

An Investigation of the Relationship between Pragmatic Competence and Motivation for Non-English Majors

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Abstract—Language is used for communication. Pragmatic competence, which is essential in English teaching, is an important component of communicative competence. The development of pragmatic competence will enhance that of foreign language learners' communicative competence. This study discusses the relation between pragmatic competence and language learning motivation. Results show that students' general pragmatic competence is at a low level. Most of the subjects hold instrumental motivation as their dominant motivation. Significant correlation has been found between pragmatic competence and language learning motivation ($r=.582$; $p=.000$). According to the survey results, the author provides several suggestions on cultivating and maintaining learners' motivation in their pragmatic learning.

Index Terms—pragmatic competence, communicative competence, language learning motivation, pragmatic development

I. INTRODUCTION

It is acknowledged that in China the ultimate goal of the English teaching in college is to develop students' communication competence. However, L2 learners in China often complain that, after learning English for many years, they cannot communicate with foreigners fluently, appropriately and successfully, although they own a high level of grammatical competence. So it is of practical significance to explore how English learners develop their pragmatic competence.

Though, it is widely accepted that motivation plays an important role in second language learning. However, in practical studies of the relationship between motivation and pragmatic competence, most of them focuses on issues of second pragmatic use, few involve in the specific study whether motivation can promote the development of pragmatic competence and how to develop learners' pragmatic competence by improving learners' motivation. That is especially true in China. The current study aims at exploring the relations of pragmatic competence and language learning motivation and shedding light on the way to motivate L2 learners in their pragmatic development. It also intends to provide pedagogic implications for English teaching in China.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Pragmatic Competence

Second language researchers have been studying nonnative speakers' pragmatic ability for more than two decades, and pragmatics has been defined in various ways, there is still a lack of a clear, widely accepted definition of the term. It is widely accepted that pragmatic competence is an important parameter in evaluating an advanced language learner. To develop communicative competence, it is inevitably involved the development of pragmatic competence.

Leech (1983) and his colleague Jenny Thomas (1983) subdivide pragmatics into pragmlinguistic and sociopragmatic components. Pragmlinguistics refers to the resources for conveying communicative acts and relational or interpersonal meanings. Socialpragmatics was described by Leech (1983, p.10) as 'the sociological interface of pragmatics, referring to the social perceptions underlying participants' interpretation and performance of communicative action. Chinese scholars take both the speaker's and the hearer's competence into account, they also give the definition of pragmatic competence. Professor He ziran argues that pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use a language appropriately in practical communication, which focuses on two aspects: the ability to produce appropriate language and at the same time to interpret correctly what the speaker says according to the speech context. And the current study mainly focuses on two aspects: pragmlinguistic competence and sociopragmatic competence.

In the area of interlanguage pragmatic competence, some scholars still make great contribution on this area. Takahashi (2001) speculated that motivation could be one of the most influential ID variables to account for differences in learners' noticing of target request forms. Schmidt (1993) argued that integratively motivated learners are more likely to pay close attention to the pragmatic aspects of input than those who are not so motivated. Cook (2001) also pointed out the possibility that exceptionally highly motivated JFL learners notice pragmatic functions that are taught and can judge what constitutes a polite speech style in Japanese. Takahashi (2005) claimed that learners differentially noticed

the target pragmalinguistic features, as contended by Crookes and Schmidt (1991). This implies a complex interplay between learners' motivational dispositions and their attentional targets at the pragmatic level. Thus the study of the relationship between motivational and L2 learners' pragmatic is significant, for it might provide Chinese EFL teachers as well as learners a new perspective in enhancing students' pragmatic competence by strengthening their pragmatic learning motivation.

B. Language Learning Motivation

In the area of SLA, more and more researchers emphasize the role of motivation on language learning. Motivation has an effect on second/ foreign language learning. Generally speaking, it is considered as one of the main determinants of second/ foreign language learning achievement (Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Dörnyei, 1994). It directly influences learners' using of learning strategies, how much learners interact with native speakers, how high their L2 proficiency level will become, and how long they will persevere and maintain L2 skills after the L2 study is over(Oxford & Shearin, 1994). As a matter of fact, all these influence the development of L2 learners' pragmatic competence. We will discuss several effective motivation models in the following sections.

