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## **Enhancing Pragmatic Competence in EFL Classrooms: Approaches, Challenges, and Insights**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In Morocco, English language teaching is embracing modern, communicative approaches that go beyond mere memorization of grammar rules and vocabulary. These methods aim to enhance students' ability to engage in real-life conversations. However, integrating pragmatic awareness—understanding how language use varies in different social contexts—has long been emphasized by teachers worldwide as a key component of effective communication. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers play a very important role in fostering this pragmatic awareness within their classrooms, where the focus is on practical language use. This study investigates how Moroccan teachers incorporate pragmatic knowledge into their lessons, examining the materials and tasks they use, their teaching methods, the types of pragmatic knowledge covered, and the challenges they face. Using qualitative research methods, the researcher interviewed six (6) English teachers as subjects. The findings reveal that these teachers employ both pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic strategies to enhance students' understanding. They use role-playing activities, debates, and various techniques, practicing appropriate linguistic choices. Despite these efforts, students' limited exposure to the pragmatics of the target language and their difficulties in recognizing pragmatic strategies hindered the effectiveness of raising pragmatic awareness. Consequently, teachers often prioritized grammar and vocabulary over pragmatic skills. Overall, Moroccan EFL teachers acknowledge the importance of pragmatic awareness, and their beliefs and practices reflect this understanding. However, challenges remain in fully integrating pragmatic tasks into their teaching..

**KEYWORDS:** Pragmatic competence, pragmatics, communicative approach, EFL, Moroccan context

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The English teaching guidelines in Morocco advocate for the adoption of contemporary and effective communicative approaches by teachers. These guidelines discourage an exclusive reliance on the memorization of grammar rules and vocabulary. Instead, the communicative approach is designed to elevate students' proficiency in real-life communication. This approach places a priority on pragmatic competence, emphasizing the ability to use language appropriately across various social and cultural contexts.

The concept of pragmatic competence (PC) plays a crucial role in foreign language teaching. The pragmatic competence of non-native English speakers is a component of broader communicative competence, which is the foundation of the language instructor's knowledge (Ishihara, 2011). The purpose of teaching English to EFL learners is to equip them with the skills to communicate effectively in English. Several researchers, including Bachman (1990), Canale and Swain (1980), and Faerch et al. (1984), have identified the essential components of learners' communicative abilities, encompassing linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, and fluency. According to Hymes (1972, p. 278), communicative competence refers to "the ability to use grammar rules in a way that is meaningful to others."

As exemplified by research conducted by Ekin and Damar (2013), Fordyce and Fukazawa (2004), House (1996), Rose (2005), Tanaka and Oki (2015), and Tulgar (2017), pragmatic competence has been the focus of most pragmatic studies. There are very few studies, particularly in English as a Foreign Language context, which examine teachers' pragmatic competence.

Despite the importance of pragmatics in English learning, students may not be able to effectively communicate in English due to insufficient emphasis placed on pragmatics. In Moroccan context, teachers serve as the primary source of pragmatic input for EFL students. Based on the findings of a study conducted by the researcher, Moroccan EFL textbooks lack sufficient pragmatic

content. This deficiency stands as a contributing factor to students' limited opportunity to develop pragmatic competence. In curriculum development, textbooks play a crucial role, and when these textbooks lack pragmatic elements, students are not exposed to authentic language use. Admittedly, in the absence of a deep understanding of pragmatics, teachers may have difficulty in integrating pragmatic instruction into their lessons.

During my 11 years of teaching English as a foreign language in Morocco, I observed numerous examples of communication breakdowns and errors stemming from students' use of inappropriate language in cross-cultural contexts. For instance, Moroccan students might surprise native English speakers by making requests in an imperative manner, rejecting requests with a blunt "No" without providing additional explanations, or posing questions about personal matters, such as age, during introductions.

Researchers refer to such communication breakdowns that occur in the absence of contextual appropriateness as pragmatic failures. According to Thomas (1983), pragmatic failure is defined as "the inability to understand what is meant by what is said" (p.91). In addition, Thomas differentiates pragmatic failures into two categories: pragma-linguistic failures and socio-pragmatic failures. Generally, pragmatic failure is a linguistic issue caused by differences in how languages encode pragmatics, so it is more manageable because learners are more likely to follow pragma-linguistic norms. Socio-pragmatic failure, however, is a result of varying beliefs and cultures regarding linguistic behavior, which makes it more difficult to address. It is evident that both types of deficiencies are deeply ingrained among second language speakers, with even advanced-level learners showing a noticeable imbalance between their grammatical competency and pragmatic awareness (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998).

In the EFL classroom, pragmatic awareness is less likely to be addressed despite the importance of communicative competence. In Moroccan English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, pragmatic competence is under-emphasized for a variety of reasons. The first reason is that most foreign language and second language teachers have a lack of pragmatic awareness. Naturally, teachers cannot instruct what they are not aware of (Judd, 1999).

Additionally, Moroccan EFL textbooks do not adequately integrate pragmatic content, so students may miss out on the opportunity to develop their pragmatic abilities. Furthermore, teachers are often challenged by time constraints; since insufficient time is allocated for English language instruction, most teachers focus on grammar and vocabulary, neglecting pragmatic competence. In addition to covering required content and preparing students for final exams, teachers often face pressure to adhere strictly to the curriculum. This pressure may limit their flexibility to incorporate additional elements, such as pragmatic instruction, especially when not explicitly outlined in curriculum guidelines.

### **Pragmatic Competence**

Chomsky (1980) defines pragmatic competence as the ability to use language appropriately for a specific purpose in accordance with the context in which it is being used. In the context of second language learning, pragmatic competence refers to having the ability to use language appropriately in a variety of social situations.

Contrary to this, Thomas (1983) believes pragma-linguistic competence refers to the ability of language users to carry out their own speech acts and reach communicative extra-linguistic competence. There are two types of pragma-linguistic competence: pragma-linguistic competence and socio-pragmatic competence. Socio-pragmatic competence is influenced by a variety of cultural backgrounds as well as native language interference. Pragmatic competence is often influenced by native language interference, as well as grammatical differences between countries.

In some cases, second language learners already possess some proficiency in a language, and the goal of the course is to enhance their communicative abilities. There is, however, a potential connection between pragmatic competence and language learning in second languages, as pragmatic competence is considered essential in communication.

According to Chen (2009), pragmatic competence entails appropriate speech in specific contexts for the purpose of communicating effectively. Further, pragmatic language competences are divided into social pragmatic competences, pragmatic knowledge competences, and pragmatic discourse organization competences.

