

EMMA CAMPO COLLANTE, JULIETA ZULUAGA GOMEZ***APPLIED PRAGMATICS: EXPLORING COMMUNICATIVE EVENTS IN THE CLASSROOM****Resumen**

La Pragmática Aplicada se ha convertido en un área importante para el estudio de la enseñanza- aprendizaje de una lengua, gracias al desarrollo de nuevos paradigmas en la Lingüística Aplicada. El presente artículo se basa en la investigación acerca de los actos de habla que se dan en el aula de clase y su incidencia en el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera. Para llevar a cabo la investigación, se tuvo en cuenta el modelo de enseñanza aprendizaje de una segunda lengua o de una lengua extranjera establecido por Swain (1977) - específicamente los factores de input que influyen en dicho aprendizaje -.

En consecuencia , para lograr los objetivos de esta investigación se observaron tres maestros de tres universidades – Universidad Distrital, INCA y Pontificia Universidad Javeriana - durante 720 minutos de clase; con base en los resultados obtenidos durante el estudio, se pudo concluir que los profesores tienden a utilizar más preguntas cerradas que abiertas. También, al analizar su discurso de estos profesores, se observó que - en su mayoría – produjeron actos de habla tales como : solicitudes, órdenes y estímulos o incentivos . Por tanto, se pudo corroborar que el maestro continua siendo una figura dominante en el proceso de enseñanza -aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera.

Por otra parte, el número de actos de habla producido por los estudiantes fue supremamente bajo y únicamente en actos como sugerencias y elogios. De otro modo, y con base en la cantidad de actos que ocurrieron durante las clases, se concluyó que hubo un proceso de acción reacción en el que no se presentó una verdadera interacción. Finalmente, se establecieron alguna conclusiones e implicaciones pedagógicas para contribuir a la Lingüística Aplicada y al campo de la enseñanza - aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera.

Towards the definition of Pragmatics:

Pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader) (Yule, 1996:3). The dictionary of Applied Linguistics defines Pragmatics as the study of the use of language in communication, particularly the relationships between sentences and the context and situations in which they are used.

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Pragmatics includes the study of:

- a) How the interpretation and use of utterances depend on knowledge of the real world.
- b) How speakers use and understand speech acts .
- c) How the structure of sentences is influenced by the relationship between the speaker and the hearer.
(taken from Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics, 1996: 284- 85).

Pragmatics and Other Fields : Applied Pragmatics.

Pragmatics has potential application to all fields with a stake in how utterances are understood. Such fields include not only the study of rhetoric or literature that are not immediately concerned with practical problems but also it is concerned with fields aiming at solving problems in communication. It is here that the applications of pragmatics are likely to have direct practical importance. Four areas in particular seem to be important in this regard: Applied linguistics (i.e. the theory and practice of second language learning), the study of man-machine interaction, the study of communicational difficulties in face-to-face interaction and the study of communicational difficulties that arise when communicators are not in face-to-face interaction.¹

Hymes (1972) considers that the application of pragmatics to problems in second language learning is based on the assumptions that, on the one hand, there are significant differences not only in the structure of languages but also in their use. Even where there are underlying universals of usage, as seems to be the case in the construction of polite expressions (Brown and Levinson, 1978), there is considerable room for cross-cultural misunderstanding.²

And on the other hand, that the study of speech-act theory allows for the focus on the typical speech events encountered by second-language learners, for the study of the principal features in classroom discourse and the way it determines the patterns of interaction in the classroom settings.

For the purpose of this article, we will focus our attention on Speech-Act Theory. Speech-act theory has to do with the functions and uses of the language. Therefore, in the broadest sense, we may say that speech acts are all the acts we perform through speaking, all the things we do when we speak (Back & Harnish,

¹ Katz (1976) states a complete analysis in each one of these fields of study in Applied Pragmatics.

² There are a great number of studies in relation to cross-cultural misunderstanding, among them we can find House and Casper, 1981; Walters, 1981 who worked on politeness request and complaints between German and English speakers.

