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Title

***Pragmatic Failure in EFL Classes:
The Case of Expressives in Oral Communication***

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to

My dear parents for their great support and encouragements

To my brother and sisters

To All my friends who helped me and encouraged me

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank ALLAH who paves the way for the accomplishment of this work.

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Abstract

The present study attempts to investigate the EFL learners' pragmatic failure when trying to express themselves orally. The students' pragmatic failure was measured quantitatively by means of a questionnaire. The questionnaire helps us to test their pragmatic competence and get the valuable data about current situation of their pragmatic failure. The study findings showed that our subjects commit pragmatic errors when they communicate using expressives. This is due mainly to the lack of pragmatic competence in the second language. The pragmatic incompetence prevents students from performing speech acts appropriately viz. expressives. In fact, it is the teachers' job to develop their students' pragmatic awareness by implementing various activities and tasks in order to foster their students' pragmatic competence and diminish their pragmatic failure.

List of Abbreviations

EFL: English as a Foreign Language.

ESL: English as a Second Language.

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

FL: Foreign Language.

L1: First Language.

L2: Second Language.

SL: Second Language.

M1: First year Master

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*General
Introduction*

General Introduction

1. Background to the study

Speaking English fluently using different speech acts and participating in communications of varying length and complexity is, in fact, the aim of most foreign language classes at the university. Furthermore, the main purpose of learning a second language is to communicate effectively using this L2 (Fernández Amaya ,2008).

Nevertheless, many EFL students are unable to do so. For example, students might not be able to state what they simply like or dislike. That is to say, they may fail even in expressing their simple feelings and emotions. As a result, they never reach the intended aim of communication. This failure is due mainly to a lack of both a linguistic and a pragmatic competence in a second language.

In this regard Li (2011) states that foreign language students' incompetence is very common. EFL students require more than the linguistic knowledge to communicate effectively in a second language. They need to master pragmatic competence (Shen, 2013).

Thomas (1983:92) points out that "*pragmatic competence is the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context*". That is to say, in order to communicate appropriately using an L2, EFL students need to acquire the pragmatic capacity which enables them to reach their communicative intention.

The resulting lack of the pragmatic competence leads to a complete breakdown of communication as Fernández Amaya (2008) argues. Pragmatic competence is, in fact, at the core of communicative competence; it is the pre-requisite for any successful communication (Li, 2011).

The present study aims at identifying and analyzing the phenomena of pragmatic failure in our EFL classes, and discussing ways in which students may be helped to acquire pragmatic competence in order to effectively communicate in a second language context.

2. Statement of the problem

Foreign language learners need to use language appropriately to achieve their communicative goals. But, they find themselves too often unable to do so. They may fail even in expressing their simple emotions and feelings using L2. The nature and cause of EFL students' pragmatic failure are various.

This study aims at exploring the nature of pragmatic failure inside EFL classes, its causes and ways in which students may be helped to avoid such a failure, and develop their pragmatic competence which plays a crucial role in communicating appropriately.

3. The Aim of the study

The aims of this study are:

- 1- To investigate why M1 students of Applied Linguistics and ESP fail pragmatically when communicating orally.
- 2- To identify the nature and the cause of pragmatic failure among EFL students.
- 3- To suggest some solutions to overcome such a failure in EFL classes.

4. Research questions

In this inquiry we attempt to find answers to the following questions:

- 1- Why do foreign language learners fail pragmatically?
- 2- Does the lack of competence in second language constitute a pragmatic difficulty?
- 3- Can this lack of competence lead to pragmatic failure?

5. Significance of the study

Since this study attempts to define and investigate the phenomena of pragmatic failure among EFL learners, the findings in this study will make the following contributions. They may help EFL students to learn how to perform a speech act appropriately by raising their awareness as to reasons behind this pragmatic incompetence. They will account for causes of this pragmatic failure and discuss ways in which students may be helped to overcome such a failure.

6. Methodology

The study is conducted on First Year Master students in Applied Linguistics and ESP at Ouargla University. They have been studying English for four years.

To collect data, we used a questionnaire. The data collected was analyzed by means of quantitative method. Finally a conclusion was drawn.

7. Limitations of the study

This study has some limitations. First, we do not pretend that this inquiry has covered all the problems that EFL learners face when communicating orally using language. Second, we focus only on one kind of speech act which is “*expressives*”. Finally, this study is conducted on M1 students in Applied Linguistics and ESP at Kasdi Merbah University. We cannot generalize and say that the same findings can be applied on M1 students at other universities using the same means of research.

