

Interpreting Contexts: The Power of Pragmatics in Communication

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Abstract

Pragmatics and communication competence plays a significant role in communication because it entails the skill to apply language in a socially acceptable manner, in different contexts. Pragmatic competence transcends the knowledge of language, and it allows human beings to negotiate social norms, expectation, and cultural practices in the process of interpreting and producing utterances. This article discusses the importance of pragmatics in communication competence in relation to its role in understanding implicit meaning, the use of politeness strategy, and turn taking in conversations. The paper discusses the importance of pragmatic competence in improving verbal and non-verbal communication especially in intercultural communication. It shows the significance of learning practical skills in order to build understanding with one another, and reduce misunderstanding in various communicative contexts.

Keywords: *pragmatics; communication; language competence; linguistic knowledge; social norms; expectations; cultural practices; verbal and non-verbal communication*

1. Introduction

Pragmatics, which is one of the subfields of linguistics is concerned with social aspects of the language use i.e. how meaning is constructed in context and social interactions between speakers and listeners. Pragmatics are variously defined and emphasize its diverse nature in communication. Levinson (1983) defines pragmatics as the study of speech as it is used in practical contexts by speakers which takes into consideration context, inference and the social norms. It was framed by Austin (1962) to be the study of the manner in which actions are accomplished through the use of language wherein he focused on speech acts such as requests, promises, and apologies. Grice (1975) has approached it otherwise, by identifying pragmatics by the process of conveying and deciphering meaning by speakers using implicature that depends on conversational maxims and joint knowledge. Later on, pragmatics was characterized as the approach to the study of how speakers adapt their language to the social demands and acquire effective communication, an approach that highlights the significance of context, culture, and power relations in defining how language is used.

The pragmatics and language use relationship is based on the fact that without taking an interest in the social context in which a language is used, one cannot be capable of comprehending and efficiently using the language. Using language is not only about the literal use of words but also how to use language in various contexts in accordance to the social rules. As an example, a single sentence may have different meanings based on the tone, setting or the relationship between the speakers. Pragmatics describes these variations and gives the structure of how speakers can coordinate their language to suit to the requirements of the situation. The ability of people to operate within these layers of subtle and intricate meaning, therefore, depends on pragmatic competence as a key to successful

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communication. It involves the interpretation of what is said in a particular utterance and what is between the lines, non-verbal messages that may most probably be employed to supplement communication. The competence thus encompasses various aspects of language use like speech actions, politeness strategies, and turn taking in the conversation itself and ability to extract context in the process of meaning creation.

Pragmatic competence is even more important in intercultural communication, when speakers should not just be aware of their own cultural norms, but should recognize and adapt to the other cultures so that their interaction would be good and respectful. Communication is bound to fail unless pragmatic competence is practiced. Misunderstanding can be caused when speakers do not see the contextual aspect of language, making it awkward, insulting, or unsuccessful in reaching the intended communicative purpose. Pragmatic competence therefore transcends grammatical accuracy and deals with the intricacies of language applied in real life situations and in dynamic situations. Essentially, it allows speakers to be socially competent communicators, who can interpret and define language, which appeals to the expectations and norms of their interlocutors.

Research has been more focused on the development of pragmatic competence among Indian children and how this relates to language acquisition and its application in social situations. Indicatively, Vaz (2019) evaluated pragmatic language skills in teens and revealed that the debate is more centered on academic language and not the pragmatic use in informal or social contexts. Bansal (2023) performed a study on pragmatic competence in children speaking Hindi and discovered that children can appropriately use the language in various social situations in making requests, apologizing, or using figures of speech, and that ability to do so significantly depends on age and exposure. Also, Afshan and Kumar (2023) examined the application of pragmatic strategies in literary writing by Indian authors who write in the English language, which depicted the importance of pragmatic competence in written communication. Another study has also been carried out with clinical research and was conducted by Rasheeka et al. (2024), who surveyed speech-language pathologists in India about their practice in assessing pragmatic language in preschool children. The studies indicate that though pragmatic competence is becoming an issue of concern, assessment and application still has a challenge in the Indian context.

