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**Pragmatic Competence and Cross-cultural Pragmatic  
Failure in EFL Classroom**

**Case Study of first year Master Students at the department of English  
at the University of Khenchela**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for Master Degree in Didactics of Languages and Cultures

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## **Dedication**

**I dedicate this work to:**

**My wonderful parents**

**My beloved husband and my mother-in-law**

**My brothers and my dearest sister**

**Mrs.Bensaidi**

**My friends who loved me**

**All teachers of English**

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## **ABSTRACT**

EFL learners face difficulties in understanding language in its context. This study attempts to investigate the reasons behind the poor pragmatic competence of first year master students and thus the poor communicative competence. We hypothesize that if pragmatics is given enough time to be taught and accompany theory with practice, learners will develop full pragmatic competence that will allow them to avoid blocks in communication. The subjects of our study are first year Master students as well as the teacher in charge of teaching the module of pragmatics in the department of English at Khenchela University. In this study, we opt for the descriptive method because of the time constraint. Data are collected by the means of a questionnaire and an interview. Data analysis permitted us to come out with the result that the insufficient time given to teaching pragmatics and the lack of practice inside and outside the classroom causes the poor pragmatic competence of the learners; in other words, not having full and complete knowledge of pragmatic aspects (implicative, speech acts, situational routines and cooperative principles) hinders learners from carrying successful interactions.

## Résumé

Les apprenants d'EFL font face aux difficultés dans la langue comprenant dans son contexte. Cette étude essaye d'examiner l'hypothèse si on donne à la pragmatique assez de temps pour être enseigné et accompagner la théorie avec la pratique, l'apprenant développera la compétence pragmatique pleine (complète) qui leur permettra d'éviter le blocage dans la communication. Les étudiants de 1ère année Master ont participé à cette étude aussi bien que le professeur responsable d'enseigner le module de pragmatique aux étudiants 1ère année Master. Dans cette étude nous optons pour la recherche descriptive à cause de la contrainte de temps. Les données sont rassemblées par le moyen d'un questionnaire et un entretien (une interview). L'analyse de données nous permet de sortir la compétence pragmatique en conséquence pauvre mène aux pannes dans la communication, autrement dit, n'ayant pas la connaissance complète d'aspects pragmatiques (implicature, des actes de parole, des routines situationnelles et des principes coopératifs) gênent des apprenants de porter l'interaction réussie (fructueuse)...

## List of Abbreviations

**E.F.L.:** English as a Foreign Language

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## **Introduction**

Effective communication is the secret key behind successful relations among people and their nations. Nowadays, language is the passport for crossing borders, establishing interpersonal relations and making business profits. Language is similar to currency; one cannot buy an item by taking one facet of his/her currency. Knowing linguistic aspects of a language is not enough, it should be tied with the pragmatic aspects of that language.

### **1. Statement of the Problem**

The ultimate goal that lies behind learning the English language is to be an effective and competent communicator both grammatically and pragmatically, that is, to interact effectively without any ups and downs in carrying an interaction with native speakers; however first year Master students face difficulties in understanding the sender's intended meaning in a given social context besides they complain from the difficulty of the module of "Pragmatics" which is introduced only in the second semester, this may lead to a breakdown in the process of communication.

### **2. Research Questions**

The focal interest of this study is to find out: what are the reasons that lie behind the poor pragmatic competence of first year Master students? And what is the implication of poor pragmatic competence on communication?

### **3. Research Hypothesis**

We are firmly attached in this study to the theory that cross-cultural pragmatic failure (communication failure) originates from poor pragmatic competence, So we hypothesize if pragmatics is given enough time to be taught and accompany theory

with practice, learners will develop full pragmatic competence that will allow them to avoid blocks in communication(cross-cultural pragmatic failure).

### **3. Aims of the Study**

The aim of this study is to stress the importance of pragmatics in EFL classroom. The main objectives of this study are:

-To investigate the reasons that stand for the poor pragmatic level of first year master students in the department of English at Khenchela University and the implications of pragmatic failure on communication.

-To raise the teachers' and the learners' attention to the importance of the pragmatic competence in avoiding cross-cultural pragmatic failure.

