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PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE IN TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULA

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Abstract. Pragmatic competence is a crucial component of communicative competence that enables language users to interpret and produce language appropriately according to social, cultural, and contextual factors. Although communicative language teaching emphasizes meaningful interaction, pragmatic competence often remains underrepresented in teacher education curricula. This study investigates the extent to which pragmatic competence is integrated into language teacher preparation programs and examines the implications of insufficient pragmatic training for future educators. Using qualitative document analysis, the study reviews relevant literature and analyzes common components of teacher education curricula.

Keywords: pragmatic competence, teacher education, curriculum development, communicative competence, language teaching, pragmatics

Introduction. The primary goal of contemporary language education is to develop learners' communicative competence rather than merely their knowledge of grammatical structures. Communicative competence encompasses the knowledge and skills required for effective communication in diverse social contexts. Among its various components, pragmatic competence occupies a central position because it enables language users to understand and employ language appropriately according to situational and cultural expectations.

Pragmatic competence involves the ability to perform speech acts such as requests, apologies, compliments, refusals, and suggestions while considering contextual variables such as social distance, power relations, and cultural norms. Learners who lack pragmatic competence may produce grammatically correct utterances that nevertheless appear inappropriate or impolite.

Teachers play a critical role in developing learners' pragmatic competence. However, successful instruction requires teachers themselves to possess sufficient pragmatic awareness and pedagogical knowledge. This raises an important concern regarding teacher preparation programs: Are future teachers adequately trained to teach pragmatics?

Despite increasing recognition of communicative approaches to language teaching, numerous studies suggest that pragmatic instruction remains limited within teacher education curricula. As a result, many teachers enter the profession with insufficient preparation for addressing pragmatic aspects of language use.

Methods. The study employed a qualitative document analysis approach. Document analysis is widely used in educational research to examine curriculum frameworks, policy documents, and scholarly literature. This method allows researchers to identify recurring themes and evaluate the representation of specific concepts within educational programs.

Results. The analysis revealed that pragmatic competence is generally acknowledged as important but rarely receives explicit attention within teacher education curricula. Most programs emphasize linguistic competence, teaching methodology, assessment, and classroom management.

Pragmatics is often incorporated indirectly through courses on sociolinguistics or communicative language teaching rather than through dedicated modules.

Table 1. Representation of Pragmatic Competence in Teacher Education Curricula

Curriculum Component	Degree of Representation	Contribution to Pragmatic Development
Grammar and Linguistics	High	Indirect
Teaching Methodology	High	Moderate
Language Assessment	High	Limited
Sociolinguistics	Moderate	High
Intercultural Communication	Moderate	High
Pragmatics-Specific Courses	Low	Very High
Teaching Practicum	Moderate	Variable
Reflective Teaching Activities	Low to Moderate	Moderate

The table demonstrates that components most directly related to pragmatic development receive considerably less attention than traditional linguistic and methodological subjects.

Limited Practical Training. A second major finding concerns the limited opportunities available for practicing pragmatic instruction. Teaching practicums generally focus on classroom management and lesson planning rather than the teaching of speech acts, politeness strategies, or intercultural communication.

Consequently, teacher candidates often report uncertainty regarding how to integrate pragmatic instruction into classroom activities.

Growing Emphasis on Intercultural Competence. The analysis also revealed increasing recognition of intercultural competence within teacher education programs. Many curricula now include cultural awareness objectives, creating opportunities for integrating pragmatic competence more effectively.

However, the connection between culture and pragmatics is not always made explicit.

Discussion. The findings suggest a significant discrepancy between the theoretical importance of pragmatic competence and its actual representation within teacher education curricula. One explanation for this discrepancy is the historical emphasis on grammatical competence. Traditional language teaching approaches prioritized linguistic accuracy, leading curriculum designers to allocate substantial instructional time to grammar, vocabulary, and assessment.

Although communicative language teaching has transformed educational objectives, curriculum structures have not always evolved accordingly. Pragmatic competence continues to occupy a secondary position despite its central role in authentic communication.

Another factor contributing to the underrepresentation of pragmatics is the complexity of pragmatic knowledge. Unlike grammatical rules, pragmatic conventions are context-dependent and culturally variable. Teachers must understand not only linguistic forms but also social norms, cultural expectations, and interactional dynamics. This complexity often creates challenges for curriculum developers and teacher educators who may feel uncertain about how to teach and assess pragmatics effectively.

Educational Implications. The limited representation of pragmatics has important implications for classroom practice. Teachers who receive insufficient pragmatic preparation may focus primarily on grammatical accuracy while overlooking communicative appropriateness.

As a result, learners may develop strong linguistic competence but struggle with real-world communication. For example, they may know how to construct requests grammatically but fail to adjust levels of politeness according to social context. Research on pragmatic failure suggests that such misunderstandings can negatively affect interpersonal relationships and intercultural communication. In some cases, pragmatic errors are more socially significant than grammatical mistakes because they may be interpreted as impolite or disrespectful.

The findings highlight the need for greater integration of pragmatics into teacher education programs. Effective reform should include:

- Dedicated courses on pragmatics and intercultural communication.
- Explicit instruction on speech acts and politeness strategies.
- Analysis of authentic discourse.
- Practical teaching experiences focused on pragmatics.
- Assessment techniques for evaluating pragmatic competence.

Teacher candidates should also be encouraged to reflect on their own communicative practices and cultural assumptions. Reflective activities can enhance awareness of pragmatic variation and improve instructional effectiveness.

Conclusion. Pragmatic competence is an essential component of communicative competence and plays a vital role in successful language teaching and learning. Despite its importance, the present analysis demonstrates that pragmatics remains insufficiently represented in many teacher education curricula.

The findings reveal that teacher preparation programs continue to prioritize grammar, methodology, and assessment while allocating relatively little attention to pragmatic development. This imbalance may limit teachers' ability to support learners' communicative and intercultural competence.

Integrating pragmatic competence more systematically into teacher education curricula would contribute to the preparation of more effective language teachers. Such integration should include theoretical instruction, practical training, authentic materials, and opportunities for reflection.

As global communication becomes increasingly important, teacher education programs must ensure that future educators are equipped not only with linguistic knowledge but also with the pragmatic expertise necessary for meaningful communication across cultures.

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