

The Effect of Pragmatic Competence on the Communicative Competence of Second Language Learners

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ABSTRACT

Pragmatics is conveying the meaning through communication. This paper reviews the related research in the field of pragmatic competence and communicative competence. How to improve the communicative competence of second language learners has been a concern of scholars, and pragmatics is directly related to the communicative competence of second language learners, which is affected differently by different environments. Second language learners need to understand many pragmatic factors in order to avoid inaccuracies and misunderstandings in communication, so communicating with others requires pragmatic competence, which can help learners of English as a second language (Nivis, 2013)[1]. This paper shows the central importance of pragmatic competence to communicative competence. It also indicates the extent to which learned pragmatic competence affects second language learners' communicative competence in-class and out-of-class settings. The goal of learning a language is communication and applying pragmatic competence appropriately in communication is a challenging task.

Keywords: *pragmatic competence; communicative competence; second language learners; cultural differences; language expression*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the 1970s, Hymes (1972)[2] introduced the idea of "communicative competence" as a pragmatic concept, taking into account specific communicative situations, such as sociocultural differences. The essential notion in second language pragmatics has been discussed in various ways.

The essential notion in second language pragmatic study is pragmatic competence. appropriate language (Barron, 2003[3]; Kasper, 1998[4]; Taguchi, 2009[5]). Second language learners with some pragmatic knowledge have different effects on communicative competence when they learn in the classroom and in practical settings. Most of the research subjects were conducted with students who received normal education, and not much analysis was done for other groups. And the environments in which the investigations were conducted were simulations of everyday environments, not in pram. However, there are some second language learners who do not learn in the classroom regularly, but learn the second language through independent learning, for

instance through watching films and reading literature, or by communicating with native speakers in their spare time. Different learning methods have different effects on communication competence.

Pragmatic competence and communicative competence are intertwined, with pragmatic competence focusing on the learner's ability to express his or her true intentions, but communicative competence focusing on linguistic competence and strategic competence (Yang, 2002)[6]. How to enable second language learners to better integrate their pragmatic competence into communication is the focus of our attention. In this paper, the communicative competence of second language learners will be discussed in terms of domestic and international theories and examples, and then analyzed in terms of different contexts.

In the classroom, the teacher assumes a practical situation in which the students will practice: What is this? Who wears it? When do you see a doctor? The topic is based on the questioning of the doctor, which leads to the scenario of seeing a doctor when you are sick, and the teacher guides the students into the learning activity

about health issues. The teacher asks the students to imagine the situation of going to the doctor when they are sick so that they can learn more about the topic of going to the doctor and imitate it in a practical situation (Wang, 2015)[7].

In some practical settings, the use of language in communication must take into account the cultural differences of the time, so it must be appropriate in the social context. Therefore, only when the pragmatic knowledge is consistent with the practical setting, meaningful communication can be produced. For example, "Have you eaten up your meal?" is often used in Chinese communication, but it cannot be used as a greeting in English because it does not have the function of "greeting" in English and does not have communicative value. Since it is not in line with the communicative rules of English, it is not appropriate to use it in the social context of "greeting"(Che, 2005)[8].

The situation simulated in the classroom is singular. If the teacher teaches only some practical knowledge of how to talk at the school when visiting a doctor and does not teach how to speak in other settings, it will still result in learners not being able to communicate well. In some cases, second language learners have to face a non-native communicative environment every day. They need to communicate with native speakers in different situations, learning a more comprehensive type of pragmatic knowledge. However, because of the large amount of input in a short period in the classroom and more of an accumulative process in a suitable setting, second language learners who learn pragmatic knowledge through regular education have better short-term communicative competence than second language learners who learn in a practical setting. However, this pragmatic knowledge needs to be accumulated over time to overcome this cultural difference, and it is impossible to learn all the pragmatic knowledge during the teaching process. In a simulated environment, some influences will be avoided, so whatever knowledge is learned, it requires practice and does improve communicative competence.

When learners learn a second language, the cultural differences between what they have learned and their native language, etc., can cause some special problems of pragmatic competence. In this period, as China's trade with the world becomes more and more frequent, the cultural environment in which second language learners live is becoming more and more complex. Therefore, the flexible application of what they have learned to the appropriate situations, and the application of pragmatic knowledge to communication can achieve better results. In the teaching process and practical setting, second language learners are required to consider social and cultural contextual factors when applying their pragmatic knowledge, and to apply the learned vocabularies and grammar rules to the appropriate communicative

situations, so that the communicative purpose can be achieved quickly and effectively. The study and improvement of pragmatic competence can be an important guide for communication in the future.

2. PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE

According to Chomsky (1980)[9], pragmatic competence can be defined as follows: knowing the conditions and method of proper usage (of the language) in accordance with distinct purposes. Pragmatic competence for second language learners is how to use the correct language for social activities in different social contexts.

However, Thomas (1983)[10] considers pragmalinguistic competence as the ability of language users to perform their own speech acts and to achieve communicative extra-linguistic power, divided into pragmalinguistic competence and sociopragmatic competence. Pragmalinguistic competence is often associated with native language interference, and different countries have different grammatical rules. sociopragmatic competence is caused by different cultural backgrounds. Some second language learners have already mastered certain language knowledge, and how to improve communicative competence is the goal of every second language learner. However, pragmatic competence is indispensable in some communication. Initial observations suggest that there may be a link between the development of pragmatic competence for second language learners should be paid more attention.

Some Chinese learners believe that pragmatic competence is the use of appropriate speech in specific contexts to communicate and thus achieve the purpose of communication and is divided into pragmatic language competence; social pragmatic competence; pragmatic knowledge competence; and discourse organization competence (Chen, 2009)[11]. However, some limitations appear in his division of dimensions, such as having not dealt with the psychological factors of learners. When people are in a different environment, they approach things uniquely. When having a conversation with friends, the atmosphere is relaxed, and the focus is on whether the meaning can be expressed ultimately. They do not care too much about some pragmatic knowledge failure. Therefore, the role of pragmatic competence in communicative expression is vital.

3. THE EFFECT OF UNDERLYING CAUSES OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

People are increasingly aware that if they learn language only at the level of vocabulary, grammar, phonetics, intonation and other knowledge, but are unable to understand the context, they will not be able to understand and use the language accurately, and they will

not be able to use the language flexibly and appropriately (Chen, 2017)[12], and these problems reflect the link between pragmatic competence and communicative competence.

3.1. Communicative competence

Canale & Swain (1980)[13] divided communicative competence into four components based on Hymes' study: grammatical competence; sociolinguistic competence; strategic competence; discourse competence. From these four categorizations, language users have a deeper understanding of communicative competence.

With the development of the era, most people are in a multi-cultural environment. For some second language learners, there are obstacles in communicating with others because communicative competence involves understanding and expressing in communication and is also directly related to the speaker and the listener (Yang, 2002). Therefore, communicative competence is a social trait that exists amongst people rather than a personal trait (Savignon, 1983)[14]. The improvement of communicative competence is a slow process. And in the process of communication, if it is out of step with the cultural background of the speaker, the second language learners also cannot have good pragmatic competence, thus making communicative competence lower. Further analysis shows that the learners' pragmatic competence is one of the factors that affect the communicative competence of second language learners.

3.2. The range of influence of pragmatic competence on the communicative competence of second language acquisition

The impact of pragmatic competence on communicative competence is extensive, and the differences in what second language learners learn in the classroom and in a practical setting are concerned. Different learning experiences face different problems, and knowledge context needs to be integrated with the content in the teaching process. However, it needs to be accumulated independently in a practical situation.

3.2.1. Learning in the classroom

In the process of teaching English at universities, communicative competence has been gradually abstracted and idealized, almost evolving into the oral language competence of well-educated native speakers in their daily lives (Yu & Liu, 2019)[15]. A survey analyses some college students of non-English majors of pragmatic competence from Zhengzhou Institute of Aeronautical Industry Management. It is clear that a language learner who is proficient in grammatical competence does not necessarily well pragmatic competence (Li, 2011)[16]. Grammatical competence is

a part of communicative competence, and grammatical competence cannot be used to judge the second language learners' pragmatics alone. In the paper test, learners do have more time to think, but in a real communication environment, learners do have not much time to think and are better able to judge learners' communicative competence. Thus, communicative competence needs to focus more on oral communication. However, in this process, pragmatic competence is indispensable. Good pragmatic competence enables second language learners to achieve a better level of communicative competence.

