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A Functional Analysis of Verbal Communicative Expressions in Kurdish and English

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ABSTRACT

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Language and communication, set expressions, verbal communicative expressions, pragmatic functions.

In the quest to fill the gap in the research studies on set expressions, we started this research paper to show in particular that forms and functions of idiomatic expressions are not necessarily related. We want to know if our advanced students have the dynamic equivalent of their idioms or proverbs stored in their mental lexicon. Often, the students just translated the idioms even when they understand the meaning and function of the idiom. Accordingly, their knowledge of form and function in the set expressions is limited and they have to be largely exposed to these expressions in different contexts.

This paper provides a detailed analysis of some of the most frequent verbal expressions in Kurdish and English from a pragmatic perspective into more complex patterns of interaction between the two. Furthermore, several expressions may also



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interact in the communicative processes that underlie the understanding of verbal expressions, making it necessary to approach many of our examples function in language use. We will explore the ways in which necessity and transparency may vary in the use of the expressions that arise from the same situation where the pragmatic function is the ultimate aim which learners are not aware of. we put forward Kurdish Therefore, expressions with their equivalent Enalish highlighting their functions in different contexts. This is done through distributing (20) Kurdish set expressions to (20) MA students in the Department of English/ College of Languages/ Salahaddin University- Hawler, to provide their equivalents in English.

At the end of the procedure and the analysis of the results, it was conclude that in order to communicate effectively in the target language, learners of English need to develop pragmatic competence, which can be accomplished through pragmatic instruction in the classroom, particularly in the oral English class. With the raise of pragmatic awareness, it is expected that learners will acquire the competence and their target language performance will improve. Besides the teachers who are to explore and enhance materials form the textbook, material developers and curriculum designers should also include examples about pragmatic awareness in the books and curricula.

Key Words: language and communication, set expressions, verbal communicative expressions, pragmatic functions.



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Introduction

Recently considerable attention has been given to communicative approaches to language learning and teaching, which have grown from the realization that knowledge of grammatical forms and structures alone does not adequately prepare learners to use the language they are learning effectively when communicating with others. It is also an outgrowth of renewed interest in the view of language as communication, a view associated with functional approaches to linguistics, which have been acknowledged as the theoretical base of the development of communicative language teaching theory and practice. However, the relationship between communicative competence and functional approaches to linguistics is far from clear.

We have to keep in mind that pragmatic competence and communicative competence overlap in the point that both of them contain sociolinguistic competence and discourse competence, they differ from each other in that the former has as its parts illocutionary competence and competence of interpreting and expressing real intention while the latter consists of linguistic competence and strategic competence. This will help us in the analysis carried out in the present study.

While the number of studies on pragmatic competence and development has been increasing since Kasper and Schmidt's call for more research into this under-researched area (e.g., Barron 2003 and Schauer 2006.), the development of certain speech behaviors such as the speech act of expressions and idioms, for example, in a second language seems to receive more attention than the others. Furthermore, most of the studies on pragmatic competence and development have examined adult learners of higher proficiency level and have been limited in the range of first and target languages.

Idioms and idiomatic expressions are language specific and usually culturally bound. They are fixed or set expressions where the meaning of the whole is not the sum of the meaning of its constituents (Lewis, 1993). Idioms are also considered as a category of the lexical approach with both the individual words and multi-word combinations stored in the mental lexicon. Some call these multi-word combinations, formulaic sequences used by native speakers. Idioms as set expressions have communicative content rather than just being a

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string of words. They have semantic and pragmatic functions. Hence, they have semantic and pragmatic utility (Conklin and Schmitt, 2008). Idiomatic expression are common in all languages, used in written as well as spoken communications. Idioms are essential in everyday language uses which are neglected in lexical studies and teaching. Fernando (1996), stated that multi- word expressions being non-literal have been neglected in lexical studies. Their functions are not well defined. Thus, both the lexico- grammatical forms and functions are important for the participants to make the discourse society acceptable (Fernando, 1996). Accordingly, when language students do not know the functions of the idioms, they refer to them in their native language. If they understand the meaning and know the function and do not know which idiom can have the same function, they would transfer the form of the native idiom into English due to the lack of knowledge about set expressions in English. Another point which we want to emphasize here is the use of an appropriate idiom or equivalent idiom to be rendered in English by our students.

In this paper we want to investigate the pragmatic awareness of advanced students to offer appropriate idioms or phrases. In particular we want to know whether MA students can provide the exact idioms depending on form and function. Hence, by form and function, we mean appropriateness, or communicative functions.