In 1980s, scholars in China begin to study second language learning motivation. Studies on the relations between learners' motivation and their language achievement are fruitful. Wu Yian & Liu Runqing (1993) have found that the Chinese learners' motivation is instrument-oriented instead of integrativeness-oriented, they argue that motivation is helpful for language learning. In her studies, Wen Qiufang (1996, 2001) investigated language learners' motivation, attitude and strategy. She offered that their relations have relative high stability. She suggested dividing learners' motivation into two sub-categories: surface motivation and deep motivation. The latter one is related to learners' interest and more facilitative to language learning. Gao Yihong and her research team (2003) discussed Chinese EFL learners' motivation type under Chinese EFL environment.

All these ILP studies suggest that motivation is one of the IDs variables that highly constrain pragmatic attention and awareness. Diversity and fruitful these studies are, little research has been done concerning the roles of motivation in language learners' pragmatic development. That is the concern of the current study.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Instruments

As has mentioned, one of the objects of the current study is to investigate the correlation between language learners' motivation and their pragmatic competence. To achieve this aim, the best way is to use questionnaire to gather data from a large number of learners. In this study, multiple-choice questionnaire is used to measure learners' pragmatic competence, five-point Likert scales questionnaire for motivation.

1. Pragmatic competence questionnaire

There are various questionnaire designed to measure language learners' pragmatic competence, such as Bardovi-Harlig's, He Ziran's and Zhang Xiaomei's, etc. In the current study, we obtained data from EFL learners in China, who were quite different from the ESL learners. Therefore, the multiple-questionnaire developed by Prof. He Ziran (1987) is adopted. It is of high validity and reliability and it was designed in the EFL environment in China.

2. Motivation questionnaire

Motivation questionnaire adopted from Gardner's AMTB (Attitude/ Motivation Test Battery) (1985b) and other sources and made necessary modification to suit the present study. They were chosen because they were developed based on models in motivational and educational psychology which specifically referred to the motivation/attention interface. The reliability of the questionnaire in the current study is .89 (Cronbach's alpha, n=111).

The Motivation Questionnaire in the study consists of four parts. Part one is about students' orientation in learning English. Part two is students' attitudes toward target language. Part three is about students' English class anxiety. Part four concerns the motivational strength in their English learning. All the motivational variables measured by items that were rated on five-point Likert scales from "1= strongly disagree" to "5= strongly agree". And it was given in Chinese in order to ensure that the subjects have an accurate understanding of the items.

B. Subjects

The subjects in this study involved 111 sophomore non-English majors from Huaian normal university. Among them, 40 major in Chinese, 28 major in mathematics, 21 major in computer science and 22 major in Chemistry. They are 46 girls and 65 boys. 34 of them had passed the CET Band-4 and others had at least taken part in the CET Band-4 once but failed. All the 111 students were required to finish a pragmatic competence questionnaire. They were allowed to use dictionaries when they had difficulties in understanding the questions, but were not permitted to discuss with others. Time was not limited. In answering the motivation questionnaire, the students were asked to indicate their opinion about each statement by giving their immediate reactions to each of the motivation items. Therefore, the true information of students' motivation could be got. This questionnaire was also conducted in the same four classes, and the average time in answering it is about forty minutes.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Subjects' General Pragmatic Competence and Their Motivation in Learning English

The purpose of this study is to make it clear the relationship between learning motivation and students' pragmatic competence, so we'll just give a general description of students' pragmatic competence and their motivation. The result (Table 4-1) shows that the scores the students get are not so satisfactory, with the minimum 2.00; maximum 19.00. The mean is nearly 13. Generally speaking, only when a student gets 60 per cent correct answers of the questions, we can say he or she passes the examination. Of the total 111 students, 83.8 per cent are under the pass line. This indicates that the pragmatic competence of the subjects is still at a low level.

TABLE 4-1
SCORES OF THE SUBJECTS' PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE

N	Valid	111
	Missing	0
Mean		12.9459
Std. Error of Mean		.37660
Median		14.0000
Mode		15.00
Std. Deviation		3.96768
Variance		15.743
Range		17.00
Minimum		2.00
Maximum		19.00
Sum		1437.00
Percentiles	25	11.0000
	50	14.0000
	75	17.0000

The result of motivation questionnaire (Table 4-2) shows that both of the students' instrumental and integrative orientation got high mean scores, but the mean of instrumental orientation (3,945) is higher than that of integrative orientation (3,653). That is, the students in the current study had a relatively strong disposition to improve their L2 for practical use. While the attitude to TL community and interest in TL culture only got 2.972 and 2.653 respectively. Thus we may infer that the students' instrumental orientation is stronger than their integrative orientation and the dominant motivational type in college students' English learning is instrumentally oriented.

