

# TEACHING PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF USING SPEECH ACTS

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**Abstract:** This article explores teaching pragmatic competence in the context of using speech acts "Request" and "Advice". Considering the significance of context for language understanding and use, the author proposes an approach based on the analysis of authentic video materials for situational learning. The article presents the methodology and research findings, emphasizing the importance of integrating pragmatic skills into language instruction using realistic situations from the real world.

**Key words:** linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, speech act, context, authentic video material, situational learning.

## Introduction

In the realm of language acquisition and proficiency, understanding the intricate interplay between linguistic competence and pragmatic competence is paramount. This article delves into the nuanced relationship between these two competencies, particularly within the framework of speech acts such as "Request" and "Advice". Recognizing the pivotal role of context in language comprehension and utilization, we advocate for an innovative approach centered on the analysis of authentic video materials to facilitate situational learning.

## Literature Review

The term "Communicative Competence" has become widely used in the scientific community, but there has been no precise and universally accepted definition characterizing the essence of communicative competence. Nevertheless, a common characteristic can be traced with the key concept of a person's ability to perceive and reproduce speech in a specific environment and in a specific communicative situation.

For example, N.I. Gez provides the following definition: "Communicative competence is the ability of a person to understand and produce foreign language statements in various socially determined situations, taking into account linguistic and social rules adhered to by language speakers" [3,34].

L.T. Akhmedova defines communicative competence as the ability to communicate. "Communicative competence is the ability of a person to communicate in one, several, or all types of speech activity, which represents a quality of speech acquired in the process of natural communication or specially organized learning. A learner possesses communicative competence if, under conditions of direct or mediated contact, they successfully solve communicative tasks of mutual understanding and interaction with speakers of the studied language in accordance with the norms and traditions of the studied language" [2].

However, linguistic competence is still perceived by teachers and students today as the primary and significant goal in the process of learning a foreign language. Linguistic forms make it possible to use language in speech, but this is insufficient for successful communicative acts. It is not uncommon for two interlocutors to encounter an unsuccessful speech act. From a linguistic point of view, the sentences were constructed correctly, and the choice of words

corresponds to the speech topic, but the meaning and intention were unclear, leading to the termination of the dialogue.

Successful speech activity requires considering a range of factors, in which pragmatic competence plays a significant role. D. Crystal regards pragmatics as "the science that studies language from the speaker's point of view, their choice of linguistic means, the difficulties they encounter in the communication process, and the subsequent impact of this choice on other participants in the communication process" [6, 55]. Furthermore, pragmatic competence considers the ability to use linguistic competence, taking into account the speaker's social role, situation, intention, and culture. "It is needless to prove that the national specificity of language and culture, national mentality, cannot but influence the nature of the chosen means and the texts produced" [8, 7].

Pragmatic competence guides the correct choice of language depending on the situation and introduces various effects of utterances on participants during conversation. Therefore, in the process of teaching English, teachers should pay attention not only to the meaning but also to whether a particular expression (message) is appropriate in a specific social circle and in the correct context.

### **Research Methodology**

E. Bates and B. MacWhinney, in their research, focused on identifying the factor influencing foreign language acquisition. According to their study, they proposed the idea of dividing the language learning process into two stages: internal (linguistic competence) and external (ability to use language units based on context and intention). [1] It is rightfully noted that effective language application should not only entail the correct usage of grammatical structures but also appropriate usage should not be sidelined. In our view, the "external stage" can confidently be attributed to pragmatic competence since language is taught not just to know it with all its rules but to communicate with it.

For D. Hymes, the ability to speak fluently implies not only knowledge of the language's grammatical rules but also understanding what to say, to whom, how, and under what circumstances. Accordingly, education has taken a new direction, considering not only linguistic importance but also social, cognitive, and cultural aspects [6].

Studying the ways of conveying and perceiving information, it would be appropriate to consider linguistic personality as the primary factor in studying communication issues. An important feature in education is considered the role of personality with all its individual characteristics, which is crucial to consider. M.I. Guzikova believes that communication, including intercultural, is primarily interpersonal interaction. Personality is a relatively stable system of individual behavior, primarily based on involvement in a social context [4,35].

