

INTRINSIC CONNECTION BETWEEN PRAGMATICS AND GRAMMAR

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العلاقة الجوهرية بين البراجماتية والقواعد

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Abstract

This article aims to present intrinsically some ideas that allow us to understand and adequately address the relationship between grammar and pragmatics. According to the literature, while high linguistic competence does not imply excellent pragmatic aptitude, grammar is a criterion for pragmatic performance in a second language (L2). This study thoroughly investigates the relationship between these two competencies. The study was conducted on a sample of 29 non-native English-speaking EFL students, and the tools used were two-level tests: one that measures only grammar, adapted from an existing test, and another that measures the level of pragmatic comprehension, developed entirely by the authors and meeting all of the requirements of a standardised test. The second one assessed English requests, invitations, rejections, and apologies. Comparing the two competencies indicates a positive association between grammar and pragmatics. As a result, this research presents evidence supporting the notion that expertise in grammar alone does not imply competency in pragmatic language usage. The paper also includes the authors' pragmatic test, which academics and teachers may use. Keywords: pragmatics test, grammar test, English as a foreign language, non-native speakers.

المخلص

: تهدف هذه المقالة إلى تقديم بعض الأفكار الجوهرية التي تسمح لنا بفهم العلاقة بين القواعد والبراغماتية ومعالجتها بشكل مناسب. وفقاً للأدبيات، في حين أن الكفاءة اللغوية العالية لا تعني بالضرورة استعداداً براغماتياً ممتازاً، فإن القواعد هي معيار للأداء البراجماتي في لغة ثانية (L2). تبحث هذه الدراسة بدقة في العلاقة بين هاتين الكفاءتين. أجريت الدراسة على عينة من ٢٩ طالباً من غير الناطقين باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، وكانت الأدوات المستخدمة عبارة عن اختبارين من مستويين: أحدهما يقيس القواعد فقط، مقتبس من اختبار موجود، والآخر يقيس مستوى الفهم البراجماتي، طوره المؤلفون بالكامل ويلبي جميع متطلبات الاختبار الموحد. قام الثاني بتقييم الطلبات والدعوات والرفض والاعتذارات باللغة الإنجليزية. تشير مقارنة الكفاءتين إلى وجود علاقة إيجابية بين القواعد والبراغماتية. نتيجة لذلك، يُقدّم هذا البحث أدلة تدعم فكرة أن الخبرة في القواعد النحوية وحدها لا تعني بالضرورة الكفاءة في استخدام اللغة البراجماتية. كما يتضمن البحث اختبار المؤلفين البراجماتي، والذي يُمكن للأكاديميين والمعلمين استخدامه. الكلمات المفتاحية: اختبار البراجماتيات، اختبار القواعد، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، غير الناطقين بها.

1. Introduction English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers have begun to understand the importance of teaching social aspects of English, such as pragmatics. Pragmatics is interested in analysing how speakers produce and interpret utterances in context [1]; it encompasses not only contexts but also inferences and other language factors to determine the meaning of the speaker's intention, which varies from culture to culture. Furthermore, due to the recent worldwide push to teach languages with communication as the primary objective, social understanding and cultural cues are more important than ever [2]. However, this does not mean that grammatical accuracy is not relevant. Some researchers have shown that the pragmatic competence of foreign language learners depends on their grammatical competence [3]. Since pragmatic competence is part of the overall competence of the English learner, it is necessary to discover whether it depends on the learner's

