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PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE CONSTRUCT IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: CRITICAL THEORETICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVES IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract
Drawing from literature on language and interlanguage pragmatics as well as education and business, this conceptual paper presents the current realities in second language learning and instruction and argues for the need to align collegiate second language acquisition curricula that emphasize linguistic and pragmatic competence. Such revision is consistent with the need to prepare college students to meet the critical demands of multi-context communication, which necessitates a deliberate teaching of pragmatic competence. More than the typical cognitive and technical skills, both local and global job markets need wide-ranging sets of communication-related competences as these affect meaning-making and quality of relationships, particularly in the workplace. Acquisition or enhancement of these skills paves the way for career, business, and life success. Said competencies also highlight the value of social or sociocultural skills as well as internal attributes that are critical in fostering healthy relationships and fruitful interaction. Both sets of skills speak of a person's appropriateness in terms of use of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic resources and norms in communication, in addition to the aptness of understanding of linguistic and non-linguistic codes. Ultimately, these skills all boil down to pragmatic competence, which is needed in a balanced second language teaching approach.

Keywords: communicative competence, pragmalinguistic/s, pragmatic competence, sociopragmatics

Introduction

Language use is a behavior that is often nuanced by the setting within which it is situated (Altarriba & Basnight-Brown, 2022; Hossain, 2024). Within every communicative event are sociocultural norms and expectations that dictate meaning. Said differently, communication represents multiple situations that encompass the milieu of the interactants (Aftab, Mahmood, & Abdullah, 2022). This entails that the audience must perceive the meaning in interaction as intended by the speaker, while the latter must also take into consideration the environment of their hearers in order to avoid breakdowns in communication or strained

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relations. In his ethnography of communication, Hymes (1968, 1974) explains that language use is influenced by a number of linguistic and non-linguistic elements, and that meaning is dependent on these sociocultural and sociolinguistic factors, echoing the Malinowskian theory of context (Senft, 2004). This goes without saying that statements made cannot be interpreted solely on the basis of linguistic codes or structure because their essence and acceptability are often governed by a gamut of variables. Again, on the part of the speaker, understanding of their audience's setting, their intentions, the instrumentalities, and the genre of communication, among others, as per Hymes, are critical. According to Malinowski (1935), words cannot stand alone, even complete sentences for that matter, because of the role of context; thus, they cannot be examined in isolation, but how they function in sentences and "situative context" (p. 58). This is why it is "a burning matter is to investigate the role of extra-linguistic, mainly culture-specific factors" to enhance language teaching and learning (Romanowski, 2017, p. 1).

Appropriacy of language and/or communicative acts is essential in discourse; hence, critical in the understanding of meaning is the consideration not just of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic rules but also of extralinguistic and paralinguistic elements such as the speaker's intent, gestures, and other non-verbal cues. All these encompass and highlight the role of context in language (use). Communication, according to Harlow (1990), demands appropriateness in terms of language and paralanguage, taking into account certain factors such as "age, sex…relationship between speaker and hearer, as well as the setting and circumstances in which the act of communication takes place" (p. 328). Hymes (1968, 1972) has alluded to the centrality of pragmatic competence (PrC) in his theory of communicative competence, where he highlights the role of context as well as appropriacy of linguistic and non-linguistic codes. Effective communication, suggests the American linguist, involves more than just grammaticality. Referring to the development of language in children, he explains: [A] normal child acquires knowledge of sentences not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner. In short, a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others. (Hymes, 1972, p. 277)

Said statements highlight the interplay of the domains of language, communication, and culture, featuring three aspects that a language learner and user should be knowledgeable about in order to be considered communicatively competent. It also brings to the fore the critical role of pragmatics in language learning.

The integration of pragmatic competence is part of Bachman's (1990) communicative language teaching (CLT) model (Qasserras, 2023) within the SLA traditions. Such competence is explicit in the model and is demonstrated in two ways: (a) by the extent of a person's knowledge of grammar, and (b) their language use in various contexts, the latter reflecting pragmatic knowledge. Clearly, a balance between grammaticality and pragmatic competence (PrC) in the teaching and learning of a second or foreign language is of paramount importance. This means, second SLA should not center only on grammatical accuracy but must also on integrating PrC (Abrams, 2013).

The pragmatic competence concept is defined as "the ability to use language effectively to achieve a specific goal and to understand language in context" (Thomas, 1983, p. 101). Others describe it as "the ability to understand, construct, and convey both true and appropriate meanings in the social, and cultural environment in which communication takes place" (Elmira, 2022, p. 1). This competency involves accurate reading of the whole communicative context known as pragmatic knowledge or pragmatic awareness. Such knowledge must result in the deployment of appropriate pragmalinguistic codes and/or sociopragmatic elements as already emphasized (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983) including prosody and extralanguistic cues, all of which constitutes PrC.

