



The EFL Students' Pragmatic Competence Level in Pakistan

Ayman Riheel Alnaas Taha¹

Department, English Language Teaching, University El. Gubba Libya

aimanraheel2020@yahoo.co.uk

Sajjad Hussain²

Department, English Language Teaching, Cyprus International University, Turkey

sajjakhosa@gmail.com

Muhammad Sajid Aziz³

Institute of Agricultural Extension, Education and Rural Development, Pakistan

msajiduaf01@gmail.com

Hafiz Ali Raza⁴

Institute of Agricultural Extension, Education and Rural Development, Pakistan

razaa0617@gmail.com

Abstract

Second language teaching and learning has been grounded greatly on pragmatics. It has been a very important aspect of L2 learners. Majority of the existing literature on this subject matter has paid much attention to diverse pedagogies in the teaching and learning of English and how to integrate pragmatics in the classroom teaching of the language. Experts in the teaching and learning of English as a second language have over the period proven that understanding the level of competence of students' pragmatics in terms of Pakistan EFL learners is imperative for establishing curriculum in teaching pragmatic competence. This study therefore addresses this aspect and pushes the debate further for a deeper understanding. This research specifically seeks to examine the pragmatic competence level of Pakistan students L2 learners or speakers as well as the contribution of gender and the type of school regarding their competency level in pragmatic knowledge. As for institution type, the results show that there is a significant difference regarding implicate and speech acts. The situational routines do not prove any differences for school type.

Keywords Pragmatic competence, Pakistan EFL learners, situational routines, Institution type

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

Pragmatic competence has become more than ever in the most recent moments, one of the language issues that draws the attention of linguists in the field of second language teaching and learning especially in an EFL context. Vocabulary and grammar are the two most prominent aspects of language to be focused on when teaching a second language in general. English as Second Language (ESL) learners are taught the numerous meanings of words and linguistic structures in (L2) as a second language as well as a target language. Learners also try to memorize as many words as they can from the L2 as a sign of a development in their language skills. Notwithstanding the need to develop both the pragmatic knowledge and the linguistic knowledge in EFL context, has become very important and analytic to achieve a communicative success on social platform leading to cultural globalization. Subsequently pragmatic competence has become a contemporary issue for both teachers and students to address in regard to pragmatic competence. To involve



in a successful communication, the EFL learners equally have to do with performance in pragmatic competence for their daily interactions among one another. For the purpose of pragmatic competence learning, EFL learners will acquire the capability to recognizing the L2 language patterns Thomas, L. T., & Ganster, D. C. (1995). Stated that, pragmatics is a field that studies “meaning in interaction”, and it has acquired more consideration in the arena of the target language.

In direction to shelter some light on this pragmatic competence, this study attempts to explore the pragmatic competence levels of students from the two different institutions (Ghazi University and Education Universities) and the learners' performance in regard to EFL context. In this perspective Barron, N. L. (2003). explains that pragmatic competence is regarded as the linguistic knowledge sources accessible in a target language to observe utterance of interlocutors for pragmatic awareness and for appropriate interpretation in a social context.

Statement of the problem

Second language learning has all the time been observed as an appreciated benefit for human endeavor, but currently, because of the swift globalization in the world, learning a second language has become much more valuable. In view this, as language consists of numerous linguistic aspects (lexis and syntax), some of these aspects might be neglected during teaching and learning in a target language. Hence, pragmatic competence has been one of those linguistic features that has been transformed and established by numerous fragments of researches that most concern EFL learners' language skills of vocabulary and grammar acquisition in the target language for meaningful interpretation during interaction on social platform Considine, J., & Brennan, D. (2007).

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate two main objectives.

- a) The first objective involves, the overall pragmatic competence of students from two universities in Pakistan
- b) The second objective refers to the factors that might affect the pragmatic competence in relation to gender and school type.

Research Questions

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the following research questions

- Research Question 1: What level of competence do Pakistan EFL students have in pragmatics as learners?
- Research Question number 2. Is gender having any contribution in Pakistan EFL learners' level of pragmatic competence?
- Research question number 3: Is the type of school having any contribution in Pakistan EFL learner level of pragmatic competence?

The study intends to enhance the pragmatic competence level of university students as well as EFL teachers in Pakistan who need to be conversant with pragmatic conventions



in social context. It also attempts to examine the pragmatic dynamics of Pakistan EFL learners in relation to gender and school types. The study further tends to broaden knowledge on pragmatic competence in an EFL context involving EFL teachers and learners in classroom circumstances.

