

THE ROLE OF AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN DEVELOPING STUDENTS' PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE

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Annotation:

This article explores ways to develop students' pragmatic competence, emphasizing the importance of pragmatic knowledge in effective communication. Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately in various social contexts, understanding how to convey and interpret meaning beyond the literal sense. The paper delves into strategies, including explicit teaching, real-life scenarios, interactive tasks, and the integration of cultural awareness in language learning.

Keywords: Pragmatic competence, language education, communication skills, Second Language Acquisition, pragmatics, teaching strategies, sociolinguistics, cultural awareness, discourse analysis.

Introduction

Pragmatic competence is crucial in language education as it enables students to communicate appropriately across diverse social contexts. This article reviews various methods for developing pragmatic competence in students, specifically in second language acquisition (SLA). Approaches such as explicit instruction, exposure to authentic materials, role-plays, and interactive tasks are evaluated. Additionally, cultural and contextual awareness plays a significant role in fostering pragmatic development. Through a comprehensive literature review and empirical research, the study offers valuable insights into effective strategies and the impact of pragmatic training on students' communicative abilities.

Literature Review

Exposure to authentic materials, such as movies, TV shows, podcasts, or real-world dialogues, is another powerful tool for developing pragmatic competence. Authentic materials offer a window into how language is used naturally in social contexts. According to House (2002),

authentic materials provide learners with exposure to the subtle nuances of language use, including slang, cultural references, and non-verbal cues that contribute to pragmatic understanding. This exposure can be integrated into lessons to highlight how pragmatics functions in different cultures and situations. The use of real-world materials also allows learners to observe native speakers' use of language in spontaneous, unscripted settings. This helps students internalize pragmatic rules and adjust their language use to fit different communicative contexts. According to Rose and Kasper, the more authentic the exposure, the better students will understand how to navigate social contexts using language.

The integration of technology into language learning has opened up new avenues for developing pragmatic competence. Online communication platforms, video conferencing, and language exchange programs allow learners to interact with native speakers in real time, offering practical experience in navigating pragmatic norms. Virtual simulations and interactive games are also being used to create immersive environments where students can practice their pragmatic skills (Thorne, 2008). These tools provide students with opportunities to experiment with different language forms and receive immediate feedback from both peers and instructors. Developing students' pragmatic competence is essential for helping them communicate effectively and appropriately in various social contexts. Pragmatic competence involves understanding how to use language in ways that suit the situation, including awareness of cultural norms, social relationships, and the communicative goals at hand.

Main body

Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately in various social contexts, balancing both linguistic correctness and the social nuances that shape communication. It encompasses understanding the cultural norms, speech acts, politeness strategies, and the way tone, formality, and indirectness are utilized depending on the context. Authentic materials—real-world resources such as films, TV shows, podcasts, news articles, and recorded conversations—play a vital role in the development of students' pragmatic competence. By providing exposure to language as it is used naturally in everyday situations, authentic materials allow students to practice pragmatic strategies that go beyond textbook learning, thus preparing them for real-life communication.

Exposure to Real-World Language Use: Authentic materials offer students the opportunity to engage with language used by native speakers in natural, everyday contexts. Unlike classroom examples that may be overly simplified or decontextualized, these materials present language as it is truly spoken or written. By interacting with these real-world resources, students can observe how pragmatic strategies—such as tone, humor, or politeness—are employed in a variety of situations. For instance, watching a TV show or listening to a podcast

exposes students to informal conversations, colloquialisms, slang, and regional variations, helping them grasp how language adapts to different contexts.

Cultural and Contextual Awareness: Pragmatic competence is closely linked to cultural understanding, as language use is highly influenced by social norms and cultural expectations. Authentic materials provide insights into how language operates within different cultures and settings. Through real-life conversations, students can learn how communication varies depending on the relationship between speakers (e.g., friends, colleagues, or superiors) and the setting (formal or informal). They can observe the use of politeness strategies, indirectness, and register variations that align with social expectations, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of how culture shapes communication.

Learning Speech Acts in Context: Speech acts (such as requests, refusals, apologies, compliments, and invitations) are essential components of pragmatic competence. Authentic materials expose students to how these acts are carried out in actual communication. For example, in a film or a podcast, students can observe how speakers navigate different social situations—how they request favors, offer apologies, or make promises. They can also see how speech acts vary based on formality and relationship dynamics. This exposure helps students understand the underlying strategies that make communication smooth and effective in real interactions.

Developing Non-Verbal Communication Skills: Pragmatic competence is not limited to verbal language; non-verbal cues such as body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice also play a significant role in communication. Authentic materials, especially audiovisual ones, allow students to see how these non-verbal elements complement or alter the meaning of words. For instance, a speaker may use a sarcastic tone to express irony, or body language may indicate discomfort even when the words themselves are polite. Through authentic materials, students can gain a better understanding of how to interpret and employ non-verbal communication, making their interactions more authentic and culturally appropriate.

Engagement and Motivation in Learning: Authentic materials are more engaging and motivating for students compared to traditional, decontextualized texts. When students are exposed to language used in real situations—such as watching a movie scene, listening to an interview, or reading an actual article—they can connect the content to their own lives. This relevance increases their interest in learning and their desire to apply what they've learned to real-world situations. The use of authentic materials also creates a sense of realism, making

students feel more confident in using the language outside the classroom in diverse social contexts.

Opportunities for Critical Thinking and Reflection: Engaging with authentic materials also encourages students to critically analyze language use. They can reflect on how different strategies are used to achieve specific communicative goals, such as maintaining politeness in a request or softening a refusal to avoid offending the listener. By discussing and analyzing these strategies, students develop a deeper understanding of pragmatic concepts and are better equipped to adapt their language in various contexts. This process of reflection fosters greater self-awareness and enhances students' ability to apply pragmatic principles in their own communication.

Conclusion

Authentic materials are indispensable tools in developing students' pragmatic competence, offering a bridge between theoretical language learning and real-world communication. By exposing students to authentic language use in various cultural and social contexts, these materials help students understand how language functions beyond grammar and vocabulary. They also provide valuable insights into speech acts, politeness strategies, non-verbal communication, and cultural norms. Through the use of authentic materials, students become more adept at navigating diverse communication situations, gaining the skills necessary for effective and appropriate interactions in both formal and informal settings. Integrating authentic materials into language learning not only enhances pragmatic competence but also enriches the overall language learning experience, making it more engaging, relevant, and applicable to real-life situations.

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