English as a Foreign Language

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, in addition to the knowledge of the language, students should be provided with the features of pragmalinguistics and socio pragmatics in order to enable them to communicate effectively in English, as they need to communicate in a social context.

1. Introduction

Students' awareness of cross-cultural pragmatics is essential in the EFL context. Integrating cross-cultural communication in EFL classes helps students develop the ability to communicate in a social context [1]. It helps avoid some challenges such as misconception, misinterpretation and misunderstanding during the interaction of two or more different cultures. Thus, teaching and learning a target language must not be separable from its cultural norms and values. Hence, it is not sufficient for the EFL teachers to teach only the grammar part of the target language, but they must also help students enhance cross-cultural pragmatic competence awareness. Jie [2] claims that language teachers must focus on three points when teaching culture in EFL classes: (a) helping students become familiar with cross-cultural differences; (b) helping students tolerate each other's culture by considering the cultural norms and values in the target language; and (c) helping students to learn the target language along with its culture. Teachers' task of making students understand the different cultural norms and values in the EFL context is essential for learners to understand what seems polite in one culture and impolite in a different culture. Thus, using a word or an expression may be morally acceptable in one culture and not in another. In this perspective, Bouchard [3] affirms that the challenges of cross-communication often occur when the felicity conditions are not respected.

The sociolinguist, James [4], describes cross-cultural pragmatic competence as using words and expressions concerning societal norms and conventions of the target language. Thus, cross-cultural pragmatic competence is the ability to use language by acquiring the meaning of words and expressions through context and sociocultural embedding. Chen et al. [5] conducted a discourse completion test (DCT) for Taiwanese and American students at the university level; the finding indicates different cultural resentments from the different nationals that seem to be concerns raised in social circumstances due to cultural differences and misinterpretations. With respect to this, Taj-eddin Mogadam [6] and Benadla [7] discovered the need to bestow communicative competency on EFL learners in classroom circumstances and highlight a teaching approach called "competency-base" in order to rekindle L2 learners for effective communication in a social context. Moreover, cross-cultural communication actively takes solid ground in the tourist industry, where Borni [8] proclaims in his research that the English language by cultural norms and values tends to promote tourism by drawing both the US and the UK close to Algeria and most African countries. By using an example, Guo [9] indicates some similarities in cross-cultural behavior between American students and Chinese students with respect to direct and indirect refusal to request and order by "nodding or shaking one's head" as a response and may signify a direct or indirect acceptance or concern in language interpretation. On gender, Maccoby [10] explains that "gender differences generally show the higher performance of women on verbal tasks and men on spatial tasks". Thus, this assumption implies that female interlocutors are more indulged in thorough communication and, as such, are favourably correlated with more affirmative responses to the target language (TL) or L2, as well as EFL. In the domain of gender issues in communication, the author Maccoby [10] lays emphasis that female communicators develop more interest in language learning. With respect to this concept, oral communicative skills must be built up among males and females by using numerous functional platforms of pragmatic routines in order to innovate conversational situations involving the native and the non-native speakers taking part in role-play activities that can establish cross-cultural understanding among the EFL learners. The author confirms that, in gender differences, male communicators, as well as language learners, could demonstrate less optimistic manners than female language learners who show a higher level of interaction with others.

Equally, in the EFL classroom context, the research of Gulzar [11] draws our attention to the interaction between Pakistani students and teachers in terms of code-switching from mother tongue (L1) to EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and vice versa by cultural socialization. Corresponding to the classroom situation, Bensen and Cavusoglu [12] also drew our attention to the effectiveness of EFL classroom code-switching in Northern Cyprus that could impart on students' level of communication with regard to the pragmatic context. Admittedly, the research of Ishihara and Cohen [13] sensitizes on the academic preparedness of EFL teachers and how practical it seems to deliver cross-cultural pragmatic knowledge to the EFL learners for communicative competency.

Morgan [14] and Ishihara and Cohen [13] bring to light the exposures of classroom interactive activities involving communicative tasks such as role-plays, pair-work, reading original English materials, presentation in English language and imitating native English speakers' pronunciation in order to develop cross-cultural communication and to enhance pragmatic competence of EFL learners. In another development, Wu [15], Weeger [16] and Sunal [17] raised concerns on strategies involving the basic principle of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which is a student-centered approach for enhancing explicit and implicit communicative competencies of EFL. By using an example, in an interactive conversation involving immigrants, "is Pope a Catholic?" by [18], a declaration is aroused that is not part of the conversation but is suddenly used as a definite answer to a question, and the meaning implies "Yes, of course" or "It is so" or "Yes indeed" or "No doubt about that". These associative meanings introduce intricate pragmatic challenges, leaving cross-cultural communicators in suspense.

2. Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Competence in an EFL Context for a Sustainable Learning Environment: A Case of Northern Cyprus

The findings indicate that EFL students are not furnished with cross-cultural pragmatic competence in the classroom and must be provided with classroom tasks to develop both explicit and implicit communicative competence for a sustainable English learning environment. They also lack textbooks comprising pragmatic knowledge. It further reveals that EFL teachers' pay little attention to cross-cultural pragmatic knowledge and classroom activities in the EFL context. These situations need to be addressed in order to help the EFL learners in enhancing cross-cultural pragmatic competence and to communicate meaningfully in a social context. It is important to state that cross-cultural pragmatic competence can bring to perfection the English language skills of EFL learners.

In the midst of cross-cultural interaction, a communicator speaking a non-native language or L2 may easily create language miscommunication, and this situation becomes the central tendency in day-to-day activities inside and outside of classroom circumstances. For instance, taking "coffee or tea" in a breakfast context may be a "dessert after a meal or before the meal" for one's culture, and it may bring misunderstanding and disappointment to some other communicators when it is defined as "breakfast only" due to some cultural norms and interpretations. As proof of this, we tend to raise the tactical awareness of ELF teachers and learners on cross-cultural pragmatic competence. Hence, on the pedagogical point of view, there is a need to consider the communication terms for values and norms by the calibre of words and expressions used amidst target language learners. Based on the results, there is a need to caution EFL teachers and learners to be circumspect when dealing with cross-cultural shocks among foreign students in classroom circumstances, and when things do not happen the way we expected or thought, one must be flexible, adjustable and tolerant of overcoming cultural emotions inside and outside school environments.

The pedagogical implication is to intensify the awareness and the importance of cross-cultural pragmatic competence in a target language, especially in the EFL context. Wu [15] asserts that the basic principle of communicative Language Teaching (CLT) must be virtual "Learner-Centred", involving communicative activities such as group discussion, debate, dialogue, role play, reading practices and presentations. Furthermore, Jie [2] and Kecskes [19] suggest that the development of pragmatic competence must be a motivation for cross-cultural communicators to improve upon their communicative clarity and fluency in EFL or ESL settings. In this manner, EFL teachers are called upon to develop EFL students' motivation for intercultural relations through cultural related tasks in classroom environments for socialization as well as certification for globalization and partnership. Rumyantseva et al. [20] also highlight that, for shaping sustainable language learning environment, forming multicultural personality through language leaning is crucial.

Consequently, the findings alert us on the urgent need for teachers to abreast themselves with the knowledge of cross-cultural pragmatics and make it teachable, learnable and achievable. Hence, the unpredictable occasions may engage L2 learners in complex scenarios lacking practical information in communication. For this reason, Zakaria et al. [21] and Walsh [22] caution teachers to be circumspect in handling issues pertaining to EFL learners and claim that the high-level compassion of communicative competency is found within the interactional gatherings of cross-cultural communicators on the social platform.

Therefore, because of the findings and for the tendency of global connections, some positive recommendations on cross-cultural activities must be observed by teachers for the enhancement of EFL learners' pragmatic competency. In this manner, Alemi et al. [23] assume that English textbooks propagate cultural knowledge for L2 learners, and teachers must locate cross-cultural information on internet journal language, culture and society for classroom's achievements. Apart from classroom tasks and other curriculum[24], this paper suggests some extracurricular activities such as cross-cultural trips for exchange programs, cross-cultural games and festivities, cross-cultural quizzes and debates, cross-cultural theatrical arts, drama or short sketches and cross-cultural expositions. These extracurricular activities seem practically important and must be observed with regard to cross-cultural awareness, sentiment and generalization.

Researchers can conduct studies on the following: (1) motivational factors relating to cross-cultural pragmatic competence; (2) specific classroom activities for the enhancement of cross-cultural pragmatic competence in EFL context; (3) interactive strategies for developing cross-cultural pragmatic competence in EFL context.

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