

## Sources of Pragmatic Support to EFL Teaching and Learning (Research Note)

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### ABSTRACT

This paper brings into focus three pragmatic sources that can support the EFL teacher:

- I. Natural environment.
- II. Interpersonal rhetoric.
- III. Presuppositions.

First, we have shown the possible contribution that a natural English environment can offer to an EFL teacher and learner alike with focus on quality of language learning.

Second, we have moved to investigating interpersonal rhetoric, particularly maxims of politeness and applied their model in Lecch (1983) (tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, sympathy) below:

“1. Tact maxim:

- a. Minimize cost to other.      b. Maximize benefit to other.

2. Generosity maxim:

- a. Minimize benefit to self.      b. Maximize cost to self.

3. Approbation (approval):

- a. Minimize dispraise of other.      b. Maximize praise of other.

4. Modesty maxim:

- a. Minimize praise of self.      B. Maximize dispraise of self.

5. Agreement maxim:

- a. Minimize disagreement between self and other.      b. Maximize agreement between self and other.

6. Sympathy maxim:

- a. Minimize antipathy between self and other.      b. Maximize sympathy between self and other.

... within a contrastive linguistic pragmatic framework with the aim of utilizing derived tact insights in our teaching. Then we have highlighted the possible contribution that presupposition can make to EFL teaching. Finally, we have drawn our conclusions and pinpointed their related pedagogic implications.

### INTRODUCTION

It seems to me that the relation of pragmatics (i.e., the discipline that is concerned with the use and interpretation of utterances in a particular context) to EFL teaching is one of linguistic support. It is the intention of this paper to investigate this relation through arguing the three parts of this paper.

#### I. Natural Linguistic Environment

By this we mean a native situation where English is

produced and used naturally. Adherence to a natural context keeps us from using unnatural language probably arising from L1 (first language acquired) interference such as, for example, “we must be thankful to Allah... to gave us the brain and the health to think and invent the car”. The underlined verb phrase must have been caused by interference from the Arabic “لأنه أعطانا” – because he gave us – (for giving us). This unnatural expression is weakened by the opposing patterns of natural language, which form a major pragmatic source of actual (natural) language as it is context and consequently effect-centred. This comparison raises the question of how similar the two teaching situations are – natural and foreign. One way of maximizing the effectiveness of

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foreign language teaching/learning is by exposing our students to natural situations and contextualizing our teaching materials. The exposition and contextualization can materialize by immersing our students in a natural language interaction (real life situations) or exposing them to what might be described as a semi natural language interaction such as audio-visualized programmes of direct English. However, a natural context is not to be absolutely trusted as we heard and saw faulty stretches of English in a natural situation such as "You are being hold in que"(Telephone Directory in England), "The translation outfit at... is ruin by an Arabic speaker."(An academic in writing in England), "Windows was smashed" (TV English program on Ch.2) and "If you are do decide to pursue your application, please contact me" (Academic institution in writing in England). We also came across a formal recording with an obscene expression at the end, "F... you", but this vulgarism is no surprise because such a variety of language "fucking, fuck off" as in "fucking jealous, fucking head, fucking business" is, I would say, used to a hackneyed (overused) level in the natural environment. In addition, trying to explain a linguistic issue, an English supervisor asked his supervisee an obscene question (masturbation-related) and asked him to write it in his research if the latter does not get offended, which seems to breach the approbation maxim above by minimizing praise and respect of other. It must be mentioned that this maxim can have a favourable pedagogic impact. Moreover, such a natural situation may not throughout give Received Pronunciation (RP)(The English spoken at the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and by educated people).

In fact, in some areas you may hear what may be described as funny pronunciations such as, for example, that of Bradford:

lucky /lúkē/, bus / bús /, up /úp/ and that of Birmingham: name /nīme/, day /dī/.

namely /nīmely/(See N.B. below).

**N.B. "u" in lucky, bus, up is pronounced as / ú / as in / put/ and "a" in day and**

**name is pronounced as /ī/ as in /five/ .**

In this regard, the use of educational technology e.g., talking dictionaries and computerized dictionaries gives pragmatic pronunciation support to EFL learners. In effect, presenting contextualized English (English in fully perceivable contexts) to our students seems to be a pedagogically successful idea as it connects with the concept of contextual learning, which is very relevant to the various specific language needs of EFL learners. Now, moving from the support of natural English environment to teaching EFL to the contribution of interpersonal rhetoric to language use in teaching, we discuss the maxims of politeness below.

