THE ASSESSMENT OF PRAGMATICS COMPETENCE BY ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS AT DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Abstract

This research focuses on the objectives of 1) the value of pragmatic competence between male and female EFL learners, and 2) the value of pragmatic competence between Papuan and non-Papuan EFL learners in the Department of English Literature. The method used in this research is quantitative. The instrument used in data collection was the Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Test (MDCT) from Birjandi & Rezaei (2010). The questionnaire consists of 20 question items and 3 choice options. Questionnaires were distributed to 28 respondents via Google Forms and paper sheets. The received questionnaire data were then assessed and grouped according to the objectives to be sought, namely gender and race. After that, it was analyzed using Microsoft Excel to find the average value. The results of this research were: 1) the pragmatic competence scores of female EFL learners were better than male EFL learners, but the comparison was not too significant. Male EFL students scored well on apologies, while female EFL students scored well on requests. 2) The value of the pragmatic competence of EFL learners between Papuans and non-Papuans is not very significant and is dominated by non-Papuan learners. Papuan EFL learners have a good apology score, while non-Papuan EFL learners have a good request score. As a result, it can be concluded that the pragmatic competence of EFL learners, both gender and race, at the Department of English Literature, is able to use pragmatic competence properly.

Keywords: *Pragmatics Competence, Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Test, Speech Act*

INTRODUCTION

Language as a tool of communication has always been developing in each particular area, and this is a challenge for both users of native languages and users of foreign languages, especially for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at Musamus University. English is regarded as an international language that is used by many billions of people worldwide, both native and non-native speakers (Songkhro & Aksornjarung, 2015). In order to know these things, we must know the language itself through linguistics.

Basically, linguistics is the science of language that studies the form of language, how it is pronounced, and the meaning of language. Linguistics has several branches of knowledge, such as morphology, phonetics, phonology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Birner, 2012). Of course, this science greatly affects

students' communication skills as EFL learners, especially in speech acts. This can also affect the ability of students to understand the meaning spoken both from the speaker's point of view and the listener's point of view, which responds according to the context of the conversation. The field of science that studies the meaning of language is pragmatics. Therefore, we need to learn what pragmatics is and its uses in social life.

Nowadays, conversations conducted both in and outside the classroom sometimes lead to misunderstandings that result in miscommunication. Whether it is caused by the use of inappropriate words, the context of the conversation, or not understanding the meaning of what is conveyed. English as a second language is not just about linguistic knowledge, but rather how learners create their own views about the target language and how to react to it

(Shibata, 2021). Therefore, EFL learners' understanding of pragmatics and how these three parts of science can overcome misinterpretation is crucial. One of the key elements in helping L2 learners improve their conversational skills is pragmatics (Moradi et al., 2016). From the three parts of pragmatics, what EFL learners need to learn today is inter-language pragmatics (ILP).

As EFL learners, we need to understand what the speaker is saying and respond accordingly to what the speaker wants. However, in responding, sometimes EFL learners are confused about how to choose the right words in accordance with the context of the conversation. Inter-Language Pragmatics (ILP) is a part of pragmatics that studies how non-native speakers (NNSs) understand the second language they learn and its development in a social context. Their understanding of using pragmatics in a second language, producing language as an act of speaking, and knowledge of a second language is required (Ahmed & Hasan, 2020; Hammadi, 2019; Taguchi & Roever, 2017). ILP also studies how language learners use their understanding of norms in the target language to conduct speech actions in their L2 (Moradi et al., 2016). ILP Knowledge can improve the pragmatic competence of Universitas Musamus EFL learners.

Understanding a language is certainly not only with the knowledge of the language that is owned but also the ability to connect the understanding of language through pragmatic competence. Pragmatic competence is divided into two definitions, namely knowledge and ability (Li et al., 2015). According to Barron (2003), pragmatic competence is knowledge about realizing the illocutionary available in linguistic sources, the structure of aspects in speech acts, and the use of appropriate linguistic language sources according to the context (Li et al., 2015; Moradi et al., 2016). Thomas (1983) defines pragmatic competence as the ability to use language appropriately according to the social context and easily understood by both the speaker and the listener and involves pragmatic knowledge and grammatical of the language (Alzeebaree & Yavuz, 2017; Aufa, 2012; Derakhshan & Eslami, 2015). From the explanations that have been submitted by several previous researchers, the knowledge and ability of pragmatic competence of EFL learners must be balanced between theory and application.