1979). However, and according to Schmidt and Richards (in Richards, 1985) this definition is too broad for most purposes, because we use speech acts in most human activities: 'we use language to build bridges, to consolidate political regimes, to carry on arguments, to convey information from one person to another – in short to communicate. We use speech in ceremonies, games, recipes and lectures, etc.' So we could extend such lists indefinitely, but as Haliday (1973) has pointed out, such lists do not by themselves tell us very much, since the innumerable social purposes for which adults use language are not presented directly, at one-to one, in the language system.

Austin (1962) pointed out that there are many speech acts and also established a distinction in the theory of speech acts among three different types of act involved in or caused by the utterance of a sentence: Locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts.

Of the large amount of philosophical work that Austin's work has given rise to, one development in particular is worth singling out. That is the influential systematization of Austin's work by Searle (1976), through whose writing speech-act theory has perhaps had the most of its impact on linguistics. Searle presents the clearest taxonomy for the speech acts and the basis for his classification is the illocutionary point or the purpose of the act; from the speakers perspective, and according to him, speech acts can be grouped into a small number of basic types based on speakers intentions by means of the following five types of utterances: Declarations, Representatives, Expressives, Directives and commissives.³

These five general functions of the speech acts, with their key features, are summarized in the table below:

Speech act type	Direction of it	S = speaker; X = situation
Declarations	Words change the world	S causes X
Representatives	Make words fit the world	S believes X
Expressives	Make words fit the world	S feels X
Directives	Make the world fit words	S wants X
Commissives	Make the world fit words	S intends X

Table 1. (Taken from Yule, 1996: 55)

³ It is worth noting that Yule (1996) states a complete review of the type of utterances in which speech acts can be grouped into.

Speech-Act Theory and Second Language Learning.

The preceding account of speech events and speech acts reviews the major contributions to speech-act theory that have been made by linguists, philosophers and other theorists. Now, we are going to consider in what ways speech-act theory can contribute to our understanding of second language acquisition since the study of the role of speech acts in second language learning could make a useful contribution to our knowledge of how second and foreign languages are acquired.

Up to now, different theories of second language learning were based on models developed in linguistic theory. Thus, it was widely assumed that transformational-generative grammar could serve both 'as a general model for language and as an explanatory model for second language learning' (Schmidt and Richards in Richards, 1985: 115). Within much L2 theory and research, the primacy of syntax was taken for granted and the syntactic paradigm was dominant. On the contrary, speech-act theory, defining proficiency with reference to communicative rather than linguistic competence, goes beyond the level of the sentence to the question of what sentences do and how they do it when language is used.

When considering second and foreign language learning, Swain (1977) proposes a four-part model of second language learning, isolating four areas of relevant research: *Input Factors, Learner Factors, Learning Factors and Learned Factors*, Swain (1977).

As the purpose of this article is to explore communicative events in the classroom, we will focus on speech-act theory in reference to the first area discussed by Swain, that is, the input factors that refers to the input to the learning process or situation and includes both linguistic and extra-linguistic variables. Subsequently, we will discuss how speech-act theory contributes to our understanding of the nature of the input to the learning process.

INPUT FACTORS IN THE LEARNING PROCESS

Schmidt and Richards (1985) point out that a theory of second language acquisition must take account of the input to the learning process. The study of speech events and speech acts allows for the focus on the typical speech settings encountered by second-language learners and the identification of discourse structure and norms for the speech events given.

Attempts to understand the structure of classroom interactions and classroom discourse have generally been isolated from the context of larger structural units of the course. Most classroom research, with either an educational focus (such as Bellack et al, 1966 and Fanselow, 1977) or a linguistic/discourse focus (such as Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975 and Coulthard, 1985) has analyzed the teacher-learners exchanges occurring in the classroom and has put them into a

classification of types of interactional 'moves'. A major focus of both types of research has been the recurring three-part pattern -teacher initiates, student responds, teacher evaluates what occurs between teachers and learners- or as it is called by Young the IRF cycle (cited in Woods, 1996).

