

The Spheres of Pragmatic Competence

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Annotation. This article deals with general notions of the pragmatic competence and its specific features. It discusses the spheres of pragmatic competence and the realization in context.

Key words: communicative competence, pragmatic competence, context, linguistic resources, contextual use.

Main part

Pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics and semiotics that studies the ways in which context contributes to meaning. Pragmatics encompasses speech act theory, conversational implicature, talk in interaction and other approaches to language behavior in philosophy, sociology, linguistics and anthropology.

Unlike semantics, which examines meaning that is conventional or "coded" in a given language, pragmatics studies how the transmission of meaning depends not only on structural and linguistic knowledge (grammar, lexicon, etc.) of the speaker and listener, but also on the context of the utterance, any pre-existing knowledge about those involved, the inferred intent of the speaker, and other factors. In this respect, pragmatics explains how language users are able to overcome apparent ambiguity, since meaning relies on the manner, place, time etc. of an utterance.

Pragmatics was a reaction to structuralize linguistics as outlined by Ferdinand de Saussure. In many cases, it expanded upon his idea that language has an analyzable structure, composed of parts that can be defined in relation to others. Pragmatics first engaged only in synchronic study, as opposed to examining the historical development of language. However, it rejected the notion that all meaning comes from signs existing purely in the abstract space of langue. Meanwhile, historical pragmatics has also come into being.

The study of the speaker's meaning, not focusing on the phonetic or grammatical form of an utterance, but instead on what the speaker's intentions and beliefs are. The study of the meaning in context, and the influence that a given context can have on the message. It requires knowledge of the speaker's identities, and the place and time of the utterance.

The study of implicatures, the things that are communicated even though they are not explicitly expressed. The study of relative distance, both social and physical, between speakers in order to understand what determines the choice of what is said and what is not said. The study of what is not meant, as opposed to the intended meaning, i.e. that which is unsaid and unintended, or unintentional.

Information structure, the study of how utterances are marked in order to efficiently manage the common ground of referred entities between speaker and hearer.

Formal Pragmatics, the study of those aspects of meaning and use, for which context of use is an important factor, by using the methods and goals of formal semantics.

When we speak of the referential uses of language we are talking about how we use signs to refer to certain items. The ability to understand another speaker's intended meaning is called pragmatic competence.

In linguistics, pragmatic competence is the ability to use language effectively in a contextually appropriate fashion. Pragmatic competence is a fundamental aspect of a more general communicative competence.

The ability to understand another speaker's intended meaning is called pragmatic competence. For example: "*Kumushni ertaga kinoga olib boraman*" in this sentence we can understand that the

speaker promises to take Kumush to the cinema. From the intonation we can realize that this sentence should be like *Kumushni ertaga kinoga olib borishga va'da beraman*.

In Acquisition in Inter-language Pragmatics, linguist Anne Barron offers this more expansive definition: "pragmatic competence . . . is understood as the knowledge of the linguistic resources available in a given language for realizing particular illocutions, knowledge of the sequential aspects of speech acts, and finally, knowledge of the appropriate contextual use of the particular language's linguistic resources."

The term pragmatic competence was introduced by sociolinguist Jenny Thomas in 1983 in the article "Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Failure". In that article she defined pragmatic competence as "the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context." [3, 209] For example:

I say: I want you to do X.

I think of it as some thing that will be good for me.

I don't know whether you well do it.

I say this because I want to cause you to do it.

In Uzbek:

Men demoqchiman: Men sening Xni bajarishingni istayman.

Men o'ylaymanki, buning bajarilishi mening uchun yaxshi.

Men bilmaymanki, sen buni bajarasanmi?!

Men buni aytayotibmanki, seni ushbuni bajarishga majbur qilmoqchiman.

"A speaker's 'linguistic competence' would be made up of grammatical competence ('abstract' or decontextualized knowledge of intonation, phonology, syntax, semantics, etc.) and pragmatic competence (the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context). This parallels Leech's division of linguistics into 'grammar' and 'pragmatics' (the use of language in a goal-oriented speech situation in which the speaker is using language in order to produce a particular effect in the mind of the hearer." [2, 224]

"Intrinsic to this decision-making process are several principles that concur to define the nature of pragmatic competence. In particular, individuals make choices and build strategies based on some of the unique properties of pragmatic/communicative competence, such as:

- variability: the property of communication that defines the range of communicative possibilities, among which is formulating communicative choices;
- negotiability: the possibility of making choices based on flexible strategies;
- adaptability; the ability to modulate and regulate communicative choices in relation to the communicative context;
- salience: the degree of awareness reached by communicative choices;
- indeterminacy: the possibility to re-negotiate pragmatic choices as the interaction unfolds in order to fulfill communicative intentions;
- dynamicity: development of the communicative interaction in time."