In Bachman's CLT model, pragmatic competence is the second broad category that focuses on the relations between the produced utterances and the characteristics of the context in which they occur (See Figure 1). Two major skills are placed under this general domain, namely, illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence. The former refers to one's ability to decode a speaker's intended or obscured meaning. It also entails knowledge and skill in using language functions as proposed by Halliday (2002), such as ideational, manipulative, heuristic, instrumental, regulatory, and imaginative functions. Ideational functions refer to the usage of language for information purposes and how interlocutors feel about that information. Manipulative functions go beyond the informational aspect with the intent to influence or control behavior. Heuristic functions relate to the use of language to extend one's knowledge of the world around them, while imaginative functions encompass the ability to tap language to entertain others. Sociolinguistic competence—the other component of pragmatic competence—is the ability to understand the context of language as demonstrated in the appropriateness of communicative acts, which may be linguistic or extralinguistic in nature. In short, it is all about the mastery of cultural conventions on the use of language or discourse. Also involved in sociolinguistic competence is sensitivity to dialects, language register, naturalness, and cultural referents in the course of interaction.

To realize a successful communication and to avoid communication breakdowns, participants in a communicative event, such as L2 learners, are expected to capture the true intent of the locution, which sometimes is not explicit or is unarticulated, but often nuanced by sociocultural variables. This reflects one aspect of PrC, which begins with an accurate understanding of the meaning of a communicative event and then responds to such with appropriate pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic strategies (Tulgar, 2016). In short, pragmatic competence is the ability to function successfully in various communication contexts by having a proper understanding of the meaning of linguistic and non-linguistic codes and without causing any offense to others, both in terms of language and behavior (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Lakoff, 1973). It begins with the knowledge of pragmatic rules and results in the appropriate and application of the same, particularly in L2 contexts.

This conceptual paper scrutinizes the current realities in second language learning and instruction and argues for the need to align collegiate second language acquisition curricula that emphasize both linguistic and pragmatic competence. Such revision is consistent with the need to prepare college students to meet the critical demands of multi-context communication, which necessitates a deliberate teaching of pragmatic competence. More than the typical cognitive and technical

skills, both local and global job markets need wide-ranging sets of communication-related competences as these affect meaning-making and quality of relationships, particularly in the workplace. It provides insights into the seminal theories on linguistic and pragmatic competences as well as SLA models that have embraced the teaching of pragmatics as an essential component of language instruction. It concludes with a call on stakeholders in the educational enterprise to take action so that grammar teaching is balanced with the enhancement of pragmatic skills.

Communicative competence: Structuralist and sociolinguistic perspectives

Pragmatic competence is an offshoot of the communicative competence (CoC) or CLA model in acquisitional traditions; however, the very concept of CoC emerged from two related and often opposing theories–the structuralist and the sociolinguistic views. In other words, the earliest concepts were not originally under the domains of SLA and ESL/EFL but within the realm of language/linguistics. From (socio)linguistics, interlanguage/acquisition experts built on and adopted the same Hymesian notion of CoC, which emphasized both grammaticality and sociolinguistic/sociocultural competence. This section traces the evolution of pragmatic competence as understood in language use and later in L2 education, starting from the generative view of competence in language development as posited by Chomsky (Whyte, 2019), followed by the ensuing arguments against it all the way to the birth of pragmatic competence as a key property of SLA and ILP models.

While language acquisition scholars are credited for their groundbreaking communicative competence frameworks and eventually the prominence of CoC within SLA, the very idea of linguistic competence was simply that—an invention within linguistics/language studies. In fact, its rhetorical origin finds its beginnings in the works of the famed American linguist Noam Chomsky (1965). It was Chomsky who proposed the competence and performance constructs (Barman 2014, as cited in Abdulrahman & Abu-Ayyash, 2019). Linguistic competence refers to the underlying knowledge of one's language, including syntax rules, a function that is not observable, being a psychological or mental property of language. Performance is a demonstration of language ability, which is expressed through accurate articulation of language (speaking) and the aspect of perceiving (listening) both of which represent an actual communicative act (Jumanazarov, 2021).

