

DEVELOPING STUDENT'S PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE USING LOW FIDELTY SIMULATION TO IMPROVE SPEAKING ABILITY AT MALAHAYATI UNIVERSITY

Abstract

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Miscommunication can take place due to the inability of speakers to express their intention clearly. Therefore, the current study aspired to develop pragmatic competence in teaching English to the nursing students to help them overcome some of the language difficulties when they communicate with other health practitioners/patients in the international area. Empirical evidence reveals that linguistic barriers between nurses and patients can lead to discrimination that compromises care, therefore, the researcher tries to reach the objective which is developing student's pragmatic competence using low fidelity simulation with quasi experimental group design. The data, taken from student's utterances filled out by the raters, analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The result reveals that (1) student's pragmatic competence was developed seen from the improvement of student's speaking score, (2) asking for apology was type of speech act improved the most, (3) English Content was aspect of pragmatic competence improved the most, (4) explicit teaching instruction gave the most significant improvement.

Keywords: Pragmatic Competence, Nursing Students, Speech Act, Simulation

Miskomunikasi dapat terjadi karena ketidakmampuan penutur untuk mengungkapkan maksud mereka dengan jelas. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bermaksud untuk mengembangkan kompetensi pragmatis dalam mengajar bahasa Inggris kepada siswa keperawatan untuk membantu mereka mengatasi beberapa kesulitan bahasa ketika mereka berkomunikasi dengan praktisi kesehatan lain / pasien di wilayah internasional. Bukti empiris mengungkapkan bahwa hambatan linguistik antara perawat dan pasien dapat menyebabkan diskriminasi yang membahayakan perawatan, oleh karena itu, peneliti mencoba untuk mencapai tujuan yang mengembangkan kompetensi pragmatis siswa menggunakan simulasi low fidelity dengan simulasi kuasi eksperimental dengan desain kelompok. Data diambil dari ucapan siswa yang diisi oleh penilai, dianalisis secara kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa (1) kompetensi pragmatis siswa dikembangkan dilihat dari peningkatan nilai berbicara siswa, (2) permintaan maaf adalah jenis tindak tutur yang paling meningkat, (3) Konten Bahasa Inggris adalah aspek peningkatan kompetensi pragmatis yang paling meningkat, (4) instruksi pengajaran eksplisit memberikan peningkatan paling signifikan.

Kata kunci: Kompetensi Pragmatis, Mahasiswa Perawat, Wicara, Simulasi

Background

Pragmatics has been defined and described differently by various researchers. In the literature, there has been no unified consensus on defining pragmatics exactly. Crystal (2003) partly describes the existence of many conflicting definitions of pragmatics to the vast scope of the field. Another view is expressed by Garric and Calas (2007) who note that the difficulty to define pragmatics is attributed to the fact that the field has been born of reflections from diverse backgrounds: logical, philosophical, and linguistic. Likewise, Thomas (1995) highlights that the lack of unanimous definition can be ascribed to the fact that pragmatics has been in constant development. Therefore, as new approaches and theories are formed in linguistics, they contribute to enriching or rather changing the view towards pragmatics.

As Thomas (1983) points out: "While grammatical error may reveal a speaker to be a less than proficient language-user, pragmatic failure reflects badly on him/her as a person." This common problem can also be seen in Indonesian learners of English. Therefore, the researcher believes that language must be used as its original function which means as a tool of communication not only simply focuses on the structure pattern and lexical resource but also completely on the comprehension and production. Comprehension and production are two aspects of learning of any language. To Tarone (1983), comprehension and production are two slippery terms, neither parallel nor complementary, which can occur almost simultaneously but are liable to be differentiated in terms of strategy employment and conceptual definition. Competency in comprehension and production is accrued by employing strategies. Strategic competence is subdivided into learning (cognitive, socio-affective and metacognitive) and

communicative strategies which comprises compensatory and avoidance, etc. however, Indonesian ESL students only focus on 4 skills of language which are reading, writing, listening, speaking, for advancing the level of their English from beginner to advance levels. We neglect the points of student's pragmatic ability in the conversation as long as they can speak fluently, produce long writing text, read the passage with a good pronunciation, the teachers have considered them having a good English language ability.