There are different ways in which people approach things in different environments and situations. It is more important to express meaning in casual conversations with friends than to dwell on pragmatic knowledge failures when conversing with friends. It is therefore imperative to possess pragmatic competence when it comes to effective communicative expression.

Language acquisition solely based on vocabulary, grammar, phonetics, and intonation, without understanding context, hinders accurate language comprehension and usage. According to Chen (2017), those with a limited understanding of context have difficulty using language appropriately and with flexibility. These challenges reflect the significant connection between pragmatic competence and communicative competence.

### **Communicative Language Teaching (CLT Approach)**

According to Savignon (1987; 2002), CLT is more like an approach than a conventional theory. As opposed to traditional theories, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) provides both teachers and learners with a wide range of flexibility and opportunities (Kennedy, 2002). In addition to transcending cultural boundaries, the CLT approach is characterized by a "universal effort" that is influenced by a wide range of initiatives, both theoretical and applied, across diverse contexts (Savignon, 1987; Savignon, 2002). There was a significant skepticism among language educators in the late 1960s and early 1970s regarding the suitability of

traditional language learning concepts to meet students' needs (Baugh, 1993; Emerson, 1971). During this period, with a shift in emphasis, many emphasized the importance of learning social terms, interpersonal skills, and intercultural interactions in addition to grammar and vocabulary acquisition (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004). Further, language learning became more than acquiring skills, emphasizing effective communication. Language learning is based on the communicative approach, which emphasizes the importance of communication throughout the process (Krashen, 1982). In applied linguistics literature, "communicative competence" has been defined in many ways. It is made up of two words, which indicate the ability or proficiency in communicating. Using a lexicosemantic analysis, it is evident that "competence" is the key word in the term.

There is considerable debate over the term "competence" in both general and applied linguistics. As a pioneer in a field of understanding communicative competence, Dell Hymes' contributions are widely acknowledged (Hymes, 1967; Hymes, 1971; Hymes, 1972).

Chomsky has also been widely credited with introducing the distinction between competence, the linguistic knowledge inherent in monolingual speakers and listeners, and performance, the ability to actually use language in the real world. "Aspects of the Theory of Syntax," a seminal work, prominently presents this significant conceptualization.

Widdowson (1983) distinguishes competence from capacity when defining communicative competence. His definition of competence, specifically communicative competence, is grounded in discourse analysis and pragmatics. According to him, capacity is the ability to use knowledge to create meaning in language. He also called it procedural or communicative capacity. As Widdowson explains, ability is not the result of competence, but remains "an active force for continual creativity," serving as a means to achieve what Halliday called the "meaning potential." It is credited to Widdowson that he was the first to emphasize performance or the actual use of language in his reflections on competence and performance by defining communicative competence in this way.

Based on Hymes' study, Canale & Swain (1980) categorized communicative competence into four components: grammatical competency, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, and discourse competency. Language users can better understand communicative competence with these classifications.

The current era is characterized by multicultural environments, which make communication difficult for some second language learners. The dynamics between speakers and listeners are directly related to communication competence, which involves understanding and expression (Yang, 2002). The concept of communicative competence has been defined by Savignon (1983) as a social attribute rather than a subjective one.

CLT focuses on learning within a language and developing the ability to use it effectively rather than simply learning the language (Savignon, 1987; Savignon, 2002). Essentially, it focuses on equipping students with the skills they need to communicate in the target language.

CLT represents a shift away from a teacher-centered approach to a student-centered approach in the Moroccan educational context. As part of this approach, the teacher facilitates communication among students through engaging learning activities. Students are typically encouraged to participate in interpersonal interactions, share and exchange ideas with their peers, and work collaboratively to learn.

Learning pragmatic knowledge becomes increasingly important as second language learners interact with authentic, real-world situations, influencing their overall communication abilities. Therefore, communicative competence needs to shift its focus to oral communication, with pragmatic competence playing a critical role. Second language learners who possess strong pragmatic competence are more likely to improve their communication skills.

Speaking fluently is one of the most important elements of communicative competence. In order to effectively convey thoughts, learners must carefully integrate local idioms into their speech without showing signs of nervousness, excessive slowness, or excessive hesitation. For proficiency to be achieved, pragmatic competence must be improved, which is based on linguistic accuracy.

It is recommended that teachers use activities that simulate real-life communication scenarios in English language classrooms to enhance pragmatic competence and encourage students to use English outside of the classroom. Students should be given the opportunity to interact in English through pair and group work. Additionally, task-based learning activities, like problem-solving, role-plays, and discussions, should be included. In order for students to learn authentic English, authentic materials like newspapers, articles, videos, and audio recordings are necessary. They can also develop a better understanding of context-appropriate language by discussing cultural nuances and variations in language use. Integrating cultural components into language teaching is equally important for enhancing pragmatic competence.

In fact, pragmatic competence requires a multifaceted approach for English language learners. It is important for students not only to grasp cultural norms but also to acquire proficiency in politeness strategies and receive instruction regarding how to use language appropriately across various contexts. Together, these strategies help learners develop pragmatic competence, improving their ability to navigate and communicate effectively in English.

### Teacher's Role in Pragmatic Competence

Teachers play a crucial role in developing pragmatic competence, especially in English EFL environments. The way teachers use language in the classroom is very essential for effective organization, management, and the overall language acquisition process (Nunan, 1995). To provide comprehensive instruction in pragmatics and communicative competence, teachers need a solid foundation in pragmatic knowledge, which is considered a core element of their expertise (Ishihara, 2011).

Effective EFL teachers should possess several key qualifications: awareness of pragmatic norms and their variations, the ability to deliver instruction and assessments that address pragmatic concerns, and sensitivity to the cultural and subjective aspects of learners (Ishihara, 2011; Kasper, 1997; Yates & Wigglesworth, 2005). Researchers advocate for the inclusion of pragmatic elements in teacher education programs to address these needs (Kasper, 1997).

Instruction aimed at improving learners' pragmatic awareness has been shown to positively affect their pragmatic competence. This includes teaching pragmatic features both implicitly and explicitly and focusing on the types of pragmatic knowledge essential for second language acquisition (Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin, 2005; Eslami-Rasekh et al., 2004; House, 1996; Kasper, 1997; Koike & Pearson, 2005; Rose, 2005).

