

The Impact of Pragmatics on Developing Intercultural Communication Skills in ESL Learners

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ABSTRACT

Effective communication in intercultural contexts requires more than linguistic proficiency; it demands an understanding of cultural nuances embedded within language use. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between pragmatic competence and intercultural communication skills among Kurdish learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in Erbil/ Iraq, in specific. Using a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative research approach, the study employed a descriptive-correlational design to analyze data from 119 participants selected via stratified random sampling and 18 students for interview. Participants completed questionnaires assessing their pragmatic competence, intercultural communication skills, and demographic characteristics. Hypothesis testing confirmed that targeted instruction in pragmatics enhances intercultural communication skills. The results revealed a strong positive correlation between pragmatic competence and intercultural communication skills. Regression analysis demonstrated that pragmatic competence and learners' cultural backgrounds significantly influenced intercultural communication skills. The findings emphasize the importance of integrating pragmatic awareness into ESL instruction to equip learners with the skills needed for effective intercultural communication. While the study confirms the theoretical frameworks of communicative and cultural competence, its limitations include a relatively small sample size and reliance on self-reported data. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts of pragmatic training and

the role of digital communication in shaping intercultural skills.

1. Introduction

Effective communication extends beyond grammatical accuracy and vocabulary breadth; it requires an understanding of the sociocultural nuances embedded within a language. For English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, mastering these nuances is critical in developing intercultural communication skills. Pragmatics, as the study of language in context, plays a pivotal role in helping learners apply their linguistic knowledge effectively in real-world interactions, thereby supporting the development of contextually appropriate communication. While communicative competence encompasses a broad range of skills required for effective communication—including grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic components—pragmatics specifically focuses on how meaning is constructed and interpreted in varying contexts. This makes pragmatics a crucial subset of the broader communicative framework, particularly essential for ESL learners aiming to navigate diverse social and cultural interactions with accuracy and sensitivity. (Yan, 2022). By understanding and applying pragmatic principles, ESL learners can navigate complex social interactions, respect cultural norms, and avoid misunderstandings, all of which are vital for successful intercultural communication (Sanchez-Hernandez & Martinez-Flor, 2022).

Pragmatics encompasses various aspects of language use, including speech acts, politeness strategies, conversational implicature, and turn-taking conventions. For instance, the way a speaker makes requests, offers apologies, or expresses gratitude can differ significantly across cultures. These differences are not merely linguistic but are deeply rooted in cultural values and societal norms (Saleem et al., 2021). ESL learners who lack pragmatic awareness may unintentionally violate these norms, resulting in communication breakdowns or even causing offense. Therefore, integrating pragmatic competence into ESL instruction can significantly enhance learners' ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural settings (Bagherkazemi & Harati-Asl, 2022).

Intercultural communication skills are increasingly important in our globalized world, where interactions across linguistic and cultural boundaries are commonplace. Whether in business, education, travel, or digital communication, individuals frequently encounter scenarios requiring sensitivity to cultural diversity (Derakhshan et al., 2021). ESL learners, who often find themselves in multicultural environments, need to adapt their language use to align with the expectations and conventions of different cultures. Pragmatic competence enables learners to understand not only what to say but also how, when, and to whom to say it, fostering mutual respect and understanding in intercultural exchanges (Schauer, 2021).

The challenges associated with teaching pragmatics to ESL learners are multifaceted. Unlike grammatical rules, pragmatic norms are not universally standardized and are often implicit rather than explicit. Moreover, cultural variations add another layer of complexity. For example, the degree of directness considered polite in one culture may be perceived as rude in another (Ali et al., 2021). Effective instruction in pragmatics, therefore, requires a context-sensitive approach that incorporates authentic materials, role-playing activities, and exposure to diverse cultural perspectives. Additionally, educators must address the learners' cultural backgrounds, as these influence their interpretations and responses in intercultural interactions (Sánchez-Hernández & Barón, 2022).

Research by Ahmed et al. (2023), highlight the positive impact of pragmatic instruction on intercultural communication skills. Studies have shown that learners who receive targeted training in pragmatics demonstrate improved ability to interpret and produce culturally appropriate language (Ahmed et al., 2023). This training also fosters greater empathy and cultural awareness, equipping learners to interact more effectively in diverse contexts. By enhancing both linguistic and cultural competence, pragmatic instruction empowers learners to become confident and adaptable communicators (Derakhshan et al., 2021). This paper explores the intricate relationship between pragmatics and intercultural communication skills in ESL learners. It examines the theoretical foundations of pragmatics, the challenges of teaching and learning pragmatic competence, and the strategies for integrating pragmatics into ESL instruction. Ultimately, it argues that fostering pragmatic awareness is essential for developing intercultural communication skills, enabling ESL

learners to thrive in an interconnected world where cultural sensitivity and effective communication are paramount.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In today's globalized world, effective intercultural communication is essential for individuals learning English as a Second Language (ESL). However, many ESL learners struggle to communicate appropriately in multicultural contexts due to a lack of pragmatic competence. Pragmatics, which involves understanding and using language in socially and culturally appropriate ways, is often overlooked in traditional ESL instruction (Tai & Chen, 2021). This gap hinders learners' ability to navigate complex intercultural interactions, leading to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and even offense in communication. Addressing this issue is critical to developing ESL learners' intercultural communication skills, which are necessary for success in diverse professional and social environments.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of pragmatic competence on the development of intercultural communication skills in ESL learners. The study aims to examine how targeted instruction in pragmatics influences learners' ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural settings. By identifying key factors that enhance pragmatic and intercultural competence, this study seeks to provide evidence-based strategies for improving ESL pedagogy.

1.3 Research Objectives

- To explore the relationship between pragmatic competence and intercultural communication skills in ESL learners.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of targeted pragmatic instruction in enhancing ESL learners' intercultural communication abilities.
- To examine and determine the pragmatic elements—such as speech acts, politeness strategies, and contextual language use—that significantly contribute to enhancing intercultural communicative competence among ESL learners.

- To assess the role of learners' cultural backgrounds in shaping their pragmatic competence and communication strategies.

1.4 Research Questions

- What is the relationship between pragmatic competence and intercultural communication skills in ESL learners?
- How does targeted instruction in pragmatics impact ESL learners' ability to communicate effectively in intercultural contexts?
- Which specific pragmatic elements contribute most significantly to the development of intercultural communication skills?
- To what extent do learners' cultural backgrounds influence their pragmatic competence and intercultural communication strategies?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

H1: There is a positive relationship between pragmatic competence and intercultural communication skills in ESL learners.