When talking about speech-act theory and second language learning in the classroom the following aspects have to be set up : The speech event, the learner event, verbal interaction and pedagogic interaction. The learning event parallels the speech event. Pedagogic interaction parallels verbal interaction and teaching acts can parallel speech acts. Every activity the teacher employs, every drill, exercise and presentation can be seen as a teaching act, a pedagogic action performed through methodological devices by the teacher, and intended to have a definite effect on the learner (Malah-Thomas, 1987).

Each teaching act can be seen as having its own 'teaching force', what the teacher intends the act to achieve. The actual effect of the act can be seen as its 'learning effect', the reaction of the learner to what is being taught. Again, in actual practice, the teacher's intention does not always match the learner's interpretation and communication cannot effectively take place unless it does so.

BEYOND THE THEORY: A STUDY OF SPEECH ACTS IN THE CLASSROOM

In the study of language input to second language learning, the structure of the speech events within the language-teaching classroom is particularly important since this structure can be defined in reference to its discourse characteristics : turn taking, amount of talking, speech function of questioning and speech acts (Holmes, 1978).

In attempts to observe what the typical speech acts are performed in the classroom and by whom they are produced, a study was carried out in three different universities. All the subjects that participated in the research were from Language Licenciatura Programs in English as a foreign language.

Description of Subjects

The subjects for the study were three teachers of English as a foreign language, all of them female, at three different university settings in Santafé de Bogotá and teaching in language Licenciatura programs. The teachers were all experienced in TEFL and they were chosen at random at different institutions that offered English Language Licenciatura Programs. They have relatively homogeneous current teaching situations (types of students and types of programs), but relatively heterogeneous backgrounds in terms of education, teacher training and previous language teaching experience.

For example, one of the professors had an M.A. master degree in TESOL and had lived in New York for three years. She has been teaching English for almost ten years. The other professor has an undergraduate degree in English and has been working in the field of teaching for a period of 15 years. And the last subject also has an undergraduate degree in English. She had the opportunity of living in Canada for ten years and has 17 years of experience in teaching. As a group, they have a variety of teaching experience (teenagers vs. Adults), ESL vs. EFL.

From the classes observed, all students were teenagers or young adults who belonged to intermediate level, whose curriculum included all the skills, and was primarily determined by the program established for the English level (Intermediate I). All of the teachers followed a guide text selected by the program head and the number of students in each group oscillated between ten and seventeen students.

Methodology

There are multiple orientations for doing research. There is not simply a finite number of these orientations, nor is there a simple dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative approaches (Cumming, 1994). Notwithstanding and based on the definition established by Cumming, as the present study is based on the principles of classroom observation, we selected, among all the taxonomies about research, Larsen and Long's (1994), since it is closer to the characteristics of this study in relation to classroom observation and more specifically to the focus on observation. Therefore, our study fits into one of the categories this taxonomy presents, that is called Focused Description.⁴

This category describes and categorizes various aspects of the instructional practices and verbal interactions that take place between teachers and students in language classrooms. Such analyses are typically guided by an observation instrument consisting of a list of predetermined, relevant categories of behaviors that trained observers look for and record either while observing language lessons as they are taught or later while working from an audio or video recording and/or written transcription of these lessons (Cumming, 1994).

Description of the Instruments

Having the theoretical background in relation to the methodology, we proceeded to the developing of the instruments to be used in order to observe the kinds of speech acts presented in the classroom setting. The instruments used

4 Focused description as it is defined by Larsen and Freeman analyses classroom interaction and aims at identifying and quantifying normative pattern of behavior within the specific curricula in order to find out how to improve conditions for language teaching and learning and to interpret the indicators of students' achievements.

when conducting this research were: an observation scheme and transcripts done by means of video taping the classes.

Observation Scheme

When talking about the observation scheme, it is necessary to mention the procedures used to establish this scheme. First of all, we did some ethnographic observations. That is to say, we went to some classes (4) to observe and to take notes about general aspects to bear in mind when dealing with discourse and verbal behavior. At this point, the study had longitudinal characteristics since the information was collected during a period of 480 minutes (4 classes). After that, we designed a scheme based on the observations carried out and we decided to pilot it with five English teachers in order to receive feedback about reliability, validity and the usefulness of the scheme. Having obtained the evaluation of the instrument, we redefined it, and in the end we established three main categories: Discourse, Verbal Behavior, and Non Verbal Signals.