Recent studies highlight the importance of teachers' pragmatic awareness, particularly in contexts where exposure to the target language is limited and largely dependent on the instructors. For instance, Ekin and Damar (2013) studied 30 teacher trainees to assess their awareness of pragmatic features through discourse completion tasks, reflection papers, and interviews. They found that while the trainees had theoretical knowledge of pragmatics, their practical application was less effective, likely due to limited experience and the specific study context.

Ivanova (2018) conducted a survey with 30 secondary school EFL teachers to evaluate their awareness of pragmatics and its role in teaching. Unlike Ekin and Damar (2013), Ivanova used a comprehensive survey with open-ended questions and Likert-scale items. The results indicated that although most teachers recognized the importance of Pragmatic Competence (PC) in teaching and assessment, 43% could not specify any particular speech acts.

Similarly, Tulgar (2017) investigated 50 faculty members' perspectives on teaching and assessing PC in an EFL context through a questionnaire. The study found no significant differences in views on teaching and assessing PC based on age, gender, academic degree, or teaching experience.

Another study by Tajeddin et al. (2018) explored Iranian non-native teachers' perceptions of native-speaker norms and pragmatic norms in English. The study, which included 125 teachers responding to an 18-item questionnaire and 22 interviews, revealed that while teachers generally followed native-speaker linguistic norms, they adapted pragmatic strategies to fit either native or non-native English varieties depending on the context.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions are aimed at exploring teachers' awareness of pragmatics:

What are the challenges faced by High School Teachers in teaching pragmatic competence?

Why teachers do not teach pragmatic aspect of English language?

The present investigation is the first phase of a larger project designed to examine the pragmatic competence of non-native English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors in the Moroccan context from various perspectives. The current part of the study is primarily concerned with a quantitative analysis of instructors' knowledge and understanding of pragmatic competence in an EFL context. Using a qualitative approach, this study examined how participants' cultural backgrounds, demographics, and pragmatic competence relate.

### METHODOLOGY

To address the two research questions posed in this study, a quantitative research methodology was employed. This approach was chosen due to the specific nature of the research questions, the characteristics of the research instrument, the number of participants, and the need to examine relationships between variables. The method was considered both appropriate and reliable for this purpose.

The research tool used was an online questionnaire, which was distributed to English language teachers in the Larache Directorate. These teachers are responsible for developing students' linguistic and interactional skills in English, covering a range of topics including the language itself, its literature, linguistic aspects, and translation techniques.

To ensure the validity and appropriateness of the questionnaire, a preliminary step involved designing and testing the draft with a focus on identified challenges. This phase aimed to confirm that the questions effectively addressed the researcher's objectives and identified challenges. The initial draft of the questionnaire was reviewed by the research supervisor, two professors from Bluefield State University, and other colleagues with an interest in the topic. Based on their feedback, minor revisions were made to improve the questionnaire's clarity and structure.

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The finalized version of the questionnaire was then distributed to English language teachers in the Larache region. All completed forms were returned and analyzed to gather data on the challenges faced by teachers, providing valuable insights into the issues addressed by the research.

The online questionnaire was distributed to EFL teachers in the Ksar Kebir region via WhatsApp groups, in addition to providing instructions and a direct link to the survey. This distribution method yielded a random sample of both male and female participants. In total, 34 Moroccan teachers, all working in public schools in the Ksar Kebir region, completed the questionnaire. The demographic breakdown of the participants revealed that 43.06% were male and 56.94% were female. Among the male teachers, 64.52% held a Bachelor's degree in English, 32.26% had a Master's degree, and 3.22% had completed a Ph.D. Conversely, 53.66% of female teachers held a Bachelor's degree in English, 46.34% had a Master's degree, and 1.39% possessed a Ph.D. Table 1 presents a summary of participants' information.

**Table 1. A summary of participants' information.**

Participants	Master degree	%	BA degree	%	Ph.D	%	Total
Males	10	32.26	20	64.52	1	3.22	31
Females	19	46.34	22	53.66	0	0	41
Total	29	40.28	42	58.33	1	1.39	72

### Question 1: What are the challenges faced by Moroccan High School Teachers in teaching pragmatic competence?

#### Data analysis and discussion

Developing pragmatic skills poses significant challenges for teachers, textbook designers, and students. Unlike other language components, pragmatic competence is best acquired through practical experience. Teachers must create learning environments that effectively enhance pragmatic skills while understanding their crucial role in successful foreign language communication.

Pragmatic competence should not be viewed as an optional component of language learning but as an essential part of effective foreign language communication. Integrating pragmatics into EFL settings is particularly challenging. It requires not only an understanding of linguistic structures but also an appreciation of the social and cultural nuances unique to each language. Teachers must also address pragmatic transfer, where learners' native language and cultural background impact their comprehension and performance in cross-cultural communication.

Evaluating pragmatic skills further complicates the assessment process, as it extends beyond standard language tests. Effective assessments must gauge learners' ability to use the foreign language appropriately in various contexts, taking psychological factors into account.

Unfortunately, many conventional textbooks neglect pragmatic competence, often providing isolated examples that do not reflect real-life language use. To develop high-quality textbooks that cater to learners' sociolinguistic needs and interests, authors and designers must deeply understand both linguistic and sociocultural elements.

The initial question of the survey asked teachers to reflect on the effectiveness of pre-service and in-service programs in supporting their teaching practices related to pragmatics. Teachers shared their perspectives through statements covering various aspects, such as pragmatic knowledge, familiarity with politeness strategies, and methods for assessing pragmatics. The results are detailed in Table 2, which presents the teachers' responses in percentages (%).

**Table 2. The effectiveness of pre-service and/or in-service programs in helping your teaching practices related to pragmatics**

Can you elaborate on the effectiveness of pre-service and/or in-service programs in helping your teaching practices related to pragmatics?		Inadequate	Fairly Adequate	Adequate
Learn about pragmatics as a linguistics branch.	N	31	15	26
	%	43.06	20.82	35.62
Identify pragmatic norms and strategies that are similar in English and your native language.	N	30	16	26
	%	41.67	22.22	36.11
Get familiar with the norms for 'politeness' when engaging in face-to-face interactions in English.	N	22	13	37
	%	30.56	18.06	51.39
Provide students with an understanding of the pragmatic aspect of English	N	35	16	21
	%	48.61	22.22	29.17
Design or choose activities and exercises that will be used to teach this knowledge aspect	N	38	13	21
	%	52.78	18.06	29.17
Assess the knowledge of English in this area by designing tests.	N	43	18	10
	%	59.72	25	13.88

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Table 2 provides an insightful look into teachers' views on the effectiveness of pre-service and in-service programs aimed at supporting their teaching practices related to pragmatics. The results reveal a nuanced perspective, showing both strengths and areas for improvement.

