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AN INTERCULTURAL STYLE: SERBIAN L1 AND ENGLISH L2 INTERACTION IN REQUESTS

the aim of this study was to test the Intercultural Style Hypothesis, put forward by Kasper and Blum-Kulka in the introduction to their 1993 volume *Interlanguage Pragmatics*, in relation to requesting behavior. The study looked into observable differences in L1 (Serbian) and L2 (English) requesting behavior and how these relate to speakers' L2 proficiency levels. The respondents were asked to complete a set of Discourse Completion Tasks; the responses were codified and the five elements considered in detail were the following: alerters, request strategies, syntactic downgraders, lexical and phrasal downgraders, and mitigating supportives. Statistical analyses of the data provide some support for the Intercultural Style Hypothesis.

Key words: Intercultural Style Hypothesis, request, Serbian, English

1. Introduction

Kasper & Blum-Kulka (Kasper, Blum-Kulka: 1993) introduced Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) as a branch of second language acquisition research whose primary goal is to study how non-native speakers (NNSs) acquire the linguistic action patterns of a particular L2. It is widely assumed that pragmatic competence usually accompanies grammatical skill and proficiency, which means that NNSs who are at the early stages of L2 acquisition are usually not able to take in the full scope of pragmatic skills and meanings of certain speech acts. However, as Pinto (Pinto 2005: 5), whose research focused on second language learners of Spanish, points out "the majority of studies in ILP are not developmental; they have not examined the process of language acquisition but rather language use, often overlooking the beginning stage. The reason for this may be that lower-level learners are not expected to have the linguistic

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competence needed to produce or even comprehend many pragmatic features".

For those speakers who are fully proficient in two languages, according to Blum-Kulka (Blum-Kulka 1991: 255-272) and Blum-Kulka & Kasper (Ibid, 3-4), it sometimes happens that they end up using neither the linguistic action patterns of their L1 nor the L2, and instead create an intercultural style that both resembles and differs from the two languages. In addition, evidence seems to show that these speakers tend to use this intercultural style irrespective of the language situation they find themselves in, i.e. irrespective of whether they are using their L1 or L2 in a particular speech situation, making it their own personal style. The 'Intercultural Style Hypothesis' thus defines the development of an intercultural pattern, which is in fact a reflection of bi-directional interaction between two languages (Cenoz 2003: 65).

Since the interaction can be bidirectional, this implies that in addition to the usual (negative in most cases) L1 transfer into L2, it would seem that L2 can have an effect on L1. In other words, the pragmatic performance in an L1 situation could be affected by pragmatic transfer from the L2. One way to go about determining whether there is any actual support for the Intercultural Style Hypothesis would be to try and investigate the extent of, if any, of this L2 influence on L1. This is not a very frequent object of research, as most authors interested in second language acquisition research tend to focus on the unidirectional influence of L1 on L2, especially in terms of grammar or vocabulary.

Unidirectional influence is not exclusive to the field of L2 grammar and vocabulary, and can be found in the process of acquiring pragmatic competence as well. Rose & Kasper (Rose, Kasper 2001), in their discussion on pragmatic competence, argue for the universal nature of certain speech acts (a point also stressed by Austin (Austin 1969) and Searle (Searle 1969), but also Cenoz (Ibid) and Eslamirasekh (Eslamirasekh 1993: 85-103)) and universal pragmatic knowledge. Kasper & Rose (Ibid) point out just how much easier it is for NNSs to increase their pragmatic competence, if they already have available in their L1 similar pragmatic knowledge. A good example of this would be the principle of politeness, as described by Brown & Levinson (Brown, Levinson 1987), which means that if two cultures require the same level of politeness in addressing certain speakers under certain circumstances, these L1 speakers would have less difficulty acquiring similar L2 pragmatic norms rather than the norms of some cultures who have different takes on politeness. Otherwise, if they use a level of politeness different from the one expected by their native speaker (NS) interlocutor, they risk

pragmatic failure and coming across as unaccommodating. Kasper & Rose (Ibid) state that one of the reasons frequently given for this is the NNS lack of grammatical proficiency, due to which they can neither understand nor produce the required polite forms and patterns. But the Intercultural Style Hypothesis actually provides an alternative explanation for these types of situations, one other than that of the speaker not being 'pragmatically fluent'.