8. Structure of the dissertation

The study falls into two main parts. The first part consists of two chapters. The first chapter is concerned with literature review in which notions such as *pragmatics*, *pragmatic competence*, *speech act* and *expressives* are defined. The second chapter is devoted to defining the notion of *pragmatic failure*, identifying its nature and cause and then discussing ways to overcome pragmatic failure among EFL students. The second part of this research paper is devoted to methodology of data collection and explains the methods and tools used in the analysis of the research findings which will be analyzed and discussed at the end of this part. It will be followed by the general conclusion of the study.

9. Definition of Key Terms

- **Speech acts:** “*Are simply things people do through language- for example, apologizing, complaining, instructing, agreeing, and warming*”. (Nunan, 1993:65)
- **Expressives:** “*Expressives have the function of expressing, or making known, the speaker’s psychological attitude towards a state of affairs with the illocution presupposes; e.g. thanking, congratulating, pardoning, blaming, praising, condoling, etc.*”. (Leech, 1983: 106)

- **Pragmatics:** *“the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication”* (Crystal, 1985: 240)
- **Pragmatic competence:** *“it is the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and understand language in context”*. (Thomas, 1983:92)
- **Pragmatic failure:** *“is the inability to understand what is meant by what is said”*. (ibid, 1983:93)

Part one: Review of Related Literature

Chapter one: pragmatics and speech acts

Introduction

1.1. Pragmatics

1.1.1. Pragmatic competence

1.1.2. Pragmatic meanings

1.1.2.1. The locutionary act

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1.3.1. Declaratives

1.3.2. Representatives

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Conclusion

Part One: Review of Related Literature**Chapter One: pragmatics and speech acts****Introduction**

EFL students aim to interact effectively when using English, but they find themselves, sometimes, unable to do so. This failure among EFL learners is very common (Li, 2011).

This first chapter is devoted to define some key concepts which may help us in identifying and analyzing second language learners' pragmatic failure i.e. *pragmatics, pragmatic competence, speech acts and expressives*.

1.1. Pragmatics

To define the term "*pragmatics*" is not an easy task. Pragmatics or "*language in use*" as (Thomas, 1983) puts it, has been defined in different ways, according to different authors and their theoretical orientations and audiences (Rose & Kasper, 2001).

Pragmatics refers to "*the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication*" (Crystal, 1985: 240). That is to say, pragmatics is that direct relationship between linguistic forms and their users as Yule (1996) argues, taking into consideration the socio-cultural context in which the act of communication occurs (Rose & Kasper, 2001).

Bardovi - Harlig & Mahan -Taylor, (2003) claim that the study of pragmatics concerns the language users' ability to relate utterances with the context in which they are uttered. In fact, meaning in pragmatics is defined according to its users (Leech, 1983). In this regard, Yule (1996) argues that pragmatics studies meaning as it is communicated by the speaker and interpreted by the listener.

Bardovi - Harlig & Mahan -Taylor, (2003:37) argue that "*The teaching of pragmatics aims to facilitate the learners' ability to find socially appropriate language for the situations they encounter*". For that, there is no reason to wait to introduce EFL learners to pragmatics; it should be, in fact, integrated into English language at the earliest level (ibid).

1.1.1. Pragmatic competence

Pragmatic competence is defined “*as the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context*” (Thomas, 1983: 92). It is in fact, the prerequisite for any successful communication (Li, 2011). The lack of such a competence on the part of the EFL learner can lead to complete breakdown of communication and more importantly to a pragmatic failure (Fernández Amaya, 2008).

For that, it is of crucial importance for English teachers to cultivate pragmatic competence in their EFL classes (Shen, 2013).

1.1.2. Pragmatic meanings

Austin (1962) distinguishes three dimensions of speech acts based on word-forces: Locutionary, Illocutionary and Perlocutionary acts:

1.1.2.1. The locutionary act

The locutionary act “*is the basic act of utterance, or producing a meaningful linguistic expression.*” (Yule, 1996:48). It is about the sentence literal sense (phonetics, syntax and semantics) (Holtgrave, 2008).

e.g.: Could you help me, please?

The surface form, and also the locutionary act, of this utterance is a question with a clear content (asking for help).

1.1.2.2. The illocutionary force

It is the conventional force of an utterance (Thomas, 1983). It is based on the speaker’s intention or purpose (Yule, 1996). The illocutionary intent is the literal meaning of the utterance (Searle, 1975).

In the previous example the illocutionary act conveys a request from by the speaker.