The pragmatic competence has been more diverse and researched. One of the most prominent areas of research has been second language learning, especially the topic of building pragmatic competence in learners who undergo an immersion, study-abroad program. Barron (2019) conducted the review of several studies and came to the conclusion that sojourns abroad tend to contribute to the pragmatic competence development, especially among learners in the English-speaking countries. Equally, Ren (2015) has talked about the way international students develop remarkably in their pragmatic competencies, particularly with regards to comprehending cultural norms and proper use of social lingo. Xiao (2015) conducted the study of adult learners of English and concluded that the combination of the study-abroad experiences and the classroom learning affected the acquisition of pragmatic competence in the learners. The role of pragmatics in intercultural communication has also been studied as researchers found that the knowledge of what language does in various social situations is very essential to effective intercultural communication. The Cambridge Handbook of Intercultural Pragmatics (2016) emphasizes how the importance of intercultural experiences in the development of pragmatic skills, which study-abroad programs offer a great exposure, but the ultimate results of the learning process are closely linked to personal, social, and institutional elements. These studies reinstate the relevance of both the immersive language experiences and practical instruction in realizing pragmatic competence of the second language learners.

One can say that pragmatic competence is central to successful communication and that it is cultivated not only in the environment of interpersonal interaction but also through the supervision of learning structures. Nevertheless, although studies in India are increasingly orienting their research towards pragmatic competence, especially with regard to child development and in clinical practice, the international research is largely concerned with the effects of immersion and intercultural exposure to pragmatic skills enhancement. More specialized research and materials are still necessary in India to facilitate the building of pragmatic competence especially during clinical and educational situations.

2. How To Understand Pragmatic Competence

Linguistic competence is the capability of a speaker to internalize and execute the rules of the structure of a language. This is in terms of the mechanics of syntax (structure of the sentence), morphology (word structure), phonology (sound systems) and semantics (meaning of words). An individual who has good linguistic competence is able to make grammatically correct sentences and he is able to comprehend the literal meaning of such sentences. To have an example of this, the sentence "She gave him the book" is grammatically accurate and semantically understandable in meaning, according to the principles of syntax and word order. Pragmatic competence however transcends this mechanical knowledge and dwells on the effective use of language in various social situations. It is knowing how to apply language and to accomplish communication objectives and manipulate social conventions, including requesting, apologizing, or showing courtesy. This entails being able to comprehend when, where, and why particular forms of language are relevant in a particular situation not only being able to read through indirect speech acts, to control conversational turn-taking, and to modify one's language depending on the social context, audience, and purpose of communication.

Pragmatic competence has several major aspects that constitute it, and they are all important in ensuring that communication is not only grammatically correct but also socially effective and contextually suitable. One of them is speech acts that is defined as the various kinds of acts we do using language. As an illustration, we say when passing the salt; we do not simply ask a question but we are requesting that person to pass the salt. The pragmatic competence requires understanding the various speech acts, requests, offers, apologies, complaints, and knowing when and how to use them suitably. An example is in a formal place of speaking, one would say, would you mind just passing the salt? to be more polite, but in a non-formal situation, a mere pass the salt, 'please' would be enough. This flexibility is included in pragmatic competence which makes the speech acts suitable to the situation.

The other significant element is 'politeness strategies', which can be considered as controlling social relationships and expressing respect or deference. The notion of politeness is usually associated with the notions of face (social identity) and face-threatening behaviour. As an example, it may be saying 'Could you please assist me with this?', is a more civilized and less blunt manner of seeking help rather than asking somebody to help him/her with this. The pragmatic competence involves the ability to reduce requests, not be imposing on others, to balance between being direct and social norms and relationships. In others, directness is acceptable whereas in others, indirectness is the best way to go and being able to distinguish between their preferences is an important element of pragmatic competence.

Another crucial element is 'turn taking' in conversation. It takes a concept of control of the flow of the conversation, knowing when to speak, when to listen, and how to give some kind of signal on whether one would want to take a turn in a conversation. As an example, conversational turn taking is usually controlled using cues like rising intonation or body language, in English. But in other cultures, being overlapped or interrupting might be more typical or even a demonstration of interest but in others, it might be viewed as disrespectful. A highly competent speaker is pragmatic in that he or she knows how to adapt to such differences and make sure that he or she takes part in the conversation in the most suitable way and does not interrupt the flow.

