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Current Studies on Pragmatics Competence in EFL Learning Context: A Review

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Abstract

Pragmatic competence has hitherto been one of the concerns that has received attention in the area as a vital element of linguistic competence**.** This conceptual study showcases a brief overview of pragmatics competence in EFL learning environment by highlighting what study designs have been utilized in contemporary research that focuses on pragmatic competence in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning and what the implications of fostering pragmatic competence are elaborated in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom under the realm of pragmatics study. The design of the study utilizes library research method. The present study presents a collection of empirical research examining pragmatic competence within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning contexts. The research methodologies implemented in these studies mostly consist of descriptive qualitative techniques, mixed methods, with only a limited number of studies utilizing the quantitative approach. Furthermore, the impact of sociopragmatic competence is significant in enhancing the communication abilities of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners.

Keywords: *pragmatic competence, EFL Learning, pragmatic*

Introduction

In terms of English Language Teaching, particularly in the EFL classroom context, practices have hitherto been focused to grammatical accuracy, and therefore the communicative function of language seems to be neglected. This is aligned with Deda's (2013) observation that the trend of language learning in the EFL context has focused on developing linguistic competence while overlooking the nature of language as a means of interaction in which meaning is negotiated not by correct/incorrect grammar rules but derived from context.

It is noteworthy that the fact, the ability to understand the essential points of what a speaker conveys is far more important in language use. Having a lack of comprehension of the communicative rules involved in the production of speech can lead to a failure in communication. Failure to address the linguistics rules in a variety of contexts leads to misunderstanding in communication (Thomas, 1983). Therefore, pragmatic competence becomes a pivotal aspect in effective language communication. Pragmatic competence has recently become one of the language concerns that linguists todays, particularly in an EFL setting, are interested in. It is one of the linguistic facets that most EFL learners find

challenging. EFL students are taugh by various words of meanings and linguistic structures in (L2) as a target language.

Crystal (1997; Kasper, 1997) stressed that pragmatics is the study of language in its sociocultural context, but it is unclear what an individual needs to know to be competent. In summary, what does it mean exactly by the term pragmatic competence? Pragmatic competency is comprised of a complex set of interconnected components, both linguistic and sociocultural in nature. As a result, non-native speakers struggle to develop pragmatic competence. Pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence are different in English. According to According to Allot (2010), the sociocultural resources that underpin sociopragmatic competency are likewise linked to sociopragmatic conventions developed by native English speakers. Meaning, interaction, and context are three concepts that are viewed as required prerequisites for fruitful pragmatic behaviour.The first is *meaning*. Pragmatics is the study of meaning in context, which is formed when a speaker utters a message. For example, "*It's cold in here"* can carry different in meaning, such as a literal statement expressing the low temperature or a request for action. Yet, in different context, the meaning cab be something else. It can be interpreted as a call for a request spoken by the speaker presents in that situation, such as closing a window or turning up the heat. As a result, as Purpura (2004) stressed it, "what a speaker tries to say is considerably deeper than what she explicitly delivers.

The second is *interaction*. Pragmatic meaning is reconstructed by all participants in a communications interaction. According to Bachman & Palmer (1996, 2010), the formation or interpretation of intended meaning in conversation, or the dynamic and interactive negotiation of intended meanings between two or more persons, is referred to as language usage in a communication. The last componen in pragmatic competence is *context.* In pragmatic competence, Context is the immediate aspects of a speech scenario, such as time, location, participants, and prior discourse. Fetzer (2004) also argued that cognitive, linguistic, social, and sociocultural settings exist, implying that theoretical inquiries must be conducted from the diverse perspectives

Celce-Murcia, (2007) provoked that one of the objectives of learning EFL is being able to communicate effectively. Thus, EFL learners ought to have communication skills, which includes socio-cultural, interactional, formulaic, and strategic competence as well as linguistic competence (Celce-Murcia, 2007, p. 45). As a set of linguistic norms that reveal themselves in the creation and interpretation of utterances, pragmatics helps the speakers examine the parameters that make the utterances acceptable cases. Therefore, pragmatic competence is the knowledge that a speaker-hearer employs to engage in communication, including how successful speech actions are conducted. Language acquisition is fundamentally a sociocultural process that involves the application of language principles in a wide range of circumstances, audiences, and goals. Consequently, pragmatic competence in all of its components assists language learners in shaping their world perspectives.

