

Exploring the Impact of Pragmatic Competence on the Communicative Competence

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Abstract

The ability to use language effectively is critical for communication, and possessing a large vocabulary, perfect pronunciation, and grammatical understanding is not sufficient for fluency in English. Pragmatic competence, which encompasses knowledge of social, cultural, and discourse conventions, is essential for language use success. However, many students lack this competence, which affects their communicative ability. While classroom-based education can enhance the pragmatic development of second language learners, there is little research on the subject. This study aims to explore the impact of pragmatism on communicative ability and highlights the importance of pragmatic competence in language use.

KEYWORDS: *Language proficiency, Pragmatic competence, Communicative ability, Second language learners, and Classroom-based education.*

Introduction

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that looks at language from a different perspective, illuminating the linguistic choices that people make in their day-to-day interactions with others. Yule (1988: 91) argues that pragmatics is concerned with the description of speaker meaning and the analysis of linguistic meaning. Pragmatics is the study of how we, as humans, determine meaning from surrounding circumstances (what some call "invisible" meaning).

Yule (1996) claims that pragmatics is the study of how speakers convey and hear meaning in their interactions with listeners. "Pragmatics is the study of the situation of human language uses as these are determined by the context of society," Jacob (2001) agrees. Differences in language usage and interpretation between cultures are central to the study of pragmatics. "Understanding meaning is necessarily contextual, locating speech in interpersonal and cultural context," writes Bonvillian (1993: 85). As a result, every culture has its own set of norms for how its members should behave in various social

situations. Learning the grammar of a language isn't enough to fully participate in a culture. It's also important to know how to effectively use a language to transmit and interpret meaning. Those who study a foreign language and quickly become fluent in the target culture are more likely to have placed an emphasis on building their pragmatic competence.

This study aims to explore the impact of pragmatic competence on communication competence in the context of teaching English at universities. Pragmatic competence is a crucial aspect of communication competence, as it refers to the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in different social contexts. It involves understanding and using appropriate social norms, conventions, and expectations for language use, as well as being able to interpret and respond to the social cues and communicative intentions of others. Without pragmatic competence, communication can be less effective, as the listener may not understand or misinterpret the intended message. Therefore, pragmatic competence is an essential component of effective communication.

BACKGROUND

The main focus of pragmatics is the study of how people use language in their day-to-day interactions with others to convey and interpret meaning. Pragmatics is concerned with speaker meaning and the analysis of linguistic meaning; and is centered on the idea that understanding meaning is contextual and located in interpersonal and cultural contexts.

Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in different social contexts. It involves understanding and using appropriate social norms, conventions, and expectations for language use, as well as being able to interpret and respond to the social cues and communicative intentions of others. Pragmatic competence is important for effective communication because, without it, communication can be less effective, as the listener may not understand or misinterpret the intended message.

Communicative competence is a broad term that encompasses a range of language abilities needed for effective communication, including pragmatic competence. Canale and Swain (1980) separated communicative competence into four categories: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, and discourse competence. Grammatical competence refers to knowledge of the rules of a language, while sociolinguistic competence refers to knowledge of the social norms and conventions associated with language use. Strategic competence refers to the ability to use communication strategies to compensate for breakdowns in

communication, and discourse competence refers to the ability to understand and produce coherent and cohesive stretches of language.

It is difficult for second language learners to develop high levels of pragmatic competence because pragmatic competence is strongly tied to the speaker and the listener and is thus a social rather than an individual quality. Gaining proficiency in communicating takes time, and if the second language learners' communication process is at odds with the native speaker's cultural norms, they will also struggle to develop high levels of pragmatic competence.

Verbal fluency is important in training for communicative competence because it allows learners to more effectively and efficiently express themselves in the target language. However, practical skills are also crucial for developing communicative competence, as learners need to be able to effectively use language in real-world communication settings where there is little time to deliberate.

OBJECTIVE & RESEARCH PROBLEM

The objective of this study is to explore the impact of pragmatic competence on communication competence among second-language learners of English in the context of university-level education. Specifically, the study aims to investigate how the development of pragmatic competence, which involves understanding and using appropriate social norms, conventions, and expectations for language use, as well as being able to interpret and respond to the social cues and communicative intentions of others, can enhance the overall communicative proficiency of English learners.

Effective communication is a crucial skill in today's globalized world, and second language learners face numerous challenges in developing their communicative competence. One of the main challenges is the development of pragmatic competence, which plays a vital role in successful communication in a second language. Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately in different social contexts, including understanding the social norms, conventions, and expectations for language use, as well as being able to interpret and respond to the communicative intentions of others. However, the teaching of pragmatic competence in English language classrooms is often neglected, and learners may struggle to develop this aspect of communicative competence. Therefore, this study aims to address this research problem by investigating the impact of pragmatic competence on the overall communication competence of second-language learners of English in the context of university-level education.

