



PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE FOR EFL LEARNERS IN A TECH-ENHANCED
CLASSROOM.

<https://doi.org/10.70728/c.series.v08.i03.142>

Feruza Vakhobova

*PhD student at Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and
Agricultural Mechanization Engineers National
Research University 39, Kary Niyaziy str.,
Tashkent, 100000 Uzbekistan Email;*

f_vaxobova@tiiame.uz

ORCID 0000-0002-0010-9220;

Abstract. This article examines new empirical studies on the development of pragmatic competence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. It focuses on the effectiveness of various teaching methods and how technology can be utilised to enhance learning environments. The pragmatic competence of EFL learners is a crucial component of successful communication across various social and cultural contexts, and effective teaching techniques are essential for its development. Learners should be afforded numerous opportunities to practise the language in a manner that is contextually appropriate in pragmatics instruction, notably through tasks that involve real-world speech acts such as requests, refusals, and compliments. The review examines the primary pedagogical trends and their impact on students' ability to perform speech acts, such as requesting items, making suggestions, and responding to compliments. It achieves this by combining studies that employed explicit, inductive, input-based, and flipped instruction, as well as those that utilised Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs).

Key words: teaching, pragmatic competence, technology, CALL, language teaching curriculum, global village, culture, lingua franca.

1.Introduction: English serves as the lingua franca of globalisation, worldwide communication, commerce, and media, so engendering several motivations for its acquisition. English is no longer seen as the exclusive domain of the English-speaking world; rather, it is considered an international product, often termed English as an International Language. In ELF, English is used to communicate both between native and non-native speakers and between non-native speakers and native speakers. Researchers need to look into pragmatic competence, which is how L2 learners can handle communicative demands by using communication strategies skilfully while negotiating who they are. Of course, it is also

reasonable for teachers to stop relying only on idealised native-speaker models of what is proper, polite, and formal in their teaching and instead include a non-essentialist point of view in formal lessons(1). Acquiring pragmatic competence entails understanding the rules and principles governing participant behaviour within a society (sociopragmatics) and the capacity to select appropriate language to express those norms (pragmalinguistics). Acquiring pragmatic appropriateness in a second language (L2) is challenging; yet, while it can be achieved without formal training, research indicates that such instruction facilitates progress(2). Bachman and Palmer assert that pragmatic knowledge encompasses the interplay of utterances, language users, and contexts, reinforcing the perspectives of prominent academics who preceded them in the subject. Crystal characterises pragmatics as the examination of language from the perspective of users, particularly focussing on their choices, the limitations they face in social interactions, and the impact of their linguistic usage on other communicators involved in the exchange.

Examining the role and significance of pragmatic competence within the framework of communicative competence development holds paramount importance in foreign language education. Proficiency in a foreign language necessitates not only lexical and grammatical proficiency but also the adeptness to employ them contextually. Understanding pragmatic competence necessitates the clarification of "pragmatics" and "competence." Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to wisely choose linguistic resources in particular situational settings.

The field of Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) was first defined by Kasper and Dahl (1991) as “referring to nonnative speakers’ (NNs’) comprehension and production of speech acts, and how their L2-related knowledge is acquired” (p. 5). However, since then, the foreign language teaching paradigm has shifted from the unrealistic native-speaker-oriented model to the intercultural speaker model (Byram, 1997, 2021). The latter is a foreign/second language speaker who can maintain successful interactions with speakers of other cultures and languages. For this reason, Sykes (2017) claims that ILP is the approach to figuring out and defining how meaning is conveyed and understood in multilingual exchanges, as well as “the ability to communicate and interpret meaning in a learned language” (Sykes, 2018, p. 121). This is closely related to Byram’s intercultural speaker since to successfully interact with culturally different people, L2 speakers need to possess ILP skills to be able to interpret meaning in their L2. For this reason, L2 pragmatic competence is vital in intercultural communication(3).

