Affective Factors and Interpretive Judgments in Intercultural Encounters

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Abstract: It is quite obvious that culture and language differences can cause misunderstandings during encounters between people from different cultures. What is less often noted is that such differences may cause participants to experience negative feelings. Culture differences often lead to violated expectations, which may cause participants to feel discomfort or stress; language differences often make it necessary for one or more of the participants to function in a language that is not their mother tongue, which may lead to feelings of anxiety, stress, or what is sometimes called language fatigue. In turn, these uncomfortable feelings may have a negative impact on interpretive judgments participants make about each other, especially by serving as a handy source of ready-made "substitute" questions (Kahneman & Frederick, 2002) which encourage participants to make subconscious and automatic (System 1) interpretive judgements rather than more conscious and careful (System 2) interpretations.

In foreign language courses, especially English courses, teachers should teach students about the role these two factors — violated expectations and language fatigue — play in intercultural communication, and how they may influence interpretive judgments. Learners who are consciously on the lookout for these factors, and for the feelings they may cause are more likely to effectively manage the impact of these factors on interpretive judgments made during intercultural communication; learners will also be more aware of and have a better understanding of how interpretive processes work in intercultural encounters.

Keywords: Intercultural communication, interpretation, affect, feelings, language fatigue, dual process views of thinking, System 1, System 2, substitution

1. Introduction

Dear Fran,

I have been in the US for several months now, and am living in a university dormitory for graduate students. Before coming to the US I assumed that living in a dormitory would be a good way to meet American students and make friends with them. But I have discovered that I actually don't see the other students in my dormitory very much except in the cafeteria, and in the cafeteria the American students and international students don't interact very much. Usually the Americans sit with other Americans, and the international students sit with other international students.

There is one American student, June, who I have gotten to know a little bit. She is in one of my classes and also lives in my dormitory. I have seen her several times in the cafeteria and

gone over to sit with her. When I sat with her, June seemed happy to chat with me, so I thought a friendship was developing between us.

Yesterday while I was eating my lunch alone in the dining hall, June came in. She saw me and nodded to me, but then she went over to another table and sat down with several other Americans. I was very disappointed, and when I told some other Chinese students about this, they said that American students aren't very interested in getting to know international students. Do you think this is true?

Your Chinese student,
Lihua

The story above is a critical incident exercise from a textbook for Chinese learners of English (Snow, 2014), and we begin with it here for several reasons. First, it is a good illustration of an intercultural encounter, a situation in which a person from one culture encounters a "stranger" from another culture. (Here and below I will follow Gudykunst and Kim in using the term "stranger" to refer to anyone who is from a different and unfamiliar culture [Gudykunst & Kim, 1997]). While many intercultural encounters between strangers are smooth and enjoyable, it is also not uncommon for problems to arise, as happens in the story above, and one assumption underlying this paper is that a major goal of foreign language courses should be preparing students to deal with such encounters effectively. Given the increasing use of English as the global lingua franca, and the likelihood that English will be the language used in a great many encounters between people of different culture and language backgrounds, it is especially important to include intercultural skills training in English courses.

The second reason to start with this incident is that it illustrates the important role interpretation plays in all intercultural encounters (Chen & Starosta, 1998; Gudykunst & Kim, 1997; Scollon, Scollon & Jones, 2012). In this particular encounter Lihua both wants and needs to make sense of what June did; in fact, it would be virtually impossible for Lihua not to interpret June's behaviour. In order to move forward in the relationship, Lihua needs to decide whether June's behaviour was intended to communicate some kind of a message and, if so, what that message might have been, and her interpretation of this incident — whether conscious or subconscious — may well impact how her relationship with June either continues to develop or fails to develop.

A third reason to begin with this particular incident is that it can be used to illustrate the significant role played by affect in intercultural encounters. As Lihua goes about trying to make sense of June's behaviour, Lihua's feelings will almost certainly have a significant influence on her interpretation process, and the same would be true for most if not all intercultural encounters. However, to date scholarly discussion of intercultural communication has tended to pay relatively little attention to the role of affect, depicting the participants in such encounters "as too conceptual, too rational, too conscious, and too intentional" (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, p. 35; see also Slovic et al., 2002). The building of intercultural competence requires that learners not only become skilled at managing the cognitive aspects of the interpretation process, but also be on the lookout for affective factors and better at managing the impact of feelings on interpretive judgments.

