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PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE IN EFL LEARNERS: THE ROLE OF CLASSROOM INTERACTION

Jizzakh branch of the National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek

The faculty of Psychology, Student of the 102-23 group

Qo'ziyeva Durdona Odilbek qizi

durdonaqoziyeva896@gmail.com

Abduraxmanova Zilola Yoqubjon qizi

Abduraxmanova@jbnuu.uz

O'zbekiston milliy universitei Jizzax filliali dotsenti f.f.f.d. (PhD)

Ibragimov Xayrulla Hamdamovich

xayrulla6266@gmail.com

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada ingliz tilini xorijiy til sifatida o‘rganuvchilarda pragmatik kompetensiyani rivojlantirishda auditoriya ichidagi muloqotning o‘rni tahlil qilinadi. Pragmatik kompetensiyaning nazariy asoslari, uning kommunikativ kompetensiya bilan bog‘liqligi hamda o‘qituvchi va o‘quvchilar o‘rtasidagi o‘zaro muloqotning til o‘rganish jarayoniga ta’siri yoritiladi. Shuningdek, juftlikda ishlash, guruh muhokamalari, rolli o‘yinlar, muammoli vaziyatlarni hal qilish va kommunikativ topshiriqlarning o‘quvchilarda nutqiy vaziyatga mos til vositalarini tanlash, muloyimlik strategiyalaridan foydalanish va muloqot maqsadini to‘g‘ri ifodalash ko‘nikmalarini shakllantirishdagi ahamiyati ko‘rib chiqiladi. Maqolada pragmatik kompetensiyani rivojlantirishda madaniyatlararo xabardorlik, o‘qituvchining fikr-mulohazalari va qulay ta’lim muhitining ahamiyati ham ta’kidlanadi. Tadqiqot mavjud ilmiy adabiyotlarni tahlil qilishga asoslangan bo‘lib, uning natijalari ingliz tili darslarida interaktiv va kommunikativ yondashuvlarni samarali qo‘llash bo‘yicha pedagogik tavsiyalar ishlab chiqishga xizmat qiladi.

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Kalit so'zlar: pragmatik kompetensiya, ingliz tilini xorijiy til sifatida o'qitish, auditoriya muloqoti, kommunikativ kompetensiya, interaktiv ta'lim, nutqiy aktlar, madaniyatlararo muloqot.

Abstract

This article examines the role of classroom interaction in developing pragmatic competence among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. It explores the theoretical foundations of pragmatic competence, its relationship with communicative competence, and the contribution of teacher–student and peer interaction to language learning. Particular attention is given to pair work, group discussions, role-playing, problem-solving activities, and communicative tasks as effective ways of helping learners select contextually appropriate expressions, employ politeness strategies, and communicate their intentions successfully. The article also highlights the importance of intercultural awareness, constructive teacher feedback, and a supportive classroom environment in promoting pragmatic development. The study adopts a literature-based analytical approach, drawing on relevant theoretical perspectives and research in applied linguistics and second language acquisition. The findings of the literature review suggest that purposeful classroom interaction can provide valuable opportunities for learners to develop their awareness of social and cultural aspects of language use. The article offers pedagogical implications for integrating interactive and communicative approaches into EFL instruction to improve learners' practical communication skills.

Key words: pragmatic competence, English as a Foreign Language, classroom interaction, communicative competence, interactive learning, speech acts, intercultural communication.

Аннотация

В статье рассматривается роль взаимодействия в учебной аудитории в развитии прагматической компетенции учащихся, изучающих английский язык как иностранный. Раскрываются теоретические основы прагматической компетенции, её взаимосвязь с коммуникативной компетенцией, а также значение взаимодействия между учителем и учащимися и общения между самими

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учащимися в процессе изучения языка. Особое внимание уделяется работе в парах, групповым дискуссиям, ролевым играм, решению проблемных ситуаций и коммуникативным заданиям, которые помогают учащимся выбирать языковые средства в соответствии с речевой ситуацией, использовать стратегии вежливости и успешно выражать свои коммуникативные намерения. В статье также подчёркивается значение межкультурной осведомлённости, конструктивной обратной связи со стороны преподавателя и благоприятной учебной среды для развития прагматических навыков. Исследование основано на анализе научной литературы по прикладной лингвистике и усвоению второго языка. Результаты анализа показывают, что целенаправленное взаимодействие в аудитории создаёт возможности для развития понимания социальных и культурных аспектов использования языка. В статье предлагаются методические рекомендации по интеграции интерактивных и коммуникативных подходов в преподавание английского языка как иностранного с целью совершенствования практических навыков общения учащихся.