### **5. Background and Significance of the Study**

The unquestionable reason that pushes learners to choose learning English is to take it outside the classroom by using it at different interpersonal levels, however when it comes to communication with native speakers, they experience certain difficulties in getting their message across. One component of communicative competence, which refers to the correct use of sociocultural norms, is the linguistic competence which in turn constitutes of pragmatic and grammatical competence. First year master students in the department of English at Khenchela university are expected by the end of the year to be linguistically competent communicators, but teachers complain from the difficulty of teaching pragmatics and the poor communicative level of the learners. Thus, we decided to carry this research to investigate the reasons behind the poor pragmatic competence of the learners.

## **6. Definition of Terms**

**Cross-cultural pragmatics:** *“The study of differences in expectations based on cultural schemata is part of a broad area of investigation generally known as cross-cultural pragmatics”* (Yule, 1996).

### **Pragmatic Failure**

*“...the inability to understand ‘what is meant by what is said’”*. Thomas (1983: 91)

### **Pragmatic Competence**

*” ....the ability to act and interact by means of language”* (Kasper & Rover, 2005, p.317)

## **7. Limitations of the Study:**

Along this study, we will be limited to first year master students pragmatic competence and the implication of cross-cultural pragmatic failure on the communicative ability of these learners. Focus will be made in isolation on pragmatic element without paying so much attention to the other factors which interfere in the teaching process like teaching methods for instance. This limitation is explained in terms of the introduction of the module of “pragmatics” to the learners particularly in this year.

Any study entails limitations which arise intrinsically from the type of the method being used. Conducting another method may provide different results. We encountered several difficulties in this study namely, the small number of teachers responsible for teaching pragmatics and time limit.

## **8. Research Design**

### **8.1. Choice of the Method**

In order to draw learners' and the teachers' of the department of English at Khenchela University attention to the importance of the pragmatic competence in avoiding cross-cultural pragmatic failure, we opt for the descriptive method which will permit find out the reasons that stand for the poor pragmatic competence of the learner, moreover to collect the needed data about the subject under investigation. We didn't opt for an experimental study because of limited period of time and its requirement of replication. Research findings may provide a theoretical framework for future research that may opt for other methods use like the experimental one.

### **8.2. Population**

Teachers' and learners', of the department of English faculty of Arts and Languages, attitudes towards the subject under investigation are valuable and important; this is why we will take into consideration both population.

Teachers concerned with our study are those who have already taught 1st year master students module of pragmatics. In regard of their small number (one teacher) sampling of this population would be useless. Since what we point at, is the teachers' perception of the problem under investigation .The most important stressed criteria of this population's selection is the teaching of the module of pragmatics.

Learners concerned with our research are first year master students in the English department at Khenchela University enrolled for the academic year 2013-2014 their exact number is (200)"Information obtained from the administration"

The choice of this subject goes back to several factors, namely they are newly introduced to pragmatics as a separate subject of study. Secondly, they have distinct

communicative abilities, furthermore, they complaint of the complexity of this module noticed in their failure to get it easily and develop pragmatic competence.

### **8.3. Students' Sampling**

Since the objective of this study is to look at 1st year master students department of English, Khenchela University, pragmatic competence, the questionnaire will be administered to the whole population.

### **8.4. Data Collecting Tools**

In order to bring more consistency to the study, we opted for a combination of two major research tools a questionnaire an interview.

A questionnaire is used in order to obtain information about the students' perceptions of the importance of the pragmatic competence in avoiding communication blocks. The questionnaire will be directly administered to the students of the department of English at Abbes Laghrour University by the end of the second term which corresponds to the period (three months studying) of students' familiarity with the module.

An interview is used besides the students' questionnaire because we have only one teacher in charge of teaching pragmatics for the 1<sup>st</sup> year Master students in order to get information about the learners' communicative level and the implication of poor pragmatic competence on communication.

### **8.5. Piloting**

Piloting the questionnaire was of a great importance since it permitted us to bring Valuable corrections namely in students' questionnaire. By piloting it on 15 students of 1st year master showed no difficulty in understanding questions.

