ANALYSIS OF TEACHABILITY OF PRAGMATICS IN COMMUNICATIVE ENGLISH SKILLS TEXTBOOKS USED IN ADAMA SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY

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 Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze the teachability of pragmatics in communicative English skills Textbook used in Adama Science and Technology University. Studies have been done to investigate the relationship between language education and pragmatic development and showed as pragmatics can be taught. Concerning the Teachability of pragmatics in the communicative English skills textbook used at ASTU, it is possible to say that pragmatics is teachable however; the overall content and application of pragmatic information and the authentic conversations or real life exercises that have been used in the textbook is insignificant. Furthermore, it is possible to see that the instructions given to teach or aware learners' this pragmatic competence has not been given due attention. Research into the sufficiency of textbooks to teach communicative practices that are reflective of authentic conversation has found that ELT textbooks rarely include adequate or comprehensible explanation of how conversation works in English. The speech acts according to the analysis made in the textbooks are, for the most part, pragmatically inadequate since they are not prepared by taking in to consideration the learners' backgrounds and their communicative and pragmatic competence. Similarly, the finding of the study regarding teachability of pragmatics in the communicative English textbook used by ASTU

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shows that there is limitations that should be solved. This is mainly due to lack of awareness both from the learners side and the teachers in giving awareness.

Introduction

The main objective of this paper was to illustrate the theoretical backgrounds about pragmatics and to evaluate the teachability of pragmatics in the communicative English textbook used in ASTU and to recommend some constructive remarks about Teachability of pragmatics so as to enhance communication and develop learners' communicative skills.

Communication is language refers to the ability to convey a message or receive message and respond to it in a way it is intended by the sender or source of the message.

'A well-known property of lexical items in natural language is that they are capable of conveying different meanings in different situations of utterance' (Papafragou, 2000).words can have different meanings depending on the context in which they are used. One should develop a skill of understanding the possibility of having different contexts of communication. Communicative English skills textbook of ASTU is also supposed to create such a fertile ground where students can understand the meaning of a word depending on context.

'Pragmatics is about the interaction of semantic knowledge with our knowledge of the world, taking into account contexts of use' (Griftths 2006). In language use it is important to know the context in which it is used. This is because words can have different meaning and can be interpreted differently depending on the context.

'Sociolinguistic perspectives on communication disorder allow us to recognize that effective communication requires a multilayered and dynamic process of negotiation of meaning between both partners in the exchange' (Muller, 2000). Since communication is the process of creating a shared or common understanding between the sender and the receiver, it requires multiple step negotiation and knowing the context. This idea is similar to the one mentioned by Griffths.

The idea of tracing speech acts in historical contexts was discussed and quoted in the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* (2000), with the core issue raised by a polemical question: "Is a Diachronic Speech Act Theory Possible?" (Bertuccelli Papi 2000: 63). In fact, studies in this area had already been conducted. Back in the 1970s, Schlieben-Lange and Weydt discussed the historicity of speech acts (Schlieben-Lange 1976; Schlieben-Lange and Weydt 1979). Lebsanft (1988) provided a close analysis of greetings in Old French; in English, Arnovick's article series on illocutionary histories of selected speech acts started in 1994/1995, and her monograph on the same topic came out in 1999. The inaugural issue of the *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* contained a host of diachronic speech act studies including Schrott (2000) on questions in Spanish, Culpeper and Semino (2000) on speech acts related to witch hunts in Early Modern England, and Jucker and Taavitsainen on insults in the history of English (2000). Within the past seven years, historical pragmatics has become an established field in historical linguistic study and the number of diachronic speech act studies has grown considerably, even to the extent that it has become of equal importance as (or at least a rival to) the study of linguistic processes. Recent studies include Jucker (2000); Kohnen (2000a, 2000b, 2002, 2004a, 2004b, 2007); Alonso Almeida and Cabrera-Abreu (2002); Busse (2002); Pakkala Weckström (2002); Milfull (2004); Archer (2005); Grzega (2005); and Taavitsainen and Jucker (2007). In one or the other the need for the use of pragmatics has been studied by a number of researchers and found out that it is possible to teach pragmatics regardless of location.

Statement of the Problem

Studies have been done to investigate the relationship between language education and pragmatic development, for example, whether grammatical development guarantees a corresponding level of pragmatic development. Some studies such as (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005 qtd) showed that high language proficiency participants had better performance in tests of pragmatics than low language proficiency participants in English as second language context.