TABLE 4-2
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR THE MOTIVATION SUBSCALES NOTES: N= 111

Category	Mean	Std. Deviation
Integrative orientation	3.653	.921
Instrumental orientation	3.945	.863
English class anxiety	3.333	1.027
Attitude to TL community	2.972	1.021
Interest in TL culture	2.653	1.098
Motivational strength	3.207	.983

B. Correlations between Motivation Factors and Pragmatic Competence

The major theoretical motivation for this study was to see what links could be discovered between learning motivation and students' pragmatic competence. We follow Gardner (1985) in believing that motivated learners learn more because they seek out input, interaction, and instruction, and when they are exposed to target language input they pay attention to it and actively process it. In other words, motivated learners may pay more attention to the pragmatic aspect of the target language. This could be testified by our investigation. From table 4-3, we can see the correlation between students' language learning motivation and pragmatic competence.

In table 4-3, pragmatic competence is significantly correlated with language learning motivation ($r = .582$, $p = .000$). The significant correlation suggests that high level of language learning motivation in learning language does necessarily result in a corresponding development of pragmatic competence. Results of the correlation analysis between orientation/anxiety/attitude/motivation and the pragmatic competence are shown in Table 4-4 followed by the analysis.

TABLE 4-3
CORRELATION BETWEEN LANGUAGE LEARNING MOTIVATION AND PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE

		Language learning motivation	Pragmatic competence
Language learning motivation	Pearson correlation	1.000	.582
	Sig.(2-tailed)		.000
Pragmatic competence	Pearson correlation	.582	1.000
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.

Table 4-4 shows the correlation between motivational factors and pragmatic competence. The correlational analysis revealed that, among the six motivation subscales, three factors were significantly related to students' pragmatic competence. They are instrumental motivation ($r = .502$, $p = .005$); integrative motivation ($r = .593$, $p = .000$) and

motivational strength ($r=.459$, $p=.018$). The correlations between pragmatic competence and three other factors are insignificant. They are English class anxiety ($r=.314$, $p=.303$); attitude to TL community ($r=-.036$, $p=.749$) and interest in TL culture ($r=-.257$, $p=.019$). We'll have a brief look at them.

TABLE 4-4
CORRELATION BETWEEN MOTIVATION FACTORS AND PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE

Pragmatic score	instrumental orientation	integrative orientation	English class anxiety	attitude to TL community	interest in TL culture	motivational strength
Pearson correlation	.502**	.593**	.314	-.036	-.257**	.459*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.000	.303	.749	.019	.018

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

1. Correlation between instrumental motivation and pragmatic competence

Table 4-2 shows that the correlation between both pragmatic competence and instrumental motivation is significant with the Pearson Correlation $r=.502$, $p=.005$. Instrument motivation has to do with practical reasons for language learning, such as getting a promotion, well pay etc. The significant correlation between instrumental motivation and pragmatic competence indicates that this type of motivation does facilitate the development of pragmatic competence in Chinese EFL learning environment, just as Gardner himself admitted that instrumental motivation is also facilitative in a foreign language learning situation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Language learners with instrumental motivation devote more effort and time in language learning because they want to have financial rewards, and they can get satisfaction from the learning rewards. But Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) claim that once any chance for receiving a reward is eliminated, learners may also cease applying extra effort. So in the practice of English teaching, language teachers should take actions to enhance the language learners' instrumental motivation.

2. Correlation between integrative motivation and pragmatic competence

From table 4-2 we can see, the correlation between pragmatic competence and integrative motivation reaches a significant level ($r=.593$, $p=.000$), this result gives support to Gardner's social-educational model and the acculturation model. In social-educational model, integrative motivation is treated as a favorable variable in L2 learning since if the learners admire the target culture, he will read its literature, look for opportunities to practice the language, and take various kinds of activities to promote the development of the language. Schumann (1986), submitted low social distance; positive attitudes toward the second language community and high integrative motivation to use the second language for communication have led to a considerable increase in overall communicative competence. Students in the current study own a high level of integrative motivation, they become "productively engaged in learning tasks, and sustains that engagement without the need for continual encouragement or direction" (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991). It is the ideal motivational type that the teachers appreciate and try to develop among his/her students.