## **8.6. Structure of the Study**

In addition to the general introduction that states the main purpose of this study, this thesis is divided into two major parts.

The first part provides a review of literature to clarify the research's major points. This part includes two chapters; the first chapter begins with an overview of the relationship between language and culture, pragmatic competence, and pragmatic failure. The second chapter looks at pragmatics and classroom instruction.

The second part constitutes of one chapter which will be devoted for the explanation of the methodology, data analysis, and the results of the research.

The general conclusion will include some suggestions and pedagogical recommendations which aim to attract the instructors' attention to this vital element.

**Chapter One: Pragmatic Competence  
and Cross-cultural Pragmatic Failure**

## **Introduction**

Language is the most distinctive feature of human communication, the soul of their life and the heart carrying the network of their relations. «*The possession of language, more than any other attribute, distinguishes humans from animals*» (From kin and Rodman, 1983:3). English language acquired a very important status all over the world because of globalization. «*Globalization may be thought of initially as widening, Deeping and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life* (Held, McGrew, Goldbatt & Perraton, 199, p.2)

With the international role given to the English language because of the inevitable process of globalization, most communications are accomplished via this language. People use English to interact, share ideas and cultures of each other. This entails the ability to use the language effectively to communicate thoughts, feelings, and establishing interpersonal relationships.”...*The ability to carry out the simplest conversation requires profound knowledge that speakers are not aware of*” (Kin and Rodman).

In this chapter we will discuss an important aspect of the communicative competence, which is the pragmatic competence; we will also go through discussing in depth cross-cultural pragmatic failure.

### **1. Language and Culture**

Language is a social institution, both shaping and shaped by society at large or in particular the ‘*cultural niches*’ (Eleanor Armour-Thomas & Sharon-ann. Gopaul-McNicol, 1998). Learning another language encompasses an accurate understanding of the existing relationship between language and culture. Language is not an ‘*autonomous construct*’ (Furlough, 1989: vi) in the sense that language is a social

practice both create and created by ‘*the structures and forces of [the] social institutions within which we live and in function*’ (ibid.).

*“Culture language learning is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing .It is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them. (Kramersch, 1993: 1)*

Teaching and learning language involves learning culture, because language cannot exist in a vacuum, though it is done most of the time implicitly by being incorporated into other aspects of the language. Learning a language should go beyond communication and consider at the same time to respect social norms specific to that culture.

### **1.1. Cross-cultural Communication/Inter-cultural Communication**

Cross-cultural communication and inter-cultural communication can be differentiated as follows: the first refers to the differences and similarities hold among cultures meanwhile the later refers to what happens between people from different cultures and how do they modify their own communication as a result of these interactions.

Intercultural communication emerged as an alternative paradigm to cross-cultural communication from about the 1970s (Seely, 1996, p.7).Larry Samovar (2002) states that: *“Intercultural communication involves interaction between people whose*

*cultural perceptions and symbol systems differ enough to influence the communication event”*

## **1.2. Pragmatics**

As well-known, a competent language learner should be able to speak correctly, fluently, has a sufficient mastery of grammar and has the adequate ability to produce utterances which are appropriate and relevant to the context. Pragmatics according to George Yule (1996):” *Pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader).*”Pragmatics is comparatively a new branch in linguistics; it can be traced to ancient Greece and Rome .The Greece “*Pragmaticus*” and the Roman “*Pragmaticos*” mean “*being practical*”(Liu, 2005).

Let’s perceive the following example to illustrate the importance of pragmatics

Here are two discussing their children:

A: How is Tom going at school?

B: Ah, well...you know what they say: boys will be boys.

A: Yeah, but girls are no easier...you know what Jess did the other day? ...

(Wierzbicka, 1991, P.391)

In this example the speaker A did not make clear how Tom behave in school, his statement is ambiguous for Second Language learners because meaning is implied.