1.1.2.3. The perlocutionary effect

“The perlocutionary act refers to the effect the utterance has on the hearer” (Holtgrave, 2008:11). In other words, it is the purpose achieved by saying something. (Leech, 1983).

The perlocutionary act in the sentence “could you help me, please?” expresses the speaker’s desire that the hearer come and help him.

1.2. Speech act

The term “speech act” was first proposed by the linguistic philosopher Austin (1962) and then developed by Searle (1969) (Nunan, 1993); *“speech acts are simply things people do through language”* (Nunan, 1993: 65), for example: ordering, promising, criticizing, apologizing, and so on (Holtgrave, 2008). The speaker makes use of such utterances to perform a certain action (Austin, 1962). In this regard, Yule (1996) argues that speech acts are those actions we perform using utterances. *“We use language to build bridges, to consolidate political regimes, to carry out arguments, to convey information from one person to another, to entertain, in short to communicate”* (Schmidt & Richards, 1980: 132). That is to say, when one speak or write s/he has already a purpose in mind; those purposes are called language functions (Blundell et al., 1982).

1.3. Speech act classification

Searle (1976) suggested a particular categorization of speech acts (Schmidt & Richards, 1980). This classification includes five types of general functions performed by speech acts: declaratives, representatives, expressives, directives and commissives (Yule, 1996: 53).

1.3.1. Declaratives

“A declarative count as an attempt to bring about a change in some institutional state of affairs, prototypes include declaring war, performing a marriage, and calling a base runner out”. (Holtgrave, 2008: 15).

For example, in a courtroom at the end of a trial, the judge says: “I sentence you to ten years of prison”.

1.3.2. Representatives

One of the fundamental things we perform using language is telling people how things are. We state, suggest, boast, complain, claim and report (Schmidt & Richards, 1980; Leech, 1983).

e.g. “it is very hot in this room”.

1.3.3. Expressives

“Are those kinds of speech acts that state what the speaker feels, they express psychological states and can be statement of pleasure, pain, like, dislike, joy and sorrow”. (Yule, 1996: 53). They are about the speaker’s feelings and psychological attitudes (ibid).

e.g. “I’d like to be the first to congratulate you”.

1.3.4. Directives

“A directive counts as an attempt to get the hearer to perform some future actions”. (Holtgrave, 2008:14). Suggestions, requests and commands all fall into this category. (Schmidt & Richards, 1980).

e.g. “Could you lend me a pen, please?”

1.3.5. Commissives

Are those kinds of speech acts which commit speakers to do something in the future, promises, threats, refusals, pledges are all commissives (Yule, 1996).

For example: “I promise you to visit you the next week”.

In this study our focus is only on one kind of speech acts which is “*expressives*”. We attempt to investigate which difficulties L2 learners face when they express themselves orally using a speech act, viz. *expressives*.

Conclusion

In this present chapter we have attempted to define the main key concepts (*pragmatics, pragmatic competence, speech acts and expressives*) which have a crucial role in analyzing and defining the phenomena of pragmatic failure among EEL students when communicating orally.

Chapter Two: Understanding Pragmatic Failure

Introduction

- 2.1. Defining pragmatic failure
- 2.2. Linguistic knowledge and pragmatic failure:
- 2.3. Pragmatic competence and pragmatic failure
- 2.4. Causes of pragmatic failure
- 2.5. Strategies in overcoming pragmatic failure

Conclusion

Chapter two: Understanding pragmatic failure

Introduction

One of the major aims of FL teaching is to make a foreign language learner as fluent as possible in order to achieve efficient communication (Fernández Amaya, 2008). However, a foreign language learner, even if s/he is quite fluent in English, may not necessarily use language effectively when speaking (Li, 2011). This is due to the fact that even fairly advanced learner often lack communicative competence (Hymes, 1964).

In this second chapter, we try to discuss the nature of EFL learners' pragmatic failure, and ways in which students may be helped to avoid serious troubles to which this failure can lead. But, first let us define the term "*pragmatic failure*".

2.1. Defining pragmatic failure

The term "pragmatic failure" was first proposed by Thomas (1983). It refers to "*the inability to understand what is meant by what is said*" (Thomas, 1983: 93). In other words, it is the inability to achieve the speaker's communicative intention (Shen, 2013). In this regard, Blum- Kulka & Olshtain (1986: 166) believe that pragmatic failure takes place "*whenever two speakers fail to understand each other's intention*". Thus, the hearer fails to achieve the desired communicative effect of the speaker's utterance (He, 1988 cited in Li, 2011). That is to say, pragmatic failure affects not only the production of language but also its understandings (Fernández Amaya, 2008).

