

**PRAGMATICS OF TEACHERS' SPEECH IN PROCESS OF
TEACHING**

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Abstract: *This article examines the pragmatic dimensions of teacher speech in educational settings and their impact on the teaching-learning process. Drawing on pragmatic linguistics, discourse analysis, and educational research, the study explores how teachers' linguistic choices, speech acts, and communicative strategies influence classroom dynamics, student comprehension, and knowledge construction. The analysis focuses on key pragmatic features including speech acts, implicature, politeness strategies, and contextual adaptation in classroom discourse. Findings suggest that effective teaching is intrinsically linked to teachers' pragmatic competence—their ability to adapt language use to specific educational contexts, learning objectives, and student needs. The article highlights how conscious attention to the pragmatic dimensions of classroom discourse can enhance pedagogical effectiveness, foster more inclusive learning environments, and facilitate deeper student engagement. Theoretical implications for teacher education programs and practical applications for classroom practice are discussed, emphasizing the need for explicit development of pragmatic awareness among teaching professionals.*

Keywords: *: Pragmatics in education, Teacher speech, Classroom discourse, Speech acts in teaching, Pragmatic competence, Discourse markers, Politeness strategies, Pedagogical communication, Linguistic adaptation, Inclusive language*



ПРАГМАТИКА РЕЧИ УЧИТЕЛЯ В ПРОЦЕССЕ ОБУЧЕНИЯ

Аннотация: Данная статья рассматривает прагматические аспекты речи учителя в образовательной среде и их влияние на процесс преподавания и обучения. Опираясь на прагматическую лингвистику, дискурс-анализ и педагогические исследования, работа исследует, каким образом лингвистический выбор учителей, речевые акты и коммуникативные стратегии влияют на динамику в классе, понимание материала учащимися и конструирование знаний. Анализ сосредоточен на ключевых прагматических характеристиках, включая речевые акты, импликатуры, стратегии вежливости и контекстную адаптацию в учебном дискурсе. Результаты показывают, что эффективное обучение неразрывно связано с прагматической компетенцией учителей — их способностью адаптировать использование языка к конкретным образовательным контекстам, учебным целям и потребностям студентов. В статье подчеркивается, что осознанное внимание к прагматическим аспектам учебного дискурса может повысить педагогическую эффективность, способствовать созданию более инклюзивной образовательной среды и стимулировать более глубокое вовлечение студентов. Рассматриваются теоретические выводы для программ подготовки учителей и практические применения в учебной деятельности, при этом акцентируется необходимость явного развития прагматической осведомленности среди педагогов.

Ключевые слова: Прагматика в образовании, Речь учителя, Дискурс в классе, Речевые акты в обучении, Прагматическая компетенция, Дискурсивные маркеры, Стратегии вежливости, Педагогическая коммуникация, Лингвистическая адаптация, Инклюзивный язык.

INTRODUCTION

The classroom represents a unique communicative environment where language serves not merely as a medium of transmission but as a fundamental tool for constructing knowledge, establishing relationships, and creating learning



opportunities. Within this complex communicative ecosystem, the pragmatic features of teachers' speech—how language functions in context beyond its literal meaning—play a crucial role in determining educational outcomes.

Pragmatics, a branch of linguistics concerned with how context contributes to meaning, offers valuable insights into teaching effectiveness. While substantial research has been conducted on pedagogical methods, curriculum design, and assessment strategies, the specific pragmatic features of teacher talk and their impact on the learning process have received comparatively limited attention. This article addresses this gap by examining how teachers' pragmatic choices shape classroom interactions and learning experiences.

The significance of this investigation extends beyond theoretical interest. As education systems worldwide face increasing diversity in classrooms and growing demands for inclusive teaching approaches, understanding the pragmatic dimensions of teacher speech becomes essential for developing pedagogical practices that can effectively respond to varied student needs and learning styles.

This article begins with a review of relevant literature connecting pragmatic theory to educational contexts, followed by an analysis of key pragmatic features in teacher speech. It then examines the implications of these features for student comprehension, engagement, and learning outcomes. Finally, it offers recommendations for enhancing teachers' pragmatic awareness and skills in educational settings.

Pragmatics examines how language users employ and interpret utterances in context, focusing on meaning beyond semantic content. In educational settings, pragmatics involves studying how teachers use language to achieve pedagogical goals through various linguistic strategies and contextual adaptations.

Crystal (2008) defines pragmatics as "the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on other participants in communication." When applied to teaching, this definition highlights



the importance of examining how teachers' linguistic choices impact classroom dynamics and student learning.

Teacher speech pragmatics encompasses several key dimensions:

- The intentional use of language to perform specific educational functions (explaining, questioning, providing feedback)
- The adaptation of speech to accommodate students' cognitive levels, cultural backgrounds, and prior knowledge
- The strategic use of implicit meanings, presuppositions, and conversational implicatures
- The management of face-threatening acts through politeness strategies
- The establishment of classroom norms through linguistic means

Speech Act Theory in Educational Discourse

Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969) speech act theory provides a valuable framework for analyzing teacher speech. According to this theory, language utterances perform actions beyond conveying information. Searle's classification of speech acts into representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations has particular relevance in educational contexts.

In classrooms, teachers regularly employ:

- Representatives (assertions, explanations, descriptions) to convey subject content
- Directives (commands, requests, questions) to guide student behavior and thinking
- Commissives (promises, pledges) to establish classroom contracts and expectations
- Expressives (praise, encouragement, concern) to build relationships and motivate students
- Declarations (defining terms, establishing rules) to create classroom realities

The distribution and effectiveness of these speech acts significantly influence the teaching-learning process. Research by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) on classroom discourse structure revealed the predominance of the Initiation-Response-Feedback



(IRF) pattern, highlighting how teachers' questioning techniques and feedback responses shape educational interactions.

