

## **Pragmatic Competence among Gender and its Relationship with Motivation in English Language Learning**

**Moh. Ana Usuludin , Miftaqur Rochmah Ayu Saputri , Sri Wahyuni**

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kediri, Indonesia

[me.anausul@gmail.com](mailto:me.anausul@gmail.com), [miftaqurrochmah1@gmail.com](mailto:miftaqurrochmah1@gmail.com), [swy090984@gmail.com](mailto:swy090984@gmail.com)

---

### **Article History**

Received : August 9<sup>th</sup> 2021

Revision : October 13<sup>th</sup> 2021

Publication : December 30<sup>th</sup> 2021

---

### **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed at revealing the correlation between pragmatic competence among gender and the relationship with motivation. A correlation design was to measure the level of relationship between students' pragmatic competence and their motivation. Furthermore, a comparative method was used to investigate the level of difference between male and female students. It involved 60 male students and 49 female students. Multiple Discourse Completion Task (MDCT) was administered to measure students' pragmatic competence, and a set of close-ended questionnaires adopted from Zaitun and Nopianah (2015) was used to measure the motivation level. This study revealed that 1) there is a significant difference in pragmatic competence between male and female learners. 2) there was a positive, deficient correlation between students' pragmatic competence and students' English learning motivation. By the end of this study, the research on improving students' pragmatic competence and motivation is needed considering that males and females have different pragmatic competence.

**Keywords:** pragmatic competence, gender, motivation.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Dealing with pragmatic competence acquisition is a challenging undertaking; however, it is imperative to highlight foreign language learning's communicative competence. It mainly occurs due to an unstandardized environment. In other words, it is necessitous to deliver adequate input and a chance for the learners to yield language outside the class (Hymes in (Rui, 2016);(Kasper & Rose, 2002). This competence refers to the practical application of language in functional communication, which focuses on two majors; pragma-linguistic refers to producing language appropriately, and socio-pragmatic refers to interpreting the spoken context correctly (Leech, 1983; Stranzy, 2005) From ID (Individual Differences)

such as motivation, gender, learning strategy, and age, language learning motivation has been pondered as an entire investigation area. It leads us to vary in encouragement degree for second language learning (Perdhani, 2016). Further, different gender in EFL gains much attention from researchers. A well-known credit in western culture reveals that female learners have better understanding and achievement in L2. Perhaps, this credit is primarily built upon the sociopsychological constrain and cultural outcomes.

In the sense of motivation and pragmatic competence, motivation is rated as a significant milestone of EFL learners, and it is assumed to be closely related to pragmatic awareness of L2 (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Intrinsic interest and social responsibility are two types of motivation that are believed to be correlated with pragmatic understanding (Li et al., 2015). Intrinsic motivation significantly connects to EFL Learners' pragma-linguistic and practical awareness (Chen, 2017; Li et al., 2015; Mou, 2011; Takahashi, 2005). A strong desire of learners to participate in the L2 community makes them look carefully at pragmatic language features rather than those who have less motivation. Their efforts and tenacities to comprehend language features contribute to achieving higher awareness levels and achievements (Schmidt, 1990).

However, some research that social responsibility weakens pragmatic awareness (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996; Li et al., 2015; Takahashi, 2005). Social responsibility comprises instrumental elements and cultural elements. There is a close relation between target language culture and intrinsic interest, three motivation types; individual development, information medium, and immediate achievement. Those three types of motivation contain the instrumental element. The result reveals that all of the motivation types which collect instrumental factors insignificantly correlate to pragmatic awareness. The cultural part yields pragmatic awareness, but the instrumental element shared by social responsibility attenuates the correlation. The insignificant correlation between motivation types related to individual development, information medium, and immediate achievement and pragmatic awareness can be deciphered from the pragmatic knowledge nature, sensitive to cultural and social features. Providing much attention to the cultural and

social norms of L2 can encourage students to obtain pragmatic knowledge. Those who are learning for some practical reasons, such as getting a good score in exams, may focus on academic achievement and literal language instead of the practical use of language in a social context. Hence, they may feel less motivated to look for interaction or contact with the culture and community of L2. They show little concern for the pragmatic aspect of English learning.