grammatical level [2-3]. As a social action system, language is used in different ways in languages with the help of grammar structures. These differences are either divided into sub-branches or take their place in scientific studies as different fields. In this article, we have tried to clarify what brings pragmatics, a branch of linguistics that has recently gained more value, to the forefront and to explain its relevance to grammar [4]. For a grammarian, explaining communication with grammar brings with it some problems. On the one hand, it would not be easy to describe a system that systematically evaluates the factors and connections of the given communication process according to possible situation variables and emphasises usage with grammar [5]. On the other hand, a person will not be able to fully explain and describe the phenomenon of social communication, that is, regular language use with grammar. For this reason, pragmatics studies have taken their place in scientific studies, and explaining the unexplained and indescribable parts of language during interaction by creating a basic consensus and target category (or linguistic action) has come to the fore. During the interaction, people perform two activities: speech phenomenon, language ability, and language used for writing. Language ability shows its mastery more in the form of a system of rules or conventions, while language activity reveals production for use. Of course, language skills and language activity are interdependent in many ways. However, human ability prefers practical, mental or communication systems to perform certain activities [6]. Understanding its competence is not possible only by knowing the rule system of the language. In other words, communication ability and communicative activity certainly include language, speech, and usage. In this sense, describing and conceptualising speech's production, understanding and usage characteristics is necessary [7]. Pragmatics comes into play at this point and provides the opportunity to examine language according to usage and context, revealing the usage characteristics of some verbal and non-verbal signs according to social structure. Although pragmatics is shown as a sub-branch of grammar in some studies, grammar shows the shape and form characteristics in languages, while pragmatics focuses on usage and functioning characteristics. This allows examining different variables in both fields [8]. This article will provide basic information on pragmatics in foreign language study and include a section on gaps in current research and the need for such a study. It will briefly review previous studies regarding grammatical and pragmatic acquisition in foreign language learning with a focus on English, provide information on the methodology and study design, and conclude with a discussion of the most important results and pedagogical implications.

1.1. Justification of the Study

This study attempts to determine the relationship between grammar and pragmatics of English as a foreign language learner. It is already known that grammar is necessary for communication, but pragmatic competence is also necessary for effective communication. For example, V. G. and Rajan (2012) [9] found that a lack of pragmatic knowledge negatively affected non-native learners' communication skills. Since the primary goal of language learning is communication, pragmatic instruction is necessary to ensure that learners can communicate effectively. Previous studies, such as that of Norrby & Håkansson (2007) [10], demonstrated a relationship between grammatical and pragmatic competence in Swedish learners; learners with a high grammar level generally showed native-like pragmatic commands and those with lower levels of grammar demonstrated poor pragmatic skills. However, there were isolated cases of learners who did not fit this generalisation. The present study seeks to validate only Norrby & Håkansson (2007) results for EFL students. Some studies [11-13] showed that participants with high grammar proficiency performed better on pragmatics tests than participants with low linguistic proficiency in English as a second language. On the other hand, other studies [13-14] showed disparities between students' grammatical and pragmatic development. This paper attempts to fill this gap and determine the relationship between pragmatics and grammar in English as a foreign language. Such a determination would benefit English teachers since they must determine how to apply grammar and pragmatics in their classrooms, precisely the amount of time each student should spend and whether they should be taught separately or together. Another innovation concerning the abovementioned research is that only specific, pragmatic features were studied. Pragmatics research has investigated isolated aspects of language learners' pragmatic competence [15]. Very few authors have attempted to analyse more than one speech act in the same study. For this research, the production of four different speech acts (request, invitation, refusal and apology) was analysed in order to try to reach a more global conclusion about the learners' pragmatic knowledge. Finally, the personal reasons that have motivated the choice of this topic have been diverse. While taking postgraduate courses, this study was focused on the pragmatics of foreign languages. It has always been interested in language teaching and linguistic and cultural studies, and, in this sense, pragmatics is a discipline that perfectly combines all these areas. As a university professor of English, I have noticed the tendencies in my students' speech about

grammar and pragmatics. Students who succeed in grammar lessons acquire pragmatics more quickly than those who lack grammatical competence. I am very interested in discovering the connection between the two competencies in order to add additional value to my grammar lessons by including pragmatic content.