Pragmatic Competence in Teaching

Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately according to contextual factors. For teachers, this competence encompasses several interrelated abilities:

- Contextual sensitivity: Adapting speech to specific teaching situations and student needs
- Sociolinguistic appropriateness: Using language that aligns with educational norms and expectations
- Strategic competence: Employing verbal and non-verbal strategies to enhance comprehension
- Discourse competence: Organizing speech coherently across extended teaching episodes

Bachman's (1990) model of communicative language ability provides a useful framework for conceptualizing teachers' pragmatic competence as essential to their overall communicative effectiveness in educational settings.

. Key Pragmatic Features of Teacher Speech

Speech Acts in Teaching

Teachers deploy various speech acts to fulfill different pedagogical functions. Analyzing the distribution and effectiveness of these acts provides insights into teaching styles and their impacts.

Directive Speech Acts

Directives constitute a significant portion of teacher talk, serving to guide student behavior and learning activities. These include:

- Direct commands ("Open your textbooks to page 45")
- Questions of various types (display questions, referential questions, procedural questions)
- Requests for action or information ("Could someone summarize what we learned yesterday?")



- Suggestions for improved performance ("You might want to reconsider your approach to this problem")

The manner in which directives are formulated—their directness, politeness markers, and contextual appropriateness—significantly affects student reception and compliance. Research by Blum-Kulka (1987) demonstrated that the directness of speech acts varies across cultures, suggesting that teachers need to be sensitive to cultural expectations when formulating directives in multicultural classrooms.

Representative Speech Acts

Representatives communicate information and explanations about subject matter. Their effectiveness depends on:

- Clarity and precision of terminology
- Use of examples, analogies, and metaphors to bridge known and new information
- Adaptation to students' prior knowledge and cognitive development
- Integration of multimodal elements (gestures, visual aids) to enhance comprehension

Effective teachers adapt the complexity, pace, and mode of their representative speech acts according to ongoing assessment of student understanding, demonstrating what Shulman (1987) termed "pedagogical content knowledge."

Expressive Speech Acts

Expressives contribute to the socio-emotional dimension of teaching by conveying attitudes, feelings, and evaluations. These include:

- Praise and encouragement ("Excellent point, Sarah!")
- Expressions of enthusiasm for subject matter ("Isn't this fascinating?")
- Empathy and understanding ("I know this concept is challenging")
- Humor and personal anecdotes that create rapport

Research by Witt et al. (2004) demonstrates that teachers' appropriate use of expressives correlates positively with student motivation, engagement, and satisfaction with learning experiences.



Implicature and Indirect Speech in Classroom Discourse

Grice's (1975) cooperative principle and theory of conversational implicature provide valuable insights into how meaning is negotiated in classroom settings. Teachers frequently employ implicature—meaning conveyed beyond literal utterances—to achieve various pedagogical aims:

- Socratic questioning that implies the direction of thinking without stating it directly
- Irony or gentle sarcasm to indicate problematic reasoning without direct criticism
- Hints that guide student discovery without providing complete solutions
- Rhetorical questions that stimulate thinking rather than seeking answers

While implicature can serve valuable pedagogical functions, it also presents challenges. Students with limited language proficiency, different cultural backgrounds, or certain cognitive processing styles may struggle to interpret implied meanings, potentially creating educational inequities.

Politeness Strategies in Teacher Speech

Following Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, teachers regularly navigate potential "face-threatening acts" (FTAs) such as correcting errors, evaluating performance, or imposing tasks. Effective teachers employ various politeness strategies to mitigate these threats:

Positive Politeness Strategies

These strategies acknowledge students' desire for approval and inclusion:

- Using inclusive language ("Let's explore this problem together")
- Acknowledging student contributions before suggesting modifications
- Expressing optimism about students' capabilities ("I know you can master this concept")
- Using humor appropriately to create solidarity

Negative Politeness Strategies

These strategies respect students' autonomy and freedom from imposition:



- Providing options rather than mandates ("You might consider approaching it this way")
- Hedging directives ("Could you perhaps try a different method?")
- Depersonalizing criticism ("This solution needs more development" rather than "Your solution is inadequate")
- Acknowledging the imposition of difficult tasks

The strategic balance of directness and politeness in teacher speech significantly impacts classroom atmosphere and student receptiveness to instruction and feedback.

This article has explored the multifaceted pragmatic dimensions of teacher speech and their profound impact on educational processes. The analysis reveals that effective teaching is inseparably linked to sophisticated pragmatic competence—the ability to adapt language use strategically to achieve pedagogical goals in specific educational contexts.

Key findings include:

1. Teachers employ a complex repertoire of speech acts, politeness strategies, and discourse markers that significantly influence student engagement, comprehension, and learning outcomes.
2. Pragmatic features of teacher talk create both cognitive and affective conditions for learning, shaping not only what students understand but also how they feel about the learning process.
3. Cultural, linguistic, and individual differences in pragmatic processing present both challenges and opportunities for inclusive education, requiring teachers to develop heightened pragmatic awareness.
4. Specific methodologies for developing teachers' pragmatic competence—including reflective practice, discourse analysis, and targeted professional development—offer promising avenues for enhancing teaching effectiveness.

The pragmatic dimension of teaching represents a crucial but often overlooked aspect of pedagogical competence. By bringing this dimension into greater focus, this article contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of effective teaching



practices and provides a foundation for more intentional approaches to teacher development.

Future educational research and practice would benefit from greater attention to how teachers' pragmatic choices shape educational experiences and outcomes. As classroom environments become increasingly diverse and complex, teachers' pragmatic sensitivity and adaptability will likely become even more central to educational success, deserving explicit attention in both research and professional development contexts.

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