

PRAGMATIC ERRORS IN LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Deasy Yunita Siregar¹, Fauzan Alfatih², Siti Zahara Wulandari³, Andre Widiyanto⁴, Lingga Sahara Ritonga⁵

¹ Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara Medan. E-mail: deasyyunita@uinsu.ac.id

² Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara Medan. E-mail: alfatihfauzan278@gmail.com

³ Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara Medan. E-mail: wulandarisitizahara@gmail.com

⁴ Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara Medan. E-mail: andrewidiyanto650@gmail.com

⁵ Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara Medan. E-mail: 14linggasahararitonga@gmail.com

INFORMASI ARTIKEL

Submitted : 2024-12-31
Review : 2024-12-31
Accepted : 2024-12-31
Published : 2024-12-31

KEYWORDS

Pragmatic, Second Language, Failure

ABSTRACT

Pragmatics is the study of language use in communication, which includes how speakers use and comprehend speech acts, how the speaker-hearer relationship influences sentence structure, and how utterance interpretation and use are influenced by real-world knowledge. Communication breaks down when a language's pragmatic force is misinterpreted, which results in pragmatic failures. Social-pragmatic and pragmatic linguistic failures make up the pragmatic failures. This kind of study is library research, which is a collection of studies about libraries or research data collection techniques whose subjects are investigated using a variety of library resources (books, scientific journals, newspapers, magazines, and documents). As a result, language and pragmatic failures. The term "pragmatic failure of language" describes pragmatic failure brought on by an inability to comprehend the linguistic context. Social pragmatic failure occurs when people misunderstand or disregard cultural differences, social background, and linguistic expression errors.

INTRODUCTION

Learning English as a second language (ESL) is a challenging yet rewarding endeavor that involves acquiring not only linguistic proficiency but also an understanding of how language functions in real-world social contexts. While many ESL learners focus primarily on grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, one critical aspect that is often overlooked is pragmatics — the study of how language is used in context. Pragmatic competence enables learners to understand the social and cultural nuances of language, such as politeness, indirectness, and appropriate language choice in different situations. Without this competence, learners may struggle to communicate effectively, leading to misunderstandings and communication breakdowns.

Pragmatic errors occur when learners fail to use language appropriately according to social, cultural, or contextual expectations. These errors are particularly common in second language acquisition because the conventions of language use in the target language often differ significantly from those in the learner's native language. For instance, the way requests are made, apologies are issued, or compliments are given can vary widely between cultures, and these differences can lead to pragmatic failure. Such failures are not simply linguistic mistakes; they involve a misunderstanding of how language functions socially, which can impact both the effectiveness of communication and the relationship between speakers.

There are two primary types of pragmatic errors: pragmatic linguistic failures and social pragmatic failures. Pragmatic linguistic failures involve incorrect language use due to a lack of understanding of the linguistic context, such as mispronunciations, improper word choices, or incorrect sentence structures. These types of errors are often rooted in the structural differences between the learner's native language and English. For example, a Chinese speaker might have difficulty pronouncing certain English sounds that do not exist in their own language, leading to confusion or miscommunication. On the other hand, social pragmatic failures occur when learners misinterpret the social and cultural norms of English-speaking communities, such as using overly direct language or failing to recognize the appropriate level of formality in a given situation.

While linguistic and social pragmatic errors are common, they can be particularly problematic in the context of cross-cultural communication. Language is inherently tied to culture, and each culture has its own set of rules governing how language should be used in different contexts. As such, ESL learners may unintentionally violate these social conventions when they apply the norms of their own culture to English, leading to embarrassment, frustration, or even offense. For example, a learner from a culture that values directness may inadvertently come across as rude or disrespectful when interacting with someone from a culture that places high importance on indirectness and politeness in communication. These misunderstandings highlight the need for ESL learners to not only focus on language mechanics but also develop a deep understanding of the social context in which the language operates.