Another related element is 'indirectness' and 'implicature'. Pragmatic competence entails the knowledge of how to communicate meaning without directness particularly when the speaker does not want to be too straightforward or insensitive. As is the case when a person says, 'It is cold in here, is it?', they are not necessarily just making a statement but probably suggesting that he or she wants the window closed or the heat to be increased. It is crucial to interpret these indirect meanings and whether they are socially appropriate to use or not. In certain cultures, it is better to be indirect because it demonstrates politeness and respect to the independence of the listener, whereas directness may be appreciated in the other cultures because it is clear and effective.

The other element is called 'deixis', and it is the process of recognizing the way a language is used to refer or to indicate time, place, and people, basing on the context of the discussion. Such words as 'here', 'there', 'now' and then all need a context to provide meaning. As an example, the sentence 'I will meet you there', has got a certain premise on the common understanding of where there is. Good pragmatic competent speakers apply and decode

deixis in the right way and they know that the meaning of such words varies over time, place, and linkage between the parties involved.

The element of 'cultural awareness' is another necessary component of pragmatic competence. The way of communication varies in different cultures, and this is the most important aspect of communication between different cultures to comprehend the culture and communicate effectively. To illustrate this, in certain cultures, eye contact when talking to someone indicates that the person is attentive and respectful but in other cultures, eye contact can be deemed as rude or confrontational. Recognizing and accommodating these cultural differences is called the pragmatic competence which means to avoid misunderstanding and facilitate the process of interaction more effectively.

Pragmatic competence is much more of a simple knowledge of the literal meaning of words. It entails the ability to locate and relocate the rules and contextual issues of the use of language in a process of socialization. It involves learning speech acts, politeness management, turn-taking, indirect meanings, proper use of deixis and cultural awareness. With the help of the development of a high pragmatic competence, people can communicate better, prevent misinterpreting, and establish more sustainable social relations.

3. Role Of Pragmatics In Communication

The pragmatic competence is important to make communication easy through the activities of speakers to make the language socially suitable in ways that conform to the expectations of the audience, the context, and the purpose. It transcends grammatical correctness in an additional way that encompasses the skills to understand and generate language in manners that are contextually proper, considerate of the social norms, and that are favourable to attain communicative purposes. To comprehend the role of pragmatic competence in communication, it is important to consider the way it contributes to the process of communication, both verbal and non-verbal interaction and control of the conversation process as well as co-occurrence of understanding.

3.1. Speech Acts and Pragmatic Competence

The ability to carry out and decode speech acts is one of the key aspects of pragmatic competence that we achieve using language. Language is not only a means of passing information as Austin (1962) talks about, to talk is to act (p. 12), but it is the way to perform acts like to make requests, make apologies, and give orders. Such actions should be interpreted in the context of certain social conditions since non-observance of the social norms may lead to miscommunication or friction of the social character. To take an example, apologizing in an English language can be accompanied by such phrases as 'I am sorry' or 'I apologize', but these expressions can be inappropriate in some situations, cultures, or they should be accompanied by the right degree of formality or sincerity. Direct requests, on the other hand, may be perceived to be too rude in some cultures, where indirectness is preferred. In Japanese, a speaker can employ such phrases as 'Would you mind...?' to be polite, or to ask politely by using expressions like, if it is not too much trouble to keep the other person polite and not to insist (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Pragmatic competence therefore enables an individual to adapt their language in order to make certain that their speech acts are fitting in their context and their audience.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness strategies are a major aspect of pragmatic competence that is important in balancing social relationship in communication. In their opinion, successful communication demands speakers to have control over the face of the speaker and the listener, which is the positive social value that an individual is actually asserting about himself (p. 61). These strategies make sure that speakers go through talks in a manner that takes into consideration the social hierarchies and need to be independent and to affiliate. As an example, in English, a direct request, like, "Give me that book" can be interpreted as being rude, and a polite request, like, 'Could you please give me that book?' minimizes the demand by being respectful to the autonomy of the listener. A highly pragmatic competent speaker has the ability to determine their degree of directness depending on the relationship and the situation. At the work place where deference and respect are of utmost importance, an even more formal form like, 'Would you mind giving me that book?' could be employed to indicate deference.

In addition, pragmatic competence in intercultural communication entails the knowledge that various cultures might have varying demands of politeness. As an example, certain Asian cultures like the Japanese or Korean culture give preference to indirectness and humility during requests whereas the western cultures may focus on

directness and clarity (Scollon and Scollon, 2001). Therefore, good communicators should be sensitive to the culture to avoid misunderstandings and keep the interpersonal relations positive.

