



## **METHODS OF DEVELOPING PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE IN TEACHING ENGLISH**

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### **Abstract**

This article discusses the methods of developing pragmatic competence in teaching English as a foreign language. It emphasizes the importance of pragmatic competence as an essential component of communicative competence, enabling learners to use language appropriately in different social and cultural contexts. The paper analyzes various methodological approaches, including communicative language teaching, task-based learning, use of authentic materials, explicit instruction, feedback strategies, and technology-enhanced learning. It also highlights the role of cultural awareness, learner autonomy, and classroom environment in fostering pragmatic development. Furthermore, the article addresses challenges in assessing pragmatic competence and suggests performance-based assessment techniques.

**Keywords:** Pragmatic competence, English language teaching, communicative competence, communicative language teaching, task-based learning, authentic materials, speech acts, cultural awareness, discourse, interaction, learner autonomy, feedback, intercultural communication, language pedagogy, assessment.

### **Introduction**

Developing pragmatic competence in teaching English has become one of the central concerns of modern language pedagogy, as it moves beyond the traditional focus on grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation to include the ability to use language appropriately in real communicative contexts. Pragmatic competence refers to the learner's ability to understand and produce language that is not only linguistically correct but also socially appropriate, contextually suitable, and functionally effective. In other words, it is the knowledge of how language is used to achieve communicative goals in different situations, taking into account factors such as speaker intention, relationship between interlocutors, cultural norms, politeness conventions, and discourse context. In the context of English language teaching, especially in non-



native environments, pragmatic competence plays a crucial role in ensuring that learners can successfully interact with speakers of English in both academic and real-world settings. However, despite its importance, pragmatic competence is often underdeveloped in traditional language classrooms, where instruction tends to prioritize grammatical accuracy over communicative appropriateness. Therefore, exploring effective methodologies for developing pragmatic competence is essential for improving overall communicative competence among English learners.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

One of the primary reasons pragmatic competence is difficult to develop in the classroom is that it requires exposure to authentic language use in varied social contexts. Unlike grammar rules, which can be explicitly taught and memorized, pragmatic norms are often implicit, culturally bound, and context-dependent. For example, the way a request is made in English can vary significantly depending on the level of formality, the relationship between speakers, and the cultural expectations of politeness. A direct request such as “Give me your book” may be grammatically correct but pragmatically inappropriate in many contexts, where more indirect forms like “Could you please lend me your book?” would be preferred. Without sufficient exposure to such variations, learners may produce language that is accurate in form but inappropriate in use, leading to misunderstandings or even communication breakdowns. Therefore, teaching methods that simulate real-life communication and provide meaningful contextualized input are essential for developing pragmatic competence[1].

One effective methodological approach is the use of communicative language teaching, which emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of language learning. In communicative classrooms, learners are encouraged to engage in meaningful tasks that require negotiation of meaning, expression of opinions, and interpretation of others’ intentions. Through such interaction, learners naturally encounter pragmatic features such as speech acts, discourse markers, turn-taking strategies, and politeness conventions. Role plays, simulations, and problem-solving activities are particularly useful in this regard, as they create opportunities for learners to practice language in socially meaningful contexts. For example, a role play involving a student asking a professor for an extension on an assignment can help learners practice appropriate levels of formality, indirectness, and politeness



strategies. Over time, repeated exposure to such tasks helps learners internalize pragmatic norms and apply them more effectively in real communication.

## **DISCUSSION AND RESULTS**

Another important methodological tool is the use of authentic materials. Authentic texts such as movies, TV shows, podcasts, interviews, emails, and social media interactions provide learners with rich examples of how English is used in real-life situations. These materials expose learners to natural language features such as hesitation, filler words, idiomatic expressions, and pragmatic markers that are often absent from textbook dialogues. For instance, watching a conversation between native speakers in a workplace setting can help learners understand how disagreement is softened, how requests are negotiated, and how politeness is maintained even in conflicting situations. Teachers can design tasks that require learners to analyze these interactions, identify pragmatic features, and discuss why certain expressions are used in specific contexts. This not only raises learners' awareness of pragmatic norms but also develops their ability to interpret meaning beyond the literal level[2].

Explicit instruction also plays a significant role in developing pragmatic competence. While some aspects of pragmatics can be acquired implicitly through exposure, research shows that learners benefit greatly from direct explanation of pragmatic rules and conventions. Teachers can explicitly teach speech acts such as requesting, apologizing, refusing, and complimenting, highlighting how these functions are realized differently in English depending on context. For example, learners can be shown various ways of making apologies, ranging from simple expressions like "I'm sorry" to more elaborate forms such as "I sincerely apologize for the inconvenience caused." By analyzing these variations, learners become more aware of the relationship between language form and social meaning. Explicit instruction can also include comparison between the learners' native language and English, helping them understand cultural differences in communication styles and avoiding negative transfer from their first language[3].

