

# Building Communicative Bridges: Intercultural Pedagogy and Pragmatic Awareness in Primary-Level English Language Teaching

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**Abstract:** The teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in primary education has gradually moved beyond an exclusive focus on grammatical structures and vocabulary acquisition, placing increasing emphasis on the development of communicative competence grounded in intercultural understanding and pragmatic awareness. This paper explores the enhancement of pragmatic awareness in primary education, understood as learners' ability to use and interpret language appropriately in relation to social and contextual variables.

Drawing on innovative instructional practices implemented within the framework of intercultural education programmes, the study highlights the pedagogical value of authentic communication, the use of corpora, authentic dialogues, and dramatized scenarios in fostering pupils' intercultural communicative competence. Particular attention is also paid to the role of technology as a facilitating tool and to feedback as a dynamic and formative process that supports deeper learning and reflection.

The paper advocates an experiential and learner-centred approach to EFL instruction, one that effectively bridges the school environment with the multicultural realities of contemporary society, enabling young learners to engage meaningfully and appropriately in real-world communicative contexts.

**Keywords:** pragmatic awareness; intercultural education; English language teaching; authentic communication; learner-centred approach

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## I. Introduction

The teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in primary education has undergone a significant shift from traditional, form-focused models centred on the transmission of grammatical and syntactic rules to more communicative and child-centred approaches. These approaches acknowledge the growing need for learners' linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic awareness in an increasingly globalised and multicultural world (Byram, 1997; Taguchi, 2015). Within this context, the role of the teacher extends beyond teaching language as a neutral system of forms and structures, encompassing the development of learners' intercultural awareness and their ability to interpret meaning in relation to sociocultural norms and expectations (Kasper & Rose, 2002).

Pragmatic awareness, defined as learners' conscious understanding of how language is used and interpreted across different communicative contexts, constitutes a core component of intercultural communicative competence. Research suggests that this competence can—and should—be cultivated from the early stages of language education (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). Despite this recognition, the teaching of pragmatics in primary education remains largely fragmented and underdeveloped, often privileging formal linguistic elements at the expense of meaningful engagement with learners' communicative needs and their everyday multicultural experiences (Taguchi & Roever, 2017).

Against this backdrop, the need for authentic, meaning-oriented, and culturally responsive language instruction becomes increasingly pressing. The integration of authentic linguistic input—such as language corpora, realistic dialogues, and experiential learning activities—can serve as an effective bridge between the classroom and learners' extramural, multicultural worlds. Such practices allow pupils to encounter language as it is used in real communicative situations, rather than as an abstract system detached from social interaction.

At the same time, digital technologies can play a pivotal role in enhancing pragmatic awareness by providing access to rich, multimodal communicative resources and by supporting learner-centred and exploratory pedagogical practices. Technology-mediated environments enable young learners to observe, analyse, and reflect on language use across diverse contexts, fostering both engagement and critical awareness.

The present paper aims to highlight the importance of pragmatic awareness and intercultural education in primary-level EFL instruction by presenting practical pedagogical applications that connect theory with classroom practice. Through a participatory and culturally sensitive learning environment, the study seeks to demonstrate how authentic communication can be meaningfully promoted in primary education, contributing to learners' ability to navigate linguistic and cultural diversity effectively.

## **II. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Pragmatic Awareness and Language Education**

The concept of pragmatic awareness refers to a speaker's ability to recognise, interpret, and produce language that is socially and culturally appropriate within specific communicative contexts (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Pragmatic awareness extends beyond knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical structures, encompassing sensitivity to the social norms, communicative intentions, and contextual factors that shape language use across different settings. In other words, it involves an understanding of language as a social action and of the ways speakers adapt their linguistic choices in order to meet the expectations and cultural conventions of their interlocutors.

In contrast to linguistic competence, which focuses primarily on formal knowledge of grammar, lexis, and phonology, pragmatic awareness emphasises the use of language in authentic communicative situations (Thomas, 1983). This distinction draws on Hymes' (1972) theory of communicative competence, which highlights the necessity of integrating linguistic knowledge with the ability to use language appropriately and effectively within a given social context. From this perspective, successful communication presupposes not only what can be said, but also when, how, and to whom it should be said.

As Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) observe, learners who have attained a high level of linguistic proficiency may nonetheless exhibit significant pragmatic failure, which can negatively affect communicative effectiveness. Such failures may include difficulty in interpreting indirect meanings, inappropriate use of speech acts (e.g. requests, expressions of gratitude, apologies), or misinterpretation of non-verbal cues and social signals accompanying spoken interaction. This phenomenon illustrates the relative independence of pragmatic awareness from linguistic competence and underscores the fact that language knowledge alone is insufficient for achieving fully effective communication.

Within the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, pragmatic awareness has attracted increasing research and pedagogical attention in recent years, as it is regarded as a key component of both communicative competence and intercultural understanding (Taguchi & Roever, 2017; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). The ability to comprehend and produce language that is socially and culturally appropriate significantly enhances communicative effectiveness in multicultural environments and contributes to the prevention of misunderstandings and potential communicative breakdowns.

Recent empirical studies (e.g. Lee, 2020; Derakhshan & Arabmofrad, 2021) have highlighted the importance of explicit instruction in pragmatic features within the classroom. Their findings suggest that the systematic integration of activities and materials targeting pragmatic awareness leads to measurable improvements in learners' comprehension and production of indirect meanings, speech acts such as requests, suggestions, and apologies, as well as in the management of non-verbal communication, which plays a crucial role in interaction. Explicit pragmatic instruction also supports learners in developing strategies for identifying interlocutors'

communicative intentions, thereby enhancing their social flexibility and adaptability across diverse cultural contexts.

Furthermore, pragmatic awareness is closely linked to the development of intercultural sensitivity, a competence that is essential for successful communication in an increasingly globalised world. Learners who demonstrate a high level of pragmatic awareness are better equipped to recognise and respect differences in communicative behaviour and social norms across cultures, fostering intercultural understanding, mutual respect, and cooperation.

Overall, the development of pragmatic awareness constitutes an integral component of contemporary language education and represents a crucial skill for the effective, flexible, and contextually appropriate use of a foreign language across a wide range of social and cultural environments.

## **2.2 Intercultural Communicative Competence and Language Awareness**

The concept of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), as elaborated by Byram (1997), represents a multidimensional construct that extends beyond narrow linguistic knowledge and focuses on individuals' ability to participate effectively, respectfully, and sensitively in intercultural interactions. Intercultural communicative competence encompasses a set of interrelated components, including attitudes such as openness and acceptance of diversity; knowledge of cultural patterns and social practices; skills of interaction, interpretation, and behavioural adaptation; and critical cultural awareness, understood as the ability to recognise, reflect upon, and challenge cultural assumptions and biases (Byram, 1997). Through this holistic framework, learners are encouraged to develop a deeper understanding of cultural differences and to demonstrate respect and sensitivity when communicating with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Within the context of language education, intercultural communicative competence should not be viewed as an optional add-on or a supplementary element of the curriculum, but rather as a fundamental dimension of the communicative approach to language teaching (Porto & Zembylas, 2021). Language and culture are intrinsically intertwined, and the acquisition of a foreign language without concurrent engagement with the cultural contexts in which it is used inevitably limits communicative effectiveness. Instruction that foregrounds intercultural development enables learners to move beyond perceiving language as a static system of rules, instead recognising it as a dynamic medium of social interaction shaped by cultural practices, social roles, and historical contexts.

The relationship between intercultural awareness and pragmatic awareness is both profound and reciprocal. Pragmatic awareness—understood as the ability to use language in socially and culturally appropriate ways—depends directly on learners' understanding of intercultural variation in discourse practices (Chen & Yang, 2022). Linguistic behaviours such as the expression of politeness, the formulation of requests, the use of humour or irony, and even the strategic use of silence may carry different meanings and pragmatic functions across cultures. For instance, while directness may be interpreted as sincerity and respect in some cultural contexts, it may be perceived as impoliteness or confrontation in others. The ability to recognise and interpret these sociocultural signals, and to adjust one's communicative behaviour accordingly, is essential for avoiding misunderstandings and for maintaining positive interpersonal relationships.