Pragmatic Competence of Communicative Expressions

Mastering a foreign language requires pragmatic competence, a sensitivity to meanings expressed by tone and word choice, and the ability to effectively express these meanings (Kasper, 1997). Textbooks rarely offer pragmatic input and gaining pragmatic competence through traditional classroom activities is difficult because "classroom discourse is highly conventionalized in ways that severely constrain both the quantity and the quality of learners' participation" (Belz, 2007).

Even with linguistic competence, foreign language learners have difficulty communicating effectively with native speakers. Studies have shown that communication styles largely differ between native and non-native speakers (Li, 1999) and that these differences impair successful communication.

"Pragmatics is the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using



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language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication" (Crystal, 2011). Pragmatics is an essential part of communication. Kasper 1997 provided the following example: "feed the cat", "can/could/would you feed the cat?", and "the cat's complaining" all communicate the same request, but may have very different impacts on the relationship between the requester and interlocutor. In a study of interpretation of dialogues, Bouton 1988 showed that in 27% of cases, nonnative speakers with high levels of linguistic competence interpreted the meaning of indirect statements differently from native speakers (Kasper 1997). Furthermore, the inability to express requests effectively can disadvantage nonnative speakers. Bardovi and Hartford 1990 showed that in academic advising, non-native speakers were less likely to have their requests fulfilled because of a lack of pragmatic competence. Some aspects of pragmatic competence learning can be transferred from a learner's first language. However, when norms differ across cultures, this transfer can hurt rather than help learners.

Pragmatic competence has become, especially in the last few decades, one of the issues that attracted attention in the field as an essential part of language competence. The realization that having a good command of linguistic knowledge in target language would not be enough to master the language has created the need to investigate the value and effect of pragmatic competence in language, especially in education. From the viewpoint of intercultural communication, there is no civilization or foreign language which is healthier or more modernized than the others. Language is for communication, but not for discrimination. Rose and Kasper (2001) underline the best thing pragmatists can do for English speakers is to activate with a different hypothesis rather than with a deficit hypothesis. That is, the learners should open their mind and learn more about cultures and diverse linguistic aspect on the globe. In fact, Rose and Kasper (2001) have pointed out that the non-native English speakers, and even residents in America, Canada, England, Australia, New Zealand.etc. all of the native speakers should gain knowledge of pragmatics by describing and explaining interlanguage contact from a world and intercultural point of view, rather than label the native-like English as a normal form of world interaction.

In an attempt to clarify the concept of communicative competence, Widdowson (1983) made a distinction between competence and capacity. In his definition of these two notions he applied insights that he gained in discourse



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analysis and pragmatics. In this respect, he defined competence, i.e. communicative competence, in terms of the knowledge of linguistic and sociolinguistic conventions. Under capacity, which he often referred to as procedural or communicative capacity, he understood the ability to use knowledge as means of creating meaning in a language. According to him, ability is not a component of competence. It does not turn into competence, but remains "an active force for continuing creativity", i.e. a force for the realization of what Halliday called the "meaning potential" (Widdowson, 1983:27). Having defined communicative competence in this way, Widdowson is said to be the first who in his reflections on the relationship between competence and performance gave more attention to performance or real language use.

Savignon (1972, 1983) put a much greater emphasis on the aspect of ability in her concept of communicative competence. Namely, she described communicative competence as «the ability to function in a truly communicative setting - that is, in a dynamic exchange in which linguistic competence must adapt itself to the total informational input, both linguistic and paralinguistic, of one or more interlocutors" (Savignon, 1972:8). According to her, the nature of communicative competence is not static but dynamic, it is more interpersonal than intrapersonal and relative rather than absolute. It is also largely defined by context. As to the distinction between competence and performance, Savignon referred to competence as an underlying ability and to performance as an open manifestation of competence. In her opinion, competence can be observed, developed, maintained and evaluated only through performance. Like many theoreticians in the field of language learning and teaching (e.g. Stern, 1986), Savignon equates communicative competence with language proficiency. Due to this, as well as to the controversial use of the term "competence", Taylor (1988) proposed to replace the term "communicative competence" with the term "communicative proficiency". At approximately the same time and for similar reasons, Bachman (1990) suggested using the term «communicative language ability», claiming that this term combines in itself the meanings of both language proficiency and communicative competence. Leaning especially on Hymes, Widdowson and, Bachman defined communicative language ability as a concept comprised of knowledge or competence and capacity for appropriate use of knowledge in a contextual communicative language use. In elaborating on this definition, Bachman devoted special attention to the aspect of language use



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- that is, the way how language is used for the purpose of achieving a particular communicative goal in a specific situational context of communication.

