PRAGMATIC TRANSFER: AN INTERLANGUAGE STUDY OF PASHTO AND SIRAIKI ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

Based on the interlanguage study of Pashto and Siraiki English language learners, this article investigates the functions and effectiveness of learners' pragmatic transfer from L1 to L2 that facilitates learning English as target language. This study investigates the Learners accomplishment of speech acts such as apology and requests in the target language by relying on the linguistic conventions and pragmatic norms of their mother tongue. The present effort is made to explore this phenomenon of pragmatic transfer in the realisation of these speech acts duly observed among Pashto and Siraiki English language learners belonging to monolingual and monoculture backgrounds who come to the university to pursue higher studies. A qualitative method and two data collection tools are used in the process of collecting and analyzing the data that is written discourse completion tasks (DCTs) and semi-structured interviews. Only eight participants belonging to Pashto and Siraiki cultural and linguistic backgrounds respectively from whom data is collected through DCTs and were also interviewed later. In the entire process of analysis, findings revealed that Pashto speakers were more pragmatic and indirect in the realisation of speech acts on requests and more direct in apologies whereas Siraiki speakers were more indirect and polite during the accomplishment of speech acts.

Keywords: *Pragmatic Transfer, Interlanguage Study, Speech acts, Pashto & Saraiki English Language Learners*

INTRODUCTION

Speech is a natural skill and an attribute of any language speaker. Besides, this study of frequent transference among languages by the learners is a part of newly emerging discipline known as Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP, hereafter). It, therefore, according to Kasper (2005), provides the subject matter for studying the use of language, that is, either production or comprehension of the monolingual learner's interlanguage from a pragmatic transfer point of view and the process of as how learners acquisition of the pragmatic categories affect the target language. Moreover, Looking at role of L1 in ILP is to seriously consider role of pragmatic transfer within frameworks of cross-cultural pragmatics and SLA (Second Language Acquisition) research. In fact, the links which connects interlanguage pragmatics to majority SLA research is true phenomenon of pragmatic transfer or cross-linguistic influence? This area of ILP has further been elaborated to expand the scope of the field in the form of pragmatic comprehension, the production of linguistic action, can be the rapid development of pragmatic competence, and most importantly, pragmatic transfer and communicative effect.

Likewise, pragmatic transfer has been defined in numerous ways, but true definitions of transfer are fundamentally vague because they seek to incorporate any the kind of transfer (strategic or automatic) at any kind and stage of linguistic level. In this regard, Odlin (1989), for instance, acknowledges: "Transfer is influence resulting from similarities and differences between target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired" (p. 27). Defining pragmatic transfer is not an easy task because of researchers' discrepancy about how to define that truly reflects the scope of pragmatics. So, the recommended definitions are reflective of this problem. According to Wolfson (1989), "The use of rules of speaking from one's own native speech community, when interacting with members of host community or simply either speaking or writing in a second language is known as sociolinguistic or pragmatic transfer" (p. 141). In this definition, terms 'pragmatic' & 'sociolinguistic' are used interchangeably and so are 'sociolinguistic rules' and 'rules of speaking', referring to 'patterns and conventions of language behavior' (p. 14).

The present study has investigated the socio-pragmatic transfer conventions, that is, the use of the already acquired cultural and linguistic resources are being used either speaking or writing in another language. The researcher has observed this phenomenon of transfer of mother tongue linguistic and cultural resources among university graduate level students in ESL context. The study further explores the pragmatic transfer through direct and indirect discourse strategies espoused during the accomplishment of speech acts realisation are also explored in the target language production of Pashto and Siraiki learners of English language.

Research Questions
  ➢ What are those specific cultural and linguistic resources that are primarily transferred from the mother tongue to the target language (English) by Siraiki and Pashto English language Learners?
  ➢ Why do learners use pragmatic transfer as a resource for accomplishing different communicative tasks in the target language?
  ➢ How does pragmatic transfer affect the pragmatic competence of the selected ESL learners in the target language?

LITERATURE REVIEW
Considering pragmatics and pragmatic transfer, cultural difference might be seen the first thing that comes to serious contemplation, Similarly, Leech (1983) has drawn a distinction between pragma-linguistics and socio-pragmatics, which is the speakers' cultural background based on their first language; the other one is the speakers' first language background and focuses particularly on the second language proficiency. In other words, when some special pragmatic features occur in a speaker's second language production, there may be three possible causes for that—either it could be the speaker's cultural background, or the influence of the speakers' first language's, or it might be the speaker's proficiency in second language. Moreover, the speaker is not necessarily be

competent enough to accomplish each and every communicative act in the second language because of his unawareness and less competence in the target language as how to use this phrase well enough, and just avoiding it consciously or subconsciously.