2.Materials and methods

In this review, our primary objective was to amass regional knowledge by scouring existing research. Bibliometric reviews seek to provide a comprehensive grasp of the literature instead of assessing research quality or defining terminology(4). Utilizing the Web of Science database, the most prevalent bibliographic online resource, we executed an extensive search from 2014 to 2024 applying the keywords "teaching" and "pragmatic competence" across all nations. Our analysis was finalised in December 2024. From the 226 global papers identified, we selected a subset for further examination of pragmatic

competency in teaching. We employed multiple programs to handle and visualise the data, including a CSV file, Microsoft Excel 2021, RIS, VOS Viewer, and Map Chart, each fulfilling a distinct role in our investigation. In conclusion, we examined 51 documents, as illustrated in

Fig. 1.

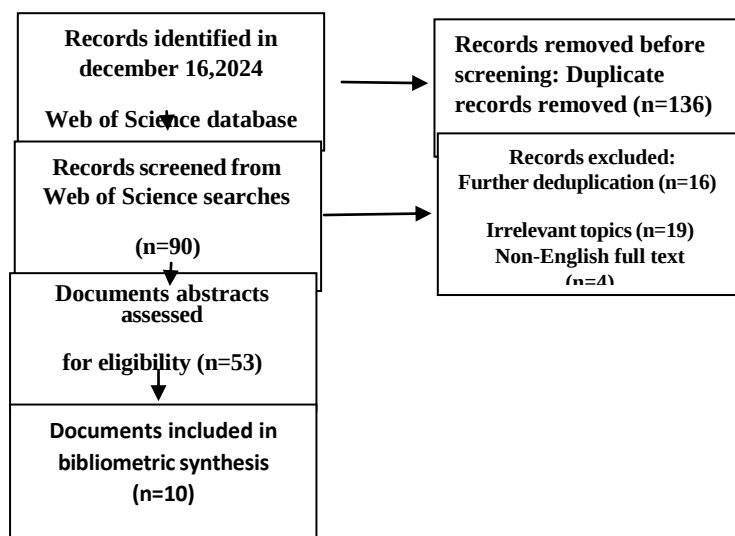


FIGURE 1. *Data Identification Flow Chart.*

3. Results

3.1 *Trend of publications on pragmatic competence in all countries*

Pragmatic competence denotes the capacity to understand, formulate, and express meanings that are both precise and suitable for the social and cultural contexts of communication. Total of 226 papers published between 2014 and 2024 on teaching pragmatic competence in all countries (Fig.2).

- Analysis of Publication Trends: Yearly Distribution of Records

The distribution of publication records across different years reveals interesting trends in research output, as reflected in the data provided. This dataset categorizes the number of publications by year, spanning from 2014 to 2024.

- Overview of Publication Distribution

A closer inspection of the publication records highlights certain patterns in research output over the years. The year 2022 exhibits the highest number of publications, with a total of 35 records. This represents a peak in publication activity, which could reflect heightened research activity or increased interest in specific topics during that period.

Following 2022, the number of publications remains relatively high in 2021, with 34 records, indicating a consistent level of scholarly output in the preceding year. This slight decrease from 2022 to 2021 is marginal and might reflect factors such as the evolving nature of research priorities or external influences on the research community, such as global events or funding changes.

- Declining Trends in Recent Years

In contrast, the years 2020 and 2023 show a decrease in the number of publications, with 30 and 29 records, respectively. These years mark a notable decline in comparison to the peak of 2021 and 2022, though the drop is not extreme. The lower publication counts in 2020 could possibly be attributed to the global COVID-19 pandemic, which may have disrupted

research activities due to lockdowns, restrictions, or shifts in research priorities towards pandemic-related issues. In 2023, the drop may be attributed to the natural lag in research processes, where data collection, publication cycles, and peer review may lead to a lower volume of outputs in a given year.

- Historical Publication Trends

When examining the years before 2020, a clear downward trend is visible. The year 2018 saw 31 publications, while 2019 had only 18. This decrease suggests a possible shift in research priorities or changes in research funding, leading to a reduced output during these years. As we look further back, the number of records gradually decreases: 2017 had 20 publications, 2016 had 19, and 2014 recorded 16 publications. These figures suggest a general decline in publications over the course of the last decade, reflecting both the evolution of the research landscape and possible shifts in academic focus, funding, or collaboration dynamics.