Given the impact of pragmatic errors on communication, it is essential that ESL learners and educators alike recognize the importance of pragmatic competence in second language acquisition. While traditional language instruction often focuses on grammar and vocabulary, it is equally important to include pragmatic training to ensure that learners can effectively navigate social interactions. This includes teaching learners how to make appropriate requests, apologies, or invitations, and how to recognize and respect cultural differences in communication styles. By emphasizing the importance of both linguistic and pragmatic skills, language educators can help learners bridge cultural gaps and develop the communication competence necessary for success in an increasingly globalized world.

The challenges that ESL students face when learning a foreign language can be attributed to a variety of factors. Among them is the fact that they consistently employ the conventional approach. This means that ESL students will find it more enjoyable to use basic and conventional learning strategies like memorization of grammar rules, vocabulary, or simple translation exercises. Actually, they can at least improve their income knowledge in their target language by using these conventional methods. Regretfully, they still don't understand the culture of the language they are learning.

"Speak a language and face the world and culture," goes a proverb. Fanon, Frantz. As we all know, language and culture are inextricably linked since a culture's language is an integral component of its identity and can become its defining feature. Learning a foreign language will be dull and flat if culture is not studied.

The science of pragmatics examines how language is used in communication, particularly how sentences relate to the situation and context in which they are used. Pragmatics is the study of how speech acts are used and understood by speakers; how the speaker-listener relationship influences sentence structure; and how speech usage and interpretation rely on real-world knowledge.

According to the definition, pragmatics focuses on the connection between speaker intent, context, and utterance. Since a person can only comprehend his own words and cannot possibly comprehend everything he hears, failure in cross-cultural communication is inevitable. Communication breaks down when people misunderstand the pragmatic power of language, such as when an apology is taken to be rational. This is known as pragmatic failure. There are two categories of pragmatic failures: socio-pragmatic failure and pragmatic linguistic failure. Failure is what we mean by pragmatic linguistic failure. The speaker's words have a sociopragmatic outcome that is inconsistent with native speakers' habits. Failure is defined as speech that is not consistent with native speakers' social culture and customs.

METHODS

The research for this article is based on a literature review methodology, which involves gathering and analyzing existing studies and scholarly works related to pragmatic errors in second language acquisition. Library research, which is a common method in the field of applied linguistics, was employed to collect data from a range of resources including books, scientific journals, articles, newspapers, and academic documents. By reviewing these sources, the study seeks to compile insights from previous research on pragmatic failures in English as a second language (ESL) learners, focusing on both linguistic and social pragmatic errors. This method allows for a comprehensive understanding of the topic, drawing on a wide range of expert opinions and findings.

The primary data used in this research comes from secondary sources, meaning that the information has already been collected and analyzed by other scholars in the field. These sources include academic papers, case studies, and previous literature on pragmatics and second language learning. The secondary data was critically reviewed to identify common patterns and themes related to pragmatic errors in ESL learning, particularly the types of linguistic and social failures that learners frequently encounter. This approach ensures that the article is grounded in existing knowledge while offering new insights based on the synthesis of various research findings.

To collect the necessary data, the documentation method was employed. This technique involves systematically gathering and organizing information from a wide range of library resources. The documentation process allows for the categorization and integration of relevant research materials, enabling a thorough exploration of pragmatic errors from both theoretical and practical perspectives. By utilizing this approach, the study offers a detailed examination of the causes and consequences of pragmatic failures, providing a foundation for understanding how these errors impact ESL learners and their ability to communicate effectively in English-speaking contexts.

RESULT AND DISSCUSSION

Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that studies how people use language in social interactions, focusing on the relationship between utterances and their meanings in specific contexts. Unlike semantics, which deals with the literal meaning of words and sentences, pragmatics concerns itself with how meaning is shaped by factors like the speaker's intention, the listener's interpretation, the social context, and cultural norms. Essentially, pragmatics explains how language operates beyond the surface level of words, taking into account non-literal meanings, politeness strategies, and conversational conventions.

