


Pragmatic Competence in EFL Classrooms: A Descriptive Study of University English Teachers' Speech Acts and Politeness Strategies in Yemen

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الملخص

تستكشف هذه الدراسة دور الكفاءة البراغماتية في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL)، مركزةً على وجهات نظر أساتذة الجامعة حول الصيغ الكلامية واستراتيجيات اللباقة، حيث تبحث في كيفية إدراكهم لأهمية الكفاءة البراغماتية في تحسين مهارات التواصل، بالإضافة إلى التحديات المرتبطة بدمجها في التدريس الصفّي. ولقد تم اعتماد منهجية متناغمة في البحث، حيث جُمعت البيانات من 60 أستاذ جامعي في جامعتي شبوة وعدن عبر استبيان تم تخصيصه لذات الغرض. اعتمدت الدراسة على تحليل كمي في تقييم تصورات وممارسات أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية في الجامعات اليمنية فيما يتعلق بدور تدريس علم الدلالة السياقية للألفاظ في تعزيز الكفاءة التواصلية لدى الطلبة. أظهرت النتائج أن 94.6% من الأساتذة يرون أن تدريس علم الدلالة السياقية للألفاظ (الجانب البراغماتي للغة) يعزز مهارات التحدث لدى الطلاب، مما يؤكد الحاجة إليه، بينما أعرب 81.4% من الأساتذة عن ثقتهم في تدريسه، مما يشير إلى حاجة ماسة للتطوير المهني. وفيما يتعلق بالصيغ الكلامية، 80% من الأساتذة الذين شملتهم الدراسة يؤكدون أن فهم تلك الصيغ يعزز الفهم والإدراك العام لدى الطلبة و ينمي العلاقات الشخصية لديهم، مع ذلك 78.6% أيدوا بقوة التدريس المباشر لها، وهذا يؤكد التحديات الجمة التي تعترضهم عند التنفيذ. كما اعتُبرت استراتيجيات اللباقة حاسمة وضرورية، حيث أقر 86.6% بتأثرها بالعوامل الثقافية، مؤكدين على دور الوعي الثقافي في تعلم اللغة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تبين أن العوامل الاجتماعية والسياقية — كالأنماط الثقافية والسياقية وكذلك التنوع في العلاقات الاجتماعية — تؤثر بشكل كبير على الاستخدام البراغماتي للغة. كما أظهرت الدراسة توافق في نتائجها مع الدراسات السابقة واختلاف في عدم تناغم ثقة المعلمين والتعزيز التدريسي لديهم. وعلى الرغم من إدراك المعلمين لأهمية الجانب البراغماتي في اللغة، إلا أنهم بحاجة إلى تدريب إضافي وتعديلات منهجية لسد الفجوة بين النظرية والتطبيق. من ذلك تسلط هذه النتائج الضوء على الحاجة إلى تطوير برامج تدريبية وتخصيص موارد لتعزيز الكفاءة البراغماتية في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of pragmatic competence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, focusing on teachers' perspectives regarding speech acts and politeness strategies. The study explores EFL instructors' perceptions of pragmatic competence and the challenges of integrating it into classroom teaching. A mixed-method approach was employed, collecting data from 60 teachers at Shabwah University and Aden University through a Likert-scale questionnaire. Quantitative analysis assessed the perceptions and practices of university English teachers in Yemen regarding the role of pragmatics in enhancing students' communicative competence. Findings indicate most teachers (94.6%) agreed that pragmatic instruction enhances communication skills. However, only 81.4% felt fully confident teaching pragmatics, indicating a need for professional development. Regarding speech acts, 80% agreed that understanding them improves comprehension and interpersonal relationships, yet only 78.6% strongly supported explicit instruction, indicating implementation challenges. Politeness strategies were also deemed crucial, with 86.6% acknowledging their cultural variability, emphasizing the role of cultural awareness in language learning. Additionally, social and contextual factors—such as cultural norms, situational context, and social hierarchy—were found to significantly influence pragmatic use. The study aligns with existing research while revealing gaps in teacher confidence and instructional support. Despite recognizing pragmatics' importance, educators require additional training and curriculum adjustments to bridge theory and practice. These findings highlight the need for targeted professional development and resource allocation to enhance pragmatic competence in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: *EFL classroom, politeness strategies, pragmatic competence, speech acts, teachers' perspectives*

Introduction

Effective communication is a key component of language teaching, and is particularly crucial in the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). To facilitate appropriate and meaningful communication in EFL classrooms, teachers need to possess pragmatic competence—that is, the ability to use language effectively in social contexts. Pragmatics encompasses a wide range of elements, including speech acts and politeness strategies, which influence how teachers interact with students and deliver instructional content. Although pragmatics—particularly speech acts and politeness strategies—have become increasingly important in the development of communicative competence, their integration into EFL curricula remains limited, especially in Yemeni universities.