Turn taking, which is an essential part of conversation, is also needed to achieve effective communication. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) in their study of conversational analysis showed that turn-taking is structured and culturally particular process. Speakers who possess pragmatic competence are aware of how to cope with when to speak and when to listen. They know the indicators, pauses, intonation, and body language that signify whether it is their time to talk or not in the discussion and when to wait and listen as the other person talks. For example, in English discussions, individuals tend to employ minimal replies such as 'Mm-hmm' or right to demonstrate their interest in listening and this would help in the smooth flow of the conversation. However, unlike in other languages, e.g. in Italian, overlapping speech is more natural and interruption can be perceived as an indicator of interest or excitement (Heritage, 1984). The pragmatic competence assists people in coping with such nuances in the patterns of conversation and make it easier and more productive.

One of the most important points of pragmatic competence is the knowledge and the ability to interpret indirect speech and implicature. In order to describe the meaning conveyed by the words beyond the literal meaning of words, Grice (1975) introduced the principle of implicature as a way to explain how speakers convey meaning through shared knowledge and conversational maxims. To take a case, when a speaker forms the sentence, 'It is getting late', he or she may not be asking anyone to go somewhere but he or she is indirectly trying to imply it. The listener who picks out this little nuance was in a state of pragmatic competence, as his or her interpretation of what the speaker intended to communicate as opposed to what he or she said. Contextual interpretation is thus a skill that should not be ignored in mitigating miscommunication especially in situations where communication is indirect or unclear. As an example, during a conversation, one could say, 'I do not have any money at the moment', and it may mean that he/she required help depending on the relations between the interlocutors. A speaker possessing pragmatic competence knows how to communicate indirectly, and how to understand such cues when applied by others. The pragmatic competence in this aspect means being able to know when to be direct and at other times being indirect and less direct in expressing a message so that the message is communicated without being offensive.

The other significant aspect of pragmatic competence is the interpretation of deictic expressions, words or phrases whose meaning is determined by the context of their depiction in the context, as in the use of this, there, and now. Levinson (1983) clarifies that deixis enables the speakers to mention time, place and individuals, but these mentions can only be understood in context of the discussion. Indicatively, when one says 'I will meet you there', then the listener must be sure of what he means by there and unless such a context is shared, misunderstanding may occur. Pragmatic competence means knowing how and when to use deixis and being conscious of the fact that different cultures and languages may use a different set of deixis. A speaker in one culture can use spatial deixis more, whereas the other cultures can use a temporal deixis. The effectiveness with which a speaker interprets and uses deictic expressions is determined by the knowledge of the speaker on the meaning of these expressions in a particular situation, thereby facilitating more explicit communication.

The pragmatic competence plays a necessary role in enabling effective communication especially in the understanding of the social environment, politeness, conversation of indirect meanings, and language appropriateness in various cultures. Pragmatic competence, as pointed out by a number of scholars, assists in shaping how people communicate and this affects their communication ability to control the conversation, do speech acts, and interpret language peculiarities in particular situations. High pragmatic competence speakers can prevent instances of miscommunication, establish rapport and enjoy more effective and smooth interactions especially in intercultural communication where cultural norms may be different. Therefore, the pragmatic competence needs to be developed as an essential part of successful communication in various types of social settings, as well as to make sure that the messages are made in the right way and with the right level of respect.

4. Pragmatics And Intercultural Communication

Effective intercultural communication involves people grappling with inconsistencies in communication patterns, social statuses, and values on politeness, formality and directness. Among the major issues in intercultural communication, one can identify the knowledge of politeness strategies. The different cultures make different

demands on what is good and rude and what is overt and indirect in a particular circumstance. Indicatively, in most western societies, verbal candour is frequently valued and a communicator can just tell you what he or she wants or requests in a manner like, 'can you provide me with that report by 3 PM?'. As an example, Japanese or Korean cultures can prefer indirect dialogue, and politeness and respect are expressed in more indirect inquiries, such as: 'I' was wondering whether we could have the report by 3 PM'. This indirectness is not an indication that one is not clear but this is a way of limiting the social implication of the request that does not ruin the face of the other person and that the relationship may go on smoothly.