Canale (1980) offered a significant and wide-ranging review of communicative competence, arguing that pragmatics is a part of communicative competence and should be noticed by language learners and educators. In fact, they recognize that grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, and discourse competence are four significant components, which constitute communicative competences.

Dealing with idioms, pragmatic and sociolinguistic aspects of language are to be considered. People working in sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic and pragmatic aspects of idiomatic expressions, considered the questions of what and how can idioms be said appropriately in context. Fillmore, Kay, and O'Conner (1988) analyzed these questions related to 'let alone', to find the relation of form and functions of idioms.

Teaching and Learning Second Language Set Expressions

The lexicon contains not only words but also a large number of prefabricated sentences and phrases which are associated with a certain type of situations (Moon, 1992, Verstruten 1992). We strongly approve of that and also claim that idioms and all types of set expressions are stored in the mental lexicon which we refer to wherever we encounter a context that elicits a need to use such expressions.

Idioms can be semantically opaque even for native speakers, but for language learners, students, they are even more difficult and complex since they do not have enough knowledge about them. In general and because they cannot interpret the idioms depending on their literal meanings of the individual words as constituents. And many idioms are culturally bound since their meanings and functions are not motivated by lexical parts but also by their cultural and historical backgrounds. Thus, learners have difficulties in comprehending their multiword expressions that may draw on metaphorical expressions found in their culture (Boers and Demecheleer, 2001).

Another point is that the students may understand the meaning or even the function of the idiom but may not know how it is said in English. That is to say, they do not know the exact form of the idiom, i.e., how it is said? Thus, it is necessary that students be exposed to set expressions in general and idioms



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in particular. And since our students are biased towards the literal processing of the idiomatic expressions, it is important that teachers offer adequate instructions to effect and promote noticing the appropriate idiom, encountered in differing context.

Research Question and Procedure

Our research question is: Are MA English language and Linguistics students able to provide English equivalent set idiomatic expressions to Kurdish? In this paper, we chose (20) Kurdish, frequently used, idiomatic set expressions and handed them to (20) MA students. After giving some information about the idiomatic set expressions and in which context they are used, we asked the students to give their equivalents in English. The answers were gathered and distributed to a table which is designed for this paper in order

to help reaching the results that lead to the conclusion of the research paper.

The Analysis

The following table, table (1) Set Expressions used in English by the Selected Students, shows the expression number as mentioned in the appendix, no answer, wrong form, and right form and function.

According to expression number 1 (ساڵێ مانگێ جارهک) out of the 20 students selected, only 4 were able to give the correct form and function, 4 gave no answer, 7 translated, and 5 gave wrong. Expression number 2 (به حمه تی که و تم)no one was able to give the correct form and function, 4 gave no answer, and 5 gave wrong. Expression number 3(بۆشی وهردهگرم) no one was able to give the correct form and function, 15 gave no answer, and 5 translated. Expression number 4 (زگم پێسووتا) no one was able to give the correct form and function, 9 gave no answer, and 11 translated. Expression number 5 (نگم پێسووتا) only 5 were able to give the correct form and function, 3 gave no answer, 7 translated, and 5 gave wrong. Expression number 6 (مه خوّوه) only 5 were able to give the correct form and function, 5 gave no answer, 8 translated, and 2 gave wrong. Expression number 7 (چاوی پێ هه لنایێ) 10 students were able to give the correct form and function, 5 gave no answer, and 5 gave wrong.



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Expression number 8 (کهپووی بگره ړوحی دهردێ) no one was able to give the correct form and function, 18 gave no answer, and 2 gave wrong. Expression number 9 (مردنم به چاوی خوّم دیت) 11 were able to give the correct form and function and 9 gave wrong. Expression number 10 (شهکره کی بشکینه) no one was able to give the correct form and function, 17 gave no answer, and 7 translated.

