The Implementation of The Pragmatics Approach to Enhance Speaking Skills in English Language Teaching

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Abstrak

This classroom action research aimed to improve students' speaking skills through the implementation of the Pragmatics Approach in English Language Teaching at Class VIII C of MTs SA Pancasila Salatiga. The research was conducted in two cycles during the odd semester of the academic year 2024–2025. Each cycle involved planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The participants of the study were 23 students of Class VIII C. To determine the effectiveness of the Pragmatics Approach, a pre-test was given before the implementation of the method, followed by post-tests after Cycle I and Cycle II. In addition to observations and interviews, the students' scores from the three tests were analyzed using a paired-sample t-test. The results showed a significant improvement in students' speaking performance across the cycles. The mean score increased from 65.22 (pre-test) to 70.87 (Cycle I) and then to 77.83 (Cycle II). The t-test analysis confirmed that the improvement was statistically significant. This study concluded that the Pragmatics Approach effectively enhances students' speaking skills and encourages active and meaningful communication in the classroom.

Key word: *pragmatics, speaking, teaching*

INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization, individuals are required to master both science and technology. To effectively achieve this, sufficient knowledge is essential, enabling one to meet the demands of a competitive global world. In this context, the role of English is crucial, both for mastering technology and for facilitating direct communication. As a global means of communication, English must be actively mastered. Consequently, English has become a compulsory subject in high schools.

In learning English, four aspects must be mastered by the students: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Brown, 2007). Among these, speaking is a productive skill that requires students to be more active, creative, and confident in using the language (Harmer, 2007). Speaking is essentially a process of transforming thoughts and feelings into verbal expressions (Nunan, 2003). In the context of education, one of the main objectives of English language teaching is to enable students to communicate effectively both orally and in writing (Richards, 2008). Therefore, learning to speak at school plays a crucial role in training students to interact meaningfully with others.

However, several obstacles often hinder the process of learning English, particularly in developing speaking skills. One of the main issues is learners' discomfort, which may arise from feelings of anxiety, rigidity, lack of fluency, and fear of making mistakes. Some students even avoid speaking due to insecurity, nervousness, and a lack of confidence (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). Speaking anxiety is a common barrier in foreign language classrooms and significantly affects learners' oral performance (MacIntyre

& Gardner, 1991). This condition is also observed among the students of MTs SA Pancasila Salatiga, many of whom display reluctance to speak during lessons due to nervousness and low self-confidence. This ongoing issue requires an effective pedagogical solution. One promising strategy is the application of a Pragmatic Approach in English language teaching, which focuses on authentic communication and context-based language use, potentially reducing learners' anxiety and enhancing their speaking competence (Kasper & Rose, 2002).

According to Yule (1996), pragmatics is the study of utterances as communicated by a speaker and interpreted by a listener (Yule, 1996). It focuses on the meaning conveyed in context, rather than solely on the literal meaning of words. Pragmatics also examines the functions of speech—how utterances are used to perform various communicative acts in real-life situations. Each utterance carries meaning, shaped by its specific context, which includes linguistic cues, cultural expectations, assumptions, background knowledge, and shared experiences between the speaker and the hearer.

Based on the English Competency Standards, the material *"Let's Study Together"* is designed to help students understand meaning in simple transactional and interpersonal conversations within their immediate environment. This objective serves as the foundation for the present classroom action research. For learning to be effective, instructional strategies must be tailored to the students' context, characteristics, and needs. In line with the principles of learner-centered education, effective teaching should emphasize active student engagement and participation in the learning process (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Nunan, 2004).

The use of a Pragmatic Approach in teaching English is grounded in the principle that language should be taught as a skill, not merely as a body of knowledge. This includes the integration of form and meaning, a focus on practical language use, and the promotion of meaningful interaction between teachers and students. One core assumption of this approach is that the language and communicative skills developed in the classroom should apply to real-life communication (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Taguchi, 2015).

