

## الإخفاقات البراغمية وسوء الفهم في مقتطفات مختارة من اختبار الصدى

الإخفاقات البراغمية وسوء الفهم في مقتطفات مختارة من اختبار الصدى  
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**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التداولية بين الثقافات، سوء الفهم، الخلفية الثقافية، اختبار الصدى، الفشل التداولي، الهوية، المواطنة، النقل المفاهيمي

### كيفية اقتباس البحث

احمد , ازاد ابوبكر , الدباغ , لنجة عبد الرزاق , الإخفاقات البراغمية وسوء الفهم في مقتطفات مختارة من اختبار الصدى، مجلة مركز بابل للدراسات الانسانية، آذار ٢٠٢٦، المجلد: ١٦، العدد: ٣.

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## Pragmatic Failures and Misunderstandings in Selected Extracts from Testing the Echo

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**Keywords :** Intercultural Pragmatics, Misunderstanding, Cultural Background, testing The Echo, Pragmatic Failure, Identity, Citizenship, Conceptual Transfer

### How To Cite This Article

Ahmed , Azad Abubaker , Dabbagh ,Lanja Abdulrazzaq Shehabaddin , Pragmatic Failures and Misunderstandings in Selected Extracts from Testing the Echo , Journal Of Babylon Center For Humanities Studies, March 2026, Volume:16, Issue 3.

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### ABSTRACT

The paper attempts to pragmatics and culture. In the selected extracts from Testing the Echo, a contemporary realistic play with cultural and political dimensions. It is written to be performed with dialogue and stage directions. The aim is to show how interactions between characters with differing linguistic and cultural backgrounds lead to misunderstandings. The purpose is to elaborate the communicative situations and struggles that non-native speakers experience due to a lack of shared knowledge or common ground in the context of the communication process. While analyzing these extracts, it was obvious that the failures of communication lead to serious cultural conflicts. The analysis depends on intercultural aspects of pragmatics.

Intercultures are ad hoc creations, in other words, ‘culture constructed in cultural content’ as referred to by Kool and ten Thijji (1994;69). In standard pragmatics, this cultural difference between



communicators is often referred to as a 'collision of cultures.' However, intercultural pragmatics challenges this perspective, framing intercultural communication instead as a normal process of 'success and failure. Blommaert, (1993;8) argues that it is a mistake to think of intercultural communication as just a clash of different cultures or gaps between them. Instead, it is about understanding how communication happens in specific contexts. This is what intercultural pragmatics focuses on.

**المخلص:** تتناول هذه الورقة البحثية البراغماتية والثقافة. في مقتطفات مختارة من مسرحية "اختبار الصدى"، وهي مسرحية واقعية معاصرة ذات طابع سياسي، كُتبت لتُعرض بالحوار والتوجيه المسرحي. الهدف هو إظهار كيف تؤدي تفاعلات الشخصيات إلى سوء الفهم، وتوضيح حالات التواصل بين الشخصيات ذات الخلفيات الثقافية المختلفة. عند تحليل هذه المقتطفات، اتضح أن ضعف التواصل يؤدي إلى صراعات ثقافية خطيرة. يعتمد التحليل على الجوانب الثقافية للبراغماتية. تُعدّ التفاعلات بين الثقافات نتاجاً ظرفياً، أو بعبارة أخرى، "ثقافة مبنية على محتوى ثقافي" كما أشار كول وتين ثيجي (١٩٩٤؛ ٦٩). في علم التداولية التقليدي، يُشار إلى هذا الاختلاف الثقافي بين المتواصلين غالباً بـ"تصادم الثقافات".

مع ذلك، يتحدى علم التداولية بين الثقافات هذا المنظور، إذ يُصوّر التواصل بين الثقافات كعملية طبيعية من "النجاح والفشل". يرى بلوميرت (١٩٩٣؛ ٨) أن من الخطأ اعتبار التواصل بين الثقافات مجرد صراع بين ثقافات مختلفة أو فجوات بينها. بل هو بالأحرى فهم لكيفية حدوث التواصل في سياقات محددة. وهذا ما يركز عليه علم التداولية بين الثقافات.

