

Engaging pragmatics in intercultural communication.

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Abstract: The article aims at giving insights into the significance of pragmatics in maintaining effective intercultural communication. Even though language is the medium of communication it sometimes can not convey the intention of speakers and as a result there may appear misinterpretation of the ideas expressed by words. To avoid such kind of misunderstanding pragmatics comes to help by which conversation may go smoothly.

Key words: pragmatics, language barriers, intercultural communication,

Pragmatics is considered to be a branch of linguistics which concerns the use of language according to situation, purpose and participating speakers. The concept is defined in different way by different linguists: According to Pütz and Neff-Aertselaer pragmatics is based on the language in practice including language science such as linguistics, the philosophy of language and the sociology of language which especially focus on the exploration of language use and its users in real-life situations. It can be interfered that pragmatics is related to applied linguistics. Its influence can be seen in practice, when two people belonging to different social groups interact with each other the words and expressions they are using will usually convey the meaning beyond ideas expressed by the words and structures. For example when someone tells “How are you, old chap?” the expression applies greeting between people and at the same time it can be understood that the addresser is a kind of old friend of the speaker. So practice explores the emergence of the language in different situations.

Petty Hart (1981) claims that pragmatics is the language study on the basis of the context. Because language can be used in different way according to the context. And there are different types of context which form the emergence of the language. According to Mingsheng Li and at all. (2011) there are five aspects of context. They are

- Physical
- Social
- Psychological
- Temporal
- Physiological

The physical refers to the location and the environment where communication takes place. Everything related to the space and environment has positive or negative influence to the communication and the use of the language will be appropriate to the location. For example if the environment is inconvenient, untidy or noisy the choice of your language to speak to the people in that environment will be in unfavorable manner or vice versus.

Social context involves language use considering gender, age, power, relationship with the interlocutor, formality all of which have considerable impact to select the pragmatically appropriate language. To be more specific, if gender is taken as an example the word choice in the communication between different genders and the same genders extremely vary in quality. The communication between the same genders occurs freely with little or no hesitation in choosing topics, use of language, expressions and jargons. But the case is not the same between different genders among which there will be some boundaries in word choice which are acquired by pragmatics.

Psychological context deals with attitudes, feelings and emotions which are inevitable part in deciding language choice. If the addresser is in tension while approaching the person mitigators are the devices that can provide the communication to be led smoothly.

Temporal refers to the appropriate time to interact with others. Your word choice may differ from one time to another. Different speech acts can be employed to suit the temporal context.

As far as the importance of pragmatics in teaching foreign languages is concerned, it is critical to providing effective communication in so many ways. In its scope the students will be able to use the linguistic structures in proper time and appropriate situation. What it means is that there are different speech acts that deliver the same meaning. For example:

“Can you help me?”

“Will you help me”

“Could you please be kind to help me?”

“Is it possible for you to help me”

All of those are different forms of the same speech act in the meaning of request. However, they can not be used in the same situation to communicate with the

people in the same situation. And through the subject the students will be informed when to employ them and in what situation.

It enables the students to understand the input in the same way with the speaker's intention which helps to avoid from misunderstanding. For example there are different gestures in all culture but they may express different meaning and the same time the same gesture may convey contrasting meaning in different culture. In order to interpret the meaning of the gesture as how it has been intended the subject is needed.

It does not only facilitate the students with linguistic knowledge but also expand their outlook about the target culture. Because, they are exposed foreign culture while learning the language. Admittedly, there are different cultural groups in the society in terms of their age, social background, position, sex, race, nationality etc. The same linguistic forms are not used in their communication. And sometimes words and expressions may express different meaning in the cultural groups. In order to choose appropriate language structure in conversation one has to be aware of their manners, way of speaking and behaving which is the way of expanding one's knowledge about the culture of those cultural groups.

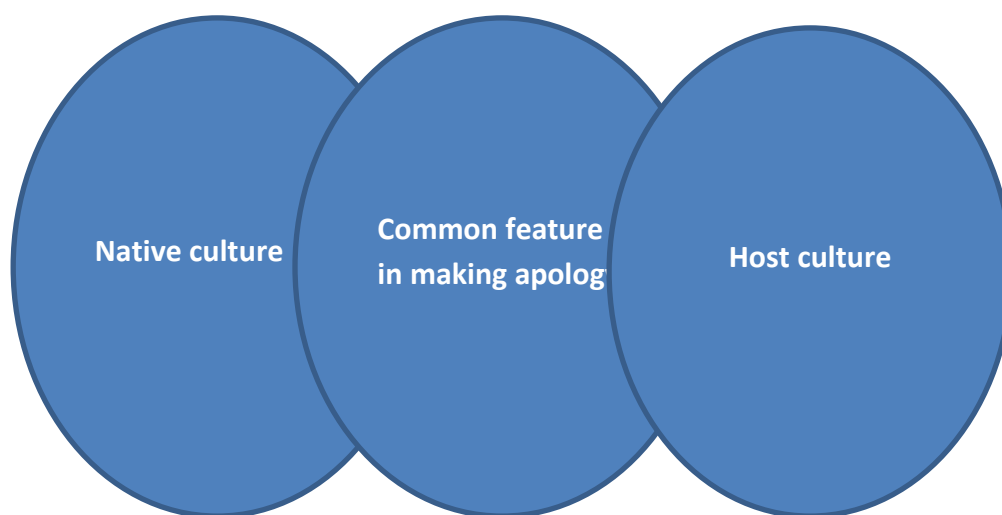
As it is urgent to familiarize the students with pragmatics the subject should be embedded in the classes of foreign languages. There some suggested way to be used to make the students pragmatically competent:

1. engaging the learners with appropriate target language input
2. raising their pragmatic awareness in different context and culture
3. creating authentic opportunities to practice pragmatic knowledge

In the foreign language classes first the students should be taught what it is like being in target culture, what are the expected norms and behaviors, what language and expressions are appropriate in certain situation and whether those expressions have implicit meaning. The target language input may be acquired by books, media, audio and video materials. The more they are exposed to the target language culture the faster and better they will become pragmatic competent in intercultural setting.

In order to raise their pragmatic awareness in different cultural context just informing the students with speech acts, expressions appropriate in the context is not enough. Practice infuses their pragmatic awareness and makes them competent user of the language according to the established norms and conventions. And at the same time practice can be achieved by creating authentic opportunities to use

the gained knowledge. In the classroom to create an authentic opportunity to practice the pragmatic knowledge requires the teacher to be more creative and search for the situations which should be common in the target culture. For example a scene requires the action of apology is found using you tube videos and presented to the students. The students are asked how to behave in that situation. First the students' performances in that situation are observed and then the real act of apology in target culture is presented and asked the students what the differences are. The have to make a Venn diagram as follow:



The diagram clearly shows similar features and differences in two cultures in making apology and what are common in both cultures. Through the diagram the students will have a clear insight into the use of language in target culture considering the context.

In conclusion knowledge of pragmatics in intercultural setting enables the students to prevent any possible misunderstanding among the people from different background. In order to enable the students to use the language in appropriate way to provide effective communication the subject of pragmatics should be embedded into the input of foreign languages and create appropriate opportunities to practice in class and out of class.

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