The larger issue addressed by this paper relates to how educators can help learners better understand the role of interpretation in intercultural encounters and the factors that are likely to affect interpretive judgements. More specifically, this paper addresses the question of which factors are most deserving of time and attention in any intercultural training conducted in English courses. My assumption is that while intercultural training should be incorporated into English courses, the time and attention which can be given to it will inevitably be limited, so teachers and curriculum designers need to carefully select a limited number of high priority factors to focus on. Likewise, in intercultural encounters, it is unrealistic to expect that learners would have the time or willingness to examine their interpretive judgments using a long mental checklist covering all the concepts taught in intercultural communication courses. It may, however, be realistic to expect them to make use of a short mental checklist covering a few important factors that they can and should be on the lookout for during intercultural encounters. Elsewhere I discuss three factors — ethnocentrism, stereotyping, and the in/outgroup dynamic — that deserve special attention because of their direct impact on the process by which interpretative judgements are made (Snow, forthcoming). These three factors are especially important to be aware of not only because they so often play a role in intercultural communication but also because they have so much potential to bias interpretive judgements made about strangers during intercultural encounters.

In this paper I wish to discuss two additional factors that should be on any short list of topics to be addressed in intercultural training in language courses — violated expectations and the demands of functioning in a foreign language — which are important partly because they play a role in so many intercultural encounters. Both of these factors are generally given at least some attention in textbooks on intercultural communication, but they generally do not receive extensive attention; for example, whereas most introductory intercultural communication textbooks devote entire sections or chapters to topics such as ethnocentrism, stereotyping and culture shock, they generally do not devote as much space to the impact of violated expectations or the demands of using a foreign language. However, I feel these two factors deserve more attention than they normally get, not only because they affect so many intercultural encounters but because studying them is a good way to help learners become more aware of the role feelings play in intercultural encounters and better understand the mechanism by which this happens.

Below we will examine the two factors in turn, with a particular eye toward the relationship of each to affect and interpretation. However, in order to fully understand how these two factors impact interpretive judgements, it is first necessary to make a quick detour into the field of psychology to examine "dual process" views of thinking and a concept called "substitution."

2. Dual Process Views of Thinking

Over the past few decades, scholars who study the human mind have advocated what are called dual process views of how the mind works. The basic idea is that the human mind has two rather different ways of thinking — one that is more conscious and reflective and one that is more instinctive and automatic. Psychologists use a variety of contrasting pairs of terms to refer to these two ways of thinking; for example, unconscious/conscious thinking (e.g., Wilson,

2002), rational/emotional thinking (e.g., Eagleman, 2011), Type 1 and 2 processing (e.g., Evans & Stanovich, 2013), and fast/slow thinking (e.g., Kahneman, 2011). However, perhaps the most widely used and familiar terms for these two ways the mind thinks are "System 1" and "System 2."

The term "System 1" refers to thought processes that function below the level of conscious awareness. This kind of thinking takes place very rapidly and efficiently, requiring little effort, and is often described as being instinctive; it is also often compared to the automatic pilot on an airplane (Kahneman, 2011; Evans & Stanovich, 2013).

One important point to emphasize here is that, because of its speed and efficiency, System 1 is our minds' default system for most thinking, and handles the majority of our interpretive judgments. This claim may seem surprising, but it is also fairly easy to see why this would be the case — the mind simply needs to make far more judgments than it could possibly devote conscious attention to. For example, as Scollon, Scollon, and Jones (2012) point out, in conversations inferential judgments need to be made constantly, as often as once per second, so most of these judgments need to be made instantly and automatically.

The term "System 2", in contrast, refers to conscious modes of thinking — consciously analyzing situations, considering different options, weighing advantages and disadvantages, and so forth. In other words, System 2 is the kind of thinking that we usually have in mind when we refer to thinking. The strength of System 2 is that it is more careful and thorough than System 1, however, this kind of thinking also requires relatively high levels of effort, and is much slower than System 1 (Wilson, 2002; Kahneman, 2011; Evans & Stanovich, 2013).

