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Activities to foster the students' socio-pragmatics awareness: a locally situated process

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Abstract

Equipping students with Sociopragmatic awareness is very crucial to be deployed. Since Sociopragmatic competences are required in communications, the ELT teachers need to facilitate them with engaging activities and authentic material. Making the students engage actively in classroom instruction will increase their enthusiasm and spread the positivity among the students. However, inserting Sociopragmatic into classroom instruction is rarely to be implemented by the teachers. To fill this void, the article presents activities to arouse the students Sociopragmatic awareness through locally situated process. This process is implemented in form of Discourse Completion Task (DCT), movie clips, and comic strips. These classroom activities are believed to give opportunities for the students to experience language practices therefore they know how to use the sensitive English.

Keywords: Sociopragmatic, movie clips, comic strips

1. Introduction

Teaching Sociopragmatics in an EFL (English as a foreign language) classroom is very urgent to be deployed. This because in this globalization encourages everyone to be able to speak good English to create smooth and meaningful communication (Miqawati, 2020). Many EFL students want to be able to communicate smoothly and effectively with others in a wide range of contexts. Communication involves more than just conveying or delivering messages to other people; it also involves social circumstances and cultural norms. (Wijayanti & Budi, 2021). People should realize that to create automatic, appropriate and effective respond is not easy to do. It requires teachers' creativity in facilitating the students in the classroom. Of course, these activities would enable the students to have exposures, engage in group activities, and use the language based on the particular context. In relation with this situation, Socio-pragmatic competence is necessary to be taught and implemented in a classroom so that the students feel secure and safe in any circumstances they face.

However, many EFL teachers face problems in implementing Sociopragmatics competence. O’Keeffe and Clancy et al (2011) mentioned that traditional textbooks frequently provide inadequate language input and interpretation of language use. These books only focused on grammar and required the students to fill in the proper answer all the time. Besides, pseudo communicative activities in speaking also becomes the problem (Wijayanti,2017). Particularly in Indonesian situation, most of the time, the teacher asks the students to read the conversation stated in the textbook, make a dialog, memorize it, then perform it in front the class. Even sometimes the teachers do not give any feedback dealing with the students’ performances. This situation makes the students cannot use English appropriately because they are not trained to communicate with others automatically and sensitively. With these conditions, it is urgent to insert contextual activities to arouse the students’ Sociopragmatics awareness in a classroom setting.

2. Why teach Sociopragmatics in EFL classes?

In the EFL setting, the students need to be introduced with Sociopragmatics competences. Martinez (2018) states that it was believed that by exposing students to a variety of communication patterns in the target community, they would improve their Sociopragmatics sensitivity and knowledge. However, these exposures are rarely found in the teaching learning process. Due to this barrier, it needs changes and teachers’ creativity in facilitating them to have interaction among others, and therefore they have particular time to do language practices.

Basically, the main purpose of teaching Sociopragmatics in the EFL setting is to arouse the students Sociopragmatics awareness. Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) further states that any failure to build Pragmatic competences may result in cultural misunderstanding. Without having language exposures and language practices, the students would not use the language appropriately since they do not know of how to apply it in communications. To conclude it is essential to learn and apply Sociopragmatics competence in the classroom so that they will use sensitive English.

Bringing Sociopragmatics in the classroom would create lively atmosphere and let the students experience language practices. They would have dynamic interaction and engagement which foster them to use English properly in a particular situation. In this classroom interactions, chances to discuss, and explore the speakers’ impressions are open. They would deploy how to respond interlocutors from high and low context cultures. For instance, when they meet American native speakers which is classified as low context culture and often thought as direct and straight to the point, the students would automatically respond it sensitively. They understand that those people rely on explicit verbal communication which is different with Asian people who are from high context cultures. Finally, since Sociopragmatic refers to the use of language based on the context, culture, and social supports, therefore inserting it in classroom activities are pivotal to be implemented.

3. Speech Acts Strategies

Hilliard (2017) states that speech acts are the most fundamental unit of communication, with each one completing a distinct communicative goal. Basically, it needs more than grammatical and lexical understanding to communicate effectively with others. Heidari, Tabrizi and Ghahak (2020) reiterate that to establish effective interaction, people require knowledge relational and socio-contextual factors dominating the use of speech acts appropriately. With these ideas, Birner (2012) further states that speech acts are classified as pivotal area of pragmatics since people develop speech acts for conducting various actions. The people use a wide range of speech acts in their daily communication for instance requests, complaints, apology, refusal and many others. The example of speech act for complaining is identified into 4 strategies which can be applied during the communication when interlocutors face this situation (Murphy and Neu, 1996). The strategies for complaining are shown below:

Your neighbour has borrowed a vacuum cleaner. When she returns it, you find a broken filter of the vacuum cleaner. You are very disappointed. You say to her.

