



# The Effect of an Instructional Program based on the Blended Learning Strategy in Enhancing English Pragmatic Competences among the Secondary Stage Students

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## ABSTRACT

The present study aimed at investigating the effect of an instructional program based on the blended learning strategy in enhancing English pragmatic competences among the secondary stage students in Saudi Arabia Kingdom. To fulfil the purpose of the study, the quasi-experimental design was adopted (pretest - post-test). The participants, totalling (56), were randomly selected from the second-year students in a public secondary school in Taif in Saudi Arabia. They were assigned into two groups: An experimental group (N= 28) that studied via an instructional program based on the blended learning strategy and a control one (N=28) that studied via the traditional method. The instrument consisted of a pragmatic competences tests to assess both discourse and functional competences. The results of the study revealed that: There was a statistically significant difference ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) between the mean scores of the control group and the experimental group in the post-administration of the pragmatic competence test, in favor of the experimental group. The study recommended developing Training English language teachers on how to exploit technology to boost collaboration among students and integrate the pragmatic competence teaching in their courses. In addition, the researcher suggested conducting further studies into blended learning strategy and pragmatic competences in English as a foreign language.

**Keywords:** Program based on the Blended Learning Strategy, Pragmatic Competence, and the Secondary Stage Students.



## Introduction

Learning English has become a global necessity as the world becomes increasingly interconnected. As the most widely spoken language, English serves as a vital tool for communication across different parts of the world. To effectively communicate in this global village, mastering communicative competence is crucial. Over the past century, there has been significant debate about the most effective and appropriate methods to help students acquire this competence.

In the field of language learning, the role played by communicative competence in developing overall language proficiency cannot be denied or even ignored. It is considered a central component not only in itself, but also it affects efficiency of communications with others. Pragmatic competence is an integral component of communicative language competence that determines the appropriate language use with a particular social context (Huang, 2007). Kasper (1997) suggested that pragmatic competence is concerned with the way language is used and its effects on participants in social interaction. This competence is arguably sensitive to communicative situations and socio-cultural norms. Therefore, it decides the degree of acceptability regarding pragmatic meanings.

According to Kasper and Kellerman (1997, 80), pragmatic competence enables the learner to be aware of contextual elements and deduce implicit meanings, which helps them understand and produce language appropriately. A language speaker's choice of utterance and recognition of an implied sense of a particular discourse enhances their engagement in any social interaction. Therefore, pragmatic competence is of great significance in language learning, as the lack of such competence can be a vital source for communication breakdowns and intercultural misunderstanding (Sickinger & Schneider, 2014). Given the nature of pragmatic competence as a socially constructed phenomenon, it is not only concerned with how to use language for particular functional purposes (function competence), but also how to arrange sentences in sequence to produce coherent stretches of language (discourse competence) (Council of Europe, 2018, 132).

Blended learning can be utilized in developing pragmatic competence because of its potential in extending the time and place for communication and interaction. It combines the benefits of traditional classroom learning and e-learning, providing broader opportunities for the maximum utilization of available technologies (Alotaibi & Zeidan, 2023). The results of studies concerned with online learning indicate that students benefit more if learning processes are developed face-to-face before, during or after engaging in technology-supported learning (Ellis et al., 2007; Holovatska, 2023; Lu et al., 2010; Michinov & Michinov, 2008; Reisslein et al., 2005). A blended learning environment makes use of technology in a variety of ways to support interaction among students and enhance communication outside the classroom through synchronous and/or asynchronous online interaction tools, such as Knowledge Management Systems, blogs (Zurainee, 2016), online forums (Abdullah & Tan, 2016), wikis (Aydin & Yildiz, 2014), social networking (Reinhardt, 2019) and avatar-based virtual reality (Tseng et al., 2020).