Ключевые слова: прагматическая компетенция, английский язык как иностранный, взаимодействие в аудитории, коммуникативная компетенция, интерактивное обучение, речевые акты, межкультурная коммуникация.

INTRODUCTION

English has become one of the most widely used languages for international communication, education, business, technology, and cultural exchange. As a result, English language teaching increasingly emphasizes the development of communicative competence rather than the memorization of grammatical rules and vocabulary items alone. Learners are expected not only to produce grammatically correct sentences but also to use language appropriately in different communicative situations. In this context, pragmatic competence has become an important area of research in applied linguistics and foreign language education.

Pragmatic competence involves understanding how meaning is communicated through language in particular social and cultural contexts. It enables speakers to recognize the intentions behind utterances, select appropriate expressions, interpret

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indirect meanings, and respond effectively to other people. For example, a learner may know the grammatical structure of a question but may not understand how to make a polite request to a teacher, disagree respectfully with a classmate, or apologize appropriately after making a mistake. Such situations demonstrate that grammatical knowledge does not automatically guarantee successful communication.

In English as a Foreign Language classrooms, the development of pragmatic competence is particularly important because learners often have limited opportunities to interact with English speakers outside the educational environment. For many learners, the classroom represents the main setting in which they encounter authentic communicative situations and practise using English for meaningful purposes. Therefore, classroom interaction can provide an important foundation for developing pragmatic awareness and practical communication skills. Traditional language teaching methods have frequently placed considerable emphasis on grammatical accuracy, translation, and written exercises. Although these approaches can contribute to linguistic development, they may not provide sufficient opportunities for learners to understand the social functions of language. Modern communicative approaches recognize that language learning is a social process in which interaction, collaboration, feedback, and meaningful communication contribute to the development of communicative ability. Consequently, integrating pragmatic objectives into classroom activities can help learners become more confident, flexible, and effective English users. The purpose of this article is to examine the role of classroom interaction in developing pragmatic competence among EFL learners. It explores the theoretical foundations of pragmatic competence, explains how interaction supports pragmatic development, identifies effective classroom strategies, and discusses the challenges and pedagogical implications associated with pragmatic instruction.

The Concept of Pragmatic Competence in Foreign Language Learning

Pragmatic competence is generally understood as the ability to interpret and produce language appropriately in relation to communicative purposes, social relationships, and contextual expectations. It includes knowledge of what to say, how to say it, when to say it, and how to interpret what other people mean. Unlike grammatical competence, which

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primarily concerns the structural rules of language, pragmatic competence focuses on the relationship between linguistic expressions and their use in communication. The concept of communicative competence was significantly developed by Dell Hymes, who argued that knowing a language involves more than understanding its grammatical structure. Speakers must also know how to use language appropriately within a particular community. This perspective challenged approaches that treated language primarily as a formal system and encouraged researchers and educators to consider the social and cultural dimensions of communication. Later, Canale and Swain developed a model of communicative competence that included grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Their framework contributed to the understanding that effective communication depends on several interconnected abilities. Pragmatic competence is closely associated with these dimensions, particularly sociolinguistic competence, because it requires learners to understand the relationship between language choices and social contexts. In subsequent models of communicative language ability, pragmatic knowledge has also been discussed in relation to functional language use and the organization of discourse. Pragmatic competence includes several related abilities. One important component is the ability to perform speech acts, such as requesting, apologizing, thanking, refusing, inviting, promising, and expressing disagreement. Each speech act can be realized through different linguistic forms depending on the context and the relationship between speakers. For instance, a learner may say “Give me your pen” when speaking to a classmate, but “Could I borrow your pen, please?” may be more suitable in a formal or unfamiliar situation. Both expressions can communicate a request, yet they differ in politeness and interpersonal effect. Another important component is sociopragmatic awareness, which concerns the social factors influencing language use. These factors include age, social status, familiarity, power relationships, cultural expectations, and the degree of imposition associated with a request or other communicative act. Learners need to recognize that an expression appropriate in one situation may sound too direct, distant, informal, or even impolite in another.

