



AI-MEDIATED MULTIMODAL FEEDBACK AS A TOOL FOR IMPROVING STUDENTS' SOCIOPRAGMATIC COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH

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Abstract. This article examines AI-mediated multimodal feedback as a methodological tool for improving EFL students' sociopragmatic competence in English. Sociopragmatic competence is viewed as the ability to select contextually appropriate language according to social status, interpersonal distance, communicative intention, degree of imposition, and cultural expectations. The study proposes integrating AI-generated textual, auditory, visual, and interactive feedback into pragmatic learning tasks. Particular attention is given to contextual appropriateness, politeness, register, speech-act realization, multimodal cue interpretation, and linguistic accuracy. The proposed framework positions AI feedback as an analytical and reflective resource rather than an automatic correction mechanism. Such feedback can support students in identifying sociopragmatic mismatches, comparing alternative expressions, revising communicative choices, and developing greater sensitivity to social and cultural variables in English interaction.

Keywords: sociopragmatic competence, artificial intelligence, multimodal feedback, EFL, pragmatics, politeness, contextual appropriateness, reflection.

Introduction. The development of communicative competence in English requires considerably more than grammatical accuracy and lexical knowledge. Successful interaction also depends on learners' ability to interpret social relationships and select linguistic forms that correspond to particular communicative circumstances. Sociopragmatic competence is especially important because it concerns judgments about what is socially appropriate in a given context, including the influence of power relations, interpersonal distance, degree of imposition, communicative purpose, and cultural expectations¹. A learner may therefore produce a grammatically flawless utterance while still creating misunderstanding or interpersonal tension because the expression is too direct, excessively formal, insufficiently polite, or socially inappropriate. Thomas conceptualized such problems within the broader phenomenon of pragmatic failure and demonstrated that successful intercultural communication requires sensitivity to the relationship between linguistic choices and sociocultural conventions.

¹ Thomas J. Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Failure // Applied Linguistics. – 1983. – Vol. 4, No. 2. – P. 91–112.



In EFL contexts, developing such sensitivity presents a methodological challenge. Students often learn English in environments where access to naturally occurring interaction across different social settings is limited. Textbooks can present useful models, but they may simplify contextual variables or provide a relatively narrow range of conversational patterns. Consequently, learners may know expressions such as *Could you...?*, *Would you mind...?*, *I'm afraid...*, or *I was wondering if...* without fully understanding when each expression is socially appropriate. Effective pragmatic instruction therefore needs to connect linguistic forms with speaker relationships, communicative intentions, institutional contexts, and cultural norms. Taguchi's review of pragmatics teaching highlights the importance of instructional intervention, meaningful practice, learner strategies, materials, and opportunities for pragmatic development in classroom settings.

Feedback represents one of the most significant mechanisms through which learners can recognize the gap between intended meaning and communicative effect². However, feedback in language classrooms has traditionally concentrated on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and formal accuracy. Sociopragmatic errors may receive less systematic attention because they are often context-dependent rather than categorically correct or incorrect. Hattie and Timperley emphasize that the effectiveness of feedback depends substantially on its focus and the way it supports learners in understanding present performance and subsequent improvement. Applied to pragmatic learning, this principle suggests that feedback should not simply label a response as inappropriate; it should explain why a particular linguistic choice does not fit the social situation and how alternative choices modify its interpersonal effect.

Artificial intelligence creates new opportunities for developing this form of explanatory and adaptive feedback³. Generative AI can analyze learner-generated responses, produce alternative formulations, simulate interlocutors, change contextual variables, and provide immediate explanations. For instance, if a student responds to a professor's request with *"No, I can't do it,"* AI-mediated feedback can demonstrate how the refusal might be reformulated through regret, explanation, mitigation, or an alternative proposal. More importantly, the system can compare how the same refusal might be expressed to a close friend, a classmate, a lecturer, or an employer. Research on generative AI in language education identifies dialogue generation, personalized practice, task development, and responsive feedback as important pedagogical affordances.

The value of AI feedback becomes greater when it is multimodal. Human interaction is not restricted to written words: pragmatic meaning is simultaneously expressed through intonation, facial expression, gesture, pauses, gaze, visual context, and other semiotic

² Taguchi N. Teaching Pragmatics: Trends and Issues // Annual Review of Applied Linguistics. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. – Vol. 31. – P. 289–310.