2. Review of the literature Throughout the acquisition of foreign language proficiency, there is a system known as interlanguage [16], which foreign language learners use to store newly acquired knowledge. During a particular stage of interlanguage, the learner learns the nuances of language use; specific nuances often involve pragmatic competence. Moreover, pragmatic competence is a necessary component of effective communication. For many years, foreign language teachers focused on grammatical competence and their teaching methods were based on delving into grammar and memorisation [9]. However, a shift in the horizon has occurred in recent years, and researchers have found that the primary goal of foreign language teaching is effective communication [15] V.G. and Rajan (2012). [9] A lack of pragmatic knowledge negatively affects non-native learners' communication skills. In investigating pragmatics, Takkaç Tulgar, Ayşegül. (2015) [17] found that a low level of grammatical competence restricted students' pragmatic ability. He suggests that students with low grammatical competence cannot produce adequate pragmatic utterances due to a lack of linguistic foundation. In a similar study, Bataller Rebeca. (2010) [18] found a clear relationship between grammatical and pragmatic competence; students with a high grammar level generally showed native-like pragmatic commands, and those with lower levels of grammar demonstrated poor pragmatic skills. She found cases where students with high grammatical competence showed low pragmatic competence, suggesting that pragmatics depends on grammar but must still be acquired as a separate entity within the interlanguage. These previous studies [16-18] show the connection between grammar and pragmatics in English language learning; however, this idea is not precise. While the literature on foreign language learning suggests a connection, English teachers should know whether this applies to their field of study and their students. Despite the studies on the importance of pragmatics, many EFL teachers do not see value in its teaching and are not trained in its instruction. The results of this research could inspire such teachers, as they would see that the inclusion of pragmatics in their curricular development can go hand in hand with grammar instruction, establishing a synergistic relationship.

2.1 Communicative competence, grammar and pragmatics

Communicative competence is crucial for language acquisition studies and applied linguistics. To delve deeper into the correlation between grammar and pragmatics, it is essential to refer to communicative competence, which has a multidisciplinary character. Despite the changes that the definition of communicative competence has undergone over the years to better adapt to the context and its use, there is unanimity that the most relevant aspects of it are the aspects related to the communicative context that takes place at a textual level, not simply at a sentence level. Thus, according to the four models of communicative competence, students must be able to communicate not only by mastering phonetics, vocabulary or grammar, but they must also master (produce and understand) the speech acts appropriate to the context, that is, be communicatively competent at a textual level, beyond the sentence. In this sense, we can affirm that a competent user must have the necessary linguistic knowledge and the competencies and skills to activate that knowledge. Defining, observing and evaluating the basic knowledge of communicative competence is relatively easy; what is not so simple is describing and evaluating the ability to use it since this is related to both cognitive processes and various affective processes [19]. However, grammar and pragmatics are inevitably linked when we refer to language's main objective, communication [20]. Hence, Purpura [30] proposes a theoretical definition of linguistic knowledge in which two components are related: grammatical and pragmatic knowledge. For Purpura, grammatical knowledge distinguishes between form and meaning. It is divided into two levels, the sentence and the supra-sentence, which, in turn, are related to pragmatic knowledge of how a statement can use the context to extend its meaning. When we refer to the grammatical meaning of a statement, it is expected to equate it with the literal meaning; when a literal meaning is not sufficiently understandable for the listener, we must resort to the information provided by pragmatics, that is, the speaker's intention, shared knowledge, among others. The difficulty in defining the relationship between grammar and pragmatics probably lies in the complexity of their framework, the complex relationships between grammar, semantics and pragmatics (linked to the use, user or inferential component of the language), and the use of language related to culture. Traditionally, there is a widespread belief that a language can be mastered if its grammar is mastered; however, this is far from reality since, historically, it has been understood that grammar is only the logical and formal part of the language. Ginzburg *et al.* (2016) [21] maintain that communicative competence should not be limited only to grammar but should consider other aspects that consider the statements' adequacy or lack of adequacy. In reality, language is made

up of a set of partial grammars, among which we find the grammar of extralinguistic signs, which depends on the context, the so-called grammar pragmatics, whose knowledge ensures the power to communicate adequately [22] Grammatical knowledge includes both form and meaning (understanding of linguistic forms and literal meaning), and although the literal meaning should be sufficient, this is not always the case; in many cases, the statements require a reference to contextual clues - including the intentionality of the speaker - to interpret the meaning of a statement in a specific situation. Grammatical meaning involves understanding the different parts of the utterance (literal meaning). However, it is impossible to separate grammatical forms and literal meaning from the linguistic functions of an utterance, which are related to the intended meaning. Thus, an utterance, besides its literal meaning, hides a pragmatic meaning (sociolinguistic, sociocultural, etc.). Therefore, if we seek to generate a contextualised learning process to acquire effectively communicative grammar, this should be taught and learned closely with pragmatics.

