

The effects of pragmatic intervention on directive speech acts in a virtual exchange CLIL context at university level

Keywords

Virtual Exchange, English as Lingua Franca (ELF), Pragmatic competence, Pragmatic instruction, CLIL

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Abstract (500 words)

Background: Intercultural and international collaboration is essential for achieving a sustainable future. and pragmatic competence plays a critical role in effective intercultural interactions. In line with this perspective, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 promotes education that fosters a culture of peace, non-violence, appreciation of cultural diversity, and global citizenship (United Nations 2015). Thus, it is crucial to educate learners in pragmatic skills that are fundamental for successful intercultural interactions. Previous research in interlanguage pragmatics underscores the effectiveness of consciousness-raising activities and explicit instruction in fostering pragmatic competence (Alcón-Soler 2015; Glaser 2014; Safont-Jordà and Alcón-Soler

2012). Peer feedback, a crucial component of collaboration, can also be a potential source of misunderstandings, however, instructional studies on peer feedback have shown promising results (Del Bono and Nuzzo 2021; Nguyen et al. 2013). In this respect, this study examines the effects of a pragmatic intervention embedded in an English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) university setting with a sustainability focus and virtual exchange component.

Methodology: Pragmatic intervention was developed to be included in a 14-week elective course on culture, communication, and sustainability where ESD (Education for Sustainable development) informed both the pedagogical design and delivery and the content. The class was open to all bachelor students and had an ELF virtual exchange setting. The participants included 22 bachelor students from different disciplines. The intervention lasted five weeks and covered the introduction of major speech acts in feedback, concept of politeness and politeness in feedback. The learners were required to provide peer feedback both before and after the intervention, which was then analysed to evaluate its effectiveness. The objective of the intervention was to prepare learners for a subsequent virtual exchange activity where they were required to provide written feedback to the blog articles written by their peers. A longitudinal design, with pre- and post-tests, was adopted to measure outcomes.

Main findings: The findings indicate that, following the intervention, the learners predominantly used conventionally indirect strategies (e.g. positive assessment of future action) to minimize the imposition level of their directives/messages. In doing so, they exhibited greater consideration for the hearer's feelings and emotions, demonstrating a more hearer-oriented communication approach.

Conclusion: The study concludes that pragmatic instruction is vital for developing the knowledge and skills necessary for effective intercultural collaboration and is both relevant and beneficial for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in terms of content and outcomes.

Abstract (300 words)

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