This particular part of the discussion taps into the relation between indirectness and politeness. Many authors (Eslamirasekh (Ibid), Marti (Marti 2005, 1836–1869), Economidou-Kogetsidis (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2009, 79–112)) state that the connection between these two notions is mostly made in the Western, English speaking parts of the world, but that it is not true in all cultures. In discussions of requests in Persian and Turkish, for instance, requesting strategies in these languages seem to be more direct than those observed in English requests. Another frequently cited example is the one provided by Blum-Kulka (Ibid): Hebrew speakers whose second language is English often use more direct strategies in performing speech acts compared to other speakers. Eslamirasekh (Ibid), for one, notes how important it was for more research to be done on non-Western languages in this field in particular, due to differing cultural norms. The problem which stems from different norms regarding politeness, and in particular those regarding polite request strategies, is known as pragmatic failure. If a speaker of Turkish or Persian were to be as direct in his requests in English as he is in his native tongue, he could be considered rude or impolite in an English-speaking country.

Jasone Cenoz (Ibid) describes interlanguage pragmatics as the study of speech acts that both native L1 speakers and language learners use, which includes the study of any possible deviations that could come from NNS unawareness of pragmatic norms other than his own. Cenoz (Ibid: 63) is quite clear on the actual outcome of pragmatic failure: "In the case of pragma-linguistic failure, the learner uses linguistic elements that do not correspond to native forms and can produce breakdowns in communication or socially inappropriate utterances …These rules can involve a different perception of social psychological elements, such as social distance, relative power and status or legitimisation of a specific behavior". Most NSs, and we are primarily referring to monolingual speakers, judge pragmatic failure to have occurred because they judge NNS utterances by comparing them to the standard, and judge the degree of failure based on the extent to which these utterances do not com-

ply with the norm they are accustomed to. But, as we have mentioned, the Intercultural Style Hypothesis actually steps in as an alternative explanation for this mismatch. It could be that the inconsistency is in fact the result of a newly established intercultural style on the part of NNSs.

A fair amount of research exists on the subject matter of bilingual speakers and how their linguistic action patterns differ from those of native speakers of one of the languages. At this point we are only interested in any possible differences that may occur during the performance of a particular speech act, in this case the act of requesting. So for example, Economidou-Kogetsidis (Ibid) compared the performance of native Greek ESL university students who spoke English and British English native speakers. Eslamirasekh (Ibid) compared the patterns in the requests of English-speaking native speakers of Persian and speakers of American English. Marti (Ibid) focused on the realization of requests made by native Turkish speakers, and the requests made by Turkish-German bilinguals. Cenoz (Ibid) studied the request patterns of native speakers of Spanish in both Spanish and in English. Although some evidence has been found in their reports in support for the Intercultural Style Hypothesis, none of the studies have been able to confirm it to the fullest.

Requests are potentially face-threatening acts, hence speakers make use of a variety of requesting strategies or formulas. These have been presented in detail in Brown & Levinson (Ibid); a concise overview to be reproduced here is provided in Marti (Ibid: 1839):

1. Bald on record: FTA performed bald-on-record, in a direct and concise way without redressive action.
2. Positive politeness: FTA performed with redressive action. Strategies oriented towards positive face of the hearer.
3. Negative politeness: FTA performed with redressive action. Strategies oriented towards negative face of the hearer.
4. Off-record: FTA performed off-record. Strategies that might allow the act to have more than one interpretation.
5. Avoidance: FTA not performed.

The complex nature of the requestive speech act thus allows for a variety of strategies and semantic and verbal formulas to perform the act. The extent and type of these strategies is culturally conditioned by the culture of a given language, and the effects of the cultural norms and visible in the linguistic choices made by the speaker. These strategies

also depend on the degree of face threat that the hearer could perceive. Marti (Ibid: 1839) also goes on to recreate the variables judged relevant by Brown and Levinson for calculating the level of imposition: "The assessment of the amount of face threat, according to Brown and Levinson, depends predominantly on the following variables: relative *power* of the speaker, *social distance* (between the interlocutors), and *rank* (degree of imposition). According to them, by adding these values, we should be able to calculate the weight of an FTA". Another, more practical, reason for using requests as the speech act of choice is the fact that this is one of the speech acts used most frequently during a single day, the occur in a very wide range of everyday social situations.