H2: Targeted instruction in pragmatics significantly enhances the intercultural communication skills of ESL learners.

H3: Learners' cultural backgrounds significantly influence intercultural communication skills ESL learners.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study holds significance for both academic and practical purposes. Academically, it contributes to the growing body of research on the intersection of pragmatics and intercultural communication in ESL education. Practically, the findings benefit ESL educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers by offering insights into effective instructional strategies for fostering pragmatic competence. Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of intercultural communication skills in preparing learners for global citizenship and professional success in multicultural environments.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Pragmatic competence—defined as the ability to use language effectively in context—has emerged as a crucial component in English as a Second Language (ESL) education, especially in fostering intercultural communication. As globalization reshapes communication norms, ESL learners are increasingly required to navigate culturally diverse interactions. This review explores how pragmatic knowledge contributes to the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), highlighting insights from recent empirical and theoretical studies. To better understand how this competence develops, the following section outlines the theoretical foundations that link pragmatics and intercultural communication.

2.2. Theoretical Foundations of Pragmatics and Intercultural Communication

The development of ICC in ESL learners is underpinned by sociocultural and pragmatic theories, which emphasize language as a tool for managing social relationships (Schauer, 2021). Intercultural communication requires not only linguistic fluency but also the capacity to understand speech acts, politeness norms, implicatures, and cultural references (Sánchez-Hernández & Barón, 2022). Pragmatics fills this gap by equipping learners with context-sensitive language strategies that align with culturally diverse expectations. With this theoretical grounding, we now turn to how pragmatic competence specifically manifests and evolves among ESL learners in practical educational contexts.

2.3. Pragmatic Competence and ESL Learners

Multiple studies affirm the significance of pragmatic instruction in ESL classrooms. Ahmed (2022) found that learners with higher pragmatic awareness were more adept at adjusting their speech to fit different cultural contexts, thereby enhancing mutual understanding. Similarly, Bardis, Silman, and Mohammadzadeh (2021) observed that pragmatic competence among EFL learners in Northern Cyprus contributed to more sustainable intercultural learning environments.

Ali et al. (2021) demonstrated that literary texts could enhance both pragmatic competence and fluency, suggesting that exposure to culturally rich language helps

learners decode implied meanings and respond appropriately. In another study, Ibrahim (2022) proposed integrating backward design into textbooks to ensure that pragmatic and intercultural learning outcomes are addressed systematically. To understand how these competencies are fostered in practice, the next section examines instructional methods and their outcomes in pragmatic teaching.

2.4. Teaching Pragmatics: Methods and Outcomes

Explicit instruction in pragmatics has been shown to improve learners' abilities to perform speech acts and manage interactions across cultures. For instance, Derakhshan, Malmir, and Greenier (2021) noted that the use of interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies significantly predicted ESL learners' speech act knowledge. Marasabessy, Sailuddi, and Anwar (2023) further argued that pragmatic awareness among literature students was higher when instruction included authentic communication tasks. Meanwhile, computer-assisted language learning (CALL) platforms like WhatsApp have provided informal settings for pragmatic development, as noted by García-Gómez (2022), who emphasized the role of digital tools in facilitating pragmatic growth through peer interaction. Rasekh Eslami and Zohoor (2023) reinforced this view, proposing that CALL environments allow learners to experiment with different pragmatic forms without fear of judgment. Building on these instructional approaches, the subsequent section explores how pragmatic competence directly supports the development of intercultural communicative competence.

2.5. Pragmatics as a Bridge to Intercultural Communicative Competence

Pragmatic instruction fosters not only linguistic skills but also intercultural sensitivity. Vu and Dinh (2022) reported a significant correlation between pragmatic training and students' increased awareness of cultural variability in communication styles. Kim, Lee, and Choe (2022) emphasized that learners in English as a lingua franca (ELF) environment developed pragmatic skills that enabled them to adjust to diverse linguistic norms. Moreover, emotional intelligence has been identified as a moderator in the relationship between pragmatics and intercultural effectiveness. Derakhshan, Eslami, and Ghandhari (2021) highlighted that learners with higher emotional

intelligence demonstrated greater adaptability in intercultural interactions. These findings support the argument that pragmatic competence is not solely linguistic but also socio-emotional. While the benefits of pragmatic instruction are evident, the next section addresses the practical challenges educators face and the pedagogical implications for enhancing pragmatic competence.

2.6 Challenges and Pedagogical Implications

Despite its significance, teaching pragmatics remains challenging due to its context-dependent nature and the lack of standardized curricula (Ahmed et al., 2023). Teachers often struggle with selecting culturally appropriate materials and assessing learners' pragmatic skills. Ariani, Basthomi, and Prayogo (2021) emphasized the role of teacher training in building students' pragmatic competence through socialization and feedback. To overcome these challenges, educators are encouraged to adopt flipped learning models, as demonstrated by Makruf et al. (2021), and integrate ICC models into constructivist pedagogies (Khan, Ahmed, & Saeed, 2023). These approaches promote active learning and intercultural reflection, essential for pragmatic development. Having explored both instructional methods and implementation barriers, the review now moves to the research methodology guiding this investigation.

3. Research Method

This study employs a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative research method to examine the impact of pragmatic competence on the development of intercultural communication skills among ESL learners. The quantitative approach is appropriate as it allows for the systematic collection, measurement, and analysis of numerical data to test hypotheses and identify relationships between variables.

3.1 Qualitative Method

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically using semi-structured interviews to explore the impact of pragmatics on the development of intercultural communication skills among ESL learners. A qualitative approach was selected to gain

in-depth insights into students' lived experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to pragmatic competence in culturally diverse English communication contexts.

3.1.2 Participants and Sampling

The research sample consisted of 18 undergraduate students from selected private universities in Erbil, Iraq, who were enrolled in English language programs or courses that involve intercultural communication components. Participants were chosen through purposive sampling, ensuring they met criteria relevant to the research aim—namely, active engagement in English communication within academic or intercultural environments.

The universities involved in the study are kept anonymous to maintain institutional confidentiality, in accordance with ethical research guidelines. The participants included both male and female students from diverse academic backgrounds, allowing for a variety of perspectives on how pragmatics influences their communication in multicultural settings.

3.1.3 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through semi-structured individual interviews, each lasting between 25 and 40 minutes. The interviews were conducted in English and followed a flexible question guide focusing on students' experiences with pragmatic use, challenges in intercultural communication, and the influence of instructional practices on their pragmatic awareness. All interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent, then transcribed verbatim for analysis. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of their anonymity, and given the right to withdraw at any point.

