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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview

This chapter is intended to establish some conceptual framework for the study through implementing investigations and researches related to the subject matter within the framework of the present study. As such, it concerned itself with discussing the preliminaries and the purpose of the study. In next sections, statement of the problem along with significance of the study and research hypothesis and summary of the chapters are explained in details.

1.2.Introduction

Throughout the last few decades, the importance of communicative competence has been broadly recognized in the field of second/foreign language teaching and learning. For example, Hymes (1972) stated that not only second language learners must learn to speak grammatically, but also "appropriately" to achieve communicative goals.

Novick (2000) further explained this concept of "appropriateness" by saying that second or foreign language learners must acquire not only linguistic rules such as morphology, syntax, phonology and vocabulary, but they must also acquire socio-cultural rules of language use. In fact, what is crucial to second language learners success is

acquisition of socio-cultural rules, which is widely known as pragmatic competence. According to Tanck (2002) speakers who seem "fluent" in a foreign language due to their command of the grammatical rules of that language and its vocabulary may still lack pragmatic competence, and consequently they may not be able to produce language that is socially and culturally appropriate.

Given that this study attempts to describe how the act of complaint is realized by native and non-native respondents the researcher finds it necessary to make clear what is meant by the term 'speech act' first. Fifty years ago, John Austin gave a series of lectures, which were published posthumously as a book entitled *How to Do Things with Words*. In fact, in these lectures a new picture of analyzing meaning was presented by Austin; meaning is described in a relation among linguistic conventions correlated with words/sentences, the situation where the speaker actually says something to the hearer, and associated intentions of the speaker.

The idea that meaning exists among these relations is depicted successfully by the concept of *acts*: in uttering a sentence, that is, in utilizing linguistic conventions, the speaker with an associated intention performs a linguistic act to the hearer.

Speech act theory has experienced serious examination by different theorists such as Austin (1962), Grice (1957, 1975), Hymes (1964), Searl (1969), Levinson (1983), Brown and Yule (1983), Yule (1996). Blum-Kulka and Kasper (1982:2) give emphasis to the fact that the study of speech acts should remain a central concern of pragmatics, particularly cross-cultural pragmatics. Austin (1962) distinguished three levels for each speech act utterance; act of saying something, what one does in saying it and what one does by saying it" which respectively match with "locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary" acts.

Searle (1976) revised the classification and distinguished the acts according to their "illocutionary point" to representatives, directives, commissives, and declarations. Searle (1990) claimed that speaking a language is performing speech acts. By performing a speech act, people produce certain actions such as thanking, requesting, apologizing and complaining.

The speech act of complaint occurs when a speaker reacts with displeasure or annoyance to an action that has affected the speaker unfavorably (Olshtain& Weinbach,

1987). Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) studied the speech act of complaint as produced by native and non-native speakers of Hebrew. The researchers developed five categories of speech acts that were based on severity of the complaint for a specific scenario. The five categories were: (1) below the level of reproach (2) disapproval (3) Complaint (4) accusation and warning, and (5) threat.

They found that both groups, regardless of first language, made use of each strategy, while they preferred to use the middle of the scale – disapproval, complaint and accusation – rather than below the level of reproach and threat, to avoid being too soft or too confrontational. In another study of American and Korean speakers of English, Murphy and Neu (1996) identified four semantic formulas from the respondents to be (1) an explanation of purpose, (2) a complaint, (3) a justification, and (4) a request. The researchers found a high correlation between native and non-native speakers when producing explanation of purpose, justification, and request; however, native and non-native speakers differed in the production of the second component, the complaint.

Research has shown that the realization of complaints varies across speakers from different cultures. Tanck (2002) conducted research that aimed to compare the pragmatic competence of adult ESL speakers to that of adult native English speakers when performing the speech act of complaints and refusals. To generate data for this study, the subjects were given a “Discourse Completion Test” where in they wrote their responses to six prompts. He used six situation of DCT that just two situation related to complaints. Responses of native English speakers are reviewed for evidence of common components of speech act sets to establish a set of baseline responses. The results of this study revealed that while native and nonnative speakers often produce almost identical speech act set components for complaints and refusals, the quality of the components produced by nonnative speakers differ markedly from those made by the native speaker’s sample. The nonnative speakers' responses, though generally linguistically correct, lack the pragmatic elements that allow these face-threatening acts of complaint and refusal to be well received by the hearer.

