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Publication date: (or date of document completion)

2009

Conference Information:

2009, International Conference on TESOL & Translation, Department of Applied English, JinWen

University of Science & Technology

Paper from proceeding: P. 54-60

Pragmatics and Communicative Competences

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Abstract

Pragmatics is included in one of four communicative competences (Canale, 1980). It is necessary and important to teach pragmatics at school in our globalized world in order to avoid as much as misunderstanding, which is likely to stem from cultural difference. As a result, greater importance should be attached to diverse customs and pragmatics.

This conceptual paper aims to deal with the basic theoretical foundations of pragmatics. Moreover, a type of speech act, “traditional dialogues of giving and accepting presents” will be compared and contrasted through the author’s previous empirical studies. The significance of this study is that the readers will be able to distinguish various types of communicative competences that Canale (1980) has identified and defined. After reading this paper, the readers will also establish basic concepts about pragmatics and research methodologies of doing empirical studies on pragmatics.

Key words: pragmatics, communicative competence, misinterpretation, diverse customs, globalization

Introduction to communicative competences

Canale (1980) offered a significant and wide-ranging review of communicative competence, arguing that pragmatics is a part of communicative competence and should be noticed by language learners and educators. In fact, they recognize that grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, and discourse competence are four significant components, which constitutes communicative competences. In a similar vein, Kasper and Rose (2001) also argue that pragmatics and language teaching should be closely related.

In order to investigate how the learning of L2 pragmatics-both the learning processes and the outcomes- is shaped by instructional context and activities, three major questions require examination: what opportunities for developing L2 pragmatic ability are offered in language classrooms; whether pragmatic ability develops a classroom setting without instruction in pragmatics; and what effects various approaches to instruction have in pragmatic development? (Kasper & Rose, 2001, p. 4)

Their first and third questions appear to imply the necessity of doing classroom research. How can teachers find out resources and materials of teaching pragmatics? What are preferred processes in teaching pragmatics? How would teachers and language educators be limited when teaching pragmatics even though most of the materials of learning appear to be native-like oriented. Hence, through Kasper and Rose's first and third questions, we can realize that the teaching of pragmatics needs further exploration.

Although the significance of pragmatics and been emphasized by many scholars (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989; House, Kasper & Ross, 2003; Kasper, 1997, 2001; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996; Rose, 1999; Takahashi, 2001; Tateyama, 2001; Tateyama, Kasper, Mui, Tay & Thananart, 1997; Weisman, 1985), the subjective pedagogies with clear process of teaching, and materials of teaching cultural differences might not be easily found. So many scholars mostly emphasize the significance of the understanding of diverse culture and linguistic perspectives, but few to none, to my knowledge at least, textbooks provide the potential examples and cases of misunderstanding that could be recommended to our students who might or might not understand the importance of pragmatics.

In fact, only students in graduate school could be familiar with most of the differences in communicative speech acts, such as greeting, leave-taking, requests, offers, invitations, rejection, promising, expressing thanks, apologies, complaining, recommending, and expressions of appreciation. On the other hand, the students in high school or undergraduate schools could rarely have access to a course focused on the cultural differences as well as the knowledge of pragmatics. Indeed, most of the teachers might not also be able to assess the various approaches to instruction or help their students develop pragmatic competence. We sincerely hope to see that more and more theoretical framework of pragmatics can also be applied to education.

Truly, the final purpose of learning language is to apply it into our daily life. Only through learning pragmatics that introduces cultural differences can we help our students communicate with foreigners from all over the world without communication breakdown caused by limited knowledge of pragmatics. Moreover, through textbooks that comprise the different usages for the same speech act, our students can have a deeper understanding in learning pragmatics. Therefore, the learner is more capable of

minimizing potential communication difficulties stemming from insufficient pragmatic competence.