Even though the judgments of System 1 are rapid and automatic, on the whole they are fairly reliable, especially in situations that are readily comparable to past experiences. This is because System 1 is good at learning from previous experience, so when it is presented with situations similar to those encountered in the past, it is able to handle the new situation by relating it to relevant past experiences. For example, when we are greeted in the hall by a friend who says "How are you?" we have learned from past experience how to read the clues necessary for interpreting the situation and deciding how to respond, and usually we don't need to engage System 2 to think consciously or carefully about what to do. However, when confronted with new situations for which past experience is not a very reliable guide, System 1 tends to be less reliable (Stanovich, 2011); in fact, Evans and Stanovich describe novel situations as a "hostile environment" for System 1 (2013, p. 229). The relevance of this point to intercultural communication is that intercultural encounters are rich in novelty, hence constitute situations that are relatively problematic for heavy reliance on System 1 modes of thinking.

Because System 1 relies heavily on lessons learned from previous experience, and often works by automatically applying lessons from past experiences to new situations, it is prone to making certain kinds of errors when dealing with situations that are novel and unfamiliar. One of the most important of these is a tendency to engage in what is called "substitution" (Kahneman & Frederick, 2002; Kahneman, 2011). The basic idea is that, when confronted with a question or problem that is relatively difficult to deal with, in its drive for speed and ease System 1 will often substitute a similar but easier question for which answers seem more readily available. As Kahneman puts it: "If a satisfactory answer to a hard question is not found quickly, System 1 will find a related question that is easier and will answer it" (2011, p. 97).

To illustrate the concept, he offers the following pairs of questions, first the original question with which we might be confronted, and then a simpler substitute question with which System 1 might replace the original question:

1. How much would you contribute to save an endangered species? → How much emotion do I feel when I think of dying dolphins?
2. How happy are you with your life these days? → What is my mood right now?
3. How popular will the president be 6 months from now? → How popular is the president now?
4. How should financial advisors who prey on the elderly be punished? → How much anger do I feel when I think of financial predators?
5. This woman is running for the primary. How far will she go in politics? → Does this woman look like a political winner?

In each case, the original question is relatively complex, and a thoughtful answer would require the engagement of System 2. In contrast, the substitute question is much simpler and easier, and can be handled rapidly and easily by System 1.

Applied to the case of Lihua and June in the 'critical incident' at the beginning of this paper, substitution might work something like this: The interpretive judgment confronting Lihua is actually rather difficult, not least because she is relatively unfamiliar with June's culture and it is therefore difficult for her to see the situation from June's perspective. So, Lihua's subconscious mind (System 1) might replace the original and difficult question ("From the perspective of June and her culture, how should I interpret her decision not to eat with me?") with an easier question such as "In my culture, what would June's behavior normally mean?" Lihua's System 1 can cope with the latter question more easily and quickly because it allows her to draw on the many years of experience she has interacting with others in her own familiar cultural framework. The obvious problem is that while the substitute question may be easier to answer, it is also more ethnocentric, and may well result in an interpretation of the situation that doesn't correspond well with June's intentions.

Dual process scholars Evan and Stanovich advocate a "default-interventionist" view of how System 1 and System 2 interact with each other. In this view, System 1 is the default system for the great majority of thinking, and rapidly generates automatic judgments. The majority of these are adopted; however, it is also possible for System 2 to intervene, scrutinize and possibly override these judgments. Ideally in intercultural encounters we will recognize that we are facing novel situations for which past experience in our own cultures will not be a very reliable guide, and we will therefore think more carefully about judgments we make. In dual process theory terms, we will recognize that we are in a "hostile environment" for System 1, and "ask reinforcement from System 2" (Kahneman, 2011, p. 417). However, our natural tendency is to avoid using System 2 unless it clearly seems necessary. As Kahneman puts it: "… a lazy System 2 often follows the path of least effort and endorses a heuristic answer without much scrutiny of whether it is truly appropriate" (2011, p. 99).

The relevance of these theories to the two the factors discussed below — violated expectations and the demands of functioning in a foreign language — has to do with the

role of feelings. When System 1 replaces a difficult interpretation question with one that is easier, it often does so by substituting a question relating to feelings; in fact, if we look back at Kahneman's examples of substitute questions (above), we will notice that in three out of five cases (#1, #2, and #4) the substitute question is focused on a feeling. My argument below will be that both violated expectations and the demands of functioning in a foreign language often generate negative feelings during intercultural encounters, and that one way this may have an impact on interpretive judgments is by making it easier for System 1 to make substitutions, especially substitutions that System 2 is relatively unlikely to scrutinize.