The literature on language education reveals a notable gap in intervention studies that employ blended learning strategies specifically aimed at developing students' English pragmatic competence, particularly within public education systems. While much attention has been given to language skills, pragmatic competence—which encompasses the ability to use language appropriately in various social contexts—remains underexplored, despite its recognized importance in effective communication. In Saudi Arabia, despite the implementation of the English Language Development Project (ELDP) in 2008, aimed at improving students' English proficiency, secondary school students continue to exhibit low levels of English communicative competence, particularly in pragmatic aspects. Several studies (e.g., Al-Hazmi, 2017; Al Khateeb & Almujaivel, 2018; Elyas & AlGrigri, 2014; & Shah et al., 2013) have identified persistent deficiencies in this area, attributing them to factors such as traditional teacher-led instruction, insufficient integration of technology, and limited opportunities for authentic English practice.

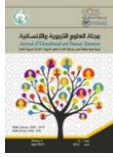
Further supporting this observation, a pilot study conducted by the current researcher, involving 50 English language teachers and 20 secondary school students, highlighted several challenges in teaching and acquiring pragmatic competence. Teachers cited time constraints, overcrowded classrooms, and a lack of professional development related to educational technology as significant obstacles. Additionally, student assessments revealed that pragmatic errors, particularly in discourse and functional language use, were prevalent. These findings underscore the need for innovative instructional approaches that can more effectively develop students' pragmatic competence.

Given these challenges, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of an instructional program based on a blended learning strategy in enhancing the English pragmatic competence—specifically, functional and discourse aspects—of secondary-stage students in Saudi Arabia. The study seeks to broaden our understanding of the factors influencing English language proficiency, moving beyond the traditional emphasis on morpho-syntax to include the sociocultural dimensions of language use. By integrating technology into the language learning environment, this study also proposes a more interactive and engaging classroom experience, offering a potential solution to the limitations of conventional teaching methods.

The current study is also to identify the most relevant pragmatic competences for second-year secondary students and to evaluate the impact of blended learning strategy on developing these competences. This leads to the central study question: What is the effect of the instructional program based on a blended learning strategy in enhancing English pragmatic competence, particularly in functional and discourse areas, among secondary-stage students?

### Literature Review

The socially appropriate language in communication cannot be judged without analyzing the social and cultural context of the speech. Thus, pragmatic competence is of crucial significance for EFL learners because successful communication is built



not only on the form and function of a specific language but also on the context (Taguchi 2019, p. 100). Language use in context represents the core area of pragmatic competence study. Pragmatics is viewed broadly as “a linguistic subfield concerned with the study of communicative action in its sociocultural context” (Kasper, 1997). The pragmatic instruction has recently been more informed by various second language acquisition theories related to cognitive and social explanations. Studies driven by skill acquisition theories, according to Taguchi (2019), focus on the knowledge of form–function–context correlations, which take initial noticing and a lot of practice to develop. Similarly, studies based on sociocultural theory and collaborative conversation emphasize the importance of interaction in facilitating co-construction and the emergence of pragmatic knowledge. On the other hand, the Cognition Hypothesis guides the design of an instructional activity by examining how task characteristics influence learners’ attention, pragmatic processing, and eventual learning.

Moreover, achieving the general feasibility of pragmatic instruction is well related to the appropriate instructional materials designed to provide contextual understanding, language use for communicative functions, cultural knowledge, and social interaction (Taguchi, 2019, p. 7). Characteristics of such instructional materials were summarized by Ishihara and Cohen (2014, p. 49) as follows :

- Instructional tasks should be designed to enhance learners’ awareness and reflection of pragmatic language use ،
- Instructional tasks have learners engage in pragmatic-focused interaction activities, and
- They guide learners’ discovery and understanding of pragmatics-related conventions and rules

These instructional materials should also be designed according to the comprehensive view of pragmatic competence that considers the two aspects of pragmatics: pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic. Thomas (1983) made a distinction between these two concepts. He defined pragmalinguistic as the intersection of pragmatics and linguistic forms and therefore comprises the knowledge and ability for the use of conventions of meanings and conventions of forms. On the other hand, sociopragmatics is the interface of sociology and pragmatics. It refers to “the social perceptions underlying participants’ interpretation and performance of communicative action” (p. 93).