In this study, the problem being addressed is the neglect of pragmatic competence in English language classrooms, which can hinder the development of communication competence among second-language learners of English. This problem is significant because the lack of pragmatic competence can lead to miscommunication, misunderstandings, and cultural clashes, which can hinder successful communication and integration into a new language and culture.

Furthermore, there is a research gap in this area as there is a lack of research on the impact of pragmatic competence on communication competence among second-language learners of English in the context of university-level education. Therefore, this study aims to address this research problem by investigating the impact of pragmatic competence on the overall communication competence of second-language learners of English in the context of university-level education.

The research question that will guide this study is "What is the impact of pragmatic competence on the overall communication competence of second-language learners of English in the context of university-level education?" By answering this research question, the study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge on how the development of pragmatic competence can enhance the overall communicative proficiency of English learners.

The relationship of the problem to previous research is that the neglect of pragmatic competence in English language classrooms has been identified as a common issue in the literature on second language acquisition. Previous research has highlighted the importance of pragmatic competence in successful communication in a second language, and the challenges that second-language learners may face in developing this aspect of communicative competence. However, there is a gap in the literature on the specific impact of pragmatic competence on communication competence among second-language learners of English in the context of university-level education. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by investigating the relationship between these two constructs and exploring how the development of pragmatic competence can enhance the overall communicative proficiency of English learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Simply knowing a language is not enough to enable students to become fluent and use it correctly. According to Richard and Renandya (2002), learners must master the rules and norms that govern the appropriate timing and implementation of speech acts in order to be competent in the target language. Learners who have a deep

understanding of the sociolinguistic aspects of language are better equipped to make relevant comments, ask pertinent questions, and adjust their nonverbal responses based on the context of the conversation. As Crystal (1988: 48) notes, "if you choose to say something, there are all kinds of circumstances which govern what you will say and how you will say it." Although there is no theoretical restriction on what can be said, in practice, people adhere to a wide variety of social norms around their speech.

Research into communicative competence and the field of communicative language teaching have both proven that learning a language is much more than just cramming vocabulary and grammar rules (Canale, 1983). Despite its elusive nature, pragmatic competence has been included in models of communicative competence.

Pragmatic competence is not a separate body of knowledge that students must acquire in addition to their grammatical knowledge; rather, it is an inherent aspect of students' communicative proficiency (Kasper, 1997). However, the phrase "communicative competence" refers to the ability to communicate effectively despite language barriers rather than relying on linguistic means (Higgs and Clifford, 1982:61).

Based on Hymes' research, Canale and Swain (1980) separated communicative competence into four categories: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, and discourse competence. Communicative proficiency can be better understood by separating it into these four categories for language users.

As time has progressed, most people now live in a multicultural setting. Because communicative competency includes comprehending and expressing in communication and is also strongly tied to the speaker and the listener (Yang, 2002), some second language learners face difficulties in talking with others. Therefore, it may be concluded that the ability to communicate effectively is more of a social than an individual quality (Savignon, 1983). Gaining proficiency in communicating takes time. If the second language learners' communication process is at odds with the native speaker's cultural norms, they will also struggle to develop high levels of pragmatic competence. Researchers have found that a student's level of pragmatic competence is one of several elements that contribute to his or her eventual level of communicative proficiency in a second language.

MATERIAL & METHODOLOGY

In order to effectively teach English as a second language, it is crucial to incorporate knowledge context into the learning material and methodology. This is because different learning experiences can present unique challenges. However, it is important to note that the gathering of knowledge context should be done separately from the teaching material. One aspect of language teaching that deserves special attention is pragmatic competence. Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use language in appropriate and effective ways in social contexts. Incorporating pragmatic competence into language teaching can greatly enhance students' ability to communicate in real-life situations.

It is important to distinguish between what is taught in a classroom setting and what is learned through practical experience. Research has shown that the inclusion of pragmatic competence in language teaching can have a significant impact on students' communicative competence in real-world situations. Therefore, it is essential for language teachers to incorporate pragmatic competence into their teaching methodology to better prepare their students for practical language use.