A key concept in pragmatics is speech acts, which are communicative actions performed through language, such as making requests, giving orders, making promises, or apologizing. The meaning of a speech act often depends on the context in which it occurs. For example, the sentence "Can you pass the salt?" is understood as a request, not a question about the listener's ability to pass the salt, due to the context in which it is used. Pragmatics also addresses issues of politeness, explaining how different cultures and languages utilize various forms of politeness depending on the social relationship between speakers. In English, for instance, indirect speech acts like "Could you please..." or "Would you mind..." are used to soften requests, reflecting cultural norms around respect and deference.

In second language acquisition, pragmatics plays a crucial role in achieving communicative competence. ESL learners not only need to master grammar and vocabulary but also understand the social rules that govern language use. Pragmatic errors, such as using overly direct language or failing to recognize the appropriate level of formality, can lead to misunderstandings and social awkwardness. Therefore, effective language learning involves both linguistic knowledge and an awareness of the cultural context in which language is used, enabling learners to communicate appropriately and effectively.

The study of pragmatics examines how a listener or reader receives and interprets the meaning that a speaker or writer conveys. Put differently, pragmatic analysis emphasizes the speaker's meaning over the meaning of the words or sentences. The four aspects of pragmatics are speaker meaning analysis, contextual meaning analysis, the study of how more is communicated than is said, and the study of how relative distance is stated in communication, according to George Yule (1996). On the other hand, pragmatics studies how senders and recipients use context to extend literal meaning in communication activities (Griffiths and Patrick, 2006).

(Levinson, 1983) Pragmatics is defined as "the study of language from the perspective of the user, particularly the decisions they make, the limitations they impose when using language in social situations, and the impact of its use the influence of language on other participants in the act of communication." With an emphasis on role choices, limitations, and the impact of communication on participants, Levinson highlights the social and interactive components of language use.

His point of view emphasizes the significance of communication action based on deep hope and mutual understanding. Pragmatics, which focuses on facets of meaning that cannot be predicted solely by language knowledge, takes into account knowledge of the social and physical world. Jean Stilwell and Peccei (1999). Since there are numerous ways to communicate, pragmatics actually takes into account both the social and physical worlds when interpreting a discussion. Pragmatic language refers to the social

language skills we employ in our daily interactions with others, including problem-solving abilities, communication strategies, comprehension of nonliteral language, and the capacity to identify and express emotions.

English as a Second Language

Pragmatics refers to the study of language use in context, focusing on how speakers convey meaning beyond the literal interpretation of words. It examines the interaction between speaker intent, context, and the social and cultural conventions that govern communication. In the context of second language learning, particularly for ESL (English as a Second Language) learners, mastering pragmatics is just as important as learning grammar and vocabulary. The results from the literature reviewed in this study emphasize that pragmatic competence is crucial for effective communication and that failure to understand and apply pragmatic rules can lead to pragmatic errors.

Stephen Krashen is a well-known linguist who developed influential theories about second language acquisition (SLA). The significance of intelligible input in second language acquisition is the main focus of Krashen's research. He presented the Input Hypothesis, according to which language learners benefit most from input that is just a little bit above their current proficiency level. His research significantly advances our knowledge of the function of input in language acquisition.

According to Krashen, learning a second language involves the subconscious process, whereby the student absorbs the language's structure and rules organically and intuitively through exposure to understandable input. This differs from the learning process, which entails conscious awareness of explicit language rules and can be used to monitor and edit a person's language production. Instead of emphasizing explicit instruction, Krashen's theory of second language acquisition emphasizes the organic process of learning a second language through exposure to understandable input. He stressed the value of meaningful, in-depth interactions and learning a second language.

A second language is one that is learned or studied. It includes linguistic development knowledge and communicative skills in that language through a range of individual, social, and cognitive factors after the first language (Ellis, 2008). According to Ellis, second language acquisition is the process of becoming proficient in linguistic and communicative knowledge in a language other than one's mother tongue to facilitate successful communication in the language, this involves honing abilities in a variety of language-related domains, including discourse, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

According to (Long, 1996), a second language is typically one that is learned or acquired subsequent to the acquisition of the first language, also known as the mother tongue. This includes other languages that people frequently learn for communication, education, work, or cultural assimilation. The linguistic environment's influence on second language acquisition has been the subject of extensive research. The significance of negotiated interactions between learners and native speakers or more experienced target language speakers was highlighted by his introduction of the Interaction Hypothesis. His study emphasizes how crucial communicative interaction is to language development.