Some studies have been done to investigate the Teachability of pragmatic knowledge in classrooms and some (qtd. Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; and Rose & Kasper, 2001) have shown that Interlanguage pragmatic knowledge is teachable.

The necessity and importance of teaching pragmatics have also been recognized (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Rose & Kasper, 2001 qtd), but still language teachers hesitate to teach pragmatics in their classrooms.

Bachman qtd (1990) lists two reasons for the reluctance in pragmatics teaching. First, teaching pragmatics is a difficult and sensitive issue due to the high degree of *assessing EFL learners' Interlanguage pragmatic knowledge* 'face threat' it often involves and, second, the number of available pedagogical resources is limited. But the reluctance should also be attributed to the lack of some valid methods for testing Interlanguage pragmatic knowledge. More studies need to be done to validate methods for pragmatics assessment in a textbook used for the development of communicative skills. Studies have shown that the textbooks are the center of the curriculum and syllabus in most classrooms; however, rarely does it provide enough information for learners to successfully acquire pragmatic competence. Some paper analysis focused specifically on the use of metalanguage, explicit treatment of speech acts, and metapragmatic information and teachers' manuals rarely supplement adequately. Studies conducted regarding teacher surveys show that teachers seldom bring in outside materials related to pragmatics, and thus, learning pragmatics from textbooks is highly unlikely. Implications suggest that textbook developers could include authentic examples of speech acts and sufficient prgamatics explanations to facilitate acquisition of pragmatic competence. This can help students learn pragmatics.

Objective:

The objective of this study is to analyze the teachability of pragmatics in communicative English skills Textbook used in Adama science and Technology University.

'The textbook as it has been studied by many scholars plays an important role in English Language Teaching (ELT), particularly in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom where it provides the primary form of linguistic input' (Kim & Hall, 2000). Since textbooks are the most important teaching aids that both teachers and students use during language learning, it should be given attention during preparing the textbook. 'Research into the adequacy of textbooks to teach communicative practices that are reflective of authentic conversation has

found that ELT textbooks rarely include adequate or comprehensible explanation of how conversation works in English' (Berry, 2000).

It has been studied that 'Previous ELT textbook research has focused on the authenticity of language samples included in textbooks as well as explanation of appropriate usage, typically using speech acts as units of analysis. Bardovi-Harlig points out that "it is Important to recognize, that in general, textbooks cannot be counted on as a reliable source of pragmatic input for classroom language learners" (2001). According to this study criticism deals primarily with the omission or disregard for authentic language samples in language textbooks, and researchers argue that language samples in textbooks need to more closely approximate results found in studies of conversation analysis. Oftentimes, pragmatic rules governing native speakers' speech act performance are not intuitive, and therefore require analysis of naturally occurring language samples, just as presentation of grammatical forms necessitates analysis of authentic language. "Only through materials that reflect how we really speak, rather than how we think we speak, will language learners receive an accurate account of the rules of speaking in a second or foreign language" (Boxer & pickering, 1995 qtd).

Explicit discussion of conversational norms and practices is another element missing from ELT texts, which often fail to adequately portray communicative practices or ideological constructs in the target language appropriately" (qtd Boxer & pickering, 1995). Particularly in EFL contexts, the only opportunity students have to learn target like conversational norms comes from either authentic language models or comprehensible metalinguistic descriptions that represent actual ways of speaking. Students are frequently not given the tools in textbooks to recognize and analyze language in a variety of contexts, and therefore, not equipped to be polite or rude intentionally (Grant & Starks 1996).

Most criticism of ELT texts has continued to focus on the role of the teacher in the classroom and articles include specific teaching ideas to supplement textbooks, such as collecting and analyzing authentic language samples (Bardovi_Harlig et al qtd). The general sentiment is that most textbooks are inadequate, but an effective teacher can overcome the shortcomings of a text.

Despite its shortcomings, the textbook is considered to be the most important tool used in the classroom (qtd Eslami-Rasekh, 2005) .Connections between the textbooks and language use, curriculum and lesson planning in the classroom need to be established for a more complete description of the use of ELT textbook. Drawing on previous studies of pragmatics in textbooks, the current study was undertaken to see what kinds of pragmatically relevant input and explicit metapragmatic information was provided in ELT textbooks.