Consequently, the development of pragmatic competence should not be regarded merely as a linguistic skill, but also as an exercise in empathy and cultural awareness. This perspective positions pragmatics as a critical component in the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence, particularly in multicultural educational settings such as those increasingly found in primary education. In classrooms comprising learners from diverse cultural backgrounds, fostering empathy and sensitivity to cultural differences can enhance collaboration, promote acceptance of diversity, and reduce conflicts arising from misinterpretations of linguistic and social cues.

In sum, intercultural communicative competence and language awareness constitute foundational pillars of contemporary language education. Together, they promote not only linguistic proficiency but also the social and cultural sensitivity required for effective communication in a globalised and culturally diverse world.

### **2.3 Age-Related Capacities and the Importance of Early Development**

Although pragmatic instruction has traditionally been considered more appropriate for higher levels of education, such as lower or upper secondary schooling, contemporary research and pedagogical perspectives increasingly highlight the capacity of primary school learners to develop pragmatic awareness, provided that appropriate input and supportive learning conditions are in place (Cekaite & Evaldsson, 2020; Taguchi, 2018). Despite the apparent simplicity of young learners' linguistic repertoires, children at the primary level are capable of engaging with foundational pragmatic concepts, including the interpretation of indirect meanings, the recognition and production of politeness strategies, the use of implicatures, and even basic forms of irony, when these are introduced through structured and age-appropriate instructional activities.

The development of such skills does not depend solely on children's linguistic maturity, but rather on the creation of a learning environment that fosters active participation, social interaction, and explicit attention to language use in context. This places particular responsibility on the teacher to integrate materials and tasks into everyday classroom practice that promote contextual awareness, sensitivity to social and cultural norms, and the development of strategies for both interpreting and producing non-explicit meanings. Through guided reflection and scaffolded interaction, learners can gradually become more aware of how meaning is constructed beyond the literal level.

Moreover, the early introduction of pragmatic goals in language education has been shown to be associated with significant long-term benefits for both social and linguistic development. Research such as that conducted by Rose and Gánem-Gutiérrez (2019) suggests that fostering pragmatic awareness from an early age enhances children's social cognition, namely their ability to understand and interpret others' emotions, intentions, and communicative needs. This, in turn, contributes to improved conflict resolution skills, as learners become better equipped to manage disagreements and misunderstandings through appropriate linguistic and social strategies.

At the same time, pragmatic instruction plays a crucial role in the development of linguistic flexibility, defined as learners' ability to adapt their language use in response to social and cultural contexts, as well as to the characteristics and needs of their interlocutors. Linguistic flexibility is a key prerequisite for effective communication and social integration, particularly in multicultural school environments where awareness of and respect for cultural diversity are of paramount importance.

In sum, the early cultivation of pragmatic awareness through targeted pedagogical practices not only strengthens learners' linguistic competence but also supports the development of essential social skills. This dual contribution underscores the value of a holistic approach to language education, one that promotes both linguistic growth and broader personal and social development from the earliest stages of schooling.

### **2.4 The Contribution of Corpora and Technology**

The use of language corpora in pragmatic instruction constitutes an innovative and empirically grounded pedagogical practice, offering both learners and educators direct access to authentic communicative data drawn from a wide range of real-life sources and contexts. Corpora, which consist of extensive collections of written and spoken discourse, enable the systematic investigation of language use, including speech acts, lexico-pragmatic strategies, and recurrent communicative patterns across different situational and cultural settings (Römer, 2023; Pérez-Paredes, 2020).

The pedagogical exploitation of corpora in primary education opens up new possibilities, as it allows learners to engage with language as it is actually used, not merely as a theoretical construct but as a living social practice. Through the guided exploration and analysis of authentic examples, pupils learn to recognise and employ speech acts such as requests, appeals, apologies, and expressions of gratitude, while simultaneously becoming familiar with lexico-pragmatic strategies that shape tone, politeness, and communicative intent. This approach supports the development of pragmatic awareness in realistic communicative contexts, thereby enhancing learners' overall communicative competence (Römer, 2023).