Although it is a measure of one's linguistic prowess, performance only forms part of such ability; it is not considered adequate or complete. Chomsky's propositions are not without any basis. Scholars believe that he may have been influenced by structural or comparative linguistics courtesy of the French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. In fact, Howatt (1984) explains that the competence-performance dualism was a reinterpretation of Saussure's *la langue* and *la parole*, the former representing the language system and the latter the production of speech. *Langue*, in Chomsky's understanding, is akin to competence, while parole is the equivalent of performance (Cao, 2022). Both linguists drew distinctions between knowledge of one's language system and the expression of such knowledge. They seem to suggest that without adequate knowledge of grammar, language production or speech would be impossible or at least impeded. Conversely, performance is determined by the knowledge of language. Learning a language, therefore, requires or is dependent on mastery of language structure; hence, the proliferation of

pedagogic formulae and methodologies that emphasize grammatical proficiency. This traditional view of competence (situated within cognitive science), which relates to the theory of generative grammar and the so-called language acquisition device (LAD), eventually evolved in terms of meaning and scope within linguistics, SLA (e.g., ILP), and the broader field of pragmatics. The same innate view of language was met with criticisms from other scholars, notably Hymes, a linguistic anthropologist.

Although communicative competence was coined in 1970 by Campbell and Wales (Bagarić & Djigunović, 2007), it was Hymes who first accurately defined the concept and explained it fully. Thus, he is considered the father of the communicative competence theory. Bagarić and Djigunović (2007) believe that through Hymes, the phenomenon was not only defined "as an inherent grammatical competence but also as the ability to use grammatical competence in a variety of communicative situations, thus bringing the sociolinguistic perspective into Chomsky's linguistic view of competence" (p. 95). Cazden (2011) offers more insights, noting that Hymes emphasized "competence not as [an] abstract systemic potential of a language, but as capability located in individual persons" (p. 364), departing from the Chomskyan philosophy. Hymes saw Chomsky as a linguist who only considered the potential of human language while disregarding all sorts of circumstances that may constrain communicative events (Cazden, 2011). Hymes' criticisms are even more pronounced in his 1973 work on CoC where he wrote, "he (referring to Chomsky) remains in the realm of theory and does not view men [sic] in their given social connections, under their existing conditions of life…", emphasizing the role of contextual, particularly sociocultural factors, that shape people and their production of language (Cazden, 2011, p. 365). In Hymes' theorizing, competence encompasses various other factors within or as maintained by the speakers themselves (psycholinguistic), sociocultural or contextual appropriateness, and actual occurrences (Eghtesadi, 2017). CoC, posits Hymes (1967), "enables a member of the community to know when to speak and when to remain silent, which code to use, when, where and to whom, etc." (p. 13). By asserting that certain communicative acts call for appropriacy over grammaticality, the Hymesian tradition subsumes morphosyntactic fidelity under pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competences.

These arguments have a close semblance to some of the definitions of pragmatics that would be formulated four decades later. For instance, within SLA and in line with the theory on CoC, pragmatics was described as "the study of how-to-say-what-to-whom-when [and] "how learners come to know how-to-say-what-to-whom-when" (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013, pp. 68-69). Again, Hymes influenced SLA in revolutionizing language teaching frameworks while also paving the way for the recognition of pragmatics as a separate discipline that intersects with other social sciences such as linguistics, anthropology, sociology, SLA (education), and psychology.

Situating his arguments within language learning and development, Hymes contends that a course in language should not only have linguistic competence as its goal, but communicative competence in general. The Hymesian model of communicative competence has the following criteria:

a. Formal constraints: whether or not something is formally possible;

b. Constraints as to the means of implementation: whether or not something is feasible;
c. Appropriacy constraints: whether or not something is adequate to the context;
d. Actual behavior: whether or not something is in fact done (Hymes, 1973, p. 84).

The four criteria are summed up as "*the goal of a broad theory of competence can be said to show the ways in which the systematically possible, the feasible, and the appropriate are linked to produce and interpret actually occurring cultural behavior* [italics in original]" (p. 286). The first criterion is understood to mean whether an utterance is grammatically possible. This asks the question of whether a particular language uses acceptable morphological and syntactic structures to produce the locution. The second element looks at the participants, particularly in how they are able to use the locution. Are there psycholinguistic or cognitive issues (e.g., memory or processing limitations) that hinder the locution? The complexity of the locution, for example, could impede language processing and lead to communication breakdown, explains Hymes. Appropriateness is concerned with the aptness of language use in the social milieu and the sociocultural expectations. This theory suggests that even if the possibility and feasibility are satisfied, they are not sufficient because appropriacy seems to have more primacy over the two conditions. What are the rules to observe and what violations to avoid in order for the locution to be suitable to the situation and for it to be understood? This echoes Lakoff's (1973) subsuming of language proficiency under sociopragmatic competence by highlighting deference and other polite acts in communication. Finally, occurrence, as the term indicates, refers to whether the intended locution actually takes place.