Communicative competence requires students to be able to express themselves fluently in communication using some local idioms without appearing nervous, speaking too slowly, or hesitating excessively. The key to its realization lies in the improvement of pragmatic competence, which requires linguistic accuracy. However, when students emphasize linguistic accuracy, they must not go into another misunderstanding, that teachers must not interrupt their communicative practice due to pragmatic failure when students are engaged in communicative training in English. Otherwise, for a long time, students' motivation to learn will be seriously frustrated, leading them to be afraid to speak English and then lose interest in learning English. Teachers teach and students memorize knowledge, ignoring the emotional factor is the biggest factor affecting learning effectiveness causing students to be disinterested and making it difficult to develop students' sense of active learning (Yuan, 2010)[17].

In recent years, skill training has been criticized, and foreign language teaching has gradually increased the learning of multiple foreign cultures, but this is only a superficial understanding of culture (He & Lin, 2015)[18]. Such teaching design overly pursues correctness that neglects practicality for second language learners. It seems possible that these results are due to make training oral skills for the purpose of communicating and making learners use pragmatic knowledge mechanically. So, it detracts from the real purpose of developing learners' communicative competence.

3.2.2. Learning in a practical setting

Learning any skill requires initiative, which is also valid for improving pragmatic and communicative competence. In the process of second language learning, learners must constantly take the initiative to actively try to integrate all competence by consciously applying the analytical, abstract, and synthesis competence they have (Zeng & Liu, 2016)[19], and human beings are inseparable from communication in life. They will actively communicate in order to get along well with others in society, and in this process can efficiently learn how to use pragmatic competence around their friends, and learning in a practical setting will teach some native phrases to make the language more appropriate. Then this

process provides good practice in communicative competence.

Many second language learners are quite good at English before they go abroad and often score close to full marks in exams. However, when communicating with native speakers, it is difficult to find the right words to describe many things in life, so integrate into the local society and culture and acquire knowledge of pragmatic competence. It is basically useless to rely on recalling words and grammatical rules accumulated in class, and such expressions will be very unnatural when spoken in a practical setting. Therefore, it is better to pay attention to the various English words you see in advertisements or newspapers and accumulate them in a practical situation.

Hymes(1972)[2] holds the view that argues against the emphasis on linguistic competence over linguistic performance in communicative competence. Because he believes that language usage needs to be dependent on the practice setting. It is the gradual generation of communication. Therefore, being in an authentic second language social environment, imitating others' ways of speaking, and perceiving other countries' cultures will help learners to improve their communicative competence. After a period, as compared to the pragmatic knowledge learned in instruction, which will be more practical and less difficult to communicate with native speakers of English.

4. CONCLUSION

Many Chinese students confuse the concepts of pragmatic competence and communicative competence. For these learners, the lack of grammatical principles and cultural differences lead to misunderstandings in the communication, for example, Chinese students are more modest in their answers, but Americans are direct in their answers. In this case, people can misunderstand the content of the communication in the diverse culture.

The topic of pragmatic competence is not only a comprehensive subject, but also involves many other fields, and it cannot be developed and practiced without some practical communication. In the classroom, learners avoid communicative failure by memorization and other methods, but learners who are independent in the social environment communicate by imitation. Second language learners who study abroad rarely receive feedback or comments about their language competence (Shively, 2011)[20]. There is more focus on input in the classroom and more focus on output in a practical setting. So the second language learners who learn pragmatic knowledge through the normal teaching mode will have a better competence to communicate with others in the short term than those who learn in a social environment.

As times change and some expressions change, second language learning requires continuous dynamic learning (Zeng & Liu, 2016)[19]. According to Jung

(2002)[21], from a pragmatic point of view, students must develop the following abilities: the ability to perform speech acts, to produce and interpret non-literal meanings, to use politeness strategies, to perform discourse functions, and to use cultural knowledge. Only a proper understanding and analysis of the use of pragmatic competence and cultural essence can be beneficial to the learning of second language communicative competence. Therefore, the findings of this study suggest that people are able to better communicate with others by continuously enriching people's pragmatic competence in a practical setting. The study of pragmatic competence and its effects in the teaching process and a practical setting now should not be limited to theoretical studies, but should also be justified by empirical studies, and methods of improving communicative competence should be studied in many ways.

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