3.1.4 Data Analysis

The interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the six-phase framework by Braun and Clarke (2006). Codes were generated inductively to capture recurring patterns and themes related to pragmatic strategies, cultural adaptation, and communication breakdowns or successes. The analysis aimed to

identify how learners interpret and apply pragmatic knowledge in real intercultural interactions.

3.1.5 Ethical Considerations

The study strictly adhered to ethical research guidelines to protect participants' rights and confidentiality. Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the researcher's academic institution. Each participant was provided with an informed consent form, outlining the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. To ensure anonymity, all identifying information was removed from transcripts, and each participant was assigned a coded identifier (e.g., P1, P2). The names of participating universities are also withheld to maintain institutional confidentiality. All digital files were securely stored and accessible only to the researcher.

3.2 Quantitative Research Method

A descriptive-correlational design is to be used to explore the relationship between pragmatic competence and intercultural communication skills. This approach is well-suited for assessing the degree of association between variables without manipulating them, providing robust data for evaluating the research hypotheses.

3.2.2 Target Population

The target population comprises ESL students enrolled in private universities in the Erbil-Kurdistan region of Iraq. The universities involved in this study requested anonymity; therefore, their names have been withheld to maintain confidentiality. These students represent a diverse demographic, offering an ideal context for studying intercultural communication within a multicultural environment.

3.2.3 Sample Size

The study included a sample size of 119 students, comprising 64 male students and 55 female students, selected from private universities in Erbil. The sample was chosen using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different age groups, genders, and proficiency levels in English.

3.2.4 Data Collection

Data was collected using the following instruments:

1. **Pragmatic Competence Questionnaire:** A validated survey instrument designed to assess students' knowledge and application of speech acts, politeness strategies, and conversational norms.
2. **Intercultural Communication Skills Assessment:** A standardized test to evaluate students' ability to communicate effectively in intercultural contexts, focusing on appropriateness, empathy, and adaptability.
3. **Demographic Information Form:** To gather data on students' age, gender, cultural background, and duration of ESL instruction.

3.2.5 Data Collection Procedure

1. **Preparation Phase:**
 - Obtain ethical approval from relevant authorities and consent from participants.
 - Conduct a pilot test to validate the instruments and refine them if necessary.
2. **Data Collection Phase:**
 - Administer the questionnaires and assessments to the sample population in a controlled classroom setting.
 - Ensure anonymity and confidentiality to encourage honest responses.
3. **Data Recording:**
 - Responses were recorded electronically and stored securely for analysis.

3.2.6 Data Analysis

Data analyzed using statistical software (e.g., SPSS) following these steps:

1. **Descriptive Statistics:** Summarize the demographic data and overall scores for pragmatic competence and intercultural communication skills.
2. **Reliability Testing:** Evaluate the internal consistency of the instruments using Cronbach's Alpha.

3. **Correlation Analysis:** Conduct Pearson correlation analysis to examine the relationship between pragmatic competence and intercultural communication skills.
4. **Significance Testing:** Use t-tests to assess differences in intercultural communication skills based on demographic factors such as age, gender, and cultural background.
5. **Regression Analysis:** Perform multiple regression analysis to determine the predictive power of pragmatic competence on intercultural communication skills while controlling for demographic variables.

4. Analysis

The analysis was conducted to explore the relationships between pragmatic competence, intercultural communication skills, and learners' cultural backgrounds. Various statistical methods, including demographic, validity, factor loading, reliability, correlation, and regression analyses, were utilized to assess the data. Each table provides insights into specific aspects of the study, as detailed below.

4.1 Qualitative Analysis

4.1.1 Demographic Analysis

Table 1: Participant Demographics (n = 18)

Participant ID	Gender	Age	Field of Study	University Type
P1	Male	21	Business Administration	Private University A
P2	Female	22	Computer Science	Private University B
P3	Female	20	English Language	Private University A
P4	Male	23	International Relations	Private University C
P5	Female	21	Nursing	Private University B
P6	Male	22	Engineering	Private University A
P7	Female	20	Media and Communication	Private University C
P8	Male	24	Business Administration	Private University A
P9	Female	22	English Language	Private University B
P10	Male	21	Law	Private University C
P11	Female	23	Dentistry	Private University B
P12	Male	20	Education	Private University A

P13	Female	22	Information Technology	Private University C
P14	Male	21	Business Administration	Private University A
P15	Female	24	Pharmacy	Private University B
P16	Male	22	English Language	Private University C
P17	Female	20	Architecture	Private University A
P18	Male	23	Political Science	Private University C

The study involved 18 undergraduate participants from three selected private universities in Erbil. The sample was balanced in terms of gender, with 9 male and 9 female students, ranging in age from 20 to 24 years. Participants came from diverse academic disciplines, including Business Administration, English Language, Engineering, Computer Science, Nursing, Law, Education, Pharmacy, Dentistry, Architecture, Information Technology, Media and Communication, International Relations, and Political Science. This diversity ensured a broad representation of academic backgrounds and communicative contexts. Regarding university affiliation, students were drawn from Private University A, B, and C, maintaining institutional anonymity for ethical reasons. Self-rated English proficiency varied across the group: 6 students identified as having advanced proficiency, 6 rated themselves as upper-intermediate, and the remaining 6 reported intermediate-level skills. This variation in language ability and academic focus provided a rich and balanced dataset for examining the impact of pragmatics on intercultural communication skills among ESL learners in a higher education setting.

Table 2: Thematic Analysis Results

Themes	Frequency (Number of Participants)
Use of Politeness Strategies	15
Challenges in Cultural Interpretation	13
Adapting Speech to Cultural Context	14
Lack of Pragmatic Instruction	10
Increased Confidence in Multicultural Settings	12

The thematic analysis of the interview data from 18 ESL students revealed five key themes that reflect their experiences with pragmatic competence in intercultural

communication. The most frequently mentioned theme was the use of politeness strategies, reported by 15 participants, highlighting students' conscious efforts to use respectful and indirect language forms, particularly in formal or unfamiliar cultural contexts. Adapting speech to cultural context followed closely, with 14 students discussing how they modified their tone, vocabulary, or expressions depending on the cultural background of their interlocutor. Challenges in cultural interpretation were cited by 13 participants, who reported difficulties understanding humor, indirectness, or cultural norms that differed from their own. Notably, 12 students shared that learning and applying pragmatic norms enhanced their confidence in multicultural settings, especially when communicating with peers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Finally, a lack of pragmatic instruction emerged as a significant concern for 10 participants, who felt that their formal language education focused more on grammar and vocabulary than on real-world communicative competence. These themes collectively demonstrate the central role of pragmatics in navigating intercultural communication and suggest a strong need for intentional, context-rich pragmatic instruction in ESL programs.