To sum up, it was seen that language use (as per Hymes' philosophy) involves not just knowledge of language rules and their application based on the limited construal by Chomsky's generative grammar. Instead, as the CoC theory highlights, the role of sociolinguistics/linguistic anthropology is critical, taking into account the context and situations that govern language use in communication (interpersonal, group, etc.) where things are fluid or dynamic. In the words of Savignon (1983), "communicative competence is relative, not absolute, and depends on the co-operation of all the participants involved" (p. 9). Further, CoC is understood as "the ability of language learners to interact with other speakers, to make meaning, as distinct from their ability to perform on discrete-point tests of grammatical knowledge" (Savignon, 1991, p. 264).

Bachman's CLT model

Regarded as a sturdy methodological approach in language teaching and learning and one of the earliest theories on communicative competence in SLA, Bachman's language learning and teaching model is divided into two broad categories: organizational competence and pragmatic competence. Organizational competence refers to the formal structure of the language including the skill to produce grammatically accurate sentences. In Bachman's theorizing, the language learner should also be able to understand content and organize thoughts and sentences into texts. There are two components under the organizational

competence, and these are grammatical competence and textual competence. Grammatical competence is concerned with lexical, morphological, syntactic, phonological, and graphological competencies. Textual competence measures the knowledge of linguistic conventions when combining utterances to complete a text, whether written or spoken. Again, this is another demonstration of organizational competence via cohesive oral and written productions.

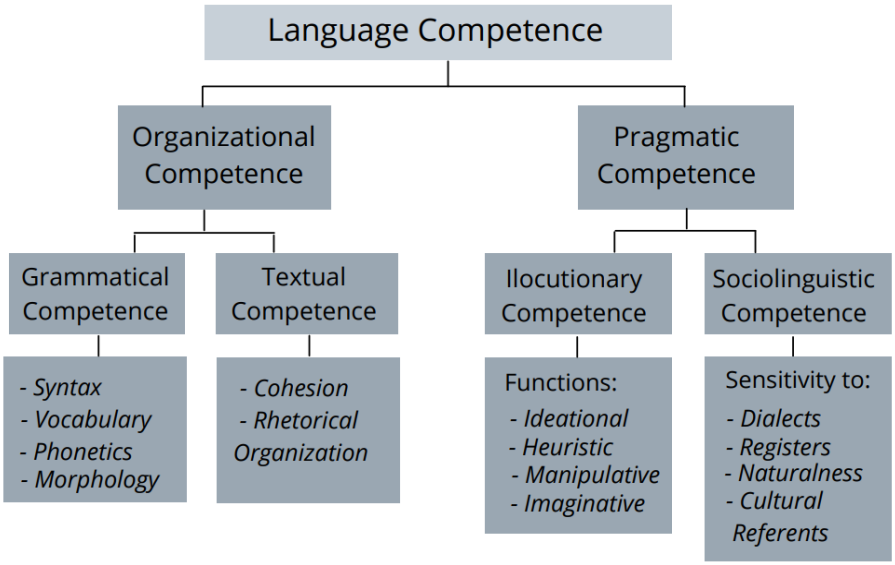


Figure 1. Illustration based on Bachman's (1990) theoretical framework of communicative language ability

Pragmatic competence, the second broad category within Bachman's CLA, focuses on the relations between the produced utterances and the characteristics of the context in which they occur (See Figure 1). Two major skills are placed under this general category, namely, illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence. The former refers to one's ability to decode a speaker's intended or obscured meaning. It also entails knowledge and skill in using language functions as proposed by Halliday (2002), such as ideational, manipulative, heuristic, instrumental, regulatory, and imaginative functions. Ideational functions refer to the usage of language for information purposes and how interlocutors feel about that information. Manipulative functions go beyond the informational aspect with the intent to influence or control behavior. Heuristic functions relate to the use of language to extend one's knowledge of the world around them, while imaginative functions encompass the ability to tap language to entertain others. Sociolinguistic competence—the other component of pragmatic competence—is the ability to understand the context of language as demonstrated in the appropriateness of communicative acts, which may be linguistic or extralinguistic in nature. In short, it is all about the mastery of cultural conventions on the use of language or discourse. Also involved in sociolinguistic competence is sensitivity to dialects, language register, naturalness, and cultural referents in the course of interaction.