Given the nature of classroom teaching and textbooks, pragmalinguistic occupies more attention than sociopragmatic. However, focusing on one aspect of pragmatic competence and marginalizing the other is a frequent cause of pragmatic failure in social interactions with native speakers. For example, a foreign language learner with good pragmalinguistic knowledge of the target language might generate well-structured utterances but not necessarily create or understand the conventional utterances appropriate to the context. Thus, the two aspects of pragmatic competence are indispensable because they are highly significant for social interaction. Despite the difficulty, they should be both incorporated in classroom instruction and assessment.



Yates (2010) asserted that these two aspects could not be taught unless teachers almost consciously know how these facets of communicative acts are realized in various contexts of language use.

### **Technologies for Pragmatic Competence Instruction**

Digital technologies are utilized in various ways to teach and learn pragmatics in a second or foreign language, from pragmatically oriented content modules provided in digital forms to telecollaboration and interactive digital simulations as pedagogical interventions (Alzahrani, 2021). Heift and Vyatkina (2017) categorized studies in the field of technologies for pragmatic competence instruction into three areas: digital curricular materials focused on the teaching and learning pragmatics, digital tools as classroom interventions and digital tools to facilitate telecollaboration. However, each area needs further investigation and in-depth studies to identify more pedagogical innovations and challenges in the field of pragmatic instruction in the information and communication era.

As technology has gained momentum in teaching the English language, recent pragmatic competence studies utilized new technological advances. They incorporated technology-based teaching and learning methods, such as synchronous and asynchronous instruction modes. Ajabshir (2019) explored the effect of computer-mediated communication (CMC) compared with traditional face-to-face instruction on the acquisition of the request speech act. The data analysis showed CMC-oriented instruction's superiority over F-F instruction in developing students' pragmatic competence.

Wafa'A and Altakhaineh (2019) and Nugroho & Fitriati (2021) investigated the effect of flipped classroom instruction on developing EFL learners' pragmatic competence. The results showed that flipped classroom instruction was more effective than the other method in raising the participants' pragmatic competence level. Similarly, Torabi (2024) found that flipped and blended instruction significantly improved participants' pragmatic awareness. Bouftira et al. (2022)'s main findings demonstrated that the three-week blended learning model resulted in a statistically significant impact on participants' levels of pragmatic. Sagban and Alquraishy (2020) and Hamrayevich, et al. (2024) found that the integration of real-life scenarios, self-paced learning, and peer collaboration in both online and face-to-face settings enhances learners' ability to use language appropriately in various social contexts.

The review of recent studies on pragmatic competence in a foreign language context revealed a growing interest in pragmatic competence learning. Most of the previous studies treated pragmatic competence as a general construct; they did not provide separate accounts of the relative effectiveness of the interventions on two sub-competences of pragmatic competence, namely function and discourse. These studies focused on speech acts such as apology, request agreement and disagreement, and used a written discourse completion test and a computer-delivered oral test to assess students' pragmatic competence production (Ajabshir, 2019; Al-Qeyam et al., 2016; Bardovi-Harlig et al., 2017; Wafa'A, 2019), as well as a multiple-choice test to assess



pragmatic competence comprehension (Taguchi, 2011).

### Research Instruments

To accomplish the purpose of the research, the researcher developed and used a Pragmatic Competence Test. The researcher developed two kinds of tests to assess both discourse and functional competences.

A- An oral test (interview) that was designed to assess students' pragmatic discourse competence. In addition, a scoring rubric was constructed to cover all discourse competence included in the pragmatic competence list.

B- A discourse completion task (DCT) was also designed to assess students' functional competence. It consisted of several situations (scenarios) followed by a short dialogue. Students then complete the dialogue with what they would say in that situation. This kind of test has been employed in many empirical studies to assess speakers' socio pragmatic knowledge, determining the appropriate strategic and linguistic choices used in a particular context (Kasper, 1999; Taguchi, 2019).