## 1. Introduction

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that emerged in the mid-20th century dealing with the aspects of language concerning context and meaning. It came about when linguists and philosophers pursued the concept of how language works in communication other than in its literal expression, and when they converged on one line of thought that language must be studied in the context of dialogue and life, and that it is a sort of human action (MasterClass, 2020).

From the initial concentration on speech acts and conversational principles, the field of pragmatics has grown to include more general concerns with cultural, cognitive, and technological impacts on utterances. Contemporary pragmatics currently shares borders with discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and psycholinguistics, which essentially make the field dynamic and interdisciplinary. Some of the key notions within the area of pragmatics which will form a foundation to understand how meaning is built up and negotiated include context, Intentions, implicature, presupposition and speech acts (Niu, 2023).

Edward Burnett Tylor, a cultural anthropologist defines culture as: "The complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society" (Sociology Plus, 2022). Thus, culture can be defined as the communal way of life of a group of people, embracing the belief they



share, as well as cultural norms, values, customs, and various practices. It includes both material aspects, such as tools and artifacts, and non-material aspects, like language, traditions, and social behaviours. Culture shapes how individuals interpret experiences and interact with one another, and it is learned and passed down through generations rather than inherited biologically (Fiveable.me, 2024). This notion is supported by DiMaggio, (1997) asserting that cultural models become internalized by individuals through everyday shared processes.

This tells us that language is not only an essential part of culture, but it also rather serves as both a reflection and transmitter of cultural values, norms, and traditions. Language and culture are usually considered "collective representations," i.e., socially constituted systems (Kecskes, 2014, p. 89). Language and culture together compose people's identities, they (along with some physical factors) are main distinctive features of different nations, societies and communities. Kecskes, (2014) asserts that "culture is seen as a socially constituted set of various kinds of knowledge structures that individuals turn to as relevant situations permit, enable, and usually encourage". By saying this, Kecskes is trying to pave the way for his later claim, that those socially constituted set of knowledge structures are unerasable in the minds of communicators, and regardless of the language they will use as lingua franca, their utterance and interpretation will be influenced by them.

Nishida, (1999) claims that when interaction occurs repeatedly between members of the same culture in certain situations, or the same topic is being discussed with them repeatedly, cultural schemas are created and stored in brain. Kecskes comments on this claim by pointing out that the development of these schemas is based on repeated prior experience, and they guide our behaviours in similar and familiar situations (Kecskes, 2014, p.88).

Intercultures are ad hoc creations, in other words, "culture constructed in cultural content" as referred to by Kool and ten Thiji (1994;69). In standard pragmatics, this cultural difference between communicators is often referred to as a 'collision of cultures.' However, intercultural pragmatics challenges this perspective, framing intercultural communication instead as a normal process of 'success and failure. Blommaert, (1993;8) argues that it is a mistake to think of intercultural communication as just a clash of different cultures or gaps between them. Instead, it is about understanding how communication happens in specific contexts. This is what intercultural pragmatics focuses on.

### 1.1 Research Aims

1. The primary aim of this study is to explore the nature of intercultural communication failures and pragmatic misunderstandings present in David Edgar's *Testing The Echo*.
2. The research aims to analyze nine selected extracts from David Edgar's play *Testing the Echo* to show how the influence of different cultural backgrounds leads to misunderstandings among the characters.
3. Through the analysis of these extracts, the study seeks to enhance understanding of the relation between cultural background and the process acquiring or learning a second language.

### 1.2 Research Question

Q1: How do the different cultural backgrounds among the characters of the play cause misunderstandings?

Q2: How are pragmatic failures portrayed in the dialogues of *Testing The Echo*?

Q3: What is the relation between cultural background and acquiring/learning another language?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Intercultural Pragmatics

Intercultural pragmatics in its core can be defined as a subfield of pragmatics that examines communication and interaction between participants with different first languages who rely on a common language, such as English as a lingua franca. It investigates how cultural and societal backgrounds influence interlocutors during communication, emphasizing the profound and inescapable impact of the conventions and norms ingrained in the languages they have acquired. Intercultural pragmatics highlights the role of these culturally rooted norms in shaping both the speaker's linguistic choices and the listener's interpretations, thereby uncovering the complexities of meaning-making in intercultural settings (Kecskes, 2014).

