

The Impact of Pedagogical Intervention in Learning Implicature, Pragmatics and Cultural Differences of English Language

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Abstract

This research sheds the light on the problem of EFL in learning English language as students or graduated who involved in their practical lives and works as interpreters, teachers...

To learn and comprehend foreign language, it isn't enough to memorize rules and grammar patterns or even to depend on the literal meaning of the words individually. It needs to go deeply across the unsaid speech, culture of this language.

To attain the goal of this research, the researcher expresses the importance of instruction of pragmatics, hidden meaning and cultural differences of the (TL) target language. This research suggests that the intensive instructions concerning implicature, pragmatics and expressing the cultural differences between the learners' language and the foreign language are useful in developing the ability of the respondents in acquiring the foreign language properly in order to get better grades from one side and be professional to practice it in the work life later on from another side.

ملخص البحث

يلقي هذا البحث الضوء على مشكلة متعلمي اللغة الاجنبية كطلاب او كمتخرجين مشغولين بالعمل كمتترجمين او مدرسين او..... . ليس كفاية ان تستذكر القوانين وحفظ القواعد او حتى الاعتماد على المعنى الحرفي للكلمات . ان الامر يحتاج الى التعمق في الكلام الغير مقال وثقافة بلد اللغة الهدف. ليتحقق هدف البحث , الباحث يشرح اهمية التعليم للمعنى الضمني والمتضمن والفروق الثقافية للغة الهدف. هذا البحث يقترح ان التدريس المكثف فيما يخص هذه الامور هو مفيد جدا للمتعلمين لغرض اكتساب اللغة الاجنبية بصورة صحيحة لتحسين درجات الطلاب من جانب وليكونو محترفين في استعمال اللغة في حياتهم العملية فيما بعد من جهة اخرى.

1.Introduction

Axiomatically, people communicate with each another using many ways of communication: words, gestures, eye movements and facial expressions. But still language is the most appropriate way of human communication. Messages are encoded by the addressees and then are decoded by the recipients. However words may mean much more than their literal meanings. They sometimes hold an additional meaning or a contrastive hidden meaning the speaker wants to convey by using few or several words and utterances. This what is called "impicature" which is an essential part of pragmatics.



Etymologically, pragmatics is of Greek origin. The word “pragma” means “deed” and is derived from Latin and Greek; especially from the words “pragmaticus” and “pragmaticos”. They both mean “practical” (Liu, 2000, p. 2). In spite of its ancient origin, the term was used to indicate a subfield of linguistics in 1970. So, pragmatics is a recent discipline having its roots in language philosophy as shown by philosophers such as Charles Morris, Rudolf Carnap, and Charles Peirce in 1930 (Huang, 2007, p. 2).

Jucker (1995, p. 35) stated that the year 1995 pointed to the beginning of historical pragmatics and he devised the title of the periodical entitled *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*. Taavitsainen and Jucker (2015, p. 2) showed that pragmatics developed rapidly during the last two decades and had general impacts on all linguists. They stated that there had been clear changes during the years 1975, 1995 and 2015 as far as linguistics was concerned. In the seventies of the last century, the paradigms were a generative one. The linguists’ sets of ideas and theories of that time made their emphasis on the text apart from the context or from the situations of the interlocutors. Focusing on the structure of the words, the systems of the sounds, the meaning of the words individually, the speaker’s competence and the formal language system is of little importance: “Actual language and externalized language as seen in natural communication was of little interest. But this has all changed, and it has already changed by the early nineties” (Taavitsainen & Jucker, 2015, p. 2).

Traugott (2008, p. 208) illustrated that linguistics turned from the mere competence to competence use and used sentence analysis as closely related to the respective context, which was regarded as a “pragmatic turn” and which had great impacts over all the branches of linguistics. This change, was a result of the earlier linguistic philosophers such as Wittgenstein, Austin, Searle and Grice who saw the language not merely signs, but a way for communication.

