

ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION IN MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOMS

Intercultural Pragmatics in Globalized Higher Education

Fostering Mutual Understanding & Reducing Pragmatic Misunderstandings in Diverse Classrooms

Keywords: Intercultural pragmatics | Communication | Intercultural competence | Higher education | Pragmatic awareness

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Research project:

CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES IN INTERCULTURAL PRAGMATICS RESEARCH: FROM SCIENTIFIC CONCEPTS TO PRACTICAL APPLICATION

<https://pragmatika-v4.vercel.app/>

Beyond Words: Navigating Intercultural Pragmatics in Higher Education

THE PROBLEM: THE "PRAGMATIC MISMATCH"



LINGUISTIC
COMPETENCE

Linguistic vs. Social Competence
Proficiency involves both linguistic execution (pragmalinguistics) and understanding social power dynamics (sociopragmatics).

THE HIGH COST OF SOCIAL ERROR

Grammatical errors are easily forgiven, but pragmatic failures are often misattributed to rudeness.



PRAGMATIC
FAILURE

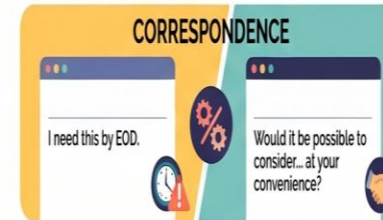
CULTURAL FRICTION POINTS IN ACADEMIC SETTINGS



CLASSROOM

DIRECT DEBATE

RESPECTFUL
REFLECTIVE SILENCE



CORRESPONDENCE

DIRECT
DEMANDS

INDIRECT DEFERENCE



FEEDBACK

EXPLICIT
CRITICISM

FACE-SAVING IMPLIED
SUGGESTIONS

THE SOLUTION: BUILDING INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

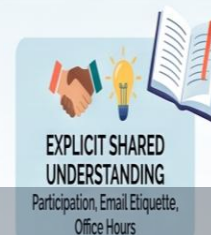
MAKE THE "UNWRITTEN RULES" EXPLICIT



IMPLICIT
EXPECTATIONS



CLEARLY DEFINE
& COMMUNICATE



EXPLICIT SHARED
UNDERSTANDING
Participation, Email Etiquette,
Office Hours



MOVE BEYOND SIMPLE ASSIMILATION

Develop pragmatic awareness among both faculty and students to create mutual understanding.



Session Overview: Navigating Pragmatic Competence in Modern Academia

CORE PURPOSE

Exposing the transformation of university classrooms into culturally varied communicative settings.

Key Focus Areas:

- Pragmatic Failure vs Linguistic Error
- Cross-Cultural Classroom Friction
- Inclusivity & Faculty Pedagogy

01

The Shifting Landscape

Globalization turning classrooms into multicultural contact zones with distinct norms.

02

Linguistic vs. Pragmatic Competence

Why grammatical accuracy does not prevent sociopragmatic misunderstandings.

03

Zones of Classroom Friction

Directness, politeness, email etiquette, and divergent meanings of silence.

04

Pedagogical Strategies

Explicit instruction, pragmatic reflection, and mutual faculty-student adaptation.

Globalized Classrooms Converge Diverse Communicative Norms

MULTICULTURAL CONTACT ZONES

Classrooms as Micro-Environments

Globalization has converted university lecture halls and seminars into diverse contact zones where international and domestic students intersect daily.

UNSPOKEN EXPECTATIONS

Distinct Communicative Norms

Students bring deeply ingrained conventions regarding politeness, hierarchy, participation, turn-taking, and instructor-student interaction.

THE ELF PARADOX

Shared Language, Different Rules

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) provides shared vocabulary, but speakers often apply non-shared pragmatic rules from their native languages.

Linguistic Fluency Does Not Guarantee Pragmatic Success

LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

Mastery of Linguistic Code (Form)

- Focuses on grammar, vocabulary, and syntax accuracy.
- Allows construction of grammatically well-formed sentences.
- Perceived as language-learning errors when mistakes occur.

INTERCULTURAL PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE

Appropriateness in Social Context (Function)

- Governs how meaning is conveyed and interpreted in social context.
- Requires understanding politeness, speech acts, and rapport.
- Pragmatic failure is often misjudged as rudeness or arrogance (Thomas, 1983).

Three Primary Zones of Cross-Cultural Classroom Friction

ZONE 01
DIRECTNESS vs. INDIRECTNESS

Questioning & Academic Critique

Varying cultural comfort levels with publicly challenging instructors, offering peer critiques, or seeking clarification during lectures.

ZONE 02
POLITENESS & RAPPORT

Faculty Correspondence & Hierarchy

Differing expectations regarding honorifics, address forms, email tone, and institutional hierarchy between students and faculty.

ZONE 03
PARTICIPATION & SILENCE

Debate & Turn-Taking Conventions

Divergent meanings assigned to silence—Western settings often reward rapid spontaneous debate, while other cultures value reflective silence.

Pragmatic Awareness Fosters Inclusivity & Mutual Understanding

PILLAR 01: MITIGATING BREAKDOWNS

Contextual Diagnostics

Shifts classroom evaluation from judging student character to analyzing contextual communicative intent during misunderstandings.

PILLAR 02: DISMANTLING STEREOTYPES

Overcoming Deficit Views

Replaces deficit labels like 'passive', 'aggressive', or 'unprepared' with nuanced awareness of diverse cultural communication norms.

PILLAR 03: FOSTERING INCLUSIVITY

Psychological Safety

Creates inclusive environments where students feel validated, understood, and empowered to engage in academic discourse.

Actionable Pedagogical Strategies for Higher Education Faculty

STRATEGY 01 EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION

Unpack Academic Expectations

Do not assume academic norms are self-evident. Explicitly define participation styles, email etiquette, and discussion expectations in syllabi and lectures.

STRATEGY 02 PRAGMATIC REFLECTION

Cultivate Meta-Pragmatic Awareness

Encourage reflection on communication choices. Help students analyze how speech acts (e.g., requests, critiques) operate across different cultures.

STRATEGY 03 MUTUAL ADAPTATION

A Two-Way Responsiveness

Frame intercultural communication as a shared responsibility. Faculty and domestic peers must adapt alongside international students.

CONCLUSION & SUMMARY

Key Takeaways: Building Pragmatic Competence

TAKEAWAY 01

Beyond Language Fluency

Linguistic competence must be paired with intercultural pragmatic awareness to ensure effective academic communication.

TAKEAWAY 02

Reducing Failure & Bias

Understanding pragmatic conventions prevents misattributing cultural differences to poor student attitude or performance.

TAKEAWAY 03

Inclusive Pedagogy

Proactive, explicit instruction creates supportive environments where diverse communicative styles thrive.

PRESENTATION CONCLUDED

Thank You for Your Attention!

Questions, Comments & Discussion

FACULTY DISCUSSION PROMPT

How can higher education institutions better support faculty in developing intercultural pragmatic awareness in their daily teaching?

Topics for Reflection:

- Faculty professional development
- Syllabus & email policy design
- Supporting diverse student voices