

Pragmatic Concerns in English Studies from Multi-Contextual Perspective

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Abstract: Studies of English and Applied Linguistics Are Increasingly Concerned with the Pragmatic Features from Multi-Contextual Perspective. Taking English as a Lingua Franca, the Present Paper Probed into Pragmatic Features of English Usage in Multilingual and Multicultural Contexts, Especially Pragmatic Performance and Phenomenon in the Field of English Teaching and Learning. Most Phenomena Were Found out to Be Different from Those Pragmatic Problems Made by Native Speakers in a Single Context. Thus, This Paper Could Provide Some Implications for Foreign Language Teaching Practice and Research in China.

1. Introduction

English as a Lingua Franca (Elf) Refers to the Communication among Non-Native English Speakers with Different Social and Cultural Backgrounds, Which is an Important Research Topic in Contemporary Applied Linguistics. Affected by the Trend of Internationalization and Globalization in Politics, Economy, Trade and Tourism, There Are Various Linguistic Pragmatics and Social Pragmatics in the Use of Language, Especially in Its Paradigm, Social Pragmatic Conventions, Pragmatic Strategy Selection and Contextual Interference. What's More, Non-Native English Speakers Outnumber Native Speakers. and It Appears a Linguistic Phenomenon Other Than British and American Usage Standard, for Example, Some Multilingual and Cross-Cultural Expressions from Non-English Speaking Countries. That's the Nonnativisation in the Use of English, Which is Also a New Trend in the Study of English as an International Lingua Franca. Therefore, This Paper Aims to Explore the Pragmatic Features of Efl in the Context of Globalization, in Particular, Its Pragmatic Concerns and Trends in Relevant Studies.

2. The Tendency of Nonnativisation in the Use of Efl

In Addition to the Interaction between Native English Speakers, English is Widely Used in the Following Four Situations. First, Some Communicators Are Native Speakers While the Rest Are Non-Native Speakers. Second, All Communicators Are Non-Native English Speakers with Different Linguistic Backgrounds. Third, All Communicators Are Non-Native English Speakers Whose Mother Tongue Are the Same. Fourth, Non-Native Speakers don't Use the Standard English But English in Post-Colonial India and Others.

Based on the Situation Above, Murray (2012) Divided the Use of English into Three Circles, They Are Inner Circle, Outer Circle and Expanding Circle. Inner Circle Refers to Native English Speaking Countries Such as the United Kingdom and the United States, Which Stands for Traditional English Standard. Outer Circle Refers to Those Non-Native English Speaking Countries Such as Singapore, Philippines India, and Nigeria Where English Has Become an Official Language Due to Politics, Culture, Religion, Historical Tradition, Etc. Expanding Circle Refers to Countries Such as China, France, Russia, Japan That English is Regarded as a Foreign Language. Thus, Diversity and Variety in Regions for English Use Has Become a Remarkable Feature, Which British and American Language Standards and Social and Cultural Conventions in Inner Circle Have Been Surpassed. It Illustrates That the Role of English Has Gone Beyond Daily Communication and Reflects Its Characteristics Used as a World Lingua Franca.

For the new features embodied in ELF, Cogo (2012), Sowden (2012) have carried out systematic

research about correcting some mistakes in the use of English and investigated characteristics of its complexity, diversity and dynamics that were ignored before. Kachru (1992), Shim (2009) have also pointed out that it is impossible to form a completely separate uniform lingua franca core in EFL. We should not treat English in a monomial approach, but appeal to the fact that communicators with different linguistic backgrounds should try to go with each other, even endure diversified cultural differences and multilingual phenomena, then we can consequently make a contribution to achieving successful communication.

3. Cooperative Interaction in Efl from Diverse Backgrounds

Since the 1990s, more research attention have been turning their focus to pragmatic appropriateness and tolerance in non-standard pragmatic phenomena in EFL under the background of multilingual culture. Users with different linguistic backgrounds have different pragmatic preferences. Formulaic languages may be restricted by specific pragmatic conventions. On the basis of the use in English among non-native speakers, Kecskes (2007) found semantic expressions (after a while, for a long time, once a week, etc), verbal phrases (try to, take care of, worry about, etc) and colloquial expressions (you know, I mean, you're right, etc) are of high frequency, which means non-native speakers have pragmatic bias in language selection.

Language communication may be subject to the interference of the users' local culture and mother tongue. It's difficult for English learners to abandon social cultural norms in their mother tongues. Thus, English teaching practice and research should attach more importance to communication needs, contextual influences and pragmatic strategies in the use of English, especially the collaborative construction and understanding of its meaning.

For example, a Portuguese X1, a Japanese X2 and an Italian X3 are discussing their good working relationships in the office.

X1: I mean we all get on well with each other, that we don't have problems, right?

X2: Yeah, I think we are alike, just the same...like what is it?...on the same boat?

X1: Yeah, what?

X2: Ah?...How do you say? on the same boat?