What Language Learners can Achieve Through being Familiar with pragmatics

From the perspective of learning English for applying it to communication in our real world, one of the benefits in learning pragmatics is that the learners can understand the meanings of language from a broader intercultural feature. After the students have a basic concept of pragmatic organization, they will be more responsive to people's intended meanings implanted in worldwide communication. Meanwhile, with frequent practice in using other peoples' linguistic aspect and interact in a global way, students will be more likely to be proficient in reacting to foreigners' conversation in a more successful and complete way.

Cross-Cultural Communication

From the viewpoint of intercultural communication, there is no civilization or foreign language which is healthier or more modernized than the others. Language is for communication, but not for discrimination. Rose and Kasper (2001) underline the best thing pragmatists can do for English speakers is to activate with a different hypothesis rather than with a deficit hypothesis. That is, the learners should open their mind and learn more about cultures and diverse linguistic aspect on the globe. In fact, Rose and Kasper (2001) have pointed out that the non-native English speakers, and even residents in America, Canada, England, Australia, New Zealand...etc. all of the native speakers should gain knowledge of pragmatics by describing and explaining interlanguage contact from a world and intercultural point of view, rather than label the native-like English as a normal form of world interaction.

There is no Constraint in Learning Pragmatics

For that reason, there is no constraint of how many unfamiliar cultures a student should be taught in the subject of pragmatics. In truth, the more traditions learned the superior international communication the students can achieve. If a beginner can absorb sufficient intercultural knowledge, a teacher should provide more for them to make progress in their pragmatic competence. Likewise, there is also no command of how various assumptions in intended meanings of which area or which language a learner should learn or should not learn in order to communicate and behave better in intercontinental situations.

The above proposal is that ample suppositions created through a more all-encompassing pragmatic acquaintance and groundwork will contribute to an accurate ruling of the premeditated meanings in intercultural connections. To bring to a close, one major concern of pragmatics is that there are no classical, superior or typical patterns in each speech act of a certain language, but only every body should learn as many dissimilar patterns in customs, and pragmatics as we can. Consequently, the

language learners, especially adult learners who have more opportunities to interact in international situations, have to increase their awareness about an assortment of types of speech acts which are based on a construction and principle model of another dissimilar traditions.

Interpretation for Rose's Concept of Pragmatic Consciousness

Rose (2001) mentions "...pragmatic consciousness rising is basically an inductive approach to develop a general awareness of how language forms are used appropriately in context." (p. 171) As a result, the purpose of pragmatic education that Rose argues is that native speakers and language learners as well as non-native speakers must be familiar with diverse appropriate structures based on intercultural knowledge, but not convert the way of interlocution into a typical/classical type of language or an inhabitant/local-like of chatting.

In supplementary words, Rose (2001) clarifies that pragmatics is a study, which makes the learners figure out that verbal communication diversities do exist in a mixture of speech acts of global communications. Pragmatics is also a study, which provides accommodation for the language learners to assorted kinds of variables and model patterns in international oral communication.

Free from Misinterpretation

Through pragmatic training, English speakers should be able to distinguish special explanations of cross-cultural traditions, and get familiarized to assorted rules, configurations, and arrangements in speech acts in the other ways of life. House, Kasper, and Rose (2003) identify what pragmatic training is this way. They describe that pragmatics is a type of understanding that makes people perceive and realize the implications in the contact structures and speech act strategies in order to resolve melt away confusion in the global communities.

Dissimilar customs of discourse patterns from time to time would cause perplexities or even awkwardness. Misinterpretation and misapprehension caused from literary breaks actually can be abstained by adequate familiarity of pragmatics. As a consequence, the teachability of pragmatics is more and more emphasized recently. After being taught about the issue of literary alternativeness, language learners will be competent in handling expression and allusion diversities and in making negotiation with people from sundry language backgrounds.

