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A Corpus-based Study of Pragmatic Competence of English Pre-service Teachers: Taking Error Types of Request Speech Act as an Example

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Abstract

The existing literature on pragmatic competence has implied the significance of improving second language learners' pragmatic competence to achieve effective communication. However, limited research has examined pragmatic competence from the perspective of error types, let alone focusing on the special group, pre-service teachers. To that end, this study investigated how error types contribute to analyzing pragmatic competence. An online Discourse Completion Test (DCT) containing 14 real request scenarios is sent to 60 participants to fill out. Results indicated that pragmatic failure takes up the largest proportion part of the error types. In addition, although there is not a significant difference on grammatical mistakes or pragmatic failures in different grades. The frequency of some sub-items is significantly different across two groups, namely: 1) incorrect use of verbs; 2) redundancy or lack of words; 3) Hedged sentence. The findings shed light on second language learning and teaching in that educators might consider developing pre-service teachers' pragmatic competence based on this research results so that they can be pragmatically competent and understand how to incorporate the pragmatic component of the language into second language instruction.

Keywords

Pragmatic competence, error types, pre-service teachers, DCT, second language teaching

1. Introduction

For nearly two decades, the teaching of English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) has focused on developing communicative competence, which has greatly influenced the research interests and instructional approaches in the discipline.

Pragmatic competence is an indispensable component of communicative competence, which plays a crucial role in human communication (Kentmen et al., 2023). It refers to the skill of effectively conveying your intended message, including its subtle nuances, in any socio-cultural setting, as well as accurately understanding the intended message of your conversation partner (Fraser, 2010, p. 5).

Nevertheless, the acquisition of pragmatics is a complex process that extends beyond mere attention to form. According to Taguchi (2019), language learners face difficulties in building their pragmatic ability due to the need to attend to multipart mappings of form, meaning, function, force, and context. Such mappings are not only intricate but also variable and

unsystematic. In addition, the pragmatic forms and their mappings are not salient and often pass unnoticed language learners (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Schmidt, 1993). These difficulties encountered in developing second language (L2) pragmatic competence suggest the need for pragmatic instruction (Alsuhaibani, 2022).

English is taught as a foreign language in China, teachers are the foremost and the most reliable source that learners can depend on for their pragmatic development. As a consequence, educators, both in-service and pre-service teachers, need to be pragmatically competent so that they can incorporate the pragmatic component of the language into second language instruction. The inferior pragmatic competence of instructors could impede learners' acquisition of English with its various pragmatic functions. Therefore, it is necessary to examine and analyze instructors' pragmatic competence. However, limited research in the domain of L2 pragmatics has investigated the effects of instructors' pragmatic competence from the perspective of error types, let alone focusing on the special group, pre-service teachers.

The current study seeks to address this gap by investigating how error types contribute to analyzing pre-service teachers' pragmatic competence with the aid of corpora and Written Discourse Completion Tests (WDCT), hoping to provide insights to promote the pragmatic competence of pre-service teachers and further improve ESL learning and teaching.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Pragmatic Competence

2.1.1 Studies on the definition of pragmatic competence

Pragmatic competence is regarded as a constituent of communicative competence that learners must cultivate in order to achieve effective communication (Kentmen et al., 2023). Currently, this term is extensively utilized in the field of second and foreign language acquisition and instruction. It examines the choices made by individuals, the constraints they encounter when employing language in social interactions, and the impact use of language has on other participants involved in communication. (Crystal, 2011).

Chomsky (1980) initially defined pragmatic competence as "the knowledge of conditions and manner of appropriate use of the language, in conformity with various purposes" (p. 224). This concept was perceived as contrasting with grammatical competence which indicates the knowledge of form and meaning. Subsequently, Canale (1987) broadened the scope of this definition by asserting that pragmatic competence encompasses "illocutionary competence, or the knowledge of the pragmatic conventions for performing acceptable language functions, and sociolinguistic competence, or knowledge of the sociolinguistic conventions for performing language functions appropriately in a given context". Later, Rose (1999) introduced a definition of pragmatic competence that has gained widespread acceptance among scholars in the field of interlanguage pragmatics. The notion was defined as the capacity to utilize available linguistic resources (pragmalinguistics) in a in a contextually appropriate fashion (sociopragmatics). In other words, it refers to how to do things appropriately with words (Thomas, 1983; Leech, 1983). For Taguchi (2012), pragmatic competence was the ability to control and deal with the complex relationship among language, users as well as interactive contexts. Pragmatics learning entails comprehending the correlation between linguistic forms, the communicative functions they fulfill, and the context in which the communication toccurs (Taguchi, 2019).