Despite its critical role, the explicit integration of pragmatic competence into EFL instruction, particularly in the unique academic context of Yemeni universities like Shabwah and Aden, remains an area significantly underexplored by empirical research. This challenge is often amplified by the fact that students' challenges in developing communicative competence for academic purposes are heavily influenced by the cultural and structural dimensions of the Arabic context, demanding that pedagogy move beyond traditional methods that prioritize linguistic accuracy alone (Aljoundi & Sheik, 2025). A lack of professional training in pragmatic instruction, cultural differences, and varied teaching philosophies are among the reasons many EFL teachers find it challenging to incorporate pragmatic elements into their lesson plans. Additionally, it remains unclear to what extent Shabwah University and Aden University English teachers include speech acts and politeness strategies in their teaching. By providing new perspectives on teaching pragmatics in a Yemeni EFL environment, this study seeks to fill a gap in the literature by examining both the challenges and potential benefits of integrating pragmatic aspects into instruction.

This study aims to address these challenges by investigating teachers' perceptions and classroom practices regarding the teaching of pragmatics, with a particular focus on speech acts and politeness strategies. The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 outlines the Methodology, including participant selection and data collection instruments. Section 3 presents the quantitative and qualitative Results. Section 4 discusses the findings in relation to the existing literature. Finally, Section 5 concludes the study by presenting the main conclusions, pedagogical implications, and recommendations for future research.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent do English teachers at Shabwah and Aden Universities perceive the role of speech acts and politeness strategies in enhancing students' communicative competence?
2. What challenges do English teachers face in integrating speech acts and politeness strategies into their EFL instruction?
3. How do social, cultural, and contextual factors influence teachers' classroom practices in teaching pragmatics?
4. What professional development needs do English teachers at Shabwah and Aden Universities have regarding the effective teaching of speech acts and politeness strategies?

Literature Review

Pragmatics is the field that examines how context shapes language use in communication. It involves not only understanding the meanings of words, but also how language is employed in authentic, real-world interactions. Yule (2010) explains that pragmatics is crucial for effective communication because it helps speakers understand intentions, social roles, and contextual appropriateness. In teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), pragmatic competence enhances teachers' ability to guide students toward using language naturally and appropriately. Recent literature emphasizes that explicit pragmatic instruction significantly improves language use in EFL settings (Roever, 2021; Taguchi, 2019), contributing to the development of more communicative, context-sensitive language learners. Research by Kasper and Rose (2002) also supports the view that teaching pragmatics enhances communicative effectiveness. Bardovi-Harlig (2020) highlights the importance of moving beyond grammar instruction and focusing on holistic communication skills. Incorporating these findings strengthens the theoretical foundation of this study, illustrating the contemporary relevance of pragmatic teaching. This study builds on these advancements by investigating how teachers integrate pragmatics into their EFL instruction, thereby contributing to broader discussions on refining communicative competence models in non-Western educational contexts.

Speech Acts and Their Importance

Speech acts are communicative actions performed through language, such as making requests, offering apologies, or giving instructions. Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) identify speech acts as a central component of communication, emphasizing that language is not only about words, but also about their functional roles in interactions. Recent research highlights the significance of speech act awareness in teacher education, suggesting that EFL teachers who

explicitly teach speech acts foster greater communicative competence among learners (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014; Félix-Brasdefer, 2018). By focusing on Yemeni teachers' use of speech acts in classroom discourse, this study builds upon Speech Act Theory by examining how these principles are manifested in a non-Western EFL context, adding a unique perspective to the existing literature. The findings illuminate the challenges Yemeni teachers encounter, particularly in balancing direct and indirect speech acts, thereby providing valuable empirical data for discussions about the applicability of Speech Act Theory in diverse educational environments.