Assumptions of the study

The instrument called a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) designed by Hudson, V. M., & Vore, C. S. (1995). and Roever, C., & McNamara, T. (2006). is appropriately considered to be used for the collection of data and for good results. Before the adoption of the questionnaire, there has been an approval from Varamäki, E., Joensuu, S., Tornikoski, E., & Viljamaa, A. (2015).who also administers the same test and for that matter, it is assumed to be effective in collecting data for good results from the participants in this study.

Limitations of the study

This investigation is a thesis and the contributors are EFL learners from two different institutions: Ghazi University and Education University in Pakistan. Consequently, the outcomes and the findings discovered from this investigation are not very wide-ranging, and they are slightly valid to the circumstances which are anxious with the side by side of pragmatic capability and the influences that might affect the study. One way to make this study more comprehensive is to involve participants from different schools or universities and as a result, by Viljamaa, S. K. (2012). quantitative instrument is used due to busy curriculum schedules of the two institutions involved in this study.

The purpose of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, the assumptions of the study, the limitations of the study, and the organization of the study. It includes the pedagogical implications, the conclusion and the suggestions for further studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In languages, pragmatics is that aspect that looks at the relationships between interlocutors speaking EFL or L2 as a target language. There are diverse ways or situations, communicators of different cultural backgrounds come together with one common objective of speaking or learning L2 as a target language either on an educational or a business platform and this tenure of intercultural encounter gives a significant tendency to the development of pragmatic competence regarding EFL in classroom circumstances social environments. In order to get a deeper understanding of this branch of languages, this section discusses three different ways of pragmatic competence in an EFL concept and they include the dynamics of speech acts, the pragmatic implicature and the situational routines to expantiate more on the topic of pragmatic competence.

Grice expresses that typically correspondence isn't made out of "disengaged comments", however it is a remarkable inverse, as it mostly depends on shared endeavours, as expressed by Grice "a discussion has a reason that the members perceive and acknowledge" Grice, H. P. (1975) Because of this equally acknowledged methodology,



some particular perceptions during a discussion are viewed as not proper and acceptable. Actually, "members for the most part certainly concur with the bearing and objectives of the discussion and have similar presumptions of how the discussion could conceivably be completed" (ibid.). Grice made the helpful standard to depict this understanding: "Make your conversational commitment, for example, is required, at the phase at which it happens, by the acknowledging the reason for the discussion so that each participant can determine where it is going to end" (ibid.). Grice proposed four maxims as a foundation that can assist to achieve effective interactive discussions and these include quantity, quality, relation, and manner structure. According to the scholar, maxim of quantity requires that any person engaged in any form of communication should ensure that enough information is provided, and therefore, maxim of quality requires the individual to also come out with the truth, relevance of the information provided is maxim of relation and lastly clarity in one's speech is maxim of manner Grice, H. P. (1975).

Regardless of the thinking that the members of a discussion need to coordinate, Grice himself expresses this isn't the situation for each person speaking, on the grounds that there is likelihood that a few speakers won't generally respect these guidelines. Grice contends that there are ordinarily situations that the communicators can either neglect to watch or purposely disregard some guidelines, "and by way of example he explains that "to suggest more than is it is said by utilizing an implicative" manner Grice, H. P. (1975).

in this manner speakers are not reliably and ready to cooperate, and we need to hold up under at the top of the priority list

Speaking Politely

By and large, speakers try to collaborate in a discussion as so as they look to orchestrate social platform for communicative interactions. In addition, so as to accomplish this amicability, there are instructions in linguistics that ensures interaction is going as courteous as it could reasonably be expected. As indicated by Celce-Murcia, M., & Olshtain, E. (2000). the accompanying standards are firmly connected with being polite, as they are concerned about recognitions, desires, and traditional acknowledge of communication techniques which improve social congruity getting the beginning of the Wilson, S. R., Kim, M. S., & Meischke, H. (1991). present the issue of politeness in pragmatic as one important branch in the language field. Affableness in discussions is seen as a technique, as consideration becomes a plot as well as a measure to regard the face or the understanding of what an opponent speaker wants to talk about. As per their thinking, "speakers portray positive and a negative faces at the same time they feel that others may not accept their propositions (negative face) and on the other hand some may be comfortable with it. They likewise present the (FTA) or the "face-threatening acts". According to the scholars they include acts that are within and they are threatening "faces" Wilson, S. R., Kim, M. S., & Meischke, H. (1991). Desires are FTAs which compromise the audience's negative face to be disregarded for example, while, reactions are FTAs which undermine the audience's genuine face, the way that she wishes to be acknowledged.