Moreover, with the expansion of globalization and the longing to communicate to a variety of communities with different cultures has become the need than before for L2 pragmatics instruction as a key and fundamental component of second language knowledge besides the grammatical rules and vocabulary. (Bachman & Palmer, 2010). During the recent decades, the scholars such as, (for reviews, see Martinez- Flor et al, 2003; Kasper, 2001; Kasper & Rose, 2002) demonstrated the role of teaching in the development of L2 pragmatics, and much benefits have been shown that learners which are instructed on a variety of pragmatics features (Takahashi, 2001; Rose & Ng Kwai-Fun, 2001, Safont, 2005). As a matter of fact, for example, if learners are left to their own linguistic choices and ways to have contact with the target language inside and outside of the classroom context, it seems that they do not acquire the pragmatic features of the target language on their own. On the other hand, it is further elaborated that the teaching of L2 pragmatics is often abandoned and gone overlooked in the outdated language classrooms. Similarly, the L2 pragmatics have been neglected in foreign language contexts, especially in the educational system of Iran as an EFL context (Eslami-rasekh & Mardani, 2010).

Thus, the resulting lack of interactions with native speakers will obviously lead to pragmatic failure and communication breakdown. Hence, pragmatics constitutes a fundamental element of language ability for EFL learners (Sadeghi & Foutooh, 2012). Moreover, the presentation of appropriate teaching methodologies is considered as a fundamental part of any EFL teaching program that makes teaching and learning more effective which is overlooked in Iranian educational system (Allami & Naeimi, 2011). Regarding the pedagogic implication of pragmatic transfer, several investigation have been done to probe the different kinds of classroom interpolations or different effects of some approaches in instruction of L2 pragmatics in EFL contexts such as Dastjerdi & Rezvani (2010), Yaqubi et al. (2012) and Sadeghi & Foutooh (2012) in the Iranian context in other EFL contexts to name a few. Based on the previous findings, there is a lack of studies regarding the methods teachers use for L2 pragmatics instruction. As such, the present study intends to fill this gap by investigating the phenomenon of pragmatic transfer among monolingual and monoculture English language learners who come up with the use of their own linguistic resources and incorporate it into the target language in the production of speech acts of apology and requests.

On the other hand, sociolinguistic competence is firmly decided by cultural conventions because different cultures have totally different standards and certain parameters about linguistic appropriateness in a given social context. Also, discourse competence is fully determined and identified through the first language, which might be replaced along with development of second language proficiency. Here, it is important to consider one serious concern which consistently connects and merges into interlanguage pragmatics to mainstream SL research and encompasses

phenomena of transfer, or cross-linguistic influence. Hence, Interlanguage pragmatics appeared on the SL research scene when concept and idea of transfer was mismatched with cognitive view of SLA. Thus, true recognition of transfer as a foremost factor in determining non- native speakers (hereafter, NNS') competence of pragmatic knowledge and usage has never been seriously challenged.

Pragmatic transfer in Leech's (1983) distinction between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics is equally suitable to broadly separate the two main loci of pragmatic transfer. On Leech's original definition, pragmalinguistics explicitly refers to 'the particular resources which a given language provides for conveying the particular illocutions' (Leech, 1983, p. 11). However, since in accomplishing a specific linguistic act, interlocutors can willfully choose from a variety of existing strategies and forms which convey the same illocution on many and different occasions, but vary in their relational meaning, or in politeness, this notion is the serious concern of pragmalinguistics. These strategies either of directness and indirectness, and an excess of lexical, syntactic, and prosodic means capable of justifying and aggravating illocutionary force have been identified cross-linguistically as pointing to the devices reflecting politeness marking (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989a).