From the above-mentioned introduction, one can learn that in intercultural communication, interlocutors use a common language as a means of communication. Nevertheless, the interaction will certainly be influenced by their own culture norms rather than those of the language used. This is evident because "interlocutors do not start from scratch but enter the communicative process with a "baggage" that is the cumulative result of their prior experience (Kecskes, 2014).

Cultural norms and conventions such as directness, politeness, and turn-taking are all part of prior experience, these entities form and shape



communication. Prior experience can also include linguistic elements such as vocabulary knowledge of grammar, figurative language and idiomatic expressions. Furthermore, it can include pragmatic competence, which involves adapting language to social contexts. The scop expands to the familiarity with situationally bound utterances that tied to specific cultural rituals, encyclopedic knowledge of culturally relevant events or references, nonverbal communication like gestures and facial expressions, and interpersonal communication patterns that guide relationship-building and conflict resolution. These different yet interrelated elements collectively influence how individuals encode, decode, and interpret messages.

Taguchi, (2023) asserts that the field of intercultural pragmatics examines how speakers select appropriate linguistic forms based on their cultural norms, and how these choices affect how meaning is interpreted by hearers, who rely on their own cultural frameworks to make sense of the utterances. Such investigations are crucial for understanding how intercultural communication unfolds, particularly when individuals from different cultural and linguistic origins interact through a shared language, often leading to variations in meaning and interpretation based on prior experience, shared knowledge, and contextual factors.

Intercultural pragmatics as a branch of pragmatics is relatively novel. István Kecskés is widely recognized as the founder of the field of intercultural pragmatics. His pioneering contributions include the development of a socio-cognitive approach to pragmatics, which examines how individual and cultural factors dynamically interact during communication, especially in intercultural contexts. Kecskés's work emphasizes the role of prior experience, cultural norms, and shared knowledge in shaping meaning and interaction in intercultural communication (Romero-Trillo, 2014).

Kecskes, (2014) asserts that “intercultural pragmatics represents a socio-cognitive perspective in which individual prior experience and actual social situational experience are equally important in meaning construction and comprehension.” The study further emphasizes that the primary focus of this pragmatic branch is language usage not pragmatic competence, as the latter can develop by practice (p. 14).

Although intercultural pragmatics is a subfield of pragmatics, there are several significant differences between the two linguistic fields. The next section highlights the key differences between them.

## 2.2 Differences Between Pragmatics and Intercultural Pragmatics:

The primary distinction between standard pragmatics and intercultural pragmatics lies in their focus and assumptions about

communication. Standard pragmatics examines how meaning extends beyond the literal content of words, heavily relying on shared context, cultural norms, and assumptions. It presupposes a common ground among interlocutors, allowing for the implicit understanding of idioms, metaphors, and other non-literal expressions. In contrast, intercultural pragmatics often emphasizes clarity and explicitness due to the absence of shared cultural or linguistic conventions between communicators. While non-literal meanings and implicatures are still present in intercultural communication, their interpretation requires additional effort. This is because when interlocutors come from diverse cultural or linguistic backgrounds, relying on culturally specific cues can lead to misunderstandings. So, interlocutors may consciously simplify language to bridge the gap between differing cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Kecskes, (2016) underscores the difference between pragmatics and intercultural pragmatics by highlighting how the latter addresses elements that standard pragmatics often overlooks. He also asserts that what standard pragmatics assumes about how things work in communications depends on there being commonalities and conventions between speakers and hearers that can hardly be counted on cross-culturally in the same way as in intercultural communication.

Considering the differences highlighted above, intercultural pragmatics questions how individuals formulate and interpret utterances in contexts where common linguistic and cultural conventions are absent or limited. Kecskes (2016) addresses this by asserting that in such contexts, speakers must actively co-construct meaning during interactions. Unlike standard pragmatics, which assumes shared norms and conventions within a speech community, intercultural pragmatics highlights the challenges, misunderstandings, and alternative strategies that arise when these shared elements are lacking. This perspective allows researchers to uncover aspects of communication that traditional pragmatics often misses.

