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The Influence of Emotional Intelligence and Pragmatic Learning Strategies toward Ninth-Grade Students' Mastery of English Speech Acts

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Abstract

This research examines how Emotional Intelligence and Pragmatic Learning Strategies predict ninth-grade students' achievement in mastering English speech acts. The study applied a quantitative correlational method with 80 randomly selected participants. Data were obtained through a Likert-scale questionnaire measuring Emotional Intelligence and Pragmatic Learning Strategies, and a performance-based test assessing Speech Act Mastery. Multiple regression analysis revealed that Emotional Intelligence ($\beta = 0.334$, $t = 3.221$, $p = 0.002$) and Pragmatic Learning Strategies ($\beta = 0.414$, $t = 4.002$, $p = 0.000$) each significantly influence students' ability to perform speech acts. The combined effect of both variables was also significant ($F = 18.642$, $p = 0.000$), with an R Square value of 0.374, indicating that the two variables explain 37.4% of the variance in students' speech act mastery, while 62.6% is influenced by other factors beyond the model. These results suggest that successful speech act performance is shaped not only by language proficiency, but also by students' emotional regulation and contextual learning strategies. Hence, English teachers should incorporate pragmatic instruction and foster emotional awareness to strengthen students' communicative competence in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Pragmatic Learning Strategies, Speech Act, Communicative Competence, EFL Students

INTRODUCTION

In English language learning at secondary school level, communication skills are not only measured by the ability to construct grammatically correct sentences, but also by the ability to use language appropriately in social contexts. Speech acts are actions performed through language when a person speaks; they not only utter words, but also perform actions, such as requesting, commanding, offering, refusing, begging, etc.

Austin (1962) defines speech acts as actions realized through utterances. Searle (1975) further emphasizes that speech acts represent the basic unit of communication because every utterance carries a specific communicative intention. The concept of illocutionary act refers to the intended purpose of an utterance, such as promising, requesting, or refusing (Searle, 1969).

Pragmatics theory is the knowledge of how to use language appropriately in various social contexts to achieve communication goals (Canale & Swain, 1980). According to Yule (1996), pragmatics is the study of meaning communicated by the speaker and interpreted by the listener based on context. According to Levinson (1983), it is the study of the relationship between language and context, which forms the basis for interpreting the meaning of utterances.

Pragmatic learning emphasises students using language for appropriate communication purposes and situations. One way to do this is through learning strategies such as role play, imitating speakers' expressions, or watching videos and dialogues. English learning strategies such as these are very helpful for students in understanding the meaning and implications of conversations, so that students become more skilled at producing speech acts that are appropriate to the context.

In addition to learning strategies, psychological aspects such as emotional intelligence also play a role in students' success in communication. Emotional intelligence is a person's ability to understand, manage, and control their own and others' emotions, including managing stress, maintaining emotional stability, motivating oneself, and being able to persevere in frustrating situations (Masril et al., 2020). Emotional intelligence also includes the ability to empathise, build social relationships, and respond appropriately to other people's moods (Butarbutar, 2020; Goleman, 2015). With good emotional intelligence, students can adapt their use of language to various situations, interact politely, and resolve conflicts wisely.

However, show observations indicate that many ninth-grade junior high school students are able to form correct sentences, yet still struggle to apply language appropriately based on context. This condition suggests that English teaching tends to focus more on grammatical accuracy than on pragmatic competence and emotional regulation. Therefore, this study examines how emotional intelligence and pragmatic learning strategies contribute to students' mastery of English speech acts.

The objectives of this study are to determine the influence of students in communicating on the mastery of speech acts by junior high school students, to determine the influence of pragmatic learning strategies on the mastery of speech acts, and to determine the simultaneous contribution of these two variables to students' English speech act abilities.

METHOD

This study utilised a quantitative approach with a correlational design. The analysis technique employed was Multiple Linear Regression. This design aimed to determine the existence, direction, and strength of the simultaneous predictive contribution of the variables Emotional Intelligence x_1 and Pragmatic Learning Strategy x_2 on English Speech Act Mastery Y .