2.2. Linguistic knowledge and pragmatic failure:

Foreign language students' pragmatic failure is of different natures. It can be caused by pronunciation and grammatical mistakes committed by EFL students' due to their insufficient linguistic repertoire (Idri, 2014). University students of English, even at their advanced level, still commit a considerable number of pragmatic errors during their oral communication which prevent them to express themselves effectively using L2 (ibid).

But, EFL learners in order to communicate successfully using an L2 need as well to be pragmatically competent (Shen, 2013). That is, “*high levels of grammatical competence do not guarantee concomitant high levels of pragmatic competence*” (Bardovi- Harlig, 1999:686).

EFL learners even if they have a good knowledge of English words, sentences and grammatical rules they may fail to express themselves appropriately (Shen, 2013). In support of this claim, Edwards and Csizér (2004) argue that even proficient English speakers often suffer from this pragmatic incompetence, and “*if students fail to use language appropriately, they are more likely to suffer from pragmatic failure*” (Idri, 2014: 230).

2.3. Pragmatic competence and pragmatic failure

From a pragmatic point of view, the ignorance of pragmatic competence is the second factor which leads necessarily to a total breakdown of communication (Fernández Amaya, 2008).

Pragmatic competence is “*the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context*” (Thomas, 1983: 92).

Furthermore, the resulting lack of such a competence on the part of EFL learners leads necessarily to a pragmatic failure (ibid, 2008). This pragmatic incompetence is not observed at the superficial structure of the statement, but it becomes evident when analyzing with the listener what force was s/he trying to express (Thomas, 1983). Pragmatic failure, she added, takes place then due to the inability to reach the learner’s communicative intention. That is, pragmatic failure not only affects language production but also its understandings (Fernandez Amaya, 2008). In fact, as Bardovi - Harlig & Mahan -Taylor (2003:38) argue “*a pragmatic error may hinder good communication between speakers*”.

Pragmatic competence is, in fact, at the core of communicative competence, it is the pre-requisite for any successful communication (Li, 2011). It is of crucial importance for the English teachers to cultivate pragmatic competence in their EFL classes (Shen, 2013).

2.4. Causes of Pragmatic failure

As we have mentioned earlier, pragmatic failure can result either from grammatical errors committed by EFL learners due to their insufficient linguistic repertoire (Idri, 2014), or from an inappropriate language use (Thomas, 1983). In fact, proficiency in the target language (TL) requires both grammatical and pragmatic competence (Shen, 2013). That is communicative competence involves not only knowing the language codification but how to use it appropriately according to the context (Saville - Troike, 2003).

In addition to what has been mentioned above, some other factors may lead to the pragmatic incompetence. First, the inappropriate cultural transfer of speech acts from L1 to L2 (Thomas, 1983). In this regard (Li, 2011: 774) claims that “*Native language, as to English learner, has an impact on correct usage of English expressions*”. This negative transfer results from the influence of the learner’s native language and its culture (ibid).

Another reason causing EFL students’ pragmatic failure when using language, is the insufficient time allotted to the oral expression session (Idri, 2014). Moreover, classes are so crowded that not all students have the opportunity to use language during these oral sessions (ibid).

Furthermore, EFL students have no such opportunity to be exposed to an authentic English environment since they have no contact with native speakers (Li, 2011). They lack so much of authentic input (Shen, 2013). In fact “*one of the necessary conditions for successful language learning is a sufficient exposure, diverse and comprehensible and demanding linguistic and cultural materials of the target language*” (ibid, 2013: 134). Besides, university student do not use English language outside the classroom when communicating with their peers (ibid, 2014).

Textbooks and the teaching method adopted in EFL classes also lead to the students’ pragmatic failure (Shen, 2013). Despite its significance, pragmatic competence was ignored by textbooks writers and EFL teachers (Fernández Amaya, 2008). In the same line Edwards and Csizér (2004:2) point out that “*textbooks usually fail to provide the necessary and appropriate input in speech acts and the material they do present often differs from real life speech*”.

Fernández Amaya (2008) suggests that English teachers should integrate the necessary pragmatic aspects of the L2 learning into their lessons in order to help their students to overcome such a pragmatic failure, and *“to provide sufficient pragmatic input for the students, it is also important to supplement textbooks with additional books that focus on pragmatics”* (Edwards and Csizér 2001:3)

2.5. Strategies in overcoming pragmatic failure

As we have pointed out earlier, pragmatic failure among EFL students is very common (Li, 2011), even proficient speakers at advanced levels still commit such a kind of pragmatic errors (Idri, 2014). Thus, *“high levels of grammatical competence do not guarantee concomitant high levels of pragmatic competence.”* (Bardovi- Harlig, 1999:686). For this reason, various teaching strategies in overcoming pragmatic failure inside EFL classrooms are suggested by many researchers.

