



Relationship between Pragmatic Competence and Communication Skills in Malayalam among Higher Secondary School Students

Sheeja S.^{1*}, Dr. Muhammed K.V.²

^{1*}Research scholar, School of Pedagogical Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala, India, Email: sheejasvijayands@gmail.com

²Assistant Professor, School of Pedagogical Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala, India, Email: mohammedoasis@gmail.com

Citation: Sheeja, S., Dr. Muhammed, K. V. (2023). Relationship between Pragmatic Competence and Communication Skills in Malayalam among Higher Secondary School Students. *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 29(4) 5464-5466
Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v29i4.10391

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between pragmatic competence and communication skills in Malayalam among higher secondary school students. A descriptive research method with a normative survey design was employed. Data were collected from a representative sample of 150 higher secondary students selected through simple random sampling. The tools used in this study are the Pragmatic Competence Test and the Communication Skills Test in Malayalam. Descriptive statistics indicated that students exhibited high levels of both Pragmatic Competence and Communication Skills. Pearson's correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between the two variables, suggesting that students with a greater understanding of language use in social contexts tend to communicate more effectively. The findings highlight the importance of incorporating pragmatic instruction into language education to enhance students' real-life communication abilities. This study addresses a significant gap in Malayalam language education by emphasizing the role of pragmatic competence in effective communication.

Keywords: Pragmatic Competence, Communication Skills

Introduction

Pragmatic competence refers to the understanding and appropriate use of language within specific social and cultural contexts. It plays a pivotal role in shaping effective communication, especially among adolescents in Malayalam communication. As outlined by Canale (1983), pragmatics involves using language appropriately in various social situations, helping learners navigate interpersonal interactions with contextual sensitivity. Enhancing pragmatic competence not only improves linguistic accuracy but also fosters non-verbal communication, situational understanding, conversational strategies, and the ability to participate meaningfully in classroom and real-life interactions (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). This, in turn, contributes to positive peer relationships and better academic and social engagement (Rose & Kasper, 2001).

Language is not just a way to share information, it also helps people build relationships, show who they are, and take part in society. Like any language, speaking Malayalam well means more than just knowing grammar and vocabulary. It also requires an understanding of how language works in real-life situations. This is called pragmatics. Pragmatics includes things like the speaker's intention, the relationship between the people talking, the situation they are in, and what expressions are culturally appropriate. Even though being good at pragmatics is an important part of good communication, it is often not given much attention in first language teaching (Taguchi, 2009). Most school language education focus on grammar, literature, and memorization. This means students may do well in writing and analysing texts, but struggle to speak clearly and naturally in everyday situations. This shows why it is important to include lessons on how to use language in real life. When students learn to use language in a practical way, they can speak more clearly and confidently in discussions, debates, and daily conversations. This also helps them improve their social skills and adapt better to different situations (Kasper & Roever, 2005).

Need and Significance of the Study

Focusing on pragmatic instruction helps students develop important communication strategies and use language appropriately in different social situations. This can lead to improved classroom participation, stronger peer relationships, and better overall language skills. Although pragmatic competence plays a key role in effective communication, there has been limited research on how it influences communication skills in Malayalam, especially among higher secondary school students. To address this gap, the investigator conducted a correlational study to explore the relationship between pragmatic competence and communication skills.

Definition of Key Terms

- **Pragmatic Competence:** A learner's conscious understanding of how language should be used appropriately in various social and cultural contexts, including interpreting and producing context-appropriate language (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010).
- **Communication Skills:** The ability to convey or exchange information, ideas, and emotions effectively through verbal, nonverbal, and written means (Hargie, 2011).

Hypothesis of the study

- There is a significant positive relationship between pragmatic competence and communication skills in Malayalam of higher secondary school students.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the current level of pragmatic competence in Malayalam of higher secondary school students.
2. To find out the extent of communication skills in Malayalam of higher secondary school students.
3. To find out the relationship between pragmatic competence and communication skills in Malayalam of higher secondary school students.

Methodology

A descriptive research method with a normative survey design was employed for the study. Data were collected from a representative sample of 150 higher secondary students selected through simple random sampling. The tools used in this study are the Pragmatic Competence Test and the Communication Skills Test in Malayalam developed and standardised by the investigators.

Analysis and Interpretations of Data

The collected data were tabulated, consolidated, analysed and interpreted using various statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including Mean, Median, Standard Deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis were employed and the results are given in Table 1.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of the Test scores of higher secondary school students

Test scores of	N	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Pragmatic Competence	150	44.3	45	6.37	0.0877	-0.999
Communication Skills	150	22.1	22.0	2.71	-0.400	-0.686

Since the highest possible score on the Pragmatic Competence Test is 60, the mean and median scores indicate that the students have a high level of pragmatic competence. Similarly, the mean and median scores on the Communication Skills Assessment Test, where the maximum score is 30, show that the students have a high level of communication skills.