2.2. The interaction between pragmatic and grammatical development It is essential to explore the theories of other experts who have researched this topic and then apply those ideas to the present study for EFL teachers. As has been seen, some maintain that grammatical competence is a prerequisite for pragmatic competence [10]; however, some studies indicate the opposite. For example, Alcón *et al.* (2008) [23] suggest that language learners acquire a considerable amount of pragmatic knowledge of the foreign language through their native language since, according to them, much pragmatic knowledge is universal and can be transferred from the first language to the foreign language, such as some specific communicative acts, conversational implicature, socio-pragmatic variability and linguistic choice. They arrive at these conclusions by frequently referencing the study of Schmidt (1995), who carefully analysed the case of an adult who demonstrated little grammatical precision but could still interpret intended messages and produce pragmatically adequate utterances.

2.3. Components of linguistic competence All of the above may have already been based on the theories of Mao, T., & He, S. (2021) [24] since studies on the relationship between grammatical competence and pragmatic competence began first with the beginning of the communicative competence approach in foreign language teaching. However, they did not explicitly speak of pragmatics. Four domains of language use were identified that foreign language learners need to be globally competent: grammatical competence, the sociocultural domain (pragmatics), the discursive domain, and the strategic domain. However, the approach does not reference the order of acquisition. Several influential current models of communicative language ability represent language knowledge as a set of related but separate components, including grammatical and pragmatic dimensions, which interact with prior knowledge, metacognitive strategies, and contextual features of language use. According to Lehmann, Christian. (2007) [25], language competence requires that the speaker uses language correctly and appropriately. Nfor, Samuel. (2018) [26] agrees with this idea, stating that a student acquires knowledge of sentences not only as grammatical “but also as appropriate”. Students can acquire a repertoire of speech acts and participate in events. These approaches do not diminish the importance of learning the grammatical rules of a language. It is one of the four components of communicative competence. Although, of course, formal language acquisition is also possible through a natural process. This indicates that communicative competence is a combination of all linguistic competencies, which indicates that grammar and pragmatics must be taught in EFL classes to produce a high overall competence level.

3. Methodology The research was carried out using a quantitative methodology in which the data obtained from the results of two tests were compared, which measured, on the one hand, the participants' level of grammar and, on the other hand, their level of pragmatic understanding. Due to the disparities between the relationship of these two competencies in English, it is important to continue researching this topic. In the fall semester of 2023, 29 students who took English as a foreign language at an intermediate-high or advanced level took the Oxford University English Grammar Test and a multiple-choice questionnaire (MCDCT) on the pragmatic level.

3.1. The design To begin the semester, three groups of students were chosen. The three groups were taking three subjects, all at an upper-intermediate or advanced level, depending on the categorisation of the university in question. All gave consent to participate, and afterwards, the three groups took a test to determine their level of grammatical competence and another test for their pragmatic level. The design of this research is quantitative. According to Mohajan, Haradhan. (2021) [27], quantitative research aims to determine the relationship between two variables in a population. Furthermore, the design is not experimental since there is no treatment after the tests.

3.2. Research Questions The research questions of the study are:

- (1) Is there a relationship between grammatical and pragmatic competence of English learners?
- (2) Is the grammatical competence of English learners necessary for pragmatic competence?
- (3) Is grammatical competence sufficient to acquire pragmatic competence?

3.3. Population

The study population is all students who took English as a foreign language courses at the intermediate-high or advanced level at the university above during the fall semester of 2023. According to the secretary of the Department of Modern Languages of the university in question, 80 students were taking EFL courses at the intermediate-high or advanced level in the fall of 2023. The request to participate in the study was sent to the 80 students in question, and 29 participated. According to Barroga *et al.* [28], quantitative studies within the educational setting require a formula that uses data where values can change continuously. The author specifies that a population of 80 students and a sample of 29 students [17.24% (n=5) men and 87.75% (n=19) women] has a confidence rate of 90% and a margin of error of 12.2%.

The participants in the sample are college students, and their fields of study vary significantly. They are between 18 and 22 years old. There was no bias in the selection of the groups. The researcher did not have access to information about the groups when selecting them. The selection process was based on the characteristics described above.

3.4. Research instruments

The research methods include:

- (1) English grammar test
- (2) English pragmatics test

To design the grammar level test and develop the pragmatic comprehension level test, a correlational or psychometric methodology was applied, through which variables were described, and their relationships were analysed based on a representative sample of subjects.