Once we did so, we were ready to observe the classes of the subjects selected for this study; and thus, the study became cross-sectional since we only observed two classes per subject, during a period of 720 minutes (6 classes). Notwithstanding, it is absolutely necessary to point out that this observation scheme was the object of a new revision based on what was actually occurring in the classroom. Although the main categories stay the same, some of the sub-categories were eliminated since they were not present or some were added since they were not taken into account but occurred during the classroom observation done, e.g. scolding and sarcasm.

Analysis of the Data

In the analysis of the data, and considering the kinds of questions made by the teachers during the six classes, we found that from the amount of questions asked (388), they preferred to use closed questions (=Long & Sato's display) rather than open ones(=Long & Sato's referential), confirming in this way, what Schmidt and Richards (1985:118) had already established when saying that: 'the speech function of questioning is frequent in classroom, but it is typically a closed question from the teacher where only one acceptable answer is required rather than open questions where several different answers are possible.'

(see table 2)

TOTAL QUESTIONS	%	DISPLAY	%	REFERENTIAL	%
338	100	209	61.83	129	38.16

Table 2. Kinds of questions

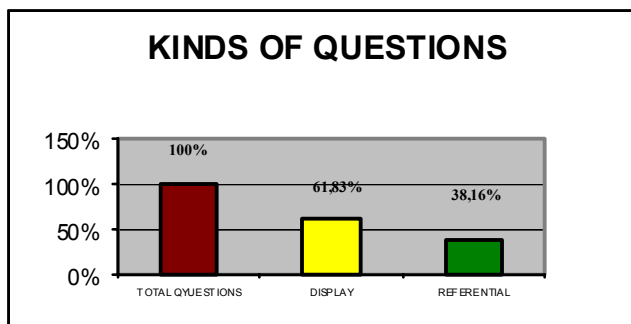


Fig. 1. Kinds of questions.

Consider figure 1

In relation to the speech acts presented in the six classes observed, it is important to point out that when analyzing the number of speech acts, we decided to take non-verbal responses (such as nodding or simply executing the required act) into account as answers. Consider table 3, in which acts initiated by teachers are related to the respective answers given by the students and the subsequent reaction of the teacher.

When talking about the speech acts, it was observed that teacher A focused her speech on orders, (26.16%) soliciting (25.23%) sarcasm (15.88%); this latter aspect results - in a way, not very common in the teaching-learning context, since teachers would not use these kinds of speech acts unless something is happening in the class and in this case, it was used as an indirect way of making students aware of something - in this case their lack of studying the topic. There are two samples that exemplify this:

T: M2 are you a classmate or are you studying here!
M2: [Keeps silence]
T: M2, think about one thing you did in the past that you don't do it.
M2: I don't understand!
LLL: [The whole class laughs]
T: Maybe, they don't understand. All laugh but nobody ask, nobody ask. Hey come on, think of you did in the past tense.

Let us consider another example of sarcasm:

F6 When I was a child, I used to do manual works.
 T 'Uh huh' ! manual works. That's a nice word. I love you because of the time you're organizing your Espanglish. No, no, write the word down, write it down and then tomorrow you will teach us how to say 'manual works.'