Comparing gender and EFL competence has been widespread research for decades; however, the research shreds of evidence for this issue are diverse. Women surpass men to con over the complex forms. They can be superior to men in several verbal fluency tests, such as discovering words beginning with a particular letter, while men are better at computing compositional rules. Consequently, they have better organization for speech (Halpern, 2000; Kimura, 1992). Despite gender is one of the fundamental elements of individual differences, but current studies have only underlined the female and male differences on several aspects; language taboo, phonetic, vocabulary, communication pattern, etc. They emphasize SLA research, such as students' practical and linguistic competencies, is infrequent research (Zoghi et al., 2013).

Several research studies have been conducted to investigate the relationship between learners' general motivation and interlanguage pragmatics (ILP). (Perdhani, 2016) reveals that EFL learners process pragmatic motivation and are motivated to develop English pragmatic features. (Chen, 2017) probed that students' motivation is strongly correlated with pragmatic competence. In other words, students who have strong motivation will possess higher pragmatic competence. Some recommend the research related to the factors that influence pragmatic competence and strategies to develop students' pragmatic competence (Al-Sha'r, 2017; Han & Tanr, 2015; Tello Rueda, 2011). This research tried to complete the gap by revealing the pragmatic competence under gender-based and its relation to motivation with all those findings. It was substantial to be brought up because few researchers were concerned about it. The present study focused on probing the distinction between pragmatic competence among gender and its relationship with English language learning motivation.

## **METHOD**

### ***Goal***

This research was done using the correlational study to measure students' pragmatic competence and students' motivation for English learning. Furthermore, for investigating the difference between male and female English foreign language learners, the writer uses comparative study.

### ***Participants***

The participants of this study were 109 tenth-grade students of one of the state vocational high schools. Among the participants, there were 60 male students and 49 female students who joined the English camp program held by school stakeholders. All the students were aged around 15 to 16 years old. In the English camp, the students were given the materials about suggestions and requests by the teacher. The students were then trained to use those two kinds of speech acts in the classroom. Then, after they finished their study about those materials, the students are asked to complete the multiple discourse completion tasks by selecting the best answer or expression they would say in each situation. Then, they were asked to fulfill the close-ended questionnaire according to their preferences that reflected their motivation for English language learning.

### ***Instruments***

Two tools, namely: Multiple Discourse Completion Task (MDCT) and a questionnaire, were used for instruments and data collection.

The Multiple Discourse Completion Task (MDCT) was administered to measure the level of pragmatic competence. To ease the students' comprehension, the current study scooped the discourse speech acts. There were two kinds of speech acts used among many speech acts: suggestion and request. The reason for choosing those two kinds of speech act was because the students had been given the materials about advice and recommendation by the teacher in the classroom. The MDCT consisted of 25 questions that had been validated and tested for reliability before it was executed into hypothesis testing.

Then, the questionnaire consisted of thirty-two questions, which were adopted from (Zaitun & Nopianah, 2015). The questionnaire was close-ended that

was measured using 4 points of the Likert scale. After testing validity and reliability, 28 items were valid and reliable for measuring students' motivation for English language learning. The items of the questionnaire covered indicators of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. According to Uno, there were several indicators of the hands of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: (1) willfulness of success; (2) encouragement and necessarily of study; (3) goal and expectation of future; (4) study recognition; (5) there is exciting activity at studying; (6) the conducive environment of study (Zaitun & Nopianah, 2015)

### **Data analysis**

The quantitative data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics with the SPSS software for Windows 21.0. Descriptive statistics, numbers, percentages, means, and standard deviation were used to analyze the data.

To assess the correlation between students' pragmatic competence and motivation, Kendal tau-b test was used to describe the strength and the direction of the linear relationship between two continuous variables (Anwar, 2009). It was used to measure since the data were not normally distributed.

**Table 1** Test of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
motivation	.098	109	.013
Pragmatic competence	.197	109	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The use of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was employed to measure the Normality of the data. The data is assumed as normally distributed if the significant value (sig.) is greater than .05. From the table above, the significant value of motivation and students' pragmatic competence was lower than .05. So that, both data are not distributed normally (motivation = .013; pragmatic competence = .00).