For instance in speaking, the use of words in order to take part in communication is not as easy as it seems. Misinterpretation can take place due to the inability of speakers to express their intention clearly, or to the inability of addressees to comprehend the intended message. As Dreyfus (2011) states, this can affect reactions and thereby the relationships between people. Being proficient in a language does not guarantee successful communication. Rather, high proficiency may render the non-native speaker hesitant to initiate conversations especially with native speakers for fear of error. Then, in case of any communication breakdown, chances of reciprocal misunderstanding can be taken personally or culturally. This is equally applicable with new learners of the language. They share the same hesitation in trying to practice what they have learned. Since the ultimate aim of learning languages is communication, it is important to conduct a study that contributes to facilitating this aim with the help of pragmatics. Pragmatic competence is a noticeably known facet of communicative competence. Edwards and Csizér (2001) give a definition for pragmatic competence as the knowing of defined social, cultural, and discourse rules of situations set by a community desired to being abided in communication. However violations of pragmatic competence hazard the

empathetic nature of communication and cause miscommunication and confusion. Kasper (1997) identifies pragmatic competence as not holding knowledge in addition to that of grammatical instruction but as a vital factor of communicative competence. This aim seems even more indispensable in contexts where little emphasis is given to develop communicative competence, in particular ESP contexts.

Therefore, the current study aspires to introduce pragmatic competence in teaching English to the students of ESP to help them overcome some of the language difficulties they may encounter when they communicate through the medium of English. ESP here will be focused on English for Nursing Students who study English at Malahayati University as the most favorite major beside medicine study. In the medical field, in particular, students' chances to join the English speaking world are wide. Their demand for mastering the language is necessary in order to enhance their confidence and reduce misunderstanding in communication. Their future profession will impose a position to be respected and a face to be saved. Thus, being competent in English is a fundamental prerequisite for the nursing student. This competence does not only refer to linguistic competence, but also to pragmatic competence, which would enable speakers to express themselves properly in different situations.

Therefore, the researcher believes that this technique will trigger students to produce more pragmatic speech act. López JG and Spirko LV (2007) stated that the use of simulations leads to the development of psychomotor, attitudinal and cognitive competences. Therefore, this process favors the acquisition of critical thinking, skills and knowledge. Besides, it has been also considered that simulations permeate improved confidence in students. In this

context, simulation is defined as a technique that employs a situation or environment created to allow people to experience a representation of real environments with the specific purpose of learning, improving language skills, performing assessments.

To this end, the present study aimed at:

1. Developing students pragmatic competence using a simulation, namely low fidelity, to improve students speaking ability.
2. finding out which type of speech act improved the most.
3. finding out which pragmatic competence improved the most.
4. finding out which teaching strategy gave significant improvement.

Speech Act Theory

Pragmatics, on the other hand, deals with how people produce and receive a speech act in social situations. A speech act is an utterance that has a functional purpose like requesting, promising or apologising. It is "the basic unit of communication" (Searle, 1969), and in Cohen's words: "A speech act is a functional unit in communication" (1996a). By uttering a speech act, an activity is performed and it changes a certain state of affairs, even on the intentional level (Mey, 2001). The concept of speech act was introduced by Austin (1962) in the discussion of the speech act theory in his book *How to do Things with Words*. It is regarded as "one of the most fruitful notions of contemporary linguistic theorizing" (Wunderlich, 1980: 291).

