THE ROLE OF PRAGMATICS COMPETENCE IN SUPPORTING STUDENT'S SELF-ESTEEM IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the role of pragmatic competence in supporting students' self-esteem in English language learning, employing a Mixed Methods approach with an Exploratory Sequential Mixed-Methods Design. The study was conducted with 80 students from Secondary School. The first phase utilized a quantitative Likert scale questionnaire to measure the relationship between pragmatic competence and self-esteem. The second phase involved qualitative narrative analysis from interviews with students and teachers to gain deeper insights. Results indicate that students with higher pragmatic competence, such as using politeness strategies and contextually appropriate responses, demonstrated increased self-esteem. Internal factors such as motivation and past experiences, and external factors including family support and teacher feedback, were found to influence this relationship. The study highlights the importance of enhancing pragmatic competence through collaborative learning, self-reflection, and creating a supportive environment to boost students' confidence and willingness to engage in English language activities. This research provides recommendations for integrating pragmatic competence into English teaching to promote both language skills and self-esteem.

Keywords: english language learning, pragmatic competence, students' self-esteem

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menyelidiki peran kompetensi pragmatik dalam mendukung harga diri siswa dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, menggunakan pendekatan Metode Campuran dengan Desain Metode Campuran Eksploratori Berurutan. Penelitian ini dilakukan terhadap 80 siswa dari Sekolah Menengah Atas. Tahap pertama menggunakan kuesioner skala Likert kuantitatif untuk mengukur hubungan antara kompetensi pragmatik dan harga diri. Tahap kedua melibatkan analisis naratif kualitatif dari wawancara dengan siswa dan guru untuk mendapatkan wawasan yang lebih mendalam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa dengan kompetensi pragmatik yang lebih tinggi, seperti menggunakan strategi kesopanan dan tanggapan yang sesuai dengan konteks, menunjukkan peningkatan harga diri. Faktor internal seperti motivasi dan pengalaman masa lalu, dan faktor eksternal termasuk dukungan keluarga dan umpan balik guru, ditemukan memengaruhi hubungan ini. Penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya meningkatkan kompetensi pragmatik melalui pembelajaran kolaboratif, refleksi diri, dan menciptakan lingkungan yang mendukung untuk meningkatkan kepercayaan diri dan kemauan

siswa untuk terlibat dalam kegiatan bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini memberikan rekomendasi untuk mengintegrasikan kompetensi pragmatik ke dalam pengajaran bahasa Inggris untuk meningkatkan keterampilan bahasa dan harga diri.

Kata Kunci: pembelajaran bahasa inggris, kompetensi pragmatik, harga diri siswa

A. Pendahuluan

The English is the most widely spoken language worldwide, making it a key tool for international communication. As the primary language in numerous countries, it is heavily utilized in global business, science, and technology (Shrishthy, 2023). Proficiency in English unlocks significant opportunities for individuals, including better career prospects (Malokani et al., 2023). This highlights the importance of English proficiency as a valuable skill across various aspects of life. Moreover, it enables individuals to broaden their social networks and foster international relationships. Mastering English is essential for engaging and connecting with people from diverse cultural and national backgrounds. As a global lingua franca, English facilitates communication and collaboration in fields such as business, science, and diplomacy (Atasheva, 2024), enriching individuals' experiences, knowledge, and global perspectives.

Despite its importance, learning English can be challenging for many learners. Issues such as lack of confidence, language anxiety, and difficulties in using English effectively are common obstacles (Kuswantoro & Novita, 2024). One key factor influencing success in learning English is self-esteem. High self-esteem positively impacts language learning, as confident and motivated students are more likely to actively participate in learning activities (Agama & Amlapura, 2023). Conversely, low self-esteem can lead to fear of making mistakes and reluctance to engage, hindering language development (Chiha et al., 2023; Ghazo, 2023).