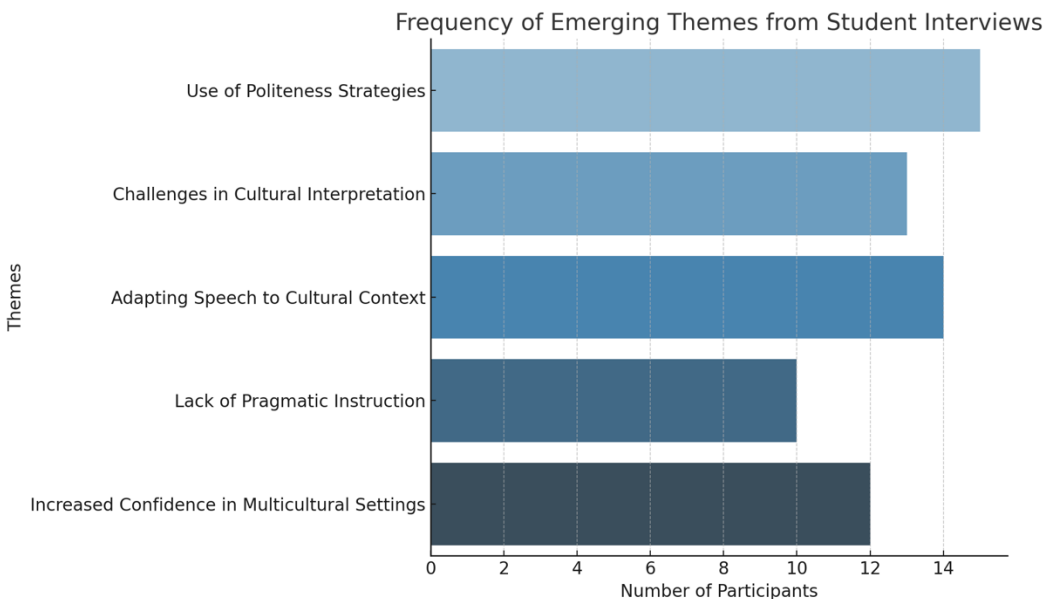


Figure (1): Frequency of Emerging Themes from Student Interviews

The chart visually represents the key findings from the thematic analysis of ESL learners' experiences with pragmatics in intercultural communication. The most prominent theme, mentioned by 15 participants, is the Use of Politeness Strategies, indicating that learners are highly aware of the importance of polite language forms—such as indirect requests and formal greetings—when engaging with people from different cultural backgrounds. Adapting Speech to Cultural Context follows closely with 14 mentions, showing that students frequently adjust their language depending on who they are speaking with, reflecting growing intercultural sensitivity.

Challenges in Cultural Interpretation was cited by 13 participants, pointing to difficulties in understanding cultural nuances such as humor, idioms, and non-verbal cues. Interestingly, 12 participants highlighted Increased Confidence in Multicultural Settings as a result of their pragmatic awareness, suggesting that such competence empowers them in diverse communicative environments. Finally, 10 participants raised concerns about the Lack of Pragmatic Instruction in their academic programs, emphasizing a notable gap in formal ESL education regarding real-world language use. Overall, the chart underscores that while students are developing pragmatic competence largely through experience and observation, there is a strong need for targeted, explicit instruction to support and accelerate this growth.

4.1.2 Thematic Analysis

4.1.2.1 Theme 1: Use of Politeness Strategies

15 out of 18 participants demonstrated awareness of politeness strategies in English, such as using indirect requests, softeners (e.g., "maybe," "I think"), and hedging. These were often contrasted with more direct communication styles from their native languages.

"When I speak English, I always say 'could you please' or 'would you mind' because I know it sounds more polite, especially with foreigners." — P3

"I add 'I think' or 'maybe' when I give suggestions in English. In my language, I can be more direct, but I feel it's different in English." — P7

"Even when I disagree, I say things like 'I see your point, but...' to keep the conversation polite." — P12

Students consciously use formulaic expressions to maintain politeness in intercultural conversations. This suggests that pragmatic competence is internalized as a means of managing face and social harmony.

4.1.2.2 Theme 2: Challenges in Cultural Interpretation

13 out of 18 participants reported frequent misunderstandings when interacting with people from different cultures. These included confusion over humor, sarcasm, or body language not aligning with what they expected.

“One time, I said ‘inshallah’ during a group project and they thought I didn’t want to do it. They didn’t understand the cultural meaning behind it.” — P11

“I made a joke in class and no one laughed. I think the humor didn’t translate well.” — P5

“Sometimes I nod during conversations out of politeness, but people think I agree with everything.” — P17

Misalignment between pragmatic norms across cultures leads to unintended miscommunication, showing a need for explicit intercultural pragmatics instruction. Students often lacked the metapragmatic awareness needed to explain or adjust their cultural expressions.

4.1.2.3 Theme 3: Adapting Speech to Cultural Context

14 out of 18 participants shared strategies they used to modify their speech according to the listener’s cultural background. This included tone adjustment, avoiding idioms, and switching to simpler vocabulary.

“When I speak to someone from Asia, I try to speak slower and avoid jokes. But with Americans, I try to be more expressive.” — P6

“I don’t use local idioms in English anymore because people don’t understand them. I just say it in a simple way.” — P1

“I change my tone depending on who I talk to. With some nationalities, I’m more formal.” — P14

This theme reflects learners’ developing intercultural sensitivity and their effort to modify pragmatic choices based on audience. This adaptive behavior suggests an emerging intercultural communicative competence (ICC).

4.1.2.4 Theme 4: Lack of Pragmatic Instruction

10 out of 18 participants, expressed that their ESL education focused heavily on grammar and vocabulary, with little to no instruction on how to navigate real-world social interactions or cultural norms.

“We learn how to write essays, but no one teaches us how to say ‘no’ politely in English. I learned it from movies.” — P9

“Teachers correct grammar, but they never tell us how to ask someone for help politely.” — P4

“I didn’t know small talk was important until I went abroad and saw how people talk casually before meetings.” — P16

The absence of structured pragmatic education in ESL courses highlights a critical gap in current curricula. Students often acquire pragmatic knowledge incidentally, not intentionally, which affects the depth and transferability of their skills.

