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“The Effects of Pragmatic Instruction on EFL Learners’ Pragmatic Competence”

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Resumen

La competencia pragmática se considera uno de los elementos más importantes al aprender un nuevo idioma. En los últimos años, investigadores de todo el mundo han puesto su atención en cómo el lenguaje se usa en contexto. Un hablante competente de cualquier idioma no solo posee un conocimiento amplio de la gramática, sintaxis y vocabulario, sino que también entiende cómo usarlo según el contexto. Por esta razón, es imperativo que los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera reciban instrucción pragmática en el aula, dada la limitada exposición al nuevo idioma que los estudiantes tienen en su entorno. En esta síntesis de investigación, un extenso estudio bibliográfico de los métodos y técnicas más utilizados para enseñar pragmática se llevó a cabo con el fin de analizar los efectos de la instrucción pragmática en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera. Los hallazgos de esta síntesis indican que la instrucción pragmática siempre es beneficiosa para el desarrollo de esta competencia. Sin embargo, cabe resaltar que la mayoría de los estudios apuntan a la instrucción pragmática explícita por sobre la implícita como una herramienta eficaz para el desarrollo de esta competencia. Otro hallazgo fue que el uso de materiales auténticos es esencial para la enseñanza de pragmática. Además, el uso de la tecnología, el enfoque basado en tareas y el enfoque de concientización demostraron ser metodologías eficaces para la instrucción pragmática.

Palabras clave: Pragmática. Instrucción implícita. Instrucción explícita. Metodologías para enseñar pragmática. Materiales auténticos.



Abstract

Pragmatic competence is considered one of the most important elements in language learning. In recent years, researchers around the world have placed their attention on how language is used in context. A competent speaker of any language not only knows grammar, syntax, and an extensive vocabulary, but also understands how to use it according to the context. For this reason, it is imperative for EFL learners to receive pragmatic instruction in the classroom, given the limited exposure to the target language EFL learners have in their environment. In this research synthesis, an extensive bibliographical study of the most used methods and techniques to teach pragmatics was carried out in order to analyze the effects of pragmatic instruction in EFL learners. The findings of this study indicate that pragmatic instruction is always beneficial for the EFL learner's development of pragmatic competence. However, it should be noted that most studies point to explicit pragmatic instruction over implicit instruction as an effective tool for the development of this competence. Another finding was that the use of authentic materials is essential for teaching pragmatics. In addition, the use of technology, the task-based approach, and the consciousness-raising approach have proven to be effective methodologies for pragmatic instruction.

Keywords: Pragmatics. Explicit instruction. Implicit instruction. Methods to teach pragmatics. Authentic materials.



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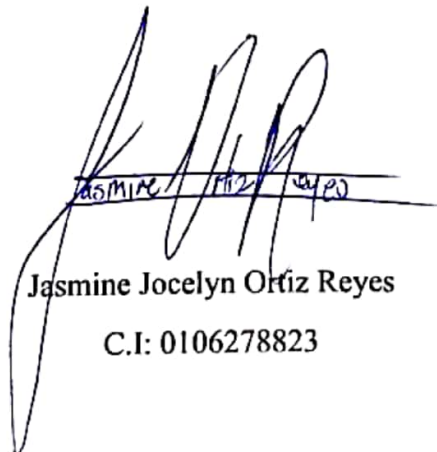


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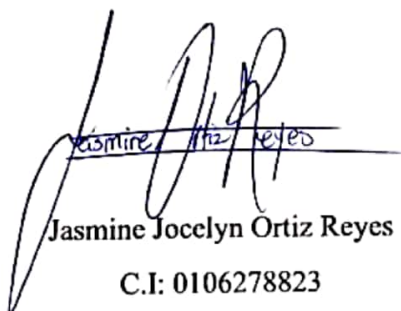
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Javier Sidel



Dedication

First, I want to dedicate this achievement to God that has always protected and blessed me and my family. I also want to dedicate this to my beloved family, that never let me down. I especially dedicate this achievement to my little son, Santiago Sidel, for giving me the strength and confidence I needed to give my best. I also dedicate this to my loving husband that always keeps motivating me and making me feel that I can achieve any objective I want. I also want to dedicate this attainment to my mom and sister that helped me taking care of my little son while I was studying, without you, finishing my major would have been impossible. I would also want to dedicate this project to my father and stepmother for supporting me through this time. I will always be in debt to all of you for making my life wonderful.

Jasmine Ortiz

The culmination of this work would not have been possible without the blessing of God and the help and support of my family, as well as my teachers, who were always there to help me overcome my limitations. This achievement is dedicated to all of them, but specially to our son, Santiago, who means the world to us. To you, Santiago, our greatest achievement.

Javier Sidel



Introduction

Pragmatics is one of the most important aspects of any language that, unfortunately, has not been given enough importance in the teaching-learning process of a foreign language. Possessing a great amount of knowledge in grammar, syntax, and vocabulary is not enough to be a proficient user of a language. Therefore, developing pragmatic competence is essential to be able to use the language efficiently and effectively. For this reason, it is necessary to point out that EFL contexts face a great challenge in developing pragmatic competence since learners have limited input and exposure to the target language in their environments, making it difficult for them to understand how language is used in real-life situations. Hence, this research synthesis seeks to emphasize the importance of pragmatic instruction and provide information for teachers on how to do so.

This research synthesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter provides a description of this research synthesis, including the background, statement of the problem, rationale, research questions, and objectives. The second chapter encompasses the theoretical framework that provides concepts and definitions to help readers understand the terms used in this research. The third chapter entails the review of the studies used to conduct this research synthesis. The fourth chapter explains the methodology used to carry out this study as well as the criteria that was used to select the primary sources analyzed in this paper. The fifth chapter includes the results that were gathered from the primary sources. The sixth chapter entails a deep analysis of the results with the purpose of answering the research questions and fulfilling the objectives set at the beginning of this study. Finally, the seventh chapter encompasses the conclusions and recommendations, as well as some limitations found during the process of conducting this project.



CHAPTER I

1. Description of the research

1.1. Background

In recent years, the field of linguistics has substantially benefited from the contribution that researchers have done with a main focus on the actual use of the language in real-life situations, that is, pragmatics (Vasquez & Sharpless, 2009). One important contribution that pragmatics has made to the field of linguistics is the Speech Act theory, introduced by J. L. Austin in 1976 and further developed by J. R. Searle. This theory illustrates the elements that intervene in the speaker's intention, not only to present information but also to persuade the listener (Vasquez & Sharpless, 2009). Some examples of speech acts are apologizing, requesting, and complaining, which are often found in everyday conversations.

The development of pragmatic awareness in EFL learners is another feature of language that has been explored with utmost importance (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005). For this, linguists have developed different approaches and strategies to help teachers raise their students' pragmatic awareness and strengthen their communicative competence inside and outside the classroom (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005).

Unfortunately, the learning of a foreign language has traditionally focused on the teaching and learning of grammar rules to allow learners to produce complete and coherent sentences both in written and oral communication (Soler & Flor, 2008). However, according to Soler (2005), in EFL contexts, the lack of authentic language input on pragmatic issues makes the development of pragmatic competence difficult to achieve. While it is true that the learning of grammar is



essential for attaining an adequate level of competence in the target language, it is evident that knowing all the rules of grammar and syntax does not make a person fully communicative competent (Schmidt, 1983). To demonstrate this, Cahuana (2015) states that language learners must possess and follow the culture's specific rules of appropriateness for communication in order to avoid misinterpretation and miscommunication. Consequently, it is imperative to develop the learner's pragmatic awareness since, as Martínez & Fernández claim (2008), "pragmatics deals with the mismatch between what is said and what is really meant" (p. 31).

According to Xiao-Le (2011), pragmatic competence is essential for the development of communicative competence. Therefore, it is necessary that teachers expose learners to a multiple number of opportunities, using a wide variety of instructional techniques, strategies, and exercises in order to make learners develop their awareness of all the features of pragmatics. These strategies can help learners understand how words are arranged to convey meaning and to realize that the messages they provide are not limited to the words they use, but evidence the way in which they express a message (Xiao-Le, 2011). However effective these strategies may be, EFL learners find the development of pragmatic awareness difficult (Soler, 2005). Thus, teachers must carry out explicit pragmatic instruction in order to raise their students' pragmatic awareness and to help them attain full communicative competence (Xiao-Le, 2011).