## II. Interpersonal Rhetoric

(a domain that concerns itself with the art of using speech or writing to persuade or influence in human interaction) which subsumes the politeness model below.

**Application of The Model** (tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, sympathy): Although these maxims may sound highly theoretical and utopian, they can have practical pedagogic applications via words, expressions, dramatic acts and dialogues designed variously as teaching materials with the aim of teaching moral/ethical lessons on the spirit of these maxims. This application would essentially require developing our students' positive thinking and sense of the other. In communication in general, politeness pays, and this is assumed to hold truth in all language use situations as well. Apparently, the value of these maxims is especially felt in an age when they are undervalued or rather violated, and the value system is not commonly cherished.

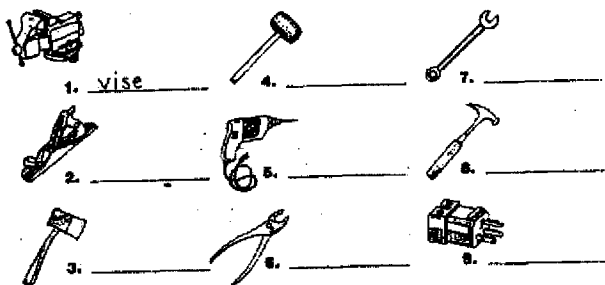
## Discussion of Politeness Maxims in Practice

Having applied the maxims of this model to both cultures\_ English and Arabic/ Islamic, we have found that they both, at least theoretically, appreciate and encourage

enforcing this model in our non-linguistic behaviour. Can they be equally encouraged in our linguistic behaviour? Our research can give a yes-answer since the tactful selection of vocabulary or situations (tact-biased, approbation-biased, generosity-biased, agreement-biased, modesty-biased, and sympathy-biased) to be exposed to our EFL learners would comply with this model. The output would be an acceleration of our students' learning of positive-tone words that promote tact, approbation, generosity, agreement (lack of conflict, confrontation and possibly bloodshed), modesty and sympathy vocabulary of the sort that moves away from self-interest toward the other's interest. The further pragmatic consequence of interacting with this model would probably be our students' kind of linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour. In effect, this is likely to lessen their tendency to rough violent behaviour as violence of language may lead directly or indirectly to violence of actions. Expressions like "get lost", "turn off your face" "bastard", "bloody idiot/bloody guy", "screw-related expressions", "kick-related" expressions, expressions of fixed dislike, derogation, insult and shooting-related words as well as other vulgar ones may soon be put into practice by youngsters and bring about violence. Therefore, we better avoid using them in our language teaching contexts. Rather, we should give an overdose of amenities (pleasant acts) and make our students conscious of these maxims.

III. We turn to the contribution of presuppositions to EFL teaching/learning below.

III. PRESUPPOSITIONS: The concept is used here in the sense of having assumptions or previous knowledge of applied linguistics and educational theory. Teachers in different teaching fields may utilize pragmatic insights such as that of presupposition to achieve several specific



instructional purposes, examples of which are ESP focuses. The following exercise is one of an ESP focus on the assumption that it serves the purpose of teaching technical (workshop) English:

Given the above, this source is also assumed to help

teachers with:

- analysing EFL learners' linguistic needs and specifying their educational goals.
- formulating appropriate behavioural objectives.
- designing as well as developing teaching materials to achieve these goals.
- choosing the appropriate teaching methods
- teaching collocational patterns and issues of lexical subtleties which pose teaching/learning problems in vocabulary use such as the ones exemplified in "low fat", "little sugar" in the context of a rice pack, but not the other way round, i.e.,

"low" does not normally collocate with "sugar" in the same way "little" does not with "fat".