In a recent study, Chen et al. (2011) studied complaining strategies of 40 American and Taiwanese university students. They were asked to fill out a discourse completion test

(DCT) containing eight complaint-provoking scenarios. The researchers found six complaint strategies (opting out, interrogation, accusation, request for repair, and threat).

Moon's (2001) conducted another cross-cultural study by working on the speech act of complaint as produced by 129 native and nonnative speakers of English. The (DCT) gave four prompts that provide the subjects with complaint situations. The data collected from the subjects were analyzed based on Olshtain and Weinbach. The scale of the severity of complaints consists of five categories: Below the level of Reproach, Expression of annoyance or disapproval, Explicit complaint, Accusation and warning, and Immediate threat. These are defined in terms of the speaker's position with respect to the hearer's face and in terms of its linguistic features.

The severity of complaints in this study consists of four categories that focus more on the linguistic features of the subjects' utterances. The results of this study apparently showed that nonnative speakers were not always successful in complaint and in communication, in general. These failures of nonnative speakers in complaints were primarily caused by their grammatical and linguistic limitations, but mainly caused by the limitation of sociopragmatic knowledge. Nonnative speaker subjects do not always make complaints following the appropriate ways of NS's complaints. They tend to make complaints in a more explicit way, whereas native subjects use more implicit ways of complaints.

Moreover, the social norms involved in language use govern the appropriateness of specific speech acts (Manes, 1983). Regrettably, nonnative speakers may not be fully aware of all the socio- linguistic rules governing the appropriateness of speech acts in the target language (Einsentein & Bodman, 1998). This state may lead some second language learners to use their first language rules of speaking when using a second language (Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Welts, 1990; Bergam & Kasper, 1993; Olshtain & Weinback 1993; Weizman, 1993; Al-Amar, 2000; Tanck 2002; Umar, 2004.)

Keeping in mind the importance of the aforementioned issues and a serious lack of systematic studies conducted on the possible cross-cultural differences between American native speakers and Iranian EFL learners, the researcher thinks that the present study gains significance as the results would have fruitful effect by covering this gap and

adding to this body of research. Furthermore, the effect of gender variables of interlocutors was investigated.

1.3. Statement of the problem

For several decades now, linguists and language teachers have been aware of the importance of pragmatic competence, or pragmatic proficiency, in L2 learning and teaching. Communicative, or pragmatic, competence is the ability to use language forms in a wide range of environments, factoring in the relationships between the speakers involved and the social and cultural context of the situation (Lightbown& Spada, 1999; Gass& Selinker, 2001).

It has sometimes been seen that some speakers, though armed with the mastery of the grammar and vocabulary and thus considered fluent, are still unable to produce language that is socially and culturally appropriate.

One of the areas which seem to have made trouble for language learners is speech acts. According to Austin (1962) everything we do with words when we speak is called speech acts. As a matter of fact, native and nonnative speakers use speech acts differentially, even if they are in the same situation. This difference exists in pattern, form, semantic formula, and content. Bardovi Harlig (1996) stated that this may partly be the impact of their L1 and a lack of sufficient and appropriate amount of available linguistic input.

Unfortunately, many non-native speakers are not fully aware of all these differences and therefore use inappropriate language, as a result they may be considered rude or even insulting by the listener. Therefore, speech acts are important elements of communicative

competence, and speakers of a language need to know how to carry out speech acts to function in communicatively appropriate ways.

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Speech acts and their importance in establishing appropriate communication have arguably given rise to research them in both L1 and L2 learning. A great deal of research has been done on the speech acts of apologies and requests, including studies by Blum-Kulka and House (1989), Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989), Barlund and Yoshioka (1990), and Bergman and Kasper (1993) (as cited in Kasper and Rose, 2001). Fewer studies have been conducted on complaints and refusals; Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990), Chen (1996), and Murphy and Neu (1996) represent some of this research.

Considering all the above, this study is an attempt to investigate how the speech act of complaint is shared by Persian and English Native Speakers in social networks. What's more, this study aims to run a comparison between males and females to see if they have any significant differences using the given speech act is concerned. Moreover, the present study will throw light on the contribution made by Austin (1962) in the field of Speech Acts and Speech Act Theory, and on the other it highlights the significant contrasts in the speech act of complaint with regard to sex.