1.2. Statement of the problem

The limited exposure to the target language in EFL contexts makes the development of pragmatic competence difficult to achieve (Herraiz-Martinez, 2018). Consequently, students are not communicative competent even when they have approved the 12 years of English instruction at school (Latha & Rajan, 2012). Unfortunately, schools give more importance to vocabulary



and grammar, which are, important, but disregard the fact that the development of pragmatic competence and awareness is key to attain full communicative competence (Schmidt, 1983).

According to Schauer (2006), “an insufficient recognition of pragmatic issues in foreign language curricula results in a marked linguistic disadvantage on the part of the EFL students whose L2 input is primarily restricted to what the curriculum offers” (p. 312). According to the Ecuadorian curriculum (2016), EFL learners at school have from 3 to 5 hours of English instruction per week. Under those circumstances, the absence of explicit teaching of pragmatic awareness is likely a consequence of the limitations in time and resources teachers have in the classroom (Cahuana, 2015). Additionally, the English textbooks used by teachers and students at school cannot be considered an authentic or profitable material to teach pragmatics because, according to O’Keeffe, Clancy and Adolphs (2019), “they often contain insufficient specific input or insufficient interpretation of language use” (p. 139).

In consequence, there is still a lack of attention in the learning of pragmatics in EFL contexts (Cahuana, 2015). As a result, EFL learners have trouble maintaining simple conversations with an English native speaker (Heras, 2014).

1.3. Rationale

It is commonly known that English is considered the world’s first language. As a result of the technological development in the last 50 years, the world has become an interconnected global society where people are able to communicate regardless of their places of origin or any distance that separates them. In addition, English is also the official language of science, international trade, and affairs (Heras, 2014). Therefore, at the present time, learning English is



essential for any individual whose aim is to be connected to the globalized world. Hence, EFL learners must develop pragmatic competence in order to communicate effectively with native speakers of the target language, since pragmatic competence is one of the key components of communicative competence (Xiao-Le, 2011).

In an EFL context, it is imperative to emphasize the importance of pragmatic competence because of the learner's limited input on the language outside the classroom (Cahuana, 2015). According to Xiao-Le (2011), explicit instruction benefits learners in making them notice pragmatic aspects of the target language as well as raising learners' pragmatic awareness. Thus, explicit instruction seems to be a better alternative to develop pragmatic competence because explicit instruction appears to be more effective than implicit instruction in facilitating the learning of pragmatic knowledge (Xiao-Le, 2011).

Fortunately, nowadays, researchers have considered the importance of the instruction of pragmatics as a fundamental aspect of language learning. (Heras, 2014; Cahuana, 2015; Herraiz-Martinez, 2018). Thus, some researchers have contributed with certain methodologies to teach pragmatics in an EFL context (Heras, 2014; Herraiz-Martinez, 2018). Indeed, these methodologies can help teachers develop activities that support learners' development of pragmatic competence.

Thence, this research synthesis is intended to help teachers understand the problems many EFL students experience to develop pragmatic awareness and competence when they learn English as a foreign language. Additionally, another reason to carry out this study is to illustrate the importance of learning pragmatics when learners learn a new foreign language, as well as finding the causes of the lack of pragmatic competence in EFL students.



1.4. Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this research synthesis.

1. How do implicit and explicit instruction contribute to the development of pragmatic awareness in an EFL context?
2. Why is using authentic materials important for teaching pragmatics?
3. What are the most efficient techniques teachers use to teach pragmatics in an EFL context?

1.5. Objectives

1.5.1 General Objective

To analyze the importance of pragmatic instruction on the development of learners' pragmatic competence.

1.5.2 Specific Objectives

- To analyze how pragmatic instruction contributes to the development of EFL learners' pragmatic awareness.
- To analyze the importance of using authentic materials to raise EFL learners' pragmatic awareness.
- To find out the most common instructional techniques to develop EFL learners' pragmatic competence.



CHAPTER II

2. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, key concepts about pragmatic instruction, which were taken from academic sources, are provided. The purpose of this chapter is to facilitate readers' comprehension of the topics discussed and analyzed later. For this research synthesis, the following definitions and concepts were included: definition of pragmatics, the importance of pragmatics, pragmatic awareness, pragmatic competence, pragmatic failure, pragmatic instruction, explicit pragmatic instruction, implicit pragmatic instruction, the use of traditional English textbooks vs the use of authentic materials, methodologies and techniques to teach pragmatics, the task-based approach, technology as a tool for pragmatic instruction, and the consciousness-raising approach.

2.1. Definition of pragmatics

Tello (2016) stated that pragmatics is immersed in the field of linguistics. Moreover, according to Heras (2014), "pragmatics concerns how humans use language and how this usage affects all the other people who are part of a given conversation" (p.12).

Similarly, Deda (2013) claimed that "the study of pragmatics explores the ability of language users to match utterances with contexts in which they are appropriate" (p.67). She also stated that pragmatics has to do with culture and communication and that it is necessary to have a cultural understanding of the target language in order to develop pragmatic competence and awareness.



2.1.1 The importance of pragmatics

After extensive research, it has been found that pragmatic awareness must be developed to achieve an adequate level of communicative competence (Deda, 2013; Heras, 2014; Wijayanto, 2013; Xiao-Le, 2011). According to Xiao-Le (2011), in order to communicate efficiently with native speakers of the target language, learners must develop pragmatic competence, since it is one of the key components for the development of communicative competence. Similarly, Deda (2013) has referred to the importance of pragmatic competence in EFL and ESL learners so they can communicate with coherence and accuracy and develop the ability to react in different situations by displaying a proper level of functional competence. Likewise, Wijayanto (2013) has claimed that pragmatic competence is crucial to succeed in interpersonal and cross-cultural communication since it permits interlocutors to convey and comprehend each other's communicative intentions. Moreover, Heras (2014) has stated that "If a learner wants to be competent in any language, he or she has to learn the pragmatics of that language." (p. 9)

2.1.2 Pragmatic awareness

According to Nikula (2002), the term pragmatic awareness is difficult to define since it is often used but rarely defined by researchers. However, Nikula has provided a clear definition of pragmatic awareness: "the term pragmatic awareness is understood as a reference to features of language and interaction with which language users orient to aspects of language use that pertain to its social and interpersonal functioning" (p.450).

Similarly, Ishihara (2007) has stated that pragmatic awareness comprises the capacity that a proficient speaker of a language possesses to use efficiently and appropriately a vast repertoire of



linguistic strategies for a certain speech act set according to the context in which communication occurs.

2.1.3 Pragmatic competence

The development of pragmatic competence is essential for cross-cultural and interpersonal communication since it provides the learner with the tools required for the exchange of information among individuals whose sociocultural backgrounds differ (Wijayanto, 2013). Furthermore, Deda (2013) has stated that pragmatic competence is the capacity that EFL learners develop to comprehend, construct and convey meaning that is appropriate to the sociocultural context in which the communication act occurs. Therefore, EFL learners must develop pragmatic competence in order to communicate effectively with native speakers of the target language, since, pragmatic competence is one of the key components of communicative competence (Xiao-Le, 2011).

Additionally, Thomas (1983) has asserted that there are two main components of pragmatic competence, 1) pragmalinguistics, which concerns linguistic knowledge to effectively construct a communicative language function; and 2) sociopragmatics, which refers to, knowledge on how to communicate considering the culture, norms and social conventions of the target language.

Moreover, according to Ishihara and Cohen (2014), pragmatic competence involves the four language skills; listening and reading, which are receptive skills and speaking and writing, which are productive skills. Considering receptive and productive skills, it can be stated that,

- As listeners, learners need to correctly interpret what is said and what is not, as well as the non-verbal features of communication, that is to say, posture,



face expressions, gestures and even silence, since they all are channels through which messages are conveyed.