Expression number 11 (چاوی له پشتی سهری دهربێ) no one was able to give the correct form and function, 18 gave no answer, and 2 translated. Expression number 12 (یاخهت له یاخهم بکهوه) only 4 were able to give the correct form and function, 11 gave no answer, 2 translated, and 3 gave wrong. Expression number 13 (کهله رفق) only one student was able to give the correct form and function and 19 students gave no answer. Expression number 14 (له سهري زوّر مهروّ) only 2 were able to give the correct form and function, 3 gave no answer, 7 translated, and 8 gave wrong. Expression number 15 (پشتم بگره) no one was able to give the correct form and function, 12 gave no answer, 2 translated, and 6 gave wrong. Expression number 16 (له پێش چاوم بزر به) only 4 were able to give the correct form and function, 14 gave no answer, and 7 translated. Expression number 17 no one was able to give the correct form and (پیشی تای بهری بهخوّی دادهدات) function, 11 gave no answer, 9 translated. Expression number 18 (دەستم مەگرە) 12 were able to give the correct form and function and 8 gave wrong. Expression number 19 (خۆت ماندى مەكه) only 5 were able to give the correct form and function, 10 gave no answer, 2 translated, and 3 gave wrong. Expression number 20 (دڵتهزێنه) only 7 were able to give the correct form and function, 5 gave no answer, 3 translated, and 5 gave wrong.



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Table (1) Set Expressions used in English by the Selected Students

Expression Number	No Answer	Translated	Wrong Form	Right Form and Function
1	4	7	5	4
2	12		8	
3	15	5		
4	9	11		
5	3	7	5	5
6	5	8	2	5
7	5		5	10
8	18		2	
9			9	11
10	17	3		
11	18	2		
12	11	2	3	4
13	19			1
14	3	7	8	2
15	12	2	6	
16	14	2		4
17	11	9		
Expression	No Answer	Translated	Wrong	Right Form and
Number			Form	Function
18			8	12
19	10	2	3	5
20	5	3	5	7

Findings

Our MA students were somehow successful in providing English equivalents set expressions for numbers 7 and 9 only (10, 11). The rest either translated the Kurdish expressions or gave wrong answers. The majority of the students gave no answers for the 20 item expressions.

This reveals that our students (even the advanced ones) are not able to understand what is meant by what is said and pragmatic failure occurs



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because they transfer their native expressions into English. Or remained silent (no answer) because they felt shy of giving wrong answers. Thus, the advanced learners who are supposed to have high linguistic proficiency lead other speakers (teachers for example) to presume that they do have high pragmatic proficiency, nevertheless the result of the investigation was not satisfactory. That is why it is necessary to raise the pragmatic awareness in general and specifically using appropriate multiword or set expressions in differing contexts.

Conclusion

If the aim of language education is to teach learners how a language should be appropriately and effectively used in different interactional settings, it is important to raise learners' pragmatic awareness as well as furnishing them with some beneficial strategies they can utilize to sustain successful communication in diverse settings with different interlocutors. Therefore, pragmatic competence should be an integral part of language curriculum. In order to accomplish this, however, there is still some need for further research aiming to raise much more awareness considering the significance of pragmatic competence and to come up with better and more productive suggestions and solutions.

Pragmatic failure occurs because learners tend to transfer their native expressions into English. They also do not provide equivalents because they are afraid to make mistakes. That is pragmatic features of the target language should be incorporated in language instruction as well as linguistic features. In order to teach the learners these pragmatic aspects, teachers should also have the necessary teaching skills enabling them to adopt different teaching strategies during their instruction. In order to equip learners with the essential pragmatic knowledge, it can be suggested that, first of all, the importance of pragmatic competence should be internalized. Then the perspectives should be re-shaped with the purpose of providing learners with the best opportunities to expose to the pragmatic features and practice them in a variety of contexts. In addition, language teachers should possess a good command of the target language including a satisfactory level of pragmatic knowledge so that they can convey what they know to their learners.

In order to communicate effectively in the target language, learners of English need to develop pragmatic competence, which can be accomplished

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through pragmatic instruction in the classroom, particularly in the oral English class. With the raise of pragmatic awareness, it is expected that learners will acquire the competence and their target language performance will improve. Besides the teachers who are to explore and enhance materials form the textbook, material developers and curriculum designers should also include examples about pragmatic awareness in the books and curricula.