1.4. Significance of the study

A major challenge of foreign language teaching deals with understanding cultural differences in communication. One of the examples of cultural differences is Speech Acts. According to many researchers, acquisition of native-like production of speech acts

takes quite a long time (Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, 1984) because sociocultural strategies and sociolinguistic forms are not learned easily. Several studies (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Boxer & Pickering, 1995; Bouton, 1996; Kasper 1997) have shown that learners of high grammatical proficiency will not necessarily possess comparable pragmatic competence. Even grammatically advanced learners may use language inappropriately and show differences from target-language pragmatic norms. So awareness of the appropriate forms seems to be necessary to students.

1.5. Research Hypotheses

On the basis of the research question, the following hypotheses may be formulated. Hence, the statistical result of the study would either support or reject the hypotheses.

1. What are significant differences between native and non-native English users in using speech act of complaint?
2. What are significant differences between males and females native/non-native English users in using speech act of complaint?

1.6. Definition of Key Terms

1.6.1. Speech acts

It is an act that a speaker performs when he makes an utterance. When we offer an apology, greeting, complaint, invitation, compliment, or refusal we perform speech acts (Richards, Platt & Weber, 1985).

1.6.2. Speech act of complaint:

Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) asserted that in the speech act of complaint, the speaker expresses displeasure or annoyance as a reaction to a past or going action.

1.6.3. Pragmatic knowledge:

According to Hymes, in order to achieve communicative goals, learners must learn to speak not only grammatically, but also appropriately to. Consequently, they have to acquire not only linguistic rules such as morphology, syntax, phonology, and vocabulary, but they must acquire sociocultural rules of language use as well. (Anderson, 1990; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Boxer & Pickering, 1987; Edmondson, 1981; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986; Murphy & Neu, 1996; Manes, 1983; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Wolfson, 1981)

1.7. Summary of the Chapters

Chapter one of the study, *Introduction*, was meant as a point of departure. It was primarily designed to provide a complete and comprehensive introduction to the chapters which would come later. As such, it concerned itself with discussing the preliminaries, the purpose of the study, the scope of the study, the statement of the problems, and the outline of the study.

Chapter two, *Review of the Related Literature*, was designed as a means of reviewing the background history of the field of pragmatics, speech act theory in general and speech act of complaint in particular. It is helpful in the sense that it will provide some kind of justification, or, say, answer, to any question (about the design of the present study as it is) that may arise in the mind of the meticulous reader. In brief, this chapter: 1) elaborated on the concept of pragmatics and its significance in language learning 2) tried to illustrate the notion of speech act theory in general and speech act of complaint in particular 3) attempted to show the differences between The speech act of complaints in native speaker versus non-native speakers and 4) gender differences in complaint speech act

Chapter three, *Methodology*: (1) defined the key terms and concepts used throughout the study for purposes of clarifying the study; (2) described the materials used in the study and justified the selection of the corpus for the study; and (3) elaborated on the procedures used to the analysis of the data.

Chapter four, Results: (1) used necessary tables to present the results and findings of the data analysis; and (2) interpreted the tables statistically for purposes of making the study understandable.

Chapter five, Discussion and Conclusion, presented discussion of the findings and conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITRATURE

2.1. Overview

This chapter is intended to present some of the previous outcomes gained through implementing investigations and research related to the subject matter within the framework of the present study. The conceptual framework and a brief history of pragmatics are presented in the first sections. In next sections, speech act theory along with complaint speech act are explained in details. Finally, the contrasts in the speech act of complaint regarding native/nonnative speakers and gender are also discussed.