To measure test content validity, the test was submitted to a jury of professors and English language supervisors and teachers in the field of TEFL (N= 18) to judge the test questions. The jury members examined the validity of the pragmatic competence test. After analyzing the jury responses to the questions of the test that had the highest percentage, they agreed upon at least 80% or more by jury members' selection in the final version of the test.

For measuring the test reliability, the researcher administered the test to a sample of students other than the participants of the study (N=28). Those students were randomly chosen from the second year of a secondary school in Taif. The purpose of piloting the test was to find out whether any item was difficult or unclear, whether the instructions of the test were clear and sufficient as well as how much time is recommended for students to complete the test. Most difficult or confusing items that most students did not attempt were modified to ensure simplicity and clarity. Reliability coefficient was calculated using Alpha-Cronbach formula. The results of the analysis showed that the value of the reliability coefficient of functional and discourse competence and the whole test was 0.82, 0.75 and 0.88, respectively, which indicates that the test was highly reliable and ready to be administered to the research participants.

### Methods and Procedures

#### Design and Treatment Material

The present research adopted the quasi-experimental design (pre-test - post-test control group design) to investigate the effect of an instructional program based on the blended learning strategy in enhancing English pragmatic competences among the secondary stage students in Saudi Arabia Kingdom. The treatment material of the present research included the following:

1- An instructional program based on the blended learning strategy that has been developed to meet the aim of the study. The experimental group students were taught



using the program for three weeks (12 classes) and encompassed three units of student English book level 2 of the secondary stage. Each class had its own objectives, time, materials, and procedures. Therefore, an elaborated discussion of the appropriate curriculum components (what to be taught) and the teaching procedures (how to be taught) was laid out and then evaluated by an expert's panel to ensure its relevance to the sample and variables of the study. The program was submitted to a jury of EFL professors and staff members (N= 8) to determine its validity. All suggestions and recommendations of the jury members were put into consideration during modifying the program that helped the researchers in administering the program.

2- The teacher's manual and the student's book provided the appropriate curriculum components (what to be taught) and the teaching procedures (how to be taught) for optimal execution of the instructional program. In addition, the teacher manual offered an overview of the instructional program and detailed lesson-by-lesson teaching procedures. It is a practical guide to help the teacher promote students' collaboration and enhance the efficiency of technology use in a blended learning environment.

3- The student's book has multiple tasks and activities organized to guide students through collaborative learning to fulfill the instructional program aim. In addition, the student's book was designed in light of the content and objectives of the English language book in the second level of secondary school to be appropriate to students' educational levels.

The teacher's manual and the student's book were handed to a panel of experts to judge their contents and suggest any modification. All suggestions and recommendations of the jury members were put into consideration during modifying the teacher's manual and the student's book that helped the researchers in administering them.

### Research Participants

The present research participants were (56) students, were randomly selected from the second-year students at Imam Malek Secondary School in Taif in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Those participants were randomly selected and assigned into two groups, namely an experimental group (28 students) that studied via an instructional program based on the blended learning strategy and a control one (28 students) that studied via the traditional method.

### Research Procedures

After extensive reading of the related literature and developing the study instruments, the study procedures began. Letters of consent necessary to apply the instruments of the research's sample were obtained (a letter from Education College at Umm Al-Qura University to Taif education administration and another letter to the assigned secondary school). Two intact classrooms at Imam Malek Secondary School in Taif in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were assigned randomly as control and experimental groups. The researcher met with the school's principal and the English language



instructor to overview the study's aim, instruments, timetable, and procedures of the research.

After completing the implementation of the treatment material, the pragmatic competence test was administered for the two groups. Responses of the research groups were assessed and statistically analysed versus their scores in the pre-test to explore the effectiveness of an instructional program based on the blended learning strategy in developing English pragmatic competences (functional and discourse) for the secondary stage students in Taif in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The attained data were analysed statistically. The results were then briefly highlighted with discussion of the findings obtained in the research.