- As readers, learners need to understand written messages and their implications such as sarcasm, humor, sexism, etc.
- As speakers, learners need to know what to say, what not to say, how to say it, and what can be communicated nonverbally. To do this, it is necessary to consider politeness, formality, directness.
- As writers, learners need to write their message considering, again, politeness, formality, directness. Learners must be aware that the aspects mentioned above would vary according to whom they are writing or speaking.

Unfortunately, the development of pragmatic competence is still underappreciated in EFL contexts until today (Cahuana, 2015). In consequence, according to Heras (2014), EFL learners present difficulties maintaining conversations with native and high proficient users of the language due to their lack of pragmatic awareness and communicative competence.

2.1.4 Pragmatic failure

Pragmatic failure is “the inability to understand ‘what is meant by what is said’” (Thomas, 1983). According to Sorour (2015), pragmatic awareness is important because without it, communication between a native speaker and a second or foreign language learner breakdowns and, therefore, pragmatic failure occurs. Thus, as Fernández Amaya (2008) has stated, pragmatic failure affects both language production and understanding. For instance, a non-native speaker can misinterpret what a native speaker is saying because of his own cultural norms.



Moreover, according to Thomas (1983), there are two types of pragmatic failure: 1) pragmalinguistic failure that is, “a linguistic problem, caused by differences in the linguistic encoding of pragmatic force” (p. 99); and 2) sociopragmatic failure that “stems from cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour” (p. 99).

Some researchers have agreed that committing pragmatic errors affects communication more than committing a grammatical error (Wannaruk, 2008; Schauer, 2006). For instance, Wannaruk (2008) has stated that sociopragmatic failure is more serious than linguistic failure since a pragmatic error can make a person be seen as rude, impolite or disrespectful. Likewise, according to Schauer (2006), most learners as well as English native speakers consider pragmatic failure to be more serious than grammatical errors.

2.2. Pragmatic Instruction

Researchers have recognized that grammar is not the only aspect of the language that teachers should cover; pragmatics should also be included in the teaching-learning process of English as a Foreign Language (Herraiz-Martinez, 2018; Smith, 2009; Sorour, 2015; Xiao-Le, 2011). According to Sorour (2015), being proficient in a language does not only require mastering grammatical rules, but also the pragmatic features of the language. If teachers neglect the pragmatic aspect of the language, and they only focus on grammar, learners will not attain an adequate level of proficiency in their target language because they will not possess the pragmatic competence that they need to engage in real-life communication in the target language. Similarly, Xiao-Le (2011) has stated that pragmatics should be simultaneously taught with grammar instead of delaying pragmatic instruction until a certain point in which learners form inaccurate depictions of the actual language in use. Moreover, Herraiz-Martinez (2018) has mentioned that it is



important for EFL students to learn not only grammar and vocabulary but also pragmatic abilities in order to be communicative competent. Finally, Smith (2009) has explained that it is easier for teachers to teach grammar and vocabulary; in consequence, they tend to neglect the teaching of the pragmatic aspect of the language.

According to Tello (2006), pragmatic instruction must follow three fundamental aspects: 1) expose learners to enough input in the target language; 2) raise learners' pragmatic awareness through proper instruction; and 3) provide students authentic materials to learn the pragmatic aspect of the target language.

2.2.1 Explicit Pragmatic Instruction

According to Rezvani, Eslami-Rasekh and Vahid Dastjerdi (2014), in explicit instruction, teachers have to provide metapragmatic information (input in pragmatic aspects of the target language) through description, explanation, and discussion. Similarly, Ishihara and Cohen (2014) have stated that explicit instruction requires learners' conscious attention to pragmatic information. Furthermore, Xiao-Le (2011) has explained that explicit instruction involves two types of activities that help students notice the most important features of the pragmatic aspect of the target language: 1) activities which aim is to raise learners' pragmatic awareness; and 2) activities that offer opportunities for communication in the classroom. Moreover, Xiao-Le also stated that the main benefit of explicit pragmatic instruction is that it helps students notice the different aspects of pragmatics, and thus, raise their pragmatic awareness in the target language.

2.2.2 Implicit Pragmatic Instruction

According to Rezvani, Eslami-Rasekh and Vahid Dastjerdi (2014), implicit instruction does not involve metapragmatic explanations, but a provision of input without explanations of any kind.



Likewise, Ishihara and Cohen (2014) have claimed that implicit instruction only requires learners to exclusively have pragmatic input without being consciously aware of it.

2.3. The use of traditional English textbooks vs the use of authentic materials

English textbooks used by teachers and students at school cannot be considered an authentic or profitable material to teach pragmatics because “they often contain insufficient specific input or insufficient interpretation of language use” (O’Keeffe, Clancy & Adolphs, 2019, p. 139). According to Gilmore (2011), English textbooks have traditionally centered on lexico-grammatical features of the target language. Moreover, O’Keeffe et al., (2019) have stated that textbooks mostly rely on invented language examples which cannot be considered authentic language. Therefore, textbooks are not a reliable source to provide learners pragmatic input in the classroom (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001)

Moreover, according to Bajrami and Ismaili (2016), authentic materials provide learners original and natural input since they are constructed by native speakers. Authentic materials include movies, TV shows, songs, podcasts, etc. Moreover, they have also claimed that when teachers incorporate these kinds of authentic materials in the classroom, students can easily gain cultural knowledge and understand the pragmatics of the target language.

Similarly, according to Cheng (2016), authentic materials provide learners exposure to natural pragmatic examples in the target language, as well as language in context to analyze pragmatic use. Moreover, Moradkhan and Jalayer (2010), after analyzing the findings of their empirical research, have suggested that teachers should incorporate authentic materials, videotaped materials, specifically, in the class since these materials engage students in different activities that raise their pragmatic awareness.



2.4. Methodologies and techniques to teach pragmatics

2.4.1 Task-based approach

According to Tajeddin, Keshavarz, and Zand-Moghadam (2012), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) helps learners develop their communicative skills by applying meaning-focused tasks. Furthermore, they have claimed that the use of tasks helps teachers to provide pragmatic input to their students since these kinds of tasks contain meaningful input for learners to notice the pragmatic features of the target language.

Likewise, Herraiz-Martinez (2018) has stated that one of the TBLT aims is to develop learners' pragmatic awareness through tasks. She has also claimed that TBLT encourages learners to communicate more since tasks enhance the negotiation of meaning through interaction among learners.

Similarly, De Aquino (2011) has mentioned that the task-based approach facilitates communication in the classroom. Moreover, she has also stated that the task-based approach provides learners the opportunity to negotiate meaning while they interact among themselves to complete the task. Additionally, she has claimed that there are some similarities between the task-based approach and pragmatics: 1) they focus more on meaning, and not only on the form; 2) the emphasis is on the production of the language, not on grammar; and 3) authentic materials are used to show language in context.

2.4.2 Technology as a tool for pragmatic instruction

According to Khaerudin and AppLing (2012), the aim of incorporating technology is to provide authentic materials to learners; these materials are fundamental to develop proficiency in



the target language. Moreover, they have stated that the inclusion of technology in classrooms contributes to learners' instruction by providing them access to authentic materials which is key for developing pragmatic awareness. Additionally, they have mentioned that using technology includes a variety of tools for learning such as chatrooms, emails, blogs, wikis, social networking, etc. Finally, they have stated that EFL classrooms can significantly benefit from technology since, in EFL contexts, pragmatic input is limited.

Moreover, González-Lloret (2019) has stated that technology plays an important role for the development of both communicative and pragmatic competence. She has also claimed that teachers must identify which of the tools technology offers would help in the process of pragmatic learning and teaching. Additionally, she has provided criteria to choose the kind of technology that would help to teach and learn pragmatics: 1) interactional spaces must be offered, so that learners can be exposed to different material and have interaction with speakers of the target language; 2) provide authentic pragmatic input from different interlocutors and contexts; 3) facilitate feedback; 4) allow students to utilize their language skills. Furthermore, she has stated that language and pragmatics can be effectively integrated by combining technology with authentic materials and tasks.