3. Correlation between students' English class anxiety and pragmatic competence

Table 4-4 demonstrates that the correlation between students' English class anxiety and pragmatic competence is insignificant ($r=.314$, $p=.303$). The insignificant correlation between English class anxiety and pragmatic competence indicates that the situational anxiety does not play a positive role in facilitating the development of pragmatic competence. As situational anxiety can be both helpful and harmful to language learning, in the current study, the subjects' English class anxiety is not helpful for their language learning. This finding gives effort to some previous studies. Gardner (1985b) found negative correlation of anxiety with proficiency test performance; Young (1986) also found negative correlation of anxiety with performance in speaking and writing tasks. Due to such a result, language teachers should take actions to reduce language learners' situational anxiety, provide activities that address varied learning styles and strategies in the classroom, help students realistically assess their performance, and develop their pragmatic competence.

4. Correlation between students' attitude to TL community/interest in TL culture and pragmatic competence

There are no significant correlation between students' attitude to TL community/interest in TL culture and pragmatic competence ($r=-.036$, $p=.749$; $r=-.257$, $p=.019$). Surprisingly, the correlation between the variables is negative, which indicates that the more interested they are in TL community and culture, the lower their pragmatic competence is. This result indicates that students' attitude to TL community and interest in TL culture have no facilitative role in pragmatic development. What led to such a phenomenon? In Gardner's social educational model (1985a), attitude is viewed as an indirect factor that plays its role in ultimate language achievement through motivation. In the current study, the students' dominant motivation type is instrument motivation, that is, the students tend to study English for some practical reasons instead of the language itself. In the current language learning context in China, examinations such as CET Band 4 or Band 6 or the Entrance Examination for Candidate Postgraduate determines whether the students can get an ideal job or a chance for further postgraduate study. Thereby, the students with instrumental motivation have to bury themselves into the practical use of the target language not the language itself. Moreover, the students' strong desire to change their present situation might attach more significance to their lower pragmatic competence, and therefore led to a negative correlation between the variables.

V. FINDINGS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

A. *Main Findings*

The analysis of the relationship between pragmatic competence questionnaire and motivation questionnaire is to find the correlations between motivational variables and pragmatic competence. The findings are:

1 The correlation between motivation and pragmatic competence is significant ($r=.582$, $p=.000$).

2 Not all the motivational variables have positive role to facilitate the development of pragmatic competence. The correlations between both instrument and integrative motivation and pragmatic competence are significant. English class anxiety is not significantly correlated with pragmatic competence. No significant correlation has been found between students' attitudes to TL community and culture and pragmatic competence.

From the results obtained by the investigation, we think that the following questions are worth considering for English teachers and learners: how to develop the language learners' integrative motivation? How to raise learners' positive attitudes toward pragmatic learning in their pragmatic development? How to sustain learners' motivation to ensure their pragmatic competence development?

B. *Pedagogical Implications*

1. Making pragmatic learning as part and parcel of English learning

In pragmatic learning, the first and most important is to motivate students to set pragmatic development as one of the goals in learning English. It will be difficult for the students to put their effort into the effective learning process without desire to learn. Pragmatic knowledge is vital to ensure the learners to use the target language in an appropriate way so make pragmatic learning as part and parcel of English learning is important. Once pragmatic competence is set as a goal of language learning, the students will consciously devote much effort on pragmatic learning, which in turn will facilitate the development of their pragmatic competence.

2. Raising students' pragmatic awareness by instruction

The low level of the students' pragmatic competence in the present study implies that pragmatic knowledge deserves special attention in EFL teaching. Through pragmatic teaching, both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence can be introduced to the students, thus construct a positive environment to promote their pragmatic competence development. Several ways could be adopted to raise students' pragmatic awareness. Here we only introduce two major ones which are commonly used: teacher presentation and students discovery.

In terms of teacher presentation, teachers can introduce information got from research issues on pragmatics to students inductively or deductively. In order to show the importance of contextual variables in the use of different language forms, teachers need to provide detailed information on the participants, their status, the situations, and the speech events that are occurring, the information provided to students in awareness raising activities will help learners build awareness of pragmatic features both sociopragmatic or pragmalinguistic.

The student's discovery procedure means that students can be given a variety of observation assignments inside and outside the classroom which can focus on sociopragmatic or pragmalinguistic features. For instance, a sociopragmatic task could be designed to observe under what conditions native speakers of American English express regrettable, when, for what kinds of situations, and to whom. A pragmalinguistic task could focus on the strategies and linguistic means by which apologizing is accomplished, what formulae are used, and what additional means of expressing apologize are employed. In these activities, students are invited to be researchers. They become ethnographers and observe and record naturally occurring speech acts. Through these activities, students can become keen and reflective observers of language use.