3.5. Description of the grammar test

When referring to language tests, Oller (1983) [29] uses the concept of expectancy grammar, a concept based on the fact that comprehension is facilitated through the hierarchical relationships established between the linguistic elements available in the reality of the user's language because they can be adequately related to known extralinguistic contexts. Oller [29] states that these relationships always occur similarly, a pragmatic expectancy grammar. According to the expectations placed under the prism of grammar-pragmatics, what we measure in a grammar test is not only grammar but pragmatics; that is, they must require the learner to understand the pragmatic interrelationship of linguistic and extralinguistic contexts. This is precisely what was intended to be avoided by adapting the grammar level test for this study. On the other hand, in Grammar Assessment, Purpura (2004) [30] analyses the different types of grammar assessment to provide a well-documented framework for grammar assessment and to develop tests, assessments and programmes for its comprehensive teaching. Purpura establishes a perspective on conducting a balanced grammar assessment at different levels. Purpura describes the concept of grammar in the different communicative models and states that grammar must be assessed independently of pragmatics, which is what we did. In this sense, the grammar test was conducted. Questions from each level that were strictly related to grammatical content were selected, and those in which vocabulary, pragmatics, sociocultural or other aspects of a different nature than purely grammatical had a significant load were discarded. On the one hand, the test was validated using the expert method, that is, by administering it to teachers of English as a foreign language; on the other hand, by piloting it with EFL students at level C2 and with native speakers. This double validation, with experts and with the pilot, confirmed that what was being measured was indeed grammar and not pragmatics. The test consists of 60 multiple-choice questions with only one correct answer, 20 questions for levels A1 and A2, 20 for levels B1 and B2 respectively, and 20 questions for levels C1 and C2. The difficulty of the questions increases according to the level being measured. For the study, we considered the initial language level to be A1, basic A2, lower-intermediate B1, intermediate B2 and EEE4, and higher C1, C2 and EEE8. To ensure that test participants are not affected by fatigue, they begin the test at the level they declare to have, and if that level seems too easy for them, they can skip to the next level.

3.6 Description of the pragmatics test

As a result of the communicative approaches introduced in the 1970s, [31] language tests have been adapted and have focused primarily on measuring learners' competence from a functional perspective. However, the test

developed to carry out this study goes beyond this functional competence and, as mentioned above, aims to separate the competence of pragmatic understanding of knowledge and students' linguistic competence. The pragmatic comprehension level test follows the framework proposed by Hudson, Detmer, and Brown (1995) [24]. However, its uniqueness lies in that the test items have been designed explicitly for non-English-speaking students studying abroad and do not delve into the study of production. The test was developed strictly by applying the qualities proposed by Bachman and Palmer (2010) [33]: reliability, validity, authenticity, interactivity, impact, and feasibility. The situations were created based on a previously developed exemplary generation test. The importance of knowing the needs of the target group in detail led us to carry out a needs analysis of the group to which the test is directed, as well as another analysis of the type of activities identified as efficient by previous studies [32, 34] allowing us to obtain a fully customised test. These analyses were essential for the identification and selection of the use of English, as they were also for deciding which tasks and which language samples were valid and appropriate. On the other hand, the pragmatic comprehension level test is more generic than those usually found since it does not emphasise any specific speech act but instead works on the situations that the students identified with a specific difficulty level in a previous study based on exemplary generation. Until now, knowledge of foreign language students' pragmatic comprehension (and production) has been addressed through specific speech acts (complaints, requests, apologies, etc.) and, above all, in English. On very few occasions, it has been done from the idea of global competence. The test, made up of 54 questions, is divided into three sections: (1) conversational routines, with 18 items describing a situation and then a dialogue in which one reply is known and the other is incomplete. The candidate must choose the appropriate response to complete the reply; (2) implicatures, with 18 items in which a situation is described to contextualise and then a complete dialogue of two replies is presented. The candidate has to interpret what one of the people interacting in the dialogue means, and (3) speech acts, with 18 items in which a situation is described to contextualise and a dialogue of two replies with only one reply is presented. The results from the pragmatics test allowed us to reorganise the questions by the level of difficulty according to the number of correct answers by the participants: the more correct answers, the easier the question is considered to be, and the fewer correct answers, the more difficult. In this way, we obtained four levels of pragmatic mastery: initial, basic, intermediate and advanced. In summary, this pragmatics test meets all the standardised test requirements. It is based on the understanding of speech acts, routines, and implicatures, taking as a model the test that Roever (2014) [35] developed as a research tool for learning pragmatics in students of English as a foreign language.