Low self-esteem often originates from negative past experiences, such as critical feedback from teachers or peers. For example, a 2019 study by Gonzalez et al. found that overly critical comments from teachers about students' English skills contributed to feelings of inadequacy, reducing participation in class discussions. Similarly, a 2021 survey

revealed that students who experienced mocking or dismissive remarks about their English abilities from peers reported lower confidence (Patel & Sharma, 2021). These findings underscore the influence of the social environment in shaping students' self-perceptions and engagement with English.

Additionally, a 2023 report by the International TESOL Association highlighted how poor assessment outcomes could foster a fixed mindset, leading students to believe their language abilities are limited (Williams & Chu, 2023). Such beliefs often result in avoidance behaviors and further underperformance, reinforcing negative self-perceptions. Addressing these issues requires educators to foster supportive and empowering learning environments.

Another challenge in learning English is the lack of pragmatic competence, defined as the ability to use language effectively in specific social contexts (Taguchi, 2019). Limited pragmatic competence can lead to communication difficulties, misunderstandings, and negative social interactions (Nguyen, 2020). It can also cause learners to appear impolite or inappropriate, which

negatively impacts their confidence and social relationships (Sykes & Cohen, 2022). Feelings of embarrassment, frustration, and inadequacy stemming from pragmatic deficiencies can further diminish self-esteem and motivation to learn English (Félix-Brasdefer & Koike, 2023; Takahashi, 2021).

B. Metode Penelitian

This study utilizes an Exploratory Sequential Mixed-Methods Design to examine the role of pragmatic competence in supporting students' self-esteem in English language learning at SMAN 1 Lenteng, Sumenep Madura. Guided by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, this approach integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods to comprehensively analyze the complex relationship between pragmatic competence and self-esteem. The study unfolds in two phases: quantitative data collection and analysis, followed by qualitative exploration, with both phases synthesized during the interpretation stage.

Two key theoretical frameworks underpin this research. The first is Pragmatic Competence

Theory, as defined by Kasper and Rose (2001), which frames pragmatic competence as the ability to use language appropriately in social contexts by integrating linguistic knowledge and cultural understanding. This theory is used to investigate how elements like politeness strategies, cultural norms, and speech act comprehension influence students' confidence and interpersonal effectiveness. The second framework is Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Theory (1965), which conceptualizes self-esteem as a person's overall perception of self-worth. Together, these theories facilitate an understanding of how pragmatic abilities intersect with psychological factors in the learning process.

The study involves 80 grade 11 students at SMAN 1 Lenteng, consisting of 52 males and 28 females, as well as two English teachers. The students' pragmatic competence and self-esteem are assessed through a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) and a Likert-scale questionnaire. Meanwhile, the teachers are interviewed to provide their insights on the influence of pragmatic competence on students' self-esteem.

The first phase focuses on collecting quantitative data using a Likert-scale questionnaire designed to measure pragmatic competence and self-esteem in English language learning. The questionnaire, grounded in frameworks by Kasper and Rose (2002) and Rosenberg (1965), evaluates pragmatic skills like speech act performance and cultural sensitivity alongside self-esteem indicators such as confidence and social acceptance. A five-point Likert scale captures students' responses, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

Additionally, a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) is employed to assess pragmatic competence. The DCT consists of written scenarios requiring students to respond to situations such as making requests, apologizing, and disagreeing politely. Responses are evaluated against a rubric that measures pragmatic appropriateness, confidence, and coherence.

The second phase involves semi-structured interviews with selected students and teachers, aiming to uncover deeper insights into

the relationship between pragmatic competence and self-esteem. Open-ended questions guide the discussions, exploring participants' personal experiences, challenges, and strategies for improving pragmatic competence and confidence in English communication.

Data analysis integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data are analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, providing an overview of trends and distributions within the responses. Meanwhile, qualitative data from interviews are examined through thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) methodology. This process involves coding, clustering related codes into themes, and synthesizing the findings to offer contextual depth. The integration of these methods, guided by the frameworks of Pragmatism Theory (Patton, 1990) and Triangulation Theory (Denzin, 1978), ensures a holistic understanding of the research problem. Quantitative data reveal patterns and relationships, while qualitative narratives provide the nuanced, contextual insights necessary for a comprehensive analysis.