Politeness Strategies in Communication

While Speech Act Theory highlights the functional use of language, Politeness Theory focuses on the social interactional balance, positing that strategies are essential for maintaining social relationships and mitigating potential face-threatening acts in communication. Brown and Levinson (1987) introduced politeness theory, explaining how language users adjust their communication to preserve social harmony. For example, instead of saying "Give me the book," a more polite request would be "Could you please pass me the book?" Recent studies emphasize the role of explicit politeness instruction in fostering intercultural communicative competence among teachers (Holmes, 2012; Culpeper, 2021). Teaching these strategies is crucial in EFL classrooms, as cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings. This study extends Brown and Levinson's framework by examining how Yemeni EFL teachers incorporate politeness strategies into their teaching practices, taking into account the strong cultural influences on social hierarchy and respect in Yemen. The findings provide insights into how Yemeni teachers navigate politeness norms in their classrooms, offering empirical evidence for the practical application of politeness theory in multicultural educational settings.

Cultural and Contextual Factors in Pragmatics

Pragmatic competence is deeply shaped by cultural norms and contextual factors. Nkirote (2024) observes that different cultures have distinct ways of expressing politeness, which influences communicative behaviors. In some cultures, direct requests are common, while in others, indirectness is preferred. Recent research underscores the importance of teacher training in cross-cultural pragmatics to address these differences in EFL instruction (House, 2019; Kecskes, 2022). House (1996) found that learners develop stronger pragmatic awareness when explicitly taught to recognize cultural differences in communication. This study applies Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) to analyze how Yemeni teachers mediate pragmatic instruction within a specific cultural context. By connecting pragmatic teaching to socio-

cultural learning processes, this study contributes to the broader discourse on the role of culture in language acquisition and highlights the challenges faced by teachers in culturally diverse classrooms.

Pragmatics in the Yemeni EFL Context

In Yemen, the teaching of pragmatics remains underdeveloped in EFL classrooms. Studies by Al-Sibai (2017) report that Yemeni teachers often struggle to integrate pragmatics into the curriculum due to cultural and institutional constraints. For instance, Yemeni EFL teachers may face challenges in teaching politeness strategies because traditional social hierarchies shape expressions of respect. Al-Ghamdi, Almansoob, and Alrefaee (2019) indicates that Yemeni EFL learners are more inclined towards directness in their speech acts than native English speakers, a cultural-linguistic difference that may be misconstrued as impoliteness. Recent research underscores the importance of professional development programs to enhance Yemeni EFL teachers' ability to teach pragmatic skills effectively (AL-Ban and AL-Sabae, 2025). Addressing a notable gap in the research, the study addresses the practices of Yemeni EFL teachers as they fail to manage pragmatic development in their classrooms. It delivers new perspectives on local challenges and instructional techniques, providing much-needed data to advance academic dialogues on pragmatics within the Arabic-speaking educational sphere.

Teaching Pragmatics: Challenges and Approaches

Teaching pragmatics presents notable challenges, particularly due to the lack of teacher preparation and the dominance of grammar-based instruction. Kasper and Rose (2002) argue that many EFL teachers lack formal training in pragmatics and often prioritize structural aspects of language. Schauer (2024) suggests that role-playing and task-based activities can facilitate the integration of pragmatics into classroom instruction. More recent studies advocate for technology-enhanced pragmatic instruction, highlighting the role of digital simulations and online discourse analysis in teacher training (Taguchi & Roever, 2023 as cited in Morady Moghaddam and Mirfendereski, 2025). Therefore, this study engages with pedagogical frameworks in second language acquisition by exploring how Yemeni teachers implement innovative pragmatic teaching strategies, such as task-based learning and role-playing, in their classrooms. Furthermore, it contributes to instructional design theory by investigating how contextual factors, including the educational system and cultural norms, influence the practical implementation of pragmatics-focused teaching strategies. It further contributes to both theory

and practice by extending Speech Act and Politeness Theories to a Yemeni context and employing a mixed-methods design to examine pragmatic instruction.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of teachers' perceptions and practices. The objective is to analyze teachers' perceptions and practices regarding the integration of pragmatics into English language teaching, with an emphasis on its role in promoting effective communication. A rigorous validation process was implemented for the research instrument, which included calculating Cronbach's alpha to ensure reliability.