For example, Gricean pragmatics assumes that cooperation in communication is a natural and subconscious process; speakers and listeners automatically understand each other by following shared principles like clarity and relevance. However, in intercultural communication, where participants come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, this automatic cooperation cannot be taken for granted. Instead, interlocutors must consciously and deliberately ensure mutual understanding. They achieve this by making extra efforts to clarify meanings, establish trust, and build shared knowledge to bridge cultural gaps. Habermas's concept of "intersubjective mutuality" reflects



this idea, emphasizing that effective communication in such contexts involves intentional actions to create common ground and foster understanding despite cultural differences (Habermas, 1979, p. 3).

Moeschler, (2004) defines the function of intercultural pragmatics as the study of those aspects of meaning implied using language that do not rely on mutually shared knowledge, but to specific contextual information needed to infer the speaker's intended message. More specifically, the domain of intercultural pragmatics focuses on the effects of the absence of shared knowledge and to what extent it alters and modifies the intended meaning (p.50).

In general pragmatics, misinterpretations do not occur due misunderstanding what the speaker has said, but about what he has implied. Contrary to that, in intercultural pragmatics, misunderstandings often occur due to failed interpretations stemmed from false explicatures.

This view is further supported in Kecskes (2016) who asserts that in pragmatics research, expressions and utterances should be analysed from the perspectives of both the speaker and the hearer. He argues that traditional pragmatics theories tend to focus more on the hearer than the speaker. One of the key reasons for this 'hearer-centeredness' is the Gricean modular view, which divides the process of interpretation into two parts: what is said and what is implied. In this context, the roles of hearer and speaker merge into that of the interlocutor, who simultaneously assumes both roles. As Kecskes, (2014) adds: Human beings are speakers and hearers at the same time. They not only try to understand the utterance of the speaker but also react to it in their own utterance. The reaction shows the degree of understanding the action (speaker's utterance).

Intercultural pragmatics does not overlook the role of implicature; rather, it emphasizes that implicature plays a crucial role in communication among individuals with shared cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as these commonalities serve as keys to successful communication and meaning construction. However, in intercultural interactions, interlocutors are not able to rely on implicatures or non-literal meanings. Therefore, misunderstandings in intercultural contexts are often caused by a speaker's failure to make their utterances sufficiently explicit, whereas in monolingual or culturally similar settings, misunderstandings typically stem from pragmatic incompetence, such as failure to interpret implicatures correctly.

### 3. Data Collection and Data Analysis and Model Adopted

The nature of this research is theoretical, qualitative, analytical, and descriptive. It has employed a text-based approach, relying on close

reading and pragmatic analysis of the play. The selections of the extracts are carefully made, based on their relevance to intercultural pragmatic failure and to achieve the goal of the research. The focus is only on the intercultural-pragmatic feature. The analysis deals with this feature regarding the spoken language of the characters. This paper tackles the literary and linguistic analysis, with reference to pragmatics and culture.

#### 4. The Analysis of the Selected Extracts

**4.1 Testing The Echo** This play is selected to be analyzed for its rich portrayal of pragmatic breakdowns and instances of misunderstandings. These instances arise from the diverse cultural backgrounds of the characters. It is a contemporary play that focuses on various aspects of modern Britain, in particular, the question of belonging and the complexities of British national identity, diversification, and the integration of immigrants in a fast-changing society. The story is about a group of adult learners from different cultural backgrounds living in the UK and preparing to take the Life in the UK test, which is a mandatory requirement for British citizenship.

Max Stafford-Clark commissioned the play for the Out of Joint Theatre Company. It was initially based on interviews conducted with people who were preparing to partake in the citizenship test or were studying in citizenship classes. It also contains quotations from versions of some texts written to describe Britishness or to provide a maintained version of British history to immigrants and newcomers (Reinelt & Hewitt, 2011). The play consists of sixty-eight scenes of which most of them are very short. In fact, there are scenes, that when performed, they are only 45 seconds long.

As far as the genre of the play concerned, it can be described as 'A Contemporary Realistic Political Drama', like every drama, Testing The Echo is written in the form of dialogues and stage direction so as to be performed. The play attempts to evaluate certain aspects of political systems of the British government and highlight the cultural tensions often arise between different communities living in the UK. Thus, the play can be dealt with as a 'political and social commentary' and as a realist play since it presents real life scenarios, revealing the actual struggles and cultural challenges of immigrants and citizens.