About 35.62% of teachers feel the programs adequately cover the pragmatic aspects of English, suggesting that while some find the training beneficial, many see a need for further development. Similarly, 36.11% believe the programs sufficiently address pragmatic norms and strategies, yet a significant number still feel unprepared in this area. More positively, 51.39% of teachers acknowledge that the programs do a good job introducing politeness norms, though nearly half feel this aspect could be better covered.

In terms of helping students grasp English pragmatics, 48.61% of teachers are dissatisfied, highlighting a notable gap in how effectively the programs prepare them to convey this knowledge to their students. Additionally, 52.78% express disappointment with the training's focus on designing practical activities and exercises, indicating a need for improved resources and guidance. The most critical concern is the assessment of pragmatic knowledge, with 59.72% of respondents finding this aspect of the training inadequate. This points to a significant shortfall in preparing teachers to evaluate students' pragmatic skills effectively.

Overall, while some elements of the programs are seen as effective, the findings clearly point to the need for substantial improvements. Enhancing these programs is essential to better equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge for teaching pragmatics, designing engaging activities, and assessing students' understanding in this vital area.

### Why teachers do not teach pragmatic aspects of English language?

#### DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The second survey question aimed to explore the reasons why Moroccan teachers might not incorporate pragmatic competence into their teaching and to assess the extent to which specific pragmatic aspects are covered in students' textbooks and teachers' guides. The responses from the teachers are summarized in the table below.

**Table 3. The incorporation of pragmatic knowledge in the students' textbooks and the teachers' guides**

To what extent are the following components incorporated into the student's textbook and teacher's guide		Inadequate	Fairly Adequate	Adequate
<b>An explanation of pragmatic aspects</b>	N	55	13	4
	%	76.39	18.05	5.56
<b>Student-focused activities that assist them in practicing these (pragmatic) language uses</b>	N	44	22	6
	%	61.11	30.56	08.33
<b>Guidelines for teaching these (pragmatic) language uses</b>	N	47	18	7
	%	65.28	25	9.72
<b>Guidelines for teachers regarding how to assess those (pragmatic) uses of language</b>	N	53	15	4
	%	73.61	20.83	5.56

Table 3 sheds light on the extent to which various pragmatic components are integrated into students' textbooks and teachers' guides. The responses reveal a pattern of dissatisfaction with how these materials address pragmatic aspects. Specifically, a substantial majority of teachers find the explanations of pragmatic concepts (76.39%), as well as the guidelines for teaching (65.28%) and assessing (73.61%) pragmatic skills, to be inadequate. Additionally, 61.11% of respondents are dissatisfied with the inclusion of student-centered activities designed to practice pragmatics. These results underscore a significant gap in how pragmatic elements are covered in educational resources, indicating a need for substantial improvements to better support both teachers and students in understanding and applying pragmatic skills effectively.

The third survey question explored the reasons why teachers might omit pragmatic aspects from their lesson plans. Table 3 outlines the justifications provided by the respondents, offering insights into their perspectives and the challenges they face in integrating pragmatics into their teaching.

Table 4. The inclusion of pragmatic aspects in the teachers' lesson plans

Generally, teachers do not include pragmatic aspects of language in their lesson plans. If you do not include any pragmatic knowledge in your lesson plan, could you possibly justify why?		Disagree	Partially agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Lack of knowledge	N	36	19	10	07
	%	50	26.39	13.89	9.72
Lack of training	N	5	12	22	33
	%	6.94	16.67	30.56	45.83
Time allotment	N	3	15	16	37
	%	4.17	20.82	22.22	51.39
Students language level	N	5	8	16	43
	%	6.94	11.11	22.22	59.72
Type of assessment	N	2	8	18	44
	%	2.78	11.11	25	61.11
Inadequate materials.	N	3	7	13	49
	%	41.67	9.72	18.06	68.05

Table 4 summarizes why teachers may exclude pragmatic aspects from their lesson plans and reveals several key reasons behind this omission. A notable barrier is a lack of knowledge, with about half of the teachers dismissing it as a reason for not including pragmatics, although a significant number still feel their understanding may be insufficient for effective teaching. Lack of training is a major factor, as most respondents acknowledge that insufficient training significantly impacts their ability to incorporate pragmatic elements. Time constraints are also critical, with over half of the teachers citing a lack of time as a reason for not including pragmatics in their lessons. Additionally, students' language levels and the type of assessments used are seen as barriers to integrating pragmatic skills. Inadequate materials also pose a significant challenge, with most teachers agreeing that a lack of appropriate resources hinders their efforts. These findings highlight the multiple challenges teachers face in including pragmatic knowledge in their teaching, underscoring the urgent need for better support, targeted training, and improved resources to address these issues effectively.

Table 5. Some reasons why EFL teachers do not include pragmatic aspects in their teaching practices

Please put a tick mark in front of your response		Disagree	Partially agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Certain people argue that one of the reasons why teachers do not teach pragmatic aspects of the English language is lack of available time.	N	7	17	15	33
	%	9.72	23.61	20.83	45.83
Numerous teachers possess limited familiarity with the target culture (English language culture), and as a result, they are afraid to teach it in the classroom.	N	29	24	15	4
	%	40.28	33.33	20.83	5.56
English language teachers frequently find themselves in a state of confusion regarding which aspects of language culture to address.	N	18	18	17	19
	%	25	25	23.61	26.39
The present English textbooks explore and pinpoint pragmatic areas relevant to students' needs, and students will be able to connect with the social and cultural contexts presented in the materials.	N	35	10	10	17
	%	48.61	13.89	13.89	23.61
Methods and techniques of teaching communicative language and pragmatics are supposed to be different	N	6	9	15	42
	%	8.33	12.5	20.84	58.33
Teaching pragmatic competence poses challenges, and it may not be as important as teaching communicative competence.	N	12	9	13	38
	%	16.67	12.5	18.06	52.78
Teachers seldom incorporate external materials associated with pragmatics into their teaching.	N	5	9	23	35
	%	6.94	12.5	31.95	48.61
Learning pragmatics solely from textbooks is considered impractical or challenging.	N	6	6	19	41
	%	8.33	8.33	12.5	56.94
Textbooks may fall short in providing genuine pragmatic language	N	3	8	15	46

<b>samples, yet teachers can overcome and compensate for these limitations.</b>	%	4.17	11.11	20.83	63.89
<b>Textbooks cannot be considered a dependable source of pragmatic input.</b>	N	4	7	18	43
	%	5.55	9.72	25	59.73

Table 5 offers a detailed look at teachers' views on various factors affecting the teaching of pragmatic aspects of English. Each statement is evaluated based on four levels of agreement: Disagree, Partially Agree, Agree, and Strongly Agree. The responses reveal a diverse range of opinions among teachers.