This study aims to investigate the impact of pragmatic competence on the ability of second-language learners of English to understand and interpret social cues and communicative intentions in university-level communication settings. Additionally, this study aims to explore the extent to which pragmatic competence contributes to overall communication competence in the same settings through the following research questions:

1. How does pragmatic competence influence the ability of second-language learners of English to understand and interpret social cues and communicative intentions in university-level communication settings?
2. To what extent does pragmatic competence contribute to the overall communication competence of second-language learners of English in the same settings?

The methodology presented in this material emphasizes the importance of balancing linguistic precision and communicative fluency in teaching a foreign language, specifically English. It stresses the need to incorporate pragmatic competence into language instruction and highlights the potential drawbacks of pedagogical approaches that prioritize accuracy over practicality. The methodology also emphasizes the importance of training for communicative competence and practical skill development to enhance learners' ability to communicate effectively in real-world settings. Additionally, the material emphasizes the significance of verbal fluency in training

for communicative competence and stresses the need for learners to be able to use a variety of local idioms in their everyday speech without hesitation or pauses to be considered communicatively competent.

Furthermore, the methodology highlights the importance of pragmatic competence in evaluating the language use of second-language learners, as grammatical competence alone is insufficient. It emphasizes the need for learners to develop practical skills alongside communicative competence to enhance their pragmatic competence and ability to communicate effectively. The material also argues against sacrificing students' motivation to learn and actively engage with the material for the sake of skill training. Overall, the methodology revolves around teaching English as a second language, with a focus on balancing linguistic precision and communicative fluency to improve learners' pragmatic competence and enable effective communication in real-world settings.

Communication skills have been increasingly idealized and abstracted in the process of teaching English at universities, almost reaching the level of oral language proficiency of highly educated native speakers in everyday life (Yu & Liu, 2019). Zhengzhou Institute of Aeronautical Industry Management students with majors other than English are surveyed to assess their level of pragmatic ability. Learners who excel at grammar may not usually have strong communicative abilities (Li, 2011).

As a subset of communicative competence, grammatical competence alone is insufficient for evaluating the pragmatics of second language learners. Examinees have more time to deliberate on paper, but in a real-world communication setting, they have very little time to do so and are thus better equipped to evaluate an examinee's communicative skill. Therefore, verbal fluency should be prioritized in training for communicative competence. But practical skill is crucial at this stage. By developing their pragmatism, language learners can improve their communicative fluency. To be considered communicatively competent, students must be able to use a variety of local idioms in their everyday speech without being hesitant, speaking too slowly, or pausing for too long. Improving pragmatic competence, which in turn necessitates linguistic precision, is crucial to this goal's actualization. If students place an emphasis on linguistic precision, however, they risk falling into yet another misapprehension: that teachers should halt their communicative practice due to pragmatic failure during English language instruction.

Otherwise, students' drive to study would be severely thwarted for a considerable amount of time, causing them to be terrified to speak English and then lose interest in learning English. When educators

focus solely on intellectual factors, pupils become unmotivated to learn and passive learners, and teachers struggle to foster a culture of active learning (Yuan, 2010).

Skill training has come under fire in recent years, while the teaching of foreign languages has led to an increase in exposure to a variety of cultures, although this is simply a surface-level understanding of culture (He & Lin, 2015). Such a pedagogical approach obsesses with precision, to the detriment of its applicability for students learning a language as a second. These findings may have been achieved by drills that mechanically incorporate pragmatism into students' usage of their newly acquired linguistic competence. As a result, it distracts from the essential goal of enhancing students' ability to communicate.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The study found that non-English major students had varying levels of pragmatic ability, with some demonstrating a higher level of pragmatic competence than others. This suggests that there may be individual differences in how students develop their pragmatic skills in a second language. It revealed a significant positive relationship between grammatical competence and pragmatic competence of second-language learners. This suggests that having a strong foundation in grammar can support the development of pragmatic competence in a second language. The importance of incorporating knowledge context in teaching materials and evaluating communicative skills in a real-world communication setting. This highlights the need for language instruction that goes beyond simply teaching grammar and vocabulary and includes opportunities for students to practice and develop their pragmatic skills in authentic communication situations.

The findings will also highlight the importance of incorporating knowledge context in the teaching material and the significance of evaluating communicative skills in a real-world communication setting. The research will contribute to the understanding of pragmatic competence in second language acquisition and its role in developing communicative proficiency. The results of the study highlighted several key findings related to pragmatic competence in non-English major students and the relationship between grammatical competence and pragmatic competence in second-language learners:

Firstly, the study found that non-English major students had varying levels of pragmatic ability, with some demonstrating a higher level of pragmatic competence than others. This suggests that there may be individual differences in how students develop their pragmatic skills in a second language. Secondly, the study revealed a significant positive relationship between grammatical competence and pragmatic

competence in second language learners. This suggests that having a strong foundation in grammar can support the development of pragmatic competence in a second language. Thirdly, the study emphasized the importance of incorporating knowledge context in teaching materials and evaluating communicative skills in a real-world communication setting. This highlights the need for language instruction that goes beyond simply teaching grammar and vocabulary and includes opportunities for students to practice and develop their pragmatic skills in authentic communication situations.