The main plot is structured around the events mostly taking place in a language and citizenship classes led by Emma, and in a council chamber where the citizenship ceremony is held. Thus, it could be said that the central drama occurs between Emma, the ESOL teacher and Nasim a strict Muslim from Egypt on one hand, and between Tetyana a Polish woman and her step daughter Muna on the other hand. However,



the events taking place in the workplace canteen between coworkers and those in the bloggers office contribute largely to the themes of the play. In the ESOL class, Nasim sees Emma as bullying and bossy, when she insists, they discuss things which are haram (forbidden), conversely, Emma dismisses Nasim's views and concerns, believing she is being irrational and irrelevant. However, the scope of the story branches out into the characters' personal lives, memories, and struggles. It demonstrates how prior experiences, cultural values, and expectations affect their understanding of British life and their own sense of belonging.

#### Scene Twenty-Four

This scene explores the phenomenon of co-constructed culture through classroom interactions. Emma asks the students for their opinion about some abstract terms such as the difference between "society, and community" or questions like "what are values", "respect, freedom, justice". This discussion explores lexical-pragmatic mismatches: for example, in Ranjit's view, "values" interpreted as "all the words," this interpretation reflects the influences of conceptual transfer from his first language, while Dragoslav's presents a political-pragmatic conflict when he comments about Kosovo "Nema zemlje Kosovo" which Emma tries to neutralize it with her educational politeness "Many differing opinions". Furthermore, Halima's disapproval of multicultural rhetoric "I come to this country not for community diversity" establishes a face-threatening act that challenges British civic ideals and assimilation. Nasim underscores cultural-religious pragmatics by refusing to take home some materials given to her by Emma "I cannot take these pictures into my house" on the basis of containing pictures of items that are forbidden in her faith. Her behaviours are clashing with the expectations of the British education system. The scene contains other pragmatic aspects such as Emma's explanation of the word "equality" which exemplifies metapragmatic instruction, she's helping students understand not just the word, but how it's used in context. Though her ironic example about unpaid volunteers unintentionally reveals a contradiction in the system exposes institutional hypocrisy, which Halima points out with the remark "But you have husband".

#### Scene Twenty-Five

The 3rd Historian's monologue in this scene, clearly illustrates pragmatic failure as the consequences of the use of formulaic language and idioms. His speech is filled with culture-specific phrases, such as "drums and muskets", "the Virgin Queen", and "a golden thread", which rely heavily on encyclopedic knowledge that surely not shared by migrant listeners. This creates a pragmatic gap, as for a listener to understand the



meanings of these expressions, they must share common ground with the speaker and master prefabricated expression, and this is what the speaker assumes. The lexical meanings of words like “liberty” and “citizen” are presented in an idealized tone, but their contextual meanings for migrants may be missing or even ironic. The Historian’s formal tone also flouts Grice’s Maxim of Manner, making the message less accessible by nonnatives. Overall, the scene highlights how institutional language can unintentionally exclude its audience, reinforcing unequal communicative roles.

### Scene Twenty-Six

A conversation at dinner party in this scene reveals significant pragmatic tensions exist within British society, highlighting how social identities are constructed, resisted, and imposed through everyday discourse. Emma makes some mockery comments about postcodes and their roles in people’s life style “live in Slough so naturally I eat out and buy small appliances. I run a reconditioned BMW so I must be black.” her remarks reflect stereotypical thinking. she employs hyperbolic humour that flouts Grice’s Maxim of Quality, sharply contradicting with Pauline’s early essentialist claims. This ironic style exposes deeper discomfort with defining people by what they buy, a sort of tension that repeatedly coming up in their conversation. Pauline’s repetition of the phrase, “All I’m saying is...”, constructs a metapragmatic marker, trying to create a more friendly atmosphere and avoid face-threatening acts, nevertheless, she is still reinforcing strict social division. Cultural references and lifestyle indicators such as eating “hummus” and wearing “Birkenstocks,” create a clash between lexical and contextual meaning. These references show how everyday terms accumulate political meanings beyond their dictionary definitions. Although these simple terms are lexically neutral, but their repeated use in social debates has transformed them into ideological concepts. “Hummus” now signals performative progressivism or social hypocrisy, while “Birkenstocks” signify liberal identity. These references carry a deep culture-specific implication, a non-native speaker who lacks encyclopedic knowledge may struggle to grasp their true meanings within the context. This can be called a semantic evolution which often creates communicative friction when speakers interpret these terms differently based on their awareness of contextual connotations versus literal meanings. Thus, without prior knowledge it is difficult for a listener to understand the implication of these expressions. As one can observe, Emma deliberately violates these expected semantic frames to expose how such cultural labels are constructed. Martin’s protest “I’m not a tribe” constitutes a defensive