According to Torrance and Young (2009), they provided a definition based on the context and identity. They define pragmatics as "Those aspects of the study of language that pertain to the identity and intentions of the speaker and hearer, and the context in which speech takes place." (Pragmatics) Regarding context, they said that "it is sometimes most narrowly regarded as the body of world knowledge to which speakers and hearers have access in generating and interpreting speech"

Kasper (1993) defined the term as "the study of people's comprehension and production of linguistic action in context" (p. 3). This brief definition states the elements of context and production as relevant elements of pragmatics that are fundamentals of any speech act in a language. Context, as Kasper viewed it, consists of the social and cultural circumstances in which communication occurs. These circumstances play a critical role in how messages are constructed, conveyed, and how they are received. Kasper also uses a broad term, "linguistic action" (p. 3), which is a somewhat general term used to describe the capacity of producing utterances that a learner has. Also noteworthy is the emphasis on

comprehension as well as production, a distinction that is particularly relevant for second language learners' daily lives.

From three definitions above we can conclude that pragmatics can be defined as the subfield of linguistics proposed to study the use of the individuals' language with the most accurate level of appropriateness and correctness possible on their performance according to the context or situation where the language is used, and the pragmatic elements that it involves, such as proxemics, chronemics, haptics, and register.

Pragmatic in language Teaching

Pragmatics refers to the study of how language is used in context, focusing on meaning as communicated by a speaker and interpreted by a listener (Yule, 1996). In the context of language teaching, pragmatics plays a crucial role in helping learners use language appropriately in social interactions. Kasper and Rose (2001) emphasize that pragmatic competence is a fundamental component of communicative competence, which encompasses not only grammatical knowledge but also the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in context.

According to Thomas (1995), pragmatic failure can lead to serious miscommunication, even when the grammar is correct. Thus, explicit instruction in pragmatics helps learners avoid pragmatic errors and enhances their overall communication skills. Taguchi (2011) also argues that integrating pragmatics into second language (L2) instruction improves learners' sensitivity to sociocultural norms and increases their pragmatic awareness, especially in speaking.

To assist educators in this area, Bardovi-Harlig (2001) proposes four essential steps for incorporating pragmatics into the curriculum: (1) identification of the speech act, (2) data collection and description (e.g., journals, prediction charts), (3) evaluation of texts and materials (such as critiquing dialogues and conducting group discussions), and (4) development of new instructional materials. In this model, the teacher introduces the theoretical framework and guides students to make predictions based on it, often using handouts or graphic organizers. Subsequently, students' observations are evaluated and discussed, followed by opportunities for active practice that emphasize the appropriate use of pragmatic elements in communication. These procedures are similar to those in the NAPKIN model in that students need to reflect on their experiences or speech acts and identify the central pragmatic elements, but they do not place the same degree of emphasis on practicing these elements. NAPKIN model, according to Castillo, is:

Need

The lesson begins with a definition of a need. This need must be based on the students, namely, the description of a situation where students use the language but with a lack of pragmatic competence. In other words, students experience a communication breakdown or a misunderstanding when interacting in a second language with persons of another culture.

Accurate Introduction of Subject Matter

This stage features an accurate introduction of the subject matter. This consists of a clear presentation of the speech act along with an analysis of the pragmatic dimensions. As a general rule, this presentation should be done using simple, straightforward terms, avoiding jargon

Practice

At this stage, the focus turns to practice. Students engage in a variety of activities to incorporate the target pragmatic elements and build fluency in their use. Some activities in this stage would include pair work in short dialogues or conversations. Conversations in pairs are especially effective since they represent specific cultural situations. All activities include the pragmatic components.

Knowledge Review

In the third stage, students review what they practiced in the previous stage. This is a good time for correction and also for highlighting the pragmatic items in the speech act. Role plays and skits in pairs, including the pragmatic components, are suggested activities in this stage. When working with only one student, the teacher may help with the skit performance as well.

Internalization

In this stage, the students are already aware of the pragmatic and communicative difference. They know the meaning and the form with accuracy; therefore, it is time for them to participate in free use of the communicative element and the pragmatic element, and in so doing, demonstrate their performance. The difference between this stage and the previous is that in this the students interact with the rest of the group, while the teacher takes notes of the language development of the students.

Natural Application

In the last stage of the model, students use the pragmatic elements and apply them appropriately in a specific setting. This is a task that students carry out in the culture itself or in a relevant situation outside the classroom, and they write about it in their journals. Ideally, they do this task and report back afterwards, describing the situation, the required pragmatic elements, and what happened.

