THE ROLE OF EXPLICIT PRAGMATIC INSTRUCTION TO IMPROVE SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS' IDEATIONAL METAFUNCTION OF THE TARGET LANGUAGE

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Abstract

Pragmatics is considered to be the component of language which is hard to teach for beginner learners of English. Highlighting the argument on the model of language competence proposed by Bachman's (1990), this paper discusses how the definition of pragmatic competence in the field of TESOL should include illocutionary competence in Bachman's model. Taking the stance on functional grammar's perspective, a brief analysis is presented how explicit pragmatic instruction can improve second language learner's ideational metafunction of the target language.

Keywords: explicit pragmatic instruction, ideational metafunction, functional grammar

PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE: THE FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCE IN LANGUAGE USE

For four decades, communicative competence has been one of the central issues discussed in the field of teaching English for Speakers of other languages (TESOL). Brown (2007) mentions that communicative competence has been defined by several experts such as:Hymes (1972,1967), Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983) with some additional descriptions from Savignon (1983) and Tarone (1990), and the most comprehensive one from Bachman (1990)). Bachman (1990) proposes the most comprehensive scheme of communicative competence, which he refers as "language competence". His model of language competence is

built from organizational competence and pragmatic competence (Bachman, 1990). He further explains that even though in his diagram these two competencies appear to be separated into form and function, in language use all of these competencies "interact with each other and with features of the language use situation" (Bachman, 1990, p. 86).

Pragmatic competence in Bachman's (1990) model includes not only the elements of sociolinguistic competence (such as: sensitivity to dialect/variety, sensitivity to register, sensitivity to the nature, and cultural reference), but also illocutionary competence (such as ideational functions, manipulative functions, heuristic functions, and imaginative functions of a language).
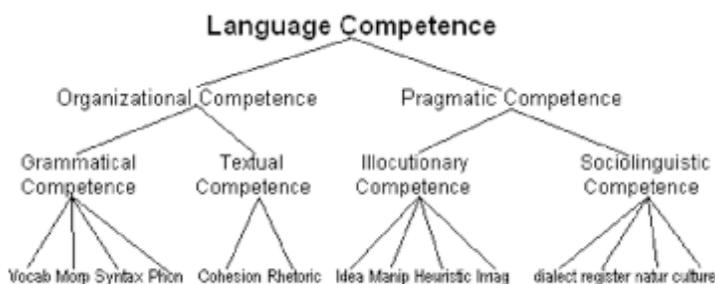

Figure 1.
Bachman's Model of Language Competence (Bachman, 1990, p.87)

MAKING SENSE THE EXPERIENCE: THE ROLE OF IDEATIONAL METAFUNCTION

Part of illocutionary competence, ideational function is the most pervasive function in language use because we express meaning, in terms of our experience of the real world by using this function (Halliday, 1973 as cited in Bachman, 1990).In his refine version of systemic functional grammar, Halliday (1994) as cited in Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks, &Yallop, (2003) explains that ideational function relates to experiential and logical meaning, that is: the functional use of language to talk about what is happening, what will happen, and what has happened (Butt et. all, 2003, p.5).

Different languages have different ways to express the ideational function because each of them has different way to make sense the experience with their ideational metafunction. Taking the view of functional grammar, most English clauses are described in terms of PARTICIPANTS, PROCESS and CIRCUMSTANCE, with process being the essential component (Butt, et.al, 2003, p.49). Furthermore, PROCESS is encoded into three basic shades of semantic meanings, therefore some verbs in English are *doing* verbs which describes actions in the real world , some are projecting process and described as *thinking, feeling,* or *saying* words, while the last group belongs to *being* words (Butt et. all, 2003,p, 50). The case is different for Indonesian. In Indonesia, for example, it is acceptable to say *dia masih di kantor* 'she is still at the office' (literally: she still at the office) because in Indonesian there is no *being* words in terms of PROCESS.

