

## TEACHER'S AWARENESS IN DEVELOPING PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE OF EFL LEARNERS

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### ABSTRACT

This study intends to portray whether or not the teacher is developing learners' pragmatic competence in the teaching of English at the tenth grade of a senior high school in southern Bandung. This study is descriptive in nature guided by two research questions covering: 1) What method is used by the teacher in the teaching of English?, and 2) Does the method indicate the teacher's awareness in developing learners' pragmatic competence? The data for this study were compiled through classroom observation. The study found out that the language-centered method used by the teacher does not indicate the teacher's awareness in developing learners' pragmatic competence, since such a method only focuses on linguistic forms or grammatical structures. This method seeks to provide opportunities for learners to practice pre-selected, pre-sequenced linguistic structure through form-focused exercises in class. This study concludes that the teacher's activities are not aimed at raising students' pragmatic competence or offering opportunities for communicative practice. She does not have any effort to equip her students with the necessary knowledge to enable them to use the target language appropriately. Thus, the teacher tends to be unaware of developing learners' pragmatic competence in the teaching of English.

**KEYWORDS:** *awareness, teaching, pragmatic competence*

### A. Introduction

The present study is concerned with investigating the teaching of English administered by the teacher in EFL classroom to reveal whether or not the teacher is aware of developing learners' pragmatic competence. The emergence of raising learners' pragmatic competence is due to a phenomenon that rarely do senior high school graduates communicate appropriately and effectively in English. Lie (2007) argued: "English is taught and used as a foreign language in Indonesia. In spite of the many years of English instruction in formal schooling, the outcome has not been satisfying. Very few high school graduates are able to communicate intelligibly in English." This sense of failure in the teaching of English as a foreign language forces teachers to have more awareness in teaching pragmatics.

Nikula in Soler and Flor (2008) stated that pragmatic development can be enhanced by teaching. This implies that teaching pragmatics in language classroom is necessary. Hence, teacher's awareness in developing learners' pragmatic competence is important. With this thought in mind, Ishihara (2011) claimed that as pragmatic competence has become established as a vital constituent of communicative competence, knowledge of pragmatics has been viewed as an indispensable component of language teachers' knowledge base. In the same vein, Farahian et al (2012) suggested that Learners need to

develop their pragmatic competence in order to achieve communicative competence, and this may be fostered with the help the learners receive from their teachers.

Pragmatic competence is defined as the ability to communicate effectively and involves knowledge beyond the level of grammar (Thomas in Grossi 2009). Meanwhile, Brock and Nagasaka (2005) defined learners' pragmatic competence as learners' ability to express or interpret communicative function in particular communicative contexts. In the same vein, Soler and Flor (2008) referred to pragmatic competence as dealing with the relationship between utterances and the acts performed through these utterances, as well as with the features of the context that promote appropriate language used.

Awareness in developing learners' pragmatic competence may be even more limited in language teacher education courses in EFL contexts such as in Southern Bandung. Since pragmatics, as claimed by Ishihara (2011), has not been recognized widely among language teachers. By contrast, Ishihara adds, the stated qualifications of an effective teacher of L2 pragmatics include an awareness of pragmatic variation (subject matter knowledge), the ability to provide pragmatic-focused instruction and assessment (pedagogical content knowledge), and a sensitivity to learners' cultures and objectivity (knowledge of the learners and the educational context). Then it is becoming the main concern of this study to find out whether or not the teacher helps the learners develop their pragmatic competence in the teaching of English. For that reason, the study investigates "Teacher's Awareness in Developing Pragmatic Competence of EFL learners" in the teaching of English at a senior high school in southern Bandung."

## **B. Literature Review**

### **1. Pragmatic competence**

Pragmatic competence is regarded as a part of language competence or communicative competence. Rasekh (2005) noted that language competence is divided into two areas consisting of 'organizational competence' and 'pragmatic competence'. Organizational competence comprises knowledge of linguistic units and the rules of joining them together at the levels of sentence (grammatical competence) and discourse (textual competence). Pragmatic competence consists of illocutionary competence, that is, knowledge of speech acts and speech functions, and sociolinguistic competence. 'Sociolinguistic competence' entails the ability to use language appropriately according to context. It thus includes the ability to select communicative acts and appropriate strategies to implement them depending on the contextual features of the situation. Fraser (2010) defined pragmatic competence as the ability to communicate our intended message with all its nuances in any socio-cultural context and to interpret the message of our interlocutor as it was intended. Despite its ability for communication success, pragmatic competence is frequently not given the emphasis it deserves in the teaching of a foreign or second language, with the result that foreign or second language speakers, who lack pragmatic competence, may produce grammatically flawless speech that nonetheless fails to achieve its communicative aims.