Task-based language teaching is another highly effective methodology for fostering pragmatic competence. In task-based learning, students complete meaningful tasks that simulate real-world communication, such as planning a trip, solving a problem, or conducting an interview. These tasks require learners to use language to achieve specific outcomes rather than simply practicing forms in isolation. Because tasks are



designed to reflect authentic communicative situations, they naturally encourage the use of pragmatic strategies such as negotiation, clarification, and politeness adjustment. For instance, when students work together to plan an event, they must agree, disagree, suggest ideas, and compromise, all of which involve complex pragmatic decision-making. The teacher's role in this approach is to facilitate communication, provide input when necessary, and guide learners in reflecting on their language use after the task is completed[4].

Feedback is also a crucial component in the development of pragmatic competence. Unlike grammatical errors, pragmatic errors are often more subtle and can sometimes go unnoticed by learners. Therefore, teachers need to provide focused feedback on inappropriate or unnatural language use in context. This can be done through corrective feedback during speaking activities, reflective discussions after tasks, or written comments on learners' performance. For example, if a student uses overly direct language in a formal situation, the teacher can explain why the expression may sound impolite and suggest alternative forms. Peer feedback can also be valuable, as it encourages learners to evaluate each other's language use and become more sensitive to pragmatic appropriateness.

Technology-enhanced language learning has opened new opportunities for developing pragmatic competence. Online communication platforms, video conferencing tools, and language learning applications allow learners to interact with speakers from different cultural backgrounds in real time. This provides authentic communicative experiences that were previously difficult to access in classroom settings. For example, participating in online discussions or virtual exchange programs enables learners to practice English in meaningful interactions with international peers. Additionally, digital corpora and concordance tools can be used to analyze real language usage patterns, helping learners observe how native speakers perform various speech acts in different contexts. Such data-driven learning approaches enhance learners' awareness of pragmatic variation and usage frequency. Cultural competence is closely linked to pragmatic competence, as understanding how to use language appropriately requires understanding the cultural values and norms that shape communication. Therefore, teaching pragmatics should also involve cultural education. Learners need to be aware of differences in politeness systems, conversational styles, and non-verbal communication between cultures. For example, in some cultures, indirectness is a sign of politeness, while in others, direct



communication is preferred. Without this cultural awareness, learners may misinterpret or misuse language even if they know the correct grammatical forms. Teachers can integrate cultural comparisons, discussions, and intercultural activities into their lessons to help learners develop a deeper understanding of how language and culture are interconnected[5].

Another important aspect of developing pragmatic competence is learner autonomy. Encouraging learners to take responsibility for their own learning can significantly enhance their ability to acquire pragmatic skills. Self-directed learning activities such as keeping communication journals, reflecting on interactions, or analyzing media conversations can help learners become more aware of their pragmatic strengths and weaknesses. Reflection is particularly important because it allows learners to consciously evaluate their language use and make adjustments over time. For example, after participating in a group discussion, students can reflect on whether they used appropriate expressions for agreeing or disagreeing and consider alternative ways of expressing their ideas more effectively[6].

In addition, classroom environment plays a significant role in fostering pragmatic development. A supportive, interactive, and low-anxiety environment encourages learners to experiment with language and take communicative risks. If learners feel afraid of making mistakes, they are less likely to engage in meaningful interaction, which limits opportunities for pragmatic development. Teachers should therefore create a classroom atmosphere that values communication over perfection, where errors are seen as natural parts of the learning process. Group work, collaborative activities, and peer interaction all contribute to a more dynamic learning environment that supports pragmatic growth[7].

Assessment of pragmatic competence is another challenging but important area. Traditional tests focusing on grammar and vocabulary are not sufficient to measure pragmatic ability. Instead, alternative assessment methods such as performance-based tasks, role plays, and discourse completion tasks are more effective. These methods evaluate how learners use language in context and whether they can appropriately respond to communicative situations. For example, learners may be asked to write or perform responses to social scenarios such as making a complaint, refusing an invitation, or apologizing for a mistake. Their responses can then be evaluated based on appropriateness, politeness, and effectiveness rather than just grammatical accuracy[8].



## CONCLUSION

Overall, the development of pragmatic competence in English language teaching requires a comprehensive and integrated approach that combines communicative practice, explicit instruction, authentic input, cultural awareness, feedback, technology, and learner autonomy. It is not enough to teach language as a system of rules; it must also be taught as a tool for social interaction. By incorporating pragmatic-focused methodologies into English language classrooms, teachers can help learners become more confident, effective, and culturally aware communicators. In an increasingly globalized world, where English is used as a lingua franca among speakers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, pragmatic competence is not just an additional skill but an essential component of successful communication.

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