As many studies depicted, the treatment of most speech acts in the textbooks is, for the most part, pragmatically inadequate. Students are occasionally given models of the speech acts with very little contextual information or explicit metapragmatic discussion. Particularly in the grammar texts, textbooks provide an association between a speech act and a particular grammatical form, which may lead students to think that is the only option for constructing an utterance. The range of speech acts among most of the textbooks is quite limited.

Although the amount of pragmatic information is small across all units in the communicative English skills used at ASTU, it is possible to say that the textbook comprised of pragmatic information; however, the quality of pragmatic information in terms of content and quantity is insignificant.

Methodology and Methods

The researcher will use quail-quan approach where content analysis is applied in order to reach to a conclusion weather pragmatics in the communicative skills text book used in Adama science and technology university is teachable or not. The textbook the researcher is analyzing is not the current one. It is the one used before ESP text book is applied.

Discussion and Interpretation

The following table shows some of the items used in the textbook where pragmatics is sought to be applicable.

Table showing distribution of certain speech acts used in each unit of communicative English skills textbook

S.No		Unit one Pages	Unit two Pages	Unit three Pages	Unit four pages
1	Accept requests	---	------	------	------
2	Acceptance of invitations	------	------	------	------
3	Apologize	------	------	------	------
4	Make introductions	8-12	------	------	------
5	Refuse invitations	------	------	------	124
6	Ask polite questions	13	------	------	------
7	Accuse	------	------	------	115
8	Agree	29,32	61,62,90	------	------
9	Compliment	------	------	------	------
10	Criticize	29	------	------	115
11	Deny	------	------	------	------
12	Disagree	29,32	61,62,90	------	------
13	Remind	------	------	------	------
14	warn	------	------	------	------

From the table above it is possible to see the distribution of Speech acts in each unit which is almost insignificant.

To see a few examples of those speech acts as shown in the textbook let's see the following examples:

A.   Complain

1.   Student 1: Life in an apartment is lonely.

Student 2: You're right. Dormitory life is not as lonely as an apartment life.

2.   **Make introductions** :

Charles: Sara, I would like you to meet my fiancée Jessica.

Sara: oh I am glad to meet you, Jessica.

Jessica: I'm glad to meet you too, Sara.

Sara: I've to go now.

Charles: okay, see you.

Sara: I hope to see Jessica some other times.

Jessica: okay, I hope to see you too.

3.   **Agreement**:

 You are absolutely right!

I completely agree!

I am in total agreement.

I agree entirely.

I could not agree more!

So we can see that speech acts or communication acts have been used in the text book. However; the way it has been used in the text book is not believed to be satisfactory. Although there is no explicit explanation about the use of pragmatics in the textbook communicative acts or speech acts have been used in the textbook. Therefore, by awareness creation or by a systematic interference of pedagogy it is possible to help learners develop their pragmatic knowledge.

It will be noteworthy if textbooks developers include presentations of variety of linguistic forms along with explicit pragmatic explanations and contextually rich opportunities for students to practice those forms. A pragmatic friendly textbook might involve pragmatic awareness raising activities, extra linguistic contextual information for all language samples, provision of variety of language forms to accomplish a certain speech act to enable prgamlingistic choices, and rich cultural information to enable sociopragamtic choices.

In order to be successful in communication, it is essential for second language learners to know not just grammar and text generalization but also pragmatic aspects of the target language (Kasper 1997). Pragmatic competence can be specifically defined as "knowledge of communicative action and how to carry it out, and the ability to use language appropriately according to context (Previous studies in 'Interlanguage pragmatics (Kasper and Rose 1999 et al.) have shown that differences and similarities exist in how to carry out communicative actions between language learners and native speakers of target languages.

Making learners aware of what they know already and encourage them to use their universal or transferable pragmatic knowledge of their first language in second language contexts is very essential and fruitful as studies showed.

Let us have a look at the following conversation taken from communicative English skills' textbook for first year students of ASTU (page 85):

Example 1.Customer: Waiter! What sort of soup is this?

Waiter: it's bean soup sir.

Customer: I don't care what it's been. I want to know what it is now.