3. Violated Expectations

One of the things we can be most sure of in intercultural encounters is that there will be cultural differences – the participants will differ from each other to some degree in their values, normal behavior patterns, background knowledge, sense of identity, and a host of other things. Granted, to some extent the same kinds of differences are also found among people from the same country or culture, and even from the same family. However, when we encounter a stranger who is not only from a different culture but also a different country, the gaps are likely to be larger. Furthermore, in addition to not knowing what the precise differences are, it is more likely that we won't know where differences exist — and that we will often be caught by surprise when differences suddenly emerge where we had not expected them.

To some degree, violated expectations may play a positive role in the interpretation process because they get our attention and often cause us to think; in dual process theory terms, they call attention to the fact that we are in a hostile environment for the subconscious mind and encourage us to engage the conscious mind (Schwarz, 2002). This point is illustrated by the story above; it is precisely because Lihua is puzzled by June's behavior that she consciously ponders it and may even seek advice from others. In this way, violated expectations that lead to active engagement of the conscious mind may actually encourage a more reflective and thoughtful approach to interpreting intercultural encounters.

However, in other ways, violated expectations are likely to have a somewhat negative impact on the interpretation process, possibly disposing us toward making relatively negative judgments. Having our expectations violated is not always a bad thing, and sometimes being caught by surprise can even be good — one thinks of the joy of a surprise birthday party. However, one inherent feature of surprises is that they are somewhat unsettling, and give us a sense that things are not entirely predictable or under our control. Part of the reason a surprise party tends to be pleasant is that the brief moment of surprise is so quickly replaced by instant return to a world of familiar faces and social norms. In contrast, in intercultural encounters the novelty of the situation in and of itself may generate anxiety or stress (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997; Barna, 1997), and when we are caught off guard by something a stranger does or says, there isn't necessarily a quick return to a familiar and reassuring world. On the whole, people tend to be more comfortable in situations that are reasonably predictable (Triandis, 1994), and surprises in intercultural encounters tend to undermine that sense of predictability, exacerbating feelings of anxiety or stress.

The discomfort created by violated expectations can have a negative impact on the

interpretation process in two different ways. First, discomfort arising from violated expectations can predispose us toward making relatively negative judgments of a strangers' behavior. Here let us remember that violated expectations may cause us to think more consciously and carefully about our interpretive judgments, and this may cause us to see more than one possible interpretation of the stranger's behavior. The possible explanations, in turn, probably range from being relatively generous toward the stranger ("Maybe she had a meeting with the other American students") to relatively harsh ("Maybe my friends are right — American students don't really like Chinese students"). To complete the interpretation process, we then need to settle on one of these explanations. The point here is that when we are experiencing negative feelings, we are somewhat more likely to choose relatively negative explanations. Schwarz notes that "…almost any target is likely to be evaluated more favorably when the judge is in a positive rather than a negative mood" (2002, p. 534); likewise, negative feelings incline one toward relatively negative judgments.

Second, the negative feelings generated by violated expectations may become a vehicle for attribute substitution. As Schwarz notes, when confronted with a difficult or complex interpretation question, "…we may simplify the tasks by assessing our apparent affective reactions to the target, essentially asking ourselves, 'How do I feel about this?'" (2002, p. 536) Taking the Lihua story as an example, it is possible that rather than devoting substantial effort to trying to figure out why June chose not to sit with her, she will simply replace the "What did June mean by this?" question with the easier "How do I feel?" question. Looking a bit further down the road, if Lihua decides she doesn't like the way June behaved, she may well generalize that to a conclusion that she doesn't like June, and through the mechanisms of stereotyping it may not be long before she is agreeing with her classmates that Americans as a whole aren't very friendly toward Chinese students (Chen, 1998).

Unfortunately, the conscious mind does not always actively intervene to check judgments that may be overly influenced by negative feelings. When it comes to the influence of feelings on interpretation, Kahneman notes that "…System 2 is more of an apologist for the emotions of System 1 than a critic of those emotions — an endorser rather than an enforcer. Its search for information and arguments is mostly constrained to information that is consistent with existing beliefs, not with an intention to examine them" (2011, pp. 103-4). In short, while June's unexpected choice will probably cause Lihua to engage her conscious mind, the discomfort caused by the violation of her expectations may limit her search area to explanations that are congruent with her unhappiness, explanations that not only explain June's behavior but also justify Lihua's negative feelings.

