



Assessing Pragmatic Knowledge: The Interaction of Grammatical Knowledge and Pragmatic Abilities

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Abstract

The literature related to the relationship between pragmatic ability and grammatical proficiency of EFL learners is occupied by a host of studies mostly resulting in controversial findings and almost arguing that pragmatic ability lags behind grammatical proficiency. Recruiting 60 EFL learners across three levels of proficiency, this study aimed to unveil the correct direction of the relationship between these two concepts. A contextualized pragmatic judgment test developed by Bardovi-Harling and Dornyei (1998) was used for this purpose. EFL learners' abilities in realizing pragmatically appropriate sentences and correcting infelicitous speech acts with regard to their proficiency level were tested.

Despite the previous findings, this study demonstrates that the three groups could almost appropriately recognize the infelicitous speech acts, although at the level of correction, where they were asked to produce appropriate forms, the proficiency factor affected the results. Due to these findings, the study concludes that the pragmatic aspect of communicative language ability should be summoned up from the back doors of Iranian language classes and some forms of consciousness raising should be used to rectify the overarching communicative ability of learners and restore the missing element which is pragmatic ability. The study further explores some obstacles which shadow the presence of pragmatic aspect of language learning and teaching in Iranian EFL classes.