In this sense pragmatics is what language learners are in need to because they must understand meaning conveyed by words. “*In understanding the pragmatics, language*

*users share certain rules and conventions which enable them to understand each other in many instances where the meaning and the intent of utterances are not clearly stated"*(Pohl,2004;Yule,1996)

### **1.2.1. Definition of Pragmatics**

Many researchers have been carried out on pragmatics, focusing mostly on language use, social, and interpersonal context of the interaction (Roever, 2010).The modern usage of pragmatics was first introduced by Morris (1938) defining it as” *the study of the relation of signs to interpreters*”, on the other hand he referred to syntax as “the formal relation of signs to one another” and semantics as ‘the relation of signs to objects to which the signs are applicable’. Pragmatics explores how the listener can draw meaning from the speaker’s speech by recognizing what is left unsaid by the speaker.

Levinson (1983) defines pragmatics as” *Pragmatics is the study of those relations between language and context that are grammaticalized, or encoded in the structure of language*” (p.9).In this definition Levinson narrows the scope of pragmatics to entail only the study of the relationship between language structures, grammatically relevant usage of the language, and context.

Another definition provided by Trosborg (1995) views pragmatics as a branch of semiotics that deals with the relations hold between signs and those who use them i.e. pragmatics is not restricted only to the linguistic analysis of words in people’s communication but rather it is applied to interpret what people mean in a particular context and how does the context influences what is said.

Crystal (1997) suggests that pragmatics is “*the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on their participants in the act of communication*” (p.301). This definition emphasizes how the context affects the communicators ‘selection of sounds, grammatical construction, and vocabulary. Thus, pragmatics can be defined as the study of communicative action in its sociocultural context (Rose & Kasper, 2001)

Pütz & Neff-van Aertselaer (2008) argued that « *pragmatics as a usage-based perspective on the language sciences such as linguistics, the philosophy of language and sociology of language essentially focuses on the exploration of language use and the users of language in real-life situations and, more generally, on the principles which govern language in everyday interaction*” (p.ix). Here the definition of pragmatics focuses on the language users, the communicative context, situated meaning and the relation between the speaker and the listener.

## **2. Features of Pragmatics**

From the previously introduced working definitions of pragmatics made by different researchers in the field we can assume pragmatics to have the following features: (a) language users ; (b) context ; (c) meaning and (d) social interaction

### **2.1. Language Users**

Language users, in our case Second language or foreign language learners, can be referred to as individuals who are able to accede to the resources available in the target language in order to make meaning *in situ* (Armor, 2004). They are not only supposed to acquire a new set of grammatical, lexical, and phonological forms of the

target language but also to participate symbolically mediated life world of another culture (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000).

Language users need to apply properly the range of knowledge of the language they learnt within different contexts. That is to say, language learners may be confused when they find that language use they learnt in class is different from that they encounter outside the class. Here again pragmatics focuses on the production process, its producers and the authentic language use.

## **2.2. Context**

Bilmes (1986) suggests that context is the total social setting in which speech events takes place:”*the meaning of an utterance is determined in large part by how its responds and how it is responded to, by its place in an interactional sequence*” (p.127) .For Mey (2001) context is “*a dynamic, not a static concept*” in the sense that it impacts to a large extent the process of interpretation (Yule, 1996). All the information needed by language users when they come to interpret an expression in a certain situation is drawn from the context in which interactions occur. The manipulation of the context can help language users to deal effectively with the communication process.

Therefore, context is the magical key that provides language users with true pragmatic meaning, pragmatic acts, and allow the use of linguistic resources to understand language as it is used (Mey, 2001) and without an accurate understanding of the importance of the context for interpreting meaning, there is the danger of setting the learners’ pragmatic competence aside.

### **2.3. Meaning**

Meaning is an important feature of pragmatics which is concerned with the study of utterance- meaning rather than sentence- meaning which is researched by semantics. In this sense pragmatics can be defined as the study of meaning such as “*speaker meaning*”, “*contextual meaning*” (Yule, 1996, p.3), “*meaning in use*”, and “*meaning in context*” (Thomas, 1995, p.1). Meaning as suggested by Marinoff (1999) “*meaning has to do with how you understand your life on an ongoing basis*” (p.210)

Park (2000) has argued that meaning involves the “*search for a sense of connection, patten, order, and significance ... it is a way to understand our experience that makes sense of both the expected and unexpected ...*” (p.14). Meaning-making is an ongoing process which involves the negotiation of meaning between the interlocutors, the potential meaning of an utterance and its context (Thomas, 1995)

### **2.4. Social interaction**

Social interactions are particular forms of externalities, where the actions of a reference group influence an individual’s preferences (Scheinkman, 2008).

