

Pragmatic failure in the heterogeneous communication.

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Abstract: The article discusses the importance of teaching pragmatics in EFL classes. The author highlights the pragmatic failure and its negative consequences in the heterogeneous communication process.

Key words: pragmatics, pragmatic failure, competence, communication, speech acts.

There is no doubt that, it is not enough to have basic grammar and vocabulary knowledge of EFL speakers in order to keep communication from breakdown when interacting with native speakers. Communication is the transmission and reception of information between communicators. In other words, it is the exchange of ideas, information between two or more persons. But this description can not cover the entire characteristics of the term communication. Importantly, communication is regarded as the communication of speech acts, a series of elements with purpose and intent. In other words, any communicator has own intents and purposes whether they are native speaker or non-native English speaker. When we are in communication, we are about to express our objective, sometimes not knowing about them. In the same rate with lack of foreign language aptitude, intercultural unawareness and pragmatic failure causes of communication difficulty and brings about its blocking. First of all what is pragmatic failure? What kind of importance does it have in the communication?

Pragmatic competence is considered as one of the important components of communicative competence as well. The study of pragmatics copes with the ability of language users to use the language appropriately. This can be unfamiliar for many EFL teachers. That is because, compared with other branches of linguistics, pragmatics has only recently come on to the teaching methodology. But it became a significant factor in the communication process, especially between native English speakers. Because a pragmatic error may block the good communication between speakers, may make the speaker appear strange in the interaction, or may make the speaker appear rude or uncaring unintentionally and leads a direct breakdown. Moreover, teaching of pragmatics aims to formalize and develop the EFL speakers ability to find socially appropriate language for the situations they encounter. It is worth pointing that, despite of a new science in linguistics, pragmatics has been investigated by many scholars who already knew the importance of language use for communicators and shared their ideas and

conclusions as well. According to the words of one of the leading scholars: “Pragmatics is the study of linguistic acts and the contexts in which they are performed”¹. Another linguist, Levinson defined pragmatics on his own: “Pragmatics is the study of ability of language users to pair sentences in the context in which they would be appropriate”. Considering these opinions we present the essence of pragmatics in the field of communication and for ESL speakers. It covers:

- Sociolinguistic aspects:
 - Openings and closings;
 - Form of addressing;
 - Other forms of politeness;
- Conversational functions:
 - Ordering, promising, arguing, requesting, offering;
- Conversational hints:
 - Imposing own opinion;
 - Conversational indirect hints;

Furthermore, conversational management, conversational structure are also encompassed by pragmatics within second language studies and teaching. It is also known that, these areas of language and language use have not addressed in language teaching process. So we can call them as “secret rules of English” which are a fairly demanding for every EFL speaker to keep communication from breakdown. Like teaching cultural aspects, foreign language teachers must conduct relevant lessons instead of procrastinating and waiting their level development. That is obvious if teaching pragmatics is carried out in the meantime of teaching other communicative skills then the result will be observed and my goal will be achieved after all. Because, it makes our students aware of and sensitive to the sociolinguistic variables that play an important role in different kind of situational frames, like encountering breakdown and the like. To the top, language is a means of communication. Any interlocutor use language to accomplish such functions like ordering, promising, arguing, inviting, requesting and so on. However, any communicative function needs to be carried out within a context whether it is held with a native speaker or a non-native one. In the process of communication our learners are expected to have two types of capabilities:

- They should have knowledge of the forms of language they use.
- They must know how to use this knowledge as well.

So, they must know how to interact. Needless to say, the importance of teaching pragmatics can be transparently seen here. Significantly, to accomplish

¹ Stalnker,R. C “Pragmatics. In Semantics of natural language” p.113

their purposes they have to know to use in the appropriate way, even though they have high verbal and grammatical competence. So, communication is described as purposive, functional and designed to bring about some effect on the environment of communicators. When EFL speakers are conscious of speech acts and interpret them without hesitation, be sure they are ready to be in communication. Because, utterances are different, environment is different. (We mean it is not classroom based conversation, but, communication between native speakers). Also, forms of language generally serve specific communicative functions. Let's take an example, a question like "How much does this sharpener cost?" is usually a form functioning as a question. A question however can function as a request. For instance, the question "Can you pass the salt?" uttered at a dinner table does not signal the speaker's attempt at listener's abilities. It rather functions as a request for action. This can show the fact that linguistic forms are not always clear in their functions. Similarly, pragmatic competence is called as organizational competence which directly refers to the ability of communicators to organize their speech in an appropriate way. We must admit that, pragmatic rules for language use are often subconscious, and even native speakers are often unaware of pragmatic rules until they are saddened (and feelings are hurt or offense is taken). In a similar way with cultural training, to teach pragmatic rules is depended on the teacher's perspective, the observation of how speakers do things with words has analyzed the pragmatic process at least to the point where we can provide responsible, concrete lessons and activities to our learners. If we really want our students to be fluent communicators even in the heterogeneous communication, we must be in the position to give assurance that they can learn pragmatics in foreign language. That is because, classroom is the best environment for EFL speakers to comprehend their background knowledge. We would like to propose some extracts from the communication breakdown based on pragmatic failure:

Native speaker: Will you be coming to my party on Saturday?

ESL speaker: Well.

Native speaker: Well what?

Not understanding the language use of the communication partner, they both may be disappointed.

Native speaker: We must have lunch together some time.

ESL speaker: Let's do lunch.

Native speaker: See you.

ESL speaker: Take care.

In this conversation, something similar happens to non-native speakers who draw the conclusion considering own native perspectives and have difficulty in correctly interpreting this type of routines, because they think that they are a real invitation. Consequently it makes them feel saddened by the lack of sincerity of American or British people, who, in fact, never invited them. What can lead EFL speakers to make pragmatic mistakes? To make clear I will state some more examples:

Speaker 1: If it is not too much bother, could you please make a video cassette of this lesson?

Speaker 2: When have I ever refused to prepare a cassette for you?

In this case, non-native speaker's request is too elaborated and the interlocutor interprets it as a complaint or criticism to his work. As we informed above, pragmatics covers the conversational functions such as offering, requesting and the like. Also, an EFL speaker may say: "I really very sorry. I just forgot. Understand? In this situation, "understand" is a direct translation from Uzbek language, used by the first speaker with question intonation looking for the listener's cooperation. Nevertheless, the effect in English is indeed opposite, since this "understand" sounds rough in English. This is due to the fact that, whereas the Uzbek learner is a language oriented towards positive politeness, but you see, there is also linguistic difference in language use which blocked the conversation on the first turn.

In conclusion, the consequences of pragmatic differences, unlike the case of grammatical errors, are often interpreted on a social or personal level rather than as a result of the language learning process. Making pragmatic mistake may have various consequences and one of them is communication breakdown. We know, such mistakes are unintentional errors of interlocutors, so on the other hand it is our professional duty to inform them about such features of learning a foreign language. If we teach our students the secrets of language use, they are enable to communicate their thoughts in actual contexts long after they have left the language classroom. These will no doubt, help EFL students not only in the process of communication, but also in a good number of other ways. That is because, pragmatic failures will not occur and obviously, communication will not broken down as well.

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