2.1.2 Studies on pragmatic assessment

Oller completed one of the early research studies on pragmatic proficiency assessments. He prioritized the construction of the natural circumstances of language in examinations. However, the authenticity of these exams was in conflict with their artificial nature and it was believed to be intricate. Additionally, Hudson et al. (1995) conducted a study to develop a framework to evaluate the significance and efficiency of pragmatic competence, and this model has received wide recognition for its consideration of various aspects, such as oral DCTs (Discourse Completion Tasks), written DCTs, multiple choice DCTs, role plays, and self-assessment.

Based on Hudson's relatively scientific framework of assessing pragmatic competence, various research have been conducted to evaluate the pragmatic ability of language learners and extract their knowledge of pragmatics, especially in speech acts. Meanwhile, Walters (2007; 2009) expressed disapproval of the previous speech act theory-based L2 pragmatic tests. He argued that these tests raised validity issues due to their lack of compatibility with conversational data. So he conducted a study on conversation analysis to assess the pragmatic comprehension, production, complement responses, and pre-sequences responses of language learners through role plays, discourse completion tasks (DCTs), and listening comprehension. Nevertheless, Walters' instrument suffered from a lack of reliability in all of its sub-part tests.

Furthermore, Cohen (2014) emphasized the necessity of considering several crucial criteria while assessing pragmatic competency. He proposed tactics such as employing authentic scenarios, evaluating various aspects of the performance, prompting students to compare their responses with those of native speakers, requesting students to justify their answers, and

employing a strategic approach to assess different elements of the speech acts.

While the methods of assessing learners' pragmatic competence are various, the majority of researchers tend to use scales to score and evaluate the appropriateness levels in discourse completion tests (DCTs) and role plays (Taguchi, 2011). It is essential to acknowledge the significance of identifying the underlying reasons for pragmatic failure when grading pragmatic skills on evaluating speech acts (Kentmen et al., 2023).

2.2 Request Speech Act

2.2.1 Studies on request speech act

Li (2000) emphasized the importance of the request speech act in multiple studies conducted by various academics. The significance of this was attributed to the intricate interplay among its structure, semantics, and pragmatics, as well as the consequential social hazards faced by speakers.

In terms of the request speech act, Searle (1976) put forward that it was a directive speech act through which the speaker attempted to make the listener do something. However, Brown and Levinson (1987) analyzed it from another perspective. They considered a request as a speech act that poses a harm to one's reputation due to its seriousness. The severity of face-threatening conduct can be evaluated through factors such as "social distance", "degree of imposition", and the "power" of the interlocutors.

In recent years, there has been an analysis of requests in the context of cross-cultural and interlanguage studies. Multiple research have demonstrated that its universal characteristics, the existing differences in how request speech acts are performed and understood require instruction and assessment for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Jalilifar, Hashemian, & Tabatabaee, 2011).

Rose (2000) employed an oral production task to investigate the speech acts of requests, apologies, and complaints made by ESL learners with different age categories. This study confirmed that learners with greater proficiency levels exhibited linguistic expressions in speech acts that were more similar to those of native speakers, in comparison to learners with lower competence levels. Similarly, In a study conducted by Taghizade Mahani (2012), the researcher presented the results of an investigation into the expression of requests in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting, focusing on individuals with varying levels of English ability. The results indicated that Iranian learners demonstrated pragmatic development in terms of directness, as observed across different English proficiency levels. In addition, the study compared the data from Iranian learners to baseline data from ten British native speakers. The results indicated that advanced level learners exhibited requestive production that was more similar to that of the British participants, in comparison to the other levels. More studies have also been carried out on the strategies, errors, and development of pragmatic competence of request. According to Liu (2014), when the learners made requests, the errors they made can be classified into two categories: grammatical mistakes and pragmatic failures and two groups of learners (CET-4 and CET-6) showed no difference in grammatical mistakes. Ying (2018) investigated six females' development of pragmatic competence through a DCT questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and observations. The results showed that social activities such as interpersonal interaction, teaching, and observational imitation can promote the development of foreign students' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence. Alkawaz et al. (2023) conducted a study to examine how explicit metapragmatic instruction affects the use of English requests, apologies, and refusals by Iraqi EFL learners. The study also considered the influence of gender and error type. The data analysis showed that explicit pragmatic instruction had a significant positive impact on the students' speech act realization. Furthermore, although the female learners experienced greater advantages from the intervention and a larger proportion of sociopragmatic errors were amended compared to pragmalinguistic errors following the treatment, the factors of gender and types of pragmatic errors did not have a significant impact on the intervening effects.

