

DEVELOPING PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE IN TEACHING GERMAN SPEAKING SKILLS TO STUDENTS THROUGH ONLINE PLATFORMS

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Annotation: This article explores the development of pragmatic competence in teaching German speaking skills to university students through online platforms. The study examines the theoretical and practical aspects of pragmatic competence as an essential component of communicative competence in foreign language learning. Particular attention is paid to the ability of learners to use linguistic forms appropriately according to communicative situations, social contexts, and cultural norms. The article analyzes the potential of online platforms such as Zoom, Moodle, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams in creating authentic communicative environments and enhancing students' speaking abilities. Furthermore, it discusses effective teaching strategies for developing pragmatic awareness, speech acts, interactional skills, and intercultural communication competence in virtual learning settings.

Keywords: pragmatic competence, German language teaching, speech acts, intercultural communication, online learning, distance education, Zoom, Moodle, Microsoft Teams, authentic communication.

Introduction: In recent years, the rapid development of information and communication technologies has significantly transformed the field of foreign language education. The widespread use of online learning platforms has created new opportunities for teaching and learning languages, particularly in the development of speaking skills. As digital education becomes increasingly important, educators are seeking effective methods to improve students' communicative abilities and prepare them for authentic interactions in the target language. In this context, the development of pragmatic competence has emerged as a crucial objective in foreign language teaching.

Pragmatic competence is generally understood as the ability to use language appropriately and effectively in different social, cultural, and communicative contexts. It involves not only grammatical accuracy but also the knowledge of how to express intentions, perform speech acts, interpret meanings, and adapt language use according to specific situations. According to Dell Hymes, successful communication depends on the speaker's ability to use language appropriately within a particular social context. This idea later became the foundation for the concept of communicative competence, which includes pragmatic competence as one of its essential components. The importance of pragmatic competence in foreign language education has been emphasized by numerous scholars. Michael Canale and Merrill Swain identified sociolinguistic and discourse competencies as integral elements of communicative competence, highlighting the need for learners to understand contextual and cultural aspects of language use. Similarly, Lyle Bachman argued that pragmatic competence enables learners to establish meaningful communication by selecting language forms that are appropriate to specific communicative purposes and situations.

In the process of learning German as a foreign language, the development of pragmatic competence is particularly important. Students often acquire grammatical structures and vocabulary but face difficulties when using them appropriately in real-life communication. Misunderstandings may occur when learners fail to recognize cultural norms, politeness

conventions, or contextual meanings that influence language use. Therefore, teaching speaking skills should focus not only on linguistic accuracy but also on the pragmatic aspects of communication. Online platforms such as Zoom, Moodle, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meet offer valuable opportunities for developing pragmatic competence in German language instruction. These platforms facilitate interactive communication, collaborative learning, role-playing activities, discussions, and simulations of authentic communicative situations. Through virtual interaction, students can practice speech acts such as requesting, apologizing, agreeing, disagreeing, and expressing opinions while receiving immediate feedback from teachers and peers.

Furthermore, online learning environments support intercultural communication by providing access to authentic materials and opportunities for interaction with native speakers. Such experiences help learners understand sociocultural norms and develop pragmatic awareness, which is essential for successful communication in German-speaking contexts. The integration of digital technologies into language education therefore contributes to the creation of learner-centered and communication-oriented teaching environments. The purpose of this article is to examine the role of online platforms in developing pragmatic competence while teaching German speaking skills to university students. The study analyzes theoretical foundations of pragmatic competence, explores effective instructional strategies, and evaluates the pedagogical potential of online learning environments for improving students' communicative performance in German.

Materials and methods: This study is based on a qualitative and descriptive research approach aimed at examining the development of pragmatic competence in teaching German speaking skills through online platforms. The research focuses on identifying effective pedagogical strategies and digital tools that contribute to students' ability to use German appropriately in different communicative situations. The study draws upon theoretical literature in the fields of pragmatics, communicative language teaching, foreign language methodology, and online education, as well as practical experiences related to the use of virtual learning environments in higher education.

The research materials include scientific articles, books, methodological guidelines, and educational resources devoted to pragmatic competence and German language teaching. In addition, online platforms such as Zoom, Moodle, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meet were analyzed as educational environments that support interaction and communication among learners. These platforms provide opportunities for conducting discussions, role-playing activities, presentations, collaborative tasks, and other speaking-oriented exercises that are essential for the development of pragmatic competence.

To achieve the objectives of the study, several research methods were employed. The descriptive method was used to examine the theoretical foundations of pragmatic competence and its role in foreign language learning. Comparative analysis was applied to identify differences between traditional face-to-face instruction and online teaching environments in developing speaking skills. Observation methods were used to analyze students' participation in online communicative activities, while content analysis enabled the examination of authentic materials, communicative tasks, and interaction patterns within virtual classrooms. Particular attention was paid to communicative activities designed to develop students' ability to perform speech acts appropriately. Through online discussions, role plays, simulations, and collaborative tasks, learners were encouraged to use German in various social and cultural contexts. Authentic audiovisual materials, including videos, interviews, and dialogues produced by native speakers, were also incorporated into the learning process to enhance students' pragmatic awareness and intercultural competence.

