The Impact of Pragma-Linguistic & Socio-Pragmatic Components on Understanding English Pragmatic Utterances

Ahmed Subhi Abdullah
M.A. in English Language, Linguistics, An Instructor in the College of Engineering, Tikrit University

Abstract---Having good pragmatic competence prevents the interlocutors from misunderstanding. The native and non-native people encounter every day a lot of pragmatic utterances that need to be inferred correctly to catch the intended meaning. Non-native people face a lot of difficulties in conveying hidden messages behind letteral lines. Leech's pragmatic components which are pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic, are so important especially for non-natives to develop in order to help them have a competence gather the linguistic elements and the socio-cultural conventions and beliefs of English culture which will eliminate the obscure of the pragmatic utterances. This research studies the theoretical view of pragmatics and leech's components as well as analyzes answers of Iraqi students inferring some of the pragmatic samples taken from real British life. The study concludes that there is a lack of pragmatic competence for those students as well as a fuzzy knowledge of Leech's two components.

Keywords---Leech's components, pragmalinguitic, pragmatic competence, sociopragmatic.

Introduction

Pragmatics is a linguistic field that deals with the intended meaning uttered within the words used by interlocutors. Many English users as well as foreign users of English face obstacles in revealing the real meaning the speakers or writers want to convey because of the lack of pragmatic competence as well as the socio-cultural beliefs of English. This problem could be found in everyday speech whether we know or not about it. Sometimes we infer difficult intentions easily for the sufficient competence we have, while on another easy occasion this competence may fail in inferring easy intentions for others. To make it systematic for users and to avoid misunderstanding, Leech (2016), introduces two components that every language user should have to get the power of implying

messages within lines of his speech and at the same time knowing that the listener will infer them clearly. One of these components is called (Pragma-linguistic) which simply means to relate the pragmatic competence to the grammatical knowledge to help in encoding and decoding intended meanings within utterances or it means to use the right linguistic tools that help in producing well-formed utterances. The other component is (sociopragmatic) which reveals the importance of knowing the limits and beliefs of the society and culture of the language used. Well-formed pragmalinguistic utterances will not protect you from falling into making pragmatic mistakes if you do not have the best support of socio-cultural knowledge which will help in knowing taboos, beliefs, rights, registers, etc. of that language user (Riddiford & Holmes, 2015; Ifantidou, 2013; Baxtiyorovna, 2021).

This study assumes that the English foreign users lack in their pragmatic competence as well as it assumes that those users do not aware of Leech's components and its importance in correctly inferring the English pragmatic utterances. This study will define the importance of Leech's both components and their effect on misunderstanding pragmatic utterances. Then – practically – these two components will be investigated by applying samples of English utterances to a group of Fifth Class students / English Dept./ Tikrit University, by asking them how to infer the real meaning behind these daily English-used utterances. After that, an analysis will be made for each sample and their inferring meanings to show if the students were right in conveying meaning or not and to know if these students apply Leech's two components or not. Finally, a conclusion of the results will be made to know the validation of the hypotheses (Chang, 2011; Beltrán-Planques & Querol-Julián, 2018; Pratiwi & Rohmadi, 2021).

Importance of Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a field of linguistics that can be defined as how to use language in daily life. It links between the inner circle (Micro linguistics) and the outer circle (pre and extra linguistics). Crystal (2005), mentions that pragmatics is extremely broad and has been studied from different perspectives. One of these views sees pragmatics as "*the study of all aspects of meaning other than those involved in the analysis of sentences in terms of truth conditions*". But the broadest view sees pragmatics as "*the study of the principles and practice underlying all interactive linguistic performance*", which means that pragmatics covers all aspects of language usage as well as some of what belongs to sociolinguistics or stylistics.

Verschueren (1999), clarifies that pragmatics " *is concerned with the full complexity of linguistic behavior*", and that allows the connection with many fields in relation like neurolinguistics, psycholinguistics, cognitive linguistics, and anthropological linguistics. It is assumed that pragmatics is considered a connection between language and human life, which reflects human behavior in using language, and that will stress the fact that pragmatics works as a bridge between linguistics and the other social sciences and humanities. (See: Van Dijk,1977; Thomas,1995; Verschueren,1999; Aitchison,1999)

Yule & Widdowson (1996), also gives a complete definition considered a significant resource for anyone who wants to talk about pragmatics as " *the study*

of speaker meaning, the study of contextual meaning, the study of how more gets communicated than is said and the study of the expression of relative distance". Yule here distinguishes the areas pragmatics works in, by the existence of the interlocutors who are communicating in a particular context, knowing their social distance, and loading their words more than what they denotatively mean.