Interestingly, while the dataset includes 2024, it shows a projected or preliminary record count of 12. This number may reflect either early-stage publications or an underestimation due to the year not being fully completed. The early data for 2024 may also indicate a potential decline in research outputs compared to previous years, although it is important to note that this figure is subject to change as the year progresses and more publications are completed and recorded. To sum up, the data presented highlights a significant trend of fluctuating publication volumes over the years, with the highest number of records seen in 2022 and 2021, followed by a steady decline in subsequent years. This decline could be attributed to various factors, including external disruptions, shifting academic focuses, and resource constraints. The projected lower number of publications for 2024 signals a potential continuation of this downward trend, though it is important to monitor how this projection evolves as more data becomes available.

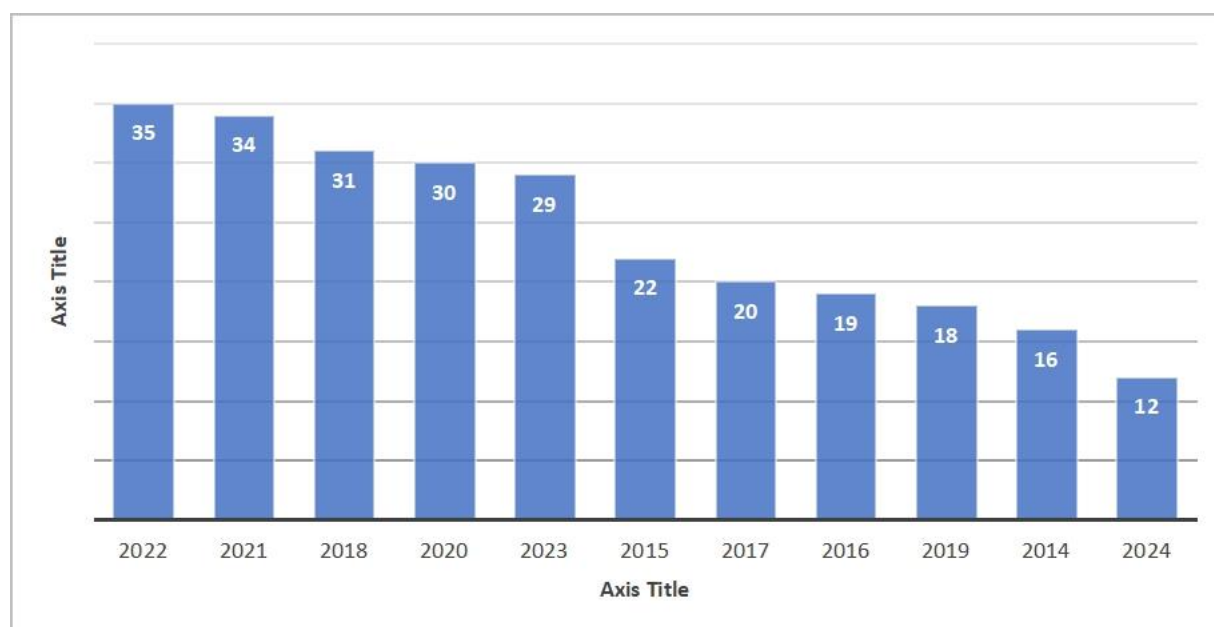


Figure 2. Annual production of articles on pragmatic competence during the period 2014-2024

3.2 Top research areas on pragmatic competence

Linguistics is the largest contributor to research on pragmatic competence, with 134 papers (fig 3), highlighting its central role in understanding how meaning is conveyed through context, tone, and cultural norms. Pragmatic competence is crucial in second language acquisition, language teaching, and multilingualism. Key areas of study include speech acts, politeness theory, conversation analysis, and cross-cultural communication.

Educational research follows closely with 133 papers, focusing on how students learn pragmatic skills in second languages and how educators can incorporate these skills into curricula. This is especially relevant in multicultural and multilingual classrooms.

Psychology contributes 13 papers, studying how pragmatic information is processed in social interactions, including areas like developmental pragmatic competence and challenges in individuals with conditions such as autism or aphasia.

The Science and Technology field, with 10 papers, explores pragmatic competence in professional and technical contexts, particularly in multilingual environments and the development of AI technologies that mimic pragmatic communication. In summary, Linguistics and Educational Research are the main contributors to pragmatic competence research, while Psychology and Science and Technology offer valuable insights into cognitive, social, and professional aspects of communication.