### Research Results

The research question was used as a guide to highlight the data analysis, the descriptive and inferential statistics, and explanations of the yielded results.

To answer the research question, the subsequent hypotheses were posed:

#### The First Hypothesis Result

There is no a statistically significant difference at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) level between the mean scores of the control group and the experimental group that studied via using an instructional program based on the blended learning strategy in the post-application of the pragmatic competence test.

For the above hypothesis, the independent samples t-test was used to test the significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the post-test of the pragmatic competence. Table (1) below shows the results of the independent samples t-test.

**Table 1**  
**The Independent Samples T-test for the Initial Difference between Post-Test Mean Scores of EG & CG in the Pragmatic Competence Test**

Test	Group	No	Mean	S.D	Df	T value	Sig
Functional competence	Experimental	28	15.68	2.52	54	4.12	0.000
	Control	28	11.21	5.14			
Discourse competence	Experimental	28	16.21	1.75	54	7.11	0.000
	Control	28	10.07	4.22			
Whole test	Experimental	28	31.89	3.33	54	5.78	0.000
	Control	28	21.29	9.12			

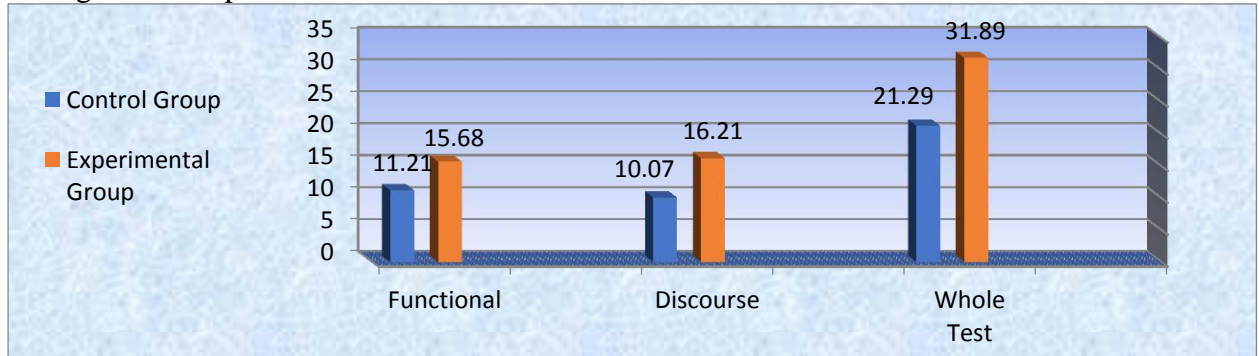
As shown in Table (1), the obtained t-value for the experimental and control groups' mean scores in the post-test of pragmatic competence (functional, discourse) is significant at the 0.05 level. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected as there was a significant difference between the experimental and control groups' means scores in the post-test of the pragmatic competence in favor of the experimental group students.





Furthermore, the results in table (1) also indicated that the mean scores of the experimental group in the post-test were significantly higher than the control group, meaning that the experimental group exhibited a higher level of pragmatic competence than the control group.

Figure (1) below shows the differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and control group in the post-test of functional, discourse, and the overall test of linguistic competence.



**Figure 1: The post-test mean scores of EG and CG on functional, discourse and whole test of pragmatic competences**

The Eta squared equation was used to determine the effect size of the instructional program based on the blended learning strategy on the pragmatic competences (function, discourse). (Field, 2009, 91). The details are given in table (2).

**Table 2**  
**Effect Size of Instructional Program based on Blended Learning Strategy on Pragmatic Competence**

Test	T Value	df	Effect Size	Interpretation
Functional competence	4.12	54	0.24	large
Discourse competence	7.11	54	0.48	large
<b>Whole Test</b>	5.78	54	0.38	large

As shown in table (2), the effect size values ranged from 0.24 to 0.48, higher than (0.14). Hence, the instructional program based on the blended learning strategy had a large positive effect size on the functional and discourse competences and, consequently, the students' overall pragmatic competence.