One clear consensus is the challenge posed by time constraints. A significant portion of respondents, 45.83%, strongly agrees that limited time is a major reason why pragmatic aspects are often overlooked. Additionally, 52.78% of teachers either agree or strongly agree that teaching pragmatic competence is inherently challenging, reflecting an awareness of its complexity.

However, opinions diverge on other issues. For example, while 26.39% of respondents agree that teachers frequently struggle with deciding which cultural aspects to focus on, a similar proportion (25%) either disagree or partially agree. There is also some disagreement about the effectiveness of textbooks in providing authentic pragmatic language examples and serving as reliable sources of pragmatic input.

Overall, the table sheds light on the various reasons behind teachers' approaches to teaching pragmatic aspects of English, revealing both areas of agreement and differing perspectives among teachers.

**Pragmatic Classroom Teaching practices at El Manssour Eddahbi High School**

As a preliminary step, the researcher conducted written interviews with six teachers from the same high school. These interviews were designed to delve into their classroom practices, understanding of pragmatic competence, and how they incorporate pragmatics into their teaching methodologies. The teachers exhibited a commendable level of professionalism, showing great cooperation and engagement throughout the interview process. They actively participated and responded thoroughly to all the questions, providing valuable insights into their approaches and perspectives.

**Types of pragmatic knowledge taught in class**

The data presented reflect teachers' attitudes and beliefs regarding English language teaching and cultural and pragmatic awareness. Analysis of their responses reveals a range of perspectives on various aspects of pragmatic knowledge in their teaching practices.

Statement 1 highlights a notable division among teachers about the core elements of English learning. Approximately one-third of respondents strongly agree that the curriculum should focus on grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, while an equal proportion strongly disagree with this traditional approach. This split underscores an ongoing debate about whether language education should prioritize mastering structural components or emphasize practical application in real-world contexts.

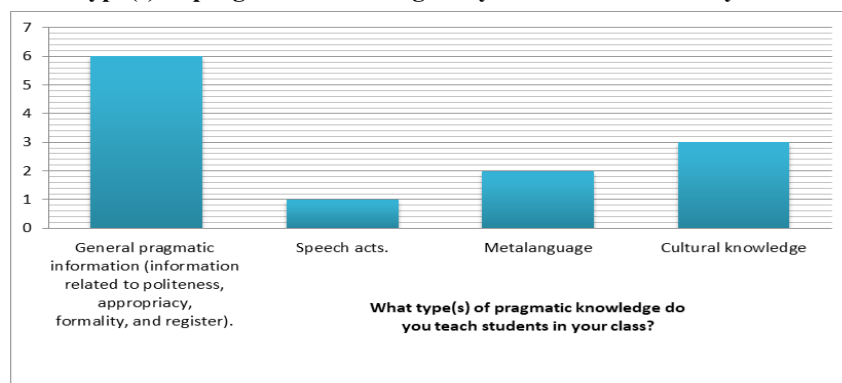
In contrast, Statement 2 shows a general consensus among teachers that fundamental linguistic knowledge—such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary—is crucial, often seen as more important than practical language application skills. This viewpoint suggests a belief in the foundational role of these elements for effective communication.

Statements 3 and 4 reveal the challenges teachers face when addressing cultural aspects in language instruction. Many respondents recognize these difficulties, indicating a need for improved pedagogical strategies to better incorporate cultural knowledge into their teaching.

Conversely, Statement 9 highlights strong agreement among teachers about the importance of preserving learners' cultural identities while they learn English. A significant majority of respondents support integrating cultural awareness into language teaching, emphasizing the need to respect and maintain students' cultural backgrounds during the learning process.

**Types of knowledge and skills taught in class**

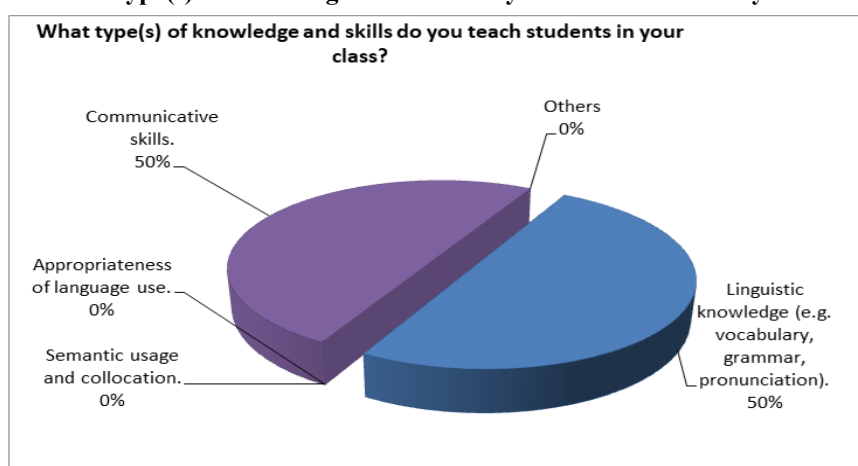
➤ **What type(s) of pragmatic knowledge do you teach students in your class?**