Speaking Skills and Pragmatic Competence

Speaking is a productive skill that involves not just accurate pronunciation or grammar, but also the ability to interact and negotiate meaning in real time (Brown, 2007). In this regard, pragmatics enriches speaking activities by adding social and cultural dimensions to the language. Learners are trained not only to s peak fluently but also to select appropriate expressions depending on the context, participants, and communicative goals (Crystal, 1997).

The inclusion of pragmatic elements such as speech acts (e.g., requests, apologies, refusals), politeness strategies, and discourse markers in speaking instruction allows learners to develop their interpersonal and sociolinguistic competence (Leech, 1983). Therefore, a

pragmatic approach to teaching speaking provides learners with tools to engage in real-life communication more effectively and appropriately.

Teaching Strategies for Pragmatic Competence

Developing learners' pragmatic competence requires well-planned instructional strategies. One common approach is consciousness-raising activities, which help students notice pragmatic features in authentic discourse (Schmidt, 1993). These activities may involve analyzing dialogues, identifying speech acts, and comparing L1 and L2 pragmatic norms.

Another effective method is the use of role plays and simulations. These techniques allow learners to practice pragmatic elements in contextualized and interactive settings (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2006). Moreover, teachers can incorporate authentic audiovisual materials—such as films, TV shows, or recorded conversations—to expose learners to naturally occurring pragmatic behavior (Rose, 2005).

Task-based learning also supports pragmatic development. Tasks that require negotiation, persuasion, or complaint formulation, for example, offer learners meaningful opportunities to use language pragmatically (Ellis, 2003). Feedback and reflection during these activities further enhance learners' awareness and control of pragmatic features.

Assessment of Pragmatic Skills

Assessing pragmatic competence can be challenging due to its context-dependent nature. However, several techniques have been developed to evaluate learners' pragmatic abilities effectively. Discourse completion tasks (DCTs), role plays, and self-assessment checklists are among the most frequently used tools (Roever, 2006).

DCTs present learners with a situation and prompt them to produce appropriate speech acts. Though limited in spontaneity, they are useful for assessing learners' knowledge of pragmatic norms. Role plays provide a more interactive format and reveal learners' ability to use pragmatic skills in real-time communication (Kasper & Dahl, 1991).

In addition to performance-based assessments, reflective journals and peer evaluations can also offer insights into learners' pragmatic development. These tools help capture the learners' awareness of appropriate language use and their progress over time.

Based on the explanation above, it can be stated that students are expected to learn English able to read, write, and pronounce English well and correctly. the teacher has as much as possible to strive for it through various methods, models, and media. However, there are still many students in class VIIIC who achieve scores below the KKM 75. Therefore, the author is trying to find a solution by applying the "Pragmatic Approach" in English teaching to obtain achievements that reach the KKM score of 75.

METHODS

This research employed classroom action research (CAR). The procedures of the classroom action research were carried out in two cycles, with each cycle implemented based on the observed improvements and the targeted changes in the learning process. The aim was to determine the effectiveness of learning English using the Pragmatics Approach for the eighth-grade students of class VIII C at MTs SA Pancasila Salatiga.

Before the implementation of the Pragmatics Approach, a pre-test was administered to assess students' initial speaking abilities. After Cycle I and Cycle II, post-tests were also conducted to evaluate students' progress. These test scores were analyzed using the paired-sample t-test to determine whether there was a significant improvement in students' speaking skills after each cycle.

In addition to the test, observations of teaching and learning activities were conducted. These observations focused on the teacher's instructional methods and student engagement during the lessons. Interviews with both the teacher and students were also conducted to gather qualitative data regarding their perceptions of the teaching process and the effectiveness of the Pragmatics Approach.

Through these activities, a collaborative communication process was established between the teacher and the observer to determine the most appropriate actions to improve the learning process in class VIII C.

The classroom action research was conducted in class VIII C during the odd semester at MTs SA Pancasila Salatiga. The implementation of the research took place from October to November 2025, during English lessons that applied the Pragmatics Approach.