Pragmatic competence also involves pragmalinguistic knowledge, which refers to the linguistic resources available for expressing particular communicative intentions. These resources include modal verbs, indirect questions, hedging expressions, discourse markers, politeness formulas, and different grammatical structures used to soften or

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strengthen a message. Expressions such as “Would you mind helping me?”, “I was wondering if you could help,” and “Could you possibly explain this?” demonstrate how speakers can communicate similar intentions through different linguistic forms. Furthermore, pragmatic competence requires the interpretation of implied meanings. In natural communication, speakers do not always express their intentions directly. They may rely on shared knowledge, contextual clues, intonation, facial expressions, and indirect language. A statement such as “It is quite cold in here” may function as a simple observation, but in a particular context it may also imply a request to close a window. EFL learners must develop the ability to recognize such meanings instead of interpreting every utterance literally. These dimensions demonstrate that pragmatic competence is complex and cannot be developed through grammar instruction alone. Learners need opportunities to observe language in context, interpret communicative intentions, experiment with different expressions, and reflect on how their language choices affect communication.

Classroom Interaction as a Foundation for Pragmatic Development

Classroom interaction refers to the verbal and nonverbal exchanges that occur among teachers and learners during the teaching and learning process. It includes teacher explanations, question-and-answer sessions, pair work, group discussions, collaborative projects, role-playing, debates, and informal classroom conversations. These forms of interaction provide learners with opportunities to use English for a range of communicative purposes. The importance of classroom interaction can be explained through the social nature of language learning. Language is not simply a collection of rules that learners memorize individually; it is a means of participating in social activities and constructing meaning with others. When learners interact in English, they must consider what their communication partners know, what they intend to communicate, and how their expressions may be understood. Such processes encourage them to move beyond the production of isolated sentences and develop a more contextualized understanding of language. Classroom interaction also creates opportunities for learners to notice differences between their intended meanings and the meanings understood by their partners. For example, a learner may make a request that sounds too direct or use an expression that is inappropriate for a particular situation. A classmate may ask for

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clarification, or the teacher may suggest a more suitable alternative. Through this process, learners become more aware of how linguistic choices influence the success of communication. Interaction is particularly valuable because pragmatic knowledge is often implicit. Learners may understand a polite expression when reading it in a textbook but may struggle to use it naturally in conversation. Active participation allows them to practise retrieving appropriate language, responding to unexpected contributions, and adapting their speech to changing circumstances. Repeated opportunities to communicate can gradually strengthen their ability to select expressions that suit particular situations. Moreover, interaction can help learners develop confidence in using English. Students who have limited experience with spontaneous communication may rely heavily on memorized sentences or avoid speaking because they fear making mistakes. A supportive classroom environment encourages them to experiment with language, ask questions, clarify misunderstandings, and learn from unsuccessful interactions. When teachers treat errors as opportunities for development rather than reasons for embarrassment, students are more likely to participate actively. The relationship between classroom interaction and pragmatic competence is therefore reciprocal. Interaction provides opportunities to develop pragmatic knowledge, while increasing pragmatic awareness enables learners to participate more effectively in subsequent interactions. Teachers can strengthen this relationship by designing activities that require learners to make meaningful choices about what to say, how to say it, and how to respond to others.

