



TEACHING SPEECH ACTS OF COMPLIMENTS: WHAT IS WHAT?

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Abstract

This article provides information about how to teach pragmatic speech acts, such as compliments and responds to the compliments in the ESL classroom. Firstly, it presents some data about the general background of the topic; secondly, it discusses the different factors of making and accepting compliments. It also cites some authentic examples from different English, Uzbek and Arab contexts.

Keywords: speech acts, pragmatics, ESL, teaching compliments, scenarios, authenticity, beliefs and religion, accuracy, socio-pragmatic factors, pragmatic awareness and competence.

Introduction

Teaching English as the Second Language in Uzbekistan is becoming more common and multi-edged. Even though the official language of the country is Uzbek, Uzbekistan is still considered to be “a melting pot” which is a home for more than 120 nations. Almost all of these nations have their cultural centers in the country and support their own identities, traditions. Therefore, traditional classes in Uzbekistan are diverse cultured and teaching the English language is not a simple task as it seems to be.

Apart from the language, it is vital to teach pragmatics and speech acts since the country integrating to the global village. As most teachers consider the grammatical or lexical patterns, structures of the language to the learners, the other factors of the language may be invisible, thus one of the most significant duties of the teachers and educators is to decode these aspects, such as pragmatic and cultural trends. Before implementing these aspects into the classroom, initially it is important to raise the pragmatic awareness. Kramsch (1993) points out that learners should be aware of intercultural competence which may facilitate them to learn better.

After having raised pragmatic awareness in the classroom then the teacher can commence teaching speech acts, such as compliments, refusals, apologies, invitations, promises, complaining. Bardovi-Harlig (1996) denominates that using or teaching through the textbooks too much may establish the unrealistic production of speech





acts by users. It should be suggested that establishing a realistic atmosphere – authentic scenarios can be more fruitful rather than over-utilizing the textbooks.

Compliments are types of phrases or expressions that can be evaluated positively on a daily basis among communicators. They can be ice breakers or conversation openers to facilitate the process. Speakers may admire properties related to personal appearance, such as hairstyle and clothes of the person, sometimes it may go beyond these and can link with possessions, skills, or personal achievements.

According to cross-cultural divergences it can be mentioned that nations might be categorized into three types due to their attitude towards the compliments: people who do not avoid and consider compliments as normal expressions, individuals that do not accept the self-praising and the group of communicators who are neutral and accept these types of positive phrases through their private traits.

It is very complicated to shift your mood from one state to another. This is a job of psychology and a common thing for every person. Therefore, it is important to teach the compliments in the ESL classroom, because during the sessions learners will be able to give and accept or receive compliments. Giving a proper respond to compliments can be different in different languages and cultures.

According to Rizk (2003) it can be acceptable for some nations to compliment a girl for being fat, yet in American culture it is an offensive utterance. The very situations and behavioral differences should be taken into consideration while teaching the pragmatics in ESL classes.

It is noticeable to mention that while teaching the compliments most teachers try to emphasize the compliments as phrases which are directly related to the female. Even in almost cultures people tend to believe that compliments are addressed to the women, not to the male. A unanimous prove of this concept is fixed with men's disliking compliments. However, personally I think that it is a real absurd. Brutian (2016) points out that compliments are preferably acceptable by both sexes. Accordingly, every human's brain likes to receive positive praises, but still reaction to this can be different. Females strive to show their emotions while most men are reserved and do not demonstrate their feelings.

Sometimes compliments can expose a controversial reaction, thus they seem to be mirrors which may reflect the person who is making a compliment himself. Laroshfuko claims that in general people praise other individuals to hear the phrases of compliment addressed to their own expectations.

If you make compliments on person's clothes or appearance, this manner can be reacted differently in different parts of the globe. For example, if a man compliments to the women in terms of her clothes or physiognomy it may be accepted by them in





an Italian cult, yet the very thing is strictly avoidable in Muslim countries. Thus, it can be inferred that the speech act productions and performances must be taught in the classroom by taking into consideration not only the cultural aspects, but also the matter of gender and beliefs (religion) of the individuals.

All in all, it can be summarized that compliments can be made on specific circumstances, but accepting and ignoring them may be various due to the culture, gender, lifestyle and personality of each individual. Therefore, educators should create a friendly learning atmosphere by taking into account all abovementioned aspects.

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