C. Hasil Penelitian dan Pembahasan

The findings aim to shed light on the role of pragmatic competence in building students' self-confidence and identify strategies to support this growth. Data were gathered from 80 students using a Multiple Choice DCT Test, Questionnaire, and Interview. The findings provide a detailed explanation of how pragmatic competence impacts self-esteem in English learning. This study revealed that most students employed suitable politeness strategies in their English interactions. They used courteous expressions like "please" and "thank you" and avoided confrontational behavior. These practices fostered positive communication and enhanced social bonds within the classroom. Additionally, this politeness greatly impacted students' self-esteem, as it made them feel more accepted and appreciated in the learning environment.

The first question of DCT Tests, assess the students' ability to make polite requests in a situation where the library is about to close. Each option reflects a different level of politeness and appropriateness in English pragmatics. Option A ("Give me the book now, I need it.")—This is a direct

and less polite request. It could be interpreted as rude or too forceful in most situations. Option B ("Can I please borrow this book quickly before the library closes?")—This is a polite request with appropriate language for the situation. The use of "please" softens the request, and the time constraint is acknowledged. Option C ("I need this book; please give it to me.")—This is still polite but more direct than option B. It includes "please" but could be seen as more demanding than option B. The results of the DCT showed that 12.5% of students chose A, which indicates a Low level (1), 71.3% of students chose B, which indicates a High level (3), and 16.3% of students chose C, which indicates a Moderate level (2). The students were able to respond politely, using the word 'please' and showing a sense of urgency while still respecting the officer.

The second question of DCT Tests, assess how students handle apologies when they are late for class, which is relevant to their politeness strategies in pragmatic competence. The responses reflect different levels of responsibility, formality, and politeness in their apologies. The results of the DCT showed that 47.5%

of students chose option C, suggesting that nearly half of the students understand the importance of formality and respect when apologizing in an academic context. Option A was selected by 27.5%, indicating that a significant number of students prefer a more casual, straightforward apology. Option B was selected by 25%, which may show that some students are less aware of the need to fully accept responsibility when apologizing.

Most students also demonstrated the ability to provide responses that were appropriate to the social context. They were able to adjust their responses based on formal or informal situations, as well as the group dynamics. For example, students were more cautious when responding in front of the teacher or when participating in large group discussions. This appropriateness of responses helped boost students' self-esteem, as they felt capable of adapting to the situations they faced. The 4th question of DCT Tests, Asses how student's ability to provide responses that were appropriate to the social context. Context-appropriate responses, which play a critical role in pragmatic competence. Pragmatic

competence involves understanding how to communicate effectively in specific social situations, ensuring that the language used aligns with the expectations of the context. In this case, students are tasked with declining a friend's party invitation due to school commitments. The appropriateness of each response varies in terms of politeness, explanation, and the speaker's sensitivity to the situation.

The pie chart shows that 50% of the students chose option A, which suggests that many students demonstrate a strong understanding of how to provide context-appropriate responses by offering a polite and socially considerate explanation. However, the fact that 25% of students chose either option B or C indicates that some students struggle with providing contextually appropriate, polite refusals.

Thus, the data reveal varying levels of pragmatic competence in producing context-appropriate responses. Those who chose option A show an awareness of how to decline an invitation without damaging the social relationship, while those who chose options B or C may benefit from further development in their pragmatic

skills, especially in balancing directness with politeness in everyday interactions. From the research results, it is evident that only a few students were able to achieve their communication goals, such as asking for help, expressing disagreement politely, or resolving communication problems. This ability shows that students' skills in managing conversations to achieve their goals without damaging social relationships still need to be improved. The ability to achieve communication goals directly contributes to students' self-esteem, as they feel more confident in expressing opinions or requests. The 3rd question of DCT Tests, connects to communication goals by evaluating how effectively students can achieve specific objectives in a social interaction. It can be seen on the Figure 4 below.