Kasper & Rose suggested that social interaction, in pragmatics, can refer to either spoken communication involving at least two people or all kinds of written and mixed forms of communication. Because of its importance for language learners it is essential that they be fully aware of different types of social interactions that would help them to become communicatively competent (Wierzbicka, 2010).

### **2.3. Aspects of Pragmatics**

Pragmatics covers different features of communication which can be deduced from Yule's definition of pragmatics as "*the study of speaker meaning [...] the study of contextual meaning [...] the study of how more gets communicated than is said [...] the study of the expression of relative distance*" (1996, p.3). From this definition the major aspects of pragmatics are; speech acts, implicature, and situational routines.

### **2.3.1. Speech Act Theory**

The speech act theory was first introduced by the philosopher J.L. Austin (1911-1960) in her influential book "How to Do Things with Words?" She claims that many utterances (things people say) are equivalent to actions. This means that people produce utterances that are not only restricted to grammar but also perform specific actions.

The American philosopher J.R. Searle (1976) states that "*speaking a language is performing speech acts*". He considers the speech acts as an integral part of linguistic communication (p.96) from this perspective; speech acts should not be viewed as independent units from the context in which they occur. For example, if you find yourself in a situation in which your boss possess a great deal of power and makes the following statement: "You're fired" this utterance represents more than a statement but performs the action of ending your employment (Yule, 1996, p.47)

### **The Locutionary, Illocutionary and Perlocutionary Acts**

The speech act theory suggests that such utterances have three main aspects: locutionary act, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary. Leech (1983: 199) briefly defines them like this:

*Locutionary act*: performing an act of saying something

*Illocutionary act*: performing an act in saying something

*Perlocutionary act*: performing an act by saying something.

Yule (1996) refers to the locutionary act as: " *the basic act of utterance or producing a meaningful linguistic expression*" (p.48) what this definition implies is that the locutionary acts are simply utterances or speech acts that already happened.

The illocutionary act, the core of the speech act theory, are characterizes by its connectedness with the intentions carried out by the speaker, e.g. promising, threatening, and so many others." The illocutionary act is thus performed via the communicative force of an utterance which is generally known as illocutionary force of the utterance" (Yule, 1996, p.48)

### **2.3.2. Implicature — the Study of How More Gets Communicated Than is Said**

Pragmatics is not limited to "what is said" only" but also to "what is meant". The study of meaning introduces a challenge because people may often say things that they do not mean or mean more than they say. The real meaning is difficult to guess or interpret. The distinction between the two terms "what is said" and "what is meant" was first done by Grice (1950) referring to it as "implicature", the conveyed meaning of the speaker( Grice 1975:43). In interaction the hearer tries to infer upon what is not said and moves towards understanding the implied meaning. This process of meaning making or generating is based upon the assumptions hold by the interlocutors and shared knowledge in the contextual situation.

Grice introduced two kinds of implicature; *conversational implicature* and *conventional implicature*. The first type depends is context-dependent "Grice, 1975,

p.50) which means that are locally interpreted, for instance, “Did you invite Bella & Cathy? - I invited Bella”, the speaker can be regarded as implying more than what he is saying (Yule, 1996, p.40, 42), whereas the second type is context-independent (ibid).

Grice presented ,in addition to conversational implicature, the cooperative principle “*Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged*” (ibid.). This principle consists of four major maxims that should not be flouted; quantity, quality, relation and manner. According to these maxims, participants of a conversation should be as informative as possible (maxim of quantity), speak truthfully (maxim of quality), be relevant (maxim of relation) and speak briefly and orderly without obscurity (maxim of manner) (Grice, 1975, p.45-46).

These maxims can be unconsciously violated by the speaker which gives the suggestion that they are not rules but instead guidelines to be followed so that to carry out a successful conversation. One reason that makes people violate one of these maxims is to be more polite.