### **2. Teaching pragmatic competence**

Kulka et al (1989) reported that even fairly advanced language learners' communicative acts regularly contain pragmatic errors, or deficits, in that they fail to convey or comprehend the intended illocutionary force.' This implies that there is a need for EFL

instruction to highlight the pragmatics of the language. Thomas in Grossi (2009) mentioned that, 'it is the role of teachers to equip the students to express her/himself in exactly the way s/he chooses to do – rudely, tactfully, or in an elaborately polite manner. What we want to prevent is his/her being unintentionally rude.' Hence, the teacher should be aware of raising learners' pragmatic competence in the teaching of EFL. This is the teacher's duty to equip his/her students with the necessary knowledge to enable them to use the target language appropriately.

The ultimate goal of learning a language is achieving communicative competence. Nevertheless, Amaya (2008) stated that, 'many students are surprised when they realize that they have difficulties when establishing a conversation with native speakers.' Thus she claimed that pragmatics constitutes a fundamental element of language ability for learners. However, teachers often view pragmatics, due to the difficulty of its teaching, and instead highlight the grammatical aspects of language. The resulting lack of pragmatic competence can lead to pragmatic failure, and more importantly to a complete communication breakdown. In a similar vein, Ming and Yan (2010) argued that pragmatic failure is a problematic issue since it tends to cause misunderstanding and even hatred between native speakers and foreign language learners. Undeniably, identifying and minimizing pragmatic failure is one of the prerequisites for successful communication on the part of language learners.

### **3. Awareness of helping students develop pragmatic competence**

Kasper in Rasekh (2005) classified activities that are useful for pragmatic development into two main types: 1) activities aimed at raising students' pragmatic awareness and 2) activities offering opportunities for communicative practice.

Awareness raising activities are activities design to develop recognition of how language forms are used appropriately in context. Through awareness raising activities, students acquire information about pragmatic aspects of language-for instance, what strategies are used for apologizing in their first language and foreign or second language. Kasper added that these activities are designed to make learners consciously aware of distinctions between the native and target language speech act. Kasper suggested two major techniques that can be used to raise the pragmatic awareness of students namely teacher presentation and discussion of research findings on different aspects of pragmatics, and a student-discovery procedure in which students obtain information through observation, questionnaire and interviews.

Activities offering opportunities for communicative practice, as suggested by Rose in Rasekh (2005), can be done through the use of a number of techniques. One strategy that she has successfully used is to have students literally translate speech acts from their first language into English. Her experience shows this to be an interesting activity to illustrate how cultural norms are reflected in the language, why pragmatic translations of instances of language use can be challenging, and what the peculiarities of literal translations are.

A discourse completion task (DCT) which Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) used for data collection in cross-cultural pragmatics research (Figure 1) can be used as a starter for translation activities. Figure 1 illustrates the simple version of DCT that she has used to obtain the intended speech functions from the students. The form contains

situations in which students are to respond in their L1 and then translate it into L2. After students have presented their L1 and translated version of the intended speech acts, she presents the relevant data from native speakers of English. Using L1 at the beginning has the benefit of validating the learners' L1 as a useful resource and not merely as a negative factor to be endured, and it also shows that the emphasis is first on pragmatics, rather than on English (Cook in Rasekh 2005). Once the students have a good understanding of what to look for in conducting a pragmatic analysis, English can be the focus.

Figure 1  
Discourse completion task (DCT)

**Please write in the provided spaces whatever you would say in the following conversational situations.**

You forget a meeting with a friend; this is the second time that the same thing has happened with the same person. At the end of the day your friend phones you and says: 'I waited for you for more than twenty minutes! What happened?'

**You:**

**Example response in Persian:**

Ei dad, agha ma baz sharmande shodim, joone to aslan nemidoonam chera  
[Oh my gosh, Mr. We became ashamed again, to your soul I don't know at all why]

**Example of response in American English:**

Oh, my gosh! I'm so sorry. I completely forgot. Can we schedule another time to meet?