## Enhancing Pragmatic Competence in EFL Classrooms: Approaches, Challenges, and Insights

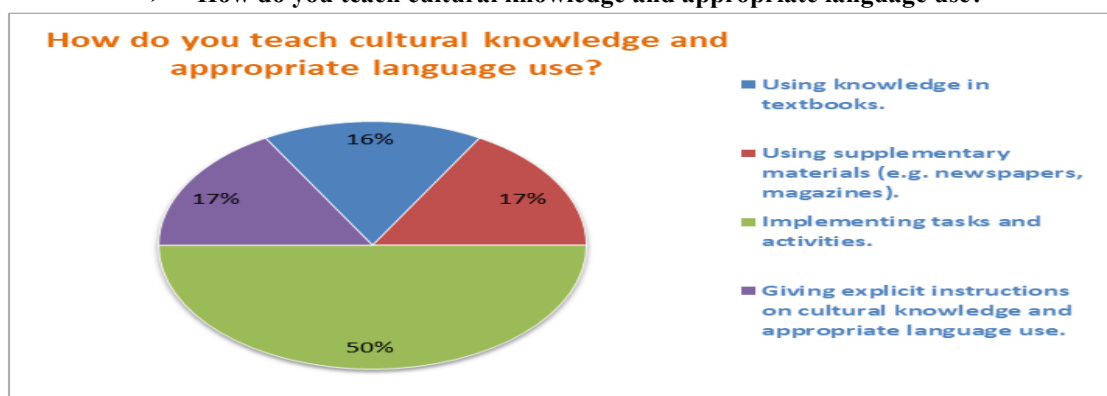
The graph provides a detailed overview of the types of pragmatic knowledge prioritized by teachers at El Manssour Eddahbi High School. Notably, all respondents (100%) place a strong emphasis on General Pragmatic Information, such as politeness, appropriateness, formality, and register, underscoring its crucial role in guiding students to use language effectively across different social contexts. In contrast, Speech Acts receive significantly less focus, with only 16.67% of teachers explicitly addressing various speech acts like requests and apologies. Meta-language teaching, which involves understanding different sentence types (declarative, imperative, interrogative), is incorporated by about one-third of teachers (33.33%), indicating a moderate emphasis on how linguistic structures convey meaning. Cultural Knowledge, which pertains to understanding cultural norms that influence language use, is given considerable attention by 50% of the teachers. This highlights the recognized importance of cultural awareness in promoting effective communication. Overall, the data reveal that teachers prioritize integrating general pragmatic information and cultural understanding into their English instruction, reflecting an awareness of the significance of pragmatic knowledge in teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). Their approach aims not only to develop students' linguistic skills but also to enhance their cultural competence, helping them communicate more effectively in various social contexts.

### ➤ What type(s) of knowledge and skills do you teach students in your class?



The data in the graph outlines the areas of focus for teachers in their language classes. Notably, **Linguistic Knowledge**—encompassing vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation—receives significant attention, with 50% of teachers prioritizing these foundational skills. Equally, **Communicative Skills** are emphasized by 50% of the teachers, reflecting a balanced approach that values both linguistic accuracy and effective communication. However, there is a notable absence of focus on **Appropriateness of Language Use** and **Semantic Usage and Collocation**, with 0% of teachers addressing these areas explicitly. This gap suggests a need for more instructional strategies to better integrate how language should be used appropriately and effectively in various contexts.

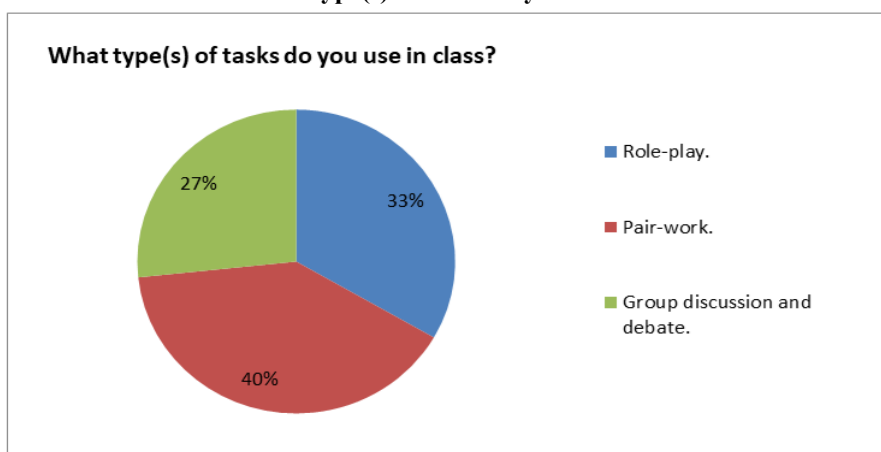
### ➤ How do you teach cultural knowledge and appropriate language use?



At El Manssour Eddahbi High School, English teachers use various methods to teach cultural knowledge and appropriate language use. The data reveals a strong emphasis on **tasks and activities**, with 50% of teachers employing this interactive approach to immerse students in cultural contexts and language applications. **Explicit instructions** are provided by 17% of teachers, ensuring that students receive clear and direct guidance on cultural norms and language appropriateness. Another 17% of teachers enhance their instruction with **supplementary materials**, such as newspapers and magazines, to offer authentic, real-life

examples. In contrast, **textbooks** are utilized less frequently, at 16%, as they often lack comprehensive coverage of fundamental pragmatic knowledge.

### ➤ What type(s) of tasks do you use in class?



The analysis of data from teachers regarding the tasks used in their classes reveals a variety of methods aimed at fostering interactive learning and communication skills. Role play, chosen by 33% of teachers, allows students to engage in simulated real-life situations, enhancing their practical application of language. Pair work, selected by 40% of teachers, promotes collaborative learning by enabling students to interact and support each other in language practice. Group discussion and debate, preferred by 27% of teachers, encourage the exchange of ideas and opinions, helping students develop critical thinking and communication skills.

Sections C and D of the questionnaire further explore teachers' experiences with teaching pragmatics through open-ended questions. These sections address the challenges teachers encounter, the tasks they find most effective for promoting communicative competence, and the strategies they consider most effective for developing pragmatic skills.

### Question 1: What difficulties do you have when teaching pragmatic knowledge?

The teachers listed the following responses:

- Difficulty of adapting academic knowledge previously learnt to students' level, lack of knowledge on how to teach this language aspect.
- I am often faced with the issue of lack of resources. The material that includes pragmatic knowledge is often either unavailable or not good enough. In addition, pragmatic knowledge is essentially context sensitive, meaning that there are no universal rules that could be used to teach this competence.
- Culture differences
- Time constraints, authentic materials and the class sizes are the main challenges.

The teachers' responses reveal several significant challenges in teaching pragmatic knowledge. One major issue is adapting academic content to match students' proficiency levels. Teachers often struggle to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge of pragmatics and its practical application, finding that academic concepts may not always be accessible or relevant for students.

Another key difficulty is the lack of resources and context sensitivity. Teachers express frustration with the limited availability and quality of materials specifically addressing pragmatic competence, noting that existing resources frequently fail to adequately cover this area.

Cultural differences also pose a significant hurdle. Effective communication relies on understanding and adapting to diverse cultural norms, yet teachers often struggle to teach these differences effectively. Addressing cultural variability requires awareness and specialized training tailored to multicultural classrooms.

Time constraints further complicate the situation, limiting the extent to which teachers can cover various topics, including pragmatics. This limitation impacts the depth and breadth of pragmatic knowledge that can be taught and practiced.