The aim of the present study was to compare the performance of NSs of Serbian in request situations in English (L2) and Serbian, in order to test for support for the Intercultural Style Hypothesis (cf. Cenoz (Ibid)), that is, to investigate the presence of any bi-directional influence between the L1 and L2. Evidence of L2 influence on L1 has all been documented in the studies previously mentioned. In most cases, the subjects were university students, but in other cases they were just bilingual adults. The data in all of these studies were gathered with the help of a Discourse Completion Task (DCT), or open questionnaire that the participants filled out. Most of the authors based their DCTs on those found in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP), which was one of the first and most extensive cross-cultural studies to be completed (developed in Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (Blum, House, Kasper 1989)). Even though the DCT is not always the most popular of means of data collection due to some criticism aimed at it in terms of the naturalness of the given responses, it is certainly by far the most wide-spread, as it can provide the greatest amount of data in the shortest period of time.

In order to test the validity of the Intercultural Style Hypothesis, the study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. Do learners of English present differences when formulating requests in the L 1 and L2 or do they develop an intercultural style for the two languages?
2. Are there differences between the requests formulated in the L1 by speakers who differ in the level of proficiency in a foreign language?

2. Methodology

A total of 85 participants filled out the questionnaires and completed the DCTs. The questionnaire provided participants' background information (at which department of the Faculty of Philosophy in Niљ and the Faculty of Philology and Arts in Kragujevac they were studying, age and gender) and a question regarding students' level of proficiency in English. Based on this final question, participants were divided into two groups. The first group consisted of NS of Serbian who were also students of English at the Departments of English at the University of Niљ (n=23) and the University of Kragujevac (n=19), the 'fluent in English' group. The second group consisted of 43 students who were students at the Department of Serbian, Faculty of Philosophy in Niљ, the 'non-fluent in English' group. Based on their course requirements, the English language skills of the 'non-fluent in English' group were judged to be at the B2 level, and those of the 'fluent in English' group were judged to be at the C1 level. Only those students who had not passed any of the Cambridge Advanced and Cambridge Proficiency tests were included in the 'non-fluent in English' group, which served as the control group. The members of the 'fluent in English' completed the DCTs both in English and in Serbian. The members of the 'non-fluent in English' group completed DCTs only in Serbian. The 'fluent in English' group of students, who filled out questionnaires both in English and Serbian, did so on different days.

The discourse completion test consisted of six situations designed to elicit requests, all of which varied in terms of degree of imposition, rank, social distance and power, and the status of the interlocutors relative to one another. In two of the situations, situations 1 and 2, it is the speaker who is perceived as having greater social status in the given situation, while in situations 3, 4 and 6 the status of the interlocutors appears to be equal. In situation 5, higher social status is awarded the hearer. The request situations were translated from English into Serbian so that they were culturally appropriate. All of the DCTs we included were 'open questionnaires', in the sense that the hearer's responses to the request were not provided, so it was left up to the participants to create the circumstances of the situations themselves. What follows is a brief outline of the request situations (in English):

Situation 1: Professor – student

A professor asks a student to bring him a book from the library.

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Situation 2: Traffic warden – driver
A traffic warden asks a driver to move his/her car.

Situation 3: Student – fellow student
A student asks a fellow student to borrow the handout from the previous lecture.

Situation 4: Student – fellow student
A student asks a fellow student to make a call from his/her cell phone.

Situation 5: Student – parent
A student asks his/her parent for some money for a concert ticket.

Situation 6: Student – friend
A student asks a close friend to help him/her move to a new apartment.