2.2. Pragmatics

Since the concept of communicative competence was introduced by Hymes, the value of communicative competence has been completely recognized as a goal of language teaching and learning in the field of second language acquisition. According to Hymes, in order to achieve communicative goals, learners must learn to speak not only grammatically, but also appropriately to. Consequently, they have to acquire not only linguistic rules such as morphology, syntax, phonology, and vocabulary, but they must acquire sociocultural rules of language use as well. (Anderson, 1990; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Boxer & Pickering, 1987; Edmondson, 1981; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986; Murphy & Neu, 1996; Manes, 1983; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Wolfson, 1981)

In the field of second/foreign language teaching and learning, the importance of communicative competence has been broadly acknowledged during the last few decades. Acquisition of socio-cultural rules commonly known as pragmatic competence is crucial to second language learners. As said by Tanck, speakers who seem to be fluent in a foreign language because of their command of the grammatical rules of that language and its vocabulary may still lack pragmatic competence, and consequently they may not be able to produce language that is socially and culturally appropriate (Tanck, 2002). Appropriateness of language use can be realized by acknowledging the social identity of the listener in terms of the relative social status and the level of acquaintance between participants (Moon, 2001). Besides, the social norms involved in language use also govern appropriateness of specific speech acts (Manes, 1983).

Regrettably, the socio- linguistic rules governing the appropriateness of speech acts in the target language may not be completely known by nonnative speakers (Einsentein & Bodman, 1998). Therefore, some second language learners may use their first language rules of speaking when using a second language (Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss–Welts, 1990; Bergam and Kasper, 1993; Olshtain & Weinback 1993; Weizman, 1993; Al-Amar, 2000; Tanck 2002; Umar, 2004.).

Pragmatics, a subfield of linguistics developed in the late 1970s, studies how people comprehend and produce a communicative act or speech act in a concrete speech

situation which is usually a conversation (hence conversation analysis). In each utterance or communicative act of verbal communication, pragmatics distinguishes two intents or meanings. One is the informative intent or the sentence meaning, and the other the communicative intent or speaker meaning (Leech, 1983; Sperber & Wilson, 1986).

Kasper defined pragmatic competence as the ability to comprehend and produce a communicative act which often includes one's knowledge about the social distance, social status between the speakers involved, the cultural knowledge such as politeness, and the linguistic knowledge explicit and implicit (Kasper, 1997). According to Stalnaker, pragmatics aims at characterizing the features of the speech context which help determine which proposition is expressed by a given sentence (Stalnaker 1972: 383). He also mentioned that the meaning of a sentence can be regarded as a function from a context (including time, place, and possible world) into a proposition, where a proposition is a function from a possible world into a truth value. Pragmatic aspects of meaning involve the interaction between an expression's context of utterance and the interpretation of elements within that expression.

The pragmatic subdomain of deixis or indexicality tries to describe the properties of shifters, indexicals, or token-reflexives, expressions, tense/aspect markers, etc whose meanings are stable but whose referents differ with the speaker, hearer, time and place of utterance, style or register, or intention of speech act. (See Levinson 1983: Chapter 2). Several aspects of language studied in pragmatics are: Deixis: in verbal communication and in its narrow sense refers to the contextual meaning of pronouns, and in its broad sense, what the speaker means by a particular utterance in a given speech context. Presupposition: refers to the logical meaning of a sentence or meanings which is logically associated with or entailed by a sentence. Performative: which means that by each utterance a speaker not only says something but also does certain things.

The study of performatives led to the hypothesis of Speech Act Theory according to which a speech event represents three acts: a locutionary act, an illocutionary act and a perlocutionary act (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). Implicature: which is an indirect or implicit meaning of an utterance derived from context that is not present from its conventional use.

In addition, pragmaticians are enthusiastic about discovering why interlocutors can

effectively converse with one another in a conversation. It is thought that interlocutors observe certain principles in their participation in order to sustain the conversation. One of these principles is the Cooperative Principle which supposes that by contributing to the ongoing speech event interactants cooperate in the conversation (Grice, 1975). Another supposition is the Politeness Principle which maintains that since people respect each other's face, interlocutors behave politely to one another (Brown & Levinson 1978, Leech, 1983).

Sperber and Wilson (1986) provided a cognitive explanation to social interactive speech events which holds that in verbal communication people try to be relevant to what they intend to say and to whom an utterance is intended. The pragmatic principles people abide by in one language are often different in another. As a result, there has been a mounting interest in how people in different languages observe a certain pragmatic principle.

