

TO THE PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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Abstract. *Pragmatic competence is being considered as a crucial component of language education, this study is intended to be a review on the value and place of pragmatic competence in general language competence and language education. For the purposes of this review, some core definitions proposed by prominent researchers about the term are presented followed by some studies, especially recent ones, investigating different factors affecting pragmatic competence and the significance of pragmatic competence in language education. There has been analyzed the terms competence and performance as well. Since competence and performance are considered interrelated aspects in language education.*

Key words: *pragmatic, communicative, competence, performance, language teaching, language education, linguistic knowledge, communicative, context.*

INTRODUCTION

Communication is an indispensable part of any community life in which people feel the need to interact with each other for certain reasons. It is through the concept of language that people can communicate with a number of interlocutors in a variety of settings. However, while interacting, people need to follow things beyond words. They need to know how to say something as well as when, where and to whom to say it. Therefore, communication is much more than putting some words in a linear order to form a set of items. Language users are supposed to follow some conventions according to which their conversation will be not only meaningful but also appropriate. This analysis of how to say things in appropriate ways and places is basically called pragmatics.

DISCUSSION

Pragmatics mainly deals with what is beyond the dictionary meanings of statements; in other words, it is about what is actually meant with an utterance based on the norms and conventions of a particular society, or context, in which conversation takes place. Therefore, having a good command of the conventions enables the speaker to establish and maintain effective and appropriate communication as well as understanding each other clearly (Yule, 1996) and this ability is generally referred as pragmatic competence.

Following the shift in which the emphasis in language pedagogy changed from the linguistic-based to communicative-based purposes, the impact and status of pragmatic competence has gradually increased in educational circles. Considering pragmatic competence as a crucial component of language education, this study is intended to be a review on the value and place of pragmatic competence in general language competence and language education. For the purposes of this review, some core definitions proposed by prominent researchers about the

term are presented followed by some studies, especially recent ones, investigating different factors affecting pragmatic competence and the significance of pragmatic competence in language education.

Before focusing on the significance of pragmatic competence, it would be better to provide some definitions of the term and its related concepts. Pragmatics generally underlines the connection between language use and the underlying factors like interpersonal or social dynamics that can possibly affect the usage of language. One of the earlier definitions of the term is suggested by Morris (1938) who regarded pragmatics as the analysis of how an interlocutor interprets the sign that the other interlocutor proposes. Another frequently cited definition belongs to Crystal (1985). He describes pragmatics as the study of language based on the perspectives of its users regarding their preferences, the impact of the interactional context and how utterances can influence other participants during or after the communication. Leech (1983) and Levinson (1983) also emphasize the influential nature of the context considering meaning making while proposing definitions of pragmatics.

Context is a crucial component in understanding the meanings and intentions of other interlocutors. That is why; pragmatic knowledge is essential in getting the intended meanings and maintaining conversations accordingly. Rose and Kasper (2001) comment that during any interaction, interlocutors “do not just need to get things done but must attend to their interpersonal relationships with other participants at the same time” (p. 2). Garcia (2004) provides a comprehensive comment considering pragmatics as a discipline taking into account “the full complexity of social and individual human factors, latent psychological competencies, and linguistic features, expressions, and grammatical structures, while maintaining language within the context in which it was used” (p. 8). From these definitions, it can be concluded that communication is not just about using words after one another. Instead, a healthy and efficient interaction is based on a variety of factors ranging from the participants of the conversation to the context in which the interaction goes on as well as the social and cultural norms and conventions of the society and its language.