### **2.3.3. Politeness — the Study of the Expression of Relative Distance**

Politeness is an integral part of pragmatics which refers to the degree of imposition and the perceived closeness or distance between interlocutors. Language has stagnant rules and conventions that are there for the sake of conducting successful interaction. These rules are associated with politeness and “*deal[s] with perceptions, expectations, and conventional realizations of communicative strategies which enhance social harmony*” (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000, p. 25).

Politeness was seen as a strategy to save one's public face image. According to Brown and Levinson, speakers have a positive as well as negative face they have a need to be accepted by others (positive face) as well as a need to be unimpeded by others (negative face) (1987p. 13). They also introduced the concept of face threatening acts (FTAs) which intrinsically threaten the negative face of the speaker. Speakers should be aware of the different politeness conventions of the target language such as social distance, imposition, and relative power, the inappropriate use of one of these principles leads to cross-cultural misunderstanding.

#### **2.3.4. Conversation Structure and Situational Routines**

The interaction is affected by the context in which it takes place, in other words it affects the use of speech acts, implicature, maxims of conversation as well as politeness. Besides there are several kinds of interaction, for example, speakers address friends differently from a president. Communicators should be aware of the conversation structure, without which will not be able to convey the required goal of the interaction.

Situational routines refers to utterances that are used in specific situations (Roever, 2006, p.231), for instance, leave takings and greetings. For language learners it is vital to acknowledge the routine formulae, since they ensure natural interaction and in avoiding communication problems. In this respect, Yamashita (2008, p.212) states that routine expressions such as "Please speak slowly" or "What does it mean?" allows learners to avoid communication problems.

### **3. Inter/Cross-cultural Pragmatics**

Communication has become almost cross-cultural involving people with different cultures, different mother tongues, and different conceptualizations. (Mey, 2008) points out that there is no culture without a user.

Cross-cultural pragmatics, which is the study of linguistic acts conducted by language users with different cultural backgrounds, tries to define the systematic relationships that exists between the sociocultural contexts and the functions and structure of language in use (Boxer, 2002) *“The study of differences in expectations based on cultural schemata is part of a broad are of investigation generally known as cross-cultural pragmatics”* (Yule, 1996)

Cross-cultural pragmatics consists of language users’ values, beliefs, cultural assumptions and communication strategies in using the language (LoCastro, 2003). *“Individuals from two societies or communities carry out their interactions (whether spoken or written) according to their own rules or norms, often resulting in a clash expectations and, ultimately, misperceptions about the other group”* (Boxer, 2002, p.151).the misconception of one group leads to the misunderstanding o the other.

Cross-cultural pragmatics consists of three main domains: the sphere of social interaction, educational encounters, and wok life. (Boxer, 2002).Social encounters dictates the steps for perceptions and misperceptions of people belonging to different cultures governed by different norms of speaking.

### **4. Communicative Competence**

The term “communicative competence “is composed of the combination two words meaning “competence to communicate” “Competence “is one of the

controversial terms in the field of applied linguistics. It was first introduced by Chomsky who made the distinction between competence and performance in his influential book “Aspects of the Theory of Syntax”.

Milroy and Milroy (1990) defined communicative competence as “*the capacity of persons to select and recognize the type of language appropriate to the occasion*” (p.503). This definition suggests that communicative competence, which was coined by Hymes in reaction to Chomsky’s linguistic competence, does not only entail knowledge of a language (competence) but also the ability to apply that knowledge (performance) (Barron, 2003; Widdowson, 1992)

Hymes (1972) suggested that communicative competence contributes to other aspects of competence needed by a language learner .the core issue which is the concern of the communicative competence is speech communication and the interaction between language and culture.

#### **4.1. Pragmatic Competence**

Learners’ ability in carrying out communicative activities is highly demanded in the spoken English classroom. Communicative competence consists of grammatical competence, social competence, and pragmatic competence. «*The communicative competence needed for participation includes not only grammatical competence, but pragmatic competence*” (Savignon, 1991)

Pragmatic competence or pragmatic proficiency is defined as” *the ability to act and interact by means of language*” (Kasper & Rover, 2005, p.317).Another

definition provided by Taguchi (2009) regards pragmatic competence as “*the ability to use language appropriately in a social context...*” (p.1).

