

Pragmatics Lesson Analysis in the context of ESP course

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Abstract: This article is devoted to an analysis of conducting the class in the context of ESP (English for Specific Purpose) to enhance awareness of pragmatic behavior in the requesting situation. The results in this article emphasize the value of pragmatics in ESP courses understanding and implementing pragmatic principles into a lesson. This article's ultimate goal is to close the gap between academic understanding and real-world application, encouraging a more thorough and contextually appropriate method of teaching language in ESP classes.

Keywords: ESP (English for Specific Purpose), analysis, pragmatic.

Introduction

ESP courses are designed to meet the language needs of specific professional fields. Pragmatics, in this context, explores how language is used in real-world situations within these specialized disciplines (Dudley-Evans, Tony and Maggie-Jo St John, 1998). It involves the analysis of language functions, speech acts, and the social context in which communication takes place. Belcher (2012) suggests ESP instructors should address pragmatic aspects to help learners develop the language skills necessary for professional communication.

In this regard, a pragmatic lesson was conducted for the students of the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Technology at Ajou University in Tashkent. As these students are future electrical engineers, it is essential to incorporate awareness in ESP courses to enhance their ability to use language appropriately in professional contexts.

The learners in the selected class are Uzbek adults aged 18-24 years, who have general proficiency Level 2 which corresponds to the range of scores from 370 to 429 on the paper-based TOEFL. While they have been studying English for at least 2-3 years, most of them did not have experience in interaction with L2 and were not exposed to L2-speaking cultures. Therefore, taking into account the serious gap in communicative language teaching and the extremely limited oral language proficiency of learners, ESP classes can help them improve their English communication skills and score high scores on tests such as IELTS or TOEFL tests.

Overall objectives of the instruction are first, to improve learners' English language skills by teaching them the different ways of communication with a specific focus on making requests that can be practically used in their everyday lives, and second, to raise learners understanding of how to properly communicate in English in IT sphere and academic environment, paying attention for the cases that would be most relevant in their future work.

Methods

The specifically targeted pragmatics' objectives include the enhancement of learners' ability to identify a wide spectrum of norms of behavior across different cultures and contexts concerning requests; the learning of proper forms of making requests (politeness, directness, formality), and practicing a range of request expressions in L2; the modeling of pre- and post-request strategies for different contexts to minimize the imposition involved in requests (I.Kecskes, 2014). Moreover, another important objective is to teach learners how to correctly analyze the speaker's

intention and the listener's interpretation through their pragmatic L2 use in the given communication context and to be able to predict the possible consequences of their own pragmatic language choice.

To motivate learners' understanding of the target pragmatic functions/features, I conducted the lesson using visual materials such as maps and photos that were shared with them as well, and some parts of instruction were given bilingually. Moreover, to introduce socially and culturally appropriate language use, the different samples of American/Uzbek request forms were explained and analyzed. As for awareness-raising tasks, I gave the students written dialogues of a wide range of situations asking them to perform role-plays as well, and assessed the level of their comprehension by giving quizzes. As Kasper G. and Dahl M. claim (1991), "Compared to a written dialogue, a role-play tends to be more interactive and spontaneous and thus is likely to yield more naturalistic discourse". As a result, the learners were well prepared to complete the given tasks and achieve the goals of this instruction.

I also provided a set of interactive and output opportunities for learners in the class to effectively complete language production tasks. One of these opportunities was given in a way of explaining sample responses collected from pragmatically competent speakers of English, whose request expressions were placed in sequence of politeness, directness, and formality. Another output opportunity was the task for learners to collect naturally occurring request dialogues in L1 or L2 for their analysis concerning contextual factors. The knowledge of the first language and culture served as an important resource for learners to realize the linguistic features and the context of the requests in L2. Moreover, interactive role-plays, such as practicing written dialogues orally in pairs, solidified the understanding of nuances of interaction to accomplish the goals of instruction. According to Ishihara N. and Cohen D.A. (2010), this technique helps learners prepare themselves for more complex social interactions in authentic and real-life situations.

At the same time, I used sample data collected from pragmatically competent English speakers to explain to the learners the essence of pragmatic variation. In this regard, three different responses were selected in the instruction to demonstrate the pragmatic variation. As for the assessment of the learners' pragmatic ability and development, it was based on the collaborative approach using elicited learners' inputs. Therefore, this assessment takes into account the diversity of pragmatic norms by approximating learners' goals and intentions as speakers.

Findings

In my opinion, the learners are well motivated to learn pragmatics in this class because starting from the introduction stage I not only assessed the level of learners' initial pragmatic awareness but also discussed with them some of the most challenging aspects of learning English from a social/cultural point of view. I provided scaffolding in the learning process, which was very helpful in gaining new knowledge and skills. According to Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (1978), "Cognitive development occurs in interaction with others who have more advanced cognitive ability rather than isolation". All in all, students become self-directed when they never again need to depend on outside assets to fulfill the tasks or access that awareness, because the new information and abilities have now turned out to be a piece of their cognitive ability. To further facilitate a deeper understanding of the lesson among learners, the different episodes of discussions were supported by visual material and bilingual instructions.

Concerning the assessment, I used formal and informal methods of doing it. For instance, in the initial introductory stage, the learners were informally assessed to get a picture of their awareness of pragmatic variability. Moreover, in the early writing assignments, I aimed to simply diagnose students' pragmatic awareness without grading them, and in later stages, I used assessment criteria provided to students in advance for this purpose.

In addition, the students' reflections on learning the pragmatics of requests were also assessed based on the rubric prepared bilingually to make the task more native. Besides, quiz results were used to estimate the learners' pragmalinguistic control over these request strategies. In the final

stage of learning, the assessment was based on the learners' intentions when making requests, and their input was taken into account. This way, I could work with the students to evaluate the fit between their intentions as speakers and the most likely interpretation that listeners might have.

Discussion

Some of the most interesting things that I liked in this lesson were the demonstration of pragmatic variations given in the samples as three different responses as well as the use of bilingual instructions for the learners of the beginning level of proficiency. I believe that incorporating these approaches in teaching practice is the core element for raising pragmatic awareness among students and motivating them to learn the English language. To accommodate my learners' needs and institutional contexts, further, I will try to modify this instruction by adding more video conversations of different kinds of requests from various English language countries to see the cultural contexts of the language.

Conclusion

Learners examined and discussed the authentic dialogues. They identified speech acts, considered the use of hedging or mitigation, and explored how cultural factors could influence communication. During the class, the students realized the value of pragmatic competence and that efficient communication can be unlocked by grasping pragmatics.

The lesson analysis highlights the value of practical application by showing how pragmatic ideas can be effectively included in an ESP course. Also, the analysis showed that lessons focused on pragmatics can better equip students to succeed in the workplace. Learners of English as a Second Language (ESP) can improve their language proficiency and lay the groundwork for effective, culturally sensitive communication in their respective industries by comprehending and utilizing pragmatics.

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