The two examples she has cited above are her students' responses to DCTs given to them. The first one comes from Persian speaking students and the second example comes from native American English speaking students. It should be noted that the data collected through a discourse completion task does not exactly reflect the richness and complexity of natural data. But it provides us with the stereotypical forms of language used in specific situations. She believes using DCT is appropriate for the initial stages of learning the communicative functions of language. It provides us with language that is less complex and less variable than natural data, but is similar enough to authentic language.

#### **4. Teaching Methods**

Kumaravadivelu (2008) classified teaching methods into three major parts: Language-centered, Learner-Centered, and Learning-Centered Methods.

##### **a. Language-Centered Methods**

Language-centered methods are defined as those focusing on linguistic forms or grammatical structures. These methods seek to provide opportunities for learners to practice pre-selected, pre-sequenced linguistic structure through form-focused exercises in class, assuming that a preoccupation with form will ultimately lead to the mastery of the target language. A set of grammatical structures and vocabulary items are carefully chosen for their potential use and graded from simple to complex.

##### **b. Learner-Centered Methods**

Learner-centered methods are those that are basically concerned with learner needs, wants, and situation. These methods (e.g., some versions of communicative methods) seek to provide opportunities for learners to practice pre-selected, pre-sequenced

grammatical structure as well as communicative functions (i.e., speech acts such as apologizing, requesting, etc) through meaning- focused activities. The learner's real-life language use for social interaction or for academic study is taken into account. The necessary linguistic structures in communicative contexts are presented.

### **c. Learning-Centered Methods**

Learning-centered methods are primarily concerned with learning process. These methods (e.g., the Natural Approach) provide opportunities for students to participate in open-ended meaningful interaction through communicative activities or problem solving tasks in class. The grammatical as well as communicative mastery of language and that student may learn through the process of communication are led by a preoccupation of meaning making.

## **C. Research Methodology**

### **1. Research Design**

Relevant to the naturalistic paradigm, the purposes and the research questions previously mentioned, this study employed a qualitative research design, embracing characteristic of a case study. A case study design is an intensive study of a specific individual or specific context (Trochim, 2001, p.161). It is considered as the suitable research method since the present study is intended to portray whether or not the teacher is aware of developing learners' pragmatic competence.

### **2. Research Site and Participant**

The research was undertaken in southern Bandung, with a private senior high school as the host institution, in which the site under this study was the tenth grade of this school. One English teacher at grade ten as the participant was included in this study. In order to go along with the ethics, the code of "Ibu X" was addressed to the teacher.

### **3. Data Collection**

This part discusses the procedures to collect the data applied in this study. The data were gathered through observations. To observe the teacher's awareness to develop learners' pragmatic competence in the teaching of English, observation sheet and video tape were used as the tools of observation. The observation sheet was mainly handwritten note on how the activities in the classroom run. Meanwhile, to capture whether or not the teacher helps student develop their pragmatic competence as comprehensive as possible, the teacher's activities in teaching English were videotaped.

### **4. Data Analysis**

In qualitative research, data collection and analysis is a simultaneous activity. Meriam (1988) argued that a researcher will not know whom to interview and what to ask if he does not analyze the data as they are collected. The data analysis conducted is guided by the research questions.

The procedures used to analyze the data collected in this study consist of the steps of coding, categorizing, and theme development. During this stage, the researcher read the observation sheet in term of the teaching process carefully sentence by sentence, drew and dropped the relevant meaning units into the same coding group. New codes were created when new meanings which did not fit into any existing coding groups were encountered. All the discovered codes linked together to form connections, then theme gradually emerged from the sets of data at the final stage of analyzing.

## D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 1. Findings

#### a. The Process of English Teaching administered by the teacher

The instructional process that practicing teacher actually does in the classroom in order to achieve her stated or unstated teaching objectives was found out from the classroom observation as follows:

**1. Translates what the students say,**

“*Jadi tujuan dan teks recount itu adalah untuk menyampaikan kepada para pembaca what happened in the past yang terjadi di waktu lampau berdasarkan rangkaian peristiwa.*”

**2. Asks the students to consult a dictionary**

“Have you find the difficult word? *Kalian sudah temukan? Masih ada yang sulit?*”

“Have you find out in the dictionary? *Sudah dicari di kamus arti dari kata yang kalian belum tahu artinya? Sudah? Let me check ok.*”

**3. Asks the students to work in groups but keeps translating English into Bahasa Indonesia**

“An autobiography of a book. Before you answering the question yah, for answering the question, please for this term yah make a group of four or five. *Sebelum kita membahas hal ini, untuk berdiskusi kita make a group, buat kelompok four or five. Jadi ada empat atau lima. At least four, kalau misalkan lebih boleh lima.*”

**4. Devides students into groups,**

“For girl divided into two groups, untuk girl perempuan dibagi dua kelompok saja, Eva, Siti Solihah, Ai Tita, Rini, dan Rina. The other second group, ok. There are six groups in this class, ok.”