Additionally, the scarcity of authentic teaching materials—such as real-world texts and situations that illustrate pragmatic principles—hinders students' understanding and application of pragmatic skills.

Large class sizes present another challenge, making it difficult to implement interactive and communicative activities essential for teaching pragmatics. Providing individualized feedback and attention becomes increasingly difficult in such settings.

Overall, these challenges underscore the complex nature of teaching pragmatics, highlighting the need for targeted solutions to address pedagogical, resource-related, and logistical issues.

### El Manssour Eddahbi EFL Teachers' perspectives on pragmatics and teaching pragmatic skills

As previously mentioned, six teachers from El Manssour Eddahbi High School were invited to complete a questionnaire on their approaches to teaching pragmatic competence. To ensure anonymity, each teacher was assigned a pseudonym: Sami, Nabil, Jamal, Jannat, Asmae, and Sara.

In Section D of the questionnaire, dedicated to written responses, the teachers were asked to share their views on various aspects of teaching pragmatics. The first question focused on the importance of teaching pragmatic knowledge to students.

#### **Question 4: Do you think it is important to teach students pragmatic knowledge (knowledge about how to use English appropriately)? If yes, how important is it? Can you give me an example?**

All participating teachers from El Manssour Eddahbi High School acknowledged the significance of teaching pragmatic knowledge to their students. Asmae elaborated on this point, emphasizing the importance of understanding how to use language appropriately in different social contexts. She illustrated this with an example: "Pragmatic knowledge involves understanding how to use language appropriately in different social contexts, which is crucial for effective communication. For instance, in a formal setting, a student might need to say, 'Could you please send me the report by tomorrow?' whereas, in an informal setting, they might simply say, 'Can you send me the report by tomorrow?' Understanding these nuances helps avoid misunderstandings and fosters better interpersonal relationships" (June 26th, 2024).

Similarly, Nabil highlighted the practical applications of pragmatic knowledge: "The importance of pragmatic knowledge can be seen in various real-life scenarios such as job interviews, academic settings, and social interactions. It aids in expressing politeness, conveying respect, and appropriately managing conversations, which are all key to successful communication and integration into different cultural contexts" (June 26th, 2024).

Sara agreed, noting the necessity of teaching appropriateness: "Sometimes you cannot teach a language point if you ignore the aspect of appropriateness. For instance, when teaching requests, we must consider the context and the person being addressed to achieve effective and genuine communication" (June 26th, 2024).

Sami also supported this view, stating, "Absolutely, it's important to differentiate between formal and informal expressions and understand when each should be used" (June 26th, 2024).

In contrast, Jamal and Jannat provided more succinct responses. Jamal mentioned, "It is crucial to include pragmatic knowledge, as it prepares students to use L2 in the real world" (June 26th, 2024), while Jannat simply affirmed, "Yes, it is" (June 26th, 2024).

#### **Question 2: Which errors do you think are more serious? Grammatical or pragmatic errors? If your students make a pragmatic error, how would you correct it? Please give justification for your answer.**

Among the five teachers who responded to the question about the seriousness of pragmatic errors, there was a consensus that these errors are particularly impactful due to their potential to cause misunderstandings and communication breakdowns. Asmae articulated the concern, stating, "Grammatical errors can often be overlooked if the overall meaning is clear, while pragmatic errors can lead to misunderstandings or even offense because they involve the use of language in social contexts and can affect the relationship between speakers. If a student makes a pragmatic error, I would correct it by first explaining the context and why the error could lead to misunderstandings or be perceived negatively. Then, I would provide an example of the correct usage and practice the scenario with the student to ensure they understand how to use the language appropriately in similar contexts. For instance, if a student uses overly direct language in a situation where politeness is expected, I would explain the importance of politeness strategies and provide phrases or structures that are more appropriate. Practicing these in role-plays or real-life scenarios would help reinforce the correct pragmatic use. Justification for focusing on pragmatic errors lies in their potential impact on interpersonal relationships and effective communication. While grammatical accuracy is important, successful communication in social contexts relies heavily on pragmatic competence" (June 26th, 2024).

Jamal agreed, noting that "The severity of grammatical versus pragmatic errors can depend on context, but generally, pragmatic errors tend to be more serious in terms of communication effectiveness" (June 26th, 2024). Sami also emphasized the practical consequences, stating, "While grammatical errors might cause minor confusion, pragmatic errors can lead to misunderstandings, offense, or a communication breakdown, which are harder to repair and have more significant consequences. If a student makes a request too directly, I might say, 'In this situation, it might be more polite to say, 'Could you please...?' instead of 'Give me...'" (June 26th, 2024).

However, Jannat suggested that the importance of correcting errors might vary depending on the lesson's focus, explaining, "It depends on the focus of the lesson. Both errors should be corrected. To address pragmatic errors, I would use a series of questions to draw students' attention to the error, then help them identify appropriate alternatives" (June 26th, 2024). Nabil added that the seriousness of errors might also depend on the language task, noting, "Deciding which errors are more serious depends on the nature of the target language point and whether the task is accuracy or fluency-based. We should raise students' awareness of the fact that pragmatic errors can be as serious as grammatical ones" (June 26th, 2024).

#### **Question 3: Do you think learners of English as a second or foreign language should try to imitate native speakers' accents and their way of using language? Why? / Why not?**

Among the five respondents, there was a consensus that learners should focus more on effective communication rather than strictly imitating native speakers' accents. Asmae argued for a balanced approach, suggesting that learners should aim for clear and effective communication without feeling the need to completely mimic native speakers. She emphasized that prioritizing intelligibility, cultural competence, and confidence is generally more practical and beneficial (June 26th, 2024).

Nabil also highlighted the importance of intelligibility, stating, "It is not that necessary. After all, intelligibility comes before accuracy. However, having a native-like accent or usage can give students significant advantages. It could improve comprehensibility, making it easier for natives to understand learners. Not to mention that your interlocutors are likely to take you more seriously when your English is not influenced by your native accent. Also, it could give learners a serious edge in some professions such as teaching abroad, acting, broadcasting, or high-level international business" (June 26th, 2024).

Jannat agreed, emphasizing that while there is no perfect model for any foreign language learner other than a native speaker, teachers should provide as many opportunities as possible for learners to be exposed to native-like usage (June 26th, 2024).

In contrast, Jamal believed that learners should focus on imitating native speakers' accents, arguing that "imitating native speakers would improve students' pronunciation, accent, and language acquisition" (June 26th, 2024). Sami offered a different perspective, stressing that "language is a way to express oneself and culture" (June 26th, 2024).