This second language typically refers to a language learned or acquired after a first language (mother tongue) has been acquired, according to research by (Spada, 2013). It addresses other languages that people learn for a variety of reasons, including communication, education, work, and cultural assimilation. Additionally, the interaction between implicit and explicit language knowledge is emphasized in their work. They

acknowledge the potential advantages of explicit instruction that offers explicit knowledge of language rules and form, as well as the value of implicit learning processes, in which language acquisition happens organically through exposure and experience.

Linguistic Pragmatic Failures

According to Sheng (2016), pragmatic failure is defined as "the inability to understand what is meant by what is said." In other words, when words are used to convey oral information, a pragmatic failure will occur when the speaker truly wants to express a word or when the recipient needs to be able to understand the meaning of the discourse. There are two types of pragmatic failures: pragmatic failure of language, which is pragmatic failure brought on by a failure to understand the linguistic context, and social pragmatic failure, which is pragmatic failure due to misunderstandings or disregards both sides of social background and cultural differences as well as linguistic expression errors.

Second language learners are used to choosing language material in the target language in order to communicate their own set of thoughts. English and Chinese have different systems and languages, which leads to a lot of pragmatic failures. The proficiency of Chinese pupils is low. Communication is occasionally hampered by this failure. Even though the speaker's meaning may be clear to an English speaker, his words are difficult to accept because they do not follow the conventions of the English language.

a. Pragmatic Failures in Linguistics: The Phonetic Transfer

The first major category of pragmatic issues that ESL learners face is linguistic pragmatic failure, which occurs when learners misunderstand or misapply the linguistic structures that convey social meaning. This includes errors in phonetics, vocabulary, and syntax that affect the speaker's ability to convey intended meaning in socially appropriate ways. For instance, pronunciation errors—such as mispronouncing sounds that do not exist in the learner's native language—are a common form of linguistic failure. As the study highlights, Chinese learners of English often mispronounce the English sounds /θ/ (as in think) and /ð/ (as in this) because these sounds do not exist in Mandarin, leading to confusion and miscommunication. Such errors can disrupt the flow of communication, making it harder for listeners to understand the speaker's intended meaning, even if the words themselves are grammatically correct.

Influenced by their accent and pronunciation habits, Chinese students often mispronounce /θ/ and /ð/ as /s/ and /d/, because there are no /θ/ and /ð/ teeth in Chinese. Chinese students are unfamiliar with pronouncing it with the nipples and the tip of the tongue between their teeth. The words "thank you" and "them" are mispronounced as "sink" and "day," respectively. Just one these two words have a mispronounced sound, but the meaning is entirely different. English comprehension will be impacted by such an acoustic failure.

b. Lexis's Linguistic Pragmatic Failure

Chinese English learners merely assume that all Chinese words and expressions have English equivalents. As a In actuality, depending on the situation and context, the majority of words have numerous equivalent forms in other languages. For instance, "develop" is the English equivalent of the Chinese character "发展." But when you combine different words in English, the word "develop" can mean different things. For example, "developing a habit" means to form a habit, "developing the film" means to treat the film with chemicals, "developing a good attitude" means to prepare a good

attitude, and so on. For new English speakers, all of this appears strange and illogical. For Chinese students, switching from Chinese to English regarding collocations in this area is quite simple. In other words, pupils may also make negative transfers if they are unable to comprehend a concept correctly.

c. Syntax-Based Linguistic Pragmatic Failures

As stated by the way that a country thinks is reflected in its syntax. Language is learned in tandem with the development of thinking skills. It is impossible to prevent a language's features from reflecting in its way of thinking. Learning a new language necessitates developing a new way of thinking. Therefore, students must get past the challenges of organizing their thoughts in Mandarin and attempt to think in English. It is far more difficult to change. For instance, there are differences between Chinese and English expressions when we ask someone to do something.