Moreover, the functions of marking illocutionary force and politeness are sometimes difficult to disentangle (consider, for instance, much-discussed multifunctionality of 'please' and equivalents such as German 'bitte' and Hebrew 'bevakaslw' as indicators of requestive force and politeness markers (e.g. Blum-Kulka & Levenston, 1987; House, 1989). On other hand, term Sociopragmatics has been described by Leech as 'sociological interface of pragmatics' (1983, p. 10), clearly referring to the social perceptions underlying participants' performance and various interpretations of linguistic action. This sociopragmatics competence of non-native speakers is assessed through the lens of social distance and social power, rights and obligations, and degree of imposition involved in accomplishment of different linguistic acts that vary cross-culturally (Blum-Kulka & House, 1989; Bergman & Kasper, in press; Olshtain, 1989; House, 1988). Hence, the above literature employs that the production of speech acts vary across cultures and linguistic conventions, and these elements are embedded in the pragmatic norms of the target language. In the vein of this thought, the present effort is made to investigate the speech acts realisation of apology and requests among Pashto and Siraiki English Language Learners.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK
This study is grounded in the framework of pragmatic transfer, ascribed to Kasper (1992) that demonstrates the need on the part of the learners to develop such strategies which carry out the production and comprehension of L2 via mother tongue when learning L2. The study of pragmatic transfer is situated within the area of ILP, and the selected framework for this study has been taken from Kasper & Blum-Kulka (1993) who identified five research areas, the first one being pragmatic comprehension which focuses on the understanding of the pragmatic norms and convention. The

present study has also drawn upon Selinker's (1992) framework of interlanguage that recognized five strategies amongst L2 learners, such as, L1 transfer where the mother tongue resources are employed for performing different communicative acts. Second strategy is transfer of training that elaborates on the notion of transference of L1 knowledge into L2. The third strategy of L2 learning is simplification as learners rely on the use of L1 while learning L2 that also creates an ease for learning the adequate knowledge of L2. Interlanguage is a natural systematic language, reflecting the learners' attempts to acquire such particular language items.

Both of the selected frameworks, namely: pragmatic transfer and interlanguage analysis focus mainly on the strategies that are developed by the L2 learners during their use of L2. The present study find out evidences for alleged pragmatic transfer in speech act realizations of Pashto and Siraiki English Language learners. The study particularly focuses on the sociopragmatic aspect of pragmatic transfer in the target language productions of the selected ESL learners. In other words, the study focuses on the strategies developed by the non-native speakers which facilitate the selected ESL learners with a considerable level of production in L2. Moreover, other related issues like, the prevailing conditions and causes for pragmatic transfer and the special effects of transfer on communicative outcomes, i.e., the issues of pragmatic competence among Pushto and Siraiki English Language learners are addressed.

Research Setting

This Interlanguage Pragmatics study is conducted in Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan (hereafter GU, Dera Ismail Khal and KPK). Dera Ismail Khal is situated in the southern areas and is very much near to boarder of other provinces like in East to Punjab and in West to Baluchistan. Due to its geographical location, it presents a nice amalgamation of different cultures and shows the diversities of different languages. The study comprises of only eight students from the Department of English, Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan who belong to either Pashto or Siraiki speaking communities' different areas, coming to the said university enrolled for learning English as a target language.

Significance of study

The study highlights issue of pragmatic transfer amongst Pashto and Siraiki English Language learners. Till date, no such research has been conducted with Pakistani English language learners in the area of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP). In this way, this study is an attempt at introducing Pakistani languages in to the domain of ILP. It unfolds and highlights the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic transference of discourse strategies by selected English language learners from their respective mother tongues to the target language (English), and therefore adds substantially to the field of pragmatic transfer, a phenomenon that is of utmost significance in interlanguage. In addition, it broadens sphere of interpretation and practical understanding of learners' perceptions about interlanguage pragmatic transfer which, undoubtedly, enhances production abilities of

learners. Also, study gave recommendations to English Language learners from two different cultural and linguistic families on how to enhance their pragmatic competence in target language.

Sample Size

Keeping the qualitative nature of the study in view, Nunan (2002) declares purposive sampling as purposeful selection, in other words, procedural selection. Purposive sampling is done and the selected eight participants, averaging in the same age, are students with their different cultural background and separate languages i.e. Siraiki and Pashto. Among these eight subjects of the study, four are selected from Siraiki speaking English Language Learners, 2 male and 2 female, likewise, four from Pashto speaking English language Learners are selected. Participant were requested to fill in the written questionnaire of DCTs consist of six different situations. It was the basic tool used for data collection which was further strengthened by semi structured interviews from the said participants. The participants were enrolled in the BS (Hons-4 years) in English Language and Literature where English is the medium of instruction and target language too. The learners were using either direct or indirect strategies during the accomplishments of speech acts of apology and requests results the influence of L1 in the production of the target language.