Idri (2014) sees that students commit a lot of grammatical errors when they speak. This is due mainly to their insufficient linguistic repertoire (ibid). She suggests that teachers should encourage their students to listen to English native speakers. This activity will enable them to pick the good English words and pronunciations (Li, 2011). In this connection, *“role playing is an excellent exercise in which a student can carry out similar situations to daily communication”* (Fernández Amaya, 2008: 20). Such an activity can help students to understand how the linguistic codification can be affected by the message (ibid, 2008).

In fact, it is the teacher job to create an interactive English environment inside EEL classes and to give learners the opportunity to use language (ibid, 2011).

Thus, *“Only when students have grasped the linguistic knowledge and come to know how to use the corresponding language knowledge to communicate appropriately, can we say that our teaching goal has been attained”* (Shen, 2013:134)

Second, instruction helps also EFL learners in acquiring pragmatic knowledge (Kasper, 1997). In this context, Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan -Taylor (2003) argue that the main purpose of instruction in pragmatics is to raise the learner’s pragmatic awareness. Despite its importance, less attention has been given to teaching pragmatic competence by EFL teachers. Rather they focus more on the cultivation of students’ linguistic competence (Shen, 2013). It is suggested that EFL teachers should help their learners to acquire the correct use of L2,

using authentic English materials which enable them to be exposed to real English (ibid). Thomas (1983) suggests that teachers should improve their student capacity in analyzing and using language consciously. “*Fostering pragmatic competence relies largely on the practice of pragmatic knowledge in interactive environment*” (Li, 2011). Activities such as: role play, simulation and drama, are suggested for constant exposure to authentic language use (ibid).

Conclusion

As we have pointed out earlier, pragmatic failure committed by EFL students seems more serious than the grammatical errors (Li, 2011). This failure results mainly from the inability to reach the speaker’s communicative purpose (Fernández Amaya, 2008).

In fact, it is the teachers’ job to develop their students’ pragmatic awareness using various activities and tasks inside classes in order to enable them to use language properly in real communication to avoid such kind of pragmatic failure.

Part Two: Practical part

Chapter Three: Data collection and analysis of the findings

Introduction

3.1. Participants

3.2. Task administration

3.3. research method

3.3.1. Description of the questionnaire

3.4. Analysis and discussion of data

3.4.1. Subjects' detailed performance

3.4.2. Subjects' overall performance

Conclusion

Part Two: Practical part***Chapter Three: Data collection and analysis of the findings******Introduction***

This study attempts to investigate the phenomena of pragmatic failure among advanced EFL students (M1 student in Applied Linguistics and ESP at Kadi Merbah University). The data of the work has been collected by means of a questionnaire submitted to 21 students. The findings obtained from the questionnaire are analyzed and discussed quantitatively.

This practical part is devoted to analyze and interpret findings obtained from the questionnaire in order to confirm or refuse the suggested hypothesis: the students under study commit pragmatic failure.

3.1. Participants

The sample of the study consists of 21 first year Master students in Applied Linguistics and ESP at Ouargla University. They have been studying English for four years at the university. They are from both sexes: males and females. Age and sex are not taken into account.

3.2. Task administration

To achieve our goals, we have collected data by means of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to 21 participants, all of them are first year master students in Applied Linguistics and ESP at Ouargla University.

3.3. Research method

The aim of this research is to investigate the phenomena of pragmatic failure among EFL students. We collect data by means of a questionnaire (students' questionnaire).

3.3.1. Description of the questionnaire

The instrument employed in this study is a questionnaire, which is designed on the basis of "*function in language*" (Blundell et al., 1982). However, the situations are modified a little to meet the research objectives. The questionnaire includes 5 situations; each of them

represents common pragmatic phenomena in the students' social and academic life, focusing mainly on the speech act of “*expressives*” in both formal and informal contexts. The first situation is about “*expressing likes*”, the second one is “*greeting someone*”, the third is about “*thanking*”, the fourth situation is “*Congratulating*», and the fifth situation is “*saying sorry*”. In each situation there are four (04) choices. The four choices are all grammatically correct, only one of them is the most pragmatically appropriate (see Appendix).