4. Data Analysis

The results on the participants' linguistic and pragmatic competencies were collected and presented in the following graphs. The pragmatics test contains 20 questions, each worth 5 points, giving 100 points. For each question answered incorrectly, the student loses 5 points. The total scores for each student are reflected in percentages. The grammar test contains 50 questions, each worth 1, with a possible maximum of 50 points. The points obtained by the student were divided by 50 in order to find the percentage. Both percentages for pragmatics and grammar are represented in Table 1. The results and their corresponding levels according to the categories established by the Oxford University placement test can be seen in Table 1. Before being converted into percentages, the score for the original grammar test was placed into one of the following five categories, according to the Oxford University scale: Complete Beginner, 0-12; Lower Intermediate, 13-24; Intermediate, 25-36; Upper Intermediate, 37-46; and Advanced, 47-50. Each student's percentages from the pragmatics test were then multiplied by 0.5 to give each student a score from 0 to 50 to put them into the same categories offered by the University of Oxford. The averages are given at the end of Table 1. Thirteen of the students had the same pragmatic level as their grammatical level. Twenty-five of the students had a higher grammatical level than their pragmatic level. Moreover, four students had a higher pragmatic level than their grammatical level.

Table 1. Results of the pragmatics and grammar tests

Student No.	Pragmatics	Grammar	Pragmatic / Grammatical level
1	63.70%	44.90%	Intermediate / Low intermediate
2	53.90%	59.20%	Intermediate / Intermediate
3	58.80%	53.00%	Intermediate / Intermediate
4	34.30%	40.80%	Low intermediate / Low intermediate
5	53.90%	79.60%	Intermediate / High intermediate
6	34.30%	32.60%	Low intermediate / Low intermediate
7	53.90%	77.50%	Intermediate / High intermediate

8	78.40%	83.60%	High intermediate / High intermediate
9	44.10%	55.10%	Low intermediate / Intermediate
10	58.80%	69.40%	Intermediate / Intermediate
11	58.80%	75.50%	Intermediate / High intermediate
12	53.90%	83.60%	Intermediate / High intermediate
13	34.30%	63.20%	Low intermediate / Intermediate
14	68.60%	44.90%	Intermediate / Low intermediate
15	49.00%	61.20%	Intermediate / Intermediate
16	58.80%	71.40%	Intermediate / Intermediate
17	58.80%	63.20%	Intermediate / Intermediate
18	73.50%	57.10%	High intermediate / Intermediate
19	24.50%	69.40%	Absolute beginner / Intermediate
20	44.10%	44.90%	Low intermediate / Low intermediate
21	34.30%	65.30%	Low intermediate / Intermediate
22	44.10%	91.80%	Low intermediate / High intermediate
23	44.10%	75.50%	Low intermediate / High intermediate
24	39.20%	79.60%	Low intermediate / High intermediate
25	53.90%	61.20%	Intermediate / Intermediate
26	58.80%	67.30%	Intermediate / Intermediate
27	58.80%	65.30%	Intermediate / Intermediate
28	49.00%	49.00%	Intermediate / Intermediate
29	39.20%	51.00%	Intermediate / Low intermediate
Average	51.00%	63.30%	Low intermediate / Intermediate

According to the results, the grammatical level affects pragmatic comprehension, especially among the high scores. However, it is not directly related, as could also be observed in the statistics calculated for this purpose. From a statistical point of view, the correlation between both scores could be calculated to see the relationship between pragmatics and grammar. The Pearson linear correlation coefficient is 0.192 and was not statistically significant ($p > 0.067$).