2.4.3 Consciousness-raising approach

Narita (2009) has stated that Pragmatic Consciousness-Raising is an inductive approach that helps learners develop pragmatic awareness by providing them knowledge about how to use the target language appropriately in a given context.

Noonkong, Damnet and Charttrakul (2017) have stated that the consciousness-raising approach involves explicit pragmatic instruction and the Noticing Hypothesis. The hypothesis

mentioned before explains “that input does not become intake for language learning unless it is noticed, that is, consciously registered” (Schmidt, 1990, 2001, as cited in Schmidt, 2012, para.1).

According to Noonkong, et al., (2017), Pragmatic Consciousness-Raising undergoes the following process:

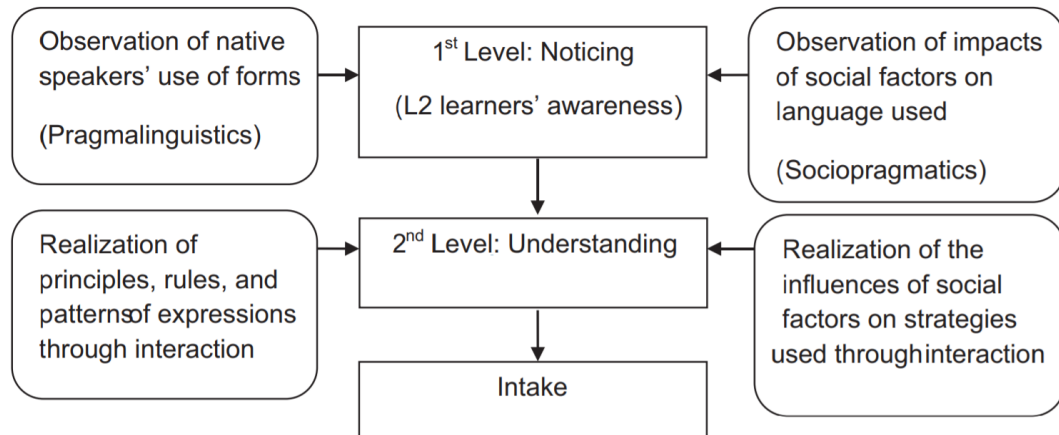


Figure 1: Pragmatic Consciousness-Raising Model. (Taken from Schmidt, 2010; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010, and Leech, 1983). Reprinted from “Enhancing Thai Engineering Students' Complaints and Apologies through Pragmatic Consciousness-Raising Approach (PCR)” by Noonkong, Damnet, & Chartrakul, 2017.

According to Noonkong, et al., (2017), in the first level, noticing, learners are exposed to how native speakers (NS) use the language to analyze the forms and grammar used by NS, and also the influence that social and contextual factors have on the way NS use the language. Then, in the second level, understanding, learners develop activities that help them become aware of the pragmalinguistics of the language (forms and functions), and the sociopragmatics of the language (social factors). Finally, learners will be able to use what they have learned as intake for real language use (Schmidt, 1990; 1993, as cited in Noonkong, et. al, 2017).

Derakhshan and Eslami (2015) have claimed that language teachers need to consider the lack of authentic input of textbooks, and therefore, teachers should try to compensate this by



immersing students in contextualized language using consciousness-raising tasks. According to Ishihara (2007), awareness-raising activities help as guided practice for students to observe, analyze and learn some pragmatic features of the target language.



CHAPTER III

3. Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of existing literature on how pragmatic instruction is carried out. These studies provide important findings related to diverse methods and tools that can be used to teach pragmatics in EFL contexts. This literature review has been classified as follows: pragmatic instruction in an EFL context, the use of authentic materials to raise pragmatic awareness and methods and techniques to teach pragmatics in EFL contexts. This classification aligns with the research questions presented in Chapter 1.

3.1. Pragmatic Instruction in an EFL Context

The development of pragmatic competence is hard to achieve in EFL contexts since EFL learners do not have much input on the language outside the classroom. According to Soler (2005), learners, in foreign language contexts, whose aim is to develop pragmatic competence in the target language, have a more difficult task since there is a lack of naturally occurring input on pragmatic issues. Likewise, Cahuana (2015), states that in EFL contexts, the development of pragmatic competence faces many limitations such as little access to authentic sources and the difficulty EFL learners have to find opportunities where they can immerse themselves in the culture of the target language.

Therefore, the instruction of pragmatics should be highlighted in EFL contexts. According to Xiao-Le (2011), pragmatic competence is a fundamental component of communicative competence, and it cannot be learned without instruction. Similarly, Herraiz-Marinez (2018)



stated that pragmatics is a fundamental aspect of the language that must be taught since it provides learners the opportunity to be confident in every situation they may face in the target language.

As a result, many linguists have conducted research to emphasize the importance of instruction and which kind of instruction works better in EFL contexts. These researchers have concluded that explicit instruction shows better results in the development of pragmatic competence and awareness by EFL learners (Xiao-Le, 2011; Eslami-Rasekh, Eslami-Rasekh & Fatahi, 2004; Soler, 2005; Salemi, Rabiee & Ketabi, 2012).

First, Eslami-Rasekh et al. (2004) conducted a study about the effects of explicit instruction on speech act awareness. Their participants were 60 EFL learners divided into two groups, the control group and the treatment group. Both groups were exposed to the same material. However, the control group did not receive any explicit metapragmatic instruction, which refers to the teaching of pragmatics through the use of instructional activities such as teacher-fronted discussion, small-group discussions, role-plays, focused tasks, among others. A pretest and a posttest were used to measure the development of EFL learners' pragmatic awareness. In this study, the results demonstrated that explicit metapragmatic instruction significantly raised EFL learners' pragmatic awareness since it allowed them to engage in contextualized and productive class activities which is similar to what Soler (2005) found in her study which aimed to examine the effects of explicit and implicit instruction in an EFL context. Her participants were 132 EFL students divided into three groups (explicit, implicit, and control). The explicit group received explicit awareness-raising tasks and metapragmatic feedback, while the implicit group received implicit awareness-raising tasks. On the other hand, the control group did not receive any kind of instruction. However, the three groups were exposed to the same material, excerpts taken from



episodes from the series *Stargate*. Moreover, a pretest and a posttest were used to measure and compare the effects of instruction in EFL students before and after the intervention. The results presented in this study indicated that after the interventions all the participants showed improvement in their pragmatic competence. Nevertheless, EFL learners benefited more from explicit instruction.

Similarly, Xiao-Le (2011) developed a study whose objective was to determine whether implicit or explicit instruction would help EFL students develop pragmatic competence. His participants were 40 EFL learners; they were divided into two groups, the implicit group and the explicit group. Both groups were exposed to the same material, videos and scripts. However, the implicit group did not receive any pragmatic awareness-raising activities such as speech act strategies exercises, role-plays, or group discussions. A pre-test and a post-test were applied to measure the development of learners' pragmatic competence before and after the instruction. Xiao-Le concluded that explicit instruction is more efficient than implicit instruction in the development of pragmatic competence in EFL contexts.

In the same way, Salemi, Rabiee and Ketabi, (2012) conducted a study that corroborated the results of the studies mentioned above. The aim of their study was to compare the effects of implicit instruction and explicit instruction and feedback on the development of pragmatic competence in EFL learners. Their participants were 100 EFL learners divided into five groups (four experimental groups and one control group). The first experimental group received explicit instruction and feedback. The second one received explicit instruction and implicit feedback. The third one received implicit instruction and explicit feedback. The fourth group received implicit instruction and feedback. On the other hand, the control group did not receive any instruction or



feedback. At the end of their intervention, they concluded that there were higher gains in pragmatic knowledge on explicit instruction and feedback over implicit instruction in EFL learners.

In conclusion, it can be said that pragmatic instruction is fundamental in EFL contexts because it allows learners to develop their sociopragmatic skills in the target language and attain a competent level of expertise in the language. Moreover, it is important to mention that explicit and implicit instruction have demonstrated to be effective tools for pragmatic instruction since learners developed their pragmatic competence after receiving either type of instruction. However, when a comparison between an explicit and an implicit group was made, the explicit group always outperformed the implicit one. For this reason, explicit pragmatic instruction appears to be a more fruitful alternative to teach pragmatics in the EFL context.