Before the questionnaire is distributed to the subjects, it is made clear to them that the study purpose is to test their pragmatic competence and get the valuable data about current situation of their pragmatic failure. The students have been asked to answer all items in the questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed and then discussed.

3.4. Analysis and discussion of data

3.4.1. Subjects' detailed performance

Table (1) shows the results of all students' responses to the situation (1) “*expressing likes*”. Most of subjects select the option “b” (I have a particular fondness for ESP) and they were unsuccessful in their choices, because the most appropriate answer is the option “d” (ESP module is great) which is usually used between friends in informal setting. Students commit a pragmatic failure when performing the speech act of “*expressing likes*”.

	Subjects answers				
	“a”	“b”	“c”	“d”	Total
Situation (1)	3	15	0	3	21

Table (1): students' responses to the situation (1)

The results on Table (2) below show that the pragmatic success rate for M1 students is 14.28 % while their pragmatic failure rate is 85.71 %.

	Subjects' pragmatic success rate (%)	Subjects' pragmatic failure rate (%)
Situation (1)	14.28	85.71

Table (2): students' pragmatic success and failure rate to the situation (1)

Table (3) below shows the results of all students' responses to the situation (2) "greeting someone". Subjects differed in their choices; only 9 students out of 21 could get the right answer (how nice to see you again!) which is appropriate to this situation since it occurs in formal sitting. Two students out of 21 agree with the option "a", and 4 of them with the option "b" which is a pragmatic failure because "Hi" and "Hello" are used among friends rather than between students and teachers.

	Subjects answers				
	"a"	"b"	"c"	"d"	Total
Situation (2)	4	4	9	4	21

Table (3): students' responses to the situation (2)

The results on Table (4) below once again demonstrate that students suffer from pragmatic failure in using expressives since their pragmatic success rate is only 42.85 % while their pragmatic failure rate is 57.14 %.

	Subjects' pragmatic success rate (%)	Subjects' pragmatic failure rate (%)
Situation (2)	42.85	57.14

Table (4): students' pragmatic success and failure rate to the situation (2)

Table (5) below shows that most of subjects chose the option “d” (Thanks very much) which is pragmatically incorrect because the student here should use a formal language when thanking his/ her teacher (i.e. Thank you very much indeed) while 10 subjects out of 21 chose option “a” and “d” which are used by friends in informal setting. We can see that only few students performed well by using the option “b”.

	Subjects answers				
	“a”	“b”	“c”	“d”	Total
Situation (3)	2	5	6	8	21

Table (5): students’ responses to the situation (3)

Results on Table (6) below indicate that students commit a pragmatic error in expressing the speech act of “*Thanking*” since their pragmatic success rate is only 23.80 %.

	Subjects’ pragmatic success rate (%)	Subjects’ pragmatic failure rate (%)
Situation (3)	23.80	76.19

Table (6): students’ pragmatic success and failure rate to the situation (3)

Table (7) below shows that 9 subjects out of 21 could get the most appropriate expression in this situation “*Congratulating*” which is the option “d” (Well done Ahmed), while the others agree on the other options which is normally used in the formal setting and this is a pragmatic failure.

	Subjects answers				
	“a”	“b”	“c”	“d”	Total
Situation (4)	2	3	7	9	21

Table (7): students’ responses to the situation (4)

From the results of the table (8) below we can notice that subjects' pragmatic failure rate is 76.19 %. That is to say the subjects' performance of the speech act of "congratulations" is very poor.

	Subjects' pragmatic success rate (%)	Subjects' pragmatic failure rate (%)
Situation (4)	23.80	76.19

Table (8): students' pragmatic success and failure rate to the situation (4)

Table (9) shows the results of all students' responses to the situation (5) "Saying sorry". About half of subjects succeeded in getting the most appropriate option for this situation (I'm very sorry). This is due to the fact that this expression is usually used in both formal and informal setting.

	Subjects answers				
	"a"	"b"	"c"	"d"	Total
Situation (5)	1	4	10	6	21

Table (9): students' responses to the situation (5)

Results on Table (10) below suggest that in performing the speech act of "saying sorry" the pragmatic success rate for M1 students is only 47.61 % while their pragmatic failure rate is 52.38 %.

	Subjects' pragmatic success rate (%)	Subjects' pragmatic failure rate (%)
Situation (5)	47.61	52.38

Table (10): students' pragmatic success and failure rate to the situation (5)

3.4.2. Subjects' overall performance

Table (11) below shows the subjects' overall performance towards the five situations included in the questionnaire. The results revealed that students do not pay attention to the context in which these speech acts are performed. Furthermore learners perform these speech acts with their teachers as well as their close friends or classmates. They are judged as being pragmatically incompetent when expressing themselves using an L2. This claim is supported by the fact that the average of the subjects' pragmatic success amounts to only 34.82% whereas their pragmatic failure average amounts to 65.71%.