Pragmatic competence in English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) classrooms is known to assist EFL learners to transmit meaning in communication interactions and better interpret messages not just through what is said but also what is unsaid. Kentmen, H.; Debreli, E.; and Yavuz, M.A. (2022) argue that pragmatic competence enables interlocutors to interact in a social setting accurately, appropriately, and successfully. This statement is alligned with what Riheel Alnaas Taha, A, et al. (2022) has highlighted that that EFL learners

would develop the capacity to recognize L2 language patterns after they comprehend English's pragmatic competency.

Since the goal of English language teaching is to achieve communicative competence, pragmatics learning is specifically essential in a foreign language. Canale in (1980) defines pragmatic competence as a subset of sociolinguistic competence. It refers to the comprehension of the socio-cultural rules that determine language usage. In this perspective, communication is defined as the interaction between what is implied by the speaker and what is captured by the listener that succeeds when the speaker expresses his attitude to his interlocutor, even if something is not said implicitly.

Pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic skills seem to be particularly problematic for EFL learners. Furthermore, in the context of EFL learning, most linguists and educational practitioners highlighted that learners frequently miss-communicate significantly from native speakers in comprehending and producing certain speech acts. According to Kasper (1997), a learner with great grammatical or verbal skills may not always exhibit parallel pragmatic proficiency. As a result, it is important to underline that L2 learners, particularly EFL learners, must also comprehend the socio-cultural characteristics of the language they are studying. In so doing, pragmatics teaching in education is required for the development of pragmatic competence adequately.

L2 learners frequently harness their knowledge of the appropriateness of language meaning in L1 when they lack socio-pragmatic knowledge of what constitutes appropriate on L2' linguistic behaviour. Pragmatic instruction is very needed in order to reduce the risks of pragmatic failure. (Erlinda, R, 2019). It is important for EFL learners to understand how to communicate properly in order to communicate successfully. In contrast, if learners lack pragmatic competence, it might result in unexpected outcomes for them.

In a multilingual community like Indonesia, where students encounter and come from many linguistic and cultural backgrounds, efficient information delivery becomes the key to gauging communication efficacy. Accordingly, establishing and developing pragmatic competence among EFL learners should be of much consideration. The results of this current review will hopefully reveal knowledge, insights and concepts for adopting the essential pragmatic knowledge in education setting as a tool of communication and learning EFL

Empirical research on this issue has also continued to focus on many areas of pragmatic competence practices in EFL and English language education across the country. Although pragmatic competence, according to Moradi, S, Tous, M. D, & Tahriri, A, (2016) is a relatively new and still evolving pedagogical approach, has acquired prominence in EFL learning settings in a relatively short period of time empirical data as evidence on this issue in certain EFL contexts across the country are highlighted. Nonetheless, the findings are still insufficient and inconclusive and this becomes a consideration for further investigation. As a result, by evaluating current literature published by Indonesian and international researchers, this study attempts to offer a complete perspective on pragmatic competence practices in EFL learning contexts in Indonesia and some other countries where English is studied as a foreign language.

A considerable amount of literature has been published on reviewing pragmatic competence in EFL learning setting. Ahmed Ibrahim, A & Maniam, M, (2020) critically elaborated on the teaching pragmatics in the classroom. The critical review that they wrote highlighted that Teaching and learning English as a foreign and second language can be

enhanced by using pragmatics. They also argued that pragmatics should be included in language training since it is important in building learners' communication capacity. Another part that become their concern is reviewing the articles that analyzed the pragmatic content in textbooks. They showcased that not all the textbooks include pragmatic information. Hence, while editing or designing curricula for EFL learners, syllabus designers should pay more attention to pragmatics. The researchers whose articles are analyzed, determined that textbooks contain appropriate pragmatic knowledge and underlined the importance of changing and re-editing more pragmatic content to include.