To analyze the level of difference of students' pragmatic competence among male and female learners, the independent sample t-test was utilized. Both instruments were evaluated statistically at a 95% confidence interval and 5% level of significance.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Level of Difference of Students' Pragmatic Competence among Gender

One objective of this present study was to clarify the difference level between male and female English as foreign language learners. Then, linked to the comparative study of students' pragmatic competence, the independent t-test was employed. Before looking at the result of the t-test, a homogeneity test of variances should be done to determine the use of an independent sample t-test. Here is the result of homogeneity test of variances using *Levene's Test*

**Table 2 Homogeneity test of variances of pragmatic competence among gender**

	F	Sig.
Pragmatic competence	14.113	.000

The data variances can be assumed as homogenous if the significant value is more excellent .05 (Priyatno, 2018). From the table above, the result of the significant matter is lower than 0.05, so that the variances of the data are not homogenous (.00 < .05). Then, here is the result of the independent sample t-test.

**Table 3 Independent sample t-test for pragmatic competence among gender**

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pragmatic competence	Equal variances assumed	-2.583	107	.011
	Equal variances not assumed	-2.709	99.110	.008

The data significantly differed if the significant value is lower than .05. Looking at the result of variance homogeneity, the "equal variances not assumed" of the independent t-test was considered. The development of the independent t-test shows that the significant value (sig. 2-tailed) is lower than .05 (.008 < .05), which

indicates that there is a substantial difference in pragmatic competence between male and female learners.

Pragmatic can be understood as the research about the meaning of spoken and written related to the context of social, textual, and situational, the research about pragmatic centered on the use of the language in the context of oral or written and implicit or explicit communication about the communicative function of language and dynamic linguistic interaction (Christie, 2000). Next, it also correlates with the context of background knowledge. The investigation on the language used and gender is closely relevant to the pragmatic study. Therefore, it can be done by utilizing a pragmatic approach.

As the result of the present study shows that the pragmatic competence among gender is significantly different. Some aspects are normatively expected by the community concern practical language use between genders. Sequentially, in socio-pragmatic strategy, pragmatic device, and language feature, women tend to have an indirect directive, hedges, and high pitch as the symbol of femininity. While men tend to have to swear words, direct command, and low angle as masculinity (King & Holmes, 2014).

The study about gender and pragmatic competence has dynamic results in some researches. Some theoretical exposure (King & Holmes, 2014; Syafrizal & Putri, 2020; Wahyuningsih, 2018) shows that men and women have differences in language use, linguistic, and pragmatic competence. In terms of politeness, women seem to be more polite and respectful than men because they often use hypercorrect grammar when speaking (Brown, 1980). (Wahyuningsih, 2018) found that showing panic and cynicism as the symbol of sympathy and showing protest when getting unfortunate conditions are the other characteristics that tend to be done by women in using the language. Differ from women, and men tend to find the solution to their problem directly.

Some aspects might influence gender and their second language education. It has been a critical area to be merged. Three fundamental elements must be considered in upholding these aspects. Those are subject matter, education process concerning motivation and attitude, pupil beliefs, learning method, achievement,



and the last is classroom material such as textbook, teacher's guide, test and curricula (Sunderland, 2010).

Compared to other research in the L2 context (Kasanga, 1996; Siegal, 1996), the investigation on pragmatic to Japanese learners in using English as L2 found that male students tend to be more dominant in interaction chance compared to female students. Perhaps, it happens due to the norm of culture that influences the pragmatic competence of the students. However, American women also really mean trying to adapt the standard of politeness in terms of socio-pragmatic of Japanese. They expected that women should show themselves as obedient.

On the other hand, some research on interlanguage contrastive shows no difference in the socio-pragmatic behaviors among gender, some of them showing the minor difference (King & Holmes, 2014). It happens because there are some influential factors related to pragmatic competence between genders, such as culture and norms. Furthermore, three factors influence the utilization of linguistic varieties in gender-based social networks, marriage opportunities and employment opportunities (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003).

### **The Correlation between Students' Pragmatic Competence and Motivation of English Language Learning**

This part was presented to discuss the correlation between students' pragmatic competence and motivation for English language learning. The writer provided a table of correlation between pragmatic competence and motivation of students in English language learning. Because of its normality test, the use of *Kendal tau-b* was executed to assess the correlation of students' pragmatic competence and students' motivation.