Discussion: The results contribute to the growing body of research on how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners develop pragmatic competence. They also have important implications for teaching languages and making policy. Students' consistent improvement in their ability to use correct speech acts in various learning settings demonstrates that pedagogical interventions focusing on enhancing students' pragmatic awareness and performance are effective.

First, the change observed from declining compliments on the pretest to accepting them on the posttests demonstrates the importance of teaching learners about L2 social and pragmatic rules. This change in behaviour shows that people learn pragmatic patterns when they can see them in action and use them in real-life situations. Because of this, MMORPGs and other tech-enhanced environments become useful for language learners who lack sufficient time to spend in the target society. Learners can develop pragmatic sensitivity in socially realistic settings on these platforms, which offer rich, interactive experiences that mimic real-life conversation.

Structured pragmatic teaching is also supported by results from various teaching methods, including flipped learning, inductive and explicit approaches, and input-based training. The fact that students who received specific instruction performed better supports the long-standing claim that being aware of metapragmatics facilitates deeper processing and retention. Explicit teaching not only improves performance immediately but also maintains pragmatic competence over time, as demonstrated by retention after a test.

Conclusion: In conclusion, this bibliometric study analyzed research on teaching speaking skills over the past 10 years, divided into three main periods. The study produced exciting findings through keyword analysis of research topics, co-citation analysis of authors and publications, publishers, and institution analysis. Countries with an EFL context, such as

USA, Iran, Spain, China, Germany, Canada, England and Russia focused more on developing learners' pragmatic competence. They contributed more to teaching pragmatic competence education studies. In addition, the analysis of author distribution revealed that there were constantly new researchers entering this field. Despite, the valuable contributions of these works, certain gaps are evident.

References

1. Taguchi N, Ishihara N. The Pragmatics of English as a Lingua Franca: Research and Pedagogy in the Era of Globalization. *Annu Rev Appl Linguist.* 2018 Sep;38:80–101.
2. Gonzalez-Lloret M. Technology-mediated tasks for the development of L2 pragmatics. Vol. 26, *LANGUAGE TEACHING RESEARCH*. 1 OLIVERS YARD, 55 CITY ROAD, LONDON EC1Y 1SP, ENGLAND: SAGE PUBLICATIONS LTD; 2022. p. 173–89.
3. Di Sarno-Garcia S. The Affordances of Telecollaboration to Teach Apologies. Vol. 24, *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES*. Edificio Pleiades Campus de Espinardo, Murcia, 30071, SPAIN: UNIV MURCIA; 2024. p. 25–47.
4. Mardieva D, Bakiyeva G, Kannazarova Z, Saidova Z. A Bibliometric Review: Interventions for Enhancing Speaking Skills in non-English-Speaking Contexts. *XLinguae.* 2024 Oct;17(4):195–224.
5. Zhang Y. The Influence of Game-Enhanced Communication on EFL Learners' Pragmatic Competence in Compliment Responses. *APPLIED LINGUISTICS*. GREAT CLARENDON ST, OXFORD OX2 6DP, ENGLAND: OXFORD UNIV PRESS; 2023.
6. Ziafar M. The Influence of Explicit, Implicit, and Contrastive Lexical Approaches on Pragmatic Competence: The Case of Iranian EFL Learners. Vol. 58, *IRAL-INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING*. GENTHINER STRASSE 13, D-10785 BERLIN, GERMANY: WALTER DE GRUYTER GMBH; 2020. p. 103–31.
7. Zhang Y. The Influence of Combining Computer-Assisted Language Learning With Instruction on Chinese College Students' L2 Pragmatic Ability. Vol. 45, *CHINESE JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS*. 19 XISANHUAN BEILU, BEIJING, PEOPLES R CHINA: FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING & RESEARCH PRESS; 2022. p. 243–53.
8. Asvad Z, Sadighi F. THE IMPACT OF PRAGMATIC - FOCUSED INSTRUCTION ON SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCE OF IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS. *Mod J Lang Teach METHODS*. 2014 Dec;4(4):30–5.
9. Li S, He J, Tao Y, Liu X. The effects of flipped classroom approach in EFL teaching: Can we strategically use the flipped method to acquire communicative competence? *Lang Teach Res.* 2022 Mar 1;
10. Qi X, Lai C. The effects of deductive instruction and inductive instruction on learners' development of pragmatic competence in the teaching of Chinese as a second language. Vol. 70, *SYSTEM*. THE BOULEVARD, LANGFORD LANE, KIDLINGTON, OXFORD OX5 1GB, OXON, ENGLAND: ELSEVIER SCI LTD; 2017. p. 26–37.