**5. Asks the students to discuss within groups,**

“For each group, please discuss with your friends, which one is the best answer for the first paragraph, yah. In this text you have to choose, which one is the correct word for complete the sentence. *Yah, jadi untuk teks yang judulnya an autobiography of a book kalian harus melengkapi. Yah, melengkapi kalimat dengan mencari kata-kata yang hilang.* It must be answered in the left side yah there are the answer.

**6. Tells the students the importance of translation,**

“*Jadi untuk melengkapi kalimat dengan jawabannya yang mana tapi dengan with their meaning dengan artinya.* Because if I ask you what is the meaning you have already to know. *Jadi kalian sudah tahu artinya ok.* I give you 15 minute to discuss with your friends.Ok, begin from now.”

**7. Uses code mixing**

“Discuss with your friend *yah* with your own group. If you find the difficult word *ya* you can ask me. *Jika kalian menemukan kata yang sulit kalian bisa ask me.*”

**8. Asks the meaning of words to the class,**

“be careful” what is careful? Who know what is mean ‘careful’. *Siapa yang tahu artinya ‘careful?’*”

**9. Asks the existence of dictionaries,**

"Is there any dictionary for each group? *Setiap kelompok ada kamus?*

"Ok, at least a dictionary for each group."

**10. Gives command**

"Pay attention yah for this text, *apabila kalian menemukan kata yang baru* but some of this words have same meaning with the other words that you have heard.

**11. Explains using the combination of Bahasa Indonesia and English**

"*Jadi ada beberapa kata yang baru menurut kalian, tapi mempunyai arti yang sama dengan kata yang pernah kalian dengar yah, jadi kalian sudah bisa menemukan, for example Fott F-o-double T. This word same as see, s-double-e.*"

**12. "Gives a clue for the students to guess the meaning of a word,**

"wrinkle is if you have grandfather or grandmother, if you get older. This wrinkle for thing not for human.

**13. counts on the translation**

"Six missing word. Before we answer, let me find the meaning word yah. *Untuk menjawab kita cari tahu artinya dulu.* Two years ago

**14. Keeps translating the English words into Bahasa Indonesia,**

"There are two words yah but the same meaning, face is mean?"

"Yah, muka yah. Cover?"

**15. Gives a command to students to point to the cover of a book,**

"Point to the cover. Cover is for book we call cover. In front of the book we call cover, apa?"

**16. Gives another command,**

"Look at for example this size of paper consist of seven pieces of paper, ukuran kertas ini terdiri dari tujuh lembar kertas yah. There are consist of seven pieces.

**17. Discusses the structure** "Ok. It was just two years ago before I was born. Nah, lihat, look at the first subject, "it" refers to ..." "It" di situ kembali ke mana. Look at the sentence before, lihat kalimat sebelumnya itu menunjukkan ke mana?"

**18. Explains using Bahasa Indonesia.**

Jadi ceritanya yah, cerita itu di mulai 2 tahun yang lalu before I was born, sebelum saya di lahirkan atau untuk sebuah buku apa? Buku lahir, terbit yah. Ini memakai subjek "I" refers to ke mana?

**19. Gives commands**

"Look at the title of the text. Lihat judul dari text. Jadi, text refers to a book. Ok jadi, menceritakan sebuah buku." Look at the fifth missing word, what is the correct answer? Kira-kira jawaban yang tepat apa? First a few workers. Put it in press and I ... (asks the students to complete)

**20. Explains using Bahasa Indonesia**

"Yah, pertama-tama sebelum menjadi buku itu, beberapa pekerja menyimpan buku itu kedalam mesin press, mesin pencetak and I ... jadi sebelum jadi buku yah itu berupa kertaskosong kemudian dicetak hingga ada apa?"  
Kemudian muncul, script, word and illustration. Yah, kemudian munculkata-kata seperti yang kita lihat pada sebuah buku yah. Word and ilustrasi. Kata-kata juga sebuah ilustrasi. On my body di dalam tubuh mereka. Yang tadinya kosong kemudian timbul yah ada kata-kata yang terlihat dan ilustrasi."