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APPENDIX

1. Once in a blue moon	ساڵێ مانگێ جارهک	
2. I am on the same boat	به ر بای رهحمهتی کهوتم	
3. Cheat him	بۆشى وەردەگرم	
4. Have sympathy	<mark>زگم پێسووتا</mark>	
5. Don't sit on the fence	ئاوى لىٰ مەخۆوە	
6. Let sleeping dogs lie	ئەو دەركەيە مەكەووە	
7. Jealous	<mark>چاوی پێ ههڵنایێ</mark>	
8. Very weak	کەپووى بگرە روحى دەردێ	
9. Very painful	مردنم به چاوی خوّم دیت	
10. Break the ice (say something)	شەكرەكى بشكێنە	
11. Never	چاوی له پشتی سهری دهربێ	
12. Leave me alone	ياخەت لە ياخەم بكەوە	
13. Pig headed	كەلە رەق	
14. Don't push it	له سەرى زۆر مەرۆ	
15. Support me	پشتم بگره	
16. Get lost	له پێش چاوم بزر به	
17. He cries before he s hurt	پێشی تای بەپی بەخۆی دادەدات	
18. Don't insist	<mark>دەستم مەگرە</mark>	
19. Don't bother me	خۆت ماندى مەكە	
20. Very shocking	<mark>دڵتەزێنە</mark>	



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تحليل وظيفي للتعبيرات التواصلية اللفظية باللغتين الكردية والإنجليزية المستخلص

في سعينا لملء الفراغ في الدراسات البحثية حول التعبيرات اللفظية، بدأنا هذا البحث لإظهار على وجه الخصوص أن أشكال ووظائف التعبيرات الاصطلاحية ليست بالضرورة ذات الصلة. نريد أن نعرف ما إذا كان طلابنا المتقدمين لديهم ما يعادل ديناميكية من التعابير أو الأمثال المخزنة في المعجم العقلي. في كثير من الأحيان، الطلاب قاموا مجرد بترجمة التعابير حتى عندما يفهمون معنى الوظيفة في اللغة. وبناء على ذلك، فإن معرفتهم بالشكل والوظيفة في التعبيرات المحددة محدودة ويجب التعبير عنها إلى حد كبير لهذه التعبيرات في سياقات مختلفة.

تقدم هذا البحثتحليلا مفصلا لبعض التعبيرات اللفظية الأكثر شيوعا في اللغة الإنجليزية و الكردية من منظور براغماتي إلى أنماط أكثر تعقيدا من التفاعل بين الاثنين. وعلاوة على ذلك، قد تتفاعل عدة تعبيرات أيضا في العمليات التواصلية التي تكمن وراء فهم التعبيرات اللفظية، مما يجعل من الضروري تناول العديد من وظائف الأمثلة لدينا في استخدام اللغة. سوف نستكشف الطرق التي قد تختلف فيها الضرورة والشفافية في استخدام التعبيرات التي تنشأ عن نفس الوضع حيث الوظيفة العملية هي الهدف النهائي الذي لا يعرفه المتعلمون. لذلك، طرحنا تعبيرات لفظية كردية و طلبنا ما يعادلها بلإنجليزية لتسليط الضوء على وظائفها في سياقات مختلفة. ويتم ذلك من خلال توزيع (20) تعابير لفظية كردية على (20) طالبا وطالبة دراسات عليا في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية / كلية اللغات / جامعة صلاح الدين - هولبر، لتقديم ما يعادلها في اللغة الإنجليزية.

و الله ولي التوفيق

الباحثان



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شیکردنهوهی کاریلۆ پههند و ئیدیهمی گفتوگۆی کوردی و ئینگلیزی

يوخته

ئەم لیکۆلینەوەیە چەند ووتارێکی گفتوگۆی لەزمانی کوردی و ئینگلیزی شیدەکاتەوە له رویی کاریان. ئەمەش لەرێگای داباشکردنی چەند ووتارێکێ کوردی بەسەر(۲۰) قوتابی خوێندنی بالا. پاش روونکردنەیەک دەربارەی پەندەکانی ھەلبژاردراو بۆ ئەم لێکۆلینەوە، داوامان کرد لە قوتابیەکان وتارای بەرامبەر بۆھەریەک لەپەندەکان بەزمانی ئینگلیزی بنووسن.

پرۆسەكە ئەنجام درا لە بەشى ئىنگلىزى، كۆلىژى زمان، زانكۆى سەلاھەدىن- ھەولێر. لە كؤتايى بۆمان دەركەوت كە زۇربەى ئەم قوتابيانە نەيان توانى ئەنجامى راست بدەنەوە بەلام وەريانگيراوە وەكوخۆى يان ھەروەلاميان نەداوە بۆ زۆربەيان.

خودای مەزن پشت و پەنای ھەموو لايەک بێ.

توێژەرەكان