In general, pragmatic competence is defined as the knowledge necessary to understand what is conveyed by the speaker and the ability to respond in accordance with the objectives conveyed and in accordance with the context of the conversation in order to make communication runs properly (Ahmed & Hasan, 2020; Farashaiyan & Hua, 2012; Saadatmandi et al., 2018). After understanding all the knowledge about pragmatic competence, EFL learners can improve their ability to use appropriate language in speech acts and avoid mistakes.

The object of this study is to assess the pragmatic competence of EFL learners by gender (male and female) and race (Papuan and non-Papuan). The Department of English Literature will be chosen because it is one of the majors that use English as a second language. Gender and race are the objects of research because it is very important to know the significance of pragmatic competence between males and females. While the race will be an interesting finding, it will be interesting to see the pragmatic competence of Papuan and non-Papuan EFL learners. The purpose of this research is expected to be an evaluation and development of the abilities possessed by EFL learners in the Department of English Literature, especially in the field of pragmatics (to communicate). On the other hand, it can be used as reference material for lecturers to improve

the English skills of male and female students, as well as for races, especially Papuan students.

METHODS

The design of this research used causal assessment and comparison, namely assessing the pragmatic competence of EFL learners in the Department of English Literature and seeing whether there is significance among the research subjects. The objects of this research are gender and race. The pragmatic competence of male and female EFL learners is assessed to determine their abilities. Likewise, the pragmatic competence of Papuan and non-Papuan EFL learners was assessed. After the researcher collects the data, it is processed and analyzed to find the mean (M). After that, the researcher was able to find the results of the pragmatic competence assessment of gender and race. Then compare male and female EFL learners, and compare Papuan and non-Papuan EFL learners.

The place of research was the Department of English Literature, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Musamus. This research was conducted for a month, covering the first two weeks of March and the last two weeks of March 2023. The first and second weeks of March were spent distributing questionnaires through Google Forms and on sheet paper in the department. After that, in the third and fourth weeks of March, the data that had been collected was processed and analyzed to see the results. And finally, the results of the data are assessed according to the object of the research. The instrument to be used in data collection is the Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Test (MDCT), developed by Birjandi & Rezaei (2010). To facilitate data collection, the questionnaire was given in the form of an online media Google Form and paper sheets as an alternative to data collection. The questionnaire consists of 20 situation items (10 items of apology and 10 items of request) with 3

answer/response options, where respondents are asked to choose one answer that best suits the request in each given situation.

The data to be taken comes from students in Universitas Musamus who are in the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, namely the Department of English Literature. The target number of respondents to be obtained is 28 respondents. Respondents have been selected according to the researcher's criteria, which are active students based on SIMAKAD who have taken pragmatic courses and, of course, respondents who are willing to answer every request that is made.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
1. Pragmatic Competence of Gender

Prior to data collection, a total of 28 respondents were recorded according to the researcher's criteria. Data collection was carried out by distributing questionnaires online (Google Forms) and paper sheets. The questionnaire with a total of 20 question items (situations), divided into 10 apology items and 10 request items. There are 3 response options, where the respondent only chooses one option that is considered the most appropriate, while the other two options are only distractions. After the data is collected, it is analyzed by calculating the correct number of the 20 questions available. Then, the number of correct questions is multiplied by 5 (18 correct examples, then 18x5 = 90). The results of the data that have been calculated are then grouped based on the research object, namely gender, and race.

Pragmatics Test: Apology and Request

This questionnaire was created as material for thesis research with the aim of assessing the pragmatic competence of EFL learners. There are 20 situations (apologies and requests) with 3 responses. Respondents were asked to read each situation carefully and choose the one answer that they considered **most appropriate**. The

estimated processing time is 10-15 minutes. Respondent participation is very important for the smooth running of this research.

Situation 1: Suppose you are late for class and the lecture is very disciplined. How would you express your apology in this situation?

Lecturer: This is the third time you're late for this class. Next time I won't let you in.
You:

a. I understand. I won't be late again.

b. Sorry but the important thing is that I attend, right?

c. Things happen in life, sorry.

Situation 2: You have been asked to submit an assignment today. However, you haven't prepared it, and you want to apologize for that. How would you express your apology in this situation?

Lecturer: I said that it must be collected today. Why don't you prepare for your term assignment?
You:

a. Sorry but I had too much other homework from my other projects to finish this one on time.

b. Well, I had some unexpected problems, so you should make an exception for me.

c. That's true. I'm sorry. I had some unexpected obstacles, but I understand that this is the policy.

Situation 3: You are almost asleep in the class while the lecture is teaching. The lecture gets very angry when he sees you sleeping in the class. How do you express your apology?