Although abundant research has been carried out on exploring the learners' pragmatic competence of request speech acts, the pragmatic errors that L2 learners, in general, and EFL pre-service teachers in particular, commit when realizing L2 speech acts are rarely investigated in earlier studies. Indeed, the existing literature has failed to adequately examine L2 learners' pragmatic errors, their origins, and the influence of pragmatic instruction on alleviating them. Thus, the present research is an inquiry into the pragmatic development of pre-service teachers taking error types of request speech act as an example.

2.2.2 Studies on request strategies

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), requests were considered as face-threatening acts in which both the speaker's and hearer's faces were at risk. Aiming to minimize the imposition, speakers often employ more indirect request strategies that sound more polite and can preserve the hearer's face. BlumKulka and Olshtain (1984) outlined three primary levels of the directness of request strategies (p. 201):

a) The most direct and explicit level is achieved through syntactically marked requests, such as imperatives, performatives, and 'hedged performatives'; b) The conventionally indirect level involves procedures that achieve the act by referring to

contextual preconditions necessary for its performance, as conventionalized in a given language; c) The non-conventionally indirect level encompasses a diverse set of indirect strategies (hints) that achieve the request either by partially referring to the object or element required for the implementation of the act ('Why is the window open'), or by relying on contextual clues ('It's cold in here').

The three levels were subdivided into nine sub-levels of request strategy types: "Mood Derivable," "Performative," "Hedged Performative," "Obligation statement," "Want Statement," "Suggestive Formulate," "Query Preparatory," "Strong Hints," and "Mind Hints." The initial five strategies pertain to the direct level, the subsequent two pertain to the conventional indirect level, and the final two pertain to the nonconventional indirect level.

Direct requests were not challenging for second language learners, as they were consistent across most languages. Second-language learners may encounter difficulties when it comes to indirect requests. Although individuals had acquired the ability to employ indirect request techniques in their mother tongue and these skills formed part of their pragmatic competence, they were not always transferable in a different language. Blum-Kulka (1980) observed that conventional indirect speech acts are a unique example of the interdependence between language conventions and conventions about the use of language. This interplay might vary in different languages and cultures. Consequently, when acquiring a new language, learners must familiarize themselves with the strategies deemed suitable in that particular language.

3. The Theoretical Foundations

3.1 Error Analysis

3.1.1 The definition of error analysis

In order to analyze learners' errors, it is essential to differentiate between a "mistake" and an "error". As stated by Brown (2000), a "mistake" is defined as a performance error resulting from the incorrect utilization of a recognized system, while an "error" refers to a noticeable deviation break from the grammatical norms of a native speaker, indicating the interlanguage competence of the learner. This recognition process is followed by the error description process.

Error analysis (EA) involves analyzing the errors made by second language (L2) learners by comparing their acquired patterns with the target language norms. The purpose is to identify and explain the errors that have been detected (James, 2013). According to Crystal (2011), EA in language teaching and learning refers to the examination of the unacceptable forms produced by individuals who are learning a language, particularly those who are learning a foreign language. James (2013) defines EA as the examination of linguistic ignorance and the exploration of how individuals deal with their lack of knowledge.

3.1.2 Specific classifications of error types

This thesis mainly adopts Thomas' (1983) and Kahraman and Akkus' (2007) specific classification of error types in English requests.

Thomas (1983) believes that linguistic competence include grammatical competence and pragmatic competence. Grammatical competence is the abstract knowledge of language, intonation, semantics, and syntax. Pragmatic competence means using language effectively to achieve one's expectations in specific contexts. In addition, Kahraman and Akkus (2007) broadened the specific classifications of error types, dividing them into five categories: <L>lexical errors, <G>grammatical errors, <Sl> lexico semantic errors, <Sg> grammatical semantic errors, and pragmatic failures.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Questions

Given that pragmatic competence plays a key role in (L2) acquisition and teaching and that there is also the need for further research to study learners' and teachers' pragmatic competence, this study seeks to analyze pre-service English teachers' error types when making a request. The research questions are as follows:

1) What are the error types of pre-service teachers in the process of making a request?
2) Is there any significant difference between learners of different stages and the distribution of error types?