Culturally diverse pragmatics

Culture impacts our regular day to day existence and information on the world, as indicated by scientists. They likewise show that culture significantly affects our parts of pragmatic competence. Yule, W., Bolton, D., Udwin, O., Boyle, S., O'Ryan, D., & Nurrish, J. (2000). features that by saying that "from the fundamental encounters and life information, people then develop a social blueprint which encourages them understand the world." Cross-social contrasts happen in view of the variation systems or language designs presented by different settings. These varieties are in all probability the purposes behind many misjudging and difficulties while traveling to another country; and on the grounds that each culture has an unmistakable social diagram which contrasts from other culture to variation degrees, so observing individuals acting and talking contrastingly when they are in their area than when they are abroad is normal.

As indicated by Yule, G., & Widdowson, H. G. (1996). Cross-social pragmatics is "the investigation of contrasts in desires dependent on societal norms." Studying and looking at how a speaker from an alternate culture develops and deciphers importance is the thing that culturally diverse pragmatics is about. It inspects the "diverse social methods for talking" or "realistic accents" Yule, G., & Widdowson, H. G. (1996). It has been proposed by investigations from the field of culturally diverse pragmatics when a culturally diverse correspondence is occurring; it is then basic to focus on the down to earth accents of the others.

Above all, the reality of the hearers' failure to comprehend the strict implications of the speakers' expressions and virtually the words don't cause anyone to neglect in trying to comprehend what they state However the test lies in the right understanding of the speakers' aims, the misconception or absence of it, turns to the situation leads communication failure Thomas, J. (1983).

METHODOLOGY

In addition, in order to assess if there is a discrepancy in the pragmatic level of competence regarding students attending two major universities, namely Ghazi University and Education University. Another argument is to explain whether the class of EFL students plays any significant role concerning their comprehension level in relation to pragmatic competence in classroom circumstances. The Discourse Completion Task (DCT) is included in this analysis to collect output results from a hundred and seventy participants.

This paper is a survey report on the extent of constructive professionalism of the Pakistan EFL learners in classroom settings. The key purpose behind this research is to collect enough information from a cross section of Pakistan EFL learners concerning their pragmatic dynamics and to reflect on the comparison involving the linguistic abilities of a much larger community of students in Pakistan. A quantitative analysis approach has been utilized in this analysis as it is the most effective way of collecting situation-based data, a qualitative approach may still be used, although it requires a much longer time than being feasible in this analysis.

The main aim of this analysis is to address the aforementioned research questions:



- Research Question 1: What level of competence do Pakistan EFL students have in pragmatics as learners?
- Research Question number 2. Is gender having any contribution in Pakistan EFL learners' level of pragmatic competence?
- Research Question number 3. Is the type of school having any contribution in Pakistan EFL learner level of pragmatic competence?

Participant

A total of 170 Pakistani students from two of our universities in Pakistan namely Ghazi University and Education University. These two institutions are of Pakistani public schools and therefore the participants in the present study are EFL students in their second year. The undergraduates are nearly evenly split between the two campuses, 85 graduates from Ghazi University and the other 85 students from Education University. The number of female participants was 70, while the remaining 100 were male students. The respondents are continuing students pursuing EFL study for the academic year 2021-2022.

In the present analysis, the appropriate instrument used for gathering the data has been through the use of Discourse Completion Task (DCT) which is originally planned and established by Roever, C., & McNamara, T. (2006). as well as (Hudson, V. M., & Vore, C. S. 1995) Until the questionnaire is adopted, permission has been requested and granted from the lead authorities of the two institution and in this sense Roever, C., & McNamara, T. (2006). proclaims that the test for data collection seems to be battery-operated and maintains the update of the Finish learners. Previous tests have confirmed the authenticity and durability of the instruments.

The information gathering the approach used in this analysis is one of the methods in analytical science and is generally split into spoken conversations and questionnaire. Kasper points out that spoken dialogue is "an open-ended discussion and role-play or simulation, which means that the data are interactive oral outputs and therefore allow a broad variety of conversation features to be explored" Kasper, G. (2000). The questionnaire, from the other side comprises 'three categories of questionnaire used throughout the field of strategic development, multiple-choice and rating-scale questionnaire that differ from each other in the form of responses they generate. The developed questionnaires are open-ended. Multiple-choice and scaled-answer questionnaires that have a set answer Kasper, G. (2000). According to Kasper, the traditional DCT consists of a "contextual definition and a simple discussion with one switch as an open door, such that the background of the circumstance is structured to allow the process of a particular communicative act" Kasper, G. (2000). A rating-scale questionnaire is "the most basic way of collecting meta-pragmatic evaluations by producing scaled category responses; these responses reflect one form of self-reporting data, a basic class of information in the social sciences" (Kasper, G. 2000) Random option questionnaires are "a flexible questionnaire type as they provide information on development, comprehension and meta-pragmatic judgment" Kasper, G. (2000). With the exception multiple choice output questionnaires, multiple-choice questionnaires have a variety of options that can be selected as perhaps the most relevant. Kasper, G. (2000). point