4.1.2.5 Theme 5: Increased Confidence in Multicultural Settings

12 out of 18 participants reported that acquiring pragmatic knowledge—especially around polite expressions and small talk—boosted their confidence in diverse environments such as conferences, student exchanges, or online meetings.

“Before I was shy, but now I know how to start a conversation with ‘How’s it going?’ or say things in a friendly way. It helps a lot.” — P13

“I feel more comfortable now in international classes. I know what to say and how to sound friendly.” — P2

“Knowing how to respond politely makes me feel like I belong more when I talk with people from other countries.” — P15

This theme links pragmatic competence with self-efficacy in communication. Students feel more empowered and socially effective when equipped with appropriate linguistic tools.

Table 3: Summary Table of Themes

Theme	Frequency	Key Insight
Use of Politeness Strategies	15/18	Students apply indirect forms and polite expressions in intercultural exchanges
Challenges in Cultural Interpretation	13/18	Misunderstandings arise from culturally specific norms and implicit meanings
Adapting Speech to Cultural Context	14/18	Learners tailor their communication based on their interlocutor's culture
Lack of Pragmatic Instruction	10/18	ESL courses insufficiently address pragmatic or intercultural communication
Increased Confidence in Diverse Settings	12/18	Pragmatic awareness enhances learners' social ease and communicative confidence

Summary of Themes presents an overview of the most prominent patterns that emerged from the qualitative interviews with 18 ESL students. The theme "Use of Politeness Strategies" was the most frequently mentioned, with 15 out of 18 participants reporting the use of polite and indirect forms—such as softeners, modal verbs, and respectful language—especially in intercultural exchanges. This demonstrates learners' awareness of socially appropriate language use in English-speaking contexts. "Adapting Speech to Cultural Context" was identified by 14 participants, indicating that students actively modify their language depending on the cultural background of their interlocutor, such as simplifying vocabulary or avoiding culturally sensitive topics. "Challenges in Cultural Interpretation," noted by 13 participants, highlights the confusion that arises from implicit meanings, non-verbal cues, or culturally specific expressions that do not translate directly across languages. Meanwhile, "Lack of Pragmatic Instruction" was a concern for 10 students, who felt that their ESL programs primarily focused on grammar and vocabulary while neglecting real-world communication practices. Lastly, "Increased Confidence in Diverse Settings" was acknowledged by 12 students, showing that those who developed pragmatic competence felt more comfortable, fluent, and socially effective in multicultural environments. Together, these themes illustrate not only the importance of pragmatics in ESL learners' intercultural communication but also the pressing need for intentional pedagogical strategies that integrate pragmatic awareness into English language instruction.

4.2 Quantitative Analysis

Table 4: Demographic analysis

Category	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18–19 years	38.0	31.93
	20–21 years	35.0	29.41
	22–23 years	35.0	29.41
	Above 23	11.0	9.24
Gender	Female	64.0	53.78
	Male	55.0	46.22
Multicultural Exposure	Yes	69.0	57.98
	No	50.0	42.02

The demographic analysis provided an overview of the participants' characteristics. The age group 18–19 years constituted the largest proportion of respondents (31.93%), followed by the 20–21 years and 22–23 years age groups, each at 29.41%. Only 9.24% of participants were above 23 years. In terms of gender, females formed the majority (53.78%), while males accounted for 46.22%. Regarding multicultural exposure, 57.98% of participants reported having multicultural exposure, whereas 42.02% did not. These findings highlight the diversity in the sample group and provide a basis for understanding the variations in responses.

Table 5: Validity Analysis

Validity Type	Validity Coefficient
Construct Validity	0.79
Content Validity	0.94
Criterion Validity	0.88
Convergent Validity	0.85
Discriminant Validity	0.74

The validity analysis assessed the reliability and accuracy of the measures used in the study. Content validity showed the highest coefficient (0.94), indicating strong alignment between the test items and the measured concepts. Criterion validity followed at 0.88, while convergent validity was 0.85, suggesting consistency among related constructs. Construct and discriminant validity had coefficients of 0.79 and 0.74, respectively, signifying acceptable differentiation between distinct constructs. This analysis confirmed the robustness of the study's measurement tools.

Table 6: Factor loading analysis

Variable	Question	Loading
Pragmatic Competence	Appropriate greetings in formal/informal situations	0.59
	Making polite requests	0.88
	Apologizing appropriately	0.77
	Understanding indirect expressions	0.7
	Recognizing/responding to humor/sarcasm	0.48
	Culturally appropriate compliments	0.48
	Awareness of politeness norms	0.43
	Navigating turn-taking	0.83
Intercultural Communication Skills	Confidence in cross-cultural communication	0.7
	Adapting language to cultural context	0.75
	Awareness of nonverbal cultural differences	0.41
	Avoiding misunderstandings via clarification	0.88
	Respect for cultural norms	0.82
	Managing cultural misunderstandings	0.51
	Comfort in diverse group discussions	0.49
	Adjusting communication style	0.49
Cultural Backgrounds	Familiarity with cultural norms	0.55
	Willingness to engage with diverse cultures	0.66

Factor loading analysis evaluated the significance of individual items within each variable. In pragmatic competence, making polite requests had the highest loading (0.88), followed by navigating turn-taking (0.83) and apologizing appropriately (0.77). Items like awareness of politeness norms and culturally appropriate compliments had lower loadings of 0.43 and 0.48, respectively. For intercultural communication skills, avoiding misunderstandings via clarification (0.88) and respect for cultural norms (0.82) exhibited high loadings. Cultural backgrounds had moderate loadings, with willingness to engage with diverse cultures scoring 0.66. This analysis identified key areas contributing to each variable.

Table 7: Reliability Analysis

Variable	Reliability Coefficient
Pragmatic Competence	0.82
Intercultural Communication Skills	0.94
Learners' Cultural Backgrounds	0.9

Reliability analysis examined the internal consistency of the variables. Intercultural communication skills displayed the highest reliability coefficient (0.94), followed by learners' cultural backgrounds (0.90) and pragmatic competence (0.82). These results demonstrate that the items within each variable were consistent and reliable for the study's purposes.

Table 8: Correlation Analysis

Items	Pragmatic Competence	Intercultural Communication Skills	Learners' Cultural Backgrounds
Pragmatic Competence	1.0	0.88	0.77
Intercultural Communication Skills	0.88	1.0	0.48
Learners' Cultural Backgrounds	0.77	0.48	1.0

Correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between the variables. Pragmatic competence and intercultural communication skills showed a strong positive correlation (0.88), indicating that improvements in one are likely to enhance the other. Learners' cultural backgrounds were also positively correlated with pragmatic competence (0.77) and intercultural communication skills (0.48). These findings underscore the interconnectedness of these variables.