Selecting closely-related vocabulary items to use seems very hard to decide without considering lexical presuppositions of meaning implications. For example, the words "hate", "detest", "abhor" etc, which all mean an intense dislike with different implications: "hate" suggests hostility and the desire to hurt and harm something or someone, "detest" suggests strong dislike mixed with scorn for something or someone and "abhor" suggests profound dislike to the point of shuddering or shrinking away from someone or something. Also, the weather conditions' related words "squall"(a sudden violent gust of wind often with rain), "whirlwind"(current of air whirling violently round and round), "tornado"(an extremely violent and destructive whirlwind extending from a mass of dark clouds), "storm"(strong wind with rain, hail or snow), "cyclone"(tornado), "typhoon"(1. A violent storm or tempest occurring in India 2. A violent cyclone or hurricane occurring in the Western Pacific, chiefly during the period from July to October), and "hurricane" (In meteorology- a wind having a velocity of more than 75 miles per hour) ( Foresman, 1979) would be examples of this sort. An EFL teacher would definitely need such semantic presuppositional knowledge to:

- help EFL learner's vocabulary selection in oral and written expression and
- explain semantic differences to his EFL learners who would need them given the fact that these would have different pragmatic impacts on their receptors.

#### Conclusions and Pedagogic Implications

- Genuine linguistic support is expected from a natural English environment as it reduces the amount of conscious effort of an EFL user.
- For pedagogic reasons, EFL teachers are encouraged

- to strengthen ties with pragmatics \_with natural English and, if I may take liberty to say, with nature as it inspires them.
- Teaching contextualized English reinforces contextual learning as it is expected to give best effect \_maximizes learning of specific language varieties.
  - In our teaching/learning situations, it is recommendable that we teach felicitous words or expressions (well-chosen for the occasion) rather than atrocious ones (savage and brutal) through presenting politeness-oriented situations. Mitigated language is preferable to rough savage variety of language. The pedagogic implication of teaching politeness-oriented language will be the necessity to design appropriate curriculum to serve such a strategy, if need be.
  - Tact-related insights (maxims) comply with religious teachings and good manners. Therefore, they are educationally as well as behaviourally favourable, and they consequently promote general taste. The politeness model, if applied, will contribute to promoting one's sense of positive values in life.
  - The concept of presuppositions can be a potential source of inspiration for EFL teachers as far as meeting the learners' educational as well as career-related demands is concerned.

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## مصادر تداولية لدعم تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية وتعلمها (ملحوظة علمية)

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### ملخص

تضع ورقة البحث هذه ثلاثة مصادر تداولية في بؤرة التركيز يمكنها ان تقدم دعماً لمدرس اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية؛ الا وهي: البيئة الطبيعية، والبلاغة بين الأشخاص، والافتراضات السابقة. أولاً: لقد بينا المساهمة الممكنة للبيئة الانجليزية الطبيعية لمعلم اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية ومتعلمها بالمثل مع التركيز على نوعية تعلم اللغة. ثانياً: انتقلنا لتفحص البلاغة بين الأشخاص وبالتحديد قواعد الأدب، وطبقنا قواعد الأدب التالي تفصيلها عند ليش (١٩٨٣) (النوق والاحساس، الكرم، الموافقة، التواضع، الاتفاق، العطف).

القواعد:

١. النوق والاحساس: أ- قلة التكلفة على الآخر. ب- أكثر الفائدة للآخر.
  ٢. الكرم: أ- قلة الفائدة لنفسك. ب- أكثر التكلفة لنفسك.
  ٣. الموافقة: أ- قلة الطعن بالآخر. ب- أكثر الطعن بنفسك.
  ٤. التواضع: أ- قلة مدحك لنفسك. ب- أكثر الطعن بنفسك.
  ٥. الاتفاق: أ- قلة من الاختلاف بين نفسك والآخر. ب- أكثر من الاتفاق بين نفسك والآخر.
  ٦. العطف: أ- قلة من اللعداء بين النفس والآخر. ب- أكثر من التعاطف بين النفس والآخر.
- ضمن إطار تقابلي لغوي تداولي بهدف استغلال رؤى النوق الناتجة في تدريسنا. ومن ثم أبرزنا المساهمة الممكنة من قبل الافتراض المسبق في تدريس اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية. ختاماً، لقد خرجنا باستنتاجاتنا وأبرزنا ما اتصل بها من أبعاد تعليمية.

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