In teacher B, the speech acts were mainly centered on soliciting (65.78%), ordering (13.15%) and encouraging (13.15%). In teacher C the higher scores were registered in the act of soliciting (61.19%), followed by encouraging, (16.41%) and ordering (11.94%). Taking these percentages into account, we can say that the teacher talk was given most of the time in terms of soliciting, ordering an encouraging speech acts. Consider figure 2

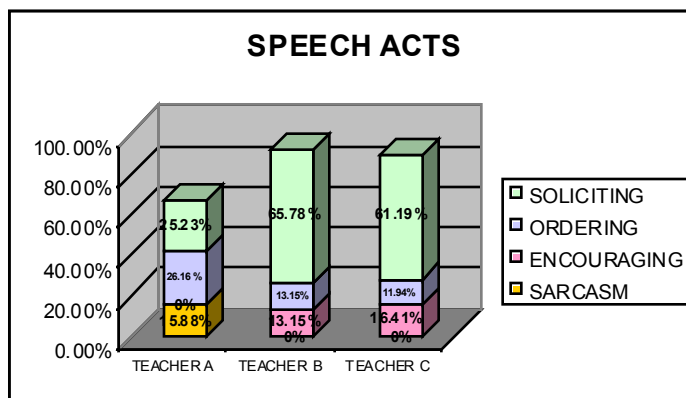


Figure 2. Amount of Speech acts performed by Teachers

In relation to the second cycle of discourse, that is - the different speech acts initiated by students, followed by the corresponding answers from the teacher and the respective reaction from the students-, it can be seen that students intervened in acts such as suggestions, jokes and encouraging statements and in all of these acts minimally. In the rest of the acts, there were no interventions. (see table 4).

TEACHER	SPEECH ACTS INITIATED BY TEACHERS																Acts
	Order		Suggest		Praising				Soliciting		Sarcasm		Praying		Scolding		
					Jokes		Encour. Statements										
	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	
	Initiates	Reponses	Initiates	Reponses	Initiates	Reponses	Initiates	Reponses	Initiates	Reponses	Initiates	Reponses	Initiates	Reponses	Initiates	Reponses	Total
A	28	20	2		10	9	15		27	21	17	4	2	2	6		107
%	100%	71.42%	100%	0%	100%	90%	100%	0%	100%	77.7%	100%	23.5%	100%	100%	100%	0%	
B	5	5	1		1	1	5		25	24	1						38
%	100%	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%	100%	0%	100%	96%	100%	0%					
C	8	7	1	1	3	2	11		41	41	2		1	1			67
%	100%	87.5%	100%	100%	100%	66.6%	100%	0%	100%	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%			

TABLA 3. Speech Acts Initiated by Teacher

STU. FROM	SPEECH ACTS INITIATED BY STUDENTS																Acts
	Order		Suggest		Praising				Soliciting		Sarcasm		Praying		Scold		
					Jokes		Encour. Statements										
	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	
	Initiates	Reponses	Initiates	Reponses	Initiates	Reponses	Initiates	Reponses	Initiates	Reponses	Initiates	Reponses	Initiates	Reponses	Initiates	Reponses	Total
A					5	3											5
B			1	1	1	1	1	1									3
C			2	2													2

TABLA 4. Speech Acts Initiated by Students

Teachers' and students' interventions

Based on the data and related to the quantity of questions and the speech acts produced by teachers and students, we can determine the amount of talk produced by each one of them. (see table 5).

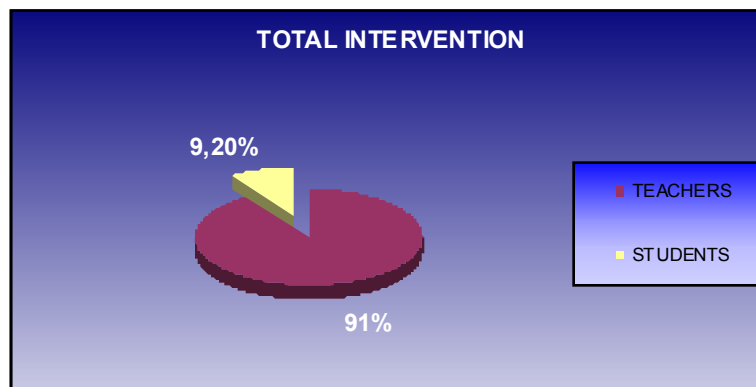
	INTERVENTIONS QUESTIONS ACTS		TOTAL INTERVENTION	%
TEACHERS	338	212	550	90.7%
STUDENTS	46	10	56	9.2%

Table 5. Teachers and students' interventions

From the above table, it is observable that the quantity of speech carried out by teachers is extremely higher than the amount of students' interventions. The

amount of teacher talk was 90.7 %, in contrast to the students' talk that was 9.2% during the six classes observed. This is illustrated in figure 3.