At the same time, the integration of digital technologies into the educational process acts as a catalyst for the effective use of corpora and for the broader enhancement of the learning experience. Through interactive tools,

educational software, and multimodal resources such as video and audio materials, learners are able to participate in experiential activities that simulate authentic communicative situations, rendering language learning more engaging, meaningful, and accessible (Lee, 2022; Godwin-Jones, 2021). These digital environments foster active learner involvement and promote learning spaces in which language is not treated as an object of study alone, but as a medium of social interaction.

In addition, contemporary collaborative learning platforms further expand instructional possibilities by enabling learners to communicate and cooperate in real time, exchange linguistic and cultural experiences, and develop intercultural skills through interaction. The use of podcasts and other multimodal materials—including images, videos, written texts, and audio recordings—offers a more holistic language-learning experience, supporting comprehension at multiple levels and increasing learners' exposure to diverse linguistic varieties and cultural practices.

Overall, the combined use of corpora and technology in the teaching of pragmatics not only enriches and enhances learning, but also prepares learners to meet the demands of a contemporary, multicultural society. In such contexts, linguistic flexibility and intercultural understanding emerge as essential competencies for effective communication and meaningful participation in globalised environments.

### **III. Methodology**

The present educational intervention was implemented within the context of English language instruction in the fifth and sixth grades of a Greek public primary school. It was embedded in interdisciplinary activities with an explicit intercultural orientation, aiming to integrate pragmatic and intercultural objectives into the EFL curriculum. The design and implementation of the intervention were informed by the principles of differentiated pedagogy, pragmatic and intercultural empathy, and the purposeful integration of digital tools as facilitators of learners' communicative competence.

The intervention was carried out over a period of four weeks, with two 45-minute instructional sessions per week. The participant group consisted of 36 pupils representing diverse cultural and social backgrounds, several of whom had only recently entered the Greek educational system. This diversity further reinforced the need for an instructional approach grounded in intercultural sensitivity and inclusive pedagogical practices.

The instructional approach combined explicit instruction of pragmatic features with guided discovery learning strategies, placing strong emphasis on learners' active participation and engagement. The intervention was structured around four pedagogical phases: (a) needs analysis and introduction, (b) instruction and integration, (c) experiential application, and (d) reflection and evaluation. Each phase served distinct pedagogical objectives and employed specific instructional tools and activities.

During the first phase, which lasted one instructional session, a diagnostic assessment was conducted to explore learners' prior knowledge and attitudes concerning politeness in communication, indirect language use, and the existence of cultural variation in expressive practices. Pupils completed a short questionnaire tailored to their cognitive and linguistic level, consisting of multiple-choice scenarios and prompts of the type "*What would you say if...?*", designed to elicit the pragmatic strategies they would spontaneously employ. This was followed by a guided whole-class discussion, through which key misconceptions were identified, such as interpreting direct refusals as impolite or experiencing difficulty in understanding indirect utterances (e.g. "*Would you like to...?*", "*Maybe we could...*").

The second phase, spanning two instructional sessions, focused on the comprehension and analysis of authentic linguistic data. Learners were exposed to excerpts from dialogues in children's television programmes (e.g. *Arthur*, *Peppa Pig*) as well as audio recordings of real-life interactions among English-speaking children, adapted for educational purposes. These materials were accompanied by simplified corpus-based worksheets, drawing on recurring discourse patterns identified in child-related subcorpora of COCA and CHILDES. Pupils analysed expressions used for polite refusal, making suggestions, expressing agreement or disagreement, and discussed possible equivalents in Greek, thereby fostering contrastive pragmatic awareness.

The learning environment was further supported through the use of EdPuzzle, which enabled the integration of comprehension questions directly into video content, and Kahoot, which was employed to reinforce understanding through gamified formative feedback. These tools enhanced engagement while providing immediate insights into learners' developing pragmatic awareness.

During the third phase, which extended over three instructional sessions, learners worked collaboratively in small groups to create and dramatise original dialogues. The scenarios were partially structured in order to scaffold linguistic production while still allowing space for creativity and learner agency. Sample situations included *"inviting someone to a party and responding with a polite refusal"*, *"collaborating on a task while expressing disagreement"*, and *"suggesting an outing that is indirectly declined"*. Pupils negotiated roles within their groups, rehearsed their dialogues, and performed them for the class, placing emphasis not only on what was said, but also on how it was conveyed, including voice tone, gesture, and the use of pauses.