3.2. The Use of Authentic Materials to Raise Pragmatic Awareness

According to some scholars, the material provided to EFL learners plays an important role in the development of pragmatic competence that will later help EFL learners achieve communicative competence (Abbasian, Mahmoudi & Shahbazi, 2016, Castillo, Insuasty & Osorio, 2017, Gilmore, 2011).

First, Gilmore (2011), carried out a study whose aim was to determine the effects of the use of authentic material to raise pragmalinguistic and sociolinguistic competence and, therefore, improve learners' communicative competence. There were 62 EFL learners involved in this quasi-experimental research. The participants were divided into two groups (experimental and control group). The control group worked with traditional English materials, books like "Inside English",



and “Face to Face”. On the other hand, the experimental group worked with authentic materials such as TV comedies, reality shows, films, etc. Moreover, in order to gather information on the development of pragmatic competence, Discourse-Completion Task (DCTs), oral interviews, and role plays were used. The findings of this study indicated that EFL learners’ communicative competence improved by using authentic materials. Such resources supported students’ learning of linguistic features, in particular, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and pragmatic features, such as body language, context-appropriate vocabulary and speech acts.

Similarly, Castillo et al. (2017), conducted research with the objective to find out how the use of authentic materials helps learners improve their communicative competence. There were 23 participants in their study. The participants were divided into two groups (experimental and control group). The instruments used to gather information in this study were interviews, surveys, and a teacher’s diary. A pretest and a posttest were used to measure the progress students made before and after the intervention. They concluded that authentic materials do help learners improve their communicative competence since authentic materials provide learners a means to raise pragmatic awareness and competence.

Likewise, Abbasian, Mahmoudi and Shahbazi (2016) investigated about the effects of using authentic materials to develop EFL learners’ pragmatic competence. To carry out this study, 60 participants were involved. They were divided in two groups, the experimental group and the control group. The first group received authentic material-based online classes, while the control group was provided with traditional English textbooks. Both groups took a Discourse Completion Test to measure their pragmatic knowledge before and after the intervention. The results obtained



demonstrated that authentic materials did facilitate the teaching and learning of pragmatics since the experimental group outperformed the control group after the intervention.

Therefore, traditional textbooks are not enough to develop EFL learners' pragmatic competence. Instead, the use of authentic materials is essential since it is the way in which students can have contact with authentic samples of the target language. Due to the limitations EFL students face in order to have authentic input, the use of authentic materials is indispensable.

3.3. Methods and Techniques to Teach Pragmatics in EFL Contexts

The development of EFL learners' communicative competence is a great challenge to language educators around the world. In order to be a proficient user of the target language, a speaker must be able to use language appropriately according to the context in which communication occurs. In recent years, there have been several studies that have explored different methods and techniques used by EFL teachers whose aim is to develop their students' pragmatic awareness and to enhance their communicative competence (Takimoto 2009, Herraiz-Martinez, 2018, Kim & Taguchi, 2015, Farashaiyan, Tan & Subakir, 2014).

Takimoto (2009) evaluated three different input-based approaches for teaching the speech act of requesting. There were sixty participants; they were divided into four groups (three experimental groups and one control group). The first treatment group had structured input tasks including group discussion, speech act analysis, discourse completion tasks, role-plays and explicit information provided by the teacher as handouts with brief summaries of the targeted words or phrases and examples of target structures in English. The second group had problem-solving tasks that highlighted the words or phrases used to make a request in English. The third



group had structured input tasks without explicit information. On the other hand, the control group had reading comprehension tasks, but they were not exposed to the target structures of requests. This study implemented pretests, posttests and follow-up tests to measure students' progress. The results demonstrated that the experimental groups obtained better outcomes than the control group since the tasks and activities mentioned above helped students notice and understand the pragmatic features and strategies to perform the speech act of request. He concluded that input-based tasks, structures input and problem-solving, help students learn pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of the target structure, in this case, requests. The techniques used to teach learners how to apologize were collaborative and interactive tasks, computer-assisted activities, learning while playing, and voice recording while using an avatar. A pretest and a posttest were also implemented to measure the students' pragmatic gains after the intervention. The results showed that all participants incremented their knowledge on the speech act of apologizing, with the implementation of the task-based approach and technology in the English class. Takimoto concluded that the use of technology and the task-based approach both help learners improve their pragmatic competence.

Similarly, Kim and Taguchi (2015) analyzed the effect of task complexity in the learning of the speech act of request-making. The 73 participants who collaborated in this study were divided into three groups (complex, simple, and control). The simple and complex groups were asked to do two collaborative writing tasks. They had two class sessions in which the task-based approach was used to teach request expressions. Moreover, they took a pretest and two posttests to evaluate the participants' progress in terms of pragmatic competence. On the other hand, the control group was only asked to do a pretest and a posttest. The results showed that the simple and complex group had better outcomes than the control group. However, the complex group



surpassed the other two groups on the delayed posttest. The results of this study demonstrated that pragmatics can be effectively taught by using the task-based approach since learners do collaborative tasks that facilitate learners' interaction among themselves.

Furthermore, Farashaiyan, et al., (2014) carried out extensive research to investigate the teaching methods and techniques that 238 English teachers from private EFL institutions in Iran used for the instruction of interlanguage pragmatics in the classroom. The results demonstrated that the majority of teachers mostly used implicit instruction techniques with an inductive approach such as role-plays, pair-work or group work, and topics and situation analysis to teach interlanguage pragmatics. In addition to such techniques, they utilized explicit pragmatic instruction with a deductive approach to teach the pragmatic features of the language such as the explanation of politeness matters, language functions and pragmatic strategies for communication. On the contrary, the least used techniques included computer-mediated language learning, pictures of foreign cultures, and email exchanges. The results of this study revealed that there is no universal technique for the instruction of pragmatics in the classroom and that most of the teachers who participated in this study preferred implicit instruction approaches with role plays and pair or group work, being these the most recurrent techniques used by the participants.

It is evident that there is a great number of methodologies and techniques that professionals have at their disposal in order to raise their students' pragmatic awareness and, therefore, develop their communicative competence. However, it is important to stress that there is not a unique methodology that guarantees the expected results at the end of the instruction process. For this reason, EFL teachers must evaluate the effectiveness of each methodology or technique according to the necessities of their students.



CHAPTER IV

4. Methodology

In this study, a bibliographical research, that is, an extensive examination that gathers information from published materials (Allen, 2017), was carried out to analyze the effectiveness of implicit and explicit pragmatic instruction, the use of authentic materials, and the most commonly used methodologies to teach pragmatics. To carry out this research synthesis, Google Scholar was the main source used to find information on the topic. However, Academia, Research Gate, and ERIC were also considered. The keywords that were used to conduct this research synthesis included the following: (a) pragmatics, (b) explicit instruction, (c) implicit instruction, (d) methods to teach pragmatics, and (e) authentic materials.

4.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Several studies related to pragmatic instruction were gathered from various sources to determine if each study possessed valuable information related to the aim of the analysis. In order to select the sources to carry out this research, every study had to meet the criteria described below:

- a) The studies must be conducted in EFL contexts.
- b) The researchers in the studies must have applied at least one methodology to teach pragmatics.
- c) In the studies, pragmatic instruction must have been carried out implicitly, explicitly or both.
- d) The studies must have covered the use of authentic materials for the purpose of



teaching pragmatics.

- e) The studies must include participants.
- f) The majority of the articles used in this research synthesis have been published in the last 5 years, so that the information obtained from such sources can be beneficial for the understanding of the importance of pragmatic instruction on the development of ELF learners' pragmatic competence.

At the end, 31 studies met the required criteria.

CHAPTER V

5. Results

For the purpose of this synthesis, 31 studies were gathered from various academic and scientific research journals and classified according to the methodological approaches used in each study. In addition, the year of publication was given special attention while selecting the studies considered for this synthesis with the aim that most of the information compiled for the elaboration of this work be of relative recentness. Hence, 90% of all studies have been carried out during the last 10 years and more than 50% during the last 5 years. Thus, the information presented in this document will be relevant to the audience, especially in relation to further research on this topic.