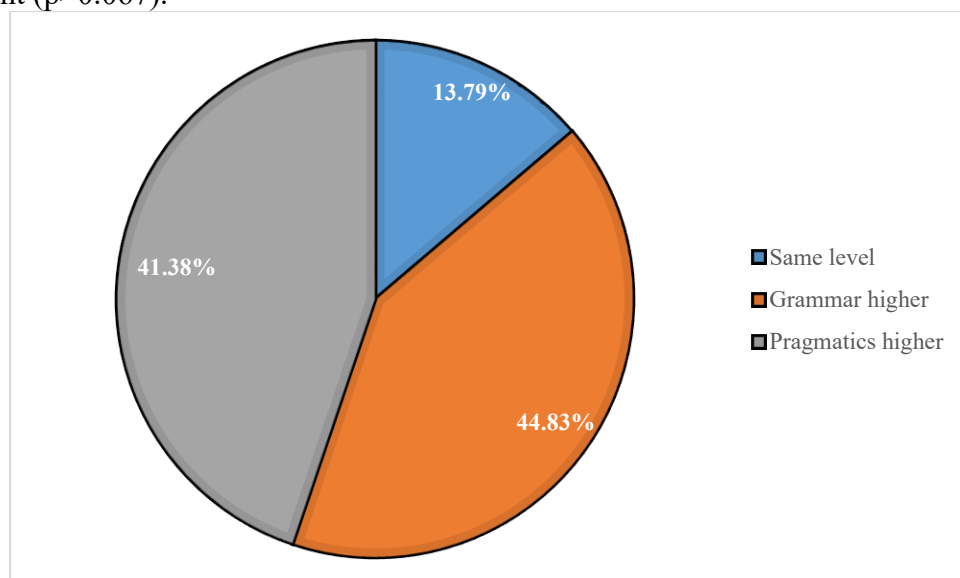


Figure 1. Grammar and pragmatics levels

Although statistical significance could be achieved by increasing the sample size, the relationship between the pragmatics and grammar scores is minimal: they only have a joint variation of less than 4% (the coefficient of determination would be $0.1922 = 0.0368$). This means the grammar performance scores can only explain 3.68% of the pragmatics performance. More than 96% of pragmatics remains to be explained. This essay does not contradict the results of many researchers who reveal that the level of pragmatics is directly proportional to the level of pragmatics [36-38]. A detailed analysis of the results indicates that students with high grammatical knowledge levels coincide with those with a higher pragmatic competence. 41% of the students had the EEE8

diploma, a C2 or a C1 of English from the CEFR, while 50% had the EEE4 diploma or a B2 (9% (N=2), one of whom had an English partner). Therefore, most students with a higher level of pragmatics may have an intermediate, advanced or higher grammar level. The correlation between the grammar level and pragmatics at intermediate and primary levels does not show homogeneity. Of the students with an intermediate level of pragmatics, the majority had a level of grammar corresponding to B1. However, 14% had a higher level of grammar (C1 or EEE8). Notably, 59% of the students demonstrated a level of grammar corresponding to B2, and 40% had passed the EEE4. It follows, therefore, that an intermediate level of pragmatics correlates typically to a higher level of grammar than that of pragmatics. As for the lower levels, it is worth highlighting that at the basic pragmatics level, there are still many students with intermediate grammar levels (B2 and EEE4). The absolute numbers coincide with what can also be observed in the analysis of the intermediate level: out of 26 students that we placed at this basic pragmatics level, 7 are students with EEE4. These data can bring us closer to confirming that EFL certifications have less pragmatic load than English ones and that students with an advanced or higher grammatical level of the language do not necessarily have an equivalent pragmatic level. We know that classes are mostly unidirectional (teacher-student) and practically no interaction or activities simulating real situations. The results shown at the initial level support the work that the official level of English in Iraq has a very low pragmatic load, which is evidenced by the initial level of pragmatics. 69% (N=9) of the students with an initial level of pragmatics had obtained the EEE4 level diploma, while 30% (N=4) had a grammar level corresponding to B1. These data confirm the excellent dispersion that the relationship between grammar and pragmatics can present and corroborate existing studies: Students with high levels of pragmatics also have high levels of grammar, but a certain level of grammar does not necessarily indicate the corresponding level of mastery of pragmatics [39].