**Table 4 Correlation Coefficient of the Correlation between Pragmatic Competence and Motivation**

Correlations			motivation	Pragmatic competence
Kendall's tau_b	motivation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.191**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.005
		N	109	109



Pragmatic competence	Correlation Coefficient	.191**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.
	N	109	109

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table above figures out the correlation between students' pragmatic competence and students' English learning motivation, indicating a significant correlation. If significance value (Sig. 2-tailed)  $> \alpha=0.05$ , so  $H_0$  is accepted. On the opposite, if obtained significance value  $\leq \alpha=0.05$ ,  $H_0$  is rejected (Priyatno, 2018). According to the data above, compared to 0.05, the value of Sig. is lower than 0.05 (sig. value =  $0.005 \leq 0.05$ ). As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected. From the table above, the correlation coefficient of students' pragmatic competence and students' English learning motivation is .191 ( $r=.191$ ). According to the correlation coefficient index, the correlation is very low, and the attribute of the correlation coefficient in the table above shows a positive correlation (+).

As a result above showed a positive deficient correlation level between students' pragmatic competence and students' English learning motivation; the teacher should engage the students' motivation more intensely because as the motivation increases, so does the students' pragmatic competence. The teacher and the students should pay more attention to their self-motivation of learning English regarding the significant correlation. It seems that the relatively highly motivated students were more concerned about the opportunities they have for communication to show their pragmatic competence than low motivated students.

The primary theoretical motivation for this study was to see what links could discover the relationship between English learning motivation and students' pragmatic competence. (Gardner, 1985) believes that motivated learners learn more because they seek out input, interaction and communication, and instruction. When exposed to the target language input, they pay attention to it and process it actively and interactively. In other words, motivated learners may pay more attention to the pragmatic aspect of the target language, English. This current investigation could testify this.

Some previous studies support the result of this current study. (Chen, 2017) found that the motivation and pragmatic competence of students are correlated significantly ( $r=.582$ ). (Li et al., 2015) conducted a correlation analysis found that among the subscales of motivation, pragmatic awareness was correlated with three of them, i.e. intrinsic interest ( $r = 0.39, p < 0.01$ ), motivational intensity ( $r = 0.37, p < 0.01$ ), and social responsibility ( $r = 0.24, p < 0.05$ ). From the study results, it is worth considering for English teachers and learners to develop their language learning motivation, develop positive attitudes toward pragmatic learning in the pragmatic development and sustain learner's motivation to ensure their pragmatic competence.

Considering that pragmatic competence has a significant correlation to motivation, there are some suggestions proposed by (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991) to manage and foster students' motivation. Learning tasks is fundamental to provide a plausible challenge for students, providing opportunities for group work. The task's design should be following the perception that students need and want and provide adequate models for classroom activities. Referring to the suggestions, some actions can be done by the teacher to sustain and escalate students' motivation in language learning, such as dividing the overall goal into some sub-goals while developing student's pragmatic, choosing some suitable activities that can be followed by students and make them enjoy the process of learning. This feeling can stimulate their motivation. Students can have a role in the language learning process and be taught the strategies to encourage themselves in the learning process.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study investigated the pragmatic competence among gender and its relationship to the motivation of learning English. It was found that there was a significant difference in pragmatic competence between male and female learners. The level of female students' pragmatic competence tended to be higher than male learners. Next, there was also a positive, very low correlation between students' pragmatic competence and student' English learning motivation. The results suggested that students' pragmatic awareness needed to be enhanced to improve

their language pragmatic competence. Future research was recommended to investigate the teaching pedagogy in the EFL learning environment. Some form of explicit or implicit English instruction as foreign language learners' pragmatics should be applied and experimented with in English teaching. For a greater result, future research also suggested examining the effects of motivation on pragmatic competence with the employment of other data elicitation methods. It could reveal foreign language learners' ability to deal with different social parameters and explore the factors of motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, to gather better understanding among researchers.

## REFERENCES

- Al-Sha'r, A. A. (2017). Efficacy of Teaching Pragmatic Aspects on Improving Undergraduate English Major Students' Conversational Skills and Expressive Abilities in Authentic Situations. *Research on Humanities and Social Science*, 7(8), 11–23.
- Anwar, A. (2009). *Statistika untuk Penelitian Pendidikan dan Aplikasinya dengan SPSS Dan Excel*. IAIT Press.
- Brown, P. (1980). How and why are women more polite: Some evidence from a Mayan. In *Women and language in literature and society* (pp. 111–136). Praeger Publishers.
- Chen, X. (2017). An Investigation of the Relationship between Pragmatic Competence and Motivation for Non-English Majors. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 7(12), 1308–1314. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0712.19>
- Christie, C. A. (2000). *Gender and Language: Towards a Feminist Pragmatics*.
- Crookes, G., & Schmidt, R. W. (1991). Motivation: Reopening the Research Agenda. *Language Learning*, 41(4), 469–512. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1991.tb00690.x>
- Eckert, P., & McConnell-Ginet, S. (2003). *Language and gender*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitudes and Motivation*. Edward Arnold.
- Halpern, D. F. (2000). *Sex Differences in Cognitive Abilities* (0 ed.). Psychology Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410605290>