The research was conducted at a public junior high school. The research population consisted of all ninth-grade students in the 2025/2026 academic year. The sampling technique used was simple random sampling to ensure data representation and independence. A total of 80 students participated in this study. Data collection in this study utilised three main instruments designed to measure variables comprehensively. Emotional Intelligence x_1 was measured using a questionnaire adapted from Goleman's theory (2015), consisting of items on a 5-point Likert

scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). This questionnaire specifically covered five dimensions: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Meanwhile, the Pragmatic Learning Strategy x_2 variable was also measured using a questionnaire with a similar 5-point Likert scale, focusing on assessing students' awareness, strategy practice, contextual sensitivity, and communicative use of language. Finally, the dependent variable, Speech Act Mastery Y , was assessed through a test that combined multiple-choice items and performance tasks (short oral/written production). This test examined students' ability to produce key speech acts such as requesting, refusing, offering, and apologising, with a score range of 0 to 100.

All instruments were validated through expert judgement and empirical testing involving 30 non sample students. Item validity was verified using Pearson Product Moment correlation, and internal reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, with a minimum acceptable coefficient of $\alpha \geq 0.70$.

Data analysis was conducted quantitatively using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) programme. The tests included: Residual Normality (tested using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test), Linearity, and NonMulticollinearity (verified using Tolerance (> 0.10) and VIF (< 10) values). Furthermore, Multiple Linear Regression Analysis became the core of the main inferential testing, conducted at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05(5\%)$. This analysis aims to test separately (partially) the contribution of x_1 to Y and x_2 to Y , as well as the simultaneous contribution of both predictor variables to Students' Mastery of Speech Acts Y . This predictive relationship is formulated in the regression equation $Y = b_1x_1 + b_2x_2$.

RESULT

The statistical analysis demonstrates that both Emotional Intelligence (X_1) and Pragmatic Learning Strategies (X_2) contribute significantly to students' Speech Act Mastery (Y). This study involved 80 ninth-grade students. Descriptive analysis showed the average value of each variable as follows:

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emotional Intelligence (X_1)	80	65	98	82.45	6.92
Pragmatic Learning Strategies (X_2)	80	67	100	84.21	7.15
Speech Act Mastery (Y)	80	60	95	83.37	6.81

The descriptive results show that the average score of Emotional Intelligence is Mean = 82.45 (SD = 6.92), Pragmatic Learning Strategies Mean = 84.21 (SD = 7.15), and Speech Act Mastery Mean = 83.37 (SD = 6.81). These averages indicate that students generally have high levels of emotional intelligence, frequently apply pragmatic learning strategies, and show good ability in producing speech acts appropriately.

Regression analysis confirms that both predictor variables x_1 and x_2 significantly determine the variation in Y :

Variable	Beta	t-value	Sig.
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Emotional Intelligence (X_1)	0.334	3.221	0.002
Pragmatic Learning Strategies (X_2)	0.414	4.002	0.000

The significance values ($p < 0.05$) indicate that each variable individually predicts Speech Act Mastery. Among the two predictors, Pragmatic Learning Strategies shows a higher β and t-value ($\beta = 0.414$; $t = 4.002$), meaning that learning strategies have a stronger influence than emotional intelligence in shaping students' ability to perform speech acts. The simultaneous regression test reinforces this finding:

Model Test	F-value	Sig.
$x_1 \& x_2 \rightarrow Y$	18.642	0.000

The R Square value of 0.374 indicates that: 37.4% of students' mastery of English speech acts is jointly predicted by Emotional Intelligence and Pragmatic Learning Strategies, while 62.6% is influenced by other factors (ex: communication exposure, teacher feedback, classroom speaking activities). The regression equation produced from the model is: $YY = 37.821 + 0.231x_1 + 0.298x_2$

This equation shows that every unit increase in Emotional Intelligence raises Speech Act Mastery by 0.231, and every unit increase in Pragmatic Learning Strategies raises mastery by 0.298. In other words, pragmatic strategies contribute more strongly than emotional intelligence in predicting the improvement of students' speech act performance.