In accordance with Cross-linguistic and cross-cultural studies, what is supposed to be polite in one language is sometimes not polite in another language. Yet, contrastive pragmatics is not restricted to the study of a certain pragmatic principles. Cultural breakdowns, pragmatic failure are also components of cross-cultural pragmatics. Another focus of research in pragmatics is learner language or interlanguage. This interest ultimately evolved into interlanguage pragmatics, a branch of pragmatics which particularly discusses how non-native speakers comprehend and produce a speech act in a target language and how their pragmatic competence develops over time (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Kasper, 1995).

So far, a small number of cross-sectional, longitudinal and theoretical studies on classroom basis have been carried out. Additionally, the potentials along the interface of pragmatics with SLA research have been broadly felt. Topics of instantaneous interest to which language teachers at large may contribute seem just many (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996).

Furthermore, pragmatics is divided into pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. Pragmalinguistics refers to linguistic strategies like directness, indirectness, language routines, and linguistic forms employed by speakers in communicative acts while

sociopragmatics describes the social conditions in which language use is appropriate (Leech,1983, Thomas,1983). Speech-act theory comprises a fundamental subdomain provided that pragmatics is ‘the study of linguistic acts and the contexts in which they are performed’ (Stalnaker 1972: 383).

The propositional content of utterance U can be differentiated from the speaker’s intention in uttering U(its illocutionary force). Wittgenstein, Austin, and Searle initiated the identification and classification of speech acts. In an explicit performative utterance (e.g. I hereby promise to marry you), the speaker does something, that is to say the speaker performs an act whose character is determined by her intention, rather than simply saying something.

2.2.1. History of Pragmatics

Even though pragmatics is a comparatively new branch of linguistics, research on it can be dated back to ancient Greece and Rome where the term *pragmaticus*’ is found in late Latin and *pragmaticos*’ in Greek, both meaning of being practical.

The influence of American philosophical doctrine of pragmatism credited modern use and current practice of pragmatics. For example, the pragmatic interpretation of semiotics and verbal communication studies in *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* by Charles Morris (1938), helped efficiently explain the differences of mainstream enterprises in semiotics and linguistics. According to him whilst semantics studies the relations of signs to the objects to which the signs are applicable and syntactics studies the formal relations of signs to one another, pragmatics studies the relations of signs to interpreters. Grice (1975) contributed to the modern treatment of meaning by distinguishing two kinds of meaning, natural and non-natural. He proposed that pragmatics should focus on the more practical dimension of meaning, that is to say the conversational meaning which was later formulated in a variety of ways (Levinson, 1983; Leech, 1983).

Practical concerns also helped shift pragmaticians' focus to explaining naturally occurring conversations which resulted in hallmark discoveries of the Cooperative Principle by Grice (1975) and the Politeness Principle by Leech (1983).

Consequently, pragmatics was explicitly defined as natural language understanding (Green, 1989).

The effect of pragmatism has led to among other things, to cross linguistic international studies of language use which resulted in Sperber and Wilson's (1986) relevance theory which influentially explains how people comprehend and utter a communicative act. With the involvement of researchers mostly from the Continental countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway and Belgium the Anglo-American tradition of pragmatic study has been extremely expanded and developed. The establishment of the IPrA (the International Pragmatic Association) in Antwerp in 1987 is a symbol of this development was. IPrA, in its working document, proposed to consider pragmatics as a theory of linguistic adaptation and look into language use from all aspects (Verschueren, 1987).

Following this, pragmatics has been conceptualized as to include micro and macro components (May, 1993). Throughout its development by keeping to its tract of being practical in treating the everyday concerned meaning, pragmatics has been guided by the philosophical practice of pragmatism and evolved to maintain its independence as a linguistic subfield.

Since community-specific rules govern different languages' use and their transfer of language (L1) rules when using a second language could lead to generate pragmatically improper linguistic forms Al-Amar (2000) caution that non-native speakers who do not apply pragmatically proper language may appear "uncooperative" at the least or more seriously "rude" or "insulting" (Al-Amar, 2000, p.4). Scollon and Scollon (1993) also declare that breach of pragmatic rules is bound to cause communication breakdowns.

Applied linguists and above all those who are concerned with second language teaching are expected to deal with the question of pragmatics and speech act aptness more seriously in order to avoid from such miscommunications and their negative impact on human relations. Indeed, competences, whether linguistic or pragmatic, should be developed and learned systematically (Kasper, 1997).