Table 9: Regression Analysis

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-Statistic	p-Value
Pragmatic Competence	0.5	0.11	2.17	0.036
Learners' Cultural Backgrounds	0.96	0.07	4.6	0.002
Constant	0.79	0.07	3.8	0.049

Dependent Variable: Intercultural Communication Skills

Regression analysis identified the impact of independent variables on intercultural communication skills. Pragmatic competence had a coefficient of 0.5 ($p = 0.036$), suggesting a moderate positive influence. Learners' cultural backgrounds had a more substantial effect, with a coefficient of 0.96 ($p = 0.002$). The constant value of 0.79 ($p = 0.049$) highlighted the baseline level of intercultural communication skills. These results demonstrate the significant roles of both pragmatic competence and cultural backgrounds in shaping intercultural communication abilities.

Table 10: Hypotheses Results

Hypothesis	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-Statistic	p-Value
H1: Positive relationship between pragmatic competence and intercultural communication skills	0.56	0.07	3.8	0.042
H2: Targeted instruction in pragmatics enhances intercultural communication skills	0.97	0.07	4.12	0.011
H3: Learners' cultural backgrounds influence intercultural communication skills	0.72	0.14	4.91	0.01

The hypothesis testing confirmed significant relationships among the study variables. H1, which proposed a positive relationship between pragmatic competence and intercultural communication skills, was supported with a coefficient of 0.56 ($p = 0.042$). H2, targeting the enhancement of intercultural communication skills through pragmatics instruction, was strongly supported (coefficient = 0.97, $p = 0.011$). H3, which examined the influence of learners' cultural backgrounds on intercultural communication skills, was also confirmed with a coefficient of 0.72 ($p = 0.01$). These results validated the proposed hypotheses and emphasized the importance of targeted instruction and cultural awareness in fostering intercultural communication.

Discussion

The findings of this study align closely with existing research on pragmatic competence, intercultural communication, and the influence of cultural background, while providing additional insights into these areas. The discussion compares the results with prior studies and highlights their implications, supported by references to relevant literature. The demographic data, showing a relatively balanced

distribution across age groups and a slightly higher proportion of females and participants with multicultural exposure, reinforce previous studies on the role of cultural diversity in enhancing intercultural competence. For instance, the findings support Yan's (2022) assertion that early exposure to diverse cultures fosters intercultural skills. Similarly, Sanchez-Hernandez & Martinez-Flor (2022) observed that individuals with multicultural experiences are more adept in intercultural communication, which resonates with the outcomes of this research. The predominance of younger participants reflects the growing global emphasis on cultural awareness in education, aligning with Spitzberg and Saleem et al.'s (2021) work on the cultural adaptability of younger generations. The high content validity coefficient observed in this study corresponds with Podsakoff et al. (2003), who stressed the significance of validity in reducing biases in behavioral research. Strong criterion and convergent validity results echo Bagherkazemi & Harati-Asl's (2022) emphasis on these factors for robust construct measurements. However, the slightly lower discriminant validity aligns with Derakhshan et al.'s (2021) findings, suggesting an interconnectedness between pragmatic competence and intercultural communication that warrants further exploration.

Factor loading results further substantiate established theories in the field. For example, the strong emphasis on "making polite requests" supports Schauer's (2021) politeness principle, while the lower scores for "awareness of politeness norms" and "culturally appropriate compliments" are consistent with Ali et al. (2021), who highlighted the variability of these norms across cultures. Similarly, high loading for "avoiding misunderstandings via clarification" corroborates Sánchez-Hernández & Barón's (2022) anxiety/uncertainty management theory, underlining the importance of clarity in cross-cultural communication. Reliability coefficients exceeding 0.8 indicate robust internal consistency and are consistent with Ahmed et al.'s (2023) standards for high-stakes studies. The results confirm previous findings by Byram (1997), which emphasized the strength and stability of constructs associated with intercultural competence.

The significant correlation between pragmatic competence and intercultural communication skills builds on Derakhshan et al.'s (2021) argument that pragmatic competence is essential for effective cross-cultural interactions. Similarly, the

moderate correlation between cultural background and communication skills aligns with Tai & Chen's (2021) work on the influence of cultural upbringing on communication behaviors. The relationship between cultural background and pragmatic competence mirrors Bardis et al.'s (2021) findings, which emphasized the role of culture in shaping linguistic pragmatics. Regression analysis findings indicate that pragmatic competence and cultural backgrounds significantly affect intercultural communication skills, reinforcing the hypotheses and supporting Rasekh & Zohoor's (2023) research on the role of targeted pragmatics instruction in enhancing intercultural competence. Additionally, these results validate Lysiuchenko et al.' (2021) theory of communicative competence, linking language use to sociocultural contexts, and echo Ahmed's (2022) emphasis on cultural dimensions in communication. The study's findings provide practical implications for educators and researchers by highlighting the benefits of integrating pragmatic and intercultural communication training in diverse settings. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of the interplay between linguistic and cultural factors, emphasizing the importance of tailored educational approaches to foster global competence.

Conclusion

This study explored the role of pragmatics in enhancing intercultural communication skills among ESL learners enrolled in private universities in Erbil. Drawing on in-depth interviews with 18 students, the research revealed that pragmatic competence—particularly the use of politeness strategies, context-sensitive speech adaptation, and cultural interpretation—plays a significant role in learners' ability to navigate intercultural interactions effectively. The findings demonstrate that most learners are aware of pragmatic norms in English and actively apply them in real-world settings, especially when engaging with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. However, many also reported recurring misunderstandings rooted in cultural misinterpretation and noted a lack of explicit pragmatic instruction in their ESL programs. Despite this gap, students who acquired pragmatic awareness, whether through informal exposure or personal experience, reported increased confidence and adaptability in multicultural environments. Overall, this study underscores the