The Role of Teacher–Student Interaction

Teacher–student interaction is an important source of pragmatic input in EFL classrooms. Teachers serve not only as providers of linguistic knowledge but also as models of communicative behavior. Their use of greetings, requests, instructions, feedback, encouragement, disagreement, and clarification demonstrates how English can be used to achieve different purposes in educational settings. When teachers communicate naturally and appropriately, learners can observe how expressions vary according to context. For instance, a teacher may say “Could you open your books, please?” when giving a polite instruction, “Would you mind repeating your answer?” when requesting clarification, or “That is an interesting point, but let us consider another possibility” when

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responding to a different opinion. These expressions illustrate how teachers can integrate pragmatic input into everyday classroom communication.

The quality of teacher questions also influences the development of pragmatic competence. Questions that require only one-word answers may provide limited opportunities for extended interaction. In contrast, open-ended questions encourage learners to explain their ideas, justify their opinions, respond to classmates, and use appropriate discourse strategies. Questions such as “What would you say in this situation?”, “How could you make this request more polite?” and “Why might this expression be unsuitable here?” direct learners' attention toward the relationship between language and context. Teacher feedback is equally important. When a learner produces an expression that is grammatically correct but pragmatically inappropriate, the teacher can explain the difference between linguistic accuracy and contextual suitability. For example, if a student uses an overly direct refusal in a formal situation, the teacher can introduce alternatives such as “I am afraid I cannot,” “I would love to, but I have another commitment,” or “Thank you for inviting me, but unfortunately I will not be able to attend.” However, pragmatic instruction should not depend entirely on explicit correction. Constant interruption can reduce fluency and discourage participation. Teachers should consider the communicative purpose of the activity and provide feedback at an appropriate moment. During fluency-based tasks, it may be more effective to note recurring pragmatic problems and discuss them after the activity. During focused practice, immediate guidance may be more useful. Teachers should also recognize that pragmatic conventions are not always universal. Expressions that are considered polite in one cultural setting may be interpreted differently in another. Rather than presenting a single expression as the only correct option, teachers can explain the social expectations associated with different choices and encourage learners to consider the context, relationship, and communicative goal.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Pragmatic competence has become an important area of research in applied linguistics and foreign language education because it concerns learners' ability to use language appropriately in different social and communicative contexts. Researchers have increasingly emphasized that successful communication requires more than grammatical

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accuracy and vocabulary knowledge. It also involves understanding speakers' intentions, interpreting implied meanings, selecting appropriate expressions, and recognizing the social conventions that influence language use. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, pragmatic competence is particularly significant because learners may have limited opportunities to participate in authentic English communication outside the classroom. One of the foundational contributions to the understanding of communicative competence was made by Hymes, who argued that language knowledge includes the ability to use linguistic forms appropriately within particular social situations. His perspective challenged approaches that focused exclusively on grammatical competence and established a theoretical basis for investigating language as a form of social interaction. This perspective is relevant to EFL classrooms because learners must develop the ability to select expressions according to communicative purposes, social relationships, and contextual expectations.

Canale and Swain further developed the concept of communicative competence by identifying grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic dimensions. Their framework demonstrated that effective communication involves the integration of linguistic knowledge and the ability to use language appropriately. From this perspective, pragmatic competence is closely associated with sociolinguistic awareness and the strategic resources learners employ to overcome communication difficulties. These dimensions suggest that language instruction should provide opportunities for learners to practise both accurate language production and contextually appropriate communication. Bachman's model of communicative language ability also contributed to the theoretical understanding of pragmatic competence. His framework distinguished organizational knowledge from pragmatic knowledge, emphasizing the importance of understanding the relationship between linguistic forms, communicative functions, and contextual meaning. This distinction is particularly important in foreign language teaching because learners may produce grammatically correct sentences without fully understanding their interpersonal implications. Therefore, pragmatic instruction should help learners recognize how different expressions can communicate similar intentions while producing different effects in particular situations.

Research by Kasper and Rose has further highlighted the importance of pragmatic development in second language acquisition. Their work examines how learners acquire

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the ability to perform speech acts, interpret communicative intentions, and use language in socially appropriate ways. Their research also supports the importance of providing learners with opportunities to encounter pragmatic features and practise them in meaningful contexts. From this perspective, classroom activities should not be limited to presenting expressions and their translations; they should also encourage learners to explore how language choices depend on the situation and the relationship between speakers. Bardovi-Harlig's research has contributed to the understanding of interlanguage pragmatics, which investigates how second language learners develop pragmatic knowledge and how their language use differs from that of more experienced speakers. This area of research emphasizes the relationship between linguistic development and the acquisition of context-sensitive communicative behavior. It also suggests that pragmatic competence should be considered an important component of language learning rather than an ability that develops automatically alongside grammar and vocabulary.

