Заглавие документа:

Авторы: Василина, Владимир Николаевич

Тема: Лингводидактика

Дата публикации: 2015

Издатель: Учреждение образования Федерации профсоюзов Беларуси «Международный университет «МИТСО»

Аннотация: The article deals with developing pragmatic competence in the EFL classroom. The chief goal of instruction in pragmatics is defined. Learner strategies for performing speech acts are discussed. Advice is given for teachers how to optimize learners’ abilities to attend to the interactional needs of the addressee.

Дополнительная информация:
УДК 81.2
ББК 802/809
Т 33
DEVELOPING PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

Pragmatic competence is broadly defined as the ability to use language appropriately in a social context. Learners need to have a range of linguistic forms (e.g., grammar and lexis) at their disposal to perform language functions (e.g., greeting). At the same time, they need to understand sociocultural norms and rules that govern the usage of these forms (e.g., what to say to greet whom). Being pragmatically competent requires both types of knowledge, as well as processing skills that mobilize the knowledge in real time communication [3, p. 1]. Because language is a tool to perform social functions and develop interpersonal relationships, pragmatic competence – the ability to convey and interpret meaning appropriately in a social situation – is an important skill to develop in order to become a competent speaker in the international community.

The chief goal of instruction in pragmatics is to raise learners’ pragmatic awareness and give them choices about their interactions in the target language [1, p. 38]. The goal of instruction in pragmatics is not to insist on conformity to a particular target-language norm, but rather to help learners become familiar with the range of pragmatic devices and practices in the target language [1, p. 38]. With such instruction, learners can maintain their own cultural identities, participate more fully in target language communication, and gain control of the force and outcome of their contributions. Exposing learners to pragmatics in their foreign language helps the learners to expand their perception of the target language and those who speak it.

There is not a single best way to teach pragmatics. Regardless of method, however, activities should share two important pedagogical practices: 1) authentic language samples are used as examples or models, and 2) input precedes interpretation or production by learners.

Instruction in pragmatics may utilize the learners’ first language as well as English. Awareness raising activities can profitably involve demonstrations in L1 or L2 samples. Demonstrations may include the use of space, such as where people stand in a line, or nonverbal gestures that accompany certain types of talk, such as shaking hands during greetings or instructions. L1 language samples can serve to introduce learners to ideas in pragmatics in a context in which they have native control of the language. The samples can also serve as the basis of L1–L2 comparisons.

Learners should be aware of the fact that in attempting to express themselves, people do not only produce utterances containing grammatical structures and words, they perform actions via those utterances. Actions performed via utterances are generally called speech acts and, in English, are commonly given more specific labels, such as apology, complaint, compliment, invitation, promise, or request [4, p. 47]. These descriptive terms for different kinds of speech acts apply to the speaker’s communicative intention in producing an utterance.
Here are learner strategies for performing speech acts. We assume that students have learned about speech acts, either through previous exposure to the L2 culture, through reading about how speech acts are performed, through attending to what a teacher has taught them, or through collecting data on their own. The challenge is to take this learned material and use it in pragmatic performance.

- Using some mnemonic for retrieving for performance purposes the speech act material that has already been at least partially learned (e.g., visualizing a list of the strategies specific to the performance of a given speech acts set and then selecting the ones that seem appropriate for the given situation).
- Practicing those aspects of speech acts performance that have been learned:
  1. Engaging in imaginary interactions, perhaps focusing on certain language structures in the speech acts.
  2. Engaging in speech acts role-play with fellow learners of the L2 or with competent speakers of the L2 playing the other role.
  3. Engaging in “real play” with competent speakers of the L2 in the speech community who have agreed to perform their usual roles (e.g., sales clerk, cashier, or receptionist) for the sake of you, the learner, whose purpose is exclusively to practice speech acts.
  4. Engaging in interactions with pragmatically competent speakers of the L2 without them being aware that your purpose is actually to practice speech acts.
- Asking pragmatically competent speakers of the L2 for feedback as to what was and was not appropriate in the speech act performance.
- Taking a style preference inventory and then trying an approach to speech act delivery that is consistent with the results (e.g., if you find yourself to be more 
  reflective, then thinking through the elements in the speech act before performing it; if more impulsive, then just doing it online and seeing what the response is).
- Using communication strategies to get the message across:
  1. Using an alerter as a social (interactive) strategy to signal to the addressee before the delivery of the speech act that it may not come out right (e.g., “I want to make a request here, but I’m not sure it will come out right...”).
  2. After performing the speech act, making comments about it in order to repair the situation in the case of pragmatic divergence which could possibly lead to pragmatic failure.
  3. Attempting to approximate what competent speakers of the L2 might do in that speech act situation: (a) weighing the assumed force and impact of several different approaches, and then on that basis selecting one; (b) going on the basis of “feel” as to what competent speakers would do based on L2 knowledge that has accrued; (c) basing speech act performance on a sense of what seems reasonable to expect competent speakers of the language to do in that speech act situation based on the learners’ perception as to how similar the L2 is to their language.
  4. Compensating for a gap in knowledge by translating from the L1 or from another language what would be said in that language in order to perform the speech act (i.e., without any preconception that the words and phrases will be acceptable).
Having the knowledge to perform the speech act appropriately but, as an expression of self-agency or subjectivity, remaining true to your own inclinations in your speech act delivery and trying not to be overly native-like [2, p. 232–233].

The EFL classroom provides a safe place within which learners can try out new forms and patterns of communication in an accepting environment. They can experiment with unfamiliar forms. The instructor and other student participants can provide feedback. Instruction should allow students to choose how much of the pragmatic norms of the culture they would like to include in their own repertoire [1, p. 39]. They will also enjoy greater insights into the target culture. An instructional approach combining communicative practice and corrective feedback enhances noticing and optimizes learners’ abilities to attend to the interactional needs of the addressee. Moreover, continuous practice contributes to faster and more efficient access and integration of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge into the learners’ interlanguage system.

References