While, Chen (2021) reviews relevant theoretical studies on BELF or known by *Business English as a lingua franca* and evaluates their qualities from a pragmatic standpoint. The study calls for a rethinking of pragmatic competence in the context of BELF and to a re-assesing of the institutional features of BELF interactions and the dynamics of pragmatic competence, pragmatic tactics, and awareness in this context.

Different perspective on the practice and application of pragmatic competence proposed by Veronika, Wain, & Schmidgall (2015). This critical review article explores the creation of an engaging pragmatics learning platform for L2 learners and or EFL context. For the practice and application of pragmatic competence, They argued that correspondence such as E-mail, puzzles with varied degrees of formality, and explanatory feedback or scaffolding choices may be supplied for practice.The also mentioned that Items that can be mixed and matched can also be utilized to support the awareness for sociopragmatic elements of requests-making. The difficulty of the task can be varied by increasing contextual complexity.

While, this conceptual article critically examines the published articles conducted by scholars around the world in exploring the pragmatic competence in relation to EFL learning context. Given that point, this critical review is an attempts to find the questions as follows.

(1) What designs of studies have the current research employed in focusing on Pragmatic competence in EFL learning context?

(2) What are the significances of empowering pragmatic competence in EFL classroom?

In the first part, the researchers explore the research desing of those selected articled to be reviewed by providing a complete overview of current (empirical) studies, designs, and frameworks. Here, the researchers propose and illustrate various model of pragmatic competence that may be used in the context of EFL environment.

The second section of this current conceptual paper is to generelize the implication and significance of empowering pragmatic competence in EFL learning. In so doing, first, the researchers examine the research on pragmatic competency, which is significant in many EFL classroom settings across different English-speaking countries. Then, this paper showcases various models of pragmatic competence outputs or implication that may be useful in the educational media focused on promoting pragmatic-functional knowledge in both EFL/ESL learners.

Method

This research employs the library research method. The data consist of examples of language use that required a context or contexts to interpret what the speaker(s) meant(s) in his(their) speech (s). They are compiled from a range of relevant publications and library

sources. It is aligned with as George (2008, p. 1) has proposed that "library research, like its twin, scientific experiment, is a sort of structured inquiry with defined tools, rules, and strategies." This study followed three primary processes in library research: (a) consulting reference tools and searching databases, (b) finding and accessing sources, and (c) assessing sources in light of the research objectives highlighted above.

This study critically examines many studies on the implementation of pragmatic competence practices in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms in Indonesia and other countries. The researchers opt out publications from academic journals and proceedings. Following that, the researchers search scholarly literature on pragmatic competence studies conducted in EFL classroom context spread across the countries on a publicly available online search engine, as well as Google Scholar, for the purpose of connecting a variety of information and precisely finding what the researcher is looking for (MIT Libraries,2020).

Results

Before proceeding to the study findings on pragmatic competence in EFL classrooms, the researchers present an overview of the methods used in the studies under consideration, which are required to further discussion.

Table 1. An overview of Research Methodology

Author	Research & Method	Focus	Result(s)
(1). Waliyadin Nuridin, (2018)	A qualitative analysis approach	It explores the pragmatic competency level of Pakistani L2 learners as well as analyze variables or factors influencing pragmatic competency	Gender plays no role in affecting the understanding level of implicature among Pakistan EFL student learners. That both males and females students have approximately the same level of knowledge of implicature. While In terms of comprehension of situational routines, there is a significant difference across school types.
2. Li, Rui, et.al. (2015)	A mixed-method research design; (MDCT), (WDCT), and an in-depth interview in.	The study looked at the pragmatic competency of Chinese EFL students in relation to awareness and production competence.	It is found that Chinese EFL learners need to promote their ability to identify and produce contextually appropriate utterances, and their pragmatic awareness is positively correlated with their production. Nonetheless, they struggle to realize communication aims by employing suitable methods and language qualities.
3. Retnowaty (2017)	Descriptive qualitative approach; A DCT assesment to examine the pragmatic competence of the participants	Evaluating the pragmatic competence of participant, based on her previous knowledge and expertise.	tudents have a poor level of pragmatic skill in implicature and speech act component. The learners are typically incorrect when it comes to indirect criticism via implicature. In speech act, Learners understand the principles of speech act and know how to interact with different people.