	Subjects' correct answers	Subjects' inappropriate answers	Subjects' pragmatic success rate (%)	Subjects' pragmatic failure rate (%)
Situation (1)	3	18	14.28	85.71
Situation (2)	9	12	42.85	57.14
Situation (3)	5	16	23.80	76.19
Situation (4)	9	12	42.85	57.14
Situation (5)	10	11	47.61	52.38
Average rate (%)			34.82	65.71

Table (11): subjects' overall performance

These results indicate that EFL students generally have not enough pragmatic awareness in using speech acts. Apparently, it is clear that M1 students focus only on the grammatical forms of sentences. That is to say, they suffer from a pragmatic failure in using expressives. This is due mainly to the lack of competence in the second language. Thus, students' pragmatic competence should be improved in the classroom through activities and tasks.

These results can be attributed to the following factors:

- ✓ Low command of language
- ✓ Lack of pragmatic competence
- ✓ The insufficient time allotted to oral session
- ✓ Lack of pragmatic input
- ✓ Lack of authentic English environment, since students have no contact with native speakers.
- ✓ Textbooks and teaching methods adopted in EFL classes focus on teaching language usage and ignore language use.

Conclusion

Drawing on the study findings, we can conclude that EFL students even at their advanced level at the university still commit a considerable number of pragmatic errors. For example they do not know when they should use formal or informal language. This is due mainly to the lack of pragmatic competence in the second language. Students' pragmatic incompetence prevents them from expressing their simple feelings and emotions such as expressing likes, dislikes, greeting, congratulating or simply in expressing thanks or sorrow. For that, it is the teachers' task to adopt various strategies and techniques in order to foster their students' pragmatic competence and diminish their pragmatic failure.

*General
Conclusion*

General Conclusion

The aim of the present study was to explore the phenomenon of pragmatic failure among university EFL students when trying to express themselves orally in the classroom. Throughout our study we attempted to affirm our claim that first year Master students in Applied Linguistics and ESP at Ouargla University do commit pragmatic errors when they communicate orally using expressives, which means that they suffer from a pragmatic failure.

Findings of the research revealed that the average of the subjects' pragmatic success amounts to only 34.82% whereas their pragmatic failure average amounts 65.71%. This confirms our hypothesis. In fact, these results showed that even though some M1 students can produce grammatically correct sentences, they may not know how to use them properly in appropriate social contexts. Thus, they seriously suffer from pragmatic failure. This is due mainly to their pragmatic incompetence in the second language. In addition to other factors such as the size of EFL classes which can affect the performance of students since they are very crowded. That is to say, students have no such opportunity to use language inside the classroom. They do not also use English outside the classroom. Textbooks and the teaching methods adopted in our classes are also additional contributing factor to EFL students' pragmatic failure. This is due to the fact that they focus mainly on teaching students the correct forms and sounds of the target language i.e. the linguistic forms and ignores to improve their pragmatic proficiency. Moreover students have not enough exposure to the target language since they have no contact with native speakers. So they lack the authentic English environment.

It is necessary then for EFL teachers to provide their students with the necessary tools to overcome such kind of failure. For example they should give their students more opportunities to express themselves using the target language inside classroom and encourage them to use it outside the classroom in order to become more familiar with this foreign language. They should also enrich their classroom input with authentic teaching materials such as film scripts, plays, Internet and so on in order to increase their students' pragmatic awareness.

Pragmatic competence should be cultivated effectively inside our EFL classes. For this purpose, various strategies should be adopted inside EFL classes'. Judd (1999) suggests the following activities in order to develop L2 students' pragmatic competence:

- 1- Cognitive – awareness raising activities, such as: presentation, discussion, and pragmatic – consciousness- raising techniques, e.g.: teacher should create some situations close to the reality, such as how to interview for a job, how to teach as a teacher, how to do business as a boss etc (Li, 2011: 776).
- 2- Receptive-skills development by using teacher generated materials and natural data, e.g.: English film scripts, plays, newspapers, articles and internet (Li, 2011: 776).
- 3- Productive- skills teaching through role playing.

Finally, pragmatics should be introduced to students at an early level. Thus, pragmatic competence is the prerequisite of successful communication.