X1: I don't know yeah, on the same boat I think, may also on the bus on the train, anyway.

X3: Whatever, we understand what you mean.

X1: Yes, we are all foreigners.

X2: Yeah, we are. (laughing)

The above example explains the interactive consultation and collaborative construction in language forms and meanings used by non-native English speakers in daily communication. Apart from basic English language abilities, communicators with different mother tongues and lack of common backgrounds pay more attention to their cooperative interaction and strategy selection. It can be seen that EFL users could promote their communication and mutual understanding through dynamic negotiation and cooperative construction of language meanings.

4. Pragmatic Priority in the Use of Efl

Pragmatic priority refers to the judgment and selection of syntactic and semantic combinations whether in language strategy selection or information understanding, including its acceptability, felicity and cognitive salience. Acceptability and felicity are typical expressions of pragmatic features in verbal communication. The feasibility of pragmatics depends on the selection and understanding of linguistic forms or communicative strategies. Differ from the judgment of language form or semantic combination under syntactic control, it is a pragmatic judgment based on contextualization. Several studies have been done to prove that the selection and context judgment of speech act such as request have something to do with pragmatic priority in the use of language.

Taking formulaic language for example, Kecskes (2007) explored pragmatic features and cognitive salience of non-native speakers from the perspective of EFL. He found out native speakers used formulaic language such as semantic collocations, verb phrases and idioms on average, while

non-native speakers used them in a very low frequency. Due to the lack of sufficient common knowledge among non-native speakers from different cultural backgrounds, language selection of them won't rely on collective salience in their native language culture.

Speakers from different linguistic backgrounds tend to avoid using formulaic language or express themselves in language that has general information in the context of English as a lingua franca. Problems in linguistics and pragmatics, misunderstanding of meaning and intention and conflict talk are actually not caused by literal or combined meanings of words. Here is a talk between non-native speakers (Kecskes 2007:191).

Chinese student: I think Peter drank a bit too much at the party yesterday.

Turkish student: Eh, tell me about it. He always drinks much.

Chinese student: When we arrived, he drank beer. Then Mary brought him some vodka. Later he drank some wine. Oh, that's too much.

Turkish student: Why are you telling me about this? I was there.

Chinese student: Yes, but you told me to tell you about it.

The Turkish student in the example applied formulaic usage of the idiom tell me about it like a native speaker in order to let the Chinese student telling him the result of the event. However, the Chinese student described it according to his or her understanding of the literal meaning. That is a pragmatic misunderstanding frequently occurred among non-native speakers. Therefore, foreign language learners should not only try to master the correct forms, but also identify specific contextual constraints and their implications. Indeed, the latter one is more important in communication, that's to say, verbal communication should follow the general principle of pragmatic priority.

5. Trends and Directions of Pragmatic Concern

The use of language is not just the process of employing language knowledge and transmitting information. It involves many other aspects, such as language knowledge, language ability, interpersonal relationship and social relationship, etc. In the light of ELF trends and characteristics, Firth (2009) put forward a new research paradigm. For instance, interactive strategies beyond classroom learning behaviors, which aims to avoid communication strategy of letting it pass. Besides, some scholars also focus on the pragmatic expressions of communication modes in different work environments. Communicative strategies should be adopted among lingua franca communicators. Cooperative interaction and meaning construction lead to successful communication. Thus, ELF users should not be regarded as deficient communicators and foreign language learners.

In recent years, the pragmatic study of cross-cultural pragmatic competence and incompetence, instead of interlanguage emphasizes the transfer of mother tongue, becomes the focus of EFL research. Cross-cultural communication is a bidirectional process. On the one hand, it requires bidirectional interaction between communicators. On the other, factors like social pragmatic conventions and other contextual constraints, pragmatic standards of their own mother tongue would be transferred into the use of English. The goal of English learning should not only refer to the pragmatic standard of native English speakers, but the pragmatic standard of learners' own language and the influence of diverse contexts. The study of English teaching and learning should not just center on pragmatic standards in terms of language forms, semantic combination and British and American culture, but emphasizes the pragmatic dimensions and features of language use in the context of globalization and diversification. Only in this way can we reveal and explain the authenticity in the use of language better, and then obtain the pragmatic competence against the background of multilingualism and multiculturalism.

6. Conclusion

The paper demonstrates that pragmatic expression and pragmatic concern has presented a new characteristic of diversification under the background of ELF. As reflected in dynamic selection without the context of mother tongue culture, contextual adaptation, interactive collaboration, pragmatic strategies, interactive communication management and information resources construction,

etc. Problems in pragmatics mainly involve suitability, diversity and variability in implicit information, pragmatic strategies and intentions. In addition, mutual adaptation and understanding as well as social statute, cultural customs and pragmatic deviations among communicators are also closely related. All these have raised some problems in both the practice and theory of English teaching and the complication of English textbooks. English pragmatic competence and social pragmatic competence in a multiplex environment might have formed new challenges to Hymes' view of communicative competence.

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