a) Request

Requests belong to the classification of directives as the speaker tries "to get the hearer to do something" (Searle, 1979: 13). The speech act of request has received greater attention than any other speech act in pragmatic studies. Its importance comes from its impositive nature which makes it

difficult for foreign language learners. The speaker threatens the hearer's face by imposing his/her freedom of action; therefore, a request is a face-threatening act (Brown and Levinson, 1987). A face-threatening act is one that inherently affects the face of the speaker or the hearer by acting as opposed to the wants or desires of the other. By face is meant "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 66). Requests can affect a person's autonomy, freedom of choice and freedom from imposition. Thus, they should be worded carefully and in a way that the addressee does not feel irritated or face threatened (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). In order to avoid losing face while interacting, a request needs to be used skillfully. For communication to take place successfully, conflict must be avoided, face must be saved and requests must be carried out appropriately (Barron, 2003). Thus, a sufficient level of pragmatic competence is required to be able to master this speech act. Therefore, this study employs the speech act of request in the research tools to measure pragmatic competence. Additionally, requesting is one of the mostly used speech act in everyday communication.

b) Apology

An apology is an utterance that reflects remorse or regret. It is required when there is a violation of any social conduct (Cohen, 1983). The apology can be expressed by a single word "sorry", or by a statement that shows an offer of repair or a reason of damage (Cohen, 1983). As apologies express a psychological state, they fall under Searle's (1976) classification of expressives. An apology is a face-threatening act for the speaker and a face-saving act for the hearer (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Blum-Kulka S and Olsthain E, 1984). The hearer's face is

saved by receiving an expression of regret of the offence, and the speaker's face is threatened in case the apology is not accepted.

As apologies are used to compensate for damage or offence, Ogiermann (2009b) stresses that they need to be fulfilled carefully because any failure might be interpreted as another offence. This is affirmed by Cohen (1983) as he indicates that: "The act of apologizing requires an action or an utterance which is intended to set things right". In order to set things right, an apology needs to be expressed with regard to the degree of the offence, and the social variables between the interlocutors such as power and distance (Blum-Kulka and Olsthain, 1984). Thus, a sufficient level of pragmatic competence is necessary to perform this speech act successfully.

c) Refusal

A refusal is a response of unwillingness to comply with an offer, a request, a suggestion or an invitation. The speech act of refusal is placed within the category of commissives since the speaker commits (not) to performing an action in the future (Searle, 1969). Refusals are face-threatening acts as the speaker contradicts the will or the expectation of the hearer. The face of either interlocutor is at risk when a refusal is performed. In order to avoid this, a speaker should pay attention to the social variables such as the social distance and power (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

The task of refusing is a complex one as it encompasses multiple indirect strategies to soften the embarrassment and to avoid misunderstandings. These strategies may include using apologies, providing reasons and offering future promises (Cohen, 1996b; Al-Eryani, 2007). Being able to know which strategy to use, how and when to use them is a difficult task for non-native speakers. How one says 'no' is more important than the

response itself (Al-Kahtani, 2005). Takahashi and Beebe (1987) highlight that saying 'no' is a major cross-cultural 'sticking point'. They point out that: "The inability to say 'no' clearly and politely, though not too.

d) Compliment

A compliment is a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some 'good' (possession, characteristic, skill, etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer (Holmes, 1986:485). Holmes (1986: 487) explains that compliments can be used as a positive politeness device when a speaker pays attention to a listener's interests, needs, and wants, while a compliment can work as a face-threatening act when they are understood as a cause of embarrassment.

Holmes (1988) defines the function of compliments as a positive speech act that serves to increase solidarity between speakers and addressees. She also adds that almost every act has the potential for being perceived as a face-threatening act because of the diversity among cultures. Wolfson (1981: 120) states that American Compliments reveal a total lack of originality and include many repetitions. In the study, 80% of her data used adjectives to show positive semantic value, and the top five adjectives were 'nice', 'good', 'beautiful', 'pretty', and 'great'. In another study, Manes and Wolfson (1981) also showed that nearly 90% of compliments used positive verbs such as 'like' and 'love' in their data.

Another function of compliments, in addition to affective function is that it is possible that some compliments have a stronger referential message than others. Compliments conveyed both affective (or

interpersonal) meaning and referential (or ideational) meaning. In some environments compliments function as praise and encouragements. So, the relationship between people is important in interpreting the functions of a compliment.