³ Hattie J., Timperley H. The Power of Feedback // Review of Educational Research. – 2007. – Vol. 77, No. 1. – P. 81–112.



resources⁴. Kress's multimodal perspective emphasizes that meaning-making operates through multiple communicative modes rather than language alone. Thus, feedback on sociopragmatic performance should help learners notice not only lexical or grammatical features but also the relationship between verbal expression and non-verbal signals. A seemingly polite sentence may acquire a sarcastic, impatient, uncertain, or dismissive interpretation when accompanied by particular prosodic or visual cues.

AI-mediated multimodal feedback can therefore combine textual explanation, audio comparison, visual prompts, dialogue reconstruction, and role-based simulation. After performing a request, refusal, apology, complaint, or suggestion, students can receive feedback concerning social appropriateness, politeness level, register, tone, and linguistic realization. They can then listen to alternative versions, compare visual contexts, revise their response, and test it in another simulated interaction. Computer-mediated environments have long been recognized as potentially useful for expanding opportunities for L2 pragmatic practice, providing authentic interaction, and addressing limitations of classroom-based pragmatic instruction. Generative AI extends these possibilities by making feedback more immediate, adaptable, dialogic, and multimodal.

Nevertheless, AI-generated feedback should not be regarded as an unquestionable sociopragmatic authority⁵. Pragmatic conventions vary according to culture, community, context, identity, and individual preference. A response suggested by an AI system may represent one acceptable possibility rather than a universally correct form. For this reason, pedagogically meaningful AI feedback should encourage comparison, explanation, revision, and reflection rather than simple acceptance. Teacher mediation remains necessary for interpreting culturally variable cases and correcting oversimplified AI-generated judgments. Accordingly, the present article conceptualizes AI-mediated multimodal feedback as a reflective learning mechanism through which students can recognize sociopragmatic mismatches, explore alternative communicative strategies, and progressively develop more context-sensitive English interaction.

Table 1. Framework of AI-Mediated Multimodal Feedback for Sociopragmatic Competence Development

Feedback dimension	Multimodal AI input	Feedback focus	Student action	Expected sociopragmatic outcome
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⁴ Kohnke L., Moorhouse B.L., Zou D. ChatGPT for Language Teaching and Learning // RELC Journal. – 2023. – Vol. 54, No. 2. – P. 537–550.

⁵ Kress G. Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication. – London–New York: Routledge, 2010. – 232 p.



Contextual appropriateness	Situation, image, dialogue, role information	Status, distance, setting, purpose, imposition	Reconsider the response according to contextual variables	Context-sensitive language choice
Politeness and register	Textual alternatives and audio models	Directness, mitigation, formality, politeness markers	Compare and rank alternative expressions	Appropriate management of interpersonal relations
Speech-act realization	AI-generated role-play and dialogue reconstruction	Requests, refusals, apologies, complaints, suggestions	Reformulate the speech act using alternative strategies	Flexible pragmatic strategy selection
Multimodal cue interpretation	Audio, facial expressions, gesture, visual context	Intonation, emotion, hesitation, non-verbal meaning	Interpret verbal and non-verbal cues jointly	Improved recognition of implicit meaning
Reflective feedback	AI explanation, prompts, alternative responses	Reason for appropriateness or mismatch	Explain, justify, revise, and retry the response	Pragmatic self-monitoring
Linguistic accuracy	Corrective textual and oral feedback	Grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation	Edit linguistic form without losing pragmatic intention	Accurate and socially appropriate production

The framework demonstrates that AI-mediated feedback should move progressively from context recognition to reflective revision. The first dimension requires students to identify who is speaking, to whom, under what circumstances, and for what purpose. Without this information, linguistic correction alone cannot ensure sociopragmatic appropriateness. The second dimension directs attention to politeness and register by comparing forms with different