Chomsky accepts that language is used purposefully; indeed, in later writings he introduced the term pragmatic competence—knowledge of how language is related to the situation in which it is used. Pragmatic competence 'places language in the institutional setting of its use, relating intentions and purposes to the linguistic means at hand'. As well as knowing the structure of a language, we have to know how to use it. There is little point in knowing the structure of:

Can you lift that box?

if you can't decide whether the speaker wants to discover how strong you are (a question) or wants you to move the box (a request).

"It may be possible to have grammatical competence without pragmatic competence. A schoolboy in a Tom Sharpe novel Vintage Stuff takes everything that is said literally; when asked to turn over a new leaf, he digs up the headmaster's camellias. But knowledge of language use is different from knowledge of language itself; pragmatic competence is not linguistic competence. The description of grammatical competence explains how the speaker knows that:

Why are you making such a noise?

is a possible sentence of English, and that

Why you are making such a noise.

is not. It is the province of pragmatic competence to explain whether the speaker who says:

Why are you making such a noise?

is requesting someone to stop, or is asking a genuine question out of curiosity, or is muttering a sotto voce comment. "Pragmatic Competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately in different social situations. It is true to say that there is no correct way to use language; however, we can certainly define what appropriate use of language in different circumstances is. What do we mean by different circumstances?"

Below are some ways to differentiate circumstances:

- ❖ Purposes for communicating, often referred to as functions, for example, inviting, apologizing
- ❖ Relative status of those communicating
- ❖ Topic area about which participants are communicating, for example, general, business, computing, medicine
- ❖ Situation, which refers to a physical location, for example, in a bank, at the airport, in a restaurant.

To communicate appropriately in these circumstances, whether using spoken or written language, we use an appropriate register, which may refer to level of formality, for example, 'Give me the book!', 'Would you mind giving me the book?' Register also refers to lexis in specific fields, for example, jargon. Another example in Uzbek: the interrogative sentence "Dars qilmaysanmi?" from its pronunciation can mean various circumstances: demand, requirement, warning, proposal, inviting and others. «*Dars qilmaysanmi, deb so'rayapman (sendan)*»; «*Dars qilmaysanmi? Buni sendan talab qilaman*» (teacher's speech); «*Dars qilmaysanmi? Seni ogohlantiryapman*»; «*Dars qilmaysanmi? (kel, birgalikda dars qilishga taklif qilyapman)*».

So, pragmatic competence is 'the ability to use language appropriately in a social context'. [3,84] It is the key to effective communication in a second language. While communicative competence and grammatical competence are explicitly taught and developed in the classroom, developing pragmatic competence is often overlooked. For example: in pragmatics we understand the meaning of the sentence without illocutionary words. Without these words we should understand the real meaning of the sentence and the speaker's point of view. These words can be: *invitation, boasting, demand, threat, command, order, advice, promise, humiliation, scolding* and others.

«*O'ldiraman!*».

«*Ishni bajaring*»

«*Homiylik ko'rsataman*»;

«*Tug'ilgan kuning bilan*»

«*Bu haqiqat*».

However, it is actually the skill which native speakers subconsciously use to define a non-native speaker as a successful communicator...and, hence, as someone they would like to talk to, help, be friends with and even hire.

Pragmatic competence is a fundamental aspect of a more general communicative competence. Pragmatic competence is understood as the knowledge of the linguistic resources available in a given language for realizing particular illocutions, knowledge of the sequential aspects of speech acts, and finally, knowledge of the appropriate contextual use of the particular language's linguistic resources. The term pragmatic competence was introduced by sociolinguist Jenny Thomas in 1983 in the article "Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Failure". In that article she defined pragmatic competence as "the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context."