- Han, T., & Tanr, A. S. (2015). THE FACTORS THAT AFFECT PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE AND TURKISH EFL RESEARCH CONTEXT. *International Journal of Arts & Sciences*, 8(7), 515–523.
- Kasanga, L. A. (1996). Effect of Gender on the Rate of Interaction. Some Implications for Second Language Acquisition and Classroom Practice. *ITL - International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 111(1), 155–192. <https://doi.org/10.1075/itl.111-112.07kas>
- Kasper, G., & Rose, K. R. (2002). *Pragmatic Development in a Second Language*. Blackwell.
- Kasper, G., & Schmidt, R. (1996). Developmental Issues in Interlanguage Pragmatics. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 18(2), 149–169. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263100014868>
- Kimura, D. (1992). Sex Differences in the Brain: Men and Women Display Patterns of Behavioral and Cognitive Differences that Reflect Varying Hormonal Influences on Brain Development. *Scientific American*, 32–37.
- King, B. W., & Holmes, J. (Eds.). (2014). *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics* (1st ed.). Blackwell Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431>
- Leech, G. N. (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. Longman.
- Li, R., Suleiman, R. R. R., & Sazalie, A. (2015). The Relationship between Motivation and Pragmatic Awareness: A Case Study of Chinese EFL Learners. *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature*, 21(3), 41–55.
- Mou, X. (2011). The Relationship between Learning Motivation and Grammatical and Pragmatic Awareness/Competence. *Journal of West Anhui University*, 31(12), 120–123.
- Perdhani, W. C. (2016). Interlanguage Pragmatic Motivation in EFL Context. *IJELTAL (Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics)*, 1(1), 75. <https://doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v1i1.8>
- Priyatno, D. (2018). *SPSS Panduan Mudah Olah Data bagi Mahasiswa dan Umum*. Andi.
- Rui, L. (2016). *AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MOTIVATION AND PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE: A CASE STUDY OF CHINESE EFL LEARNERS OF HEBEI UNIVERSITY*. Universiti Sains Malaysia.
- Schmidt, R. (1990). *Consciousness, Learning and Interlanguage Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.

- Siegal, M. (1996). The Role of Learner Subjectivity in Second Language Sociolinguistic Competency: Western Women Learning Japanese. *Applied Linguistics*, 17(3), 356–382. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/17.3.356>
- Stranzy, P. (2005). *Encyclopedia of Linguistics* (Vol. 1). Fitzroy.
- Sunderland, J. (2010). Theorizing Gender Perspectives in Foreign and Second Language Learning. In R. M. J. Catalán (Ed.), *Gender Perspectives on Vocabulary in Foreign and Second Languages* (pp. 1–19). Palgrave Macmillan UK. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230274938\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230274938_1)
- Syafrizal, & Putri, F. S. (2020). Linguistic Politeness: An Analysis of Gender Differences in Speaking Classroom. *ENGLISH EDUCATION: Journal of English Teaching and Research*, 5(2), 169–178.
- Takahashi, S. (2005). Pragmalinguistic Awareness: Is it Related to Motivation and Proficiency? *Applied Linguistics*, 26(1), 90–120. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amh040>
- Tello Rueda, Y. (2011). Developing Pragmatic Competence in a Foreign Language. *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal*, 8, 169–182. <https://doi.org/10.14483/22487085.177>
- Wahyuningsih, S. (2018). MEN AND WOMEN DIFFERENCES IN USING LANGUAGE: A CASE STUDY OF STUDENTS AT STAIN KUDUS. *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature and Culture*, 3(1), 79. <https://doi.org/10.30659/e.3.1.79-90>
- Zaitun, & Nopianah, A. (2015). Correlation Between Students' English Learning Motivation and an Attitude towards Quipper School. *Jurnal Teknodik*, 19(3), 259–272.
- Zoghi, M., Kazemi, S. A., & Kalani, A. (2013). *The Effect of Gender on Language Learning*. 5.