Throughout these activities, the teacher adopted a primarily facilitative and mediating role, intervening only when necessary to support comprehension or to provide intercultural clarification. This approach allowed learners to experiment with pragmatic choices in a low-anxiety environment, encouraging risk-taking and reflective language use.

The fourth phase, lasting two instructional sessions, focused on reflective discussion and evaluation. Learners responded to questions targeting metalinguistic and metapragmatic awareness, such as *"Why is it preferable to say 'I'm afraid I can't' rather than 'No' when declining an invitation?"* or *"How would you feel if someone addressed you in this way?"*. Classroom discussion centred on the distinction between grammatical correctness and social appropriateness, enabling pupils to articulate emerging insights into pragmatic norms.

In addition, learners participated in an interactive self-assessment quiz via the Wordwall platform, which functioned both as a reflective tool and as an indirect measure of their progress in pragmatic awareness. Concurrently, the teacher maintained a reflective journal, documenting learners' reactions, instances of emerging pragmatic awareness, and spontaneous forms of metalinguistic and metapragmatic commentary observed during classroom interaction.

The design and implementation of the intervention are theoretically grounded in explicit pragmatic instruction, which international research has shown to yield positive outcomes in the acquisition of functional language forms and socially appropriate language use (Rose, 2023; Youn & Kerekes, 2020; Taguchi, 2018). The methodology also draws on principles of learner-centred and collaborative learning, combined with metalinguistic reflection and culturally responsive pedagogical strategies.

The integration of technology as a tool for enhancing input processing and as a channel for interaction constitutes a core component of the intervention. Digital tools facilitated differentiated access to content, supported learner autonomy, and promoted multimodal learning, aligning with contemporary perspectives on technology-enhanced language education (Godwin-Jones, 2021; Lee, 2022).

Finally, the methodological choices of small-group work, authentic discourse analysis, and dramatisation rendered the learning experience experiential and meaningful, strengthening both learners' cognitive and emotional engagement. Rather than approaching pragmatic awareness as an abstract theoretical construct, the intervention positioned it as a functional and socially embedded competence, developed through sustained practice and dialogic interaction within the classroom.

#### **IV. Results**

The evaluation of the instructional intervention was based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, with the aim of capturing its overall impact on learners' linguistic behaviour and pragmatic awareness. The evaluation followed a mixed-methods research design, drawing on standardised measurement instruments, the teacher's reflective journal, classroom observations, and written learner feedback.

At the quantitative level, learners completed a pre-test and a post-test, each lasting 25 minutes. The tests included tasks focusing on the recognition of speech acts, the selection of contextually appropriate utterances based on

social scenarios, and the comprehension of indirect meanings. The results indicate a substantial improvement in learners' performance following the intervention.

More specifically, the mean score on the pre-test was 11.8 (standard deviation = 2.6), whereas the mean score on the post-test increased to 17.1 (standard deviation = 1.9). The difference between the two mean scores (5.3 points) was found to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ), based on a paired-samples *t*-test. In addition to the increase in mean performance, the reduction in standard deviation suggests greater consistency and homogeneity in learners' outcomes, which can be attributed to the systematic and inclusive implementation of pragmatic instructional objectives across the group.

The comparison of mean scores is illustrated in Figure 1, which visually represents the notable progress observed between the pre-test and post-test measurements.

