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TEACHING PRAGMATIC SKILLS AND ABILITIES THROUGH ACTIVITIES

Abstract: *This article provides data about communicative language teaching and its role in contemporary teaching of pragmatics and negotiation in the classroom. It presents some activities based on interaction which can be implemented into different types of classrooms.*

Key words: *Fishbowl, Discussion panels, Negotiation, CLT, ESL, group writing, productive skills, creativity, student-centered, chain writing*

Language: *English*

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Introduction

Everything, every matter has its roots, backgrounds or origins. The same feature embodies the language. Language is a key factor in expressing your thoughts; it is an irreplaceable means for interaction and communication.

Pragmatic ability is a pivotal key and it is defined as being beyond the literal meaning. According to Cohen (2014) pragmatic abilities are utilized so as to interpret and comprehend intended or hidden messages, targets and inclinations that may occur during the language performance or act.

Therefore, it is highly important for learners to be aware of functional language (using the utterances of apology, complaint, compliment, criticism, proposal, demand, request and others).

Materials and methods

A variety of methods are used to assess the pragmatic ability and skills of the learners in the ESL classroom. The most significant matter has been built on the communicative approach and decoded the interactive patterns.

The chosen material can be implemented to different level classes and it may be modified or adjusted according to the topic or an instructor's preference.

The following activity is newly created and thoroughly synthesized according to pragmatics and pragmatic abilities.

Initially, it introduces the objectives of the activity, then presents the activity itself, later gives the description and analysis of the script, finally, decodes functional language utterances.

The last stage of the paper considers merits and demerits of this activity and provides a brief conclusion.

This activity can be used as supporting material and teachers are able to use it to overcome the barriers of the learners who have some problems with speaking skills.

Activity for B1 and B2 level learners
1. Objectives

1.1. Learners will be able to feel the use of the pragmatic language and behavior in a role play which can assist them to boost their imagination and critical thinking.

1.2. Learners will be able to appraise the constant degree of formality, directness, humor,

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proposal and rejection through the context of the complaint.

1.3. Learners will be able to use their guessing skills by anticipating the sequence of the case.

2. Suggested time: 80 minutes

Time allocation

2.1. Introduction of the new topic (20 minutes)

2.2. Presenting new language and transitions related to the topic (10 minutes)

2.3. Providing examples and activities, encouraging learners to work in groups and pairs (30 minutes)

2.4. Consolidation of the topic with recommendations and demonstrations (10 minutes)

2.5. Wrapping up and marking (10 minutes)

3. Procedure

3.1. The instructor explains the language and structure of complaining, represents some examples according to the register (formality, informality).

3.2. The instructor provides some phrases, transitions and sign posting vocabulary related to the topic of complaint.

3.3. The instructor explains how to act and perform the role play by distributing the script to the whole group.

3.4. The instructor summarizes the activities and provides positive feedback.

Directions (Based on a new activity)

4.1. The instructor chooses four voluntaries for role playing. After having selected he or she arranges the role of the participants, such as, a salesman, a customer, a manager and a secretary. Three more learners will be involved in the process, one of them will be responsible for observing both receptive and productive skills, another candidate will stand for social and cultural norms and the last observer will evaluate the how successful the functional language will be produced.

4.2. The instructor himself will take the possession of the monitor and thoroughly observes the unity, coherence and negotiation.

4.3. After having played the act, participants will be evaluated according to their parts.

4.4. In a subsequent stage another group of candidates will be invited.

The script of the play

AT THE DEPARTMENT STORE

Salesman: Good morning! (0) How can I help you? (1)

Customer: Good morning, I purchased this mobile phone two weeks ago. But the sound and graphics are really irritating (2). It is always loading (3) when I want to shoot the photo or I use the camera.

Salesman: Are you using outdoor memory card? Did you insert any?

1 – Suggestion/offer
2 – Criticism
3 – Complaint
4 – Exclamation

Customer: Yes, but it is in vain. You assured me that it would have a good capacity with sixteen gigabytes. But it is using only a half of that.

Salesman: Did you bring your guarantee pack with you?

Customer: Yes, here it is, so you can see a one-year warranty declaration, but I used it only more than a couple of weeks!!! (3)

Salesman: Let me see, ok, mmm… (4) Yeah, but, sir, it says that if the device is technically unable to perform operations ….

Customer: What??? (5) Don't you think that this issue is technical? (6) Isn't it directly connected with the function of the device??? (7)

Salesman: Unfortunately, no sir.

Customer: I do not accept the way how you are treating me. At least you have to offer me refund! (8)

Salesman: I am sorry (9), but it is not our policy (10) to give you refund, sir.

Customer: Do you think so? I must see your manager immediately! (11)

AT THE MANAGER'S OFFICE

Customer: Good morning sir (12), I am really sick of your service, I have a complaint on (13) ….

Manager: Sorry, but I have just received an urgent call from Local Committee and I have to leave (14).

Customer: But I want to complain about the ….

Manager: You may do it in a written form. Miss Diana, will you offer a pen and paper, please (15).

Customer: What an irresponsible organization and what an imprudent manager!!! (16)

Manager: What? What did you say? What a rude attitude towards me and my staff! I will immediately inform the police!

Customer: Really? What about your urgent meeting??? (17)

Manager: It is not your business. They will wait.

Customer: I see. Miss Diana, you may give a pen and paper to your boss, not to me.

Results
Specific features of the dialogues

A simple statistical analysis of the activities has been revealed as results. In total, 17 sub categories of speech acts have been determined and classified according to their frequency in the dialogues.

There are some characteristics that must be outlined. Thus, utterances which are in bold are some fragments of socio-linguistic and cultural pragmatics. Some of them will be decoded according to their function in the following sentences.

0 – Greeting (appropriate both for informal and formal register)

5 – Surprise
6 – Surprise
7 – Anger
8 – Demand

9 – Apology
10 – Denial
11 – Decision
12 – Formal greeting
13 – Complaint

14 – Ignoring (cultural aspect of the mentality)
15 – Proposal
16 – Anger and rude criticism
17 – Surprise and irony/humor

Discussion

The current study has found that these types of activities may illustrate both advantages and disadvantages when they are implemented to the ESL classroom.

Advantages of this activity

Presents a good range of interaction and negotiation,

Provides an impressive and authentic learning atmosphere,

Gives an opportunity of acting and behaving in social cases,

Encourages using the language properly,

Motivates to observe every scene and motive,

Demonstrates a good range of vocabulary and phrases,

Establishes a good rapport among learners,

Rises respect towards all people equally without considering their level of status.

Disadvantages of this activity

Not all of the learners may be involved in,

Time may not be allocated enough,

Evaluators may not be honest,

Learners may feel inter reliability,

Authenticity may lack in activities

Conclusion

Brown and Levinson (1987) point out that pragmatic norms and pragmatic language may be diverse and represent some challenges for L2 community.

Thus, it has to be stated that even though there are some weak points of this activity the outlined advantages will considerably outweigh them.

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