

Developing pragmatic competence of foreign language learners: Implications for language pedagogy

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Most of the problems that foreign language learners encounter in communication are mainly pragmatic since exposure to authentic language use is very scarce and language teachers and textbook writers often neglect developing pragmatic knowledge in instructional setting, focusing on merely linguistic knowledge (Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor, 2006). In contrast to a second language (SL) context in which learners have more exposure to the target language and more opportunities to use it in real-life exchanges, a foreign language (FL) environment fails to provide genuine communication in the target language for the learners. Actually, classroom setting is the only source of input and instances of target pragmatic behaviour. This situation inevitably prepares the ground for pragmatic violations when functioning in the target language. One of the effective ways to minimize pragmatic failure is by arranging learning opportunities which is conducive to the development of pragmatic competence, which refers to “the knowledge of the linguistic resources, sequential aspect of speech acts and the appropriate contextual use of linguistic resources” (Barron 2003, p.10). For the purpose of preventing pragmatic failure in language learners’ pragmatic performances in the target language, this article has three essential aims which are hoped to help language teachers to eliminate these failures. First of all, it aims to revisit the major concepts related to pragmatics. Second, it aims to focus on the cognitive mechanisms that language learners go through in their journey towards developing their pragmatic competence. Finally, in light of the information discussed so far, this paper aims to provide language teachers with learner-based instructional techniques which can help them to enhance their students’ level of pragmatic competence in the target language.

Barron, A. (2003). *Acquisition in Interlanguage Pragmatics*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Martinez-Flor, A., and Uso-Juan, E. (2006). A Comprehensive Pedagogical Framework to Develop Pragmatics in the Foreign Language Classroom: The 6Rs Approach. *Applied Language Learning*, 16(2), 39-64.