As a result of this change, the language use and discourse were enriched. The aims of linguistics in 1970 was to describe language as it was represented by the native speakers’ competence. The Chomskian linguistic theory was the core of linguistic theory that the knowledge of grammar to both the speaker and listener of their language was the most important element to understand each other “Knowledge of language of {their} speech community is uniformly represented in the mind of each of its members, as one element in a system of cognitive structure” (Chomsky, 1980, p. 220).

The pragmatic turn had a cognitive, social and cultural turn. This was obvious in the definition of Veschueren (1999, p. 7-11) of pragmatics as “cognitive, social and cultural perspective on linguistic phenomena”.

2. The Problem of the Research

Consequently, people can easily communicate with each another from the same community sharing the same knowledge, information and background. The EFL who study language far away from their native language face the problem of expressing utterances, hidden meanings and difference in cultures.

3. The Interrelationship between Implicature and Culture

It must be indicated that the concept of CP does not have a universal presence due to the fact that culture varies from one nation to another: what is true to one nation may or may not be true to another. It has been pointed out that Grice’s maxims do not work in the same manner



among all nations (Cignetti and Di Giuseppe, 2015). Implicatures may mean different things according to the different cultures which have their own distinct contexts and their peculiar point of view concerning what may be regarded as cooperative, and “therefore the usefulness of implicature as a conversational strategy in cross-cultural communication can be diminished” (Bouton, 1988). For example, Bouton (1988) comes to the conclusion, in his study concerning cross-section representations, that the international SL learners differed in their interpretation of implicatures with respect to the native speakers and among themselves. More precisely, out of the six culture groups under study, he found out that the Latin Americans occupied the second nearest position with respect to the Americans, who were the target group.

It can be suggested that pragmatic coherence can be easily achieved among people having the same culture and the same schemata. It has been pointed out that to understand what two or more speakers mean in their conversation, it is not enough to interpret the words at their face value. Trobriand Mlinowski, an anthropologist, watched primitive fishermen, whose language was called *Kiriwinian*, crying out from their canoes when manoeuvring through difficult paths. He came to the conclusion that the meaning the words they said could not explain what they meant: “One had to understand why they said what they said and how they said it to whom in a specific **context of situation**” (Kramsch, 1998, pp. 25-26). It is quite reasonable that their words, their particular way of thinking or their set of opinions concerning something and their beliefs to “a larger **context of culture**”, (Kramsch, p. 26) represented by the fishermen’s tribal economics, their social order, types of kinships, rites whatsoever, seasonal frequencies and their point of view concerning time and place, so that “the semantic meanings of verbal signs had to be supplemented by the pragmatic meanings of verbal actions in context” (Kramsch, p. 26). It is quite right that one implicature in one culture may or may not correspond to another in another culture, and therefore, the CP cannot be sustained in this case due to the notion as Leech (1983) stated that the Grice’s maxims can’t work in the same quality in different societies. This is to say that what is true to one culture may or may not be true to another. For instance, according to the British culture, the term “thank you” when addressed by someone given something means that he does not want that something or is unwilling to accept it; yet, according to the Arab culture, the very equivalent term “Shukran” when used in the same situation and circumstances means acceptance of that something and is expressive of gratitude. This fact shows that one society group may make use of Grice’s maxims in a way different from another society group due to the different cultures they possess. The following example shows how misunderstanding between two speakers occurs because the speaker of one culture does not understand the implicature in the term “sugar daddy” (a rich older man who gives money, gifts, etc., so someone ‘such as a young woman’ in exchange of love or friendship) said to him by a girl of another culture. The following conversation develops between them both:

The young woman: have you ever been a sugar daddy?

The old man: him, yes, I am a good father.

In this respect, the old man just understood the literal meaning of the term “sugar daddy” due to his ignorance of one aspect of the culture of the addresser. The old man thought that the term “sugar” might suggest goodness. On the other hand, the girl immediately realized that the old man did not know the meaning of “sugar daddy” Kramsch (1998, pp. 31-2) had his say in this regard:



Speakers from different cultural backgrounds may have different interpretations of what it means to be true, relevant, brief or clear with regard to conversations. They may have different definitions of the speech activity itself. A service encounter at the bank might have a different social value in India and England, and the roles of cashier and customer might be differently defined. But they all enter a verbal exchange assuming that there will be some sort of co-operation between the parties involved.