The results of the DCT showed that 31.3% of students chose A, which indicates a High level (3), 42.5% of students chose B, which indicates a Low level (1), and 26.3% of students chose C, which indicates a Moderate level (2). Only 31.3% of students were able to politely decline, provide reasons, and offer alternative possibilities to maintain social

relationships. The eighth question of DCT Test also assesses how students handle a situation of misunderstanding during a lesson. The results of the 5ᵗʰ figure of DCT showed that 35% of students chose A, which indicates a Moderate level (2), 43.8% of students chose B, which indicates a High level (3), and 21.3% of students chose C, which indicates a Low level (1). A total of 43.8% of students were able to respond politely, using the phrase 'Could you please' to ask the teacher to repeat the explanation.

Students with good pragmatic competence showed higher self-confidence when expressing their opinions in group or class discussions. They were not only able to convey their opinions clearly, but also felt that their opinions were valued by peers and teachers, which ultimately boosted their self-esteem. The fifth question of the DCT Test examines the participants' ability to express their opinion in a context that requires acknowledgment of another person's achievement. The focus is on how self-assurance and confidence in expressing an opinion are demonstrated in different levels of politeness, sincerity, and

appropriateness. Option C (46.3%). The majority of participants selected this neutral and reserved response, indicating a tendency toward modest or noncommittal opinions. This suggests that many participants may lack confidence in openly expressing praise or are influenced by cultural norms that discourage enthusiastic acknowledgment. Option B (30%). A significant portion of participants chose this confident and positive response, reflecting a good balance of self-assurance and empathy. It suggests an understanding of how to express opinions that build and maintain relationships. Option A (23.8%). A notable percentage chose this bold but inappropriate response, which shows a willingness to express opinions directly but often at the cost of tact and empathy. This may highlight a need for improving emotional intelligence and awareness of appropriate social behavior.

The responses to this question reveal varying levels of self-assurance in expressing opinions. Option B aligns with a confident and respectful approach, while Option C indicates a more reserved or hesitant expression. Option A reflects overconfidence or a lack of awareness about the impact of

negative remarks. By connecting this analysis to "Expressing an Opinion (Self-Assurance)," the results can guide individuals to improve their ability to express opinions confidently and empathetically in social interactions.

The fifteenth question of DCT Test assesses the participants' ability to express opinions confidently while managing interpersonal conflict. Expressing an opinion in this scenario demonstrates how individuals assert themselves in the face of disagreement while maintaining emotional control and communication skills. The results of the 15th question of DCT Test showed that 23.8% of students chose A, which indicates a High level (3), 38.8% of students chose B, which indicates a Low level (1), and 37.5% of students chose C, which indicates a Moderate level (2). A total of 23.8% of students have not yet developed the desire to resolve conflicts peacefully and seek joint solutions. The twelfth question of DCT Test examines how individuals navigate expressing their thoughts assertively without disregarding others' perspectives, demonstrating varying levels of self-confidence and communication styles. Those who

selected Option A demonstrate a confident yet respectful approach, showing high emotional intelligence. They express their opinions clearly while valuing others' viewpoints. This aligns with a mature, balanced sense of self-assurance. This approach fosters collaboration and healthy dialogue, a key aspect of constructive self-expression. The participants who chose Option B they may not fully prioritize harmony in discussions. This choice highlights self-assurance in stating one's ideas but with a focus on being heard rather than maintaining a shared understanding.

Discussion

Pragmatic competence, the ability to effectively use language in various social contexts, is closely tied to students' self-esteem in learning English. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) highlights learning as a social process where language skills develop through interactions with more knowledgeable individuals. By mastering pragmatic competence, students can navigate these interactions more effectively, which enhances their confidence in using English. Successful use of appropriate language fosters feelings of value and

recognition from peers and teachers, strengthening self-esteem.