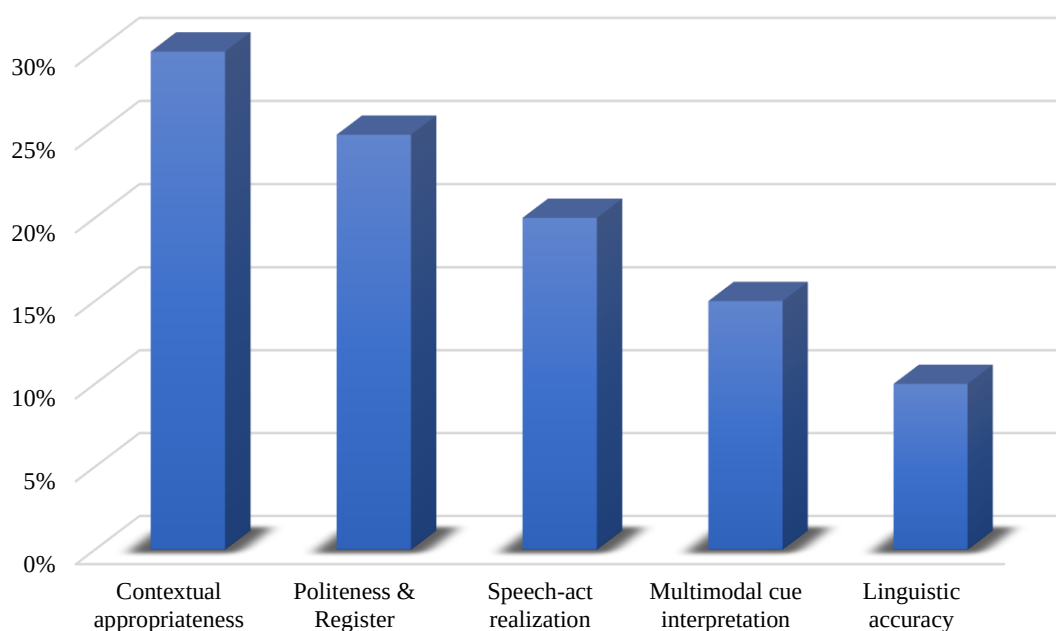


levels of directness and mitigation. Speech-act feedback then helps students examine how the same communicative intention may be realized through different pragmatic strategies.

Multimodal cue interpretation expands this analysis beyond written language. For example, AI-generated audio can contrast sincere and reluctant apologies, while visual scenarios can illustrate differences in facial expression or situational formality. Such input can make implicit interpersonal meanings more observable. Reflective feedback subsequently encourages students to explain why one response is more suitable than another and to revise their initial production.

The final dimension, linguistic accuracy, remains important but is deliberately positioned within a broader sociopragmatic framework. A sentence should not be evaluated only according to grammatical correctness; students should also consider its likely effect on an interlocutor⁶. Accordingly, AI-mediated multimodal feedback operates through a sequence of noticing → comparison → explanation → revision → renewed interaction. This cyclical organization turns feedback from simple error correction into a mechanism for developing context-sensitive pragmatic decision-making.

Figure 1. Recommended Emphasis of AI-Mediated Multimodal Feedback



The chart assigns the greatest instructional emphasis to contextual appropriateness (30%), since sociopragmatic competence fundamentally depends on interpreting social variables before selecting language. Politeness and register (25%) receive the second-largest share because power, distance, and formality directly influence interpersonal meaning. Speech-act realization

⁶ Belz J.A. The Role of Computer Mediation in the Instruction and Development of L2 Pragmatic Competence // Annual Review of Applied Linguistics. – 2007. – Vol. 27. – P. 45–75.



(20%) focuses on choosing appropriate strategies for requests, refusals, apologies, complaints, and related acts. Multimodal cue interpretation (15%) develops sensitivity to intonation, facial expression, and visual context, while linguistic accuracy (10%) supports formal correctness. This distribution intentionally prioritizes social appropriateness over grammatical correction. It should be understood as a flexible pedagogical model: teachers may modify the proportions according to learner proficiency, instructional objectives, diagnostic evidence, cultural context, and the particular sociopragmatic difficulties identified in a specific EFL group.

Conclusion. In conclusion, AI-mediated multimodal feedback provides a promising methodological mechanism for improving students' sociopragmatic competence in English. Its pedagogical value lies in combining linguistic feedback with information about social status, interpersonal distance, communicative intention, politeness, register, prosody, visual cues, and cultural context. Unlike conventional correction focused primarily on grammatical accuracy, sociopragmatically oriented AI feedback can help learners understand why an expression is appropriate or inappropriate and how alternative formulations influence interpersonal meaning.

The proposed framework integrates contextual appropriateness, politeness and register, speech-act realization, multimodal interpretation, reflective evaluation, and linguistic accuracy. Through repeated cycles of noticing, comparison, explanation, revision, and renewed interaction, students can gradually develop greater sensitivity to contextual variables and make more informed communicative choices. Nevertheless, AI feedback should remain pedagogically mediated. Pragmatic appropriateness cannot always be reduced to a single correct response because communicative norms vary across cultures, communities, situations, and speakers. Teachers therefore need to contextualize AI-generated recommendations and encourage critical evaluation. When employed as a reflective rather than prescriptive tool, AI-mediated multimodal feedback can contribute to more adaptive, socially appropriate, and interculturally sensitive English communication.

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