Pragmatic competence is also viewed as “*the ability of the second language learner to use language according to the pragmatic rules that govern the use of linguistic utterances as used by native adult speakers*” (Nureddeen, 2008, p.280).

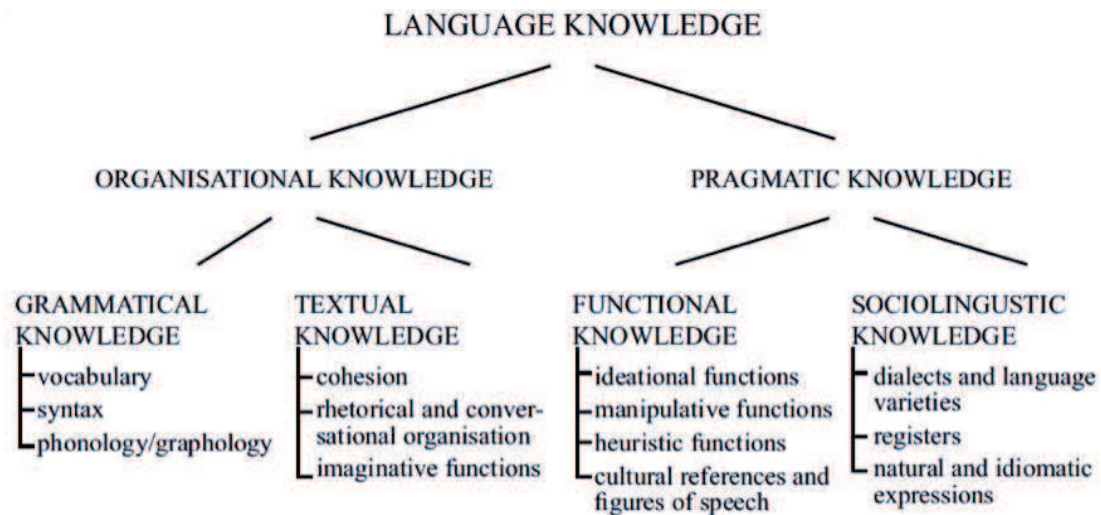
In Bialystok’s (1993) account,

*“Pragmatic competence entails a variety of abilities concerned with the use and interpretation of language in contexts. It includes speakers’ ability to use language for different purposes - to request, to instruct, to effect change. It includes listeners’ ability to get past the language and understand the speaker’s real intentions, especially when these intentions are not directly conveyed in the forms- indirect requests, irony and sarcasm. It includes command of the rules by which utterances are strung together to create discourse. To participate successfully in such conversations, speakers need to have mastered the three aspects of language listed above”* (p.43).

## **4.2. Bachman’s Model**

Language competence is viewed as “*knowledge of language*” (Bachman, 1990, p.85)

The main components of language competence are: organizational competence and pragmatic competence.



**Figure 1.** Areas of language knowledge (Source: Bachman and Palmer, 1996:68)

In this model, introduced by Bachman and Palmer, organizational knowledge consists of the capacity engaged in controlling formal language structures, that is, grammar and textual knowledge.

The grammatical knowledge, which includes several other areas of knowledge such as knowledge of vocabulary, syntax, morphology, and phonology, allows the recognition and the production of grammatically correct sentences as well as understanding their propositional content.

Textual knowledge permits the comprehension and the production of texts (spoken or written). It covers the necessary knowledge of conventions for combining sentences or utterances into texts, this means, knowledge of cohesion and rhetorical organization.

Pragmatic knowledge refers to the abilities used in order to create and interpret discourse. It consists of two main areas of knowledge: the first area is concerned with the knowledge of pragmatic conventions (functional knowledge) used for expressing language functions correctly and for interpreting the illocutionary power of utterances

or discourse. The second area is the knowledge of sociolinguistic conventions for creating and interpreting contextually appropriate utterances.

### **4.3. Pragmatic Aspects of Communication**

The aspects of the communicative competence that are associated with pragmatics refer how language is being used in an interactional situation to achieve the speaker's intended goals.

