

FORMATION OF STUDENTS' PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE AS A METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEM

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Abstract: In the contemporary context of language education, providing learners with theoretical knowledge alone is no longer sufficient. It is equally essential to develop their thinking, communication, and adaptation skills, as well as their ability to use language effectively in real-life situations. In mother-tongue (Uzbek) instruction, teachers can not only enhance students' linguistic knowledge and foster perception, speech, and logical thinking but also cultivate their pragmatic competence. This article analyzes the formation of students' pragmatic competence as a methodological issue, drawing on the perspectives of leading linguists. It also examines the current state of pragmatic competence development in mother-tongue education.

Keywords: linguistics, pragmalinguistics, pragmatics, competence, creative competence, pragmatic competence, spontaneous learning, specially organized learning, pragmatic communicative competence.

Throughout history, the development of every nation has been directly linked to advances in education and science. This interconnection has long been acknowledged and today remains both an undeniable truth and an essential necessity that cannot be postponed. Therefore, in the Republic of Uzbekistan, the enhancement of educational quality and content – closely tied to state and social progress – is being pursued and refined through government initiatives, the demands of a rapidly changing era, competency-based approaches to teaching, and the latest achievements in educational innovation.

In today's educational system, the overemphasis on the internal structure of language has been the subject of serious and well-founded criticism. Knowledge of linguistic structure without understanding how and where to apply it brings little benefit. Ultimately, such learning results only in wasted time and effort. The field that addresses this problem is pragmalinguistics.

Just as creative competence encompasses linguistic and communicative skills, pragmatic competence is formed through interrelated skills and abilities and serves as a unifying category among them. Pragmatic competence can be defined as the ability to act appropriately and effectively in specific communicative situations.

Although the term pragmatics has become widely used in linguistic literature, many researchers note that the boundaries of linguistic pragmatics remain imprecisely defined. Pragmatics is generally interpreted as the real-life communicative process in which linguistic means are purposefully selected to accomplish communicative goals.

According to A.Nurmonov and G.Ziyodullayeva, the competency-based approach to language teaching aims to develop learners' speech, linguistic, creative, and pragmalinguistic competencies. These belong to the category of subject-specific competences. In practice, teachers design each lesson to cultivate particular abilities and skills based on the topic's content

and objectives. Language education that successfully develops these competences fulfills its pedagogical purpose and justifies the trust placed in it.

Regardless of form or content, achieving effective and high-quality learning outcomes requires clarifying which competences are to be formed in learners. This process should be organized according to the pedagogical principles of consciousness, continuity, coherence, and progression from simple to complex across grade levels.

Pragmatic communicative competence primarily involves shaping students' awareness of the power, potential, and consequences of language. Numerous examples illustrate this: speeches by political leaders during elections, commanders' addresses to soldiers before battle, or unconsidered remarks that later cause deep regret.

V.V.Shakhovsky emphasizes that the meaning and expression of emotive speech structures depend on interlocutors' need and purpose for emotional expression. This need is determined by the speaker's attitude toward reality and communicative intent.

Pragmatic communicative competence also involves the ability to sense the communicative environment and select the appropriate style for that context. This skill develops not only through formal instruction but also, more significantly, in spontaneous learning environments. By observing social life, students witness how speech patterns change alongside shifts in individuals' social roles.

It further requires adherence to the norms of communicative culture while considering interlocutors' nationality, age, social status, and gender. For example, addressing one's parents informally with *ty* ("you") is acceptable in Russian culture but considered disrespectful within Uzbek culture. Similarly, using inappropriate forms of address or tone toward women or men is perceived not only as impolite but potentially insulting.

Pragmatic communicative competence also entails perceiving subtle social markers and adapting flexibly to unfamiliar environments. Some individuals feel alienated in new social settings, while others quickly build rapport and integrate seamlessly into new groups. Those with strong communicative competence can function effectively in any social context.

According to V.N.Komissarov, three types of pragmatic relations operate in verbal communication:

Relations expressed by the source of information (speaker or writer), including communicative purpose, personal attitude toward the message, and intended impact on the recipient.

Relations manifested in the text itself, reflecting the pragmatic meaning of linguistic units.

Relations arising from the recipient (listener or reader), whose interpretation and attitude toward the message and its author complete the communicative act.

Learners begin acquiring pragmatic competence in early childhood, long before formal schooling. Even preschool-aged children can use language functionally – responding to questions, expressing needs, and reacting to their surroundings. During preschool and primary education, this emerging competence must be consciously refined and developed.

From a psychological perspective, language competence comprises two main components: (1) speech experience accumulated through communication, and (2) explicit knowledge of language obtained through formal instruction. The first develops naturally within the family and social environment; the second is systematically cultivated in educational institutions according to state-approved curricula.

The eminent Russian psychologist L.S.Vygotsky identified these as (1) spontaneous learning and (2) specially organized learning. In spontaneous learning, the child “acts according to his or her own program,” while the environment serves as the teacher. Specially organized learning occurs in formal institutions such as schools and colleges.

In spontaneous learning, paralinguistic means (gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, etc.) and acoustic features (intonation, pitch, tone modulation) are internalized naturally through observation. When these two aspects – spontaneous and organized learning – interact harmoniously, a well-developed speech aptitude emerges.

Speech competence is demonstrated in the ability to read texts expressively, comprehend and restate others’ ideas, and convey personal thoughts coherently in writing. To achieve this, learners must master the phonetic, lexical, morphological, and syntactic levels of language and apply them appropriately in communicative contexts.

Speech competence manifests in both oral and written forms. Observations in general secondary schools indicate that students’ proficiency in both remains below the standards set by the State Testing Center (DTM). Oral speech competence averages 50–60%, while written competence is even lower, at 30–40%.

Research shows that low speech competence stems from several interrelated factors observable in both spontaneous and formal learning contexts.

Factors associated with formal instruction include:

The dominance of test-based assessment, which reduces motivation to develop communicative skills.

Numerous deficiencies and methodological errors in the teaching of literature.

Inclusion of literary texts that are age-inappropriate or inadequately analyzed, limiting students’ expressive growth.

Overemphasis on grammar, memorization, and test preparation at the expense of communicative practice.

Textbook exercises on sentence or text creation that yield little progress, since students lack training in idea formulation and writing skills; teachers also lack methodological resources for teaching text construction.

A nation’s cultural level is closely linked to the literacy of its people. Orthographic competence thus holds great importance: literacy is not merely the ability to write but the ability to write correctly. This competence develops through the integrated mastery of all linguistic levels – phonetic, lexical, morphological, and syntactic.

The analysis above demonstrates that the current level of students’ speech, linguistic, and creative competences remains unsatisfactory. Consequently, the formation of pragmatic competence – a crucial component of communicative ability—also falls short of expectations. Contemporary language education has yet to reach the desired standard in developing students’ pragmatic aptitude, which is essential for effective communication and successful participation in real-life language use.

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