out that DCT can be used as a "fast answer" to data collection, but investigators can still use a tool that better fits their study questions. Brown notes that "DCTs are cheap to implement and score and require large-scale populations to be analyzed as they are in multiple choice format" Brown, C., Dunbar-Jacob, J., Palenchar, D. R., Kelleher, K. J., Bruehlman, R. D., Sereika, S., & Thase, M. E. (2001). The subjects of the analysis are selected for practical purposes, more specifically due to the extreme feasibility and exposure to the sample. In addition, the range of subjects (180) is minimal. For context, in empirical cross-sectional research on application growth, Rose looks at only 15 (2000) and 39 (2009) primary school students, while Félix Brown, C., Dunbar-Jacob, J., Palenchar, D. R., Kelleher, K. J., Bruehlman, R. D., Sereika, S., & Thase, M. E. (2001). works with 45 university students. Since the number of learners is comparatively low, the findings of the present research are unlikely to be generalizable to other classes of learners. In turn, a variety of reasons can distinguish the subjects of study from other learners. Furthermore, it is doubtful that the learners studied would be any in case unique from several other learners with comparable school systems. Given the shortcomings of the exams, I consider it realistic and also appropriate to test the analytical ability of Libyan EFL learners as holistically as possible.

The present research uses the (DCT) pragmatic method to assess the comprehension of pragmatic competence of the Pakistani EFL learners. The purpose of this pragmatic test is to evaluate the participants' awareness of the various facets of the pragmatic competence. The development of pragmatic competence of L2 learners in English as a foreign language context, as well as interpersonal habits and speech activities are the things being examined. Researchers are split into two groups of researches of two well-established and prestigious institutions, each taking the exam in their schools and under the guidance of the researcher and their teachers to reduce discomfort and any other adverse consequences.

A quantitative process methodology has been used in this analysis. The results collected from the Pakistan EFL learners as answers to the DCT are based on the presumption that each right answer is equivalent to one point and that each inaccurate response is equal to zero. The study is carried out using version 20 of the Methodological Kit for Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). It is used to analyze the mean consequences of the respondents and also the confidence interval as per their levels of comprehension on pragmatic competence.

This part discusses the results of the analysis and the review of conclusions concerning the research questions. This begins with data tables showing the study results, and it is accompanied by a narrative description of the test results. The present study centers on knowing the level of pragmatic competence of Pakistani EFL learners, and the contribution of gender as well as the type of school of the respondents. The sample is made up of 170 students from two separate Universities. All the two Universities are public universities. The results of the data are incorporated into SPSS, which also are interpreted on the basis of multiple choice questions. These initial research results are obtained using statistical software that contributes to the paper's conclusions via test results. The part explores and addresses three key researches from the present analysis. The paper explores adequate responses to the level of pragmatic competence of Pakistani EFL learners, and the students'



gender also has some significant impact on their level of understanding regarding pragmatic dynamics, their comprehension of situational routines and their comprehension of speech acts during interactions. In addition the study seeks to explore whether there are significant disparities in pragmatic comprehension, pragmatic implicature, situational routines and speech acts among the student participants of both universities.

This study's research questions are tested using different tables, and concise analyzes of each outcome are also provided. The performance of the learners in pragmatic competency is determined by the number of correct answers they provide to the pragmatic comprehension test. The work is assessed on the assumption that each correct answer is equal to one value, and so each inaccurate answer is equal to nil. Any unclear reaction or fresh element is deemed an inaccurate response.