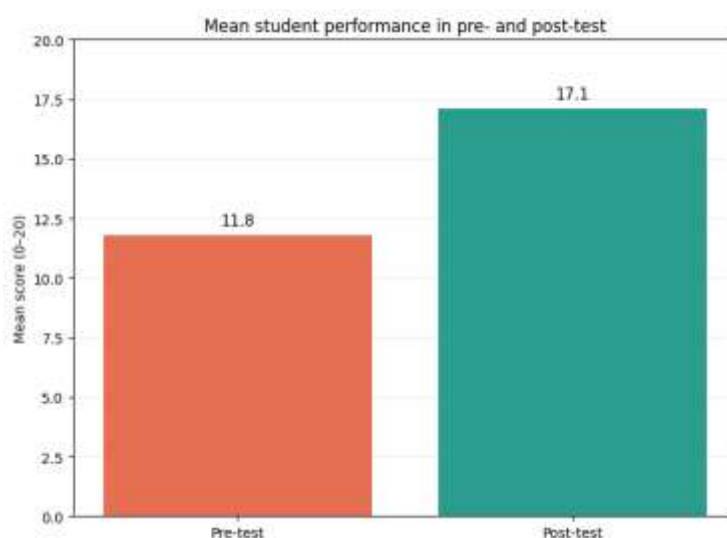


Figure 1. Bar chart illustrating students' mean scores in the pre-test and post-test

Beyond numerical gains, qualitative data provided further insights into the nature of learners' development. Classroom observations and entries in the teacher's reflective journal revealed increased sensitivity to social appropriateness, more frequent use of mitigated and indirect forms, and a growing ability to justify pragmatic choices during reflective discussions. Learners demonstrated heightened awareness of the distinction between grammatically correct utterances and socially acceptable ones, often commenting explicitly on tone, politeness, and interlocutor perspective.

Written learner feedback also indicated a positive shift in attitudes towards language use, with several pupils reporting that they had become more attentive to *how* something is said rather than merely *what* is said. These findings suggest that the intervention not only enhanced learners' test performance but also fostered metapragmatic reflection and pragmatic sensitivity, supporting the development of communicative competence in a broader sense.

Overall, the results provide converging quantitative and qualitative evidence that explicit, interculturally oriented pragmatic instruction can lead to measurable improvements in primary learners' pragmatic awareness and communicative behaviour.

At the qualitative level, the analysis was based on systematic observation of changes in learners' language use during instructional activities, as well as on documented instances of spontaneous production of pragmatically appropriate expressions. A representative example concerns a sixth-grade pupil who, during the initial phase of the intervention, consistently used the simple form "No" to decline invitations or suggestions. By the final phase of the implementation, the same learner spontaneously produced the utterance "I'd love to, but I have to study,"

indicating not only the acquisition of a new linguistic structure but, more importantly, an understanding of the pragmatic function of indirect refusal as a politeness strategy.

Similar patterns were observed in dramatized classroom scenes, where pupils opted for expressions such as “*Maybe we can do it later*” or “*Would you mind if we tried something else?*”, avoiding direct formulations like “*I don’t want to*” or “*No, I don’t like it*”, which had predominated during the initial stages of the intervention. This shift points to the internalisation of pragmatic strategies, a process closely aligned with theoretical accounts of pragmatic development in second language learners (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Taguchi, 2018).

Further encouraging evidence emerged from the analysis of learners’ responses to closed- and open-ended questionnaire items. More than 90% of pupils reported feeling more confident when required to use English in social situations, while 83% indicated that participation in role-play activities and group discussions helped them better understand how politeness “works” in language. Characteristic excerpts from learners’ written comments include statements such as: “*I learned that you don’t have to say ‘no’ straight away; there is a nicer way*”; “*At first I didn’t understand why people say ‘I’m afraid’, but now I know it’s a way to say something negative without sounding rude*”; and “*I liked that we were speaking like ‘real English people’.*”

At the level of overall learning behaviour, changes were observed not only in learners’ linguistic repertoires but also in their attitudes towards using English. Whereas during the initial phase several pupils avoided participating in oral activities due to fear of making mistakes, in the final phase they increasingly volunteered to assume roles and experiment with new expressions. This shift appears to be linked to an enhanced sense of psychological safety and to the acceptance of communicative failure as a natural component of the learning process (Derakhshan & Arabmofrad, 2021; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021).

Taken together, the findings of the present intervention lend support to existing research suggesting that pragmatic instruction, even at an early age, can lead to qualitative improvements in communicative performance, provided that it is embedded within learner-centred and authentic learning environments (Rose, 2023; Taguchi & Roevers, 2017; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). At the same time, they highlight the pedagogical value of technology and dramatization as mechanisms that render pragmatic phenomena visible, tangible, and experientially accessible to young learners.