Participants

The study was conducted with a sample of 60 English language teachers from the Departments of English at Shabwah and Aden Universities. Participants were selected through a purposive convenience sampling method to ensure that the sample consisted of highly qualified and experienced professionals.

Table 1

Participants' Educational Background

Educational level	Frequency	%
Bachelor	4	6.7
Master	24	40.0
Ph. D.	32	53.3
Total	60	100.0

The majority of participants (93.3%) held either a Master's or Ph.D. degree, and 73.3% had more than five years of teaching experience, ensuring that the respondents were well-positioned to provide meaningful insights on the topic of pragmatics. Although the sample size was limited, future studies should consider larger and more diverse samples to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

Data Collection Method

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data regarding teachers' perceptions and practices related to pragmatics. The questionnaire consisted of 20 items, divided into four main sections:

1. **Demographic Information:** This section gathered background details, including participants' educational qualifications, years of teaching experience, and age.
2. **Importance of Pragmatics:** This section explored teachers' perspectives on the value of teaching pragmatics, including speech acts and politeness strategies, in enhancing students' communication skills.
3. **Speech Acts and Communication:** This section examined teachers' views on the role of speech acts in fostering mutual understanding and effective communication.
4. **Politeness Strategies:** This section assessed the importance of politeness strategies in communication and their impact on students' communicative competence.

The questionnaire was administered to a total of 60 English language teachers. A Likert-scale format was used for most questions, with responses ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree," allowing for straightforward quantification of participants' attitudes and perceptions. In addition, open-ended questions were included to capture more detailed qualitative insights on specific issues related to the teaching of pragmatics.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process was initiated following the necessary institutional approval from both Shabwah and Aden Universities. A purposive convenience sampling method was employed to recruit the target population (n=60), ensuring representation from both male and female EFL instructors. The questionnaire was administered electronically via Google Forms over a four-week period (from November 1 to November 30, 2024), providing participants with sufficient time to respond. To ensure transparency, an informed consent form was included at the beginning of the survey, detailing the study's purpose and ensuring anonymity. The completed questionnaires were automatically compiled and exported to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 for quantitative analysis, while open-ended responses were collated for thematic qualitative analysis.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected through the Likert-scale questions were analyzed using descriptive. Specifically, quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (version 26) to calculate descriptive statistics, while qualitative responses were coded manually through thematic analysis. Frequency distributions, mean scores, and percentage calculations were employed to summarize and interpret the responses. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, and percentage). Cronbach's alpha confirmed the internal reliability

of the instrument. Qualitative data from open-ended responses were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and insights regarding teachers' perceptions of pragmatics.

Results and Discussion

This section presents an in-depth analysis of the collected data, focusing on responses from the teachers' questionnaire. The analysis is based on the responses of 60 English language teachers. The findings provide valuable insights into the role of pragmatics in English language teaching, particularly concerning speech acts and politeness strategies. The results are analyzed in relation to previous studies to highlight areas of agreement or divergence. To address the first research question concerning teachers' perceptions of the role of pragmatics in enhancing communicative competence.

Table 2

Teachers' Perceptions of the Importance of Pragmatics in Effective Communication

Items	Level of Acceptance							Mean	Std. Deviation	RII%
	F	Strongly Agree	Agree	Average	Disagree	Disagree Strongly				
Stem1	f	48	8	4	0	0	4.73	0.594	94.6	
	%	80.0	13.3	6.7	0	0				
Stem2	f	24	24	12	0	0	4.20	0.775	84	
	%	40.0	40.0	20.0	0	0				
Stem3	f	20	32	4	0	4	4.07	1.033	81.4	
	%	33	53	6	0	6				

The results indicate that all three statements received strong approval from respondents, with the Relative Importance Index (An RII value above 80% was considered indicative of strong agreement among participants The highest agreement (94.6%) was with the statement that teaching pragmatics, including speech acts and politeness strategies, improves students' communication skills. This finding reinforces that pragmatic competence is integral to achieving communicative goals, enabling learners to manage social interactions appropriately. The strong endorsement suggests that teachers recognize the immediate impact of pragmatic instruction on students' communicative success. Overall, these findings affirm the relevance of pragmatic instruction in EFL contexts while exposing persistent challenges in teacher preparation.