### **The Second Hypothesis Result**

There is no a statistically significant difference at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) level between the mean scores of the experimental group that studied using an instructional program based on the blended learning strategy in the pre and post applications of the pragmatic competence test.



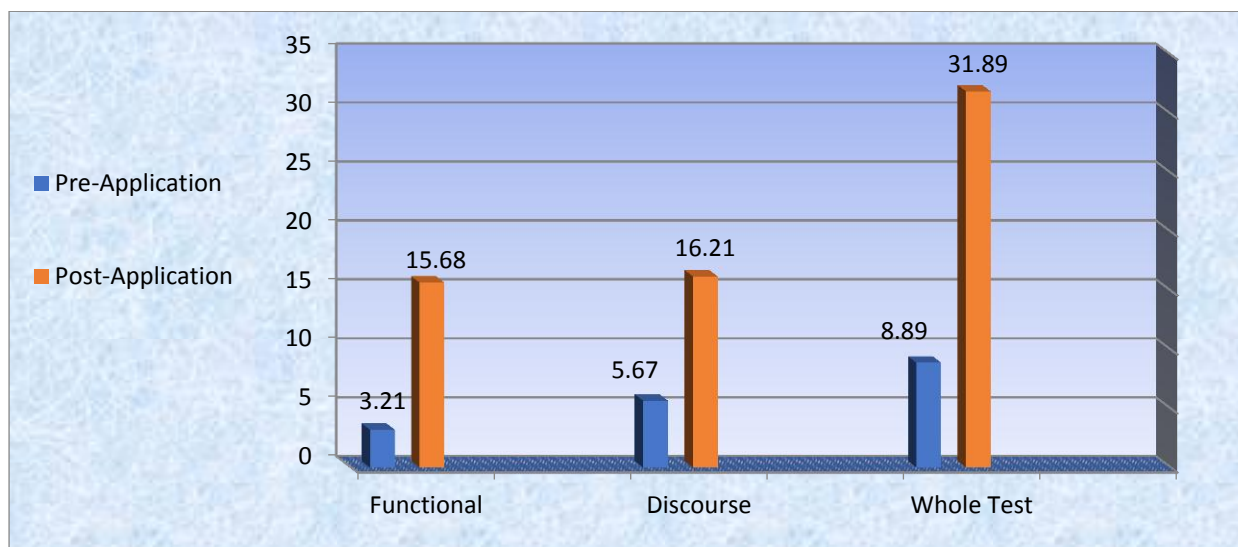
For the above hypothesis, the paired samples t-test was used to test the significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre-test and post-test of the pragmatic competences. The details are given in the table below.

**Table 3**  
**The Paired Samples T-test for the Initial Difference between Pre and Post-test Means of EG in Pragmatic Competence Test**

Test	application	No	Mean	S.D	Df	T value	Sig
<b>Functional competence</b>	Pre-test	28	3.21	2.13	27	18.56	0.000
	Post-test	28	15.68	2.52			
<b>Discourse competence</b>	Pre-test	28	5.67	2.27	27	19.31	0.000
	Post-test	28	16.21	1.75			
<b>Whole Test</b>	Pre-test	28	8.89	4.07	27	22.24	0.000
	Post-test	28	31.89	3.33			

As shown in table (3), the obtained t-value for the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre-test and post-test of the pragmatic competences (function and discourse) is significant at 0.05 level. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected as there was a significant difference between the two means scores of the experimental group in the pre-test and post-test of the pragmatic competences. Also, data analysis shows that the mean scores of the experimental group are significantly higher in the post-test compared to theirs in the pre-test.

The graph below shows the differences between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre-test and post-test of functional, discourse competences, and the whole test of pragmatic competence.



