DOI: 10.17117/na.2016.06.01.605

<http://ucom.ru/doc/na.2016.06.01.605.pdf>

Поступила (Received): 10.06.2016

Саматова Г.Н., Насимова С. Прагматический подход к преподаванию на английском языке

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A pragmatic approach to teaching functions in English

*В статье рассматривается прагматический
подход к преподаванию функций на английском
языке*

Ключевые слова: прагматический подход,
функции на английском языке

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*The article is about A pragmatic approach to
teaching functions in English and the verbal stance
of the initiator and the interlocutor toward each
other must be pragmatically acceptable in order for
the communicative event to proceed smoothly*
Key words: pragmatic approach, pragmatically

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Professional using foreign language for face-to-face interactions inevitably need to perform language functions such as requesting, suggesting, advising, and inviting in ways that their foreign interlocutors can comfortably understand. Foreign language training programs often teach learners to perform these functions as parts of a broader competence in grammar, to be specific, as part of modal auxiliary usage. A teacher would show her learners how to use *would* and *could* for performing requests, *ought to*, *should*, *had better*, and *must* for advice, and so on. There is no disputing that functions such as advising and requesting can be performed using modal auxiliaries. However, the culturally based assumptions that learners draw upon while performing such language functions play a role as great as correct grammatical usage in completion of the language act. The verbal stance of the initiator and the interlocutor toward each other must be pragmatically acceptable in order for the communicative event to proceed smoothly. One of the most sensitive areas of interpersonal communication between Russian speakers of English and native English speakers is the use of directives, i.e., speech acts through which the speaker attempts to get the addressee to do something. The way that speakers employ language to perform these acts is

influenced by operative assumptions for interaction in their culture. Whereas in English language culture interlocutors tend to preserve each other's right to independence, autonomy, non-imposition and non-interference, in Russian language culture, as in other Slavic cultures, speakers value closeness, intimacy and what might be called "uninhibited emotional expression" (Wierzbicka, 1991). These differences determine the most typical cases of interlanguage transfer in performing such directives as requests, suggestions, invitations, and advice. For instance, in the Russian culture, advice, invitations and suggestions are often imposed on the interlocutor by the use of the imperative and multiple repetitions (Wierzbicka, 1991), while in English language culture it is common to avoid such imposition in these speech acts by the use of indirect structures, hints and preliminary questions. The culture clash that results when Russian and English native speakers communicate with each other employing these different operative assumptions often results in the misinterpretation of intentions. Russian speakers of English, when they use conversational strategies based on their native communication system, often sound abrupt, straightforward, imposing and even aggressive to the native English speaker's ear. On the other hand, native English speakers are often perceived by Russian speakers as cautious, too polite, evasive and even manipulative. The learner who has not yet mastered an adequate level of pragmatic competence in the foreign language may quickly find himself playing a similarly unseemly role. By including pragmatic aspects in English language teaching as well as in teaching other languages, teachers can raise students' consciousness of linguistic elements crucial for avoiding such clashes of culture. In the Russian English language teaching tradition, "advisability" is commonly taught as an aspect of the meanings of modal verbs such as "should," "ought to," and each other must be pragmatically acceptable in order for the communicative event to proceed smoothly. One of the most sensitive areas of interpersonal communication between Russian speakers of English and native English speakers is the use of directives, i.e., speech acts through which the speaker attempts to get the addressee to do something. The way that speakers employ language to perform these acts is influenced by operative assumptions for interaction in their culture. Whereas in English language culture interlocutors tend to preserve each other's right to independence, autonomy, non-imposition and non-interference, in Russian language culture, as in other Slavic cultures, speakers value closeness, intimacy and what might be called "uninhibited emotional expression" (Wierzbicka, 1991). These differences determine the most typical cases of interlanguage transfer in performing such directives as requests, suggestions, invitations, and advice. For instance, in the Russian culture, advice, invitations and suggestions are often imposed on the interlocutor by the use of the imperative and multiple repetitions (Wierzbicka, 1991), while in English language culture it is common to avoid such imposition in these speech acts by the use of indirect structures, hints and preliminary questions. The culture clash that results when Russian and English native speakers communicate with each other employing these different operative assumptions often results in the misinterpretation of intentions. Russian speakers of English, when they use conversational strategies based on their native communication system, often sound abrupt, straightforward, imposing and even aggressive to the native English speaker's ear. On the other hand, native English

speakers are often perceived by Russian speakers as cautious, too polite, evasive and even manipulative. The learner who has not yet mastered an adequate level of pragmatic competence in the foreign language may quickly find himself playing a similarly unseemly role. By including pragmatic aspects in English language teaching as well as in teaching other languages, teachers can raise students' consciousness of linguistic elements crucial for avoiding such clashes of culture. In the Russian English language teaching tradition, "advisability" is commonly taught as an aspect of the meanings of modal verbs such as "should," "ought to," and "must," the pragmatic aspect of the use of these verbs in communication being ignored. Cultural transfer from Russian is evident when learners persistently choose the strongest forms for giving advice, such as you must or you should, or even choose the imperative, while avoiding options preferable to the English native speakers, such as Why don't you...? and It might be a good idea to..., which only sometimes incorporate the modals of advisability.

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