Analysis of Participants' Interviews

It was clear from the interviews of participants that linguistic resource and cultural norms of their respective mother tongue are incorporated by relying on the pragmatic norms, and are conceptualised in the domain of L1. It was acknowledged that pragmatic norms of the target language cannot be acquired due to less understanding and awareness of linguistic and cultural norms. In addition to that, it was found among the interviewee that Pashto speaking English language learner were more polite in putting forward the request, and even during the interviews, on several occasions, they routed an indirect discourse strategies, on the other hand, in the performance of apology, they were direct and kept a social distance and cultural egotism. Most importantly, Siraiki speaking English learners were more indirect in the expression of both the speech acts, and extended much intimacy and politeness towards the interlocutor. Thus, it was contended that pragmatic transfer was obvious among the both speech communities learning English as a target language resulting in the form of an influence of their mother tongues (See Appendix A).

Analysis of Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs)

Discourse Completion tasks have been a much used and much criticized elicitation format in cross-cultural and IL pragmatics. The first format was developed by Levenston and Blum (1978) to study lexical simplification, and first adapted to investigate speech act realization by Blum-Kulka (1982). Discourse Completion tasks are written questionnaires including a number of brief situational descriptions, followed by a short dialogue with an empty slot for the speech act under study. Subjects are asked to fill in a response that they think fits into the given context. The present study has employed the last type of DCT developed by Billmyer and Varghese (2000). In this vein, six

situations on a sheet were developed and distributed among the participants with a request to fill in after several reading of the given situations. Each three situations are developed respectively for apology and requests as well (see Appendix B). In the analysis of DCTs, it was found that both non-native speakers (hereafter, NNSs) of English language learner over differentiates and varies in both apology and request strategies. For example, using an expression of apology:

Pashto L1 Speaker: *I'm sorry*
Siraiki L1 Speaker: *I'm sorry for the problem I made!*

Even criticizing or blaming oneself, the Siraiki NNSs uttered, *"I'm such a fool"* expressing embarrassment at the speaker end which clearly illustrates that Siraiki NNSs were obtaining more politeness values for each discourse strategy establish boundaries in the realisation of the speech act as Siraiki NNSs is using more long-winded request realizations than the Pashto NNSs . On the other hand, the Pashto speaker is less polite and direct as if pleading someone apology has been imposed, and meant to be accomplished irresolutely.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study revealed that the performance of these speech acts varies across linguistic proficiency which is partially influenced by L1 transfer, as Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986) asserted that learners rely on the linguistic and cultural norms of their mother tongues and are incorporated into the target language pragmatics resulting in the form of pragmatic transfer. The studies further corroborated Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1986) "too many words" that both the NNSs displayed more supportive moves by indirect strategy and provided enough justifications for their requests (cf. also Kasper, 1989). No significant differences were established between the NNSs groups. It was found from the interviews of the subjects that pragmatic transfer results in the form of L1 linguistic conventions incorporation into the target language which is considered an obstruction rather hampers the ability of the learners in achieving a balanced pragmatic competence. Thus, it is concluded here that NNSs of English learners varies due their linguistic and cultural differences which not only affect the proficiency but it also happens due to lack of awareness, ignorance and less exposure towards the pragmatic norms of the target language.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that Language transfer is inevitable in the process of second language acquisition. It seems that in the past, the greatest significance has been given to the form of the language in ESL/EFL settings. Currently, though as the communicative approach has become more valued and widely accepted in language teaching settings, the focus has shifted towards the improvement of communicative competence, which includes pragmatic competence of the learners. Thus, focus on pragmatics and speech acts have been in rising demand. It is necessary to understand the cultural differences and pragmatic patterns of the languages so that learners can target this specific area of teaching.

The current study analyzed the apology and request speech acts performed by Pashto and Siraiki nonnative speakers of English where L1 and L2 interact to a great extent in target language learning. It further elaborates the Pashto and Siraiki expression of these speech acts in Pakistani ESL context, specifically in terms of the related strategy use and production of speech acts in target language. The major findings of the study were somewhat promising. The both non-native speakers of English preferred to employ most frequently similar strategies, making apology and requests than, with only the Pashto speakers sharing their least preference for others strategy comprising here statement, small talk and joking. Overall, the findings of the present study support the research to date in that the Pashto speakers' production of apology speech act still exhibited some inadequacy as compared to the Siraiki non-native speakers of English. As a note of recommendation, even advanced EFL learners require classroom and autonomous work in order to improve their pragmatic awareness and strategic competence. Thus, Instructional materials, delivery, and assignments at advanced level can promote learners' socio-cultural awareness and pragmatic competence through contextual analysis of various speech act realizations. Let's hope so!

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