

## TEACHING PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE THROUGH ROLE-PLAY IN EFL CLASSROOMS

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**Abstract.** Pragmatic competence is a crucial component of communicative competence, enabling learners to use language appropriately across social and cultural contexts. However, it remains underdeveloped in many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings due to limited exposure to authentic communication. This study investigates the effectiveness of role-play as a pedagogical strategy for enhancing pragmatic competence in EFL classrooms. Using a quasi-experimental design, the research examines how structured role-play activities influence learners' ability to perform speech acts such as requests, refusals, and apologies. Findings indicate that role-play significantly improves learners' pragmatic awareness, fluency, and confidence. The study concludes that integrating role-play into EFL instruction provides meaningful communicative opportunities and recommends its systematic incorporation into language curricula.

**Keywords:** pragmatic competence, role-play, EFL, communicative competence, speech acts

### 1. Introduction

In modern language education, communicative competence encompasses not only grammatical accuracy but also the ability to use language appropriately in context.

Pragmatic competence, which involves understanding and applying sociocultural norms in communication, is essential for effective interaction. Despite its importance, it is often underemphasized in EFL classrooms, where instruction tends to focus more on grammar and vocabulary.

This imbalance results in learners who may be linguistically proficient but unable to communicate appropriately in real-life situations. Recent research (2023–2025) emphasizes that explicit and interactive approaches are necessary to develop pragmatic awareness and performance.

Role-play is widely recognized as a communicative technique that simulates real-life situations, allowing learners to practice language in context. By engaging in role-play, students can develop both linguistic and pragmatic skills through experiential learning.

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of role-play in enhancing pragmatic competence among EFL learners and to provide pedagogical recommendations for its implementation.

### 2. Methods

#### 2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test measures to evaluate the impact of role-play on pragmatic competence.

#### 2.2 Participants

The participants were 40 intermediate-level university EFL students. They were divided into:

- Experimental group (n = 20)
- Control group (n = 20)

### 2.3 Instruments

The following instruments were used:

- Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs)
- Role-play performance tasks
- Observation checklists
- Learner reflection journals

The instruments focused on key speech acts such as requests, apologies, refusals, and suggestions.

### 2.4 Procedure

The study lasted eight weeks:

- The experimental group participated in structured role-play activities.
- The control group received traditional instruction.

Role-play scenarios included:

- Daily interactions (e.g., ordering food)
- Academic contexts (e.g., asking questions)
- Professional situations (e.g., interviews)

### 2.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using paired and independent samples t-tests. Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic coding.

## 3. Results

The findings indicate that role-play had a statistically significant positive effect on learners' pragmatic competence.

Key outcomes include:

- Improved use of appropriate speech acts
- Increased fluency and confidence
- Enhanced sociocultural awareness

The experimental group outperformed the control group in both DCT scores and role-play assessments. Learners also reported greater engagement and reduced communication anxiety.

## 4. Discussion

The results confirm that role-play is an effective method for developing pragmatic competence in EFL contexts. It provides learners with opportunities to engage in meaningful communication and apply language in context.

Role-play supports:

- Authentic interaction
- Experiential learning
- Development of metapragmatic awareness

These findings align with recent studies highlighting the importance of task-based and interactive approaches in language learning. Additionally, combining role-play with explicit instruction enhances learning outcomes.

However, several challenges were identified:

- Limited classroom time
- Student anxiety

- Need for teacher training

To address these issues, teachers should scaffold activities, provide clear instructions, and create a supportive learning environment.

### 5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that role-play is a valuable tool for enhancing pragmatic competence in EFL classrooms. It bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical communication skills.

The findings suggest that:

- Role-play should be systematically integrated into curricula
- Teachers should receive training in communicative methodologies
- Future research should explore digital and AI-based role-play environments

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