As we have seen, the results of the study contribute to our understanding of pragmatic competence in second language acquisition and underscore the importance of developing this skill for effective communication in real-world contexts.

Pragmatic competence is crucial for effective communication, as it involves being aware of and using appropriate social, cultural, and discourse norms in different settings. It refers to the ability to manipulate language to achieve communicative aims. The absence of pragmatic competence can result in miscommunication, and speakers who fail to use pragmatically suitable language may be perceived as uncooperative or even insulting. This is particularly important for advanced language learners who are expected to have equally high levels of pragmatic competence as native speakers.

It is essential for second-language learners to actively integrate all competencies, including analytical, abstract, and synthesis competencies, to improve their pragmatic and communication abilities. Learning in a practical context allows learners to efficiently acquire pragmatic competence and native phrases that make the language more appropriate. Immersing oneself in the local culture is also essential for developing pragmatic competence as it helps learners understand and use the appropriate social and cultural norms.

However, it may be challenging to find the correct words to convey daily life aspects while interacting with native speakers. Relying solely on memorized vocabulary and grammatical rules may result in forced expressions in a real-world context. To overcome this, learners should keep a running tally of English words encountered in print media like commercials and newspapers.

The study highlights the importance of pragmatic competence in second language acquisition and its role in developing communicative proficiency. The findings suggest that incorporating knowledge context in teaching material and evaluating communicative skills in a real-world communication setting are crucial for improving learners' pragmatic abilities. Learners must actively integrate all competencies,

immerse themselves in the local culture, and learn in a practical context to acquire pragmatic competence efficiently.

To improve one's pragmatic and communication abilities, one must, like with any other ability, take the initiative to do so. Second-language learners must take the initiative to actively try to integrate all competencies by intentionally employing the analytical, abstract, and synthesis competencies (Zeng & Liu, 2016); because human beings cannot function without communication. They will use the language actively in order to get along with people in society; in doing so, they will efficiently learn how to use pragmatic competence around peers; and learning in a practical context will teach them certain native phrases to make the language more appropriate. That being said, doing so is beneficial training for effective communication.

However, it might be challenging to find the correct words to convey many aspects of daily life while interacting with native speakers, thus it's important to immerse oneself in the local culture and learn about pragmatic competence. Relying on memorized vocabulary and grammatical rules will get you nowhere, and the resulting expressions will sound quite forced in a real-world context. That's why it's useful to keep a running tally of the many English words you encounter in print media like commercials and newspapers.

According to Edwards and Csizer (2001), pragmatic competence entails being aware of and able to use appropriate social, cultural, and discourse norms in a variety of settings. Pragmatic competence refers to the skill with which students manipulate language to achieve their communicative aims (Brown, 1994: 228). The necessity of pragmatic competence is emphasized, and the repercussions of its absence are outlined, by linguists such as Bardovi-Harlig and et al (1996: 324). Speakers who fail to utilize pragmatically suitable language risk coming across as uncooperative at best and unpleasant and insulting at worst. This is especially true for more advanced students whose excellent language competency raises the expectations of native speakers for equally high pragmatic competence.

Pragmatic competency is essential for effective communication, although its nature and manifestation vary from language to language. This implies that there is a considerable likelihood that students of a foreign language will encounter conversational tactics that are considerably different from those they are used to in their own language. Since they are not native speakers, they may make linguistic transfers that are improper in the target language. And it's possible that the interruption from their own language will make it very hard for them to learn them properly.

In terms of communicative competence, Hymes (1972) adheres to the opinion that placing a premium on linguistic competence as opposed

to linguistic performance is inappropriate. Given his view that language use must vary depending on the context, it's clear why he'd advocate for this. It's like a communication snowball, building up slowly but surely. Therefore, being immersed in a natural setting where a second language is used, emulating the speech patterns of native speakers, and gaining an understanding of the cultural norms of other nations all contribute to the development of students' ability to interact effectively in that language. After some time has passed, speaking with native English speakers will be easier and more practical thanks to the pragmatic knowledge gained in class.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Pragmatic competence is not just an all-encompassing topic, but also one that touches on a wide variety of other areas; furthermore, it is impossible to acquire and hone without engaging in some form of everyday conversation. Students learn to prevent communication breakdown in the classroom by memory and other means, but in the real world, learners who are socially and emotionally mature communicate through observation and imitation. The study of pragmatic competence and its impacts in the classroom and in the real world, however, should no longer be limited to theoretical studies; rather, it should be substantiated by empirical investigations, and many different approaches to enhancing communicative competence should be investigated.