4.2 Participants

The participants in this research are postgraduate students majoring in English Education at South China Normal University located in Guangdong Province of China. All of the students are trained and developed as English pre-service teachers and cater to the research subject. The valid sample consists of sixty students. Thirty students are in their first year and the other

thirty are in their second year. Their average age is 24 years.

4.3 Instruments

Discourse completion tests (DCTs) have a long-standing tradition in the field of pragmatics research. Despite criticism for DCTs' hypothetical nature that does not accurately depict reality, they have several advantages and strengths that need to be stressed. For instance, DCTs have control of contextual variables and demographic information (Cyluk, 2013) and represent prototypical responses that tap into the participants' pragmalinguistic knowledge (Kwon, 2004). The objective of this study is to investigate the impact of pragmatic competence on pre-service teachers, which is why a DCT (Discourse Completion Task) is particularly relevant. Additionally, DCTs facilitate the collection of a substantial volume of data within a relatively short period.

Therefore, a DCT consisting of 14 situational scenarios is shown in Table 1, which is modified from Rose's (2000) oral discourse completion test and Taguchi's (2012) became the author's ideal option to conduct this study and the results of the quantitative data were analyzed by SPSS 25.

Table 1. 14 Situational Scenarios in the Study

No.	Situational scenarios
1	Asking a teacher to hand in homework late.
2	Asking a teacher question.
3	Asking a teacher to copy the PPT.
4	Asking a teacher to extend the deadline of homework
5	Asking a teacher to write more clearly on the blackboard.
6	Asking a teacher more time to do a paper.
7	Asking a classmate to borrow a book.
8	Asking a classmate to borrow a notebook.
9	Asking a classmate to take a seat.
10	Asking a classmate to close the door.
11	Asking a classmate to help to buy a meal.
12	Asking a classmate to borrow a campus IC card.
13	Asking a classmate to borrow a pen.
14	Asking a classmate to hang out together.

4.4 Pilot Study

A pilot study was considered before conducting the experiment for the purpose of validation. Three students who were not going to take part in the main experiment were selected to join the pilot study. The aim of the pilot study was to minimize the negative effects of some factors. First, it could help find out whether the instructions or language expressions were clear enough for participants to understand what to do in DCT. Second, it was helpful to find out whether some questions or procedures in the experiment were designed logically and reasonable. Third, the pilot study ensured that there were no other problems that may occur in the experiment.

In view of the fact that almost all students recruited for the pilot study indicated that the instructions and items of the instruments were comprehensible enough, and nothing was changed in terms of the content of the questionnaire and test. However, one student provided feedback that the time given to complete the DCT was limited because she didn't have enough time to think about the answers carefully in fifteen minutes. Therefore, the time given to complete DCT was adjusted from fifteen minutes to twenty-five minutes.

4.5 Research Procedures

4.5.1 Data collection and processing

At the beginning, a pilot study was made before the DCT was sent to the participants formally. Several volunteers filled out the questionnaire in advance so that the author could see whether adjustments were needed. In the process of the study, one student complained that the time given to complete the idiom test was limited, therefore the author decided to adjust the time

from ten minutes to twenty-five minutes when conducting the formal experiment. In addition, the author found that some students may easily forget to fill out the questionnaire even if they had promised to complete it. Therefore, the author decided to remind the participants to accomplish the questionnaire again to make sure more validated questionnaire can be collected in the formal study.

Secondly, the experiment is carried out online. In one month, altogether sixty valid online DCT results were collected. The author organized the corpus collected and divided them into two documents named "grade 1 and grade 2" respectively. Then redundant Chinese characters were removed and two documents were converted into plain text format.

Thirdly, with the help of a text organizer, each text was organized separately, specifically removing all spaces-skips, first and last paragraph spaces, blank lines between paragraphs, merging paragraphs, organizing punctuation, converting full angle to half angle, uppercase to lowercase, and finally saving the texts.

The final step was data statistics and data analysis with the help of Antconc 3.5.8 and SPSS 25. The “Concordance” of Antconc3.5.8 was used to filter the targeted phrases and SPSS 25 was used for analyzing the data, including its Independent Samples T-test, Pearson Correlation analysis, and One-Way ANOVA analysis.