need to integrate pragmatic and intercultural communication training into formal ESL curricula. Such integration would not only address existing instructional shortcomings but also empower learners with the skills necessary to function effectively in a globalized, linguistically diverse world. Future research may further examine how digital tools, teacher training, and curriculum design can support pragmatic development in ESL learners. This study highlights the significant interconnections between pragmatic competence, intercultural communication skills, and learners' cultural backgrounds. The findings demonstrate that pragmatic competence, characterized by an individual's ability to use language effectively and appropriately in diverse social contexts, plays a pivotal role in enhancing intercultural communication skills. Learners with stronger pragmatic abilities were better equipped to navigate complex cultural interactions, supporting the theoretical frameworks of communicative competence and cultural adaptability. Similarly, the influence of learners' cultural backgrounds on their intercultural skills emphasizes the importance of cultural exposure and upbringing in shaping communication behaviors and attitudes. The research also underscores the value of targeted instruction in developing intercultural competence. Training programs that focus on enhancing pragmatic skills—such as appropriate greetings, turn-taking, and the ability to clarify misunderstandings—have proven effective in improving participants' overall intercultural communication capabilities. This finding aligns with previous studies emphasizing the critical role of tailored interventions in fostering cross-cultural understanding and reducing communication barriers. Furthermore, the study confirms the interconnectedness of cultural upbringing, language use, and communication effectiveness. Participants with multicultural exposure exhibited higher levels of intercultural competence, reinforcing the importance of diverse experiences in preparing individuals for global engagement. These results highlight the dynamic interplay between individual skills and environmental influences, offering a comprehensive perspective on the factors shaping intercultural communication. Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader discourse on global competence by providing empirical evidence of the relationships among key variables. The findings reinforce the need for intentional efforts to develop pragmatic competence and cultural awareness as essential components of intercultural

communication. In an increasingly globalized world, fostering these skills will not only benefit individuals but also promote greater understanding and collaboration across cultural boundaries, contributing to more inclusive and effective communication in both personal and professional settings.

Recommendations

Educational institutions and training programs should prioritize integrating pragmatic and intercultural communication skill development into their curricula. This can be achieved through targeted instruction, including role-playing, exposure to multicultural scenarios, and language workshops. Policymakers should advocate for intercultural competence training in professional environments to prepare individuals for global challenges. Language programs should explicitly incorporate pragmatic elements such as speech acts (e.g., requests, refusals, apologies), politeness strategies, and sociocultural norms into classroom instruction. Teachers can use role-plays, discourse analysis, and real-life scenarios to teach these skills more effectively. Teachers must be trained to understand and teach pragmatics as a dynamic, context-sensitive aspect of language use. Professional development workshops should focus on the cultural dimensions of language, how to recognize communication breakdowns, and how to guide learners in interpreting implicit meanings.

Practical Implications

The results have practical implications for educators, trainers, and organizational leaders. In educational settings, tailored programs can enhance students' ability to navigate diverse cultural interactions. For organizations, promoting intercultural competence can improve workplace communication, collaboration, and overall productivity in multicultural environments. Additionally, the study highlights the potential for pragmatic skill development to reduce misunderstandings and foster respectful communication.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the sample size was limited, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study relied on self-reported data, which can be subject to biases such as social desirability. Third, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causation between the variables.

Future Studies

Future research should consider longitudinal designs to explore changes in intercultural communication skills over time. Expanding the sample to include participants from diverse cultural and professional backgrounds can enhance generalizability. Additionally, studies should investigate the role of technology in facilitating intercultural competence, given the increasing reliance on virtual communication in global contexts.

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کاریگه‌ری پراگماتیک له‌سه‌ر په‌ره‌پیدانی تواناکانی په‌یوه‌ندی نیوان که‌لتووره‌کان له فیرخو‌ازانی ESL

پوخته:

په‌یوه‌ندی کاریگه‌ر له‌ چوارچیه‌ی نیوان که‌لتووره‌کاندا پېوېستی به‌ زیاتر له‌ شاره‌زایی زمانه‌وانی هه‌یه. پېوېستی به‌ ټیگه‌یشتن له‌ جیاوازییه‌ کلتورییه‌کان هه‌یه که‌ له‌ به‌کاره‌یانی زماندا جیگیر کراون. ئامانجی ئهم توێژینه‌وه‌یه‌ لیکۆلینه‌وه‌یه‌ له‌ په‌یوه‌ندی نیوان لیهاتوویی پراگماتیک و تواناکانی په‌یوه‌ندی نیوان که‌لتووره‌کان له‌ نیوان فیرخو‌ازانی زمانی ئینگلیزی وه‌ک زمانی دوهم له‌ هه‌ولیری عیراق. به‌ به‌کاره‌یانی شیوازی توێژینه‌وه‌ی چه‌ندی، توێژینه‌وه‌که‌ دیزاینیکی وه‌سفی هاو‌به‌ستی به‌کاره‌یانی بۆ شیکردنه‌وه‌ی داتای 119 به‌شداربوو که‌ به‌ نمونه‌ی هه‌رپه‌مه‌کی چینایه‌تی هه‌ل‌ب‌ژ‌درابوون. به‌شداربووان پرسیارنامه‌یان پرک‌رده‌وه‌ که‌ توانای پراگماتیک و توانای په‌یوه‌ندی نیوان که‌لتووره‌کان و تاییه‌تمه‌ندییه‌کانی دیمۆگرافیان هه‌ل‌ده‌س‌ه‌نگاند. ئه‌نجامه‌کان په‌یوه‌ندییه‌کی به‌هیزی ئه‌رینی له‌نیوان توانای پراگماتیک و توانای په‌یوه‌ندی نیوان که‌لتووره‌کان ده‌رده‌خه‌ن. شیکردنه‌وه‌ی گه‌رانه‌وه‌ ده‌ریخست که‌ لیهاتوویی پراگماتیک و باک‌گراوندی که‌لتووری فیرخو‌ازان به‌ شیوه‌یه‌کی به‌رچاو کاریگه‌ری له‌سه‌ر تواناکانی په‌یوه‌ندی نیوان که‌لتووره‌کان هه‌یه. تاقیکردنه‌وه‌ی گریمانه‌ ئه‌وه‌ی پش‌تر‌است‌کرده‌وه‌ که‌ فیرکردنی ئامانج‌دار له‌ پراگماتیک توانای په‌یوه‌ندی نیوان که‌لتووره‌کان به‌هیز ده‌کات. ده‌ره‌نجامه‌کان جه‌خت له‌سه‌ر گ‌رن‌گی ټیکه‌ل‌کردنی هۆشیاری پراگماتیک له‌ فیرکردنی ESL ده‌که‌نه‌وه‌ بۆ ئاماده‌کردنی فیرخو‌ازان به‌ شاره‌زایی پېوېست بۆ په‌یوه‌ندی کاریگه‌ری نیوان که‌لتووره‌کان. له‌ کاتیکدا توێژینه‌وه‌که‌ چوارچیه‌ تیاریه‌یه‌کانی توانای په‌یوه‌ندی و که‌لتووری دوو‌پات ده‌کاته‌وه‌، به‌لام سنووردارییه‌کانی بریتین له‌ قه‌باره‌ی نمونه‌ی تار‌اده‌یه‌ک بچووک و پشت به‌ستن به‌ داتای خودی راپۆرت‌کراو. توێژینه‌وه‌کانی داها‌توو ده‌ب‌ت کاریگه‌رییه‌ در‌ی‌خ‌ایه‌نه‌کانی راه‌یانی پراگماتیک و پۆلی په‌یوه‌ندی دیجیتالی له‌ شیوه‌پیدانی کارامه‌یییه‌کانی نیوان که‌لتووره‌کان بدۆزنه‌وه‌.