4. The Demands of Functioning in a Foreign Language

It is not unusual for intercultural communication textbooks to give significant attention to issues related to language, and the trend seems to be toward more attention to language rather than less. For example, recent introductory textbooks such as Zhu (2014) and Liu, Volčič, and Gallois (2015) devote entire chapters to language, addressing issues such as the components of language, varieties of languages, the role of language in shaping perception, ties of language to identity and power, and so forth. However, there is one language-related feature of intercultural

communication that textbooks generally do not address in much detail. As the encounter between Lihua and June illustrates, in a great many intercultural encounters, especially those between people from different countries, at least some of the participants have to function in a language (often English) which is not their native variety, over which their mastery is at best partial, and in which they may not be entirely comfortable and confident. It should also be noted that even when participants are functioning in their first language, the encounter is often made somewhat more challenging by the fact that other participants don't have native levels of skill in the language(s) being used.

It is certainly obvious to anyone who has travelled outside their home region or country that the foreign language factor plays a major role in intercultural communication, not least because of its potential to cause misunderstandings; most sojourners have a stock of stories relating to how deficiencies in their own foreign language skills or those of their hosts caused outcomes ranging from entertaining to tragic. However, the impact of foreign language use on intercultural encounters is not limited to its potential to bedevil attempts to communicate; the need to function in a foreign language often has a considerable impact on one's feelings, which in turn may impact our interpretations of strangers.

One aspect of this which is often addressed in the literature on second language acquisition relates to what is called anxiety — feelings of discomfort or stress that people may experience when they need to communicate in a foreign language. For example, Brown (2014, p. 151) describes three types of "foreign language anxiety":

- "Communication apprehension" caused by fears that one will not be able to express ideas adequately and clearly.
- "Fear of negative social evaluation" that is caused by one's concerns about making a positive impression on others.
- "Test anxiety" that affects students in test situations.

Brown's focus is on the role anxiety plays in language learning rather than its role in language use, which accounts for the special attention given to test anxiety. However, the first two types of anxiety he mentions are just a relevant to foreign language users as to foreign language learners.

There are a number of ways in which having to function in a foreign language might well lead to anxiety and stress. For example, in her conversations with June, Lihua may at times experience one or more of the following:

- Concern about whether she can express herself clearly, and whether June will understand her. While concerns like this are especially strong among people who only have beginning-level skills in a foreign language, concerns often persist well into the intermediate and even advanced level, especially for learners who have had relatively few opportunities to use the language in real conversations with native speakers.
- Concern about her ability to understand what June says, especially if June speaks quickly or has an unfamiliar accent. This concern may be especially strong because

it is very embarrassing and awkward to time and time again ask someone to repeat what they said.

- Worry about making mistakes. This may be especially strong for people who learn a foreign language in classroom settings where accuracy is rewarded and mistakes are often criticized or punished. People who try to use a language learned under such circumstances may find it quite stressful to speak, and may even feel guilty if they make mistakes.

Here we should note that the effects of anxiety "are neither simple nor solely negative" (Scovel, 2001, p. 131), and the challenge of functioning in a foreign language may be quite exciting and stimulating. However, as Oxford notes, "…most language research shows a negative relationship between anxiety and performance" (1999, p. 60), so it seems fair to conclude that anxiety caused by the need to function in a foreign language will often be a problem in intercultural encounters.