4.5.2 Data analysis

To answer the first question of this study, an error analysis was necessary. Firstly, three postgraduates from a university in Guangzhou were employed to mark and classify errors in the corpus. To ensure the quality of the analysis, a pilot research was organized. All three volunteers were asked to mark and classify the error from 35 randomly selected sentences. The paired T-test showed that there was no significant difference ($p<0.05$) between the three volunteers, which also indicated that the data on error types used in this study was reliable. At last, 156 errors had been found. The basic background information of the three volunteers is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The Basic Background Information of Three Volunteers

	Grade	Related Certificates	English as a second language
Volunteer 1	Second year postgraduate	TEM-8	Y
Volunteer 2	Second year postgraduate	TEM-8	Y
Volunteer 3	First year postgraduate	TEM-8	Y

In order to test if there was a relationship between learners of different stages and the distribution of error types, correlation analysis was first carried out. However, the results showed that there was neither a positive nor negative relationship between these two elements. Then independent samples T-tests were conducted to check if there was a significant difference in the distribution of error types between learners of different stages.

To answer the second question, the text was sent to Antconc for further analysis. examination. Antconc, developed by Dr. Laurence Anthony, is a freely downloadable toolbox for analyzing corpora. The software offers seven tools specifically designed for processing 'txt' files. Only the method of "concordance" was employed in this study to filter the targeted sentences.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Error Analysis

5.1.1 Analysis of error types

Examining the errors made by second language learners might assist in identifying the specific linguistic difficulties and requirements they face during a particular phase of language acquisition. Based on Kahraman and Akkus (2007) and Thomas (1983), error types were classified into grammatical failure and pragmatic failure. The former included syntactic mistakes, and grammatical and lexical mistakes while the latter containd pragmalinguistic failures and sociopragmatic failures. The distribution of error types is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Error Types Distribution

Error type	Grammatical mistakes		Pragmatic failures		Sum
Sub-items	syntactic mistakes	grammatical and lexical mistakes	Pragmalinguistic failures	sociopragmatic failures	
Times	12	34	32	78	156
Percentage	7.69%	21.80%	20.51%	50%	100%

As shown in above Table 3, there are 156 errors in the request corpus. The results of independent sample t test show that

there is a significant difference (p<0.05*) between grammatical mistakes and pragmatic failures. In the sub-items, sociopragmatic failures account for the biggest proportion of errors, which are 50%, while syntactic mistakes made by pre-service teachers only take up 7.69%. However, there is not a significant difference (p=0.23>0.05) between grammatical and lexical mistakes and pragmalinguistic failures because the proportion of errors that exists in these two sub-items is very similar, taking up 21.80% and 20.51% respectively.

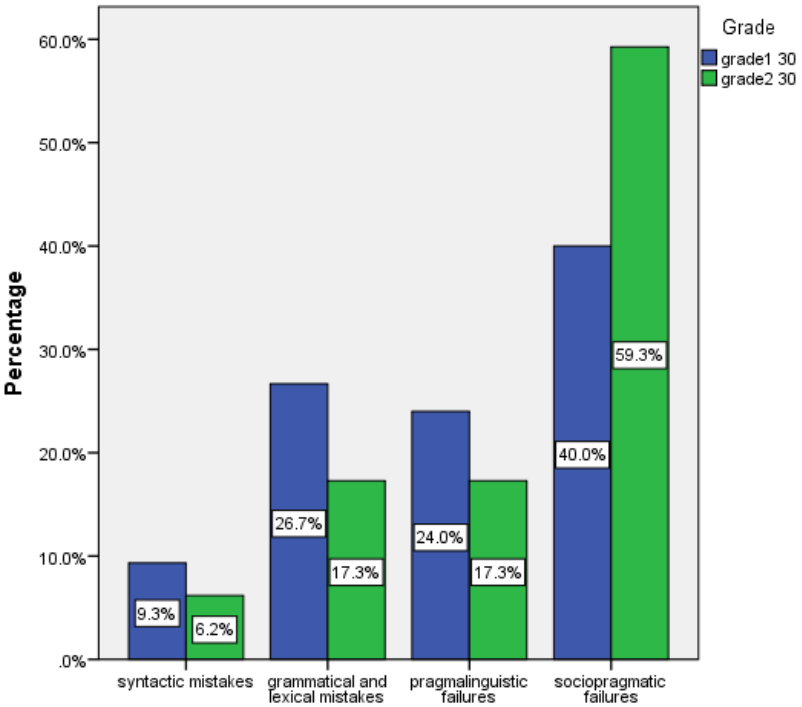


Figure 1. Error Types of Different Grades.

