



Scientific and theoretical bases of studying speech acts in pragmalinguistics

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Abstract

This article is dedicated to the development of pragmalinguistics as an independent field in linguistics and its main peculiarities which have a great impact on communication. Indeed, as it is a newly-learned realm, much research is needed in order to find out differences and similarities in L1 and the target language. Learning the language does not guarantee to comprehend the conversation well due to pragmatic difficulties. Besides, there is always implied meaning of every utterance and it causes some distraction to the speaker and listener. Therefore, being pragmatically competent is a must in today's linguistics. As opposed to Sociolinguistics Pragmalinguistics mainly deals with speech acts and these acts play a vital role in oral communication. Concerning the importance of utterance and its interpretation in communication related to its social contexts, speech act contributes greatly on this matter because it is not merely about the speaker's attempt to express their thought via utterance but it is also useful to get someone perform particular action. In regard to the English as a foreign language, there are things to consider. It is easy for the speakers or listeners to determine the intended meaning of utterances if they are spoken in the mother tongue. Factors such as idiomatic expressions and cultural norms are not function as barriers to determine the intended meaning.

Key words: pragmatics, linguistics, pragmalinguistics, speech acts, locutionary meaning, comprehension,

The terms "pragmatics" is commonly used in today's linguistics since it requires learners to comprehend their genuine intention and perform a true action. The word pragmatics means "action" from the Greek language. Hence, its subject is a current language. Indeed, pragmatics is the study of language use in interpersonal communication. It is concerned with the choices made by speakers and the options applied in social interaction. It examines the effects of language use on participants in acts of communication (R. Hickey, 2015, p.2). It is often confused with semantics which is the study of meanings and covers a range of levels – grammar, syntax and the lexicon. According to Kasper (1997), to be pragmatically competent, one has to understand and produce a communicative act. This often needs knowledge of social cultures, the norms of the relevant speakers and covert and overt linguistic knowledge. Consequently, pragmatics helps to realize the implicit meaning. It is widely known that pragmatics includes three subgroups which are pragmalinguistics,



sociopragmatics and applied pragmatics, whereas Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983) once divided pragmatics into pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics referring to the skills and strategies for delivering communicative acts and interpersonal meanings within the frame of social perceptions and performance of communicative action. They also pointed out that being sociopragmatically competent means knowing the social conventions for “what you do, when and to whom” (Kasper & Röver, 2005, p. 2), particularly perceptions of relative power, social distance, and degree of imposition (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Pragmalinguistic competence encompasses knowledge of conventions of means (strategies for realising speech intentions) and conventions of forms (linguistic items used to express these intentions) (Kasper & Röver, 2005). For instance, implicature is a linguistic strategy (convention of means) for conveying an implicit or indirect message/meaning in English, but the linguistic items (conventions of forms) used to perform this strategy can be formulaic implicatures such as indirect criticism or irony. Both types of knowledge enable L2 learners to correctly appropriate pragmalinguistic tools into sociolinguistic norms. Based on these opinions let's have a much closer insight into each of these very groups. Initially, pragmalinguistics is more concerned with the linguistic end of the pragmatic. Usage is seen from the view point of the structural resources of a language, i.e. it concerns aspects of context which are formally encoded in the structure of a language, whilst sociopragmatics would see usage as primarily determined by social factors in communication. As well as, applied pragmatics refers to practical problems of interaction in situations where successful communication is critical, e.g. medical interviews, law courts, interrogations, official counselling.

Pragmalinguistics started to be widely studied in the 60-70s of the last century. More research was carried out in a bid to find out speech acts, such as greeting, request, apology, refusal, complaint, invitation (e.g., Omar, 1991; Hassall, 1997; Trosborg, 1995). In linguistics, a speech act is an utterance defined in terms of a speaker's intention and the effect it has on a listener. In other words, a speech act is a purposeful activity which is carried out in accordance with the established rules in the society and it is an utterance spoken in an actual communication situation. (Esenova, 2017, p.49). This notion was originated from the British philosopher John Langshaw Austin (1911-1960). He classified the speech acts mainly as three types:



1) locutionary act occurs when the speaker performs an utterance (locution).

2) an illocutionary act – the performance of an act in saying something with a specific meaning.

3) perlocutionary act - is focused on possible responses in speech act.

Indeed, Cutting (2002) believes that locutionary is what is said, also proposed by Yule (1996) who states that locutionary act is the act of producing meaningful utterances. Austin (1962) put forward the view that illocutionary speech acts might be performed by means of the performative formula. The illocutionary act is however one level of the total speech act that one performs in uttering a sentence (p.1). Admittedly, depending on the content every utterance has an intention and in order to understand that implied intention one needs to be pragmatically competent. For example, someone says “I will call a lawyer“. Here locutionary act is the sentence itself since it is just an utterance, while the intention of the speaker is the illocutionary speech act. However, it is not easy to comprehend that intention without knowing the content as it can be a warning, promise or just prediction. So if the content is about warning someone with this utterance, the illocutionary act is that he/she wants to stop someone from doing something, whereas the result or response of the listener is a perlocutionary speech act.

From Searle's view, there are only five illocutionary acts, namely: representatives, directives, commissives, expressive, and declarations.

Representatives: conclude, confess

Directives: requests, suggestions, invitations

Commissives: promises, requests, offers

Expressives: complaints, apologies

Declarations: to baptize, to declare war

Representatives are speech acts that the utterances commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition. The utterances are produced based on the speaker's observation of certain things then followed by stating the fact or opinion based on the observation. When someone says “she's beautiful”, the speaker can state the sentence based on the fact or just give his or her own opinion about physical condition of a person (Hidayat, 2016, p.9).



Directives area speech acts that speaker uses to get someone else to do something. These speech acts include requesting, questioning, command, orders, and suggesting. For example, when someone says “Could you lend me a pencil, please?” the utterance represents the speaker requests that the hearer to do something which is to lend him a pencil.

Commissives are speech acts that the utterances commit the speaker to some future course of action, these include promising, threatening, offering, refusal, pledges. For example when someone says “I’ll be back”, represents the speaker’s promise that he/she will be back.

Expressives are speech acts that the utterances express a psychological state. These speech acts include thanking, apologizing, welcoming, and congratulating. For example, when someone says “don’t be shy, my home is your home.” The utterance represents the speaker’s expression that he/she welcomes someone.

Declarations are speech acts that the utterances effect immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs and which tend to rely on elaborate extra- linguistic institutions. These speech acts include excommunicating, declaring war, christening, firing from employment. For example “you are dead to me.”

As Hidayat (2016) mentioned the goals of teaching speech acts in the classroom should be directed in rising consciousness of the students that utterances in English as foreign language could lead to misinterpretation. It is imperative to accurately understand the intended meaning by analyzing the utterances. By understanding the norms and idiomatic expressions of the first and second language the students could determine the message of the utterances so that it could expand their knowledge resulting in the ability to perform the speech act.

In sum, the ability to understand the hidden message of utterance is really important to have. Some words or utterances could be misdirected into something unpleasant if we are not careful. By understanding Pragmatics and speech acts we can get clearer understanding of the utterances. The goals of teaching speech acts in the classroom should be directed in rising consciousness of the students that utterances in English as foreign language could lead to misinterpretation. It is imperative to accurately understand the intended meaning by analyzing the utterances. By understanding the norms and idiomatic expressions of the first and second language the students could determine the message of the utterances so that it could expand their knowledge resulting in the ability to perform the speech act.



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