The role of interaction in language acquisition has also received considerable attention. Long's interaction hypothesis emphasizes the importance of interaction and negotiation of meaning in second language development. When learners experience communication difficulties, they may ask questions, request clarification, repeat information, or modify their utterances. These processes can help them understand language input and recognize differences between intended and interpreted meanings. Although negotiation of meaning does not automatically guarantee pragmatic development, it creates opportunities for learners to practise communicative strategies that are essential for successful interaction. Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective provides another important theoretical foundation for understanding classroom interaction. According to this perspective, learning develops through social participation, collaboration, and guided assistance. In language education, interaction with teachers and peers can help learners perform communicative tasks that they might initially find difficult to complete independently. Through collaborative activities, learners can observe language use, receive feedback, and gradually develop greater control over their communicative behavior. This perspective supports the use of pair work, group discussions, role-playing, and collaborative problem-solving in pragmatic instruction.

Methodology

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The present article adopts a qualitative, descriptive, and literature-based research approach to examine the role of classroom interaction in developing pragmatic competence among EFL learners. This approach is appropriate because the main purpose of the study is to analyze existing theoretical perspectives, synthesize relevant research findings, and identify pedagogical practices that can support the development of contextually appropriate language use. The research focuses on the relationship between pragmatic competence and classroom interaction, with particular attention to teacher–student communication, peer interaction, communicative activities, feedback, and intercultural awareness. The study considers how these elements can contribute to learners' ability to perform speech acts, interpret communicative intentions, express opinions, make requests, respond to others, and adapt their language to different social situations. The methodological framework is based on the analysis of academic literature in applied linguistics, second language acquisition, communicative language teaching, and interlanguage pragmatics. Foundational theoretical works by Hymes, Canale and Swain, Bachman, Long, and Vygotsky provide the conceptual basis for examining communicative competence and interaction. Research by Kasper and Rose, Bardovi-Harlig, and Taguchi contributes to the analysis of pragmatic development and the role of instruction in second language learning. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages provides an additional perspective on communicative interaction and sociolinguistic appropriateness. The literature analysis follows a thematic approach. Relevant concepts and arguments are organized around several interconnected themes, including the definition of pragmatic competence, the relationship between interaction and language acquisition, the contribution of teacher and peer communication, the effectiveness of interactive teaching strategies, and the challenges of pragmatic instruction. Comparing these themes makes it possible to identify common principles across different theoretical perspectives and explain their relevance to EFL classroom practice.

RESULTS

The analysis of the relevant literature indicates that classroom interaction plays an important role in supporting the development of pragmatic competence among English as

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a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The reviewed theoretical perspectives suggest that effective communication depends not only on grammatical accuracy and vocabulary knowledge but also on learners' ability to interpret communicative intentions, select appropriate expressions, and adjust their language according to social and cultural contexts. The results of the literature-based analysis are organized around the main themes identified in the research, including communicative interaction, teacher–student communication, peer collaboration, interactive teaching strategies, pragmatic awareness, and the challenges associated with pragmatic instruction. One of the main findings is that meaningful classroom interaction provides learners with opportunities to connect linguistic knowledge with practical communication. Traditional activities that focus exclusively on grammatical structures may help learners construct accurate sentences, but they do not necessarily prepare them to communicate appropriately in different social situations. In contrast, interactive tasks require learners to consider their communicative purposes, respond to other speakers, and select expressions that correspond to the context. This finding is consistent with communicative approaches to language teaching, which emphasize the importance of using language to achieve meaningful objectives. Classroom interaction can therefore help learners understand the relationship between linguistic forms and their communicative functions. Another important finding concerns the contribution of teacher–student interaction to pragmatic development. Teachers provide learners with examples of appropriate language use through instructions, questions, explanations, feedback, and everyday classroom conversations. These exchanges expose students to different ways of making requests, expressing opinions, asking for clarification, agreeing, disagreeing, and responding politely. The analysis suggests that teachers can strengthen pragmatic awareness by explaining why particular expressions are suitable in specific situations. For example, learners can compare direct requests with more indirect and polite alternatives and discuss how the relationship between speakers influences their choice of language. Such practices can help students develop a more flexible understanding of English communication.