It should be noted that pragmatic competence examines not only the speaker's intentions from the context but also how the interlocutor perceives and draws conclusions. On the one hand, the addresser "carries in their speech motives, goals, expresses certain intentions, emotions, evaluations, attitudes...". At the same time, "sets of typical speech acts, speech moves, speech techniques, tactics, strategies, the nature of the implementation of communication postulates, the ability to make one's act expedient, coordinate one's speech actions with the speech actions of such or another pragmalinguistic type" are considered [6,57]. On the other hand, the addressee with their interpretation and attitude towards what is said.

Improving pragmatic competence is one of the most important tasks in the process of teaching a foreign language. Thanks to this, there is an opportunity to use a foreign language in various

communicative contexts, as well as to choose adequate language means. Accordingly, teaching pragmatic competency provides a significant advantage in successful speech acts.

## Analysis and Results

As an example, let's consider and analyze what students should pay attention to when expressing "Requests" and "Advice" in English. "In the situation of a Request, it is also advisable for Russian-speaking communicants to follow certain rules to construct statements in accordance with the peculiarities of English communication style.

1. In English communication, a request is a more "dangerous" speech act than in Russian, and when making a request, one should maintain distance and be explicitly polite.
2. It is not advisable to express your request directly, i.e., using the imperative, even if your request is elementary.
3. It is important to remember that the English word "please" is not sufficient to soften the request.
4. Avoid using means of strengthening the request (like Russian expressions "I'm begging you very much", "Please", or "Would you be so kind as to do it").
5. When expressing a request in the form of a question, keep in mind that questioning statements "Could you do it?" / "Would you do it?" are neutral in English communication, i.e., no more polite than the Russian model "Do (you) it, please."
6. A speaker-oriented question is always more polite than a listener-oriented question, so it is preferable to use phrases like "Could I have your telephone number, please?" / "Could I get my photos back?" instead of "Could you give me your telephone number?" / "Could you return my photos?".
7. When wishing to make a more polite request, indirect expressions (indirect questions, elaborate constructions) are used, and doubt about the possibility and willingness of the recipient to fulfill your request is expressed: "Do you think you could possibly help me with this?" / "I am wondering if you could possibly help me with this" / "I'm terribly sorry to bother you but I was thinking maybe you wouldn't mind helping me with this," etc.
8. The more indirectly and verbosely you express your request, the more polite it sounds; however, the choice of phrase is determined by its appropriateness in the specific communicative situation [7].

To achieve an effective result during teaching speech acts in English, it is necessary to use tasks of an authentic nature, such as authentic video material. "Acquiring communicative competence without being in an authentic environment of the target language is not an easy task. This defines one of the main goals of the modern teacher, which is to create conditions that allow simulating a situation of real communication. It is precisely videos that help us to come closest to achieving this goal" [5,78].

The use of authentic video material contributes to creating a favorable atmosphere in the classroom. This will serve as a vivid example not only for linguistic competence but primarily as a tangible example in teaching pragmatic competence. "By videos, we mean various types of television production (news programs, interviews, entertainment shows, advertisements, fictional/documentary films, cartoons, etc.), which can be transferred to any medium and used later as didactic material" [5,80]

After demonstrating video material, it is necessary to apply new knowledge in practice. For this, technologies such as role-playing, discussion, situational learning, or problem-based

learning can be used. In our view, they will be very effective and productive, and most importantly, motivate students to master the language. For example, situational learning gives a significant advantage in developing pragmatic competence. In such learning, students have the opportunity to recognize ways of using language norms in a particular social context, paying detailed attention to a specific situation. It becomes possible to develop not only language skills but also to practice language considering its appropriate use in a specific social context.

### Conclusion

The practical application of pragmatic competence in classes is primarily aimed at improving foreign language communicative competence, which, in turn, focuses on the ability to navigate in intercultural and interlingual environments. By investigating the utilization of speech acts "Request" and "Advice" within various contextual settings, we have underscored the importance of considering authentic video materials for effective situational learning. The methodology employed in this research has provided valuable insights into the integration of pragmatic skills into language instruction, emphasizing the relevance of real-world situations for fostering language proficiency. Moving forward, further exploration and implementation of such approaches are essential for maximizing language learners' abilities to navigate diverse communicative contexts with fluency and efficacy.

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