Leech's components (Pragma-linguistic & Socio-pragmatic)

Leech (2016), sheds the light on two components of pragmatics, which are pragma-linguistics and socio-pragmatics. Pragmalinguistics is more concerned with the linguistic core of pragmatics, including " *the particular resources which a given language provides for conveying particular illocutions*" (Leech, 2016). Barron (2003), mentions these resources which contain " *pragmatic strategies (e.g., directness and indirectness), pragmatic routines and modification devices*". The second component is sociopragmatics, which is " *… the sociological interface of pragmatics*" (Leech, 2016). Again, Barron (2003), adds that this component includes constraints such as " *social status, social distance and degree of imposition on the choice of linguistic realization of a particular illocution*".

Laughlin et al. (2015), mention a good example to clarify the importance of these two components. A verbal strategy for making a request is conventionally indirect (e.g., could you do the dishes?), while the verbal means of making this conventional indirect request may involve questions, manners, or covers. And that is the pragmalinguistic component the language used should have. While knowing if the conventional indirectness or directness of this request is suitable for this social context is the role of the sociopragmatic component. Thus, this binary psycholinguistic structure of pragmalinguistics and socio-pragmatics places pragmatic competence on a continuum with grammar at one end and sociology at the other, making pragmatic competence an adaptive process mediated by an individual's linguistic resources, modalities, limitations, and sociocultural conventions of a particular situation of language use.

Crystal (2008), defines both components as " *Pragmalinguistics has been used by some to refer to the more linguistic 'end' of pragmatics, wherein one studies these matters from the viewpoint of the structural resources available in a language. Sociopragmatics, by contrast, studies the way conditions on language use derive from the social situation."*, which means that both are considered as a combination adequate to enable interlocutors to face the various pragmatic messages transferred among them correctly.

Methodology and Practical Side

Leech's components are considered an excellent model to analyze the samples which are (15) English sentences. These samples are taken from the internet with their intended meanings which are common among British people. Through a survey, these samples were introduced to (13) students in the fourth class at the college of education for girls / Tikrit university, in which they are asked to infer the real meanings of these 15 samples. The task of this research is to analyze the answers of those students and show if they approximate the intended meanings or not and clarify if they have the appropriate pragmatic competence and

knowledge about Leech's components (Koike & Pearson, 2005; Kurzon, 1995; Van Compernolle, 2011).

Throughout studying the answers of the students, some answers are neglected because two students render the samples into Arabic without focusing on the real requirements of the survey given to them. The literal inferring of those students and the pragmatic inference will be taken into consideration to compare the capacity of the competence those students have of the pragamlinguistic and sociopragmatic components (Allami & Naeimi, 2011; Ifantidou, 2011; Paradis, 1998).

The samples should be mentioned in a table to show the real utterances and their real intended meanings as they are taken from an image of the source. (tiredbees.com, n.d.)

Table 1
The real utterances and they're real intended

No.	Real utterances	Real inferring
1	I hear what you say	I disagree and do not want to discuss it further
2	With the greatest respect...	I think you are an idiot
3	That's not bad	That's good
4	That is a very brave proposal	You are insane
5	Quite good	A bit disappointing
6	I would suggest...	Do it or be prepared to justify yourself
7	Oh, incidentally / by the way	The primary purpose of our discussion is ….
8	I was a bit disappointed that…	I am annoyed that…
9	Very interesting	That is clearly nonsense
10	I'll bear it in mind	I've forgotten it already
11	I'm sure it's my fault	It's your fault
12	You must come for dinner	It's not an invitation, I'm just being polite
13	I almost agree	I don't agree at all
14	I only have a few minor comments	Please re-write completely
15	Could we consider some other options	I don't like your idea

Analysis & Discussion

Sentence (1) "I hear what you say…"

One of the student's answers is approximating the real inferring which is " I don't have the ability to hear what you want to say" whereas the other answers are inferred literally as " I understand, I listen to you, ". The first answer shows that the student is aware of the pragmalinguistic side which is the relative clause used in a way to clarify disagreeing as well as the student shows awareness of the sociopragmatic side of the English culture and conventions in using such

utterances to show disagreement. Other answers which are interpreted imply a lack in pragmatic competence and Leech's both components.

Sentence (2) "With the greatest respect…"

Two answers are close to the intended meaning, one of them is interpreted politely as " with no offense…", while the other is rendered impolitely as " I do not respect you". Those students show a knowledge of the pragmalinguistic use of this sentence in an introduced speech to show offense to the listener. Also, they clarify their sociopragmatic knowledge of the social use of such utterances in English society. Other students interpret it literally as great respect for the listener.

Sentence (3) "That's not bad"

All answers are right in interpreting this sentence as " it's good, it's ok, really good…etc.", and this is a prove that students are aware pragmatically of the easy structured sentences in giving the reverse of the negation in the utterance, and that may be common because of the tutors daily use of this utterance in lectures and speaking with Iraqi EFL students.

Sentence (4) "That is a very brave proposal"

Most of the answers fail to be close to the real meaning. They are interpreted as "brave person, you surprised me, successful presentation" but only one answer may be approximating to some extent the intention as "you have not the courage and you can make a good suggestion". The last is not correlated with the real meaning "you are insane" which shows that the speaker is a mad person to make this proposal in this way, but the student closely knows the reverse of this utterance is right referring, so that student has the adequate pragmatic competence which helps him to combine Leech's components to interpret it correctly.