**Figure 2: The pre and post-test mean scores of EG on functional, discourse and whole test of pragmatic competence**

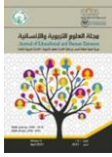
To measure the effectiveness of the instructional program based on the blended learning strategy on English pragmatic competences, Blakes' modified gain ratio was used through computing mean scores of pre and post-test of functional, discourse and in the whole test of pragmatic competences. Blake determines the standard value of effectiveness of the independent variable at (1.20) (Blake, 1966). The details are given in the table below.

**Table 4**  
**Effectiveness of the Instructional Program Based on the Blended Learning Strategy on English Pragmatic Competence**

Test	Pre-Mean Scores	Post-Mean Scores	Score	Blake Value
Functional competence	3.21	15.68	20	1.36
Discourse competence	5.67	16.21	20	1.26
Whole Test	8.89	31.89	40	1.31

The computed values of Blake's modified gain ratio of pre-and post-English functional, discourse and the whole test of pragmatic competence were 1.36, 1.26 and 1.31, respectively, higher than the standard value (1.20).

These results indicated the effectiveness of the instructional program based on the blended learning strategy in developing students' English pragmatic competence.



### Discussion of the study results

The first hypothesis test results revealed a statistically significant difference ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) between the mean scores of the control group and the experimental group in the post-application of the pragmatic competence test, in favor of the experimental group. This test result is attributed to the instructional program based on the blended learning strategy, which positively affected students' pragmatic competence (function, discourse) among the experimental group students.

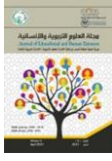
The experimental group outperformed the control group in both pragmatic competence types: discourse and functional competences. The instructional program exposed those students to increasing opportunities for communication in authentic situations where they had to use English to construct shared knowledge (Alzahrani & Alotaibi, 2024). In these situations, students worked individually and in groups to achieve the activities' objectives. They were required to employ different aspects of discourse competence, such as turn-taking, thematic development, cohesion, coherence and fluency. Also, students were encouraged to appraise their work and recorded videos by comparing their answers against the 'pragmatic rubrics' designed for this study. Students constantly received feedback from their peers and teachers and were provided with multiple model answers for the pragmatic competence activities.

Furthermore, the blended learning strategy-based program motivated students to utilize social learning and technology for further interaction and cognitive development. They engaged in a series of conversations to perform communicative functions and use the appropriate sociolinguistic choices according to the context (Alzahrani, Alhalafawy, & Alshammary, 2023). Along with face-to-face and online discussions, students were also encouraged to find various native examples of spoken discourse and written text on the Internet, which enriched their conversations and enhanced their learning of the language for particular functional purposes.

A number of studies support this result. For example, the outcomes of Ajabshir's (2019), Wafa'A and Altakhaineh's (2019) and Nugroho & Fitriati's (2021) studies revealed the superiority of 'computer-mediated communication' (CMC) and 'flipped learning' compared to traditional face-to-face instruction in pragmatic competence development. Moreover, Sagban and Alquraishy (2020) revealed the effectiveness of conversational strategies, such as asking for repetition, asking for clarification, interpretive summary, checking for comprehension and confirmation and using fillers/hesitation devices to enhance students' pragmatic competence.

Concerning the second hypothesis, the test results revealed a statistically significant difference ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre-and post-applications of the pragmatic competence test, in favor of the post-test. The test findings are attributed to the instructional program based on blended learning strategy, which indicated the effectiveness of the instructional program on the development of pragmatic competences.

The suggested instructional program assisted students achieve meaningful learning by consolidating the new pragmatic points with their prior background to construct



new knowledge with the help of modern information and communication technology. The present research aligns with Jonassen et al. (2003) who highlighted that meaningful learning occurs within ‘knowledge construction, conversation, articulation, collaboration, and reflection’ (p. 15). Subsequently, this is also in line with the studies that found a strong correlation between collaboration and meaningful learning (Marjan et al., 2012; Morales & Navia, 2017).