Pragmatic failure and breakdown in communication

Teaching L2 learners communicative competence and/or pragmatic competence cannot be overemphasized, given its central role in day-to-day interaction and formal interlocution. The arena of politics as well as international diplomacy, for instance, is regulated by prescriptive rules and conventions in communication, and these include ways on how dialogues and negotiations ought to be conducted between governments (Odell & Tingley, n.d.). To win others to their side, representatives of nations do not merely rely on powerful arguments but also on their ability to package their ideas in such a way that they seem favorable to the receiving or hearing parties. Often in these circumstances, communication is not only made pragmalinguistically correct but also sociopragmatically appropriate, softened to the point that it borders on vagueness in order to avoid offense or disagreements but create harmony. As already explained, pragmalinguistic skills refer to appropriateness of linguistic features, including use of politeness strategies, while sociopragmatic competence reflects one's ability to use culturally appropriate communicative practices (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983) as manifested via respect, agreeableness, and courtesy. These specific communicative courtesies, also known as conventional politeness, are referred to as politeness1 while the "scientific conceptualization of politeness1 and as a theory of the universal principles governing human interaction" is called politeness2 (Félix-Brasdefer, 2022, para. 1).

The veracity of one's statements and even their accuracy in terms of grammatical structure are not enough conditions for the success of the dispatch of a message in whatever form and platform. As a case in point, American Elizabeth Lauten, communications director for Tennessee Rep. Stephen Lee Fincher, came under fire in 2014 after making a social media post that was critical of the daughters of then American President Barack Obama. The posts followed earlier criticisms in news articles about their alleged inappropriate outfits during a formal White House function and for displaying boredom during the event (Jaffe, 2014, para.3). In a Facebook entry, the US Republican staffer wrote, "Dear Sasha and Malia: I get you're both in those *awful teen years*, but you're a part of the First Family, try showing a little class. *At least respect the part you play*…". Lauten continued, "Then again, *your mother and father don't respect their positions very much*, or the nation for that matter. So I'm guessing you're coming up a little short in the 'good role model' department" (italics added) (para. 4). Chiding the two teenage girls, Lauten stressed, "stretch yourself...rise to the occasion" and "act like being in the White House matters to you." Her concluding words were more piercing: "Dress like you deserve respect, not a spot at a bar. And certainly, don't make faces during televised, public events."

In the highly publicized social media message, Lauten lambasted both the presidential kids and the Obama couple at a wrong occasion, with inappropriate choice of words, and in the wrong platform. She was subsequently criticized for her "inappropriate" tenor and for being an "adult bully" (Mister Tibbs@TChallaMac, 2014; Spicer, 2014). The viral post was immediately taken down, and Lauten had no choice but to issue an apology (DelReal & O'Keefe, 2014). In contrast, an Obama spokesman issued a carefully worded response, saying only that they were "taken aback" but that an act of contrition was the proper thing to do (Parkinson, 2014, para. 8). The backlash resulting from Lauten's lack of sociopragmatic sensitivity eventually led to her resignation, and the language fiasco was described

as "a little too much communicating" (Baker, 2014, para 1), indicating a lack of appropriacy of language and the timing of the communication. Accordingly, 80% of polled readers in a California newspaper believed the official "deserved to lose her job" (para. 18). Saying too much in a very critical manner on the wrong occasion in a wrong forum contradicted Grice's (1975) very idea of the cooperative principle and violates his maxims of quality and relevance. In addition, it goes against Lakoff's (1973) rules of politeness. In short, the American official lacked pragmatic competence.

Another case of sociocultural offense/pragmatic failure was committed in 1992 by then US President George H. W. Bush. During a state visit, Australians were horrified and felt insulted as they watched Bush flashing a V-sign, a gesture which is considered vulgar in their culture (Cultural Atlas, 2022). Despite the sociocultural offense, no apologies were offered; rather, the American leader merely acknowledged the differences between the United States and Australia. In the Philippines, months after assuming the presidency, Rodrigo R. Duterte committed a major offense in international relations when he referred to then US President Obama a "son of a wh_ _ _", an utterance that caused further embarrassment for the country. Strong reactions and anger from both international and local media companies, which Duterte often uses foul language, were elicited (Reuters, 2017). Responding to an interview question on the possibility of being quizzed on countless human rights violations arising from his anti-drug war, Duterte warned, "I am a president of a sovereign state...I do not have any master except the Filipino people, nobody but nobody. You must be respectful." He then uttered his infamous expletives, "Do not just throw questions. *P_ _ _ng ina* (son of a wh_ _ _), I will swear at you in that forum" (Wan & Nakamura, 2016, para. 5). Duterte's appalling statements about and his treatment of a head of state of a powerful nation resulted in the cancellation of a scheduled bilateral meeting between the two leaders.