Sentence (5) "Quite good"

Two answers are rendered close to the intended meaning as "acceptable, it's not bad". Here, the students depend heavily upon the sociopragmatic component because this utterance is used purely in the English culture, and the pragmalinguistic alone will not be very helpful in knowing the real meaning. Other answers are interpreted literally.

Sentence (6) "I would suggest…"

This utterance is difficult for the students to interpret it pragmatically, so all the answers are about " I have a suggestion, I have another idea… etc". All the latter is talking about is that the speaker is suggesting an idea and the listener is free to accept it or not, but the real use of this utterance is a hidden obligation to the listener to do it and to cope with it or you will fail, for instance, a coach giving a new technique for the player using the above utterance, which means to do it or prepare yourself to fail.

Sentence (7) "Oh, incidentally / by the way"

All students consider this utterance as something not important, is going to be said after it, and that is actually what the exclamation expression "Oh" made in decreasing the importance in the minds of the foreign people when they use their pragmatic competence but in a real situation, this utterance means that what comes after is the primary discussion and its very important. Again, this failure in interpretation belongs to the lack in knowing the pragmalinguistic use of "oh" and the socio-cultural convention of this utterance.

Sentence (8) "I was a bit disappointed that…"

Two answers are very close to inferring the intention as "frustrated". Both students have the knowledge about the pragmalinguistic use of the introductory sentence in such a case as well as the sociopragmatic sense that prevent him from pragmatic failure in interpreting the utterance as "it doesn't very matter" which is the most common of the rest answers.

Sentence (9) "very interesting"

All answers see the meaning in a positive way of "surprising, exciting …etc", neglecting the negative meaning the speaker may intend which is "it's clearly nonsense", and that is the real meaning which one answer only approximates it as "so boring". Here, the student feels the daily common use of this utterance when its used among friends informally which bears in mind some extent of mocking and that will lead to the negative meaning of the utterance.

Sentence (10) "I'll bear it in mind"

This sentence hides an intended meaning of " I have already forgotten it", so it's a kind of confession that the speaker has forgotten to do something. One answer gives the exact meaning as " I won't forget it" and that clarifies that the pragmalinguistic awareness of using "will" in this sentence to make a decision at the moment of speaking, is taken into consideration by the student as well as the sociopragmatic sense that the student has about English culture. Other answers gather the meaning of "I will do it" without saying anything about oblivion.

Sentence (11) "I am sure it's my fault"

All answers are talking about "confession, it's not your fault its mine, …. etc." which are away far from the native intention which is "it is your fault". A student takes into consideration the pragmatic inferring and interprets it as "I am not the culprit" and that is what the listener gets from the meaning behind the lines.

Sentence (12) "You must come for dinner"

All responses interpret it as an invitation for dinner, but only two answers catch the hidden meaning as the first one is "an invitation, positive face" which means the speaker actually does not want to invite but it's a polite style used in speech.

The other answer interprets it as "I don't want you to come to dinner" which is also the real intention of the speaker but without paying attention to politeness.

Sentence (13) "I almost agree"

This utterance is used when you want to express the negative meaning with a polite style. Unfortunately, responses rendered it as an agreement with a condition or need to persuade. Only one answer interprets it as " I disagree" which is the real meaning behind this pragmatic use of this utterance. So the student is aware of the pragmalinguistic use of "almost" in such a linguistic situation and connected it with the sociopragmatic background of the social convention for such an utterance.

Sentence (14) "I only have a few minor comments"

All students give the literal meaning of the sentence. No one could infer the real meaning of such a sentence which is "please, re-write completely". The pragmatic failure may be happened because of the cultural differences between the Iraqi and English Cultures. In Iraq, this sentence conveys that there are some typos or a few mistakes which can be corrected but in Britain, this is understood as a hint to rewrite the whole passage or report.

Sentence (15) "Could we consider some other options"

This is a sentence spoken to release the meaning of "I do not like this idea", but other cultures will understand it as " They do not decide yet". Three students are close somehow to the real meaning as "This option is not suitable, thinking in other points & looking for another option". Other answers are even far from the expected understanding of foreign students.

Conclusion

This research comes to prove that there is a huge lack of understanding of pragmatics and how to develop pragmatic competence to help in conveying the intended meanings. Throughout the analyses of the 15 sentences, most of the students are far away from interpreting pragmatically and they are only aware of the letteral meanings which anyone can find them correctly in dictionaries through knowing the meanings of each word without paying any attention to the hidden meanings the speaker may hide. Also, this research reveals that 80% of the students' answers do not know Leech's pragmalinguistic & sociopragmatic components which are so important in developing pragmatic competence. 20% only of the answers interpret closely the pragmatic utterances and that is proof that those students develop their competence individually.

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