

Interlanguage Pragmatics: An Intimidating Term, Followed by a Colon

Abstract:

Second language learners bring a wealth of communicative and pragmatic skills to the classroom from their mother tongue. However, many communicative lessons do little to take advantage of these resources. Using the tool of conversation analysis, the presenter examines the talk in interaction of English language learner's casual conversations to illuminate the positive and negative transfer of pragmatic conventions.

What is interlanguage pragmatics?

If pragmatics is how language is used and interpreted in context, *interlanguage* pragmatics is the same thing, just with non-native speakers. (Kasper & Blum-Kulka 1993)

What is conversation analysis?

Instead of examining the outcome action of talk, conversation analysis starts by observing how a bit of talk was done, and inquires as to what someone could be doing talking in that way and what that bit of talk seems designed to do. (Schegloff 2007)

Data:

- 70 minutes of recorded conversation.
- Transcribed and examined using conversation analysis.
- Three extracts chosen that represent the range of pragmatic proficiencies evident in the recordings.

Context:

- Naturally occurring conversation between adult English language learners and native speakers as part of a "conversation group" program, administered by the language school the learners are enrolled in, that allows them non-academic language practice.
- Learners are intermediate-beginners enrolled in an intensive English language program on campus. They have had some English language instruction in their home country, and had been living in the U.S. for about two months.
- Native speakers in extracts (1.0-1.1) are students enrolled in a graduate program to become English language teachers. In extract (2.0) the native speaker is an administrator at the language institute where the learners are enrolled and an experienced English language teacher.

Pedagogical implications:

- More efficient use of classroom time (no more teaching basic pragmatics, etc.).
- Increased awareness of cross-cultural *similarities* in communication.
- Better meet the needs of students by eliminating impractical native-like models for pragmatic appropriateness.

Extract (1.0) [Conversation group #1~ 05:38-05:48] – Use of “no”-token

Fpp 1 Luke: how are you?
Spp 2 **Darth:** (hh fine)°
Fpst→ 3 Luke: you sick?
Spst→ 4 **Darth:** Noh (.2) on:ly a bit mor tired
5 Luke: ye:ah I'm tired also.

Extract (1.1) [Conversation group #1~ 08:15-08:31] – wh question interpretation

12 **Yoda:** (.2)yeas sree oh clock=
13 Leia: [oh my go:sh.]
14 Luke: [oh my god]
15 **Yoda:** yah
-whq→ 16 Leia: What time did you have to wake u:P?
17 **Yoda:** (.)mmmmm(.2)maybe(.)I(.) >didn't a come to< class[uh
18 Monday I got to get up ima crazy because eh(.) before ze
19 Halloween party I no sweeping

Extract (2.0) [Conversation group #2~ 11:45-12:14] – Using no response as a disagreement

1 Uhura: but you live uuuh(.2) you(.)live(.)next door
2 **Spock:** yeah
3 Uhura: you live very close
4 **Spock:** yeah (.7)
5 Uhura: this is a bad place to sit isn't it?
6 **Spock:** hh hhh
7 Uhura: hh (.4) you guys keep shading your eyes hh
→ 8 (7.0)
9 Uhura: do you guys wanna move? (.4)
10 **Spock:** no(.) its okay
11 Uhura: its okay? (.2) this should feel normal to you yeah?
12 **Spock:** hh hh

Sources

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