Indirect speech acts state that a speech act will be more courteous if it is more optional and indirect. In comparable situational contexts, Chinese people typically employ more direct and impressive, or less indirect, methods and optional speech acts than native speakers. For example, "Have another sandwich" is a common Chinese response when offering food or beverages. "Do you want to eat another sandwich?" is what English says. Speech acts must follow English linguistic conventions in order to be successful in communication (Luo, 2011).

Additionally, cultural differences in nonverbal communication can further complicate pragmatic competence. The study highlights that ESL learners may not be familiar with the appropriate nonverbal cues that accompany different types of speech acts in English. For instance, the use of eye contact, body language, and tone of voice can all convey important social meanings that influence the interpretation of words. Misunderstanding or failing to pick up on these cues can lead to social missteps, such as coming across as disengaged or insincere. This is particularly true in high-context cultures, where indirect communication and nonverbal cues are more prominent, compared to low-context cultures like English-speaking countries, where verbal communication is often more direct and explicit.

The results of this study indicate that pragmatic competence is essential for ESL learners to communicate effectively in English. Both linguistic and social pragmatic failures can hinder communication, leading to misunderstandings or awkward interactions. The findings suggest that ESL learners need to be not only linguistically proficient but also culturally aware in order to navigate the subtleties of English communication. Language instruction should therefore integrate pragmatic training, helping learners understand both the linguistic structures and social conventions that govern language use. By improving both their linguistic and social pragmatic competence, ESL learners can significantly enhance their communication skills and achieve greater success in cross-cultural interactions.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, pragmatic errors are a significant challenge for ESL learners, particularly when they are unaware of the social and cultural contexts that influence language use. Pragmatics plays a crucial role in effective communication, as it determines how language is understood and interpreted in various social situations. For ESL learners, these errors often arise from a failure to comprehend not only the linguistic aspects of the target language but also the cultural and social nuances that shape communication. As highlighted throughout the study, pragmatic failures can be

categorized into two primary types: linguistic pragmatic failures and social pragmatic failures. Both types of errors can lead to misunderstandings, awkward interactions, and communication breakdowns, thereby hindering successful cross-cultural exchanges.

Linguistic pragmatic failures, such as issues with pronunciation, word choice, and syntax, are common among ESL learners, especially when their native language systems differ significantly from English. For example, Chinese learners often face challenges with phonetic transfer, where sounds in English do not exist in their native language, leading to mispronunciations that change the meaning of words. Additionally, lexical and syntactic differences between languages can cause learners to incorrectly translate phrases or structure sentences in ways that sound unnatural or awkward in English. These linguistic errors not only affect clarity but also disrupt the flow of communication, making it harder for speakers to convey their intended meaning.

On the other hand, social pragmatic failures are more closely related to misunderstandings of cultural norms and expectations in communication. ESL learners often struggle with knowing when to use formal or informal language, how to make indirect requests, or how to express politeness in a way that aligns with native speakers' social practices. Such failures can lead to unintended rudeness or a perceived lack of respect, even if the learner's intentions are innocent. As communication is deeply tied to culture, learners must be aware that mastering the mechanics of a language is not enough; understanding the cultural and social dimensions of language use is essential for effective communication.

To address these pragmatic errors, ESL learners must not only improve their language proficiency but also develop cultural awareness and sensitivity. Teachers and language programs should incorporate pragmatic instruction alongside traditional language skills, providing learners with opportunities to engage in real-life communication scenarios that highlight cultural differences and social expectations. Furthermore, learners should be encouraged to immerse themselves in authentic language environments, where they can observe and practice how native speakers navigate social interactions. By fostering both linguistic and pragmatic competence, ESL learners will be better equipped to communicate confidently and appropriately across cultural boundaries, ultimately achieving greater success in their language learning journey.