Author	Research & Method	Focus	Result(s)
4. Moradi, et al. (2016)	A quantitative research; Applying MDCT test	Examining the degree of pragmatic knowledge among Iranian EFL students and assesing if there were any significant variance between years of study.	It is found that, the level of pragmatic knowledge among Iranian EFL learners was not very high. It indicated that Iranian EFL learners' speech act methods differed from native patterns. In this situation, it might be due to a lack of English pragmatic knowledge or L1 negative transfer. It is also suggested that L1 negative transfer caused incorrect phrases and methods to be produced by Iranian EFL learners.
5. Kentment, et al (2023)	A quantitative analysis; applying a series test of MCDT DCT.	It analyzes EFL's understanding of conversational implications	Participants had a low degree of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features, but some had difficulty giving suggestions due to cultural and naturalness appropriateness. The analysis of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic performances based on gender for the MCDT and DCT showed no differences between the two groups, but females used words that were more pleasant and polite. It is reported tahth males used better vocabulary and matched their words according to females used more pleasant and polite words, while males used better vocabulary but lacked pragmalinguistic appropriacy.
6. Bardis, B.; Silman, F. & Mohammadzadeh, B.(2021)	Mixed methods of quantitative and qualitative analyses	The study explains conversational interactions in the classroom and the importance of developing cross-cultural pragmatic competence on the EFL context.	They found that EFL students lack crosscultural pragmatic competence in the classroom and lack textbooks with pragmatic knowledge. Teachers pay little attention to cross-cultural pragmatic knowledge and activities in the EFL context. They claimed taht Cross-cultural pragmatic competence can bring to perfection English language skills.
7. Sari, R.D.P, et.al (2017)	A qualitative research	The purpose of this research is to characterize and showcase the function of pragmatic competence in the interaction between lecturers and students.	They claimed that factual and existential presuppositions can be manifested in the interaction between lecturers and students of in the classroom. They also stated that pragmatic competence (for example, factual and existential presuppositions) may be used to improve communication and equalize material-related presuppositions.

Discussion

Designs of studies the current research have employed in focusing on Pragmatic competence in EFL learning context

In respect of research design, the data presented above gives detailed information regarding pragmatic practices study undertaken by researchers in the context of EFL learning in various countries. In general the studies used varied approaches. Others have a different focus and instrument such as employing an assessment exam and analyzed qualitatively (Retnowaty,2017; Waliyadin Nuridin, 2018), while others have employed observation in the classroom (Sari, et.al (2017), and mixed method, as described by Li, Rui, et.al. (2015; Bardis, Silman, & Mohammadzadeh, 2021) and for quantitave method, the article are conducted by Kentmen, Debreli, & Yavuz, 2023; Moradi, Tous, & Tahriri, 2016).

While Moradi, Tous, & Tahriri (2016) highlighted the pragmatic competence in EFL context quntitatively. As a result, using qualitative approaches in research might result in a more thorough analysis of a phenomena. Based on the data finding, the review results showcased that the majority of the research utilized designs related to descriptive qualitative methods. The investigations are descriptively elaborated. The majority of these studies employed qualitative research methodologies since the majority of them focused on characterizing L2 pragmatic competence in relation to level and assesment, while one focused on assessing learners' cross-cultural knowledge seen in the classroom during an interaction.

Only two of the overall studies utilized the qualitative method on the types of implicature in the classroom and the significance of enhancing cross-cultural insight on pragmatic knowledge in EFL learning, followed by two other articles that discussed different findings with quantitative approaches respectively. Thus, to answer the first question in this review, the research designs employed in the reviewed studies are varied; descriptive qualitative, quantitative and mixed method

The significance of (Socio)Pragmatic competence in EFL learning context.

In order to answer the second research question, the researcher looks into the relationship between pragmatic competence with L2 learner interaction both between lecturers and learners or between students and classmates in EFL learning as what has been reviewed under those seven 7 articles. This section mostly reviewed papers that emphasized the role of pragmatics in the development of second and foreign languages acquisition. Since pragmatic competence is concerned with understanding how language connects to the environment in which it is utilized.

