

Analysis of Pragmatic Failure in College English Teaching

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Abstract. The aim of this study is to search for the best teaching method to improve the college students' ability in their intercultural communication. This paper presents an analysis of the emphasis on countermeasures in college English teaching and examines the mistakes of college students' writing. The result shows that the main reason of the pragmatic failure is attributed to culture discrimination. This paper also shows the strategy of avoiding pragmatic failure in college English learning. The result suggests that the better teaching method in college students' writing is of great significance in improving college students' writing ability.

Introduction

With the development of economy and technology, the international communication becomes more and more frequent. For college students who live in the background of the global integration, cross cultural communication becomes essential. However, intercultural communication is one of the major problems that college English learners face in the application of English. Pragmatic failure is an important cause of cross cultural communication.

Pragmatic Failure

Pragmatic failure is defined as "the inability to understand what is meant by what is said". That is to say, when words are issued to deliver verbal information, when the speakers really want to express a word or the receiver should be able to understand the meaning of discourse, the pragmatic failure will occur. Pragmatic failures can be divided into two categories: language pragmatic failure and social pragmatic failure. Language pragmatic failure refers to pragmatic failures caused by misunderstanding the linguistic context. Social pragmatic failure refers to pragmatic failure because of misunderstanding or ignoring both sides of the social background and cultural differences and language expression errors.

Pragmatic Failure of College English Learners

Cultivating students' English communicative competence is the ultimate goal of College English teaching. However, the majority of English learners with many years of English learning experience, in the practice of intercultural communication will still distress and complain that they are very difficult to express or not able to fully understand the target language. This is mainly because the English learners' pragmatic competence has not been highly valued. Therefore, the phenomenon of pragmatic failure is easy to occur in the cross cultural communication.

Language is the carrier of culture and culture is the essence of language. The close relationship between language and culture makes the foreign language teachers not only pay attention to the language itself, but also attach great importance to the culture of the target language when they are teaching a foreign language. For College English teachers, in daily English teaching, cultural introduction is necessary. For example, in order to explain an article about Christmas, the writer needs to explain the relevant vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, discourse system. At the same time, the customs related to the origin of Christmas, Santa Claus, Christmas tree and other culture connotation of cultural background information is indispensable important. Through the introduction of such culture, students can learn the target language and a more in-depth

understanding of the target language, so their language ability and pragmatic ability can be trained simultaneously. Secondly, the comparison method is one of the most effective measures. Pragmatic failure is one of the important reasons for the communication with native language culture habits. The conventions of intercultural communication and communication in foreign language learning with specific, in-depth comparison, is the most effective method. The mother tongue and the target language have enhanced the way the solution, so it can effectively avoid pragmatic failure and achieve ideal communicative effects. Moreover, teachers should create more pragmatic environment, weakening the role of traditional teaching teachers monologue. The teachers let the students more involved in the activity. For example, the activity which is close to the life, such as the greeting, shopping, invitation, apology and other topics, is good for the students to play. In this process, students can experience the target language in a similar situation expressing their thoughts and feelings, so as to avoid, pragmatic failure, caused by misunderstanding and conflict in the real cross-cultural communication.

The Strategy of Avoiding Pragmatic Failure in College English Learning

Pragmatic failure belongs to Pragmatics which is a new branch of linguistics. It is the study of language in use and communication. Its direct research lies in speech acts and the ongoing discourse. Pragmatic failure refers to the mistakes made by the speakers in the communication, which doesn't perform the complete communicative task. It is not called errors, because this kind of failure doesn't come from the grammar of the language. It is due to the unsuitable form of speaking or untimely remark. In the process of learning a language, besides mastering the knowledge and ability of the language, the form of speaking and the different concrete functions under the non-language environment should be paid more attention. Chinese people often ignore this point in the process of communication in English, so failure often appears in the communication. There are two kinds of pragmatic failure. One is pragmatic linguistic failure; the other is social-linguistic pragmatic failure. Pragma-linguistic failure includes two levels. First level is that the speaker uses the words with different meanings; the hearer misunderstands the meaning and contextual category, and the misunderstanding of some idioms for the lack of culture background.

The second level is the hearer misunderstands the speaker's illocutionary meaning speaker doesn't express the illocutionary meaning clearly. The customer should come to take his TV set Three days later B ten days later. The two choices both are right. In English "next" is time deixis. "It will be fixed next Thursday." Maybe it has two kinds of meaning. One is that the repairman let the customer take the TV set ten days later; the other is to take the TV set three days later. What is the right time depends on the context of situation. It is impossible to specify the time unless we know the exact time when the utterance is made.

The other pragmatic failure is social linguistic failure which often appears in the actual communication and this failure seriously influences the effect of communication. Here I have to say that language is a tool of communication. It can't be separated with concrete social environment. To distinguish these two kinds of pragmatics failure mechanically is an impossible thing. For example, when two classmates or workmates meet each other at the first time, they will say "Hello, how are you?" But many Chinese students use the sentence "Hello, how are you getting on?" It indicates that the speaker has known what the other is doing so require the process of the situation. But it isn't suitable to regard it as the greetings at the first meet. The usage of greetings should agree with mutual principles. Every speech community has greetings. But the forms of language and principles are different. If we are careful to find the rules, we could get that all the kind of greetings is highly stipulated, and they are ritualistic and polite formula.

No matter what is pragmatic linguistic failure or social-linguistic pragmatic failure, the basic reason is the discrimination of two different cultures. Different culture backgrounds have the different speaking form or custom... Language is formed in the process of growing up and daily life. It is difficult to alter. Even in the study of another language, people are intended to keep his way without thinking. In the cross-culture communication, it is possible to get a wrong conclusion from other's speaking. The speakers of two sides are not conscious to find the trouble in the process of

communicating and to take some measure to avoid the conflict in communication.

These mistakes seem small, but it exposes the deficiency of English teaching. The context of language rigidly adheres to the text. There are no useful words or phrases to perform the communicative task. Once the students meet concrete language environment, they often copy the words mechanically. The method of teaching is very old. Only the teacher speaks English in class, even in some places, only speaking Chinese all the time. It is the same form as the traditional course. The students lack in the environment to use language, lack in the Pragmatics competence. The students pay so much attention to the text, and do the exercises for the examination everyday. Although they master the words, grammar very well, they know nothing about how to use the language. These are the common phenomenon in our English teaching. We should reform the method of teaching to cultivate the ability of communication.

There are some pieces of advice about English teaching, in order to solve the problem of Pragmatic failure. Culture discrimination is the basic reason to the pragmatic failure. The English teacher should introduce more culture of America or British, and then let the students compare the Chinese culture with America culture. Through the collection of materials teachers will play a role to connect two different kinds' cultures and enhance the student's sensitiveness about the discrimination. It will make the students pay more attention to the details of different cultures, such as how to greet, how to praise and so on. The mistakes in culture are more seriously than language. Teaching English in "culture vacuum" is impossible. The purpose of communicative teaching is to help students communicate with each other. Here the key point is whether they could use English correctly. This is related with the knowledge of pragmatics.

Conclusion

More research is needed to allow the teachers to effectively integrate above findings into the teaching practice. However, it has encouraged the teachers to examine the textbooks and materials used from a pragmatic perspective and will assist me to become more aware of features in their own native language. The teachers are in a better position to place the findings from very specific cross-cultural view.

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