This finding aligns with previous research (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 2012), which emphasizes the essential role of pragmatic competence in effective language use. It also resonates with Rose and Kasper (2001), who argued that pragmatic awareness significantly enhances learners' ability to engage in meaningful conversations. However, some studies, such as Flor and Juan (2010), suggest that while pragmatic instruction is beneficial, its implementation faces challenges due to curriculum constraints and lack of training. Despite these obstacles, the high approval reported in this study suggests an increasing awareness of the necessity of pragmatic instruction among EFL teachers.

The second statement, which highlighted the importance of encouraging students to practice speech acts and politeness strategies both in the classroom and in real-life situations, received an RII of 84%. This finding supports the view that practical application is key to developing pragmatic competence, reinforcing the idea that learning pragmatics should not be confined to theoretical instruction. Nevertheless, the slightly lower agreement compared to the first item may indicate that while teachers acknowledge the importance of practice, they might encounter difficulties in consistently incorporating it into their teaching. This is consistent with findings from Taguchi (2015), who noted that although teachers recognize the value of pragmatic instruction, many feel unprepared to provide adequate practice opportunities.

The third statement, regarding teachers' confidence in their ability to teach pragmatics, received an RII of 81.4%, the lowest among the three statements. This suggests some hesitation among teachers about their own competency in teaching pragmatics, possibly due to insufficient training or a lack of adequate teaching resources.

Overall, the high approval ratings in this study support previous research emphasizing the significance of pragmatics in language education (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014). However, the slightly lower confidence level among teachers in their ability to teach pragmatics effectively highlights the need for targeted teacher training programs. Future studies could investigate professional development initiatives aimed at enhancing teachers' confidence and pedagogical strategies in teaching pragmatics.

A point of divergence appears when comparing these findings with those of Flor and Juan (2010) who found that some teachers downplay the importance of explicit pragmatics instruction due to time constraints or a lack of relevant teaching materials. In contrast, the respondents in this study overwhelmingly support the integration of pragmatics, suggesting a shift in awareness and attitudes toward its importance in EFL context.

Table 3

The Importance of Using Speech Acts for Successful Communication

Items	Level of Acceptance					Mean	Std. Deviation	RII%	
	F	Strongly Agree	Agree	Average	Disagree				Strongly Disagree
Stem4	f	20	28	4	8	0	4.00	1.000	80
	%	33.3	46.7	6.7	13.3	0			
Stem5	f	20	28	4	8	0	4.00	1.000	80
	%	33.3	46.7	6.7	13.3	0			
Stem6	f	12	40	0	8	0	3.93	0.884	78.6
	%	20.0	66.7	0	13.3	0			

As shown in Table 3, respondents rated all items highly, with the Relative Importance Index (RII) ranging from 78.6% to 80%. The highest agreement (80%) was observed for stems 4 and 5, namely: “I think that understanding speech acts can help individuals understand the intentions and messages of others in verbal communication” and “I think that using speech acts contributes to building positive relationships with others and enhancing mutual understanding.” These results, based on the responses of 60 participants, suggest that teachers recognize the significance of pragmatic competence in fostering successful social interactions.

These findings align with previous studies, such as Searle (1976), who emphasized that speech acts are fundamental to communication. They also support Austin's (1962) assertion that understanding speech acts is essential for decoding meaning in social exchanges. However, some researchers, including Taguchi (2011), have observed that students often struggle with pragmatic comprehension due to cultural and contextual differences, indicating a need for more explicit instruction.

The sixth item, addressing the necessity of explicit instruction in speech acts, received an RII of 78.6%, which is slightly lower than the other two statements. The item stated: “I believe that providing explicit instruction is essential for helping students understand the nuances of these important aspects of language use.” This suggests that while teachers acknowledge the importance of structured pragmatic instruction, they may face challenges in

implementing it effectively. This interpretation is consistent with Bardovi-Harlig (2012), who highlighted that explicit instruction is crucial for developing pragmatic competence but is often underutilized in EFL curricula.

Overall, the findings reinforce the argument that speech acts are a vital component of successful communication, as emphasized by Kasper and Rose (2002). However, the slightly lower score for explicit instruction indicates that, despite recognizing its value, many teachers may require additional support or training to integrate it effectively into their teaching. This observation also aligns with Taguchi (2015), who found that many teachers feel unprepared to teach pragmatics explicitly, even though they recognize its significance.