To mention a few case studies, a communication error that arose in a business meeting between an American team and a Japanese team is the difference in communication style. The team of Americans who are used to the open communication style was direct in their ideas and stated exactly what they expected. An example is when one American manager said point-blank, we need you to get this done by the end of Friday with no excuse. However, the Japanese team, as the culture of which places high emphasis on indirectness and politeness in communication, did not react with equal directness. Rather, they provided shallow answers like, 'we will do our best' or 'it might be tough, but we will see what we could do'. These answers were taken as evasions or lack of professionalism by the American team who expected a firm commitment. They took it personally when the Japanese team did not give them a solid answer as a sign of lack of commitment or urgency and this caused frustration. To the Japanese team, the direct approach appeared to be inconsiderate and too demanding because it failed to uphold members of the team to acknowledge the significance of upholding harmony (wa) and authority respect. Japanese culture does not tend to disagree or make outright refusals because it may result in the other party losing face. Pragmatics of the American team, which emphasizes being direct and efficient, did not correspond to the Japanese team and its politeness and respect to the social order (Kashiwabara, 2010). The case of pragmatic competence in cross-cultural communication is extremely important as demonstrated in this case. The American team had to know the Japanese focus on indirect communication, humility and respect of authority. On the same note, the Japanese team would have been able to appreciate the fact that the American team was used to direct communication and that they needed a promise.

In another case study, the time perception was a major cultural barrier in a negotiation between a German and a Brazilian company. The Germans are well known to be punctual and concentrated on efficiency and thus expected the Brazilian team to be at the meetings on time and adhere to schedule. The German negotiators were physically irritated when the Brazilian team came late to the meeting, because they thought that being punctual was a safety of being a professional and also a sign of respect (Meyer, 2014). But the Brazilian team, who have a more relaxed culture of flexibility and relationship-building as opposed to time-keeping, did not consider the delay to be a serious problem. In their case, it was on building a personal relationship first and then discussing business. The Brazilian society values socializing and rapport building to create trust and their importance supersedes being punctual when meeting. This difference in culture caused some tension at the initial steps of the encounter. The Germans felt that the Brazilians were disrespectful and unprofessional, whereas the Brazilians felt that the Germans were too strict and not interested in creating personal connection with them prior to discussing business. The case has shown how various cultural values like time orientation and the importance of personal relationship in business can put cross cultural communication into difficulty. Pragmatic competence in this case would have entailed the realization of the varying cultural norms related to time and relations on the part of both parties. The Germans might have been more flexible and patient, whereas the Brazilians should have been more cognizant of the German obsessions with time.

One more was the lack of similarity in the delivery of feedback and expectations in an academic partnership between an American professor and a Chinese graduate student resulted in a communication breakdown. The American professor was used to provide explicit and even harsh comments on the work of the student and was sure that such open-minded evaluation could help the student become a better one. The professor used such words as, 'this part is written badly and should be rewritten absolutely'. The Chinese student on the other hand was brought up in an environment where harmony is very important and one should not be blunt. Criticism, particularly in the public or semi-public context is perceived as a loss of face in the Chinese culture and is usually avoided. The student was embarrassed and discouraged by the harsh feedback, and in that case, he did not demonstrate dissatisfaction and worked on the basis that their professor did not approve of their abilities. Consequently, motivation dropped and the professor realized that the quality of work by the student had deteriorated and this resulted into frustration. This misinterpretation was attributed to the fact that the professor was not aware that the direct approach, though culturally

fitting in U.S would have been culturally irrelevant to the Chinese student who would have been okay with indirect or positive feedback (Li, 2009). The case shows the significance of learning about the styles of feedback in intercultural communication. The American professor should have been more sensitive of the fact that direct criticism may create a sense of face and self-esteem in the mind of the Chinese student. Instead, the student would have needed to be more interculturally sensitive to express his/her dissatisfaction with the type of feedback. Both sides had to work towards practical ability to give feedback in a manner that was responsive to the culture of the other party.