In teaching English as Foreign Language (EFL), these different metafunctions may cause problem. Indonesian EFL learners at beginner level, for example, often have problem in communicating the ongoing activities that they do. They often forget to use *being* words and perform utterance such as I having my lunch.In other cases, it is also found that the beginner learners have problem with the tenses. For example, rather than saying I *visited* my grandma last month, 'saya *mengunjungi* nenek saya bulan lalu' the learners will say I *visit* my grandma last month', because in Indonesian the learners use the same verb *mengunjungi* to express their experience in both the past and present time CIRCUMSTANCE. In order to improve the students' grammatical competence, especially in the syntax level, a teacher's intervention in ideational metafunction needs to be conducted.

Many language educators are concerned on whether pragmatics is teachable to second language learners at beginner level (Kasper & Rover, 2005, p.17). This happens because as Kasper & Rover (2005), they define pragmatic competence by following Leech's (1983) domain of pragmatics which includes socio-pragmatic and pragmalinguistic
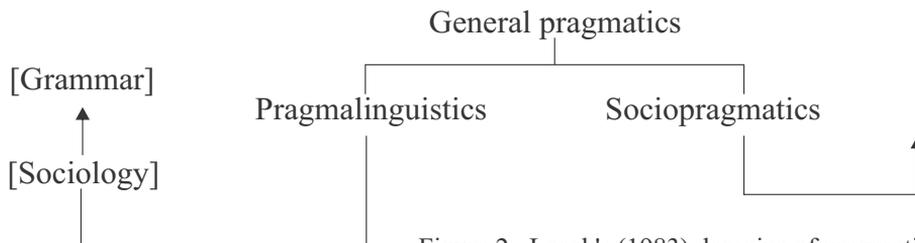

Figure 2. Leech's (1983) domains of pragmatics

Kasper & Rover (2005) state that to be pragmatically competent can be comprehended as

"the process of establishing sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic competence and the increasing ability to understand and produce sociopragmatic meanings with pragmalinguistic conventions (p.2).

As seen on figure 2, if Leech's domains of pragmatic competencies are put into Bachman's model of language competence (figure 1), they only cover sociolinguistic competence in.

Figure 3. Bachman's model of pragmatic competence

According to the noticing hypothesis proposed by Schmidt (2001), second language input needs to be noticed, or put into voluntary attention as the essential starting point for second language acquisition (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Kasper & Rover (2005) highlight that

In order to acquire pragmatics, attention must be allocated to the action that is being accomplished, the linguistic, paralinguistic, and nonverbal forms by which the action is implemented, its immediate interactional or textual context, and the dimensions of the situational context that are indexed by linguistic and pragmatic choices. (p.5)

Therefore, designing a lesson plan that directs second language learners' attention to immediate interactional or textual context of the use of Simple Past Tense, for example, will help the learners to notice the grammar of the target language. However, in the case of Indonesian which has different ideational metafunction to express Simple Past Tense, directing attention without explicit pragmatic instruction on the ideational metafunction will not be sufficient to make

the learners acquire the grammar of the target language (English). Second language acquisition requires understanding of the target language, while understanding implies "the recognition of some general principle, rule, or pattern" (Schmidt, 1995, p. 29 as cited in Kasper &Rover, 2005, p. 5). As a consequence, ideational metafunction needs explicit instruction in order to bring the learners' notification in the surface structure to understanding of the deep structure.

Many studies of explicit pragmatic instruction have been done (Liu, 2007 ; Soler & Pitarch, 2010; Xiao-le, 2011; Silva, 2011), but the research only focuses on the sociolinguistic component in Bachman's (1990) model of pragmatic competence of the second language learners (figure 3). Bachman (1990) describes more complete model of pragmatic competence by adding illocutionary competence in line with Leech's (1983) emphasis, "grammar interacts with pragmatics via semantics" (Leech, 1983, p. 12). Therefore, for beginner level second language learners, giving explicit pragmatic instruction in ideational metafunction can scaffold the learners' second language acquisition.

CONCLUSION

Notional-functional syllabus, which was born from functional approach in language teaching, uses the functions of language as the elements in a foreign language curriculum (Van Ek& Alexander, 1975; Wilkins, 1976 as cited in Brown, 2007). Different from structural syllabus, functional syllabus puts grammar as the derivation of notions. Unlike structural syllabus which precedes it and uses grammar as the primary element, functional syllabus puts grammar as the secondary element which derives from the notion, which includes abstract concepts (such as existence, time, space, quantity and quality) and context (Brown, 2007, p.247).

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