From Figure 1, we can see the distribution of error types in each grade clearly. According to the results of Spearman Correlation analysis, the author found that there is no significant positive relationship between groups because all of the p values are above 0.05 (p=0.26, p=0.48, p=0.55).

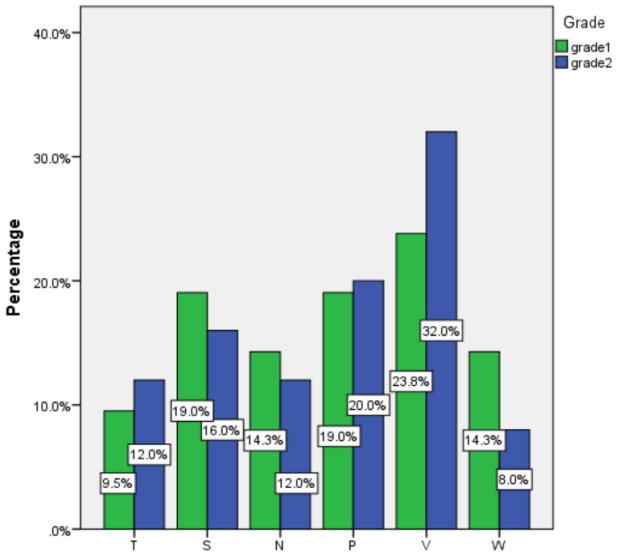
As for grammatical mistakes, grammatical and lexical mistakes occupies the majority of it and there is a significant difference between syntactic mistakes and grammatical and lexical mistakes (p=0.018<0.05*).

In addition, compared with grammatical mistakes, pragmatic failures account for a larger part of the total errors in each grade, especially sociopragmatic failures which reach 40 percent in grade one and 59.3 percent in grade two. This tendency reflects that when postgraduate students made a request in English, the sentences they spoke were correct grammatically and lexically but inappropriate in specific contexts and situations. Meanwhile, there is a significant difference exists between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failures (p=0.012<0.05*).

5.1.2 Grammatical mistakes analysis

First of all, the types of grammatical mistakes are presented in Figure 2. It can be seen that “incorrect use of verbs” is the most frequently occurring type in both grades, accounting for 32% and 23.8% respectively. In addition, in terms of “spelling mistakes”, “incorrect use of nouns’ singular plural forms” and “redundancy or lack of words”, they are more likely to appear in grade one students. However, the first graders perform better than the sophomores in the aspects of “tense and voice”, “incorrect use of pronouns” and “incorrect use of verbs”.

Finally, to find out the specific differences between groups, an independent sample t-test is launched. In general, the result shows that there are no significant differences in the aspect of grammatical mistake types between the two grades (p=0.23>0.05). However, the post hoc tests indicate that as for the error type of “incorrect use of verbs”, the number of students from the first year is significantly lower than those from the second year. On the contrary, the frequency of “redundancy or lack of words” in freshmen is significantly higher than that in sophomores. Meanwhile, some common mistakes in collected data were found in all grades, such as "solve questions; to finish, etc."



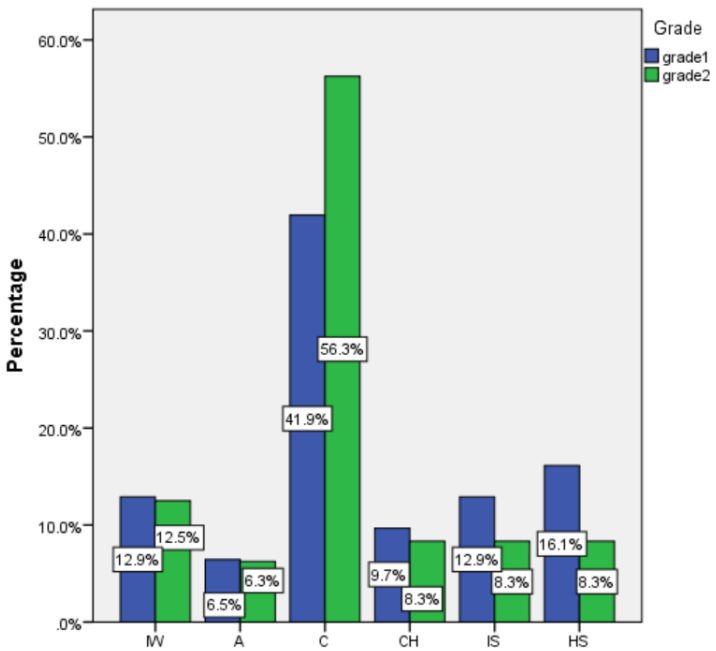
T= tense and voice
S=spelling mistakes
N=incorrect use of nouns' singular and plural forms
P=incorrect use of pronouns
V=incorrect use of verbs
W=redundancy or lack of words