Undeniably, English language learners' effort on their pragmatic understanding is a major cause why they can interrelate with foreigners and converse efficiently and suitably in their societal life. Beyond doubt, for involving yourself in worldwide conferences as a civilized and well-mannered individual in the present globalized village, the language learners have to prepare themselves for a conception of

communication configurations and speech act strategies in inter-cultural communication. Afterward, they can collaborate with foreigners graciously and competently.

Teachability of pragmatics, Considering the Pedagogies of pragmatics

Although we might think the materials and textbooks are not easy to be found, the pedagogies of teaching pragmatics had been discussed. Since the pragmatics is a significant field of second language learning, researchers have tried to provide language teachers and learners' different approaches, methods, and strategies for pragmatic education (E.g. Kasper and Rose, 2001). In fact, providing the definition of pragmatics and displaying the cultural differences through discourse cases, comparing and contrasting the unlike strategies that poles apart cultures concern, and learning with situations and revealing cultural misconstruction through role play are numerous effectual paths to instructing contents of pragmatics.

Furthermore, we consider that the pragmatic lessons should be established at the commencement of a learner's foreign language education, for the reason that pragmatic edification is a noteworthy basis why an individual is capable of submitting an application through English in cross-cultural speech in a well-bred and proper approach, even though the student can simply converse with a limited level of English ability.

Exposition of pragmatics through Case Studies

First of all, learning from the dialogues through case studies is a technique that teachers and students can submit an application to gain knowledge of the cross-cultural differentiations, and an assortment of usages in speech acts. Essentially, every person can be skilled at presenting confusion models of pragmatics that designate the graciousness and correctness concerns in communication of his/her original cultures (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996). Since literary disagreements are contained in varied realms, each individual could be a specialist of his/her own language and habit of talking.

Bardovi-Harlig believe that (1996), everyone who utilize a second or foreign language, whether learners, teachers, or researchers, know a quantity of attractive stories of mis-interaction and misconstruction in intercultural circumstances. That is, giving example through learners' life experiences might be a practical and easy way of teaching and learning Pragmatics.

Hence, in the course of referring to typical patterns revealing cultural differences in the case studies of miscommunication stimulated by cultural difference, English speakers might be able to stay away from the discourteous or unproductive languages from viewpoints of the other backgrounds. Moreover, various case studies demonstrating the cross cultural miscommunication are in point of fact very motivating, which will contribute to stirring the learner's inspiration for learning knowledge of this field.

Training for Request Speech Act

According to Kasper and Rose (2001), “In many second and foreign language teaching contexts, curricula and materials developed in recent years include strong pragmatic components or even adopt a pragmatic approach as their organizing principle.” (p. 3) A lot of recommendations for teaching in diverse perceptions of pragmatic capability are currently based on empirical studies of case study.

Many scholars (e.g., Weizman, 1985) have focused on the issue of how to train our students to apply knowledge of pragmatics. In Weizman’s terms (1985), pragmatics can be trained by speech act strategies in dissimilar cultures. For example, for teaching “request” speech act in pragmatics, the “hint” strategy needs to be introduced to the learners. The reason is that, the “hint” approach is applied in countless countries as a conventional technique, especially nations in Asia.

That is to say, verbal communication learners should be trained with imperative strategies of request speech acts of the different languages and become skilled at increasing their consciousness of the concealed demand utility in the languages. To facilitate it, if the speakers are not taught by the dialogue patterns of pragmatics beforehand, various request speech acts might sound like chitchat or inaudible. If the language learners are not educated through pragmatics, interlocutors of English in different language backgrounds might carelessly decline their friends or momentous partners without realizing that they rebuff their friends who require their support a moment ago.

Conclusion

Pragmatics is regarded as one of the most strenuous aspects for language learners to figure out. Sometimes, learners would believe that pragmatics can only be learned with an expertise or through their own life experiences. Hopefully, this kind of phenomenon in language learning can be gradually altered through sufficient researchers in this field and appearances of textbooks written through focusing on case studies of dialogue patterns and cultural differences.

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