The demands of functioning in a foreign language can sometimes have another kind of impact on feelings — resentment. While this probably does not affect as many intercultural encounters as language use anxiety does, there are some situations where feeling compelled to use a foreign language such as English may in and of itself give rise to negative feelings. Of course, in the description of the situation given above there is no evidence that this happened in Lihua's encounter, but we can still use this story as an illustration to help us understand the problem. No doubt Lihua expected to use English in this encounter, and was probably quite willing to do so; however, she may also have been aware that she had little choice in the matter. To some extent, the choice of English as their common language in this encounter was simply an issue of utility; the growing role of English as the global lingua franca means that using English is often the most practical solution when people from different language backgrounds need to communicate. However, the choice of English is also in part an issue of power, and the fact that Lihua has to use English — rather than June using Chinese — is also rooted in the economic, political, military, and cultural power of English-speaking nations, especially the United States and the United Kingdom. While Lihua — and many others like her around the world — may often be quite willing to use English, at other times she may resent norms which assume that when Chinese people interact with people from other countries, they are expected to accommodate the others by using English. Of course in Lihua's case we can argue that she has chosen to study in the United States, so should expect to use English — and this is most likely how Lihua would view the situation herself. However, the reality is that the same game rules — Chinese should accommodate foreigners by learning English rather than vice versa — are often found even in interactions that take place on Chinese soil.

Probably the most overlooked impact of being required to function in a foreign language is that it tends to be more tiring and draining than functioning in one's native language, a phenomenon that is sometimes called "language fatigue." One possible reason why this factor is less discussed may be that, from a research perspective, the concept of "fatigue" itself is problematic. As Hockey notes, fatigue is "…poorly understood. This is true even within the scientific community, where it has been surprisingly neglected in terms of scientific investigation" (2013, p. 2). However, the role of this factor in intercultural encounters calls for

serious attention. Here I will draw on my own experience. My first language is English, but my command of Chinese (Mandarin) is quite advanced for a non-Chinese person, and I have used it on a daily basis for decades. However, even now when I speak in Chinese, I am still quite keenly aware that using it requires more effort than using English does. Furthermore, the fact that it requires more effort does at times impact my interactions with Chinese people. For example, in long conversations I more rapidly become fatigued, especially if the topic — hence vocabulary — is at the outer ranges of my coping skills, or if the person I am listening to is speaking with an unfamiliar accent. This makes it somewhat more likely that I will tune out of the conversation, or look for opportunities to terminate it, than would be the case if I were speaking English. I am also aware that when I feel fatigued, I am somewhat more likely to avoid starting new conversations in Chinese or simply avoid interacting with Chinese people.

It is here that there may be a link to the Lihua/June story. In this particular case, there is no evidence that Lihua is avoiding interaction because of any extra effort that using English would require of her. However, it is possible that when June saw Lihua and had to decide whether to sit with her or with some American friends, language fatigue played a role. As mentioned above, communicating in a foreign language is not only fatiguing for the person using a language that is not their native tongue, but also to some degree for the native speaker who is trying to communicate with someone who is functioning in a language that is foreign to them. It is entirely possible that when June saw Lihua, one reason she chose to go sit with her American friends was the knowledge that conversation with Lihua was going to require more effort and be more tiring than chatting with other native speakers of English would.

Obviously experiences will vary from one person to the next, and it may well be that not all foreign language users experience the kinds of language fatigue I describe above. However, it also seems reasonable to assume that most of us will experience higher levels of fatigue when we function in a foreign language, especially when such use is difficult (due to skill levels, unfamiliar topics, and so forth), if we need to function in a foreign language for a long time, and if there are higher levels of pressure.

As Hockey notes in his recent overview of research on fatigue, fatigue is best understood as "…having a basis in emotion, like anxiety and depression" (2013, p. 21), so we should expect its impact on interpretative judgments to be similar to that of other negative feelings. This is all relevant to interpretation in part because, as we saw above, negative feelings such as anxiety, resentment, and fatigue may predispose us toward relatively negative interpretations when a stranger does or says something that appears to be puzzling or problematic.

However, negative feelings that result from the need to function in a foreign language may also affect the interpretation process through the mechanism of substitution. This may happen in two ways. First, as we have already seen above, negative feelings that arise from being required to function in a foreign language may make it easier for System 1 to engage in substitution, replacing relatively difficult interpretive questions with easier questions of the "How do I feel?" variety. In this regard, the demands of functioning in a foreign language would impact interpretive judgments in much the same way as violated expectations would.

There is, however a second way in which the emotions generated by the foreign language factor may encourage attribute substitution – foreign fatigue may serve as an accelerant that increases the chances not only that System 1 will engage in substitution, but that System 2

will not intervene. Here we should remember that one of the effects of fatigue is decreased willingness to continue engagement with tasks that require effort. "Given a choice of options, fatigued individuals adopt less effortful strategies to solve a problem, and seek less information before making a decision" (Hockey, 2013, p. 120). So, language fatigue would encourage us to adopt relatively fast and easy interpretations offered by the subconscious mind, rather than investing effort by engaging the conscious mind for more careful consideration of the issue.