Later, the more diplomatic and cautious Obama told an interviewer, "Clearly, he's (Duterte) a colorful guy" (para. 6). While the Philippine leader demonstrated inappropriateness with a choice of unsavory and demeaning remarks, his US counterpart exhibited discretion, tact, and use of euphemistic phrases in order to sound friendly or cordial despite the unfair verbal attacks. The latter's choice of words showed correct language use and concomitant pragmatic competence. Duterte, although capable of using English, perhaps his second (L2) or third language (L3), fell short of the expected pragmatic ability that is expected in professional contexts and more particularly in international relations. This scenario proves that speakers of a second language may be grammatically adept, but pragmatically incompetent, whether wilfully done or otherwise. As Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei (1998) put it, "grammatical development does not guarantee corresponding levels of pragmatic development" (p. 234).

In the context of international business and intercultural communication, failure to consider sociocultural conventions in interaction can cause an offense (Lakoff, 1973), leading to unsuccessful business transactions. Harrington and Lewis (2014) help illustrate the role of culture in communication in their work by relaying the experience of a North American sales executive named Sandra who was tasked to woo a large company in Japan into striking a business deal. Sandra relied on her knowledge or "expertise in the specialized product line" and, with all

confidence used her communication skills to convince a Japanese chief executive officer to sign a contract during a one-on-one meeting (p. 8). She was under the impression that an agreement would be reached, but her communication prowess was met with an "icy resistance" (p. 8). Her supposed adeptness in language proved unsuccessful, and a competitor was awarded the prized contract. Sandra discovered later that the rival remained mostly silent during her meetings (a demonstration of sociopragmatic competence) with the Japanese CEO and spoke only about superficial matters that were unrelated to the business transaction. Sandra represents individuals who lack intercultural awareness, a key ingredient in cross-cultural communication (Taguchi, Li, & Xiao, 2016) and considered within the province of pragmatic competence.

Harrington and Lewis's (2014) account highlights philosophical differences between the east and the west, the former drawing mostly from their Taoist and Confucian worldviews which make their adherents possess and exhibit a high context culture (Hall, 1976; Hall & Hall, 1990) that is characterized by indirectness, among other typical traits. The latter, on the other hand, is influenced by Aristotelian mindset that is coming from a low context orientation and is characterized by individualism and directness. In Taoism, according to Chen and Holt (2002, as cited in Dong & Day, n.d.), acceptance, harmony, and non-confrontation are central beliefs, and these same practices are carried over in the conduct of business, communication, and day-to-day activities. Similarly, Confucianism strongly promotes "social order, social norms, and active social interaction" (p. 111).

The preceding instances indicate that failure to recognize and adjust according to cultural idiosyncrasies and ascertain the interlocutor's intentions or meaning, regardless of one's adeptness in discourse, could lead to a breakdown in communication, as demonstrated by Lauten, Sandra, and Duterte. Bush, for his part, exhibited a lack of sociopragmatic awareness, another important aspect of pragmatic competence. The cited incidents also highlight the value of pragmatic competence and the repercussions of pragmatic failure. Communication with a flawed syntax can be considered negligible, but inappropriate use of language and extralinguistic elements—often deemed offensive—not only elicit strong negative reactions but often lead to displeasure, criticisms, and sanctions. It is because using any language "in a sociopragmatically inappropriate manner is far more serious than speaking the language with incorrect grammar" (Wang, 1999, p. 127).

To iterate, lack of pragmatic awareness (e.g., failure to ascertain the interlocutor's intentions or to consider certain cultural norms and practices) can lead to a misunderstanding and relationship barriers. As Hymes (1972) emphasized, communicating with "accuracy, clarity, comprehensibility, coherence, expertise, effectiveness, and *appropriateness"* (italics added for emphasis), whether in formal or informal situations, is critical (p. 282). The words of Albert Einstein are instructive: "I speak to everyone in the same way, whether he is the garbage man or the president of the university" (League Managers Association, 2021), a philosophy that echoes Hymes (1974) view of communicative competence and Grice's (1975) cooperative principle in communication as well as other values promoting sociopragmatic competence.

