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Contemporary Approaches to
Intercultural Pragmatics Research and its
Application in Language Teaching



From Scientific Concepts to Practical Implementation

*Contemporary Approaches to
Intercultural Pragmatics Research
and its Application in Language Teaching –
From Scientific Concepts to
Practical Implementation*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEFR – Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

CLA – Communicative Language Ability

CMC – Computer-Mediated Communication

DCTs – Discourse Completion Tests

EFL – English as a foreign language

FTA – Face-Threatening Act

IC – Intercultural Communication

ICC – Intercultural Competence

IP – Intercultural Pragmatics

RMM – Rapport Management Model

Foreword

The increased mobility of people, ideas, and cultures in the twenty-first century has intensified the need for deeper understanding of how language functions across cultural boundaries. Communication today rarely occurs within a single cultural framework; instead, speakers constantly negotiate meaning with interlocutors who may interpret linguistic forms through different cultural norms, values, and expectations. In this context, intercultural pragmatics has emerged as a crucial field of research that explores how individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds use language in interaction and how meaning is constructed, interpreted, and sometimes misunderstood in intercultural communication.

Contemporary approaches to intercultural pragmatics research emphasize the dynamic, context-sensitive nature of communication. Rather than treating language use as a rigid system of rules, modern scholarship focuses on how pragmatic meaning is collaboratively negotiated through interaction. Researchers increasingly adopt interdisciplinary perspectives, combining insights from linguistics, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, cognitive science, and cultural studies. These perspectives highlight that pragmatic competence involves not only knowledge of linguistic forms but also awareness of cultural conventions, social relationships, and communicative intentions.

In the recent years, advances in research methodologies have significantly enriched the understanding of intercultural pragmatic phenomena. Corpus-based studies, experimental methods, conversation analysis, and ethnographic approaches provide new ways of examining authentic communication across cultures. Digital communication environments, such as online platforms and social media, have further expanded the scope of pragmatic research, revealing new patterns of intercultural interaction and negotiation of meaning.

One of the most important challenges in the field is the transfer of theoretical knowledge into educational practice. While intercultural pragmatics has generated valuable insights into the nature of communication, its application in language teaching remains an evolving area. Language education has traditionally focused on grammatical accuracy and lexical knowledge, often overlooking the pragmatic dimension of communication. However, successful interaction in a second or foreign language requires much more than structural competence; learners must also understand how to use language appropriately in diverse social and cultural contexts.

The integration of intercultural pragmatics into language teaching therefore represents an essential step toward developing learners' communicative competence. Contemporary pedagogical approaches increasingly recognize the importance of raising learners' awareness of pragmatic norms, speech acts, politeness strategies, and culturally embedded communication patterns. Through carefully designed classroom activities, authentic materials, and reflective tasks, students can develop the ability to interpret and produce language in ways that are socially and culturally appropriate.

Equally important is the development of intercultural awareness and sensitivity. Language learners must learn not only how to communicate effectively but also how to interpret differences without judgment and negotiate meaning in situations where cultural expectations may differ. In this sense, intercultural pragmatics teaching contributes not only to linguistic proficiency but also to broader educational goals, including critical thinking, empathy, and intercultural understanding.

The project *Contemporary Approaches to Intercultural Pragmatics Research and Its Application in Language Teaching – From Scientific Concepts to Practical Implementation* was conceived within this broader academic and educational context. Its aim is to bridge the gap between theoretical research and practical application by bringing together scholars, educators, and students in a collaborative exploration of how intercultural pragmatic insights can inform and enrich language teaching practices.

The project began in 2025 and will continue through 2026. It brings together academic staff, researchers, and students from the Faculty of Philology at Goce Delcev University in Stip, as well as colleagues and students from the South East European University in Tetovo. The collaboration between these institutions reflects the multicultural and multilingual character of North Macedonia, where diverse linguistic and cultural communities interact on a daily basis. Such a context provides a particularly meaningful environment for the study of intercultural pragmatics and its role in language education. By fostering cooperation among scholars from different academic and cultural backgrounds, the project contributes to a broader understanding of intercultural communication and promotes the development of innovative teaching practices in language education.

By presenting contemporary scientific concepts alongside examples of pedagogical implementation, this project seeks to support teachers in integrating pragmatic awareness into their teaching and to encourage students to approach language learning as a socially and culturally embedded process. At the same time, it contributes to the ongoing dialogue between research and practice, emphasizing that effective language education must be grounded in both solid theoretical foundations and innovative teaching methodologies.

We hope that the outcomes of this project will serve as a valuable resource for researchers, educators, and students who are interested in advancing the study and teaching of intercultural communication. The growing complexity of global communication makes it increasingly important to equip learners with the skills necessary to navigate linguistic and cultural diversity with confidence and sensitivity.

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Finally, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to all the employees, academic staff, and students of the Faculty of Philology, Goce Delcev University (UGD) in Stip, and the South East European University (SEEU) in Tetovo. We are also immensely grateful to everyone involved in the project's activities. Their support, commitment and collaboration were vital for the successful implementation of this initiative.