5.1. Year of Publication

Table 1

Publication by Year

Year of Publication	No. of Publications	(%)
2004 – 2009	3	10%
2010 – 2014	10	32%
2015 – 2020	18	58%

Note. N= 31

Table 1 shows the years of publication of the studies analyzed in this work. It can be seen that 16 of the 31 studies considered for this synthesis have been conducted in the last 5 years, which demonstrates that more than half of the information gathered for this synthesis is recent and



relevant to this date. Similarly, 36% of all studies, that is to say, 12 studies included in this synthesis, have been conducted during the last 10 years.

Table 1 also indicates that the number of studies has increased substantially due to the relevance that the field of pragmatics has gained in recent years. Linguists around the world have noticed the importance of the socio-pragmatic aspects of the language for the development of communicative competence. For this reason, it has been imperative to admit that the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary does not make a person fully competent in the target language (Jan, 2015).

5.2. Analysis of the Types of Pragmatic Instruction

Table 2

The types of pragmatic instruction in an EFL context.

Studies	Explicit	Implicit
Eslami-Rasekh, Eslami-Rasekh, A & Fatahi, (2004)	X	
Soler (2005)	X	X
Takimoto (2009)	X	
Moradkhan & Jalayer (2010)	X	
Xiao-Le (2011)	X	X
Gilmore (2011)		X
Nguyen, Pham T. & Pham M. (2012)	X	X
Farahian, Rezaee, & Gholami, A. (2012)	X	
Bardovi-Harlig & Vellenga (2012)	X	
Salemi, Rabiee, & Ketabi (2012)	X	X
Rezvani, Eslami-Rasekh, & Vahid Dastjerdi (2014)	X	X
Rafieyan, Sharafi-Nejad & Lin (2014)	X	



Birjandi & Derakhshan (2014)	X	X
Bardovi-Harlig, Mossman, & Vellenga (2015)	X	
Chalak & Abbasi (2015)	X	X
Derakhshan & Eslami (2015)	X	X
Kim & Taguchi (2015)	X	
Abolfathiasl & Abdullah (2015)	X	
Rafieyan (2016)	X	X
Abbasian, Mahmoudi, & Shahbazi (2016)		X
Gharibeh, Mirzaee & Yaghoubi-Notash (2016)	X	
Abrams (2016)	X	
Bardovi-Harlig, Mossman & Su (2017)	X	X
Castillo, Insuasty, & Osorio (2017)	X	
Noonkong, Damnet, & Chartrakul (2017)	X	
Herraiz-Martinez (2018)	X	
Derakhshan & Arabmofrad (2018)	X	X
Lin & Wang (2020)	X	
Irshad & Bukhari (2020)	X	
Derakhshan & Shakki (2020)	X	X
Babayiğit (2020)	X	

Note. N=31

Table 2 displays the two types of pragmatic instruction, implicit and explicit. As displayed in the table above, the type that is mostly used in EFL contexts is explicit instruction, as 94% of the analyzed studies used this type of pragmatic instruction, while implicit instruction represented 45%. This is likely due to the fact that explicit instruction can help EFL learners overcome one of the most substantial problems they face: the limited input they have outside the classroom. Even though implicit instruction has also demonstrated to be effective to teach pragmatics, when a



comparison was made between the groups that received implicit or explicit instruction, the explicit group always outperformed the implicit one.

5.3. Analysis of the Use of Authentic Materials

Table 3

Development of Pragmatic Competence through the use of Authentic Materials in EFL Contexts
Note. N=31

Authentic Materials	Number of Studies	Development of Pragmatic Competence
Book series	2	✓
Videos	12	✓
Interviews	2	✓
Audios	4	✓
Films	7	✓
TV shows	9	✓
Magazines and newspaper	1	✓
Advertisements	1	✓
NS speech samples and dialogues	7	✓
Emails	1	✓
Short stories	1	✓
Did not mention	1	✓

In some studies, there was more than one type of authentic material involved.



Table 3 displays the use of authentic materials that were included in each study. As mentioned above, certain studies have utilized more than one type of materials. In all of them, it has been stated that the very first step that teachers should take to teach pragmatics is to expose learners to authentic samples of the target language, so that they can learn the pragmatic and cultural aspects of the language. The use of authentic materials is indispensable for teaching pragmatics and it has been evidenced that, with it, students can develop their pragmatic competence regardless of the type of instruction they receive.

5.4. Analysis of the effectiveness of approaches and techniques to teach pragmatics in an EFL context.

Table 4

Effectiveness of approaches and techniques to teach pragmatics in an EFL context.

Approaches & Techniques	Number of Studies	Percentage
Task-based Approach	10	26%
Technology-based Approach	8	21%
Consciousness-Raising Approach	20	53%

Note. N=31

In few studies, there were two approaches involved.



The purpose of this table is to analyze the use of three different methodologies and techniques to teach pragmatics. It is important for the field of language teaching to have knowledge of some of the methodologies that have demonstrated to be effective when teaching pragmatics.

Table 4 indicates the number of studies according to the approaches that researchers considered for their studies. It can be seen that 53% of all studies have utilized the consciousness-raising approach as a main technique to teach pragmatics since this approach was specifically designed to teach it. Similarly, the task-based approach, the second technique, constitutes the 26% of the studies followed by the technology-based approach, which comprises the 21%. It is important to note that in certain studies two approaches were involved.



CHAPTER VI

6. General Discussion

This chapter provides a deep analysis of the results obtained during the elaboration of this research synthesis with the purpose to answer the research questions established in Chapter 1. This chapter has been divided into the following sections: analysis and interpretation of the types of pragmatic instruction; development of pragmatic competence through the use of authentic materials in EFL contexts; and effectiveness of approaches and techniques to teach pragmatics in an EFL context. Each section analyzes table 2, table 3, and table 4, respectively.

6.1 Analysis and interpretation of the types of pragmatic instruction

This section addresses how implicit and explicit instruction contributes to the development of pragmatic awareness. Instruction for the development of pragmatic competence presents a great number of challenges, especially in EFL contexts, due to the limitations and difficulties that exist inside and outside the classroom for both teachers and students. According to Soler (2005), one of the difficulties that many EFL students face when learning their target language is the lack of authentic, naturally occurring input outside the classroom where EFL students can learn pragmatics implicitly. Similarly, Herraiz-Martinez (2018) considers that the limited exposure to the target language that EFL students have, due to the context in which they learn a foreign language, makes the development of pragmatic competence considerably difficult to achieve.

Besides the difficulties described above, there are other factors that hinder the teaching and learning of a foreign language. One of them is the restriction that the foreign language curricula impose over the teaching process in institutions of education around the world. This limitation considerably reduces the input that students receive in the classroom since teachers have to focus



their efforts on covering the contents that the curriculum offers (Schauer, 2006). In Ecuador, the Ministerio de Educación, in the 2016 curriculum, established a range of 3 to 5 hours of English instruction per week, constraining the amount of practice and exposure for learners. Such circumstances considerably limit the development of pragmatic awareness and competence in EFL contexts.

Fortunately, researchers have recognized that grammar is not the only aspect of the language that teachers should cover; pragmatics should also be included in the teaching-learning process of English as a Foreign Language (Herraiz-Martinez 2018; Smith, 2009; Sorour, 2015; Xiao-Le,2011). According to Sorour (2015), being proficient in a language does not only require mastering grammatical rules, but also the pragmatic features of the language. If teachers neglect the pragmatic aspect of the language, and they only focus on grammar, learners will not attain an adequate level of proficiency in their target language because they will not possess the pragmatic competence they need to engage in real-life communication in the target language. One of the possible reasons why this aspect of the language has been neglected is explained in Smith's (2009) study, in which he mentions that it is easier for teachers to teach grammar and vocabulary; in consequence, they tend to neglect the teaching of the pragmatic aspect of the language.