Considering language knowledge and production, Chomsky (1965) coins the terms competence and performance. The former refers to the mental capacity of a person considering language. Competence which mainly involves such linguistic knowledge as phonetics, phonology, morphology and syntax enables a person to understand and produce the language. Performance, on the other hand, is the actual production of a language user. While competence is the linguistic input, performance can be considered as the linguistic output. In other words, competence is about knowing the language and performance is producing the language. Considering these two terms, however, Chomsky comments that performance is subject to certain external factors such as the language user and the interactional context. Therefore, he concludes that performance does not always reflect the full nature of competence and he favors competence over performance. There has been; however, a shift in language teaching pedagogy from linguistic to communicative competence starting from the introduction and development of communicative language teaching methods. This shift has required a thorough and in-depth analysis of the communicative and pragmatic aspects of the language (Trosborg, 1987).

Therefore, communicative functions of the language naturally gained momentum. Different Takkaç Tulgar (2016) models of communicative competence and different criteria for efficient communication have been proposed by Hymes (1972); Canale and Swain (1980); Grice (1975); Bachman (1990); Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell (1995). These models of communicative competence have been proposed partly as criticisms and reactions to the emphasis on linguistic competence in language education.

One of the first criticisms towards the dominance of linguistic competence over communicative one came from Hymes (1972). Hymes disapproves Chomsky's perspective of competence and performance by conducting an ethnographic examination of interactional competence known as ethnography of communication. Hymes comments that though linguistic knowledge is significant, communicative dimension of language use should not be undermined and to support his point of view, he maintains that "there are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless" (p. 278). Therefore, it can be stated that based on Hymes' critical view, there has been a crucial shift from the focus on grammar to the communicative aspects in language studies.

While making a review on pragmatic competence, it is important to refer to Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence. This communicative competence model, which is later built on by Canale (1983), consists of four main areas of knowledge and skills to possess for effective communication: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. The first is related to such general linguistic knowledge as the phonology, morphology and syntax of the language and it resembles Chomsky's term of language competence. Sociolinguistic competence enables interlocutors to use contextually appropriate language based on their grammatical knowledge. It, in a way, combines linguistic knowledge with contextual rules. Discourse competence is about the ability of the language user to follow cohesion and coherence in language production to maintain flow and unity. The last item, strategic competence, is related to both verbal and non-verbal hints that can make interaction more effective and hinder possible communication breakdowns. Hence, based on these brief definitions, one can infer that effective communication with little or no misunderstanding requires a successful combination of these four competencies. However, it is also significant that all the interlocutors maintaining interaction should possess these skills. There has been a certain degree of criticism towards Chomsky's reliance on language competence undermining the value of language performance. Hymes (1972) and Canale and Swain (1980), with their notion of communicative competence, were among the pioneers considering the significance of appropriate language production. It was Bachman (1990) who proposed pragmatic competence as a separate unit of communicative competence. Bachman suggests that general language competence consists of two main parts: organizational competence and pragmatic competence.

The first category, organizational competence, includes a language user's linguistic knowledge such as vocabulary, morphology and syntax and this is called grammatical competence, which is similar to Chomsky's term of language competence and Canale and Swain's grammatical

competence. Besides grammatical ability, organizational competence also includes textual competence which is about cohesion and coherence in interaction.

The second category, pragmatic competence, consists of illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence. The first component, illocutionary competence, involves four main functions: ideational function helps language users express their thoughts and feelings; manipulative function enables people to obtain what they want; heuristic function creates opportunities to learn new things and use language as a problem-solving tool; and imaginative function improves people's creativity. These four functions proposed by Bachman in his book "The role of pragmatic competence in foreign language education information" (1990).

CONCLUSION

So, all above considered, there should be pointed out that without pragmatic competence, communication would eventually breakdown. Taking the different models of pragmatic competence and some studies on the issue into consideration, it can be stated that pragmatic competence is an essential component of general language competence if the aim of language is to communicate. Pragmatic competence enables language users to establish and maintain appropriate and effective interaction besides understanding and giving meaning to the messages based on contextual.

As for the notions of competence and performance, competence is the linguistic input, performance can be considered as the linguistic output. In other words, competence is about knowing the language and performance is producing the language. Considering these two terms, there has been concluded that both are regarded interrelated aspects in language education and play significant role in language education.

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