11. Nguyen M, Do H, Pham T, Nguyen A. The effectiveness of corrective feedback for the acquisition of L2 pragmatics: An eight month investigation. *IRAL-Int Rev Appl Linguist Lang Teach*. 2018 Sep;56(3):345–75.
12. Mehrpak L, Mehrdad AG, Karimi L. THE EFFECT OF TEACHING SPEECH ACTS ON IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE (WTC). Vol. 6, *MODERN JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS*. NO 300, AHMADABAD ST, MASHHAD, 00000, IRAN: MODERN JOURNAL LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS; 2016. p. 495–504.
13. Ziashahabi S, Jabbari A, Razmi M. The Effect of Interventionist Instructions of English Conversational Implicatures on Iranian EFL Intermediate Level Learners' Pragmatic Competence Development. *COGENT Educ*. 2020 Jan 1;7(1).
14. Khalaji HR, Golnesaei MJ. THE EFFECT OF EXPLICIT INSTRUCTIONS ON PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE OF REQUEST. Vol. 5, *MODERN JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS*. NO 300, AHMADABAD ST, MASHHAD, 00000, IRAN: MODERN JOURNAL LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS; 2015. p. 179–88.
15. Gonzalez-Lloret M. Technology and L2 Pragmatics Learning. Vol. 39, *ANNUAL REVIEW OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS*. 32 AVENUE OF THE AMERICAS, NEW YORK, NY 10013-2473 USA: CAMBRIDGE UNIV PRESS; 2019. p. 113–27.
16. Glaser K. News from the pragmatics classroom: Contrasting the inductive and the deductive approach in the teaching of pragmatic competence. Vol. 13, *INTERCULTURAL PRAGMATICS*. GENTHINER STRASSE 13, 10785 BERLIN, GERMANY: DE GRUYTER MOUTON; 2016. p. 529–61.
17. Loranc B, Hilliker S, Lenkaitis C. Virtual exchange and L2 pragmatic development: analysing learners' formulation of compliments in L2. *Lang Learn J*. 2023 Nov 2;51(6):706–17.
18. Usó-Juan E, Martínez-Flor A. Using audiovisual material to teach refusals from a discursive perspective: a research-based proposal. *Complut J Engl Stud*. 2022;30:53–66.
19. Solodka A, Perea L. The Speech Act of Complimenting as Part of the Ukrainian, Russian and English Speaking Communities: Ukraine and the USA. *ARAB WORLD Engl J*. 2018 Dec;9(4):39–55.
20. Li Q, Taguchi N. Usage-based approach to teaching L2 pragmatics. In: Martínez-Flor A, Sánchez-Hernández A, Baron J, editors. *L2 PRAGMATICS IN ACTION: Teachers, learners and the teaching-learning interaction process*. 2023. p. 265–90.
21. Gharibeh S, Mohammadnia Z, Sarkhosh M. Traditional, Multiple-intelligence Based Instruction, and L2 Pragmatics Development. *J ASIA TEFL*. 2022 SUM;19(2):542–62.
22. Chen Y shan. Understanding the development of Chinese EFL learners' email literacy through Exploratory Practice. Vol. 20, *LANGUAGE TEACHING RESEARCH*. 1 OLIVERS YARD, 55 CITY ROAD, LONDON EC1Y 1SP, ENGLAND: SAGE PUBLICATIONS LTD; 2016. p. 165–80.
23. Neary-Sundquist C. The use of pragmatic markers across proficiency levels in second language speech. *Stud SECOND Lang Learn Teach*. 2014 Dec;4(4):637–63