Project Leader
Biljana Ivanovska

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: “CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO INTERCULTURAL PRAGMATICS RESEARCH AND ITS APPLICATION IN LANGUAGE TEACHING – FROM SCIENTIFIC CONCEPTS TO PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION” (2025-2026)

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In an era marked by globalization, intensified mobility, and multicultural educational environments, successful communication increasingly depends not only on grammatical accuracy but also on pragmatic and intercultural competence. Learners of foreign languages often possess solid grammatical knowledge, yet still encounter difficulties in real-life communication due to insufficient awareness of pragmatic norms, culturally conditioned communicative strategies, and implicit meanings embedded in discourse. These challenges are particularly evident in intercultural interactions, where misunderstandings may arise from differing expectations regarding politeness, indirectness, and the realization of speech acts.

Intercultural pragmatics, as a branch of applied linguistics, explores how language use is shaped by cultural, social, and contextual factors and how speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds negotiate meaning in interaction. In the context of foreign language education, intercultural pragmatics plays a crucial role in developing learners' ability to interpret and produce language appropriately in diverse communicative situations. However, pragmatic competence does not develop automatically through exposure to grammatical structures alone; rather, it requires systematic instruction, guided awareness, and engagement with authentic communicative contexts.

The project “Contemporary Approaches to Intercultural Pragmatics Research and Its Application in Language Teaching – From Scientific Concepts to Practical Implementation” addresses this need by combining theoretical insights from modern pragmatic research with empirical investigation and pedagogical application. By focusing on English and German as foreign languages and comparing learner language with that of native speakers, as well as with Macedonian and Albanian native speakers, the project aims to deepen our understanding of pragmatic competence development and to provide concrete, research-based solutions for improving foreign language teaching practices.

1. Project Description - Object of Research

The object of this research is intercultural pragmatics and its application in foreign language teaching, with a particular focus on English and German as foreign languages. The project examines the pragmatic competence of Macedonian and Albanian learners of English and German, primarily university students from the Departments of English

Language and Literature and German Language and Literature at the Faculty of Philology, Goce Delcev University in Stip, as well as students from the Faculty of Languages, Cultures and Communication at the South East European University (SEEU) in Tetovo.

The research further includes native speakers of English and German, enabling contrastive analyses between learner language and native speaker-norms, as well as comparisons with Macedonian and Albanian native speakers. This multilingual and multicultural perspective allows for a systematic investigation of similarities and differences in the realization and interpretation of speech acts and politeness strategies across languages and cultures.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Pragmatic competence is understood as the ability of speakers to go beyond the literal meaning of utterances in order to interpret the speaker's intended communicative meaning within a specific social and cultural context. For learners of foreign languages, pragmatic meaning often poses a significant challenge, as it is frequently implicit and culturally embedded. In the absence of adequate pragmatic knowledge, learners tend to rely on transfer from their mother tongue, which may result in inappropriate language use, misunderstandings, or even communicative failure due to divergent pragmatic norms.

The project focuses on the development of pragmatic competence through:

- the appropriate formulation of speech acts (e.g. requests, apologies, refusals, invitations, complaints, expressions of disagreement or agreement);
- the appropriate use of politeness strategies in accordance with the cultural expectations of native speakers;
- the recognition and interpretation of indirect speech and implicit meaning in discourse.

In this context, explicit instructional guidance provided by language teachers is considered a key factor in fostering pragmatic awareness and competence among learners.

3. Research Aims and Questions

The main aim of the project is to investigate how pragmatic competence develops in learners of English and German as foreign languages and how it can be effectively enhanced through targeted instructional approaches. The research is guided by the following questions:

1. How do linguistic and social contexts influence language use in intercultural communication?
2. How does pragmatic competence develop among Macedonian and Albanian learners of English and German as foreign languages?
3. Which strategies and teaching methods are most effective for developing intercultural pragmatic awareness?
4. What similarities and differences exist in the interpretation and realization of speech acts among learners of English and German, Macedonian and Albanian native speakers, and native speakers of English and German?

4. Hypotheses

The project is based on the following hypotheses:

- Explicit pragmatic instruction significantly contributes to the development of pragmatic awareness in foreign language learners.
- Learners exposed to authentic communicative situations demonstrate greater flexibility and appropriateness in the use of pragmatic strategies.
- Culture-specific communicative patterns strongly influence the interpretation of politeness and the realization of speech acts.

5. Methodology and Research Design

The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The methodological framework includes:

- contrastive analysis of pragmatic strategies in English, German, Macedonian and Albanian;
- empirical data collection through questionnaires, role-play tasks, interviews, discourse analysis, and standardized language proficiency tests aligned with the CEFR;
- sociopragmatic and intercultural models for analyzing language use in different cultural contexts.

6. Scientific and Social Relevance

Within the broader scientific community, this project makes a significant contribution to the development of intercultural pragmatics as both a theoretical and applied discipline. It provides new empirical data on learner interlanguage development, offers practical pedagogical solutions for foreign language teaching, and fosters interdisciplinary dialogue between linguistics, pedagogy, cultural studies, and communication studies.

In the local context, the project enriches the still limited body of research in applied pragmatics in North Macedonia and opens new opportunities for regional and international collaboration. Building on previous research conducted by the project team, the inclusion of English, German, Macedonian, and Albanian creates a valuable platform for contrastive and intercultural pragmatic studies, with direct applicability in education and further academic research.