### **Question 4: How do you use pragmatic materials and tasks in your classroom teaching?**

In response to the question about effective activities for teaching pragmatic knowledge, the three participating teachers provided varied and insightful suggestions. Asmae emphasized a comprehensive approach, suggesting that "discussion activities, guest speakers, and written prompts" are highly effective. She noted that these tasks help students develop a deeper understanding of how to use language appropriately in various social contexts, thereby enhancing their overall communicative competence (June 26th, 2024).

Nabil focused on more interactive methods, recommending "dialogues and role plays" as key activities that can effectively address pragmatic learning (June 26th, 2024).

Jamal supported this interactive approach, highlighting "role-plays, dialogues, and games" as effective tools for devising pragmatic materials. He believed these activities engage students actively and make learning pragmatic concepts more dynamic and practical (June 26th, 2024).

### **Question 5: What type of pragmatic information needs to be included in your classroom teaching?**

In exploring teachers' perspectives on incorporating pragmatic information into classroom teaching, several key themes emerged. Asmae underscored the necessity of including pragmatic education that extends beyond mere grammar and vocabulary. She emphasized the importance of addressing "speech acts, turn-taking, and nonverbal communication in social and cultural contexts" (June 26th, 2024). Nabil similarly highlighted the need for focusing on "contextual appropriateness, speech acts, cultural norms, conversational norms, and politeness strategies" (June 26th, 2024). Sami echoed these sentiments, stressing the inclusion of "appropriateness, idiomatic expressions, cultural context, and nonverbal communication" (June 26th, 2024). Jannat, on the other hand, emphasized the value of "any tasks that could raise the students' awareness that linguistic and pragmatic knowledge are inseparable and complementary" (June 26th, 2024). Collectively, these insights advocate for a holistic approach to teaching pragmatics, aiming to equip students with the skills needed for effective communication in diverse and real-world contexts.

### **Question 6: How have you learned pragmatic knowledge?**

When discussing how they acquired their pragmatic knowledge, the respondents highlighted a range of sources. Jamal noted learning through "formal education, immersive experiences, and interactions during university studies," which underscores a structured approach combined with practical engagement. Jannat, in contrast, attributed her knowledge to "watching movies and series, exposing herself to authentic materials extensively," reflecting a more informal, media-based learning style. Asmae emphasized learning through "exposure to language use itself," suggesting a focus on real-world application and observation. Sami reported gaining insights from "textbooks, films, books, social media, and forums," showcasing a diverse blend of traditional and contemporary resources. These varied approaches highlight the importance of integrating formal education with practical, media-based, and interactive experiences to develop a well-rounded understanding of pragmatic competence.

## **CONCLUSION**

The present study underscores the essential role of pragmatic competence in facilitating effective communication. Despite growing awareness of its significance, current teaching practices and resources remain inadequate in addressing this need. The study also acknowledges its limitations, particularly the potential constraints of its findings to the Moroccan high school context. This recognition opens avenues for further research into pragmatic instruction across diverse educational settings. Future research should explore the efficacy of various teaching methods for developing pragmatic skills, assess the impact of teacher training programs, and investigate pragmatic instruction at advanced levels of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). By addressing these areas, future efforts can enhance the teaching of pragmatic skills and improve communication outcomes for students in a range of educational contexts.

### LIMITATIONS

The limitations of this study include the relatively small sample size of only six teachers, which may not fully represent the diversity of teaching practices and challenges across all Moroccan high schools. Additionally, the study relies on self-reported data from interviews and questionnaires, which may be subject to teacher bias or inaccuracies in recalling their teaching experiences. Time constraints also limited the scope of the research, preventing the inclusion of a broader range of teachers or an in-depth exploration of students' perspectives on pragmatic competence. Furthermore, the study focuses on a specific context in Morocco, meaning its findings may not be generalizable to other regions or educational systems. Finally, the research does not explore the long-term effectiveness of pragmatic teaching strategies, as it focuses on teachers' current practices and perceptions.

### KEY FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

In today's globalized world, the importance of teaching pragmatic competence in Moroccan high schools has never been more evident. As English increasingly becomes the dominant international language for business, communication, and education, it serves as a crucial link between nations, fostering global interactions. For Morocco to maintain its competitive edge in this interconnected landscape, enhancing educational strategies and making English a central focus of both academic and professional development are essential.

While achieving linguistic proficiency in English—encompassing vocabulary and grammar—remains a foundational goal, it is no longer sufficient on its own. True mastery of the language demands the development of pragmatic competence: the ability to use language effectively and appropriately across various social contexts. This includes skills such as interpreting indirect speech acts, employing effective politeness strategies, and navigating cultural differences to ensure successful communication.

The findings of this investigation reveal several key insights into the current state of pragmatic instruction in Moroccan high schools. Teachers have expressed a clear need for well-designed professional development programs and teaching materials that emphasize pragmatic competence. Although teachers acknowledge the importance of teaching pragmatics, they face significant challenges due to constraints such as time limitations, diverse student proficiency levels, and inadequate training and resources. Many teachers feel unprepared to teach pragmatics effectively, highlighting a critical need for professional development opportunities in this area.

Furthermore, pragmatic instruction is rarely implemented in Moroccan classrooms, leaving students without explicit guidance and forcing them to develop their pragmatic competence independently. This gap underscores the necessity for professional training programs that equip teachers with effective strategies for teaching pragmatics.

In conclusion, advancing pragmatic competence in Moroccan high schools requires a multifaceted approach that transcends traditional language teaching methods. Addressing the current shortcomings in textbooks and classroom practices, alongside advocating for targeted professional development and curriculum enhancements, is crucial. This research lays the groundwork for future efforts to improve English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, ensuring that students acquire the skills necessary for effective communication in a globalized world.

### IMPLICATIONS

The practical implications of this study emphasize the need for targeted professional development programs for Moroccan EFL teachers to enhance their ability to teach pragmatic competence effectively. Teachers require specialized training and resources to integrate pragmatic strategies into their lessons, particularly in dealing with real-life communication situations, cultural differences, and indirect speech acts. This could involve developing or updating teaching materials and textbooks to include pragmatic content, as well as providing workshops or courses focused on teaching pragmatic skills. Furthermore, schools and educational policymakers should prioritize creating opportunities for teachers to collaborate and share best practices in teaching pragmatics. By addressing these needs, the study suggests that Moroccan students will be better equipped to communicate effectively in English within various social contexts, improving their overall language proficiency and global competitiveness.

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