

Why should we teach pragmatics? The importance of pragmatics in language teaching. (in the example of Apologies)

Fergana State University

Applied English department teacher

Kosimov Abdulkhay

Abstract.

Teaching pragmatics is one of the important things in second language acquisition and its development. Many EFL learners know the English language and its grammatical structures, but don't consider the culture of this wonderful and fantastic language. As we know, there is a link between the transfer of pragmatics knowledge and second language acquisition. Negative pragmatic transfer sometimes may lead to learners' divergence in their language acquisition process.

Keywords. Pragmatics, learners' divergence, pragmatic transfer, pragmatic ability, grammatical competence, grammar-focused activities.

Introduction.

The importance of pragmatic competence in the EFL classroom is very high as students will be able to use the target language appropriately in a different social context. Wierzbicka (2003) found that pupils with good grammatical competence can communicate effectively with native speakers, on the other hand, their speech has problems in terms of the level of politeness. I tried to analyze students' weak points from the culture of English and taught them English culture through different authentic materials. McCarthy (1998) suggests the “III” (Illustration- Interaction-Induction) method to teach grammar in the EFL classroom as it is more effective than the “Presentation-Practice-Production” approach.

Because of the gaps in their pragmatic competence, sometimes they use words that are not quite typical for the situation. As English teachers, we should consider improving both the grammatical and pragmatics knowledge of our learners, but it is also vital to check our students' language acquisition process whether they are on the right way or not. Some scholars characterize the phenomenon of “pragmatic transfer” differently. Olshtain (1983) defines it as a strategy of students in integrating native language components into the production of the target language. Edmondson and House (1991) find that sometimes advanced learners have problems using some words and structures in their daily life, as they

are not sure whether it is appropriate or not. Several factors may affect learners' pragmatic competence.

Grammar and Pragmatics.

Jung (2005) found that grammatical competence, input, and instruction are the factors that may cause pragmatic failure. Morkus (2018) stressed that pragmatic competence failure is more than harmful than linguistic mistakes of learners as native speakers forgive linguistic errors but they are very sensitive to pragmatic failure. So it is essential to practice learners' pragmatic ability by using authentic materials in the classroom. Using both inductive and deductive approaches is very important while teaching to improve our learners' pragmatics awareness. On the other hand, learners are not trained to produce the target language orally in the EFL classroom and real life context. Most of the time, teachers use the deductive method focusing on the usage of the target language rules. Sometimes learners know what to say, but they are afraid of making mistakes in their speech.

The limited grammatical ability of learners may also cause pragmatic divergence which may lead to pragmatic failure in daily communication. It is important to note that not all grammatical competent users can be pragmatic competent as they may fail to comprehend the intended meaning during the conversation. However, having good grammar may impact learners' pragmatic competence as they know and understand the structures of words. As I mentioned above, using different methods (deductive and inductive) can be effective for learners' grammar knowledge. First, they will learn the rules and the formulas of the target language, then they will produce their sentences to consolidate the topic they have had. It can be efficient to develop their grammar skills as it includes both theory and practice. It is crucial to inform students that making grammar mistakes is not a tragedy, as it is a simple process that everybody may face during the learning process. Giving grammar-focused activities is another way to improve the grammatical competence of our learners.

The cost of misunderstanding culture.

The reason for this is that various cultures have distinct habits, communication methods, and customs. As a result, when we negotiate across cultures, we bring different perspectives to the table, which may result in misunderstandings. Apologizing is one of the crucial speech act as it plays a vital role in communication. Chapman and Thomas (2006) emphasize that it is very important to make an appropriate apologizing strategy in different cultural contexts. Using an inappropriate apologizing strategy may cause intercultural misunderstandings and may lead to counter-effects in our communication with native speakers. The teacher should find the appropriate and effective ways of making an apology not only in English but also in other different cultures to prevent negative consequences in the future.

Sometimes making a wrong apology may cause crises between two countries. For instance, Chinese crashed with the USA president, Chinese officials requested an apology for the collision. Bush said only “I am sorry” which later caused the opposition between the USA and China. So it is very important to consider cultural differences while making an apology in our communication. So we have to consider these factors as an alarm to teach pragmatics in the language teaching process. Cohen and Olshtain (1981) also mention about some factors that affect the degree of formality of apologizing, including the familiarity with the person, intensity of the act, place, relative authority of speakers, age, sex. As you can see that, there are different factors that may affect your speech. So we have to teach pragmatics in language teaching.

The importance of interactional activities.

Providing interactional activities such as role-plays is one of the best ways to present the SS, SD, and intensity. Ishihara and Cohen (2010) give several principles for curriculum development that are very effective for teaching pragmatics. One of them is using empirically established information and naturalistic speech samples. I also used that principle while designing my lesson as this method is very effective to improve students’ knowledge of the culture of the language and helps learners to avoid pragmatic failure during communication with native speakers. I utilized different tech tools while designing my speech act lesson plan, including the CARLA website, Kahoot, padlet.com, Piktochart visual editor, Youtube social media. You should consider that all the lessons and your activities must illustrate the target speech acts in different conditions and use the appropriate strategy during the conversation regarding the three elements (social distance, social status, intensity).

Conclusion.

Currently, CLT method is the most widespread in teaching English. So it is important to conduct lessons by using this method. Students will learn pragmatics through authentic materials. Nowadays, it is important to improve communicative, pragmatics, and sociolinguistic competences of learners. So teacher will design the lesson considering these things. Students should learn how to make an effective apology in English.

Teacher should provide role plays, consciousness raising activities while conducting pragmatics lesson to provide a deeper understanding of the topic. Teacher will explain the terms, including direct apologies, indirect apologies; modification of apology strategies (using different strategies in one situation); apology strategies in different languages comparison of Uzbek and English pragmatics and choices of speech acts (apology) in different situations.

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