Relationship between Pragmatic Competence and Communication Skill of higher secondary school students

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated to examine the relationship between pragmatic competence and communication skills in Malayalam among higher secondary school students. The test result is given in Table 2.

Table 2 Relationship between Pragmatic Competence and Communication Skills

N	Pearson's r	df	level of significance
150	0.802	148	p < .001

The analysis, based on a sample of 150 students, yielded a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.802 with 148 degrees of freedom, which is statistically significant at the $p < .001$ level. This result indicates a strong positive correlation between pragmatic competence and communication skills. In other words, students who demonstrate higher levels of Pragmatic competence also tend to exhibit stronger communication abilities in

Malayalam. The high level of statistical significance ($p < .001$) confirms that this relationship is not due to chance. These findings suggest that pragmatic competence plays a critical role in enhancing effective communication, reinforcing the need to integrate pragmatic aspects into Malayalam language instruction for higher secondary students.

Discussion of Results

The findings of the study reveal a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.802$, $p < .001$) between pragmatic competence and communication skills in Malayalam among higher secondary school students. This suggests that students who understand how to use language appropriately in different social contexts are also more effective communicators. These results align with previous research emphasizing the importance of pragmatics in communication. Ishihara and Cohen (2010) highlight that pragmatic competence enhances not only linguistic accuracy but also the ability to interpret social cues and use language effectively in real-life interactions. Similarly, Kasper and Roever (2005) emphasize that pragmatic competence supports learners in navigating social conversations, improving both classroom communication and broader social skills. Rose and Kasper (2001) also stress that integrating pragmatics into language teaching helps students develop essential communication strategies, while Taguchi (2009) notes that pragmatic instruction enables learners to communicate more naturally and appropriately. Together, these studies support the present finding that pragmatic competence is closely linked to effective communication.

Educational Implications

Based on the findings of the study, several educational implications can be drawn to enhance the teaching and learning of communication skills in Malayalam through the development of pragmatic competence.

- The strong positive correlation between pragmatic competence and communication skills highlights the need to incorporate pragmatic elements - such as context-appropriate expressions, politeness strategies, and conversational norms into the Malayalam language curriculum at the higher secondary level.
- Language teaching should emphasize practical communication scenarios, such as role-plays, debates, interviews, and group discussions, to help students develop the ability to use language effectively in social contexts.
- Teachers should be trained to understand and teach pragmatic aspects of language, including non-verbal cues, tone, intention, and appropriateness in various social situations. Professional development programs should be designed to enhance teachers' awareness and instructional strategies related to pragmatics.
- Along with traditional language assessments, tools and rubrics to evaluate students' Pragmatic competence and application should be developed and implemented to get a holistic view of their communicative abilities.
- Language textbooks and supplementary materials should include sections on pragmatic usage, common communication errors in context, and exercises that challenge students to choose or generate context-appropriate responses in Malayalam.
- Exposure to a variety of communication forms such as films, drama, and media in Malayalam can help students observe and learn natural pragmatic usage in diverse situations, thereby enhancing their understanding of social language norms.
- Special interventions and support systems should be put in place for students who struggle with understanding social language cues, ensuring inclusive language learning practices.
- The findings underline the importance of pragmatic competence in communication and suggest that educational policymakers should consider including explicit pragmatic instruction as a key component of language education reforms in schools.

REFERENCES

1. Canale, M. (1983). *From communicative competence to communicative language pedagogy*. In J. C. Richards & R. W. Schmidt (Eds.), *Language and Communication* (pp. 2–27). Longman.
2. Cohen, A. D. (2008). *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence: Principles and Practice*. Multilingual Matters.
3. Hargie, O. (2011). *Skilled interpersonal communication: Research, theory and practice* (5th ed.). Routledge.
4. Ishihara, N., & Cohen, A. D. (2010). *Teaching and Learning Pragmatics: Where Language and Culture Meet*. Pearson Education.
5. Kasper, G., & Roever, C. (2005). Pragmatic development in a second language. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning* (pp. 317–334). Routledge.
6. Rose, K. R., & Kasper, G. (2001). *Pragmatics in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
7. Taguchi, N. (Ed.). (2009). *Pragmatic competence* (Mouton Series in Pragmatics). Mouton de Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110218558>
8. Thomas, J. (1995). *Meaning in Interaction: An Introduction to Pragmatics*. Longman.