Explicit instruction, which as illustrated in Table 1, has received more attention in EFL classrooms and has demonstrated to be a great alternative for teaching pragmatics in the EFL context. Xiao-Le (2011) stated that pragmatics should be simultaneously taught with grammar instead of delaying pragmatic instruction until a certain point in which learners form inaccurate depictions of the actual language in use. Additionally, according to Xiao-Le (2011), the most important benefit of explicit instruction is that it helps raise EFL learners' awareness of pragmatic



knowledge. Likewise, Eslami-Rasekh, Eslami-Rasekh and Fatahi, (2004) concluded that explicit instruction facilitated the raising of EFL learners' pragmatic awareness to a considerable degree, which is similar to what Irshad and Bukhari (2020) mentioned in their study by stating that explicit pragmatic instruction helps learners develop their pragmatic knowledge and use different linguistic devices depending on the context. The findings that these researchers have discussed demonstrate that explicit pragmatic instruction is beneficial for the development of EFL learners' pragmatic competence.

As for implicit instruction, which is also illustrated in Table 1, it can be seen that it has not received equal interest from researchers. Chalak and Abbasi (2015) explained that using implicit instruction is mostly related to exposure of the language being used in different ways depending on the context but does not include an explicit explanation of why that occurs. Similarly, Derakhshan and Shakki (2020) stated that sole exposure to pragmatic aspects of the target language may not be enough for learners to develop their pragmatic competence. In their study, explicit and implicit instruction were used, and both types of instruction helped learners gain pragmatic knowledge. Likewise, Soler (2005) conducted a study comparing the two types of instruction and concluded that after explicit and implicit pragmatic instruction, EFL learners developed their pragmatic abilities. Moreover, Salemi, Rabiee and Ketabi, (2012) concluded that both implicit and explicit instruction helps EFL learners develop pragmatic competence.

Teaching pragmatics is not an easy task; however, it is an essential part of the language. In these studies, pragmatic instruction has proved to be effective; both implicit and explicit instruction have demonstrated to help learners develop pragmatic competence. However, in all the studies that could compare the use of explicit and implicit pragmatic instruction, the group that



received explicit pragmatic instruction consistently surpassed the implicit group. In contrast, having no instruction at all has not facilitated the learning of the pragmatic aspect of the language. Therefore, learners will possibly not be able to use the language efficiently in real-life situations.

In conclusion, it can be suggested that although implicit and explicit instruction do support EFL learners' development of pragmatic competence, explicit pragmatic instruction has shown better results in EFL contexts due to the straightforward approach to teaching pragmatics in the classrooms. In most cases, EFL learners do not have input outside the classroom and such limited exposure can be disadvantageous for the development of a desired level of pragmatic competence.

6.2 Development of Pragmatic Competence through the use of Authentic Materials in EFL

Contexts

Regarding the second research question which explores the importance of using authentic materials to teach pragmatics, this research synthesis evidences that, in most cases, EFL classrooms do not possess the conditions to access authentic resources to teach pragmatics. This poses a problem, since the absence of explicit pragmatic instruction is probably a consequence of the limitations in time and resources teachers have in the classroom (Cahuana, 2015). Moreover, it is important to mention that resources that EFL teachers and students have at their disposal, such as English textbooks, cannot be considered authentic or profitable material to teach pragmatics since, according to O'Keeffe, Clancy, and Adolphs (2019), "they often contain insufficient specific input or insufficient interpretation of language use" (p. 139).

Likewise, Gilmore (2011), mentioned that English textbooks have mostly concentrated on the lexico-grammatical features of the language, giving less importance to the pragmatic aspect of the language. As a consequence, learners' pragmatic awareness is affected since most



teachers only rely on textbooks that do not facilitate the development of pragmatic awareness and competence. Unfortunately, textbooks are not a reliable source to provide learners pragmatic input in the classroom (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001), since textbooks rely on artificial examples which cannot be considered authentic language (O'Keeffe et al., 2019).

Authentic materials are an essential part of pragmatic instruction, as with authentic materials, teachers can expose students to naturally occurring language samples; and therefore, learners will notice the pragmatic features of the target language. In all the studies considered for this research synthesis, authentic materials have been used for teaching pragmatics since it is the first step to carry out pragmatic instruction. According to Abbasian, Mahmoudi, and Shahbazi (2016), Moradkhan, and Jalayer (2010), Gilmore (2011), Birjandi and Derakhshan (2014), Derakhshan, and Eslami (2015), Bardovi-Harlig, Mossman, and Su (2017), Castillo, Insuasty, and Osorio (2017) and Derakhshan, and Arabmofrad (2018), it is fundamental that teachers incorporate authentic materials in their classes so that students gain pragmatic knowledge.

Additionally, Derakhshan and Shakki (2020) stated that only using authentic materials is not enough for students to learn about the pragmatic features of the target language. However, combining the use of authentic materials with proper pragmatic instruction has demonstrated to be the most efficient way to raise EFL learners' pragmatic awareness.

Moreover, it is important to mention that the use of authentic materials is especially beneficial in EFL contexts since it can be the only source of natural pragmatic input students have. For this reason, it is necessary that teachers do not disregard this limitation in EFL contexts, so they can compensate this problem through the use of authentic materials.



As shown in Table 2, there are many different types of authentic materials that teachers can use to carry out pragmatic instruction. From all the authentic materials mentioned before, which demonstrated to be effective to teach pragmatics, there are two types that are mostly used, videos and TV shows. Moradkhan, and Jalayer (2010) stated that videotapes, like movies or TV shows, provide learners a more complete picture of how people use the language in real life situations, not only focusing on what words or phrases people use, but also the posture, gestures or tone of voice that is used in a given situation. According to Babayiğit (2020), learners feel more eager and motivated to learn thanks to the images and videos that are used to increase learners' pragmatic knowledge. Likewise, Birjandi and Derakhshan (2014) affirmed that movies, videos, and TV shows are a great source of pragmatic input since they can simulate real life samples of how language is used in context, which can help learners understand the pragmatic aspects of the target language. Similarly, Castillo, Insuasty and Osorio (2017) declared that authentic materials are culturally and linguistically rich, and they increase learners' motivation and curiosity to learn.

As it has been evidenced, the use of authentic materials has proven to be one of the most profitable resources to teach pragmatics because of the advantages it provides to students. Authentic materials, such as real conversation recordings, TV shows or films can significantly contribute to EFL learners' development of pragmatic skills for they can observe and analyze naturally occurring conversations and familiarize themselves with the pragmatics of the language in a more meaningful form.



6.3 Effectiveness of approaches and techniques to teach pragmatics in an EFL context.

With regard to the last research question which aims to determine what the most efficient techniques are to teach pragmatics in an EFL context, we can discuss the following.

Language learning is a complex and extensive process that involves the learning of a substantial set of grammar rules and vocabulary. However, besides those two essential aspects of language, there are additional skills that language learners must develop in order to become proficient users of the language, such as pragmatic skills.

In an EFL context, teaching and learning languages can certainly be a challenge because of the limited resources and input students are exposed to. Not only is it difficult to learn a foreign language in such conditions, but it can even be more complicated to develop the sociopragmatic features of the target language.

With the purpose of raising EFL learners' pragmatic awareness, three main approaches have been developed in recent years. The first one is the task-based approach. Takimoto (2009) conducted a study where 60 participants were divided into four groups, three experimental groups and one control group. The results demonstrated that the experimental groups displayed higher proficiency in using the speech act of requests than the control group. He concluded that input-based tasks, structures input, and problem-solving proved to be effective when students learnt the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of the target language. Similarly, Herraiz-Martinez (2018) used interactive and collaborative tasks in order to teach the speech act of apologizing. The results showed that all participants incremented their knowledge on the speech act of apologizing with the implementation of the task-based approach. Herraiz-Martinez concluded that the task-



based approach helps learners improve their pragmatic competence. In addition, Kim and Taguchi (2015) and Castillo, Insuasty, and Osorio (2017) analyzed the effects of task complexity in learners' development of pragmatic awareness through collaboration and interaction. Both studies used pretests and posttests to measure their pragmatic progress. They concluded that pragmatics can be effectively taught by using the task-based approach through collaboration and interaction. Therefore, the studies mentioned above demonstrate the effectiveness of the task-based approach and its positive effects on the development of EFL learners' pragmatic competence.

