style, with groups who are not necessarily on the radar of many of our students when 'foreigners' are thought of, such as the Myanmarese community in the Takadanobaba area, Brazilian-Japanese, residents of lesser known South East Asian countries, various individuals from African nations and so forth, might provide

a very eye-opening experience. This might also have the added benefit of bringing forth the notion of encouraging intercultural competence as well as pragmatic competence by promoting CR and noticing activities that would also supplement pragmatic instruction in the classroom (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998). Thornbury (2005) feels that we should apply any cultural awareness raising tactfully, as it can be risky to do or even irrelevant to do so otherwise, especially where it might actually be needed for going to study or work abroad. He also suggests having learners embark on two kinds of planned outings, one that could be deemed successful and the other that might lead to embarrassment/ failure (p. 4). It is not specified how this might be enacted, but it seems to offer some good potential. If learners could even be encouraged to try using some gestures to see if it made getting their point across easier or helped them to carry along a story better, that should also be strongly supported and encouraged. Another noteworthy means of promoting pragmatic-socio-cultural awareness in the classroom comes from Johnson and Rinvolucri (2010). As teachers we need to do a lot more work with recognizing our learners' "target-culture norms and behaviors, cultural beliefs and norms, try to look beyond stereotypes and nurture more empathy" with the ultimate aim being to "develop a much more profound awareness of their home culture" (p. 16). Certainly, it should also be kept in mind that in order for this admirable prescription to gain true legitimacy, it should ideally traverse bi-directionally between learners and teachers.

Learners need chances to become more attuned to the importance of non-verbal communication and how it affects their pragmatic skills to manage a number of different social situations. As it has been mentioned, increasing pragmatic awareness is one of the key ways to do this. Charlebois (2003) tried to pinpoint what might cause cross-cultural pragmatic failure so as to then turn into action a plan for better teaching pragmatic competence in Japanese classrooms. While he mentioned "pragmatic L1 based transfer to L2 usage, inadequate pragmatic knowledge and different realizations of speech acts cross-culturally" (pp. 36-40) as three main reasons, which are certainly reasonable, the full situation might not be as straightforward. If we consider what Kecskes (2014) tells us, "'Transfer' may not exactly be the right term to describe what takes place in the bi- and multilingual mind" (pp. 77-78). In actuality, what learners borrow from their L1 in terms of cultural values and norms may in fact cause varying disparities of errors in lower level learner and some occasionally unnaturally composed (i.e., 'out-of-tune') constructions at higher levels.

Conclusion

As Hinkel (2014) mentions, "not understanding the socio-cultural expectations can negatively impact learners ability to function in an L2 community" (p. 3). In this paper, a number of issues have been looked at which cross both boundaries of pragmatic and gestural competence. Failure can occur in each area when socio-cultural aspects of the L2 are not known or adhered to. Certain areas such as the influence of consciousness to help with noticing what non-verbal language might be important to pick up on as well as the potential usefulness of SBUs to help learners memorize formulaic speech segments, might be worthwhile for additional study and application towards gestural usage. This author would like to see how applying gestures to SBUs might enable learners to better propel themselves along as well as get them 'locked in' not only on what they need to say and how to say it but also how to round it out with 'thinking for gesturing' that can allow them to maneuver around those social-cultural pitfalls which their L1 selves might still believe 'works' in the L2 environment but does not always do so. And lastly, as teachers, we also need to not only give our learners the opportunities to 'test out the culture' in safe and comfortable ways, but we also have a responsibility to help equip them with the knowledge they need for making informed choices about how to monitor and be attentive to aspects of their own non-verbal language in other socio-cultural environments, that might cause offense. Thomas (1983) believes we should allow our learners to 'flout' the rules of speech just as NS do, as long as they do it with the realization of what they are doing, or in other words, have control of the meanings they are making. Thus, we must attend to our own body language in our learners' meaning-spaces too. In the end, what we choose to show whether with words or not, creates meaning, and with that, the choice to be empowered or disempowered.

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