On the other hand, the accessibility of accessible and available learning resources and synchronous and asynchronous collaborative opportunities aided students with a secure, motivating and low-stress learning environment. Moreover, the instructor’s role as a moderator and representative of the knowledge community helped unlock the potential of the blended learning environment and amplified knowledge mobilization and language use. Therefore, there were extended opportunities and motivation for communication and constructive learning. Thus, the second hypothesis test results align with Garrison and Vaughan (2011) and Monteiro and Morrison’s (2014) studies, which concluded that blended learning increased motivation and supported students’ autonomy and capacity to achieve individual and shared tasks, along with their commitment to self-learning. Furthermore, the results of So and Brush’s study (2008, 318) shown that students who engaged in a high level of blended learning were more fulfilled with their online activities than those who have a low level of blended learning.

Moreover, these outcomes can also be inferred by considering Vygotsky’s (1978) theory and its manifestation in a blended learning environment. The instructor, students and context were integrated to create a design that responded to the pragmatic competence acquisition requirements. Knowledge is internalized individually after engaging in face-to-face social interaction. Also, technology, coupled with face-to-face interaction, facilitated communication and collaboration with more capable peers or resources to provide students with timely and suitable support in the form of scaffolding, ensuring that every student was challenged and developing.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

Considering the results attained, the present research proposes a further focus on investigating the effectiveness of the online platform (Madrasati) based on the principles of collaborative learning and connectivism theory. It is imperative to examine a mixed-method study to investigate and explore teachers’ perceptions and challenges of blended learning in teaching the English language. Moreover, there is a need to design other instructional training programs to enhance students’ achievement and attitudes towards English language learning.

### **Conclusions**

The present research revealed the effect of an instructional program based on the blended learning strategy in enhancing English pragmatic competence (function, discourse) for the secondary stage students. The results revealed a statistically



significant difference between the mean scores of the control group and the experimental group in the post-administration of the pragmatic competence test, with the experimental group demonstrating superior performance. Furthermore, the findings indicated a statistically significant improvement in the experimental group's mean scores when comparing the pre- and post-administration of the pragmatic competence test, favoring the post-administration. This improvement is attributed to the blended learning strategy, which integrated both face-to-face and online components to enhance students' pragmatic skills, including both functional and discourse competence. The experimental group's superior performance can be linked to the rich learning experiences provided by the program, such as authentic communication opportunities, collaborative activities, and regular feedback. These experiences facilitated the development of critical discourse skills such as turn-taking, thematic development, and fluency.

The instructional program not only enhanced students' pragmatic competence in practical contexts but also leveraged social learning and technology to foster cognitive development. This finding aligns with prior research indicating that computer-mediated communication and flipped learning approaches can be more effective than traditional methods in developing pragmatic skills (Nugroho & Fitriati, 2021; Wafa'A & Altakhaineh, 2019).

The study also highlights the role of the instructor in optimizing the blended learning environment. By serving as a moderator and facilitating both synchronous and asynchronous interactions, the instructor contributed to creating a motivating and supportive learning atmosphere. This environment enabled students to engage more effectively with the material and with each other, leading to improved outcomes and greater ability to use language appropriately, as supported by Bouftira et al. (2022) and Hamrayevich, et al. (2024). Furthermore, the study echoes So and Brush's (2008) findings that high levels of blended learning correlate with greater student satisfaction and engagement.

The theoretical framework underpinning this research, particularly Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social interaction and scaffolding, further supports the effectiveness of the blended learning approach. By combining face-to-face and online interactions, the instructional program created a learning environment where knowledge could be internalized through social engagement and technological support, ensuring that students received timely and appropriate assistance.

In conclusion, this research underscores the value of blended learning strategies in enhancing English pragmatic competence. By integrating diverse learning modalities and fostering an interactive and supportive environment, educators can significantly improve students' communicative abilities. These findings advocate for the adoption of blended learning models in language education and provide a foundation for further research into their application across different educational contexts.



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