The answers that the participants provided, a total of 762 request patterns, were coded according to the model given in Cenoz (Ibid) for:

Alerters; used to draw the hearer's attention, and include titles/ roles, surnames, first names, nicknames, endearment terms, offensive terms, pronouns, attention getters or combinations of these elements: *John, eh, you*, etc;

Request strategies; which refer to the linguistic elements used to convey the head act of the request. The most common strategies are the conventionally indirect ones that include *want* statements (*I'd like to*), suggestory formula (*How about?)* and preparatories (*Can I, Could I*);

Syntactic downgraders; which mitigate the request by using interrogatives (*Can I?*), the past tense (*I wanted to*), conditional clauses, etc;

Lexical and phrasal downgraders; used to mitigate the impositive force of the request and include expressions such as *please, I'm afraid, you know* and *will you*;

Mitigating supportives; which include justifications, promises of reward and preparators (*I'd like to ask you...*).

These linguistic elements are all generally used to minimize directness and soften the imposition of the request. The results were entered

into the SPSS 17.0 program, where they were processed by means of the paired samples and independent samples *t*-test.

3. Results

In order to determine whether any differences exist between the requests produced in English and in Serbian by students assessed as possessing a degree of fluency comparable to C1, that is, the 'fluent in English' group, the mean number of alerters, request strategies, syntactic downgraders, lexical downgraders and mitigating supportives in their English and Serbian requests were compared using paired samples *t*-tests.

Table 1 Requests in English and Serbian by the 'fluent in English' group

	English		***Serbian***		***t***	***s***
	Mean	***SD***	***Mean***	***SD***		
alerter	.21	.445	.37	.535	3.771	.000
request strategy	.70	.459	.74	.450	.943	.347
syntactic downgrader	1.22	.682	1.00	.658	-3.600	.000
lexical downgrader	.79	.739	.44	.577	-6.182	.000
mitigating supportive	.38	.653	.34	.694	-.795	.427

The results indicate that, for the 'fluent in English' group, there are significant differences between the means for the two languages corresponding to the total number of alerters, lexical and syntactic downgraders in English and Serbian. In response to the first research question we conclude that the 'fluent in English' group presents important differences when formulating requests in the L1 and L2 with respect to the group's usage of alerters, syntactic and lexical downgraders and no differences when formulating requests in the L1 and L2 with respect to request strategies and mitigating supportives.

Next, the specific means for each of the requests were compared to see if there were differences related to request situations. Tables 2-6 include the mean number of linguistic elements used in the formulation of each of the requests in English and in Serbian by the same 'fluent in English' group.

Table 2 Mean number of alerters in English and Serbian in each request

Request	*English*		*Serbian*		*t*	*s*
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*		
(1) Professor /student	.10	.307	.46	.555	3.354	.002
(2) Traffic warden/driver	.54	.643	.46	.606	-.476	.637
(3) Student /fellow student	.10	.307	.28	.456	2.214	.033
(4) Student /fellow student	.31	.521	.15	.366	1.670	.103
(5) Student /parent	.41	.549	.56	.552	1.356	.183
(6) Student /friend	.63	.160	.31	.569	3.148	.003

Table 3 Mean number of request strategies in English and Serbian in each request

Request	*English*		*Serbian*		*t*	*s*
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*		
(1) Professor /student	.64	.486	.87	.339	2.471	.018
(2) Traffic warden/driver	.51	.506	.49	.506	-.206	.838
(3) Student /fellow student	.82	.389	.85	.366	.298	.767
(4) Student /fellow student	.90	.307	.92	.270	.374	.711
(5) Student /parent	.62	.493	.64	.537	.206	.838
(6) Student /friend	.69	.468	.67	.478	-.240	.812

Table 4 Mean number of syntactic downgraders in English and Serbian in each request

Request	*English*		*Serbian*		*t*	*s*
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*		
(1) Professor /student	1.28	.724	1.51	.756	1.503	.141
(2) Traffic warden/driver	.85	.844	.90	.940	.240	.812
(3) Student /fellow student	1.38	.544	.97	.486	-3.782	.001
(4) Student /fellow student	1.48	.506	.95	.320	-5.602	.000
(5) Student /parent	1.08	.623	.74	.498	-2.485	.017
(6) Student /friend	1.26	.637	.95	.510	-2.508	.017

Table 5 Mean number of lexical downgraders in English and Serbian in each request