Method

This conceptual paper draws from literature on language and interlanguage pragmatics as well as education and business in order to present the current realities in second language learning and instruction. It covers both foreign and local sources that highlight the current situation in L2 pedagogy and attempts to argue for the need to align collegiate second language acquisition curricula so that they emphasize linguistic and pragmatic competence. It will explain the need for curricular revision and how such effort aligns with the need to prepare college students to meet the critical demands of multi-context communication, which necessitates a deliberate teaching of pragmatic competence. It will discuss that more than the typical cognitive and technical skills, both local and global job markets need wide-ranging sets of communication-related competences as these affect meaning-making and quality of relationships particularly in the workplace. It will argue that the acquisition or enhancement of these skills pave the way for career, business, and life success. Additionally, it argues that both sets of skills speak of a person's appropriateness in terms of use of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic resources and norms in communication in addition to the aptness of understanding of linguistic and non-linguistic codes. Ultimately, these skills all boil down to pragmatic competence.

Research involving human subjects

This conceptual paper relied only on available literature, and data-gathering did not necessitate the involvement of human subjects. Hence, the author has no declaration to make concerning investigation protocols and adherence to ethical matters.

Findings and Discussion

This study explored critical theoretical and pedagogical considerations in second language teaching. As alluded to in the previous sections, revisiting theories and practices in foreign language instruction is needed in order to promote approaches and strategies that are responsive to the needs of the learners.

Some pedagogical considerations

Pragmatic competence has been a focus of study in interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) and second language pedagogy for the past decades. Educators have realized that, beyond the development of language skills, PrC must also be taught to learners of English as a second language (ESL) or as a foreign language (EFL). For such proficiency to be acquired, pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic skills deserve a place in language pedagogy. But even though the limitations of the grammar-based curriculum, which neglects PrC, it is still the default tactic in L2 pedagogy, which does not provide realistic communicative processes that can lead, for example, to sociopragmatic competence (Savignon, 1997, as cited in Abrams, 2013). Also, despite the critical role of pragmatic ability in communication and second language learning, however, there is a tendency to leave out "textbooks or classroom activities…on developing pragmatic competence" (Abrams, 2013, p. 423). Further, even though "pragmatic instruction has received increasing attention in L2 contexts, [the] understanding of *sociopragmatic* development is still comparatively limited"

(italics in the original) (pp. 423-424). Again, this highlights the importance of teaching pragmatic competence.

In the context of the Philippines, second language curricula in the tertiary level appear to be incongruent with the goals of communicative adeptness. Rayon (2017), for instance, highlights a lack of emphasis on the teaching of pragmatic competence in college English courses. He complains:

> [The] challenge of pragmatic competence development has not been given focus by most educational institutions and language teachers. Since the current global linguistic era demands more of what has been offered by Philippine universities, the conventions of English as a second language [are] not anymore bound to communicative proficiency only. What the current curriculum offers [has] failed to holistically address the needs of learners, especially the competency in pragmatics. Most…Philippine educational institutions and language teachers have disregarded the importance of integrating pragmatic competence enhancement. (p. 114)

This failure to come up with a curriculum that reflects Bachmanian SLA philosophy is a disservice to Filipino college students, who, according to Rayon, must deal "with real life linguistic situations" (p. 114), echoing earlier assertions in the field of ILP. Rayon makes a strong indictment against the prevailing educational system and calls on stakeholders to realize the importance of integrating pragmatic competence development because [it]…is what the learners need in dealing [with] life outside the four walls of the classroom. The current demands of the workforce and in the broad range of professions are applicability and practicality rather than…consolidated framing of theories. (p. 114)

Rayon's observations are reflection of the true state of a core education subject known as Purposive Communication, a collegiate L2, a 3-unit subject that replaced a number of English subjects following the implementation of the K-12 program in basic education. Purposive Communication combines writing, speaking, and presenting as the main components seems to neglect communicative competence and pragmatic competence. It envisions students who can produce communication outputs—oral, written, and multimodal (e.g., audio-visual, web-based) —making them ready for the demands of college and/or their chosen disciplines and in their pursuit of careers (Commission on Higher Education, 2013). In a memorandum, the commission (hereafter CHEd) states the need to develop "communicative competence" and enhance "cultural and intercultural awareness" by instilling respect toward others who subscribe to different worldviews (CHEd, 2013, p. 1). Yet, a closer look at the subject's course outline shows it is designed to develop grammatical skills in English, with a sprinkling of topics on cultural/intercultural awareness. It follows that pedagogical philosophy does not reflect the communicative competence theories, most of which give equal weight to both grammar and pragmatic skills (see Bachman, 1990; Canale & Swain, 1980). In fact, there is no emphasis on teaching communicative language ability that focuses not only on knowledge of language rules but also on developing pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic skills (Martinez-Flor & Fukuya, 2005, as cited in Abrams, 2013).

Said differently, the existing curriculum on Purposive Communication is yet to intentionally and fully promote the explicit teaching of pragmatic competence.