The analysis also highlights the importance of peer interaction. Pair work and group activities create opportunities for learners to use English for a variety of communicative purposes while responding to the contributions of their classmates. Through collaborative tasks, students can practise turn-taking, clarification, negotiation of meaning, and the

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expression of agreement or disagreement. These activities can also increase the amount of time learners spend using English during lessons. Peer interaction is particularly valuable when students are required to exchange information, make joint decisions, or solve problems because communication becomes necessary for completing the task. However, the benefits depend on the quality of the interaction, the relevance of the activities, and the guidance provided by the teacher. A further result concerns the pedagogical value of role-playing and contextualized communicative tasks. The reviewed literature supports the use of simulated real-life situations as opportunities to practise speech acts and sociolinguistic choices. Activities involving shopping, asking for directions, inviting friends, apologizing, requesting assistance, and communicating with teachers can help learners explore how expressions change according to the communicative situation. Role-playing allows students to experiment with different language forms and compare the effects of alternative expressions. When followed by reflection and feedback, these activities can promote a deeper understanding of pragmatic appropriateness and encourage learners to apply their knowledge in new contexts.

Overall, the results of the literature review suggest that classroom interaction is an important pedagogical resource for developing pragmatic competence among EFL learners. Teacher–student exchanges, peer collaboration, contextualized activities, intercultural comparisons, and constructive feedback can contribute to learners' understanding of how English functions in social communication. At the same time, the analysis indicates that successful pragmatic instruction requires deliberate planning and sustained attention to contextual language use. Since the present study is based on existing literature rather than original empirical data, these conclusions represent a synthesis of theoretical and research-based perspectives and should not be interpreted as measured effects from a newly conducted classroom experiment. Future empirical research could investigate these relationships through classroom observations, pragmatic performance assessments, and comparisons of instructional approaches across different learner groups.

Conclusion

Pragmatic competence is an essential dimension of successful English language learning because it enables learners to use linguistic knowledge appropriately in different social and communicative contexts. The ability to communicate effectively requires more

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than grammatical accuracy and vocabulary knowledge; it also involves understanding speakers' intentions, interpreting implied meanings, selecting suitable expressions, and adapting language to interpersonal relationships and cultural expectations. Classroom interaction provides valuable opportunities for developing these abilities. Through teacher–student exchanges, peer discussions, role-playing, information-gap activities, collaborative problem-solving, and dialogue analysis, learners can practise a wide range of communicative functions and become more aware of the social dimensions of language. These activities encourage learners to negotiate meaning, clarify misunderstandings, express opinions, make requests, and respond appropriately to others. The effectiveness of classroom interaction depends on the quality of instructional design and the learning environment. Teachers need to provide meaningful communicative tasks, model appropriate language use, offer constructive feedback, and encourage reflection on pragmatic choices. They should also consider learners' proficiency levels, cultural backgrounds, classroom size, and educational objectives when selecting activities. Although challenges such as limited instructional time, examination pressure, and insufficient exposure to authentic communication may restrict pragmatic development, these difficulties can be addressed through carefully planned interactive lessons and the integration of pragmatic objectives into regular language instruction. Even simple classroom exchanges can become opportunities for learners to develop communicative awareness when teachers explicitly connect language forms with their social functions. Ultimately, developing pragmatic competence should be regarded as an integral part of EFL education. Learners who understand not only what English expressions mean but also when, why, and how to use them are better prepared to participate in real-life communication. By making classroom interaction purposeful, inclusive, and context-sensitive, teachers can help learners become more confident, competent, and culturally aware users of English.

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