- 21. Keeps translating the meaning**  
 “He..eh, handsome is mean tampan atau ganteng or for human, beautiful for girl is mean cantik. But for thing artinya bagus.
- 22. Models the correct pronunciation,**  
 “/deliv3:d/
- 23. Corrects the mispronunciation,**  
 “ /kold/”
- 24. Asks the student to translate,**  
 “Ok, translate, artikan dari atas. My friend and I ....“were packed, apa were packed?” “Not only a book but some books were packed into a huge box packed?”
- 25. Uses the synonym of a word**  
 “And we were delivered? Delivered? What is the other word the same meaning with delivered? Kata apa yang sama artinya dengan delivered?”
- 26. Describes the meaning of words,**  
 “Seorang penjual buku, kita harus titik-titik buku itu di depan took.”“Dipajang. Ok and then comfortable?“Atau nyaman. Kemudian sales girl?“Penjual wanita?”  
 “No, a sales girl is a shopkeeper who gives service to the buyer, seorang wanita yang melayani pembeli, apa namanya? ”Pelayan toko atau pramu...”
- 27. Corrects the answer, “Pramuniaga”**
- 28. Asks the students to guess the meaning from her description of a word.,**  
 “Pramugari is a person who service a passenger in a plane. Yah, kalau pramugari itu orang yang melayani penumpang di pesawat terbang. Pramuniaga and pramugari is different yah. Pramuniaga if a girl pramuniagawati
- 29. Asks, the student to translate,**  
 “So the translation is eh Agus translate!”  
 “A sales girl put a tag of 25 thousand rupiahs on my back.”
- 30. Shows a book and pantomimes,**  
 “Contoh ini buku yang dijual oleh pelayan toko yah. A sales girl put a tag (pantomimes) a 25 thousand rupiah on my back yah. So, she put a tag in front of eh in the back of the book.”
- 31. Explains the structure of passive voice**  
 “I was displayed. Was (to be) and then following by past verb so, the sentence become passive yah. Jadi artinya pasif. Saya di pajang.”
- 32. Discusses grammar**  
 “It was a very ... Nah it di situ refers to? Di situ ada it, kembali ke mana?”  
 “Jadi the book lihat kalimat sebelumnya, the sentence before.

**Table 1 Data Analysis**

<b>Coding</b>	<b>Categorizing</b>	<b>Theme</b>
Focusing on translation	If students can translate from one language into another, they are considered successful language learners.	
Advocating group	In groups, students can begin to feel a sense of	

works	community and can learn from each other as well as the teacher. Cooperation, not competition, is encouraged.	Language-Centered Method
Combining target language and native language	Learning is facilitated through attention to similarities between the target language and the native language.	
Giving commands	The imperative is a powerful linguistic device through which the teacher can direct student behavior.	
Discussing structure or grammar.	The major objective of language teaching should be for students to acquire the structural patterns	
Correcting mis-pronunciation	Errors lead to the information of bad habits. When errors do occur, they should be immediately corrected by the teacher.	
Correcting students' answers	The teacher is the authority in the classroom. It is very important that students get the correct answer.	
Showing things to convey the meaning of words	Objects (e.g., realia or pictures) present in the immediate classroom environment should be used to help students understand the meaning.	

## 2. Discussions

The study is aimed at finding out the method used by the English teacher in the process of teaching and learning. The results of the study are presented in line with the research questions.

### a. *What method is used by the teacher in the teaching of English?*

Regarding the procedures or the strategies administered by the teacher in the teaching of English, the data show that the teacher applied various procedures conforming to the method categorized as Language-Centered Method.

### b. *Does the method indicate the teacher's awareness in developing learners' pragmatic competence?*

To a significant extent, the language-centered method used by the teacher in the teaching of English does not indicate the teacher's awareness in developing learners' pragmatic competence, since such a method only focuses on linguistic forms or grammatical structures. This method seeks to provide opportunities for learners to practice pre-selected, pre-sequenced linguistic structure through form-focused exercises in class.

## E. Conclusion

The teacher's activities are not aimed at raising students' pragmatic competence or offering opportunities for communicative practice. She does not have any effort to equip

her students with the necessary knowledge to enable them to use the target language appropriately. Thus, the teacher tends to be unaware of developing learners' pragmatic competence in the teaching of English. The uncertainty inherent in pragmatic may frequently challenge her as the complex improvised experience. The risk taking required to teach pragmatics may contribute to the primary profession's reluctance to embrace its potential.

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