DISCUSSION

The multiple regression analysis strongly confirmed the study's central hypothesis: Emotional Intelligence (x_1) and Pragmatic Learning Strategies (x_2) collectively serve as significant predictors of students' English Speech Act Mastery (Y). The resulting F-value of 18.642 ($p = 0.000$) indicates that the two variables, when examined together, have a robust and statistically relevant influence. Furthermore, the R^2 value of 0.374 suggests that these two factors account for nearly 37.4% of the differences observed in students' ability to produce appropriate speech acts. This demonstrates that successful communication in secondary English involve.

The findings reveal that Emotional Intelligence (x_1) is an individual, positive, and significant predictor of Speech Act Mastery (Y). ($\beta = 0.334$; $p = 0.002$). This is logical because producing speech acts such as requesting or refusing is an inherently social function. High EI, which includes dimensions like empathy and social skills, enables students to understand the context and the feelings of their conversational partner, leading them to choose more polite, effective, and contextually appropriate language. Therefore, psychological resources are critical for achieving communicative intents more than just linguistic knowledge.

Among the two predictors, Pragmatic Learning Strategies (x_2) exerted the strongest influence on Speech Act Mastery, evidenced by the highest beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.414$) and strongest significance ($p = 0.000$). This highlights the direct, powerful effect of explicit pragmatic training, which focuses on developing student awareness, practice, and contextual sensitivity. Unlike general emotional maturity, these targeted strategies provide students with the specific tools and experience needed to align their

utterances with communicative goals, effectively closing the gap between knowing what to say grammatically and knowing how to say it appropriately in a social situation.

These findings provide empirical backing for the foundational principles of Speech Act Theory, which classifies language use as a form of human action. Mastering speech acts requires more than just uttering words; it requires controlling the illocutionary act (the intended purpose). The research shows that this mastery is supported not just by the linguistic strategies (x_2) but also by the affective intelligence (x_1) necessary to navigate the complexities of social interaction. This reaffirms that pragmatics is the study of language use in context, demanding that educators integrate social competence development alongside strategic language instruction.

The significant contributions of both variables suggest a strong pedagogical mandate: English teachers should move beyond a sole focus on grammatical accuracy and adopt strategies that integrate both pragmatic skills training and the nurturing of emotional awareness. However, the model left 62.6% of the variance in mastery unexplained. This substantial remainder implies that other external variables play a major role. Future research should explore environmental and instructional factors not measured here, such as exposure to native speakers, the quality and frequency of corrective teacher feedback, and the role of general student motivation in the communicative setting.

CONCLUSION

Based on the multiple linear regression analysis of 80 students, this study concludes that Emotional Intelligence (x_1) and Pragmatic Learning Strategies (x_2) jointly and significantly contribute to students' English Speech Act Mastery (Y). These two variables account for 37.4% of the variation in students' mastery $R^2 = 0.374$ Individually, both are significant predictors (Emotional Intelligence ($p = 0.002$), Pragmatic Learning Strategies ($p = 0.000$), but the latter is the stronger contributor $\beta = 0.414$ This evidence fundamentally supports the foundational view of Austin (1962) and Searle (1975) that speech acts are the basic unit of communication, realized through utterances that carry a specific communicative intention. The higher predictive power of (x_2) validates that mastering these actions requires the strategic effort to grasp the "meaning communicated by the speaker and interpreted by the listener based on context," as defined by Yule (1996).

The research reinforces the functionalist claim by Allwood (1977) that linguistic communication should be understood as a special case of the general theory of human action. The significant role of Emotional Intelligence (x_1) affirms that students' ability to engage in polite and contextually appropriate language a requisite for achieving successful illocutionary force is tied to affective skills such as empathy and social skills (Goleman, 2015). Pedagogically, the findings emphasize that in order to develop Pragmatic Competence a key component of Communicative Competence (Canale & Swain, 1980), English teachers must shift focus from mere grammatical accuracy toward the explicit integration of pragmatic learning strategies and the intentional fostering of students' emotional awareness. Finally, as 62.6% of the variance in mastery remains unexplained, future studies are recommended to explore other external contextual factors, such as the quality of teacher feedback, exposure to communication outside the classroom, or speaking anxiety, to gain a more complete picture of pragmatic development.

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