	N	Mean	Std.Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Implicature	170	2.27	0.07	2.18	10/1
Situational Routines	170	2.10	0.08	2.00	10/12
Speech Acts	170	2.07	0.82	1.75	8/8
Total	170	7.44	1.62	2.00	24/31

The total score for the assessment of the students is rated at a maximum of 31 points. In terms of the sectional breakings, implicature carries 11 marks, situational routines note 12 marks and speech acts are rated 8 marks as maximum. As shown in the table above, the students are not able to score the expected maximum of 31 marks. The highest score for the test per the above table is 11 marks for implicature examination and 12 marks for situational routines respectively. None on the participants is able to score the full marks for these sections. However, all the students who participate in the study score full marks for the speech acts section earning all the 8 marks. This is resulted to the total score of 24 marks obtained from the three sections studied. Mean score for the total is (7.44) with a standard deviation of (1.60). The standard deviation according Muijs, D., Harris, A., Lumby, J., Morrison, M., & Sood, K. (2006). is the measurement of how distribution of values clusters around the mean. The table also shows that the mean of implicature is 2.27; the situational routine is 2.1 while that of the speech acts is 1.75.

Below is the answer to the second research question which provides analysis of the significant contributions of gender in implicature understanding.

Table: 2. Does gender significantly make differences regarding the understanding of implicature for EFL learning students?

	Gender	n	mean	SD	SEM	p
Implicature	Female	70	2.2705	0.07786	0.23	0.60
	Male	100	2.2709	0.09226	0.29	

Statistically speaking, gender does not have any significance in determining the comprehension level of implicature among the Pakistan EFL student learners. This means that both females and males have basically the same level of understanding of implicature



for EFL students. This is evident from the table above showing a p-value greater than an alpha of 0.05. Consequently, the results above showed that both gender obtained equal marks for the scoring.

Table: 6. Does school type significantly make differences regarding the understanding of situational routines for EFL students?

As it is shown on table 6 above, statistically, there is a significant difference between school types in terms of the understanding of situational routines given the fact that the p-value is less than 0.05. The results show that students from **Ghazi University** have a higher mean score than those from **Education University**.

Through this research the Ghazi EFL learner's pragmatic capabilities were tested. The findings of the pragmatic examination are discussed in the previous section, and I will quickly address my key conclusions in this section as well as analyzing the results so as to provide answers to the research questions of this study, which could be found. Again to know what these findings mean in terms of the realistic competency of Pakistan EFL learners, I will also relate my findings with existing studies on the topic. Next section will address the present study first research issue, which deals with the overall level of pragmatic competence of Pakistan EFL learners. Furthermore, both the second and third questions discuss the contribution of the gender on the level of pragmatic competence of Pakistan EFL learning students and the contribution of the participants from the two universities according to their levels of comprehension in pragmatic competence respectively.

The Pakistan EFL learners' pragmatic level of competence is generally low, particularly when it is compared with some previous studies. The concluding remarks from the discussions above have proven that L2 speakers or L2 learners have a very low level of pragmatic competence especially in comparison with other existing research. Findings from this study also show that gender does not have any significant role to play in terms of the level of pragmatic competence of Pakistan EFL learners. In the determination of which school has the highest understand of pragmatics, Ghazi University is slightly ahead of Education and so it implies that University type statistically and significantly prove differences in the student participant's pragmatic competence.

CONCLUSION

The research study specifically seeks to examine the pragmatic competence level of Pakistan students L2 learners or speakers as well as the contribution of gender and the type of school on their competency in pragmatics. In order to evaluate this, the study is divided in three sections, implicature, situational routines and speech acts. We utilize a logical check of (DCT) to obtain the outcome of this study. The study proves that the student participants generally have a low pragmatic competence as compared to previous studies on the subject matter.

In addition, all the three sections according to the results prove that gender does not have any significant influence in determining the competency level of pragmatic knowledge concerning the university students used for the study. In either implicature, situational



routines or speech acts, the female or the male gender does not predict whether one will be highly competent in pragmatics or being lowly competent in pragmatics. It is however worthy to note that the male gender earns higher marks in implicature than that of female while alternatively, the female gender has higher marks for the situational routines and speech acts. As for school type, the results show that there is a significant difference regarding implicature and speech acts. The situational routines do not prove any differences for school type.

Comparing the results from University type, the outcome that is obtained among the two groups, students from Ghazi University and Education University shows a significant difference with respect to implicature and speech acts. Moreover, assessment of situational routine section shows no significant differences between the two groups, with Ghazi University students scoring high marks than Education University students.

This study has proven that it has policy implication such that language teaching classrooms in Pakistan must be incorporated with pragmatics so that it will be easier to evaluate from time to time the pragmatic competence of students. It is important for this move as teachers and curriculum makers will have the opportunity to have a full understanding of students' needs in terms of pragmatics so that they could be provided in curriculum designs. In this manner, teachers will not have any problems in determining the teaching approach to adopt in teaching pragmatics to new language learners. The speed at which learners can develop their pragmatic competence will be quicker as teachers will be able to help them with right kind of information to develop their pragmatic skills.

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