Table 4

The Importance of Politeness Strategies for Effective Communication

Items	F	Level of Acceptance					Mean	Std. Deviation	RII%
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Average	Disagree	Disagree Strongly			
Stem7	f	28	24	8	0	0	4.33	0.724	86.6
	%	46.7	40.0	13.3	0	0			
Stem8	f	16	44	0	0	0	4.27	0.458	85.4
	%	26.7	73.3	-	0	0			
Stem9	f	16	40	4	0	0	4.20	0.561	84
	%	26.7	66.7	6.7	0	0			
Stem10	f	8	32	16	0	4	3.67	0.976	73.4
	%	13.3	53.3	26.7	0	6.7			

The results in Table 4 indicate that the highest level of agreement (86.6%) was observed for the belief that speech acts and politeness strategies differ significantly across languages and cultures. This finding, based on responses from 60 participants, underscores the crucial role of cultural variation in shaping pragmatic competence. The importance of this variation is supported by Hofstede's (2016) cultural dimensions theory, which highlights how societal values influence communication styles. Similarly, Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory posits that differences in directness and indirectness across cultures significantly affect politeness strategies. As a result, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners must develop intercultural competence to navigate linguistic and cultural differences effectively.

Additionally, a high level of agreement (85.4%) was recorded for the assertion that students who use appropriate politeness strategies are more effective communicators in English. This supports the widely accepted view that politeness is integral to successful communication. Blum-Kulka et al., (1989) in their Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP),

demonstrated that speakers who employ culturally appropriate politeness strategies enhance mutual understanding and reduce communication breakdowns. Similarly, respondents agreed that students who lack an understanding of politeness strategies may struggle with effective communication in English, a perspective consistent with Ishihara and Cohen (2014), who emphasize the importance of pragmatic competence in second language acquisition and interactional success.

In contrast, the belief that students generally understand and appropriately use speech acts and politeness strategies received the lowest level of agreement (73.4%). This suggests that, while the importance of politeness is recognized, students' ability to apply these strategies effectively is still inconsistent. This observation is in line with Kasper and Rose (2002), who argue that pragmatic competence develops gradually and requires explicit instruction. Moreover, Roever (2021) notes that assessments of pragmatic knowledge often reveal gaps between theoretical understanding and real-world application. These results underscore the need for targeted instructional approaches to enhance students' ability to employ politeness strategies appropriately in communication. Consequently, the discrepancy suggests that while teachers appreciate the role of politeness strategies, they recognize students' limited mastery, highlighting an urgent need for explicit intercultural pragmatics instruction.

Table 5

The Influence of Social and Contextual Factors on the Use of Speech Acts and Politeness Strategies

Items	F	Level of Acceptance					Mean	Std. Deviation	RII%
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Average	Disagree	Disagree Strongly			
Stem11	f	20	36	4	0	0	4.27	0.594	85.4
	%	33.3	60.0	6.7	0	0			
Stem12	f	20	32	8	0	0	4.20	0.676	84
	%	33.3	53.3	13.3	0	0			
Stem13	f	16	32	12	0	0	4.07	0.704	81.4
	%	26.7	53.3	20.0	0	0			

Table 5 reveals that cultural factors (85.4%) received the highest level of agreement among respondents. The 11th item, "I believe that cultural factors, such as differences in values and beliefs, impact the use of speech acts and politeness strategies in communication," underscores the fundamental role of cultural influence in shaping communication norms. This

strong agreement highlights how deeply rooted values and beliefs dictate the appropriateness of speech acts and politeness strategies, making culture a central determinant of language use. This finding aligns with Hofstede's (2016) cultural dimensions theory, which emphasizes the impact of societal values on communication behaviors, as well as Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory, which suggests that varying levels of directness or indirectness in speech are reinforced by cultural norms.

The results also show that contextual factors ranked second in level of agreement among respondents. The item, "I agree that contextual factors, such as the purpose of a conversation, influence the use of politeness strategies in communication," reflects the view that speakers adjust their politeness strategies based on situational variables, such as the communicative purpose. This is consistent with the findings of Blum-Kulka et al., (1989) whose Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) demonstrated that speech acts, such as requests and apologies, are highly context-sensitive—even within the same culture, different situations require distinct politeness strategies. The strong agreement among respondents thus supports the importance of contextual awareness for effective communication.