Such a language curriculum shows a mere replica of what Savignon (1991) calls "form-focused and meaning-focused classroom" tactic, which is outdated, inadequate, and has been the subject of widespread criticism as early as the 1970s (p. 269). This exhorts educators and policymakers to implement a holistic and practical curriculum that integrates "multiple disciplines" to address the changing needs in workplace communication (Hoch & Fischler, 2011, as cited in Vidyarthi et al., 2012, p. 626). I am of the view that explicit teaching of pragmatic awareness among college students could help address the deficiencies of certain curricula and provide some grounding for any ILP theorizing in the local scholarship. At the same time, expected from the implementation of a proposed ILP syllabus are skills that graduates need in order to succeed in the workplace.

Drawing from literature on language and interlanguage pragmatics as well as education and business, the most critical argument of this paper is that current realities present a need to review and overhaul SLA curricula in the country. Such revision becomes even more urgent when one realizes that equipping students with the critical demands of multi-context communication both in college and later in their chosen careers necessitates a deliberate teaching of pragmatic ability. More than the typical cognitive and technical skills, both local and global job markets need wide-ranging sets of communication-related competences as these affect meaning-making, interactions, and quality of relationships in the workplace and society in general.

In other words, the acquisition or enhancement of these skills set the stage for career, business, and life success. Often referred to as socioemotional abilities, these competencies highlight the value of social or sociocultural skills and internal attributes that are designed to foster healthy relationships and fruitful interaction. Both sets of skills speak of a person's appropriateness in terms of use of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic systems and norms in communication in addition to the aptness of understanding of linguistic codes as well as non-linguistic codes and sociocultural elements/contexts. Ultimately, socioemotional skills all boil down to pragmatic competence. These skills are crucial in working for and with different types of people, both locally and globally.

A study by the World Bank (WB) shows that socioemotional skills or pragmatic skills in this study have overtaken the cognitive and technical skills in the hierarchy of needs of various companies in the Philippines (Santos, 2020; Santos & Bae, 2022). In a way, a career person must be armed with the necessary pragmatic skills in order to thrive in the workplace or in a business setting. According to the Philippine Enterprise Survey (PES), which the WB commissioned, formal education—meaning mere knowledge transfer—is no longer an adequate measure of competence among the Filipino workforce. In fact, a third of local employers found it difficult to fill job vacancies because graduates did not possess the skills that they were looking for. It elaborates: "Most of these missing skills are *not forms of academic knowledge or technical acumen* but rather socio-emotional skills…Emerging international evidence suggests that *socioemotional skills are increasingly crucial* to the types of jobs being created by the global economy" (italics added for emphasis) (Acosta, et al., 2017, xiii).

The extreme value of socioemotional skills or pragmatic skills has also been getting more and more attention in the academic milieu with the championing of the 21st Century Competencies (21CC) pedagogical approaches. Europe and North

America are the main proponents of 21CC models designed to produce well-rounded graduates who are imbued with work and life skills. The European Union Competencies for Lifelong Learning, for example, combines entrepreneurship, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics with, social, civic, and *cultural adeptness* (emphasis added) (Hozjan, 2009), the last phrase signifying the critical role of individual flexibility, open-mindedness, and appropriateness which are some of the manifestations of pragmatic ability. Another 21CC paradigm, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21), promotes the building up of analytical, collaborative, and interpersonal potentials also known as 4Cs, a coinage for critical thinking, collaboration, creativity and communication (California Department of Education, 2019; National Education Association, 2019). Central here are two components—collaboration and communication—which are essential embodiments of pragmatic competence. All these generic pedagogical approaches, according to experts, can help ensure employable and in what Tan et al. (2017) call "future-ready" college graduates, thereby addressing skills mismatch in the labor market (p. 5).

Conclusion

Reconfiguring L2/SLA courses around the needs of students and of the workplace/marketplace, such as the development of pragmatic competence, was discussed in this paper. Such an overhaul, particularly in the context of the Philippines, is an initial yet bold step toward progress and nation-building. To reiterate, redesigning L2 curricula with the deliberate teaching of pragmatic competence is a matter of necessity. The formal teaching of pragmatic skills among students in collegiate L2 subjects can no longer be treated as supplemental but as something fundamental to aid in career and life success, either in the workplace or in their business enterprises. Echoing experts, it must be stressed that a holistic and practical curriculum that integrates various disciplines is extremely warranted, given the changing needs in workplace communication. It is high time that language theorists and educators take heed of such admonition. Indeed, language instruction must take into account not only the value of mastering the systems of a target language but also the acquisition of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic skills, which mirror pragmatic competence.

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