speech act, resisting Pauline's attempt to box him into a sociolinguistic category, while his multiple self-identifications (as teacher, Spurs fan, Labour voter, man) gesture toward shifting nature of identity. Meanwhile, Pauline's closing question "And what if, Wednesday, you're a Muslim?" subtly invokes intercultural pragmatics, raising questions about performative identity and the pressures of synthesized culture in a multicultural society.

### Scene Thirty-Five

There are rich instances of intercultural pragmatic tension present in this scene, where differing speech styles, cultural expectations and norms of communication lead to frequent miscommunication. The interaction between participants like Emma, Nasim, Martin, and Pauline shows how institutional and interpersonal discourse can clash in a multicultural context. Nasim's repeated interruptions "Mrs Goodman-Lee?" might reflect an immediate and urgent communication style stemmed from her sociocultural background, but are considered impolite within British norms of turn-taking. These incidents present in the play emphasize that pragmatic failure is often not a consequence of poor language ability, but outcome of conflicting cultural schemas. Emma's response "I'll be with you in a moment" reflects her preference for orderly dialogue and her reluctance to adjust the turn-taking style for the sake of intercultural communication. This opens another argument; despite the fact that the burden of assimilation rest with the minority population, e.g. immigrants or refugees, it is important to note that in intercultural communication, the majority group must also contribute to the successful integration of the minority group. It is a two-sided active involvement process. In other words, the majority group too must play their part in conforming to and respecting the cultural norms and practices of the minority group. Therefore, they need to compromise to some extent so that communication is successful and respectful of differences in culture (provided they are ready to accept and facilitate the integration of the minority). Compromising in this context does not mean losing your identity or belittling your culture, it is rather a sign of respect, mutual understanding and consideration of others' cultures. The ultimate goal of communication is conveying a message the best way the addressee can receive and perceive. Sometimes, this might require the speaker to adjust their speech style. This is what intercultural pragmatics is about, and this is another central theme of this research, to argue that achieving mutual understanding and paving the way for co-construction of intercultural requires active involvement of both parties, the speaker and the hearer. Another case of misunderstanding due to lack of encyclopedic

and shared knowledge is the argument between Emma and Nasim. Nasim's use of the word "streak" is misunderstood by Emma due to differing conceptual associations. Despite efforts by characters like Martin to create common ground, the scene resists a co-constructed cultural synthesis, especially as Pauline's rigid worldview undermines other views. Finally, the scene rejects institutional and societal expectations of communicative conformity, showing how power imbalances, unacknowledged cultural frames, and lexical ambiguity contribute to communicative breakdowns in multicultural environment.

### Scene Thirty-Six

This is one of the most important scenes to look for instances of socio-pragmatic norms and intercultural pragmatic failure in an ESOL class setting. Jasminka's speech (although comprehended) exemplifies lexical and grammatical deviations from standard English e.g., "I come in as au pair," "I not do kissing", this reflects her non-native proficiency. However, she demonstrates pragmatic competence in conveying her intentions despite linguistic limitations by her open discussion of personal empowerment, sexual boundaries, and career aspirations.

Toby uses softening and indirectness as politeness strategies when he responds "Terrific. But maybe... not the condom. Or the mouth. Or in earshot of Nasim", this is to avoid offensive and sensitive content in a multicultural situation. This cultural awareness technique is significant when participants of a discourse come from divergent cultural backgrounds.

The most vivid case of intercultural pragmatic breakdown occurs when Jasminka makes a gun-to-ear gesture when she hears the word "earshot", misunderstanding the idiomatic and formulaic expression. This incident illustrates how figurative language can lead to misunderstanding when participants do not share the same encyclopedic and cultural knowledge. This is the 'Echo' that inspired the play's title, the way expressions and utterances are distorted, reflected, or unheard in intercultural interactions. Overall, the scene showcases that successful communication in intercultural situations requires more than language proficiency or grammatical accuracy; it is more about mastering implicature, idioms and prefabricated expressions that are culture specific.