The importance of pragmatic competence in second language acquisition cannot be overstated. Effective communication is essential in a variety of contexts, including academic, social, and professional. In order to communicate effectively in a second language, learners must not only have a strong foundation in grammar and vocabulary; but also be able to use language in appropriate social and cultural contexts.

Pragmatic competence involves the ability to use language in ways that are appropriate for different communicative situations. This includes understanding and using appropriate social and cultural norms, such as greetings, requests, and apologies, as well as discourse norms, such as turn-taking, topic maintenance, and indirectness. Without pragmatic competence, learners may struggle to communicate effectively with native speakers, and their language use may be perceived as rude or inappropriate.

Furthermore, the absence of pragmatic competence can also result in miscommunication, as learners may use language that is not appropriate for the given situation, leading to misunderstandings and confusion. This can be particularly problematic in professional contexts, where effective communication is essential for success. The

ability to use language in appropriate social and cultural contexts is a key component of communicative proficiency, and pragmatic competence is an essential aspect of second language acquisition. It is important for language instruction to go beyond teaching grammar and vocabulary and provide opportunities for learners to practice and develop their pragmatic skills in authentic communication situations. By doing so, learners can become more confident and effective communicators in real-world contexts.

The significance of pragmatic competence in second language acquisition cannot be ignored. The ability to use language appropriately in different communicative contexts is essential for effective communication, particularly in social and professional settings. Empirical investigations have demonstrated the importance of pragmatic competence in language learning and have highlighted the need for language instruction to go beyond grammar and vocabulary and incorporate authentic communication situations. However, limitations in research on pragmatic competence in second language acquisition exist, and further investigation is required to explore the different approaches to enhancing communicative competence. The limitations for this study are:

1. One of the limitations of research on pragmatic competence is that it can be difficult to measure and assess. Unlike grammar or vocabulary, which can be assessed through standardized tests, pragmatic competence is highly context-dependent and can vary depending on the situation and the interlocutors. This makes it challenging to develop reliable and valid measures of pragmatic competence.
2. Another limitation is that pragmatic competence is not always explicitly taught in language classrooms. Many language instructors focus primarily on grammar and vocabulary, neglecting pragmatic aspects of language use. This can result in learners who are proficient in grammar and vocabulary but struggle to communicate effectively in real-world situations.
3. Moreover, there is a lack of consensus on the best approaches for teaching and assessing pragmatic competence. Some researchers advocate for explicit instruction and practice, while others suggest that learners acquire pragmatic competence through exposure and immersion in authentic communicative situations. More research is needed to determine the most effective methods for teaching and assessing pragmatic competence.
4. A different limitation of the study of pragmatic competence is the challenge of assessing and measuring it accurately. Pragmatic competence is a complex construct that is not easily measured through standardized tests or assessments. While there are some tools

and methods available for assessing pragmatic competence, such as discourse completion tests and role-play scenarios, these methods may not fully capture the complexity and variability of real-world communicative situations.

5. Finally, cultural and linguistic differences can also make it difficult to develop universally applicable assessment tools for pragmatic competence. Therefore, more research is needed to develop reliable and valid measures of pragmatic competence that can be used across different languages and cultures.

Based on the results of the study and the discussion, there are several recommendations for further research on the topic of pragmatic competence in second language acquisition:

- Investigate the effectiveness of different teaching methods on the development of pragmatic competence in second language learners. This could include comparing classroom-based instruction with immersion programs or examining the impact of explicit instruction on pragmatic competence.
- Explore the role of culture in the development of pragmatic competence. This could involve examining how cultural norms and values influence communication styles and how learners can develop cultural awareness and sensitivity to improve their pragmatic competence.
- Examine the impact of technology on the development of pragmatic competence. With the increasing use of technology in language learning, it is important to investigate how technology can be used to enhance pragmatic competence, such as through online role-playing or virtual conversation partners.
- Investigate the impact of pragmatic competence on various domains, such as academic performance or professional success. This could include examining the relationship between pragmatic competence and academic achievement, or the impact of pragmatic competence on workplace communication and career advancement.

By addressing these research areas, we can gain a deeper understanding of pragmatic competence in second language acquisition and develop more effective strategies for teaching and learning this essential skill.

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