Similarly, Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) emphasizes learning through observation and feedback. When students witness pragmatic language use in authentic settings and receive positive reinforcement, their self-efficacy—belief in their abilities—improves. This heightened belief fuels better performance, creating a virtuous cycle of progress and confidence. Developing pragmatic competence is crucial for boosting students' self-esteem in English learning. This aligns with the Self-Esteem Theory (Coopersmith, 1967), which posits that individuals perform better when they feel valued and confident. Pragmatic competence involves understanding and using language in alignment with social and cultural norms, which is essential for meaningful communication. Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1997) also suggests that belief in one's abilities significantly impacts motivation and performance, tying pragmatic competence directly to success in language learning.

In social contexts, pragmatic competence empowers students to understand and respond to communication norms, earning them respect and social acceptance. For instance, correctly using polite expressions or idiomatic language during a conversation can boost their confidence and sense of achievement (Saka & Merç, 2023). However, research shows that many students struggle with pragmatic competence, as evidenced by low performance on Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs). Challenges arise from limited understanding of social contexts, such as when to use formal or informal expressions or specific politeness strategies. A lack of real-world exposure restricts their ability to apply pragmatics effectively outside the classroom. The Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach bridges this gap by connecting classroom material to real-life situations, improving understanding and application of language in authentic contexts (Windi & Suryaman, 2022). Low proficiency in grammar and vocabulary further hinders students' ability to craft appropriate pragmatic responses. Psychological factors such as anxiety and low confidence also negatively impact their pragmatic competence. Communication anxiety often limits students' participation in

interactions, affecting their ability to use language effectively.

Difficulties in interpreting English meanings, as students express in statements like "I always make mistakes in interpreting meanings in English," stem from inadequate vocabulary and grammar mastery. Vocabulary forms the foundation for understanding meaning, while grammar helps in interpreting sentence structures and intentions. Errors in grammar comprehension often lead to misinterpretations, particularly in complex communication (Nation, 2017; Schmitt, 2020; Ellis & Shintani, 2017).

Moreover, limited interaction with native speakers, as indicated by the statement "I feel that I lack exposure to native speakers," reduces opportunities to learn pronunciation, intonation, and culturally appropriate language use. According to Krashen's Input Hypothesis, comprehensible input is essential for second language acquisition. Without adequate exposure, students' progress in language competence is hindered. Additionally, insufficient daily exposure to English slows the learning process and diminishes motivation

and practice opportunities. Students also report feeling anxious about speaking English, as highlighted by the statement "I feel anxious when speaking English." Such anxiety, common among second language learners, often stems from fear of negative judgment, lack of confidence, or past negative experiences. Language anxiety is frequently linked to proficiency gaps, which impact speaking abilities and overall language learning (MacIntyre, 2017; Alamer & Lee, 2024).

E. Kesimpulan

This study underscores the critical importance of pragmatic competence in enhancing students' self-esteem during English language learning. Students with strong pragmatic skills—such as the ability to use language appropriately in diverse social contexts—demonstrate higher self-esteem. This confidence arises from their improved ability to communicate effectively, encouraging active participation in learning activities. Both internal and external factors play a role in shaping students' self-esteem. Intrinsic motivation, interest in learning, and prior experiences significantly influence confidence, while negative

experiences—such as overly theoretical teaching or limited variety in approaches—can hinder it. External factors, such as unsupportive learning environments, also impact confidence. Developing pragmatic competence provides students with positive learning experiences, strengthening their self-esteem and fostering resilience in the face of challenges. Strategies to boost self-esteem during English learning include collaborative learning, aligned with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Learning Theory. Group activities and conversation simulations encourage students to practice English in a relaxed, supportive environment where errors can be corrected, and feedback shared, reducing the fear of failure. In summary, self-reflection, collaborative learning, and constructive feedback are vital for improving pragmatic competence and self-esteem. These strategies help students build a deeper understanding of language and greater confidence in their learning journey.

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