Another case study was that an Indian call center rep was talking to a British customer in one of the customer service interactions. The customer who was accustomed to getting clear and efficient service in the UK got frustrated when the Indian representative requested him to give personal information severally when the customer had already given the same. This appeared unproductive and frustrating to the British customer which resulted in annoyance and a rude demeanour in the dialogue. But the Indian representative had a culturally particular style in which politeness and thoroughness were the key. The training of customer service agents in India is done so that all the essential details can be established to guarantee optimum service. The many requests of the information did not indicate inefficiency but the attempt to give correct and specific support. The communication style of the representative was contradictory to the British efficiency and straightforwardness in service relationship (Rajagopalan, 2015). The case shows how the customer service expectations vary in terms of communication styles. The British customer should have realized that the constant demands of the Indian representative were due to his wish to be comprehensive and polite and not due to ineffectiveness. On the other hand, the Indian representative would have been able to feel the frustration of the British customer and modify their approach to make it shorter. The pragmatic competence in this case would entail both parties adapting their styles of communicating to the cultural expectations of the other party.

These case studies reveal that cross-cultural communication issues are frequently occasioned by differences in pragmatic competence such as the difference in expectations towards politeness, time, feedback, and conversational style. Effective communication within intercultural settings demands more than just language skills but human knowledge of the role of language within a cultural system. Practical ability helps one in preventing conflicts, forming better relations and effective cross-cultural communication.

The Conversational Maxims by Grice (1975) are very relevant in intercultural communication, especially the relevance and quantity maxims. Westerners would be more inclined to adhere to such maxims, offering sufficient information to the listener so that they can get the point without having to go into details. But within certain Asian cultures the speaker might give more background or contextual information to make sure that the listener is properly informed as is the case with traditional Chinese communication. As an example, a Chinese speaker may go into a long explanation without straight to the point and answer the question, as it indicates respect towards the interview partner who is supposed to grasp all the aspects of the problem. An American counterpart may consider this as an unnecessary elaboration, and how inter cultural differences may create misunderstandings when pragmatic competence does not exist. Turn taking during conversations also differs greatly with different cultures, which will influence the expression of pragmatic competence when communicating in different cultures. Turn-taking during conversations are relatively fast and simple in most western cultures. In some cases, interruptions are regarded as an indicator of interest or attention as long as it does not interfere too much with the speech of the speaker. Conversely, in other cultures like in the Middle East or along the eastern part of Asia, overlapping speech may be taken to be rude and disruptive, and turn taking may be more formal and a speaker waits to get specific indications before speaking. A lack of understanding of these cues may cause discomfort or frustration in intercultural communication because either of the parties might feel that they are being impatient or rude by the other. Pragmatic competence in this regard means not just that one knows when to talk and when not to talk but also that one knows the degree of interruption that is considered acceptable in a certain culture.

Also, indirect speech acts play a vital role in intercultural communication, in which speakers do not directly indicate something but instead use an implication. As an instance, the phrase *It is getting late* in English, when considered in different contexts, may be understood in many ways such as a mere observation, or even a hint that the conversation should end. On the contrary, in other cultures, such indirectness is not always as widespread or has different connotations. In the Russian culture, communication can be direct and, in this case, the same comment on time may be understood literally and not a hint to stop the argument. An individual of a direct culture may not be able

to see through the indirect speech act, and may be left puzzled or even ignored when he or she fails to notice the connotation behind the utterance.

The intercultural communication depends on the concept of the face and face-threatening acts (Brown and Levinson, 1987). The term 'face' is used to describe the image that one has of oneself in terms of social interaction and this image will be either positive (and one wants to be liked or admired) or negative (and one does not want to be forced into something). Keen on face-oriented culture such as Japan or Korea, communication is usually organized in such a way that it neither includes face-threatening actions, the actions that might embarrass, belittle, or compel the listener- nor does it exclude them. During a business meeting, say, a Japanese manager may say in a way that he disagrees without stating that, 'it is a bad idea', but says phrases such as 'I am not sure whether that will work'. As a contrast, in more direct societies like the United States or Germany, being straight forward may be considered more effective and truthful. In such sensitive dealings with face, pragmatic competency in intercultural contexts is learning to recognize these negotiations and learn when to save a face by not telling the truth directly or indirectly.

The role of pragmatic competence in intercultural communication is another complicated issue because of cultural differences in non-verbal communication. Different cultures have varying meanings of non-verbals as they include gestures, eye contact, and body language. As an example, eye contact is regarded as an indication of attentiveness and confidence in the United States, and excessive eye contact in certain Asian cultures can be interpreted as disrespect or even confrontational. In the same manner, there is a wide range of physical proximity in conversation which is what is believed to be a good distance between two people talking. Whereas Italians may talk in a very close proximity and as a sign of warmth and interest, people of the Scandinavian countries may not be comfortable with this and may wish to have a higher distance. Intercultural communication pragmatic competence entails that one learns about such non-verbal messages and modulates his or her behaviour to prevent miscommunication or offence.