Methodology

Both quantitative and qualitative research was conducted in order to find out the difference in student's pragmatic competence before and after the implementation of simulation task of pragmatic and the importance of developing pragmatic competence for nursing students. Quasi experimental with non equivalent group design was used to this research. The writer used one class as the experimental class and one class as the control class. The Non-Equivalent Groups Design was structured like a pretest-posttest randomized experiment. The researcher selects groups that were similar so it could be fairly compare the treated one with the comparison one.

This study was aimed to find out the difference in student's pragmatic competence before and after the implementation of simulation task of pragmatic.

In addition, the researcher also tried to find out which teaching instruction gave more significant improvement. Because in this research, the researcher used 2 classes, 1 class belonged to experimental class which used explicit teaching instruction, and 1 class belonged to control class which used implicit teaching instruction. Two raters were involved to score students pragmatic competence with four aspects of rating adopted from NorQuest College – Online Workplace Learning Model Project. They are English Content, Organization, directness, politeness, formality, and word choice with band score 1 to 6.

Here are the steps conducting the test:

1. Selecting the Instrument of material
2. Determining the population and sample of the research.
3. Conducting role-play as pretest
4. Giving treatments (4 times)
5. Conducting role-play as posttest.
6. Recording Transcribing, and Coding.

Result and Finding

According to the result of the data, there was significant improvement for both control class and experimental class in the student's pragmatic competences after being taught by implicit and explicit teaching using low fidelity simulation. The implementation of low fidelity simulation in developing the student's pragmatic competence in speaking gave positive effects on improving student's pragmatic skill. For the experimental class, the mean score of pretest that consist of 28 students is 13.28 and the mean score of posttest was 19.76, while for the control class, the mean score of pretest was 12.25 and the mean score for posttest was 16.60. It means that there was a significant gain between pretest and post test in the students' pragmatic competence for both control class and experimental class after being taught by explicit and implicit teaching using low fidelity simulation. By comparing the data of speaking score in pretest and posttest, it could be concluded that the implementation of this simulation technique was helpful to improve students' pragmatic competence in speaking.

The second finding was English Content was the Aspect of pragmatic skill that improved the most for both control and experimental class, however, the result of Directness, Politeness, Formality was the aspect that improved the least. It indicated that the students were less mastering the aspect of directness, politeness, and formality when responding the situations. This was partly influenced by cultural

assumptions. According to Baumer and Rensburg (2011), politeness is conditioned through cultural experiences. Expressions of politeness could be misinterpreted.

The third Finding was Asking for apology is the type of speech acts that improved the most for both control class and experimental class. However, the result of giving compliment got the least significant improvement for experimental class. And for control class, making request got the least significant improvement among other type of speech acts.

Last but not least, it was believed that explicit teaching as the treatment for experimental class gave more significant improvement than the implicit teaching as the treatment for control class. This study seemed to provide evidence supporting Schmidt's (1990) idea which regarded noticing as an important condition for acquisition. According to Schmidt, awareness is required for learning to take place and noticing is needed to input to intake. Regarding the present study, explicit teaching using low fidelity simulation as the treatment led learners notice more pragmatic aspects of language.

Conclusion and Suggestion

This simulation technique can be a solution to improve student's confidents to speak in front of public, especially for this research sample, who is nursing students that will get interaction with the patients, because it accommodates social awareness. For example, we have to know when we talk to the elder or younger kid or same age friends, we use different word choice. In this technique, the teacher also can modify the procedure and teaching material, like using computerized based, mannequin, flash card, and ect. It is important to be noted that teacher-students relationship has a significant factor to a successful classroom procedures because this activities involves

emotion, knowledge, experience, sharing, and belief of each part.

Based on the conclusion, it could be seen that the implementation of low fidelity simulation technique was effective to develop student's pragmatic skill in speaking seen from the increased score after being taught by using this technique.

However, this research was conducted for ESP nursing students. Therefore, further longitudinal times series research is needed to investigate the effect of the treatment in the long run and make sure whether the obtained results are due to the treatment and whether they have turned to be part of the learner's input.

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