### Scene Thirty-Nine

Edgar reveals the reality behind the process of becoming British citizen. In the household of Aziz, Muna helps Tetyana prepare for the test. Tetyana's struggle to identify the saints' days demonstrates





intercultural pragmatic failure and the question of identity and belonging. On the other hand, Muna's questions about religion highlight the tensions between preserving cultural roots and assimilation. Muna's account of schoolyard bullying due to her religion (Muslim) explores a complex level of failed integration: she is a native speaker and British by birth, helps Tetyana to pass the test and become British, yet her own identity is under threat due to her religion, while Tetyana, although not a British, but more accepted by the British community because of her skin colour and religion (Christian). This shows that cultural identity goes beyond language proficiency, and complete assimilation is unachievable and remains a mere fiction. Through this conversation, Edgar contrasts institutional notions of citizenship with the emotional work of actually building a life in a new culture. Overall, the scene explores that true belonging can't be measured by test scores, but develops through such personal negotiations of identity. The setting as a child's bedroom itself, suggests that national identity is constructed not in government offices, but through such vulnerable, human moments.

### Scene Forty-Seven

If the play contain climax, this scene should be taken as the climax (or at least part of the climax). It powerfully dramatizes the tensions that arise when multilingual class intersects with cultural identity, religious values, and institutional power. Through an ESOL classroom, Edgar highlights the complexities of intercultural pragmatics, exploring how difficult integration can become when personal histories and cultural values clash with educational methods.

Emma, although, being neutral in her question about why students came to Britain, but Nasim started confronting her by her blunt response "I came because you want my father to work here." While her response may appear confrontational, it is not entirely irrelevant, it reflects the frustration that many immigrants feel when repeatedly asked why they came to Britain. Regardless of her intention, Emma's question resembles those provoking inquiries that migrants often face across British institutions, which trigger feelings of being marked as outsiders, despite their contributions to society. The scene suggests that educators might benefit from greater sensitivity to topics that evoke cultural or emotional tension.

As the class progresses, Emma is trying to stay neutral and remain composed. Despite Nasim's intention to escalate the tension, Emma maintained control of the situation and continued with her teaching. However, she did not seem to acknowledge the sensitivity of her topic

which already has provoked the feelings of some students, continued asking the other students the same question.

The cultural conflict intensifies when Emma hands out cards with pictures to discuss their contents for educational purposes. However, Nasim objects to discussing images of pork as part of British breakfast. She refuses to participate "It is haram to discuss unclean", through this situation, the playwright marks a critical point of pragmatic and cultural failure, where Emma's attempt at inclusive discussion turns into exclusionary by ignoring religious sensitivities. The episode suggests that educators, particularly those teaching multicultural classes, should always have a broader perspective and be more mindful of cultural and religious sensitivities which does not seem to be the case in this situation. Emma admitting the picture contains a "a slice of bacon" puzzled by Nasim's objection: "Now, is this a problem? Nasim explains the reason for her refusal "Pig is unclean." Emma replies: "Not to British people. That's why we're / discussing." It appears that Emma is trying to override the students' individual values by British norms and employ what could be termed "forced assimilation". Once more, Nasim explains why she cannot discuss the card: "You ask me discuss this go against religion". Emma's binary choice: "participate or leave" could be counted as an adoption of what is termed by Robert Phillipson (1992) as Linguistic Imperialism. On the other hand, Nasim's objection which leads to a walkout, illustrating what scholars like Pennycook and Canagarajah describe as "performative resistance in language learning", this is when students challenge the dominant cultural framework being imposed.

At the end of the scene, Emma reflects on nostalgic symbols like "Stonehenge" and "warm beer", as part of British culture. This moment, however, reveals how national identity is built on emotional attachments rather than fixed definitions. This notion is supported when Dragoslav tells her, "Emma, you are homesick," exposes a deeper truth: even those teaching Britishness struggle with belonging. This dialogue explores the core tension of the play: Britishness isn't a checklist of facts or traditions, but an ongoing, unresolved debate about culture, memory, and who gets to feel "at home." Whether for immigrants or native citizens, identity remains unfixed, contested, and deeply personal.