Request	*English*		*Serbian*		*t*	*s*
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*		
(1) Professor /student	1.08	.807	.85	.670	-1.548	.130
(2) Traffic warden/driver	.97	.778	.69	.655	-1.923	.062
(3) Student /fellow student	.74	.637	.28	.456	-3.376	.002
(4) Student /fellow student	.77	.742	.28	.456	-3.439	.001
(5) Student /parent	.59	.715	.23	.427	-2.883	.006
(6) Student /friend	.56	.641	.31	.468	-2.039	.048

Table 6 Mean number of mitigating supportives in English and Serbian in each request

Request	*English*		*Serbian*		*t*	*s*
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*		
(1) Professor /student	.13	.409	.10	.307	-.298	.767
(2) Traffic warden/driver	.23	.485	.18	.389	-.467	.643
(3) Student /fellow student	.31	.521	.26	.595	-.388	.700
(4) Student /fellow student	.62	.847	.56	.754	-.321	.750
(5) Student /parent	.49	.790	.49	1.023	.000	1.000
(6) Student /friend	.54	.643	.44	.754	-.628	.534

The results indicate that there are differences between some, but not all requests uttered in the two languages. When the number of alerters used when formulating requests is considered, statistically significant differences in the requests uttered in the two languages emerge in the first, third and sixth request. In terms of use of request strategies, the difference in requests uttered in Serbian and English is not statistically significant in any of the requests, with the exception of request 1. Statistically significant differences in the use of syntactic downgraders emerge in requests 3, 4, 5 and 6. The difference in requests uttered in the two languages in terms of lexical downgraders is statistically significant in all but the first and second request situation. Finally, no statistically significant differences were found with respect to the use of mitigating supportives in requests in the two languages.

In response to the first research question, it must be concluded that although native speakers of Serbian with a high level of fluency in the L2 (English) make requests in their L1 and L2 in a very similar way, important differences exist in the formulation of three of the six requests. The

greatest difference emerges in the formulation of the third and sixth request, where statistically significant differences were found with respect to the use of alerters, syntactic and lexical downgraders, but not request strategies and mitigating supportive. No statistically significant difference in the formulation of the second request was found. Some statistically significant differences were found in the formulation of the first request (with respect to the use of alerters and request strategies), fourth request (with respect to the use of syntactic and lexical downgraders), and fifth request (with respect to the use of syntactic and lexical downgraders).

The second research question concerned differences in the L1 according to proficiency in the L2. Several *t*-tests (independent samples) were carried out to analyze the differences in the requests produced in Serbian by the two groups – the 'fluent in English' group and the 'non-fluent in English' group.

The results of the general comparison between the requests formulated by the two groups are given in Table 7.

Table 7 Requests in English and Serbian by the two groups of fluent and non-fluent

	Fluent in English		***Non-fluent in English***		***t***	***s***
	Mean	***SD***	***Mean***	***SD***		
alerter	.35	.521	.64	.663	-4.674	.000
request strategy	.76	.441	.84	.385	-1.836	.067
syntactic downgrader	1.02	.685	1.19	.666	-2.550	0.11
lexical downgrader	.47	.594	.42	.562	.875	.382
mitigating supportive	.32	.682	.41	.700	-1.318	.188

The results of the *t*-tests indicate that there is a significant difference between the 'fluent in English' group and the 'non-fluent in English group' only in terms of the use of alerters when requests are formulated in Serbian, but not in the use of the remaining four linguistic elements investigated.

Tables 8–12 present the results of the *t*-tests (independent samples) corresponding to each of the requests by the two groups of fluent and non-fluent speakers of English.

Table 8 Mean number of alerters in Serbian by the two groups of fluent and non-fluent

Request	*Fluent in English*		*Non-fluent in English*		*t*	*s*
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*		
(1) Professor /student	.46	.555	.90	.680	-3.101	.003
(2) Traffic warden/ driver	.46	.600	.62	.633	-1.101	.274
(3) Student /fellow student	.28	.456	.74	.677	-3.530	.001
(4) Student /fellow student	.15	.366	.54	.720	-2.975	.004
(5) Student /parent	.56	.552	.62	.544	-.413	.681
(6) Student /friend	.31	.569	.38	.590	-.586	.560

