



**METHODOLOGY FOR DEVELOPING PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE IN
TEACHING ENGLISH (IN THE PROCESS OF LETTER WRITING)**

Aliboyeva Nilufar Abdumajidovna

Teacher at the Department of Foreign Languages, Academic Lyceum,
Termez State University Based on the Review of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in
Philological Sciences,

Sayyora Abdukarimovna Kabilova
Termez State Pedagogical Institute

ABSTRACT

This article explores the methodology for developing pragmatic competence in teaching English, with a particular focus on the process of letter writing. Pragmatic competence is considered a key component of communicative competence, enabling learners to use language appropriately in different social and contextual situations. The study analyzes theoretical foundations of pragmatics, principles of teaching writing skills, and effective classroom strategies that enhance learners' ability to produce contextually appropriate written communication. Special attention is given to formal and informal letter writing as an effective pedagogical tool for developing learners' awareness of politeness strategies, speech acts, discourse organization, and socio-cultural norms of communication. The article also discusses task-based learning, genre-based instruction, and communicative approaches as effective methodologies for fostering pragmatic awareness in English language teaching.

KEYWORDS

Pragmatic competence, English language teaching, letter writing, communicative competence, discourse analysis, speech acts, politeness strategies, genre-based approach, task-based learning, writing skills development

INTRODUCTION

Pragmatic competence in letter writing refers to the learner's ability to select linguistically, socially, and culturally appropriate expressions in accordance with the communicative context, the purpose of writing, and the interpersonal relationship between the writer and the recipient. It is widely recognized in English Language Teaching (ELT) as a fundamental component of communicative competence because it goes beyond grammatical accuracy and focuses on the appropriateness and effectiveness of language use in real-life communication. In other words, a learner may produce grammatically correct sentences, but without pragmatic competence, the written message may still fail to achieve its intended communicative effect. This is particularly evident in letter writing, where tone, politeness, and register play a decisive role in shaping meaning and interpersonal relations.

In many educational contexts, learners demonstrate sufficient knowledge of vocabulary and grammar but struggle to adapt their language to different communicative situations. This difficulty often results in pragmatic failure, which occurs when the intended meaning is either misunderstood or perceived as inappropriate due to cultural or contextual mismatch. For instance, a direct expression such as “Give me information about the course” may be grammatically correct but pragmatically inappropriate in a formal letter. Such issues highlight the importance of integrating pragmatic awareness into language instruction, especially in writing skills development[2].

Literature review and methods

Letter writing is particularly suitable for developing pragmatic competence because it naturally requires learners to consider audience, purpose, and discourse conventions simultaneously. Unlike isolated sentence-level exercises, letter writing involves sustained communication where each linguistic choice contributes to the overall tone and effectiveness of the message. Different types of letters – formal, semi-formal, and informal – demand different linguistic strategies. Formal letters, such as job applications, official complaints, and inquiry letters, require indirectness, politeness, and structured organization. Informal letters, on the other hand, allow for more personal expression, emotional language, and relaxed grammatical structures. Through repeated exposure to these variations, learners gradually internalize how language functions differently across contexts[1].

One of the key methodological approaches to developing pragmatic competence is explicit instruction. In this approach, teachers directly teach learners the rules and conventions of pragmatic language use. This includes instruction on politeness strategies, levels of formality, and the appropriate realization of speech acts in writing. For example, learners are taught that instead of using a direct imperative such as “Send me the report immediately,” it is more appropriate in formal correspondence to use mitigated expressions such as “I would appreciate it if you could send me the report at your earliest convenience.” Explicit instruction helps learners become consciously aware of how language choices affect interpersonal meaning and social relationships[3].

In addition to explicit teaching, contrastive analysis of formal and informal letters plays an essential role in developing pragmatic awareness. In this method, learners compare different types of authentic or semi-authentic letters and analyze differences in structure, vocabulary, tone, and discourse organization. They observe that formal letters typically begin with standardized salutations such as “Dear Sir or Madam” and end with expressions like “Yours faithfully” or “Yours sincerely,” while informal letters may use greetings such as “Hi” or “Dear friend” and closings like “Take care” or “Best wishes.” This analytical process helps learners recognize genre conventions and understand how linguistic choices are shaped by communicative context[4].

Discussion and results

Speech act theory provides another important theoretical foundation for teaching pragmatic competence in letter writing. According to this theory, language is used not only to convey information but also to perform actions such as requesting, apologizing, inviting, thanking, or complaining. In written communication, these speech acts must be carefully structured to ensure appropriateness and politeness. For example, an apology in a formal letter may be expressed as “I sincerely apologize for any inconvenience caused,” while a request might be phrased as “I would be grateful if you could

provide further details.” Understanding how different speech acts are realized in English helps learners produce more effective and context-sensitive written communication[5].

Task-based learning is also highly effective in promoting pragmatic development. In this approach, learners are engaged in meaningful, real-world tasks that require authentic language use. Activities such as writing job application letters, composing complaint letters to companies, or drafting invitation letters encourage learners to consider audience expectations, communicative purpose, and contextual appropriateness. Because these tasks simulate real-life communication, learners are more motivated and more likely to apply language in flexible and meaningful ways rather than relying on memorized structures [7].

Genre-based instruction further enhances pragmatic competence by focusing on the typical structural and functional features of different types of texts. In letter writing, learners are taught that a well-structured letter generally includes a salutation, introduction, body paragraphs, closing remarks, and a signature. Each of these components serves a specific communicative function, such as establishing rapport, stating purpose, providing detailed information, and concluding politely. Mastery of these genre conventions enables learners to produce coherent, organized, and contextually appropriate letters that meet communicative expectations in both academic and professional settings[6].

Interactive classroom practices also play a crucial role in developing pragmatic competence. Peer review activities, for instance, allow students to exchange letters and evaluate each other’s use of tone, politeness, and clarity. This collaborative process encourages reflection and raises awareness of pragmatic appropriateness. Similarly, role-play and simulation activities immerse learners in realistic communicative situations, such as writing scholarship applications or responding to institutional inquiries. These activities bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world communication, making pragmatic instruction more meaningful and effective[3].

Despite the importance of grammar in language learning, pragmatic failure remains a common issue among learners due to limited exposure to authentic communicative contexts and insufficient awareness of cultural norms. Overly direct expressions, inappropriate greetings, or incorrect levels of formality can negatively affect the effectiveness of written communication. Therefore, developing pragmatic competence requires continuous exposure to authentic texts, guided practice, and reflective feedback from teachers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, pragmatic competence in English letter writing is a multidimensional skill that integrates linguistic knowledge, communicative ability, and cultural understanding. Its development requires a combination of instructional approaches, including explicit teaching, contrastive analysis, speech act awareness, task-based learning, and genre-based instruction. When these methods are systematically applied, learners gradually develop the ability to produce contextually appropriate, socially sensitive, and communicatively effective written texts. Ultimately, this competence not only improves their letter writing skills but also enhances their overall communicative proficiency in English, enabling them to participate more successfully in academic, professional, and intercultural communication contexts.

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