Furthermore, the study investigated how online platforms facilitate real-time interaction and provide opportunities for meaningful communication. Virtual learning environments allow

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students to engage in pair work, group discussions, and problem-solving activities that require the use of appropriate linguistic and pragmatic strategies. Such activities help learners develop the ability to express opinions, make requests, offer suggestions, agree or disagree politely, and maintain effective communication in German. The combination of these methods provided a comprehensive framework for analyzing the effectiveness of online platforms in fostering pragmatic competence. By integrating theoretical analysis with observations of practical teaching activities, the study offers valuable insights into the role of digital technologies in enhancing German speaking skills and supporting communicative language learning in higher education contexts.

Results and discussion: The results of the study indicate that online platforms play a significant role in developing students' pragmatic competence while teaching German speaking skills. The analysis revealed that virtual learning environments provide favorable conditions for interactive communication, authentic language use, and the practical application of pragmatic knowledge. Through various online activities, students demonstrated noticeable improvement in their ability to use German appropriately according to different communicative situations and sociocultural contexts.

One of the key findings of the study is that online platforms enhance students' participation in communicative activities. The use of video conferencing tools such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams enabled learners to engage in discussions, role plays, and collaborative tasks that simulated real-life communication. These activities encouraged students to apply appropriate linguistic forms, politeness strategies, and speech acts in different contexts. As a result, learners became more confident in expressing their ideas and interacting with others in German. The findings also revealed that role-playing activities significantly contributed to the development of pragmatic competence. Students who participated in simulated communicative situations demonstrated greater awareness of social norms and contextual language use. For example, learners became more capable of selecting appropriate expressions when making requests, offering suggestions, expressing agreement or disagreement, and apologizing. The ability to adapt language according to the social status of interlocutors and communicative purposes improved considerably throughout the learning process.

Another important result concerns the use of authentic materials in online instruction. German-language videos, interviews, dialogues, and audiovisual resources exposed students to natural communication patterns and cultural conventions. The analysis showed that learners developed a better understanding of how native speakers use language in various social situations. This exposure increased students' pragmatic awareness and helped them recognize differences between literal meanings and intended communicative functions. Consequently, students became more sensitive to contextual and cultural aspects of communication.

The study further demonstrated that collaborative learning activities positively influenced the development of pragmatic competence. Working in pairs and small groups encouraged learners to negotiate meaning, exchange opinions, and solve communicative problems together. Such interactions required students to employ discourse strategies, maintain conversational flow, and respond appropriately to their peers. As a result, learners improved not only their speaking fluency but also their ability to manage interpersonal communication effectively. The findings also indicate that online learning environments support the development of intercultural communicative competence. Through interaction with authentic materials and participation in culturally oriented discussions, students gained deeper insights into German-speaking cultures, social conventions, and communication styles. This cultural awareness contributed to more appropriate language use and reduced the likelihood of pragmatic misunderstandings during communication.

Despite these positive outcomes, the study identified several challenges related to the development of pragmatic competence in online settings. Technical issues such as unstable internet connections, limited opportunities for spontaneous interaction, and reduced non-verbal communication occasionally hindered effective communication. In addition, some students initially experienced difficulties interpreting contextual meanings and cultural nuances through virtual communication. These challenges suggest that online instruction should be carefully designed to maximize interaction and provide sufficient opportunities for authentic language practice.

The discussion of the results highlights that pragmatic competence cannot be developed solely through the acquisition of grammatical knowledge and vocabulary. Effective communication requires an understanding of social norms, cultural expectations, and contextual appropriateness. Online platforms offer valuable opportunities for creating communicative environments in which these skills can be practiced and refined. However, the role of the teacher remains essential in guiding learners, providing feedback, and facilitating meaningful interaction.

In conclusion, the development of pragmatic competence is an essential component of teaching German speaking skills, as it enables learners to use language appropriately and effectively in various communicative situations. The findings of this study demonstrate that online platforms provide valuable opportunities for enhancing students' pragmatic competence by creating interactive, flexible, and communication-oriented learning environments. Through the use of virtual classrooms, role-playing activities, discussions, collaborative tasks, and authentic materials, students are able to practice language in meaningful contexts and develop the skills necessary for successful communication.

The study revealed that online learning platforms such as Zoom, Moodle, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meet contribute significantly to the improvement of speaking skills and pragmatic awareness. These platforms encourage active participation, facilitate authentic interaction, and support the development of sociocultural and intercultural communicative competence. As a result, learners become more capable of selecting appropriate linguistic forms, performing speech acts effectively, and adapting their language use according to specific social and cultural contexts.

Furthermore, the integration of authentic audiovisual materials and communicative activities helps students gain a deeper understanding of German-speaking cultures and communication norms. This cultural awareness is crucial for avoiding pragmatic misunderstandings and achieving effective interpersonal communication. The research also confirms that collaborative learning activities promote meaningful interaction and provide learners with opportunities to apply pragmatic strategies in real communicative situations.

Despite the numerous advantages of online learning environments, certain challenges remain, including technical limitations, reduced non-verbal communication, and the need for carefully designed interactive tasks. Therefore, the successful development of pragmatic competence requires not only technological resources but also effective pedagogical guidance. Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating communication, providing feedback, and creating opportunities for authentic language use. Overall, the study confirms that online platforms are effective tools for developing pragmatic competence in German language education. Their purposeful integration into the teaching process can significantly enhance students' speaking abilities, communicative confidence, and intercultural awareness. Consequently, online learning environments should be regarded as an important component of modern foreign language teaching methodology and a valuable means of preparing students for real-life communication in German-speaking contexts.

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