5. DISCUSSION

Table 1 and Figure 1 suggest a positive relationship between pragmatic ability and grammatical competence among EFL students. Participants with high pragmatic competence generally have high or even superior grammatical ability. Therefore, this research supports previous studies on English acquisition that show that the grammatical competence of foreign language learners is necessary to develop pragmatic competence. Still, 13.79% of the participants had a higher pragmatic level than their grammatical level. These data contradict many studies that claim that grammar is necessary for pragmatics. No participant achieved an advanced score in the grammar or pragmatics tests. A large percentage (44.83%) achieved the same level, both in grammar and pragmatics. 41.37% of the students achieved a higher level of grammar than pragmatics. This study indicates what many researchers have contrasted: grammatical competence is a prerequisite for pragmatic competence. Most students with an intermediate level of grammar also had an intermediate level of pragmatics. As Figure 1 shows, a significant percentage of participants still obtained higher scores in the pragmatics test than in the grammar test. The global variables for the results are related, although not very related, suggesting that grammatical competence is insufficient for EFL students' pragmatic ability. Therefore, the preliminary conclusion that can be drawn is that grammatical competence is not the only factor determining pragmatic ability. Qian *et al.* (2024) [40], for example, suggest that language learners acquire a considerable amount of pragmatic knowledge from their native language because, according to them, much pragmatic knowledge is universal and can be transferred from the first language to the second language. The research results corroborate what has been suggested by some existing studies in other languages [40-43], which found in his study that a low level of grammar is equivalent to a low level of pragmatics. Still, there are learners with a high level of grammar and a low level of pragmatics. The study here also coincides with the statements of Hakansson and Norrby [10] on the existence of evidence that all students with a low level of grammar have a low level of pragmatics and that students with a higher level of pragmatics always coincide with those who have a higher level of grammar. However, Hakansson and Norrby [10] observed what the results obtained from the comparison of the pragmatics and grammar tests of this research have revealed: no student who demonstrates a low grammatical level will show a high pragmatic competence, although there are cases of students with high grammatical levels who do not have an equivalent pragmatic competence. This last case could be students who have studied the English language in class but have deficient production.

6. Conclusions and Suggestions

One of the limitations of this study is the low rate of participation in the tests. Only 36% of the students at the upper-intermediate and advanced levels participated in the study, perhaps due to the study dates since it

coincided with the dates of the final exams. Even so, the sample size represents this work's purpose. However, further research is indicated to delve deeper into the main objectives of this research.

Another limitation was found in the design of the pragmatics test. While many researchers have successfully used the multiple-choice format for pragmatics tests in the past [44-45], Jianda, L. (2007) [46] explains that some students may select answers carelessly and that sometimes it is difficult for native speakers to decide on the most appropriate answer. There is no natural language production but only recognition. As the students were busy with the final exams, it is possible that 13.79% of students who achieved a higher score in pragmatics than in grammar chose any answer or got lucky in guessing the answer. This study suggests that grammatical competence is necessary for pragmatic competence in English learners, but it is insufficient for mastery of the language. In other words, grammatical competence is a prerequisite for pragmatic competence but does not guarantee it. Future research can focus on the differences between the pragmatic and grammatical knowledge of English learners with different language proficiencies. More studies are needed that compare pragmatic and grammatical levels before and after interventions by teachers or researchers. The perfect setting for such a study would be a foreign language classroom, where students are still learning grammar at a beginner or low-intermediate level. Future research will allow these questions to be answered. The pedagogical implications of the results of this study are essential. Before this research, there was a gap in knowledge about the possible connection between pragmatics and grammar in EFL students and, therefore, a large number of foreign language teachers did not see the value in teaching pragmatics or were not trained in its instruction. The pedagogical implications of the present research should have an impact on these teachers since the results demonstrate that pragmatic instruction is necessary and that students. However, they require a grammatical foundation and do not acquire pragmatics without lessons or experience abroad. Likewise, explicit and active instruction in pragmatics is recommended in EFL classes. As Alduais *et al.* (2022) [2] indicate, the best way to learn pragmatics is through a natural process; the problem is that students would have to spend considerable time in an Arabic-speaking country to acquire pragmatics implicitly. Therefore, explicit instructions are followed by active activities incorporated into existing activities that use the vocabulary and grammar studied. These activities must align with the principles of the communicative method in that everything students do has to focus on meaning and the practical life of the student. Lastly, EFL teachers will continue to design curricula to meet their programs and learning outcomes, but the conclusion of this study verifies that pragmatics is necessary. Not only that, but there are additional effects in creating curricula that lend themselves to real-world application, which is precisely what pragmatic lessons do. The primary responsibility of EFL students is to find and develop practical lessons for them. Therefore, pragmatic instruction must be highly considered.

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