The participants of this study were the students of class VIII C for the academic year 2024–2025, comprising 23 students. The class was chosen because the students shared similar characteristics and abilities, making it an appropriate setting for implementing and evaluating the teaching intervention.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

English Language teaching in the Speaking aspect with the theme "Let's study together" in Class VIII C in this classroom action is carried out in 2 cycles. Each cycle consists of a preliminary study, planning, action, observation, and reflection of the activities carried out.

In the first cycle, the researchers conducted: a) identification of problems regarding the material learning English on the Speaking aspect in the theme "Let's study together" with the commonly used learning strategy, namely the conventional, b). observations using observation and shooting, c). Impact evaluation: The conventional approach used a list of student activities. Commonly used activities using conventional learning models, namely the lecture method, question and answer, and giving a presentation. In the learning process in Class VIII C MTs SA Pancasila Salatiga, the teacher is still the center (teacher-centered). The learning process becomes less meaningful because the teacher emphasizes less the meaning of the learning material to students. Teachers do not give strong motivation, so students are less active in the learning process.

In this study, the researcher collaborated with other teachers in preparing a research plan, which includes: 1) learning objectives, 2) competencies and learning materials, 3) strategies for learning in the form of models and media used, as well as learning resources, and 4) evaluation of results. At the beginning of learning, observations were made of the teacher opening lessons, such as apperception of the material to be discussed and

motivating students. Teaching and learning activities are observed from beginning to end. In the first cycle, the results of performance observation of teachers in teaching and learning activities are considered quite good by the observer. While student activities in the learning process activities assessed by observers are not good.

The research in cycle II was carried out by correcting the mistakes made in the first cycle. The lesson plan used is the result of a revision based on the weaknesses that occurred in the first cycle. Similar to the first cycle, in the second cycle the researcher held a collaboration with other teachers in preparing research plans, which include: 1) learning objectives, 2) competencies and learning materials, 3) learning strategies in the form of methods and media that used as well as learning resources, and 4) evaluation of learning outcomes. The learning process carried out by the teacher in presenting the material "Let's study together", so that students understand, because they train and answer repeated questions that have been shared by the teacher.

The results of improvements in the learning implementation plan have a good impact on the smooth running of the English learning activities in cycle II. This can be seen from observations, where student performance in the learning process activities assessed by the observer is very good. The same is also in teacher performance appraisal, in teaching and learning activities was assessed which was considered very good by the observer.

The learning outcomes of Class VIII C students at MTs SA Pancasila Salatiga were assessed across three stages: before the implementation of the Pragmatics Approach, after Cycle I, and after Cycle II of the Classroom Action Research. The scores indicate a progressive improvement in students' performance.

Before the intervention, the total score of all 23 students was 1,500, resulting in an average score of 65.22. After the implementation of the first cycle, the total score increased to 1,630, with an average of 70.87. This shows a noticeable improvement of 5.65 points. Following the second cycle, the total score reached 1,790, yielding an average score of 77.83, which marks an additional gain of 6.96 points from Cycle I and a cumulative improvement of 12.61 points from the initial pre-intervention score.

The statistical results show a consistent and significant improvement in students' English performance across the intervention cycles. The average score increased from 65.22 before the implementation to 70.87 after the first cycle, and further to 77.83 after the second cycle. Standard deviations decreased slightly over time, suggesting that student scores became more consistent.

Paired sample t-tests revealed statistically significant differences between: the pre-intervention scores and those after Cycle I ($t = -5.35$, $p < 0.001$), between Cycle I and Cycle II ($t = -6.46$, $p < 0.001$), and especially between pre-intervention and post-Cycle II ($t = -12.17$, $p < 0.001$). These findings strongly indicate that the Pragmatics Approach had a significant and positive impact on students' learning outcomes.

This data demonstrates that the implementation of the Pragmatics Approach in English teaching contributed positively to enhancing students' learning outcomes. The

consistent increase in scores across the cycles suggests that students benefited from the more interactive, context-aware learning methods encouraged by pragmatic instruction..

CONCLUSION

Based on data analysis about learning English in the theme "Lets study together" with the Application of the Pragmatics Approach in class VIIIC in the odd semester of MTs SA Pancasila Salatiga, in Cycle I and Cycle II, it can be concluded that the application of the pragmatic approach can improve students' skill of class VIII C MTs SA Pancasila Salatiga in learning English in the material "Lets study together" and improve their learning outcomes

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