Table 9 Mean number of request strategies in Serbian by the two groups of fluent and non-fluent

Request	*Fluent in English*		*Non-fluent in English*		*t*	*s*
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*		
(1) Professor /student	.90	.307	.95	.223	-.843	.402
(2) Traffic warden/ driver	.49	.506	.79	.469	-2.784	.007
(3) Student /fellow student	.85	.366	.85	.366	.000	1.000
(4) Student /fellow student	.92	.270	.85	.366	1.057	.294
(5) Student /parent	.64	.537	.74	.442	-.920	.360
(6) Student /friend	.67	.478	.77	.427	-1.000	.320

Table 10 Mean number of syntactic downgraders in Serbian by the two groups of fluent and non-fluent

Request	*Fluent in English*		*Non-fluent in English*		*t*	*s*
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*		
(1) Professor /student	.46	.555	.90	.680	-3.101	.003
(2) Traffic warden/ driver	.46	.600	.62	.633	-1.101	.274
(3) Student /fellow student	.28	.456	.74	.677	-3.530	.001

(4) Student /fellow student	.15	.366	.54	.720	-2.975	.004
(5) Student /parent	.56	.552	.62	.544	-.413	.681
(6) Student /friend	.31	.569	.38	.590	-.586	.560

Table 11 Mean number of lexical downgraders in Serbian by the two groups of fluent and non-fluent

Request	***Fluent in English***		***Non-fluent in English***		***t***	***s***
	Mean	***SD***	***Mean***	***SD***		
(1) Professor /student	.85	.670	.59	.549	1.849	.068
(2) Traffic warden/ driver	.69	.655	.64	.584	.365	.716
(3) Student /fellow student	.28	.456	.23	.427	.513	.610
(4) Student /fellow student	.28	.456	.28	.456	.000	1.000
(5) Student /parent	.23	.427	.33	.662	-.813	.419
(6) Student /friend	.31	.468	.38	.544	-.670	.505

Table 12 Mean number of mitigating supportives in Serbian by the two groups of fluent and non-fluent

Request	***Fluent in English***		***Non-fluent in English***		***t***	***s***
	Mean	***SD***	***Mean***	***SD***		
(1) Professor /student	.10	.307	.05	.223	.843	.402
(2) Traffic warden/ driver	.69	.655	.64	.584	-.555	.581
(3) Student /fellow student	.26	.595	.56	.821	-1.896	.062
(4) Student /fellow student	.56	.754	.59	.818	-.144	.886
(5) Student /parent	.49	1.023	.62	.815	-.612	.542
(6) Student /friend	.44	.754	.53	.687	-.550	.584

The results of the *t*-tests indicate that there are significant differences between the fluent in English group and the non-fluent in English group in some of the measures corresponding to the formulation of requests 1, 3 and 4, namely in alerters and syntactic downgraders. Further, a significant difference in the use of request strategies in request 2 also emerged.

No statistically significant differences were found in terms of the use of lexical downgraders and mitigating supportives by the 'fluent in English' group and the 'non-fluent in English' group in any of the six request situations investigated.

When the direction of the differences in those cases in which the differences are significant is analyzed, the following observations can be made:

- The 'non-fluent in English' group uses a higher number of alerters than the 'fluent in English' group when requests are formulated in Serbian; the least number of alerters is used by the 'fluent in English' group when formulating requests in English;
- The 'non-fluent in English' group uses a higher number of request strategies than the 'fluent in English' group when requests are formulated in Serbian; the least number of request strategies is used by the 'fluent in English' group when formulating requests in English;
- The 'fluent in English' group uses fewer syntactic downgraders when formulating requests in Serbian than when formulating requests in English; further, the 'fluent in English' group uses fewer syntactic downgraders when formulating requests in Serbian than the 'non-fluent in English' group does.

Though a quantitative analysis is useful in providing a general perspective on the use of different elements in the formulation of requests, a qualitative analysis is likely to provide more detailed insight into the use of the linguistic elements which were found to differ significantly in terms of usage by the 'fluent in English' and 'non-fluent in English' groups.