The pragmatic competence in intercultural communication does not only mean being able to possess the knowledge on the rules of a particular language, but being able to figure out the particularities of a given culture having a way of communicating, and adjusting personal conduct to it. As Holmes (1995) puts it, 'Pragmatics is not only the art of saying the right things but also say the right things right when and right' (p. 32). This is especially important in intercultural communication that presupposes the existence of expectations and patterns of communication of each cultural group. Learning these expectations can assist people to prevent misunderstandings and earn good relationship as well as to improve collaboration in a multitude of contexts, such as business meetings and in a social context.

Thus, practical expertise concerning intercultural communication is vital in the process of manoeuvring around the intricate maze of social expectations, cultural variations and language conventions that characterize human relationships. It encompasses subtle approach to politeness, taking of turns, indirectness, non-verbal communication and the notion of face that are all part of effective communication in the multicultural environment. With the continuous growth in the number of cross-cultural exchanges through globalization, the pragmatic competence is becoming a more important aspect in ensuring effective, respectful and productive communication between and among cultures.

5. Need For International Pragmatic Training

The internationalized world has placed communication between cultures as one of the most important issues ever. With the increasing interactions of the people of different cultural backgrounds in the business, education, diplomacy and other aspects, the requirement of intercultural pragmatic training has been of utmost priority. Pragmatic competence is the capacity to use language as it relates to a social situation, that is, not only the literal meaning of words, but the social implications, hints at social politeness, or non-verbal communication, which are culture-specific. Among the most important motives why intercultural pragmatic trainings are needed, it must be stated that the sphere of communication is hardly concerned with the language itself; it is also conditioned by the cultural context that serves as the environment of communication. The manner in which a request is made in one culture could be straightforward and clear whereas in a different culture, a request could be anticipated to be made in a subtler way through hints or softening words in an attempt not to sound imposing or embarrassing. This is because without intercultural pragmatic

competence, people may easily misunderstand such nuances thus causing miscommunication, offense, or even relationship breakdowns.

It has been established in research that most intercultural communication issues are brought about by the variation in pragmatic norms. As an example, Americans are habitually extreme in their communication whereas individuals in East Asian cultures like Japan and China are more indirect particularly when it comes to disagreement or refusal (Brown and Levinson, 1987). These differences in approaches can cause a misunderstanding, where a straight forward statement communication can be taken by another culture, which embraces indirectness, as rude or pugnacious. Moreover, pragmatics is not just confined to the verbal communication, but it is also the ability to understand and interpret non-verbal communication i.e., gestures, eye contact, and personal space, which varies in cultures. In the case of maintaining eye contact, the communicator can consider it as an indication of attentiveness and sincerity in the second example of Western culture, but in Japan, it will be regarded as rude or offensive (Gudykunst and Kim, 2003).

Intercultural pragmatic training, therefore, assists people to be aware of these differences in the cultures and provides them with the proficiency required to adjust their communication mode to suit the culture. To a business, this training may save it a lot of money in case of any possible misunderstanding, enhance better negotiation and build good working relation with people across the borders. To teachers and learners, knowledge of the cultural differences in the language usage helps them in balancing their academic and personal lives in the international or multicultural world more easily. Moreover, within the framework of diplomacy, the awareness of pragmatic norms can be the key to effective negotiations and cross-cultural relationships without conflicts.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, intercultural pragmatic training is the key to the modern globalized world because individuals of different cultures have to interact regularly. With the creation of pragmatic competence, people are able to cross the cultural boundaries, enhance communication, and avoid misunderstandings, which would otherwise destroy relationships, be it in business, education, or diplomacy. With further convergence of cultures in the global environment, the rate at which a person can adjust his/her communication style to suit the culture of another person or group will become a key skill to be learned. It has become a crucial issue and hence it is preferable that organizations, institutions and individuals should focus more on developing intercultural pragmatic competence so that they are able to negotiate the intricacies of global encounters. In this way, we can not only empower our self-relationship with others and our professional connection but also make the communication on a global scale more peaceful, productive, and respectful.

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