This is an interesting excerpt for analysis within the frame work of Grice's theory. Several aspects must be taken in to account. Let us begin by the customer's utterance. First of all the customer has to know his own interest before giving orders to the waiter; however, he has been asking about the kind of soup presented to him. So, the question "what sort of soup?" has no relevance with the context. From this it might be derived that the maxim of relation is not being observed, but the reality is that any competent speaker can intuitively can understand the fact that the reason why the customer keep raising such question is, he did not have the knowledge of giving sufficient information or sufficient instruction while giving orders (maxim of quantity is ignored). You can see the misunderstanding that has happened between the two in which the customer said,"I don't care what it has been. I want to know what it is now". Here politeness principle is not also applied. The customer is impolite in that, although it was his fault not to order the kind of soup he wants to have further he also mistreated the waiter. He also lacks both grammatical failure and pragmatic failure. In the first place the customer should clearly understand the use of present perfect and if he failed to understand that he should have a pragmatic knowledge in which he can possibly cooperate with the waiter so that he can have sufficient information concerning his request.

So maxim of quantity (make your contribution as informative as is required) has not been applied for the purpose of exchange between the two interlocutors. There is a pragmatic failure in that there is inability to understand what is meant by what is said. The waiter wants to tell the customer about the kind of soup but, the customer misunderstood the waiter as if the waiter has been talking about past actions.

Example 2. Teacher: Why is Sunday the strongest day?

Student: Because all the other days are week days.

By looking at this dialogue between the teacher and the student one can see the relevance of pragmatic competence. Why is Sunday the strongest day? for the teacher the question may be why Sunday is a stressful day as compared to other days from his own life experience. However, the student just responded by saying "because all the other days are week days". The other point here is there might be misunderstanding between the two speakers in a sense that for example the student associated weak with strong, and the teacher who might be considered to be more pragmatically competent may understand differently. Anyhow there is a pragmatic interference in the sentence. ILP deals with the way non native speakers' *comprehension, production, and acquisition of linguistic action in L2, or put briefly, ILP investigates how to do things with words in a second language.* So in the sentence above, if the two speakers do not have equal pragmatic competence, they may not understand each other .

Example 3. Patient: doctor, I keep thinking I'm a billiard ball.
      Doctor: so, you can be a professional player.

Here the patient wants to describe some symptoms of his illness. However, the doctor responded by telling to the patient that he can be a professional player. This will be a nice text for teaching ILP. This means that the doctor is talking to the patient in a way that the patient can have a kind of feeling at ease and talk to him in the most relaxed manner.

Discussion

This part of the study discussed currently available language textbooks for the purpose of teaching pragmatics and has offered a few examples of how we might supplement or adapt these textbooks to teach complaints, requests, conversational closing, and gendered language based on empirically established information concerning pragmatics. Because many language textbooks place minimal emphasis on pragmatics and often teach appropriate language use in an insufficient and inadequate way, teacher readers are invited to be critical appraisers of the material that they use in their classrooms.

This would mean making sure that the language samples presented to learners are reasonably natural and authentic. It would also be expected that learners' input would reflect a variety of

pragmatic norms used in the target language community. Depending on some of the points discussed above, it is possible to say that pragmatics is teachable.

Conclusions

Concerning the Teachability of pragmatics in the communicative English skills textbook used at ASTU, it is possible to say that it is teachable however; the overall content and application of pragmatic information and the authentic conversations or real life exercises that have been so far used in the textbook is insignificant. Furthermore, it is possible to see that the instructions given to teach or aware learners' this pragmatic competence has not been given due attention. Research into the adequacy of textbooks to teach communicative practices that are reflective of authentic conversation has found that ELT textbooks rarely include adequate or comprehensible explanation of how conversation works in English. This means that most speech acts in the textbooks is, for the most part, pragmatically inadequate since they are not prepared by taking in to consideration the learners' backgrounds and their communicative and pragmatic competence. The students' culture and language proficiency should be taken in to account.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis made so far it is likely to suggest the following constructive points so as to help learners develop their pragmatic competence and develop communicative English skills both in content and quantity:

• It will be very important if textbooks developers include presentations of variety of linguistic forms along with explicit pragmatic explanations and contextually rich opportunities of using pragmatics for students to practice those forms.

• Explicit discussion of conversational norms and practices is very essential in ELT texts, which will portray communicative practices.

• The study of pragmatics should be one part of language learning.

• Further research about the Teachability of Pragmatics in the communicative textbook should be conducted.

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