Pragmatics consists of conventional rules of language which are manifested in the production and interpretation of utterances. In particular, it helps the speakers analyze the conditions that make the utterances acceptable in some situations. Therefore, lack of mastery of conversational norms involved in production of speech acts may result in breakdown in communication. According to Thomas (1983), a failure in considering these parameters results in the communication breakdown or misunderstanding. Thus, pragmatic competence is the knowledge that speaker-hearer uses to engage in communication, including how speech acts are successfully performed.

In language teaching, communicative competence is defined as the students' ability to "understand the essential points of what a native speaker says... in a real communicative situation" as well as "respond in such a way that the native speaker interpret to response with little or no effort and without errors that are so distracting that they interfere drastically with communication" (Terrell, 1977, p. 326, cited in Kramsch, 1996). In addition, most of linguists and educational specialists emphasized that foreign language learners often show significant differences from native speakers in comprehending and performing certain speech acts. Kasper (1997) argues that a learner of high grammatical or linguistic proficiency might not necessarily show equivalent pragmatic development. So, for the sake of development of pragmatic competence automatically or sufficiently, instruction in pragmatics is necessary.

To what extent does pragmatic competence affect communicative competence? There is more to second language acquisition than just becoming fluent (Bennett, 1993). Along with language is the inseparable aspect of culture, which means that, in order to achieve communicative competence, language learners need to develop cultural competence as well as linguistic competence. Becoming culturally competent in two speech communities is just as important an aspect for language learners as bilingualism. In order to appropriately understand a culture and become a member of the new speech community, language learners must develop both bilingual and bicultural competence (Bennett, 1993). In the context of EFL learners, it is necessary for second language learners to also learn the pragmatic and cultural aspects of the second language in comparison with the first language they already acquired. The following is an excerpt of a conversation between two speakers from different nationalities (American (A) and British (B)). The American visitor was in London and wanted to pay after he had his dinner):

A: Excuse me, can you give me the cheque, please?
B: Pardon me sir, we don't accept cheque. We do accept cash or credit cards.
A: What do you mean? I want to pay the cheque. How much do I owe you?
B: Oo, you mean the bill. Of course, sir. Right away sir.

It was obvious that speaker B did not understand what speaker A meant by cheque. A cheque is a means of payment whereas speaker A meant he was going to pay the bill which speaker B understands in this context. There is a different use of words in American and British English which may cause misunderstanding between the two nationalities. In this case pragmatic competence is needed in order to be communicatively competent.

Communicative competence is a term coined by the linguist Dell Hymes(1970). Although there is no one communicative method, the most salient aspects of the communicative approach to language teaching include a focus on meaning, learner-centered curriculum, emphasis on oral, written, and gestural communication, authentic language samples, and purposeful communicative classroom activities (Hymes, 1970, Lee & Van Patten, 1995). It refers to more than just a basic textbook familiarity with a foreign language and results from the combination of grammatical, sociolinguistic, strategic, and discourse competencies (Hymes, 1970). Sociocultural competence is a similar ability referencing a speaker's pragmatic knowledge and ability to "express messages appropriately within the overall social and cultural context of communication. This includes knowledge of language variation with reference to sociocultural norms of the target language." (Celce-Murcia, 2007, p. 46). It references the merger of both syntactic competency and the appropriateness of imbedded cultural norms in speech behaviors and patterns (Hymes). This communicative and sociocultural language competence are needed as specific teaching strategies into the language classroom: 1) Create a socially interactive and low-anxiety classroom environment. 2) Incorporate a variety of teaching methods. 3) Embed L2 culture into the curriculum.

As a conclusion, pragmatic competence or pragmatic knowledge is the ability to express meaning beyond language rules. It deals not only about grammar but also meaning. Language learners need to know how certain expressions are used in appropriate English. It is not enough to know grammatical rules without knowing in what situations the rules must be applied. Aside from pragmatic competence language learners especially EFL learners must also learn the socio-cultural aspects of the language(s) they are learning. One can learn English or Uzbek at language courses without knowing the context of the language use. It is highly recommended that language courses

also teach pragmatics as well as socio-cultural aspects of languages. Schools and universities play important role in endorsing such approach as students learn their basic language competence at school. The revolutionary idea would be combining the three aspects of language learning: linguistic, pragmatic, and socio-cultural competence for any language learners.

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