### Scene Sixty

The play uses several linguistic strategies to expose multicultural conflicts. Jamal's rhetorical questions "Where are the values?" adopt a religious register to critique trivial citizenship standards, while his lexical choices "drunken slags" ironically mirrors state discourse. Mahmood's pragmatic responses show code-switching and deflection "they don't test





you on that bit”, reducing resistance. His sudden shift to pizza toppings highlights how identity is reduced from serious matters to simple things such as consumer choice. The contrast between serious theological debate and trivial topics satirizes institutional expectations. Through fragmented syntax and free indirect discourse, Edgar captures the hybridity and ambiguity of British Muslim identity, caught between resistance and assimilation, demonstrating the struggle they face in living as westerners.

### Scene Sixty-Eight

In the play’s final scene, Edgar masterfully dismantles the illusion of a unified British identity by layering contradictory voices into a dissonant chorus such as political slogans: “golden thread that runs through British history”, clichés: “Conform or don’t come here” and stereotypes: “ “Kilted men” on restroom signs”. These dimensions make the scene a chorus of different voices and views. The technique used conforms to Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia, which creates an atmosphere where official and institutional narratives clash with irony and mockery, exposing how national identity is more noise than clarity. The title Testing the Echo becomes chaotic literal words like “tolerance,” “duty,” and “Jerusalem” bounce around, sounding increasingly hollow. Edgar shows us that nationalism often relies more on mere repetition than profound meaning.

A striking gender divide closes the scene: Men declare “That’s how we are,” while Women counter, “That’s how they ought to be.” This contrast shows how citizenship is not just political; it is performative and gendered. Men claim ownership of the nation as it is the case around the world, while women carry the burden of holding up an ideal of what it should be. Migrant women, in particular, are expected to prove their belonging through impossible standards and survival tools. Emma’s final, unfinished utterance “Although” suspends the whole notion and leaves the thought hanging, a deliberate silence that speaks volumes. Edgar offers no clear resolution, only the unsettling reminder that Britishness is a question with no final answer.

What makes the scene powerful is its mix of critique and longing. It mocks political hypocrisy, like Syrus’s comment “conform or don’t come here”, yet it also acknowledges the emotional pull of shared myths, such as the dream of building “Jerusalem.” Even the absurd details, “a kilted man on a toilet sign” highlight how tradition becomes a subject of mockery and satire, yet still determines one’s identity and belonging. In the end, Edgar suggests that national identity is not something you inherit, it is a script, always being rewritten, always up for debate. As a journalist written in the commentary section of this play “I believe

Britain is, and always will be a work in progress. The reality of ‘ Middle England’ is not my reality...’. This reveals that the citizenship test, then, is just the latest, clumsiest way of directing that progress.

## 5. Conclusions

It is concluded that:

1. An Intercultural interaction without co-constructed culture leads to lexical-pragmatic mismatches due to first language-influenced conceptual transfer among the characters of the play. This led them to form the idea of a contradiction in the system exposes institutional hypocrisy.
2. Pragmatic failure occurs due to the consequences of the use of formulaic language and idioms during an intercultural interaction. This creates a pragmatic gap, as for a listener to understand the meanings of these expressions, they must share common ground with the speaker and master prefabricated expression, and this is what the speaker assumes.
3. Flouts of Grice’s Maxim of Manner, makes the message less accessible by nonnatives. Institutional language can unintentionally exclude its audience, reinforcing unequal communicative roles.
4. Everyday terms accumulate political meanings beyond their dictionary definitions. While lexically neutral, their repeated use in social debates has transformed them into ideological markers.
5. Performative identity and the pressures of synthesized culture in a multicultural society.
6. Pragmatic failure is often not a consequence of poor language ability, but outcome of conflicting cultural schemas.
7. Misunderstanding due to lack of encyclopedic and shared knowledge
8. Institutional and societal expectations of communicative conformity, showing how power imbalances, unacknowledged cultural frames, and lexical ambiguity contribute to communicative breakdowns in multicultural environment.
9. Successful communication in intercultural situations requires more than language proficiency or grammatical accuracy; it is more about mastering implicature, idioms and prefabricated expressions that are culture-specific





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