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ENHANCING OF THE PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE IN ACADEMIC DISCUSSIONS WHILE TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Introduction

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 education. This work is intended to provide a brief overview of pragmatics and pragmatic competence, the pedagogic significance of pragmatic competence highlighting the relevant theoretical components of pragmatics. For the purposes of my work, relevant literature covering definitions of pragmatics and pragmatic competence and research carried out on pragmatic competence is presented.

This study is based on a qualitative and descriptive research approach. The data were collected from scholarly literature related to pragmatics and language teaching, as well as classroom observations and analysis of academic discussions among English language learners. The research applies the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes meaningful communication and real-life language use. Various teaching strategies were analyzed, including interactive techniques like role-plays and simulations, group discussions and debates, discourse analysis tasks, explicit instruction of pragmatic norms.



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Additionally, learners' pragmatic competence was evaluated through their ability to use appropriate speech acts (e.g., requests, apologies, agreements, disagreements) and maintain politeness strategies in academic contexts.

Results. Pragmatics, a subject within linguistics, focuses on how people perform, interpret, and respond to language functions in a social context. Learning a language involves more than learning grammar and lexis. The rules of proper communication, such as how to speak appropriately in a situation or understand another person's intention, are critical skills to master in order to become a fully competent speaker in another language. These objectives of pragmatics learning are represented in the connection between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics¹. Pragmalinguistics refers to the linguistic forms available to perform language functions, while sociopragmatics refers to the appropriateness of the linguistic forms in a given social context. Pragmatic competence requires both types of knowledge, as well as processing skills that mobilize this knowledge in real time communication. Learners need to have a range of linguistic forms at their disposal in order to perform language functions (e.g., greetings), but at the same time, they need to understand the sociocultural norms and rules that govern the usage of these forms (e.g., what to say to greet a certain person). Hence, in second language (L2) learning, grammar (forms), and pragmatics (rules of communication) deserve distinct attention but should be learned conjointly, because the object of pragmatics learning is form-function-context mappings—knowledge of forms and their functional possibilities, as well as contextual requirements that determine the form-function mappings

The findings indicate that enhancing pragmatic competence significantly improves students' performance in academic discussions. Learners who were exposed to pragmatic-focused instruction demonstrated:

¹ Leech, G. Principles of pragmatics. Harlow, England: Longman. 1983.



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- increased awareness of context-appropriate language use
 - improved turn-taking and interaction management
 - better use of politeness strategies and hedging devices
 - greater confidence in expressing opinions and responding to others

Moreover, students showed noticeable progress in understanding implicit meanings, such as irony, indirectness, and speaker intention.

Discission

The results highlight the importance of integrating pragmatic competence into English language teaching, especially in academic settings. Traditional grammar-focused approaches are insufficient for developing effective communicative skills. The study confirms that pragmatic competence is a core component of communicative competence, enabling learners to use language appropriately according to social and cultural norms.

Researchers contend that they maintain to adhere to their first language pragmatic rules to govern their language use and their familiarity with second language usage makes them indifferent to learning pragmatic facets as communication takes center stage. Because of the strong influence cross-cultural pragmatics research has had on the field², the majority of IL pragmatics research has focused on L2 use, comparing differences between native speakers and advanced learners. Since the 1990's, however, there has been an increase in investigations on IL pragmatic development, encouraged by calls for research on how learners progress from beginning to advanced stages³. These studies have focused on

² Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G. Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies.1989. Norwood, NJ: Ablex

³ Bardovi- Harlig, 1999a; Kasper, 1992, 1998; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Kasper & JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH 153 © 2016 ACADEMY PUBLICATION Schmidt, 1996.



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factors that might influence development, such as level of proficiency⁴, the influence of instruction⁵, individual differences⁶, study abroad, and transfer⁷. Most of the work that has sought to outline developmental stages has been based on the acquisition of requests. The researchers Kasper and Rose suggest five stages of pragmatic development based on Achiba, Ellis, and Schmidt: 1) pre-basic (context dependent); 2) formulaic (unanalyzed formulas and imperatives); 3) unpacking (formulas incorporated into productive language use); 4) pragmatic expansion; and 5) fine-tuning. Investigations in the field of IL pragmatic development have used these stages as the basis for analysis, with some providing further support⁸ while others have found that their learners do not seem representative of any stage and suggest that learners are idiosyncratic and non-linear in terms of their development. Among various instruction methods proposed for developing interlanguage pragmatics, two types of research studies have as their primary goal the development of classroom techniques in order for enhancing pragmatic fluency, namely, observational and interventional studies. In a literature review conducted by Kasper, he truly came to the conclusion that early studies in the realm of second and foreign language classroom have taken pragmatic ability for granted at the expense of accentuating merely the language use.

⁴ Salsbury, T. & Bardovi-Harlig, K. "I know your mean, but I don't think so": Disagreements in L2 English. In L. F. Bouton (Ed.), *Pragmatics and Language Learning* (Vol. 10, pp. 131-151). 2001. Urbana-Champaign, IL: Division of English as an International Language

⁵ Rose, K. R. Interlanguage development in Hong Kong, phase 2. 2009. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 41, 2345-2364.

⁶ Kuriscak, L. M. The effect of individual-level variables on speech act performance. In A. Martínez-Flor & E. Usó-Juan (Eds.), *Speech act performance: 2010. Theoretical, empirical and methodological issues* (pp. 23-39). Amsterdam: John Benjamins

⁷ Beebe, L. M., Takahashi, T., & Uliss-Weltz, R. (1990). Pragmatic transfer in ESL refusals. In R. Scarcella, E. S. Andersen, & S. D. Krashen (Eds.), *Developing communicative competence in a second language* (pp. 55-73). New York: Newbury House.

⁸ Chang, Y.-F. 'I no say you say is boring!': The development of pragmatic competence in L2 apology. *Language Sciences*, 2010: 32, 408-424.



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Furthermore, classroom interaction plays a crucial role. Activities such as debates and discussions create opportunities for learners to practice real-life communication and develop pragmatic awareness. Teachers should also provide explicit feedback on pragmatic errors, as these are often overlooked compared to grammatical mistakes. However, challenges remain in some difficulties. For example, lack of teacher training in pragmatics, limited exposure to authentic language use, cultural differences affecting interpretation of meaning.

Conclusion. To sum up, enhancing pragmatic competence is essential for effective participation in academic discussions in English. The study demonstrates that integrating pragmatic instruction within communicative teaching approaches leads to significant improvements in learners' interactional skills.

Teachers are encouraged to incorporate pragmatic-focused activities and provide explicit guidance on language use in context. Developing pragmatic competence not only improves linguistic ability but also fosters intercultural communication and critical thinking skills. Future research should explore more practical methods and technological tools to support the development of pragmatic competence in diverse learning environments.

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3. Crystal, D. (2003). *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* (5th ed.). Oxford: Blackwell.



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