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Appendix

The Questionnaire sheet

Instructions: Please read the following situations and select what you believe you would say in each situation.

Situation 1: “Expressing likes”

You are at the campus with your best friend and classmate, you are discussing about the module of ESP.

- You:** a) I have a particular fondness for ESP
b) ESP is one of my favorite modules
c) I’m very fond of ESP module
d) ESP module is great.

Situation 2: “Greeting someone”

You are at the University, you see a teacher you haven’t met him/her for some time.

- You:** a) Hello, sir
b) Hi sir, how are you?
c) How nice to see you again!
d) Ah, sir just the person I wanted to see.

Situation 3: “Thanking”

You asked your teacher to provide you with a particular book, the next day, in the class he brings it to you and you thank him.

- You:** a) Thanks, sir.
b) Thank you very much indeed.
c) I should say how grateful I am!
d) Thanks very much.

Situation 4: “Congratulating”

Your best friend, Ahmed, has just passed his driving test, and you want to congratulate him.

You: a) I’d like to congratulate you.

b) Let me congratulate you.

c) I’d like to be the first to congratulate you.

d) Well done, Ahmed.

Situation 5: “Saying sorry”

You have arranged a meeting in your friend’s house in order to revise for an exam, but you forgot, next day you met him.

You: a) May I offer you my profoundest apologies

b) Please accept my apologies.

c) I’m very sorry.

d) Please forgive me.¹

¹ Forms and options extracted from Blundell et al. (1982).

Abstract

The present study attempts to investigate the EFL learners' pragmatic failure when trying to express themselves orally. The students' pragmatic failure was measured quantitatively by means of a questionnaire. The questionnaire helps us to test their pragmatic competence and get the valuable data about current situation of their pragmatic failure. The study findings showed that our subjects commit pragmatic errors when they communicate using expressives. This is due mainly to the lack of pragmatic competence in the second language. The pragmatic incompetence prevents students from performing speech acts appropriately viz. expressives. In fact, it is the teachers' job to develop their students' pragmatic awareness by implementing various activities and tasks in order to foster their students' pragmatic competence and diminish their pragmatic failure.

Key words: Pragmatics, Pragmatic competence, Pragmatic failure, Oral communication

Résumé

La présente étude a pour objectif de faire investigation pour le phénomène d'échec pragmatique au milieu des étudiants de l'anglais lorsqu'ils veulent d'exprimer oralement.

L'évaluation quantitative d'échec pragmatique a été réalisé grâce à un questionnaire distribué aux étudiants, et qui nous a donner une idée sur le degré de la conscience pragmatique chez les étudiants de l'anglais et d'obtenir des informations précise sur leurs échec pragmatique.

Les résultats obtenus montrent que les étudiants commettent des fautes pragmatiques lorsque lorsqu'ils s'expriment oralement. Cela est principalement dû au manque de la compétence pragmatique qui est la cause principale de cet échec.

Dans ce cas le rôle de l'enseignant de l'anglais est très primordial dans amélioration de la compétence pragmatique des ses étudiants dans la classe, et cela peut être faire par la diversification des activités et des exercices à fin d'améliorer la conscience et diminuer l'échec pragmatique.

Mots clés: Pragmatique. La compétence pragmatique. L'échec pragmatique. La communication orale.

ملخص الدراسة

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التقصي حول ظاهرة الإخفاق السياقي في أوساط طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية وهذا عند محاولتهم التعبير عن أنفسهم شفهيًا، تم قياس الإخفاق السياقي لدى الطلبة كميًا عن طريق الإستعانة بإستبيان كتابي، والذي ممكنًا من معرفة مدى الوعي السياقي للطلبة والحصول على معلومات دقيقة حول وضعية إخفاقهم السياقي.

بينت النتائج المحصل عليها من خلال هذا البحث أن الطلبة يقعون في عدة أخطاء سياقية عند التعبير عن أنفسهم شفهيًا وهذا راجع أساسًا إلى نقص إكتسابهم للكفاءة السياقية والتي تعتبر السبب الفعلي لمثل هذا الإخفاق.

في مثل هاته الحالة على الأستاذ أن يلعب دورًا أساسيًا في رفع الوعي السياقي لدى طلبته داخل أقسام الدراسة وذلك عن طريق تنويع الأنشطة والتمارين التي تساهم في تطوير الكفاءة السياقية لدى الطلبة وبالتالي تفادي ظاهرة الإخفاق السياقي موضوع البحث.

الكلمات المفتاحية : علم السياق، القدرة السياقية، الإخفاق السياقي، التخاطب الشفهي.