Anxiety may well function in a similar way. Anyone who has had the experience of learning a new language knows that it feels quite uncomfortable to have to listen to people say things we don't fully understand, to read texts we can't entirely comprehend, to struggle to express ourselves in ways that we have some confidence will be understood, and so forth. All of this often creates a desire to re-establish a sense of certainty, to get back on solid land as soon as possible. When confronted with puzzling situations in intercultural encounters, it probably also prods us to reduce additional burdens of uncertainty, and one fast and easy way to do that is by substituting easier questions for which appealing answers are readily available, rather than tolerating long periods of ambiguity as we make efforts to generate and assess possible explanations.

5. Teaching Goals

The two factors discussed above (i.e., violated expectations and the demands of functioning in a foreign language) are not the only ones that are likely to play a role in intercultural encounters by generating negative feelings; another such factor would be culture shock, which often generates a variety of negative emotions (Triandis, 1994; Ward, 1996; Ting-Toomey, 1999; Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). But, the two factors discussed above are especially important for learners to be aware of because they are rooted directly in two of the most common characteristics of intercultural encounters — culture and language differences between the participants — so these two factors impact a very high percentage of intercultural encounters.

One of th e main reasons to teach about these two factors in English courses has to do with identifying what Evans and Stanovich (2013) referred to as "hostile environments" in which judgments made by System 1 require more scrutiny from System 2. Put in plain terms, learners are more likely to perform well in intercultural encounters if they realize they are in a situation where they need to think more carefully about any judgments they make of strangers' words and actions. Both Lihua and June are more likely to handle their lunchroom encounter well if they think about their interaction a little more consciously and carefully than would be the case if they were dealing with someone whose language and culture is the same as theirs. One goal of teaching should thus be to help learners quickly identify intercultural encounters as a special kind of communication situation where they should slow down and proceed more carefully and thoughtfully.

A second reason to teach about these factors is that this helps learners become more aware of them, which increases their ability to manage the influence of these factors on interpretive judgments. Remember that the processes by which feelings impact interpretive judgments often function at a partially or fully subconscious level, and if learners are not on the lookout for these factors and their influence, it is quite possible that they will be missed. To build awareness, it is

helpful if learners are consciously on the lookout for:

- The factors themselves: In intercultural encounters, learners should not only be on the lookout for culture differences, but the violated expectations that often result from such differences. Similarly, they should be aware that language differences often compel one or more participants to function in a language that is somewhat foreign to them, and that this may cause not only misunderstandings but also fatigue.
- The feelings generated by the factors: In intercultural encounters, learners should be on the lookout for negative feelings that may be caused by violated expectations and the demands of functioning in a foreign language, such as stress, anxiety, discomfort, and fatigue.

To this end, it may be helpful if learners have a short mental checklist of things to be on the lookout for in intercultural encounters, a list of simple and easy-to-remember questions such as the following:

- Did something the stranger did or said catch me by surprise and make me feel a little uncomfortable?
- Is the fact that I am speaking a foreign language (or the stranger is speaking a foreign language) causing me anxiety or fatigue?

Developing the habit of asking oneself simple questions like these makes it more likely that learners will notice some of the factors which may be affecting judgments they make in intercultural encounters.

6. Conclusion

Assuming that it is appropriate and desirable for English courses to include intercultural communication training, the two factors discussed above are all strong candidates for a short list of high priority topics to address. Each of these is present in a great many intercultural encounters, no matter whether the strangers involved are from English-speaking countries or not, and each is obviously important in its own right.

One additional advantage of teaching about these two factors is that through learning about them learners also gain a better understanding of the role of affect in the interpretation process. Through studying how violated expectations and the demands of functioning in a foreign language influence intercultural communication, learners can also gain a better understanding of the role feelings play in intercultural encounters, and the need to consciously be aware of and manage the impact of feelings. Perhaps most important, as they learn more about how these factors affect intercultural communication, learners become more consciously aware of the interpretation process itself, and of the value of approaching it more carefully and consciously in intercultural encounters.

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