Strategy	Example
1. Initiation and explanation of purpose	Excuse me, Mrs. Brown. I want to talk with you about this vacuum cleaner you borrowed yesterday
2. A complaint	The filter of this vacuum cleaner was broken. I think you could not handle my stuff properly
3. A justification	I am very disappointed. You should have handled the thing you borrowed very carefully
4. A Request	Well, Mrs. Brown, before returning it, it should be checked. I would be very happy if you can fix it or buy me the newest filter vacuum cleaner.

It is hoped that interlocutors apply these strategies for successful communication. It is believed that by deploying these strategies, the failure of communication would be avoided. These guidelines are very essentials to be introduced so that the students have chances to use them in classroom activities. The language practice they experience would lead them apply sensitive English appropriately based on the context situation.

4. Activities to Foster the Students; Sociopragmatic Competence

To arouse the students' Sociopragmatic awareness especially at university level, the English teachers play a pivotal role in facilitating them with adequate pedagogical inputs. These inputs would be very beneficial in leading them understand of how to do communication properly. It is expected that by knowing how to respond and interact with other interlocutors, the communication or process of delivering information will run smoothly. With these ideas, the teachers should equip the students with activities which foster them to have language practices so that they know to use English appropriately.

The first activity that can be done by the teacher is Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs). These are written prompts which present context situation, then trigger the students to respond based on it. The example of DCTs can be seen as follows:

Discourse Completion Tasks

Situation: You are with your friends at the cafe. Then you order a plate of Fried rice and beef steak. When you taste it, your fried rice is just too salty and your steak is overcooked. Complain to the waiter.

You: Excuse me, I think the fried rice is just too salty. This steak is also overcooked. I have told you that I wanted medium.

Waiter: _____

From this DCTs, the teacher can divide the students into several groups. In each group they discuss and decide the respond from the situation above. After that, the teacher can ask them to perform the dialog in front of the class.

The second activity is watching short videos or movie clips. In the EFL setting, the use of authentic material is crucial. Authentic material provides authentic input which eases the students to follow the expressions. It is thought that exposing learners to as much real content as possible, according to their levels and interests will improve their sensitivity to the target language (Heidari, Tabrizi and Chalak, 2020). Underwood (1989) further mentions that authentic materials in form of video clips and short stories enable the students to get as much more real acts of communication with all the interactional features which are not generally found in scripted materials. Likewise, Nunan (1999) states that authentic language material is as spoken or written language content that reflects real-world conversation and is not created particularly for the purpose of language training. Since it has real life input, then it will assist the students to express a particular language expression

The third activity is integrating technology in the classroom. Technology integration into classroom learning is crucial to provide new, fun and comfortable nuances (Wijayanti, 2020). As a part of global community in industry 4.0, the teacher must respond to this condition and make it opportunity (Miqawati and Wijayanti, 2020). One example

of facilitating the students with technology is using movie clips taken from YouTube. In this platform, the teacher can easily access it and choose it based on the needs. Using YouTube would challenge the students to see the content of videos from different perspective. The teacher can facilitate the students to watch various videos or movie clips from different countries which represent high and low culture. From the video which present high and low culture, the students would know the way they do communication. With this mind, they would understand that expressing a particular language function should be done based on the contextual situation where it takes place and also social variables that represents the linguistics resources.

Comic strip also can be an alternative to raise the students' Sociopragmatics competence. It is a series of illustrations contained within a box that tells a story (Liu, 2014). Furthermore, Baker (2011) concurs with comics can be utilized to teach part of speech, social situations, historical events and many others. She further mentions that combining text and images invites readers to think deeply and critically about the link between the two. The followings are two examples of comic strips which can be deployed to trigger the students' sensitivity in using the language.



Figure 1. The example of comic strip



(Taken from www.weeklystorybook.com)

Figure 2. *The example implicature*

These comic strips would be very motivating and challenging. By providing colourful pictures, storyline, social context, and expressions used, the students are facilitated to have adequate pedagogical inputs. These inputs are beneficial to be implemented during language practices. With these ideas, the students also realized that in a communication, the interlocutors do not only need grammatical competences but also Sociopragmatic competences which fit with the contextual structure. In term of classroom instructions, the teacher could utilize these comic strips in a group discussion. In a higher level, the students could be asked to identify the possible context for “We need to talk”, then they can share it with other groups. In the second images, the teacher also needs to facilitate the students to think of possible situations of why the grandma does not directly give reasons but ask the girl a question. Finally, this lively group discussion would establish various ideas and arouse the students’ critical thinking skill.

5. Conclusion

To produce successful and effective communication in English, Sociopragmatic competences are urgent to be deployed in the classroom instruction. Discourse Completion Task, movie clips, and comic strips are media which provide locally situated process to arouse the students’ Sociopragmatic awareness. As characterized with authenticity, these media would facilitate the students to have language practices and understand the social context therefore they would automatically use sensitive English.

To conclude, Sociopragmatics competences can be integrated into classroom instruction. This locally situated process through DCT, movie clips and comic strips would motivate and challenge the students in order to successfully engage in the classroom activities. Wijayanti and Budi (2021) further reiterate that the activities which facilitate the students to have Sociopragmatic’ awareness would make them understand, think critically, and imagine creatively.

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