4. A qualitative analysis

In the case of the 'fluent in English' group, an interesting situation presents itself if we look at the request patterns for request situation 2 (A traffic warden asks a driver to move his/her car). For each of the remaining five request situations, statistically significant differences were noted at least once. For this particular situation no statistically significant differences were noted for any of the studied linguistic elements. The reason for this is that most of the participants used the imperative to realize the request in this situation, irrespective of whether they were making it in Serbian or English. For example:

Move your car please sir/madam.
Sir, please move your car.

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Please, move your car!

Molim vas pomerite svoj auto!
Budite ljubazni i pomerite svoj auto.
Pomeri auto!

In this situation, the speaker has more social power and there is a great social distance between the interlocutors, in favor of the speaker. The speaker perceives there to be a low degree of imposition and expects the task to be carried out without any effort on his part to maintain the hearer's negative face.

The third request situation (A student asks a fellow student for the handouts given in a previous class) also requires a closer look. In terms of social power and distance, the interlocutors seem to be of equal status, but the speaker does perceive the degree of imposition to be great (greater, for instance, than in the situation where he addresses his friend), so at least some effort has to be made to preserve the negative face of the hearer.

This group of participants understood the need for more downgraders to be used to soften the request and thus used more of them when making their requests in English in this request situation. For example:

Could you bring me the handouts from the previous class, please?
Would you give me your handouts?

Hoćeš li da mi pozajmiš beleške sa prošlog časa?

And finally there is the sixth request situation: A student asks a friend to help him/her move to a new apartment. No difference in terms of social distance and power between the speaker and the hearer. Since they are friends, the degree of imposition is not high as in the previously studied request situation. In this case we have a chance for supporting somebody's positive face in English, which is reflected in the greater use of alerters and more downgarders (both syntactic and lexical). For example:

I need help with moving my stuff to a new flat. Could you help me?
Mate, could you help me with these? I'm moving to a new crib.

Imaš li vremena da mi pomogneš oko selidbe?

This part of our discussion is a reflection of the fact there is a strong and evident connection between indirectness and politeness that in English which is not reflected in other languages (as was noted at the beginning of the paper). In Serbian, it would seem, based on the data shown in Table 7 and Table 10, that more alerters are consistently used, irre-

spective of the request situation. This is further supported by an analysis of the data shown in Table 8. More alerters were used by the non-fluent group in various situations: when the speaker had more social power and the social distance between the speaker and hearer was great (request situation 1), as well as in situations where the speaker and hearer could be perceived as equals (request situations 3 and 4).

In request situation 2 (a traffic warden and driver), the non-fluent group used more direct request stratetgies, as they perceived the situation required in Serbian. The 'fluent in English' group responded in accordance to the indirectness is politeness principle.

As in the case of alerters, the 'non-fluent in English' group consistently used more syntactic downgraders in the same request situations (1, 3, 4) to soften the imposition of the request.

Examples for situation 1:

Kolega, hoćete li, molim vas, da mi donesete knjigu iz biblioteke?
Kolega, da li biste mogli da mi donesete knjigu iz biblioteke?

Examples for situation 3:

, PMFHB N PßFUF MJ N PMJN 7BT EB NJ EBUF NBUFSJBM TB QSP MPH časa?
, PMFHB N PßFUF MJ VSB EB NJ QPOFTFUF CFMF LF TB QSP MPH časa?

Examples for situation 4:

[WOJUF LPMFHB N PßFUF EB NJ QP[BKN JUF VPKF CFMFHPO
[WOJ FN PßF EB NJ QP[BKN J VPK N PCJMOJ UFMFGPO N PMJN UF , JUOP N J je.

5. Discussion

The results presented indicate that subjects whose first language is Serbian and who are fluent in English exhibit significant differences in the use of three of the five linguistic elements investigated: alerters, syntactic downgraders and lexical downgraders; at the same time, they tend use a similar number of request strategies and mitigating supportives. According to the Intercultural Style Hypothesis, the L2 could influence the production of speech acts in the L1, in that L2 learners could use similar pragma-linguistic elements in the two languages because there is interaction between the two system. The results do not lend support to this overall when only the formulation of requests in Serbian and in English by the 'fluent in English' group is considered.