Lecturer: Did you sleep well last night?
You:

a. **I'm sorry; I will try and not let it happen again.**

b. I'm sorry, but I didn't sleep a wink last night.

c. I think so.

EFL learners	Respondent	Mean	M. Apology	M. Request
Male	8	65,6	36,875	28,75
Female	20	68,5	35,5	33

The results of the assessment above show that the average scores of male and female EFL learners are dominated by females. Even so, the comparison of the values is not very significant between the two. From the results of the report, an important finding was issued, namely that the pragmatic competence of EFL learners in the Department of English Literature between male and female genders was not much different.

The results of the above study also reveal that the M. Apology of male EFL learners is not much different from that of female EFL learners, while the M. Request of female EFL learners dominates compared to male EFL learners. The results of this study prove that EFL learners in the Department of English Literature are able to use their pragmatic skills in speaking, both in the context of apologies and requests. The pragmatic competence of EFL learners in the Department of English Literature should always be improved so that their abilities continue to improve even more.

2. Pragmatic Competence of Race

Referring to the previous data from the Department of English Literature student respondents, there were 28 respondents, with 10 Papuan students and 18 non-Papuans. During data collection, it was seen that Papuan EFL learners could fill in each question easily, just like non-Papuan EFL students. After the data is collected, it will be grouped according to the research object and analyzed in the same way as before.

EFL learners	Respondent	Mean	M. Apology	M. Request
Papuan	10	64	36	28
Non-Papuan	18	69,7	35,83	33, 9

The results of the assessment found that the average score of non-Papuan EFL learners was higher than that of Papuan EFL students. However, the comparison between the two is not very significant. This is an interesting finding because the insignificant comparison between the two races shows that the quality of the pragmatic competence of Papuan EFL learners cannot be doubted. The data above also explains M. Apology that non-Papuan EFL students are not much different from Papuan EFL students, namely 36:35.83.

Meanwhile, the M. Request of Papuan EFL learners is smaller than that of non-Papuan EFL students, namely 28:33.9. Although not all Papuan students in the Department of English Literature have the same background, they are able to show that their quality of speech is not much different from that of non-Papuan students. By studying diligently and always improving pragmatic competence, EFL students, both Papuan and non-Papuan, will always improve regularly. These results can be useful for lecturers to improve the quality of Papuan EFL learners.

The results of the research above state that the pragmatic competence of male and female EFL learners in the Department of English Literature is not very significant. Based on the research report, it was found that the pragmatic competence of female EFL learners was higher than that of male EFL learners. However, male EFL learners scored higher on apologies, while female EFL students scored higher on requests. When compared with previous research, Songkhro & Aksornjarung (2015) stated in their research that the pragmatic competence of male learners is better than female learners, especially in the aspects of responding to praise and greeting people. Meanwhile, research conducted by Holmes (1995) found that the pragmatic abilities of female learners in speech acts were better than male learners, and in the context of apologies and requests, female learners were more polite (Ahmed & Hasan, 2020).

The results of further research are related to pragmatic competence among Papuan and non-Papuan EFL learners. From the results of the report above, it was found that the pragmatic competence scores of non-Papuan EFL learners were higher than Papuan EFL learners. However, the comparison is not very significant. The findings also found that Papuan EFL learners scored well in the context of apologizing, while non-Papuan EFL learners scored well in the context of requests. This is an interesting and important finding considering that many assume that the quality of Papuan learners' understanding of English is doubtful. However, the results of this research found that the pragmatic competence of Papuan and non-Papuan EFL learners at Department of English Literature was not very significant. As a result, Papuan EFL learners are able to use pragmatic competence in speech. It's just that they need to make improvements to the deficiencies they have.

CONCLUSION

After getting the results of this research, it was concluded that the pragmatic competence of EFL learners between the male and female genders was not very significant, with a ratio of 65,6:68,5. The findings found that the pragmatic competence scores of female EFL learners and the use of speech in requests were better than those of male EFL learners, while male EFL learners had good scores on apologies. In the results of subsequent research, the pragmatic competence of EFL learners between the Papuan and non-Papuan races is also not very significant, with a ratio of 64:69,7. Non-Papuan EFL students have a good average value of pragmatic competence and average request

scores, while Papuan EFL students have a good average score on apologies. From all the results of this research, it can be concluded that the pragmatic competence of EFL learners in the Department of English Literature, both in terms of gender and race, is not very significant, and they are able to use their pragmatic competence in speech act.

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