

STRESZCZENIE DOKTORATU W JEZ. ANGIELSKIM

Investigation of pragmatic competence of Polish and Yemeni students of English as a foreign language at the tertiary level

Badanie kompetencji pragmatycznej polskich i jemeńskich studentów języka angielskiego jako obcego na poziomie szkolnictwa wyższego

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Pragmatic competence, the ability to use language effectively, is considered one of the aspects of language that poses many challenges for EFL learners. L2 learners need to develop their pragmatic competence to use language appropriately in different contexts (Rajabia et al., 2015). Learners need to learn not only the linguistic components of the target language, such as phonetics, phonology, syntax, and semantics, but also what to say and how to function appropriately in foreign language interaction. Taking this into consideration, this study attempts to contribute to research in interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) by investigating the pragmatic competence of different groups of English speakers. More specifically, this study aims to investigate the pragmatic competence of Polish and Yemeni students of English as a foreign language at the tertiary level. The study is exploratory in nature and motivated by the fact that no other empirical comparative study has so far been conducted on investigating the pragmatic competence of two different L1 backgrounds and cultures in the way this study has devised.

The participants of this study are 129 Polish EFL students enrolled at the Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland, and 125 Yemeni EFL students enrolled at the Department of English, Ibb University, Yemen. To this end, two different data collection methods were used in this study: a test (Discourse Completion Task, DCT) to assess the pragmatic competence of Polish and Yemeni students of English as a foreign language and a background questionnaire to collect sociolinguistic data about the learners. The test of pragmatic competence was developed by using an existing questionnaire by Roever (2005). The pragmatic features of requests were categorized and analyzed using Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) classification, the pragmatic features of apologies were categorized and analyzed using Afghari's, (2007); Olshtain & Cohen's, (1983); and Suszczyńska's, (1999) classifications, while the pragmatic features of refusals were categorized and analyzed using Beebe et al.'s (1990) taxonomy of refusal strategies.

Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used in data analysis. The findings indicate notable pragmatic similarities and differences between the two groups of respondents. The **first research question** aims to investigate the differences between the declared pragmatic competence of Polish and Yemeni students of English Studies. The results show that there are general pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic differences in the use of request, apology, and refusal strategies between the two study groups. The findings revealed that Polish and Yemeni participants provided the intended speech acts, but used different strategies employed to realize these speech acts in different contexts.

The **second research question** is concerned with examining the differences between Polish and Yemeni students of English Studies with respect to their declared understanding of the use of English implicatures. When comparing the performance of the Polish and Yemeni groups on the implicature test, the results revealed that the mean value of the implicature test score was higher in the Polish group than in the Yemeni group. Using the independent samples t-test, a highly significant difference was found between the performance of the Polish and Yemeni participants on the total score of the implicature test.

The **third research question** deals with investigating the differences between Polish and Yemeni students of English Studies with respect to their declared understanding of the appropriacy of using English in different contexts. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test revealed significant differences between the Polish and Yemeni participants in the categories of Request and Refusal, with the Polish participants scoring significantly higher than the Yemeni participants. In the category of Apology, Polish participants scored numerically higher mean scores, but the difference was not statistically significant.

The **fourth research question** is related to examining the Polish and Yemeni participants' perceptions of pragmatics in English learning and teaching. An independent-sample t-test yielded a statistically significant difference between the two study groups only in the second category ('The importance of using English appropriately') and in the third category ('English as a means of communication'). In other words, the overall findings revealed that the difference in mean scores between the Polish participants in the second and third categories was higher than that of the Yemeni participants. In sum, the findings of the study reveal that the Polish students seem to have a higher level of pragmatic competence than the Yemeni students.

Keywords: Pragmatic competence; Speech acts; implicature; English as a foreign language (EFL); Polish EFL students; Yemeni EFL students