By comparison, social factors, represented by the 13th item, received an agreement level of 81.4%. This relatively lower percentage, while still high, suggests a less secure confidence level among teachers when integrating social and pragmatic factors. This uncertainty can be attributed not only to training gaps but also to systemic barriers, As Aljoundi and Sheik (2025) confirm, "The findings of this study identify linguistic, cultural, institutional, and structural challenges that hinder English language acquisition, emphasizing that the problem is deeply rooted in curriculum design and the lack of systemic support for developing communicative competence," which strongly resonates with the perceived difficulty among the present study's teachers in navigating the social and pragmatic dimensions of EFL teaching. The lack of robust exposure to practical pragmatic teaching methods further contributes to this perceived difficulty. The item, "I believe that social factors, such as the relationship between speakers or their relative status, affect the use of speech acts and politeness strategies in communication," shows that relationships and status differences are recognized as important, though slightly less influential than cultural and contextual factors. This may be because social hierarchies and interpersonal relationships are often shaped by broader cultural norms and specific situational contexts. As noted by Kasper and Rose (2002), while social status influences pragmatic choices, its effect is typically intertwined with both cultural expectations and situational demands. Together, these findings reveal that teachers perceive pragmatic use as contextually bound,

socially nuanced, and culturally mediated—underscoring the multifaceted nature of communicative competence.

Conclusion

This study underscores the significance of speech acts and politeness strategies in enhancing the communicative competence of English teachers at Shabwah University and Aden University. The findings demonstrate that the majority of the 60 teachers recognize the crucial role of pragmatics in fostering effective classroom interactions. With 94.6% agreement on the importance of explicit pragmatic instruction, the study addresses the first research question by confirming that teachers view speech acts and politeness strategies as essential for improving students' language proficiency. This is consistent with previous research (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 2012), which highlights the direct connection between pragmatic competence and communicative effectiveness. Moreover, the study also illuminates primary challenges encountered by participants in integrating pragmatic instruction into their EFL classrooms. Cultural differences, insufficient professional training, and a lack of teaching resources were identified as significant barriers, supporting previous findings by Flor and Juan (2010). Thus, while teachers value the importance of pragmatics, structural limitations continue to hinder its comprehensive integration. Furthermore, the influence of social, cultural, and contextual factors on the use of speech acts and politeness strategies was evident in the results. Cultural norms exerted the strongest impact (85.4%), followed by contextual factors (84%) and social factors (81.4%). These results confirm that pragmatic choices are deeply embedded within sociocultural and situational contexts, in alignment with Hofstede's (2016) cultural dimensions theory and Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory. In summary, the study highlights the necessity for targeted professional development programs to strengthen teachers' ability to teach pragmatics effectively. The findings suggest that training in role-playing, task-based learning, and cultural awareness is vital to overcoming instructional challenges. Therefore, incorporating structured pragmatic instruction into teacher training programs is essential for advancing EFL pedagogy at Shabwah and Aden Universities.

Limitations of the Study

This study acknowledges several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. Firstly, the reliance on a limited sample size of 60 teachers restricts the generalizability of the findings beyond the two participating Yemeni universities. Secondly, the primary data source the self-report questionnaire is susceptible to social desirability bias, where

participants may have provided answers that reflect perceived best practice rather than their actual teaching behaviors. Thirdly, the interpretation of the results regarding pragmatic and politeness strategies is intrinsically subject to cultural influence; the findings reflect the perceptions within a specific Yemeni cultural context and may not be directly transferable to other EFL settings. Future research should address these constraints by incorporating classroom observations and expanding the participant pool across different regions.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards for academic research. Prior to data collection, the necessary Institutional Approval was obtained from the academic administrations at both Shabwah and Aden Universities. The principle of Informed Consent was strictly adhered to, where all participants were provided with a clear summary of the study's objectives and procedures at the beginning of the questionnaire, as well as their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Furthermore, the principles of Anonymity and Confidentiality were maintained; all collected data were handled anonymously, and coded numbers were used instead of names to ensure that the identity of the teachers remained confidential during the analysis and publication stages.

Bio

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