Figure 3. Teachers and students' interventions



Results and Findings

After having analyzed the data obtained from the two instruments of this study, it can be concluded that in relation to the speech function of questioning, and according to Chaudron (1995), teachers preferred using display questions where only one acceptable answer was required; on the contrary, teachers did not make use of many referential questions where there is not a predetermined answer.

In reference to the kinds of speech acts teachers presented, they were in their majority soliciting, ordering and encouraging statements. These acts corroborate the facts that not only is the professor the one who held the floor of the classes (Legarreta, 1987 and Enright, 1984), but also it gives a sample of what their roles were in the classes. On the contrary, the number of the speech acts initiated by the students - students ask, teacher responds and students react towards these answers- was extremely low (9.2%) and they were only in acts such as suggestions and praising; all this previous information gives enough tools to validate that what really happened in those classes - according to Malamah Thomas (1987) - was an action-reaction process, in which students were giving responses to the teachers' discourse all the time and, therefore, there was no place for a real interaction process.

The teacher's discourse is another preponderant element that shows us how the interaction was in the classroom; Dillon (cited in Morgan, 1994) considers that the pattern of interaction is determined by the amount of teacher and student talk and the extent to which talk is initiated by either the teacher or the student. In that order of ideas, and analyzing the speech acts produced by both, teachers and students, it was found that from the amount of speech acts performed, 90.7% were produced by the teachers, in contrast to the students that was 9.2% during the six classes observed. In relation to teachers' talk, it was carried out in a predictable

IRF cycle (Young,1987); that is teachers initiate, students respond and teachers give feedback.

CONCLUSIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

From the present study, we can conclude that the speech acts marked a kind of interaction in the classroom; teachers appeared to be at the center of the teaching learning processes. Fact that is against recent theories such as Social Constructivist Model (Williams and Burden, 1997) which addresses the learner as the center of this process. Furthermore, this interaction is what Malamah (1987) called a mere action-reaction process where there is a teacher action upon the class and a student reaction towards this act with its subsequent teachers action. And what Young called the IRF cycle: ' what emerges from actual classroom interaction is a fairly predictable cycle of talk that has contributed significantly to an understanding of teacher-students' interaction in the classroom.' Therefore, student answers responded only to the questions asked or the speech acts performed by the teachers causing interaction to be channeled through the teachers (Young, 1987:73). The implication is then that teachers still hold the floor and are the center in the classroom, showing a teacher-centered approach.

Teacher talk is one of the most relevant factors that takes part in a class. Thus, aspects such as the kinds of speech acts, the speech function of questioning, and the amount of teacher talk are issues that gave us some basis to conclude that teachers present the major quantity of the speech acts and that these speech acts are given in terms of display questions, ordering, soliciting and praising. All these characteristics aim at using a more formal discourse in a one-way communicative cycle, that is to say, teacher-student-student cycle and in a very low percentage, student-teacher-student one. Therefore, and according to Nunan (1989) learning within a classroom context must be understood in relation to the highly structured and selective type of language that typifies classroom language and teaching situations.

Speech-act theory -more specifically with reference to input factors- constitutes an important area in the language teaching classroom since it contributes to our understanding of the nature of the input to the learning process and the finding out of strategies that allow learners improve in the process of learning or using a foreign or second language.

Although this study has tried as much as possible to analyze objectively the data from the three teachers observed, it is necessary to show the limitations this study presents, in the sense that the results obtained from the analysis of the data do not give a representative sample of what is actually happening in the classroom setting, and therefore, the findings cannot be generalized. However, this study constitutes a contribution into a deeper exploration of a broad and rich area that

deserves full attention since it provides powerful insights into the teaching-learning processes.

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It is worth noting that Anderson, 1992 states a complete review of the reasons for the growth of interest in Pragmatics in recent years.