3. Practicing L2 pragmatic abilities to guarantee pragmatic development

Options for students to practice their L2 pragmatic abilities are necessary. Researchers have found that the use of the target language plays a crucial role in SLA (Seliger, 1977; Swain 1993, 1995, 1998). Swain (1993, 1995, 1998) claims that producing language serves second language acquisition in several ways: to enhance fluency; to promote "noticing"; to test hypotheses; to reflect on language use; to notice the gap; to develop discourse skills; to develop a personal voice. Producing the target language may prompt L2 learners to process subsequent input and pay attention to pragmatic features in the input.

In order to develop students' pragmatic competence, Classroom activities, student-centered interactions, can offer opportunities for students to practice their L2 pragmatic abilities. Such small group interaction requires that students take alternating discourse roles as speaker and hearer, then different types of task may engage students in different speech events and communicative actions. Activities such as roleplay, simulation and drama engage students in different social roles and speech events. Such activities provide opportunities to practice the wide range of pragmatic and sociolinguistic abilities that students need in interpersonal counters inside and outside the classroom.

4. Motivation maintaining

Motivation, viewed as a key factor in L2 learning in SLA research, should not only be regarded as a trigger in the initiation phase of language learning, but also should be sustained in the learning process. Dörnyei (2001) gave some suggestions on motivation maintaining. They are: (1) setting 'proximal subgoals'; (2) improving the quality of the learning experience; (3) increasing the learner's self confidence; (4) creating the learner autonomy; and (5) promoting self-motivating learner strategies. Crookes and Schmidt (1989) also give some suggestions on fostering and maintaining students' motivation. Such as: using learning tasks to pose a reasonable challenge to the students ---neither too difficult

nor too easy; providing opportunities for group work, tasks designed in the perceptions of learners' needs and wants and providing plenty of variety in classroom activities. Following those advice, something could be done to sustain and promote students' motivation in language teaching. For example: to teachers, while developing students' pragmatic competence, they could divide the overall goal into some subgoals, and choose some appropriate activities, which students could perform well, to let the students feel a sense of success in learning, which in turn will stimulate the students' motivation. To students, they could be encouraged to take part in language activities and be taught the strategies to encourage themselves in the learning process.

5. Considering pragmatic ability as a teaching goal

The purpose of language teaching activities is to help students become more effective and successful communicators. That is, to help students develop their communicative competence. While pragmatic competence is a vital component of communicative competence, so it is important for language teachers to take developing students' pragmatic competence as a teaching goal in their language classroom.

Kasper (2001) points out; the research that has been done to date does indicate that pragmatic development, though observed to occur in second language classrooms without instruction, can be facilitated by instruction, particularly when that instruction is of an explicit nature.

Previous studies have suggested the teachability of language pragmatic features. And we should make pragmatic ability as a teaching goal. In Chinese EFL environment, English classroom provide an ideal arena for exploring the relationship between learners' subjectivity and L2 use. In the classroom, learners have the opportunity to reflect on their communicative encounters and to experiment with different pragmatic options. For Chinese language learners, classroom may be the only available environment where language learners can try out what using the L2 feels like, and how more or less comfortable they are with different aspects of L2 pragmatics. Thus sheltered environment of the L2 classroom should be prepared and offered to give the opportunities to learners to communicate effectively in L2, to promote the development of their pragmatic competence.

VI. CONCLUSION

The present study has probed into the relationship between pragmatic competence and motivation for non-English majors. Correlation analysis show that college students' language learning motivation is significantly correlated with their pragmatic competence, which means high motivated students will possess high pragmatic competence, but not all the motivational variables have positive role to facilitate the development of pragmatic competence. Instrumental motivation is evidenced to be the dominant motivation type of Chinese learners', which indicates that English learning in China is mainly for practical purpose. The correlation between pragmatic competence and integrative motivation is significant. No significant correlation has been found between English class anxiety and pragmatic. The students demonstrate low level of attitudes to TL community and culture, and no significant correlation has been found between the attitude and pragmatic competence.

According to the study results, some suggestions are given on how to cultivate students' pragmatic competence by motivating them in pragmatic learning, including raising both teachers' and students' pragmatic awareness; creating opportunities for students to practice their L2 pragmatic ability; helping students maintaining their language learning motivation; making the cultivation of pragmatic competence as a teaching goal. To develop students' pragmatic competence, it needs the endeavor of both teachers and students.

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