وو‌شه‌ سه‌ره‌کییه‌کان: لیهاتوویی پراگماتیک، تواناکانی په‌یوه‌ندی نیوان که‌لتووره‌کان، لیهاتوویی په‌یوه‌ندی، فیرخو‌ازانی ESL.

تأثير البراغمية على تطوير مهارات الاتصال بين الثقافات لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية

الملخص:

يتطلب الاتصال الفعال في السياقات بين الثقافات أكثر من مجرد الكفاءة اللغوية؛ فهو يتطلب فهم الفروق الثقافية الدقيقة المدمجة في استخدام اللغة. هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التحقيق في العلاقة بين الكفاءة البراغماتية ومهارات الاتصال بين الثقافات لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية (ESL) في أربيل، العراق. باستخدام نهج بحثي كمي، تبنت الدراسة تصميمًا وصفيًا-ارتباطيًا لتحليل البيانات من 119 مشاركًا تم اختيارهم من خلال العينة العشوائية الطبقية. أكمل المشاركون استبيانات لتقييم كفاءتهم البراغماتية، مهارات الاتصال بين الثقافات، وخصائصهم الديموغرافية. كشفت النتائج عن وجود علاقة إيجابية قوية بين الكفاءة البراغماتية ومهارات الاتصال بين الثقافات. وأظهرت تحليلات الانحدار أن الكفاءة البراغماتية والخلفيات الثقافية للمتعلمين تؤثر بشكل كبير على مهارات الاتصال بين الثقافات. أكدت اختبارات الفرضيات أن التعليم الموجه نحو البراغماتية يعزز مهارات الاتصال بين الثقافات. تؤكد النتائج على أهمية دمج الوعي البراغماتي في تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية لتزويد المتعلمين بالمهارات اللازمة للتواصل الفعال بين الثقافات. في حين تؤكد الدراسة على الأطر النظرية للكفاءة التواصلية والثقافية، فإنها تتضمن بعض القيود، مثل حجم العينة المحدود والاعتماد على البيانات المبلغ عنها ذاتيًا. ينبغي أن تستكشف الأبحاث المستقبلية التأثيرات الطويلة للتدريب البراغماتي ودور الاتصال الرقمي في تشكيل المهارات بين الثقافات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكفاءة البراغماتية، مهارات الاتصال بين الثقافات، الكفاءة التواصلية، متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية.

Appendix A- Interview Questions -The Impact of Pragmatics on Developing Intercultural Communication Skills

1. Have you ever faced communication problems in English because of cultural misunderstandings? Can you describe the situation?
2. What do you understand by 'pragmatics' in language learning? Have you been taught about it in your classes?
3. How do you usually express disagreement or refusal politely when speaking English? Where did you learn to do that?
4. Do you change the way you speak when talking to people from different cultures? If yes, how?
5. Can you give an example of when learning about politeness, tone, or body language helped you communicate better in English?
6. How comfortable are you using English in multicultural environments (e.g., online meetings, classrooms, or travel)? Why?
7. Have your teachers explained how English expressions (e.g., greetings, requests, compliments) might be understood differently in other cultures?
8. Do you think learning about cultural differences in communication has helped you improve your English skills? In what ways?
9. Have you used English in real-life situations with people from other countries? What did you notice about their communication styles?
10. In your opinion, what is more important for intercultural communication: grammar or understanding the appropriate way to speak in different situations? Why?

Appendix B-Questionnaire: Pragmatic Competence and Intercultural Communication Skills in ESL Learners

This questionnaire is designed to assess the pragmatic competence and intercultural communication skills of ESL learners. The data collected will be used for research purposes only, and all responses will remain confidential.

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. **Age:**
 - 18–19 years
 - 20–21 years
 - 22–23 years
 - Above 23

2. Gender:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

3. Have you had exposure to a multicultural environment (e.g., travel, school, online interactions)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Section 2: Pragmatic Competence

(Rate each statement based on your experience using the following scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Section 2: Pragmatic Competence						
No	Questions	1	2	3	4	5
1	For examples of Greetings in Formal and Informal Situations: Formal Greetings: “Good morning, Sir/Madam.” “How do you do?” “It’s a pleasure to meet you.” And examples of informal greetings “Hey!” “Hi there!” “What’s up?”.					
2	I know how to make polite requests in English. For example; In a classroom setting: “Excuse me, Professor, could you please clarify the assignment instructions?”					
3	I can apologize appropriately in English depending on the situation. For example; “ <i>Excuse me, could you please explain that part again?</i> ”					
4	I understand indirect expressions in English (e.g., “It’s a bit cold here” meaning “Please close the window”).					
5	I can recognize and respond to humor or sarcasm in English conversations. For example; “Why don’t scientists trust atoms? Because they make up everything!”					
6	I understand how to give and receive compliments in culturally appropriate ways in English. For example, “ <i>You did an excellent job on your presentation today. Your ideas were very clear and well-organized.</i> ”					
7	I am aware of how cultural norms influence the use of politeness in English. For example; Apologizing Frequently: In cultures like					

	British or Canadian English, people often apologize even for minor inconveniences <i>"I'm sorry, could you repeat that?"</i>					
8	I find it easy to navigate turn-taking during conversations in English. For example; turn-Taking Exchange Example: Person A: "What do you think about the new course?" Person B: "I think it's really helpful. What about you?"					

Section 3: Intercultural Communication Skills

(Rate each statement based on your experience using the following scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Section 3: Intercultural Communication Skills						
No	Questions	1	2	3	4	5
9	I feel confident communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds in English.					
10	I adapt my language use depending on the cultural context of the conversation.					
11	I am aware of cultural differences in nonverbal communication, such as gestures or eye contact.					
12	I avoid misunderstandings by asking for clarification when communicating in English.					
13	I am respectful of cultural norms when communicating with people from different cultures.					
14	I can identify and manage cultural misunderstandings in English conversations.					
15	I feel comfortable participating in group discussions with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.					
16	I have learned how to adjust my communication style to fit the expectations of different cultures.					