## V. Discussion

The findings of the present instructional intervention corroborate the position advanced in contemporary research that pragmatic awareness is a skill that can be systematically developed from the early stages of education (Taguchi, 2018; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). The statistically significant improvement observed in learners’ metapragmatic task performance, together with documented instances of spontaneous use of indirect and polite strategies, highlights the effectiveness of explicit pragmatic instruction combined with experiential practices, such as dramatization and the use of authentic materials. These results reinforce earlier findings suggesting that pragmatic knowledge does not emerge as a by-product of linguistic proficiency alone, but rather requires targeted and sustained pedagogical intervention (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998).

Furthermore, the incorporation of language corpora and the integration of digital tools (such as EdPuzzle, Kahoot, and Wordwall) played a decisive role in enhancing learners’ linguistic and pragmatic sensitivity. By providing exposure to authentic input and multiple modes of engagement, these tools supported learners’ noticing of pragmatic features and facilitated deeper processing of language use in context. The multimodal presentation of language—through visual, auditory, and interactive resources—not only accommodates diverse learning profiles (Godwin-Jones, 2021) but also renders language use meaningful and socially situated, rather than abstract and decontextualised.

A further important dimension of the discussion concerns the intercultural component of communicative competence. As argued by Byram (1997), effective language teaching cannot be divorced from cultural understanding. Activities that embedded culturally situated examples of English-speaking interactions enabled learners not only to practise linguistic forms, but also to reflect on different value systems, politeness norms, and social conventions. The observed shift from literal interpretation to an appreciation of the sociopragmatic meaning

of language suggests an emerging internalisation of intercultural awareness, understood as the ability to adapt communicative behaviour to diverse cultural contexts (Chen & Yang, 2022).

Particularly indicative of pragmatic development was learners' gradual movement from unmitigated language use (e.g. "No") to mitigated refusal strategies (e.g. "I'd love to, but..."). The adoption of such politeness strategies not only enhances interpersonal communication but also reflects a more sophisticated level of social awareness (Thomas, 1983). The fact that learners employed these strategies spontaneously, without teacher prompting during the dramatization phase, provides strong evidence of a transition from explicit knowledge to functional use, a process central to pragmatic development (Taguchi & Roevers, 2017).

Equally noteworthy was the observed increase in learner confidence and willingness to communicate. Reduced anxiety in oral production and heightened participation in collaborative activities point to a shift in learners' identities as language users. This finding aligns with research by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021), who argue that learning environments characterised by psychological safety and acceptance of communicative failure foster learner autonomy and engagement.

Overall, the evaluation of the pedagogical approach confirms that the integration of explicit instruction, authentic input, collaborative learning, and technology-enhanced practices creates a fertile learning environment for the development of not only linguistic skills, but also social and emotional competencies. Within such a framework, pragmatic awareness ceases to function as an abstract theoretical construct and instead becomes a practical, operational tool for meaningful communication.

## VI. Conclusion

The present study has demonstrated the importance of integrating pragmatic and intercultural awareness into the teaching of English in primary education. Through the use of authentic materials, technology-enhanced instruction, and experiential learning practices, the findings indicate that young learners are capable of developing meaningful communicative skills and of using language in socially and culturally appropriate ways. Learners' shift towards more polite and indirect forms of expression, alongside their increased engagement and active participation, attests to the pedagogical potential and effectiveness of pragmatic instruction at an early age.

The development of pragmatic awareness should not be viewed merely as a linguistic objective, but as a broader educational goal that contributes to the formation of culturally sensitive, empathetic, and socially responsible individuals. In this respect, language education assumes a critical role in supporting learners' socialisation into diverse communicative communities. Moreover, the deliberate incorporation of inclusive language practices can serve as a foundation for addressing issues of gender inequality and social exclusion from an early stage of schooling, reinforcing values of equity and respect.

Finally, this study advocates the scaling up of similar pedagogical interventions, the systematic development of targeted instructional materials grounded in authentic corpora, and the ongoing professional development of teachers in the areas of pragmatics, intercultural communication, and linguistic equality. Such initiatives can contribute to a more holistic, socially responsive, and forward-looking model of foreign language education that aligns with the communicative demands of contemporary multicultural societies.

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