DAFTAR PUSTAKA

- Ellis, R. (2008). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Indriani. (2019, September 19). Forum CSR: Guru perlu kerja sama tim tingkatkan mutu pembelajaran. (ANTARA/HO- Dokumentasi Pribadi), p. 1. Retrieved from <https://www.antaraneews.com/berita/3125649/forum-csr-guru-perlu-kerja-sama-tim-tingkatkan-mutu-pembelajaran>
- Lado, R. (1957). *Linguistics across cultures: Applied linguistics for language teachers*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan.
- Levinson, S. (1983). *Pragmatics*. : Cambridge University Press.
- Liming, Xiao. (2002). *English-Chinese comparative studies and translation*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Long, M. (1996). *The Role of the Linguistic Environment in Second Language Acquisition*. Academic Press.
- Luo, X. (2011). On Pragmatic Failures in Second Language Learning. *Journal Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 289-286.
- Marliani, Sari. (2016). *MOTIVASI KERJA DAN KEPUASAN KERJA TERHADAP KINERJA KARYAWAN* (Studi pada karyawan PT. Bank Negara Indonesia

- (Persero)Tbk Cabang Karawang). *Jurnal Buana Akuntansi*, 1(1), 47–75. <https://doi.org/10.36805/akuntansi.v1i1.43>
- Mulyono, Hardi. (2018). Kepemimpinan (Leadership) Berbasis Karakter Dalam Peningkatan Kualitas Pengelolaan Perguruan Tinggi. *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Sosial Humaniora*, 3(1), 290–297. <https://doi.org/10.32696/jp2sh.v3i1.93>
- Pasaribu, G. R., Daulay, S. H., & Nasution, P. T. (2022). Pragmatics principles of English teachers in Islamic elementary school. *Journal of Pragmatics Research*, 4(1), 29–40.
- Astadi, Satriawan, Dewa Gede, Indiyati, Dian, Sudarmanto, Eko, Panjaitan, Roymon, Lestari, Ambar Sri, & Farida, Nurul. (2021). Perilaku Organisasi. In *Perilaku Organisasi*.
- rapika kesatriani damanik, m.hilmi tarigan, selna aprila sidauruk dan septiana GAN. (2018). Pengaruh Budaya Organisasi, Tim Kerja dan Motivasi Intrinsik terhadap Komitmen Normatif Guru Sekolah Dasar Negeri di Batang Kuis. *JURNAL DIVERSITA*, 4(2), 127–131.
- Ri, Kementerian Pertahanan, Pendidikan, Badan, Pelatihan, D. A. N., Kepala, Keputusan, Pendidikan, Badan, Pelatihan, D. A. N., & Jakarta, Ditetapkan D. I. (2020). Bahan pembelajaran dinamika kelompok.
- Sheng, D. (2016). Analysis of Pragmatic Failure in Collage English Teaching. *Journal Education*, 34–36.
- Spada, P. M. (2013). *How Language are Learned* (4th ed). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- T Simorangkir, Sahat. (2022). Pengaruh Kerjasama Tim dan Efikasi Diri terhadap Kinerja Guru SMP Negeri di Kecamatan Jonggat Kabupaten Lombok Tengah Tahun Ajaran 2020/2021. *Formosa Journal of Science and Technology*, 1(4), 305–314. <https://doi.org/10.55927/fjst.v1i4.996>
- Tua, Nasib, Gaol, Lumban, Kristen, Pendidikan Agama, Siburian, Paningkat, Pendidikan, Manajemen, Universitas, Pascasarjana, & Medan, Negeri. (2018). Peran Kepala Sekolah Dalam Meningkatkan Kinerja Guru. *Manajemen Pendidikan*, 5 no 1 jan.
- Tutiasri, Ririn Puspita. (2016). Komunikasi Dalam Komunikasi Kelompok. *CHANNEL: Jurnal Komunikasi*, 4(1), 81–90. <https://doi.org/10.12928/channel.v4i1.4208>.
- Ziran, He. (2006). *Notes on pragmatics*. Nanjing: Nanjing Normal University Press.