Figure 2. The Distribution of Grammatical Mistakes.

5.1.3 Pragmatic failure analysis

According to Table 3, the author has found that pragmatic failure takes up the largest proportion part of the error types, 70.51% (20.51% of pragmalinguistic failures and 50% sociopragmatic failures respectively).

To be more specific, firstly, the distribution of pragmatic failures is illustrated in Figure 3, which shows the error type of "Incorrect use of collocations" accounts for the majority part (49.1%) in it and the order of the following error types from high to low was: "Inappropriate Words" (12.7%), "Hedged sentences" (12.2%), "Incomplete sentences" (10.6%), "Chinglish" (9%) and "inappropriate alerters" (6.4%).



IW= Inappropriate words
A=Inappropriate alerters
C=Incorrect use of collocation
CH=Chinglish
IS=Incomplete sentences
HS=Hedged sentences

Figure 3. The Distribution of Pragmatic Failures.

Lastly, to find out the difference between groups, a independent Sample T test is launched. The result shows that, as for pragmatic failures, there is no significant difference between students from the first year and the second year ($p=0.13>0.05$). However, the error type of "Hedged sentence" is significantly different across the groups ($p=0.035$, $p<005$), which means

that the learners from the first year have significantly higher this kind of error than those from the second year.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Major Findings

This study aims at analyzing pre-service English teachers' pragmatic competence through error types when making requests. To this end, an online Discourse Completion Test containing 14 request scenarios is sent to 60 participants to fill out.

The distribution of error types shows that pragmatic failures take up the largest proportion part of the error types (70.51%). In the sub-items, sociopragmatic failures account for the biggest proportion of errors while syntactic mistakes made by pre-service teachers only take up 7.69%.

In addition, as for grammatical mistakes, there is not a significant difference in different grades and "Incorrect use of verbs" in it is the most frequently occurring types in both grades. The post hoc tests indicate that the first graders perform significantly better than the sophomores in the aspects of "incorrect use of verbs". However, the frequency of "redundancy or lack of words" in freshmen is significantly higher than that in sophomores. In terms of pragmatic failures, there is not a significant difference in different grades, and the error type of "Incorrect use of collocations" accounts for the majority part (49.1%). The post hoc tests reveal that the error type of "Hedged sentence" in it is significantly different across the groups, which reflects that the learners from the first year made significantly less mistakes in this kind of error than those form the second year.

6.2 Pedagogical Implications

In China, English is regarded as a foreign language. Without relevant interventions of teaching, learners' pragmatic competence is difficult to develop (Dai &Yang, 2005).

The corpus data collected in this study have reflected the imbalance of the development between grammatical and pragmatical competence. Therefore, English teaching should pay more attention to cultivating pre-service teachers' pragmatical competence so that they can be pragmatically competent and understand how to incorporate the pragmatic component of the language into second language instruction.

6.3 Limitations of the Study

The primary limitation of the study refers to the limited number of participants involved in the pilot study (n=3) and the formal experiment (n=60). In addition, since most participants taking part in the research are female, the results may not be generalizable to both genders.

6.4 Suggestions for Future Studies

Further researchers are recommended to consider the following advice: Initially, this study does not investigate the gender of participants as a potential mediating variable, therefore, future studies can explore its underlying impact on the pragmatic competence of pre-service English teachers through error analysis. Moreover, this study exclusively utilized the Discourse Completion Test as the sole method for gathering data on participants' pragmatic competence. Additional techniques, such as role plays, observations, and interviews can be employed as a complementary means of DCT.

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