It can be concluded then that speech acts fall within one single cultural domain. In case of the interlocutors, whatever their nationality may be, know the same culture, they can communicate and understand each other clearly, for language is regarded part of the culture of its users and expressive of many and various speech acts illustrating meanings such as asking, complaining etc., in many and various cultures: "Language use is a cultural act because its users co-construct the very social roles that define them as members of a discourse community" (Kramsch, 1998, p. 35). According to the researcher's experience during her master's study in Lebanon, the Lebanese used to nod their heads to show their refusal of something, which is part of their culture, but the same action according to other nations, the Iraqis for instance, is considered an insult.

4. The Ingredients Underlying the Teaching of Pragmatics

Studies of interlanguage pragmatics should not only concentrate on the production of language, but it should also concentrate on its perception and the judgments made to produce it. Linguistic studies on judgment and perception, according to Cignettiy & Giuseppe (2015), explored those differences that appear in L2 conversations and the written reproduction of native speakers and learners. It was shown that the perceptions and judgments of native speakers and learners were often at odds as indicated by Bardovi-Harlig (2001). Furthermore, it was indicated that significant information is related to the kinds of speech acts the learners could acquire as inputs. In addition, it is also related to their ability to recognize the points at which their native language the TL meet and at which they separate (Rose & Kasper, 2001). Studies concentrated on the performance of the FL learners inasmuch as the latter tend to get less input of TL, and therefore they had little chances to communicate in the foreign language outside the classrooms. Moreover, they were not to use their pragmatic understanding when exposed to TL situations, which required them to have instructions in pragmatics as far as linguistic communication was concerned, so that they could improve and increase their understanding of their L1 understanding available to them and develop its usage in the TL contexts (Rose & Kasper, 2001). Besides, as Payne and Whittaker (2006, p. 9) stated that the university students have to distinguish between learning and teaching. Students learn what the teachers impose upon them during the lectures and whatever meanings contained in the books they deal with in the classroom. Teaching cannot enrich the students completely if they are in need of learning and realizing the culture related to the language they are studying. The students' personal experiences, their own way of thinking, circumstances and some other privacy have an influence on their learning.

Naturally speaking, native speakers and EFL show remarkable differences in the pragmatic representations which they hold during the communication, which could be regarded as being difficult and which have their impact on the "pedagogical intervention in learners' comprehension of the TL pragmatic aspects" (Cignettiy & Giuseppe, 2015, p. 52). In consequence, there arises the need for the awareness of the pragmatic knowledge necessary to



transfer the input into intake, which should consciously be noticed by the learners, and as a result, the input is so important that without it “acquisition cannot take place...we owe it to learners to help them interpret indirect speech acts as is the case of implicature” (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001, p. 31). The understanding of pragmatics makes the teaching process convenient in so far as it aims to “facilitate the learners’ ability to find socially appropriate language for the situations they encounter” (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003, p. 37). One of the linguistic areas that had not been thoroughly explored was pragmatics. Thusly, pragmatics can be defined by Wintergerst and McVeigh (2011, p. 40) as “the branch of linguistics that studies language in context and especially the conveying and interpreting of meaning”. According to his personal experience, Joe (2011, p. 40) was in China as a teacher of English. When he was visited by his Chinese students because he was ill. He started to make hints in English to announce the time of leaving him, for he was not well; he said many utterances such as they surely had homework to do and it was so pretty late and it was great of them to visit him. No one interpreted his gentle request to leave until he said directly that it was time they left; they recognized that he asked them to leave.

It should be noted that even native speakers could not be aware of the unsaid messages unless their feelings were hurt or they felt that they were offended. Bardovi-Harlig, and Mahan-Taylor (2003, p. 37) stated that:

Pragmatics does not receive the attention in language teacher education programs that other areas of language do. Nevertheless, rules of language use do not have to be “secret rules” for learners or teachers. A growing number of studies exist that describe language use in a variety of English-speaking communities, and these studies have yielded important information for teaching pragmatics.

