THE IMPACT OF PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE ON EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AMONG EFL LEARNERS

*Student:***Anarkulova Diana Abdusattarovna**

Scientific advisor: **Shamsutdinova L.R.**
Doctor of Philosophy of Pedagogical Sciences,
Uzbek State University of World Languages

Abstract: *Pragmatic competence is a key component of effective communication in English as Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, enabling learners to use language appropriately in various social and cultural situations. A lack of this competence can lead to misunderstandings, especially in intercultural communication. This article explores the significance of pragmatic competence in EFL communication, highlighting its role in understanding speech acts, politeness strategies and*

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Introduction

Communication is a fundamental aspect of human interaction and its effectiveness relies not only on linguistic knowledge but also on the ability to use language appropriately in different social and cultural contexts. Pragmatic competence is the ability to use language in accordance with certain interaction norms, goals and context. Taguchi (2009) defines pragmatic competence as the ability to use language appropriately in various communicative situations, including understanding and interpreting the speaker's intentions, as well as selecting suitable linguistic resources to achieve communicative goals. The development of pragmatic competence is an important aspect of teaching and

learning a language, as it allows students to become more effective and flexible communicators.

Pragmatic competence helps students develop 21st-century skills such as the ability to understand the goals, feelings and communication styles of representatives of different cultures and social backgrounds. Thus, teaching students pragmatic competences promotes in the growth of their empathy, collaboration and cross-cultural competence. For example, students are motivated to reflect on their native culture and the cultures of other countries, realizing that there is no one right way to communicate. It also helps them to provide feedback, give directions and deal with difficult topics. This article examines the role of pragmatic competence in communication, the difficulties faced by English language learners, as well as effective pedagogical strategies for its development.

Pragmatic competence, as described by Chomsky (1980), is the ability to understand the circumstances and procedure of appropriate language usage in accordance with specific goals. The study of pragmatics, according to Yule (1996), focuses on how speakers and listeners exchange meaning. "Pragmatics is the study of the situation of human language uses as these are determined by the context of society," Jacob (2oo1) concurs. The process of learning a foreign language is complex. While learning English, it is important for students to develop and improve their communication skills. This competence, as noted by the authors of Canale and Swain, includes the following types of competencies: pragmatic, grammatical, strategic and discursive. Grammatical competence, according to the authors, consists of knowledge of basic phonetic and phonological rules, as well as the basics of syntax and morphology. Fluency in the grammar of the language does not always lead to the development of pragmatic competence. Nevertheless, according to researchers Kasper and Rose, students need to master the basics of grammar in order to further develop their pragmatic competence.

Strategic competence is the ability to overcome difficulties in the communication process, using both linguistic (synonyms, paraphrase) and non-

linguistic (sign language) means to convey the meaning of a message. Discursive competence includes knowledge of how to create coherent texts in oral and written form. According to foreign researchers Felix-Brasdefer and Cohen, pragmatic competence includes two components – pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic. Pragmalinguistic competence affects the linguistic resources necessary for the realization of language functions. For example, these may be syntactic forms and lexical units used for greetings in the language being studied. Sociopragmatic competence involves the ability to assess a communication situation and choose appropriate language tools, for example, to determine whether it is acceptable to tell the truth to the question *"How are you?"*. In order to use English skillfully, students should not limit themselves to working with the meanings and forms of language units. They should develop pragmatic (sociolinguistic) competence – the ability to understand the intentions of the interlocutors and to use linguistic means correctly. Therefore, students need to master pragmatic norms.

Pragmatic competence plays an important role in successful communication in English. It allows the speaker not only to formulate his thoughts correctly, but also to adapt them to the specific situation, social norms and expectations of the interlocutor. Pragmatic competence includes the ability to interpret and use speech acts, to take into account the level of politeness, the degree of formality and cultural differences in communication. According to a study published on the CyberLeninka platform, mastery of pragmatic competence is necessary for full-fledged communication in a foreign language. This contributes to the formation of students as competent communicators who are able to interact effectively in various situations.

Lack of pragmatic competence can complicate the communication process and lead to misunderstandings, especially in intercultural communication. For example, a lack of understanding of differences in the expression of politeness can make a student seem too straightforward or, conversely, insecure. Another example is the use of direct and indirect requests. In some cultures, it is common

to make requests directly (e.g., *"Give me the book."*), whereas in English-speaking cultures, indirect forms (e.g., *"Could you please pass me the book?"*) are often preferred. An EFL student who lacks pragmatic competence might use overly direct language, which could come across as rude or demanding, even if that was not their intention. In addition, the development of pragmatic competence is an important aspect of teaching English as a foreign language. It allows students not only to speak grammatically correctly, but also to use the language naturally, which contributes to effective communication with native speakers. Understanding and applying sociocultural and pragmatic norms and strategies helps to avoid misunderstandings and promotes successful communication.

In teaching and learning a language, developing pragmatic competence is crucial for the functional flexibility of the learners. Pragmatic competence grows throughout the learning process and language learning. Students need to practice conversational skills in various communication situations and receive feedback that will help them realize and improve their pragmatic competence. The following strategies and methods can be used to acquire pragmatic competence:

1. Using Authentic Materials

Working with authentic materials like English films, television series, podcasts, and recordings of real-world conversations enables learners to get accustomed to the spoken language outside the classroom. These materials help the learners with intonation, non-verbal communication, and the contextual use of language (Taguchi, 2015).

2. Role-Playing Games and Simulation of Situations

The role-play method allows for exercising of some pragmatic skills in a safe environment. For example, students can portray interview and telephone conversation scenarios and even casual conversations at a café, looking at how different wordings can change the listener's perception (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010).

3. Learning Through the Analysis of Speech

Acts Students can learn how to effectively communicate their intentions in an English-speaking environment by studying examples of different speech acts, such as requests, apologies, and compliments, and analyzing their efficacy in various contexts (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986).

Pragmatic competence is essential for effective communication in EFL contexts, as it enables learners to use language appropriately in diverse social and cultural interactions. Without it, even grammatically proficient speakers may struggle to convey their intentions clearly or interpret others' messages accurately, leading to misunderstandings. The challenges EFL learners face, such as difficulties in applying politeness strategies or adapting speech to different communicative situations, highlight the need for explicit pragmatic instruction. Implementing teaching strategies like authentic materials, role-playing, and speech act analysis can significantly enhance learners' ability to navigate real-world conversations successfully. Therefore, integrating pragmatic competence into language education is not just beneficial but necessary for developing confident, culturally aware, and effective communicators.

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