Technology is a tool that must be used in every classroom, not only for teaching pragmatics but for any other teaching purpose. Technology must be incorporated in the class since it offers multiple alternatives to teachers and students. By using technology, teachers can find many resources to teach the target language, including more authentic materials that would help learners understand better the pragmatic aspect of the language. For instance, Chalak and Abbasi (2015), Herraiz-Martinez (2018) and Babayiğit (2020) stated that using technology to teach pragmatics resulted motivating for learners, and therefore, their pragmatic awareness improved significantly after their interventions. Teachers must be aware that, nowadays, learners are part of a new technological world, and thus they feel more comfortable and motivated using technology in their classes. Additionally, by using technology, teachers can bring into the class multiple interesting materials that would help learners notice and understand the pragmatic aspects of the target language.

The Consciousness-Raising approach helps learners understand how to use the language effectively in a given context. This approach has a specific purpose, making L2 learners conscious of the pragmatic aspect of the target language. Therefore, this approach will help learners raise



their pragmatic awareness. Abolfathiasl and Abdullah (2015), Derakhshan and Eslami (2015), Cheng (2016) and Noonkong, Damnet, and Chartrakul (2017) all concluded that the Consciousness-Raising approach is beneficial for teaching pragmatics since students will be exposed to different materials that will help them realize the pragmatic norms of the target language. Learners will not only be exposed to authentic materials, but they will also be taught explicitly the pragmatic features of the language to finally be able to use that information in real-life situations. For the development of pragmatic competence, EFL learners must be conscious about the content of their messages and the manner they employ such content to produce their utterances; in other words, they must develop pragmatic awareness to communicate effectively in the target language.

In conclusion, it can be said that the three approaches described in table 3 have demonstrated to considerably help EFL learners develop their pragmatic skills. Most studies used the consciousness raising approach for its effectiveness; however, both, the task-based approach and the technology-based approach have also demonstrated to be beneficial for learners in EFL contexts given the difficulty they may face to achieve pragmatic competence in their environment.



CHAPTER VII

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

Second or foreign language learners can find it difficult to communicate when expressing their ideas or conveying a message to others. Despite knowing a considerable amount of vocabulary and the syntax of the language, they may fail to express themselves. Why does this occur? The answer to this question does not lie on whether they know the language or not, but on how they use language in context. Therefore, understanding the concept of pragmatics becomes essential to learning. Pragmatics can be defined as the way in which language is used in real-life communication according to different social contexts (Vasquez & Sharpless, 2009). Researchers around the world have noticed that, for a speaker to be competent in a second or foreign language, it is fundamental to develop pragmalinguistic skills to communicate effectively with native or highly proficient speakers of any language. According to Xiao-Le (2011), the main effect of developing pragmatic competence is to achieve communicative competence. Therefore, pragmatics is an essential aspect of language learning since it provides EFL learners with the knowledge that they require to use language in context. Accordingly, the main purpose of this research synthesis was to emphasize the importance of teaching pragmatics and to provide relevant information on how to do so.

Pragmatics should be simultaneously taught along with grammar and language skills so that learners do not create fossilized errors regarding pragmatics later (Xiao-Le, 2011). To illustrate this, the analysis of the thirty-one studies that were considered for the elaboration of this research synthesis underscore that the inclusion of pragmatic instruction in the EFL classroom is



beneficial for the learning of pragmatic competence. In EFL contexts, it is more difficult to teach and learn pragmatics since most of the language input occurs exclusively within the classroom. On the contrary, in ESL contexts, it is easier to develop pragmatic skills since it is more likely for students to communicate with native speakers of the target language on a daily basis. Therefore, pragmatic instruction is essential in EFL contexts because of the limited opportunities that learners have to be exposed with the language outside the classroom. In consequence, it is fundamental for EFL learners to receive pragmatic instruction so that they can develop an adequate level of proficiency that allows them to engage in real-life conversations with native or highly proficient speakers of the language (Sorour, 2015). The results of the studies analyzed in this research synthesis suggest that implicit and explicit pragmatic instruction are significantly effective for teaching pragmatics. However, when a comparison between the groups was made, always the explicit group outperformed the implicit one. For that reason, it can be said that explicit pragmatic instruction is a more suitable alternative in EFL contexts since, as Xiao-Le (2011) stated, the main benefit of explicit pragmatic instruction is that it helps students notice the pragmatic features of the language, and therefore, raise their pragmatic awareness.

Another important aspect that all studies share is the use of authentic materials during the intervention. Authentic materials provide learners exposure to natural pragmatic samples, as well as language in context (Cheng, 2016). Hence, all studies demonstrated that students gained pragmatic knowledge after the intervention since the use of authentic materials significantly contributed to students learning of cultural knowledge and the pragmatic features of the language (Bajrami & Ismaili, 2016). By using authentic materials, teachers can expose students to natural samples of the target language, and so, learners can notice the differences or similarities in the pragmatic features and rules between their native language and their target language. While it can



be a challenge to incorporate authentic materials in the class, since the materials teachers use, usually textbooks are already provided by schools, it is advisable to try to combine both, textbooks and authentic materials, to have greater results during the teaching process.

In this research synthesis, three techniques and approaches were analyzed, the task-based approach, the use of technology and the consciousness-raising approach. All three demonstrated to be effective to teach pragmatics. However, one was more commonly used, the consciousness-raising approach. This was due to the fact that the consciousness-raising approach has been specifically designed to teach pragmatics. According to Noonkong, Damnet, and Chartrakul (2017), this approach is divided into three parts, during the first part, learners are exposed to the target language by using authentic materials; as a result, they are able to notice the pragmatic features used for communication. Then, the teacher explicitly explains the pragmatic aspects that intervene during a regular conversation; in this way, learners can start gaining pragmatic awareness. Finally, students internalize the pragmatic knowledge obtained during the previous stages, and therefore, obtain the capacity to communicate efficiently in a real-life situation. Moreover, the task-based approach is also a good alternative to teach pragmatics since it allows teachers to bring activities to raise students' pragmatic awareness (Tajeddin, Keshavarz & Zand-Moghadam 2012). Likewise, Herraiz-Martinez (2018) stated that by working in groups, learners can exchange meaningful information or ideas which are important in the process of developing pragmatic awareness. As a result, in the studies where TBLT was applied, students did gain pragmatic knowledge after the intervention. Lastly, the use of technology is a great resource to teach pragmatics since teachers can find a vast number of tools and materials to work with (Khaerudin & AppLing 2012). Additionally, incorporating technology into the class can result motivating and exciting for learners (Babayigit, 2020; Chalak & Abbasi, 2015; Herraiz-Martinez,



2018). Therefore, the use of technology has demonstrated to be effective for pragmatic instruction. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that a mixture of the three techniques and approaches is possible and can even create a more dynamic and engaging class environment.

In conclusion, pragmatic instruction is essential in EFL contexts because of the constraints described before. In general, explicit instruction has been proved a better alternative to teach pragmatics along with the use of authentic materials, which can compensate the fact that there is not much natural input in the teaching of the target language. Consequently, it is of utmost importance to incorporate these resources in combination with different approaches in the teaching process, so that EFL students can learn one of the most important elements of any language—pragmatics.

7.2 Recommendations and limitations

The first recommendation is to give pragmatics the importance it deserves when teaching a second or foreign language. Unfortunately, grammar and vocabulary are still the topics that teachers focus most of their attention on. Moreover, it is important to suggest that English textbooks should incorporate more resources such as topics or activities related to pragmatics in order for students to be more exposed to the sociopragmatic features of the target language. Furthermore, teachers should have more training in how to teach pragmatics in EFL contexts since it is a very important aspect of the language. The last recommendation is to carry out more research about English pragmatic instruction in Spanish speaking countries. In this way, there can be a deeper understanding of what should be changed or modified in the educational system to have better outcomes with EFL learners.



Concerning limitations, a significant restriction faced in this research synthesis was the lack of studies carried out in Latin America. Even though, all the studies took place in EFL contexts, a great majority took place in Asia or the Middle East; therefore, it would be interesting to analyze the effects of teaching pragmatics in the Latin American context.



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