It is possible for ESL and EFL learners to learn the basics of pragmatics and discern the mechanism of understanding implicatures throughout the concrete language activities, and at the same time “We are in the position to give assurance that they can learn pragmatics in their second or foreign language and be ‘I n the club’ of English speakers” (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003, p. 37).

It has been advocated that the EFL and ESL learners urgently need to be taught the basics of pragmatics throughout giving them instructions prior to exposing them to exercises consisting of implicature, so that the teaching process would be successful, since the language system of the native language of the learners and that of the acquired language are different in many and various daily situations in which they need to express themselves. Thus, the absence of instructions deters the teaching process and the process of comprehension on the part of the learners due to the differences among the cultures to which the two languages belong “regardless of their first language background or language proficiency. That is to say, a learner of high grammatical proficiency will not necessarily show equivalent pragmatic development” (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003, p. 38). This indicates that learners with a high level of proficiency in grammar exhibit feasible competence in pragmatics. Moreover, the nonnative speakers can neither be successful nor unsuccessful, for they often interpret implicatures when they rely on their social and personal competence in this regard, not on the process of language learning.

Nevertheless, a pragmatic error is possible in this case, for they may unwittingly insult others due to their lack of the instructions necessary to lead them to the suitable utterance to be spoken in a certain situation, as indicated by Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2003, p. 38): Being outside the range of language use allowed in a language, or making a pragmatic mistake, may have various consequences. A pragmatic error may hinder good communication between speakers, may make the speaker appear abrupt or brusque in social interactions, or may make the speaker appear rude or uncaring. Unintentional insult to interlocutors and denial of requests have been identified as other potential pragmatic hazards.

Insufficient input (instruction) is what makes the subject of pragmatics difficult for learners, and therefore the learners misinterpret implicatures. It should be advocated that class lecturing is the best way to feed the learners with the kind of inputs necessary to let them interpret messages correctly. The language learners should have instructions in advance throughout observing daily situations in particular conversational speech acts are used, which may be related to invitations, refusal, requests, or apologies. These representations often occur among people. It is advocated that the learners should be involved in those situations, or at least have an idea about them that makes them able to respond correctly to either one of them, for learners may or may not easily and immediately notice certain significant features of the language points they are exposed to: "By highlighting features of language and language use, instructions can inform the learner.

Finally, the classroom is the ideal place in which learners are helped to interpret language use. Instruction can help learners understand indirect speech acts when and why certain linguistic practices take place. It can help learners to better comprehend what they hear" (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003, p. 38).

Conclusion and Recommendation

Still learning foreign language is a big problem for those who have studied it in their country and have no chance to communicate with its population. Thus, so many EFL when they prison their minds by their simple experience and culture of their native language face the problem of un ability to blend with the TL.

Knowledge of the implicatures contributes to the students' comprehension capabilities and fluency in language usage. Integrating comprehension of implicatures when learning English helps learners break the ice of language difficulties in learning, comprehending and practicing the English language and improving their understanding of hidden meanings of utterances during their studies and even after graduation.

However, the researcher feels strongly that results should serve as a way to look more closely and seriously into the implementation of conversational implicature in teaching English for foreign students. He also sees that instruction presents a promising opportunity to improve educational outcomes in Iraqi universities and in their practical life later on.

Recommendation

- (1) The research sounds out how the general teaching population in Iraq feels about the importance of instruction.
- (2) The researcher recommends further studies in the field of pragmatics, especially a study of implicatures implied in the Arabic language employed by the Iraqi community. This helps in carrying out comparative studies between the unsaid messages produced in the speech acts of



both the English-speaking community and the Arabic-speaking community. A study of this kind will be of great value for understanding the schematic representations of utterances in the two languages concerned.

- (3) A pedagogical recommendation should be recommended to the teachers, instructors, writers and learners of a second language. They have to pay attention to practice their English language inside and outside the classroom and among themselves and blending with the culture of the English language. Such practice will break the wall of fear of using the foreign language.

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