In terms of building awareness and production of pragmatic competence in EFL context, the interaction of learners with their interlocuters are vital. EFL learners need to be encouraged to use pragmatic awareness to identify and produce contextually appropriate utterances. As what conducted by Li, Rui, et.al. (2015) on their research that Chinese EFL learners were more aware of the interlocutor's social power, but had difficulty using appropriate strategies and linguistic features to achieve communicative intentions. Their research finding suggest us that that some form of pragmatic instruction, particularly pragmatic awareness is significant for the learning of L2 pragmatics. Thi is alligned with what have (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Kasper, 1996) proposed that the pragmatic awareness

contributes to the learning of L2 pragmatics. According to Bardovi-Harlig (2001), "if we wish learner utilise speech delivered to them as feedback, we need to understand how they interpret and perceive such input." The present study as elaborated by Li, Rui,et.al (2015) found that EFL learners have weak production skills. Providing explicit feedback in communicative activities by teachers, for the sake of raising learners' awareness and improve their communicative competence, should be of consideration. Another point to highlight is the insufficient pragmatic knowledge of Chinese EFL learners is largely impacted by their L1 transfer. This happens due to Chinese EFL learners lack socio-pragmatic knowledge of what constitutes appropriate on L2' linguistic behaviour. (Erlinda, 2019). While the Intercultural communication awareness can become effective and acceptable interplay of information, motivation, and skills from various backgrounds (Wiseman, 2003, p. 192).

Another significant issue related to pragmatic competence is sociopragmatic. It is the aspect that most learners find it problematic. Sociopragmatics is one of the most essential components that contribute to L2 learners' communicative skills. Sociopragmatic knowledge contributes significantly to the development of pragmatic competence in EFL in classroom social settings. As a subset of sociolinguistic competence (Canale, 1980), pragmatic competenc.

As the finding reported by (Bardis, Silman, & Mohammadzadeh, 2021) that EFL students lack cross-cultural pragmatic knowledge and must be provided with classroom activities to develop communicative competencies. They claimed that EFL teachers do not provide enough attention to pragmatic knowledge and classroom activities. From this perspective, it is possible to conclude that language and culture are closely linked, and that language must be taught alongside cultural norms and values in order for speakers of different languages to converse across cultures. Therefore, EFL students should be taught socio pragmatics in order to communicate successfully in English. This knowledge is critical for creating a successful and sustainable communication environment, that in the long run can help learners avoiding pragmatic failure in cross-cultural communication.

Conclusion

The findings of the study indicated from what have hitherto been elaborated by Waliyadin Nuridin, 2018; Li, Rui, et al., 2015; Retnowaty, 2017; Moradi, Tous, & Tahriri, 2016; Kentmen, Debreli, Yavuz, 2023; Bardis, Silman, & Mohammadzadeh, 2021; Sari, et al., 2017) emphasized on learning and teaching pragmatics, specifically pragmatic knowledge in classroom. They came to the conclusion that teaching English as a foreign language can be enhanced by giving spaces for learning and teaching through pragmatics.

Based on the review findings and discussion, some conclusions are elaborated. First, the showcase of empirical studies on pragmatic competence in EFL learning environments in current research designs is related to descriptive qualitative methods, mixed methods, and only two studies employed the quantitative method. Second, the implication of sociopragmatic competence plays a role in improving EFL learners' communication skills. It is started by the findings of the article reviewed on the students' lack of sociopragmatic competence (Bardis, Silman, & Mohammadzadeh, 2021) and continued on some consideration for improvement, such as building the awareness of EFL' Learners' awareness when they start learning a language and empowering sociopragmatic aspect in it since it affects to their communicative competence both inside and outside classroom.

The practical implications of this current research are to raise awareness as well as the relevance of cross-cultural pragmatic competence in a target language, particularly in EFL learning environment. Language learners, particularly EFL learners, must master the socio-cultural components of the language(s) they are learning in addition to pragmatic competence. Therefore, it is strongly advised that university that implements English education study program cover both pragmatics and socio-cultural elements of languages.

The theoretical implication is that schools and higher education institutions play a pivotal role in supporting such approach (pragmatics and socio-cultural elements) since learners acquire their fundamental language skills there. Combining these dimensions of language learning: linguistic, pragmatic, and socio-cultural competency for all language learners would be a groundbreaking innovation.

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