However, comparison of the requests formulated in the L1 (Serbian) by the 'fluent in English' group and the 'non-fluent in English' group re-

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veals evidence which does lend support to the Intercultural Style Hypothesis (Blum-Kulka, 1991). Speakers who are fluent in English use fewer alerters when formulating requests in English than when formulating requests in Serbian. Furthermore, the same group uses fewer alerters when formulating requests in Serbian than does the 'non-fluent in English' group (requests 1, 3 and 4). Likewise, speakers who are fluent in English use fewer request strategies when formulating requests in English than when formulating requests in Serbian. There is also a statistically significant difference in the number of request strategies used by this group when formulating requests in Serbian compared to the number of request strategies used by the 'non-fluent in English' group (request 2). These findings lend support to the Intercultural Style Hypothesis because they show that learners who present a high level of proficiency in the L2 seem to be developing an intercultural pattern that is reflected in the differences between requests formulated in English (L2) compared to requests formulated in Serbian (L1) and between requests formulated in the L1 by this group and by other native speakers of Serbian.

Additional evidence emerges when the direction of differences in another case in which the differences in the use of a pragma-linguistic element are significant between the 'fluent in English' group and the 'non-fluent' in English group is considered: the case of syntactic downgraders. It has already been noted that speakers fluent in the L2 (English) use more syntactic downgraders when formulating requests in English than when formulating requests in Serbian (L1). At the same time, this group uses fewer syntactic downgraders when formulating requests in the L1 than the 'non-fluent in English' group does. These findings make more sense when considered in the context of 'fluent in English' speakers' use of alerters, in particular in requests 1, 3 and 4. In request 1, speakers fluent in English used more alerters when formulating requests in Serbian than when formulating requests in English. In situations 3 and 4, the same group used similar numbers of alerters when formulating requests both in Serbian and in English, but fewer alerters when formulating requests in Serbian than other native speakers of Serbian.

6. Conclusion

The quantitative analysis showed that the participants in this study exhibited differences in only three of the five linguistic elements (alerters, syntactic downgraders, lexical downgraders). The qualitative analysis showed that these differences did reflect influence of the L2 on L1, but only in certain request situations (primarily situations 1, (interlocutors of different status), 3 and 4 (interlocutors of the same status)). This

leads us to the conclusion that support can be found for the Intercultural Style Hypothesis, but that it is only limited. This conclusion is similar to the conclusions drawn by other authors who studied the request patterns of NSs and NNs: research results also only partially confirmed the hypothesis.

Clearly there is evidence for L2 influence on L1, especially in terms of use of syntactic downgraders both in English and Serbian by the 'fluent in English' group. The possible limitations of using DCTs in terms of the naturalness of the provided responses have already been mentioned as a limitation of this study, and another possible limitation is that it deals with a single speech act. There is a definite shortage of research on pragmatic competence when it comes to NNSs of English whose native tongue is Serbian. Perhaps the results of this study could yield useful results for further research on multilingual competence, especially research on non-Western languages.

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ИНТЕРКУЛТУРНИ СТИЛ: ИНТЕРАКЦИЈА СРПСКОГ КАО МАТЕРЊЕГ И ЕНГЛЕСКОГ КАО СТРАНОГ ЈЕЗИКА У ЗАХТЕВИМА

Резиме

У овом раду говори се о тестирању Хипотезе интеркултурног стила, коју су Каспер и Блум-Калка представиле у уводном поглављу књиге *Intercultural Pragmatics*, у контексту постављања захтева. Предмет истраживања биле су разлике између захтева постављених на српском (матерњем језику испитаника) и на енглеском језику (језику који испитаници уче као страни) и могућност да се уочене разлике могу објаснити степеном развијености језичких компетенција испитаника на страном језику. Резултати квантитативне анализе показују да међу испитаницима постоје јасне разлике у погледу језичких средстава којима се служе приликом постављања захтева. Квалитативна анализа указује да су поменуте разлике најуочљивије у ситуацијама где је статус говорника битно различит, као и оним где су говорници статусно једнаки. Закључујемо да, као и у другим сличним студијама, резултати пружају тек парцијалну потврду постојању интеркултурног стила код говорника са високо развијеним језичким компетенцијама на страном језику.

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