#### **4.3.1. Functional Competence**

This competence refers to the speaker's capacity to fulfill communicative purposes in a language. People tend to have a variety of aims for which they use language, for instance, greeting, expressing apology, asking for clarification, and so on.

#### **4.3.2. Sociolinguistic Competence**

This pragmatic aspect of communication stands for the ability to make interpretations of the social meaning in a communicative situation.

#### **4.3.3. Interactional Competence**

It involves the knowledge as well as the use of the mostly-unwritten rules to interact effectively in varied situations within a given speech community and culture. It also entails the knowledge of initiating and managing conversations, negotiating meaning with other people, and knowing what kind of body language, eye contact, and proximity to other people are appropriate to act accordingly.

#### 4.3.4. Cultural Competence

It refers to the ability to get the behavior from the perspective of the members of that culture and to act in a way that would be understood by them. Cultural competence encompasses a close understanding of cultural aspects, social structure, values, beliefs and the way things are supposed to be done.

### 5. Pragmatic Failure

Cross-cultural communication requires both speakers' sufficient mastery of the linguistic knowledge of the target language and their pragmatic competence.

However studies carried out in this area shows that communicators commit mistakes when at the level of social rules and conventions.

*Most of our misunderstandings of other people are not due to any inability to hear them or to parse their sentences or to understand their words ...A far more important source of difficulty in communication is that we so often fail to understand a speaker's intention.*(Miller 1974)

Pragmatic failure refers to the “*inability to understand 'what is meant by what is said'.* (Thomas, 1983).This occurs mainly when speakers of the same speech community misunderstands each other and results in cross-cultural communication breakdown.

J. Thomas (1983) points out that pragmatic failure occurs on any occasion “*On which H (the hearer) perceives the force of S's (the speaker's) utterance as other than S intended she or he should perceive it*”. The following illustrations are given by Thomas to clarify her definition:

“a. H perceives the force of S's utterance stronger or weaker than S intended s/he should perceive it;

- b. H perceives as an order an utterance that S intended s/he should perceive as a request;
- c. H perceives S's utterance as ambivalent where S intended no ambivalence;
- d. S expects H to be able to infer the force of his/her utterance, but is relying on the system of knowledge or beliefs that S and H do not share." (1983, 94)

***Example 1***

Misunderstanding at level 1 (Failure to understand which proposition S has expressed)

A (to fellow passenger on a long-distance coach): Ask the driver what time we get to Birmingham.

B (to driver): Could you tell me when we get to Birmingham, please?

Drivers don't worry, love, it's a big place—I don't think it's possible to miss it!

In this case, the driver understood that B's utterance was a request for information, but misunderstood the intended sense of when.

***Example 2***

Misunderstanding at level 2 (Failure to understand the intended pragmatic force of S's utterance)

A: Is this coffee sugared?

B: I don't think so. Does it taste as if it is?

In this case, B interprets A's utterance as a genuine request for information rather than, as A intended, a complaint (Gloss: As usual, you've forgotten to sugar it!), the intended effect of which was to elicit an apology and an offer to fetch the sugar.

(Thomas, 1983, p.93)

In another definition provided by He Ziran (1997) “*Pragmatic failures are not the errors in diction, but those mistakes failing to fulfill communication because of infelicitous style, incompatible*

In this perspective, to function effectively the learners needs not only a grammatical knowledge, that is, to speak fluently respecting the correct use of grammar, but also pragmatic knowledge '*the ability to use language ... in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context*' (Thomas, i b i d ).

“*Pragmatic failure is committed when the speaker uses grammatically correct sentences, but unconsciously violates the interpersonal relationship rules, social conventions, or takes little notice of time, space and addressee.*” (Qian Guanlian, 2002) .Here again learners can communicate effectively when they know how to use language in context. Rules that govern grammar tend to be prescriptive while pragmatic competence varies across cultures.

*“When the speaker uses sentences with correct symbol relations in verbal communication, but speaks ill-timed, improperly or not habitually, he tends to unconsciously violate interpersonal norms, social conventions, or run counter to the sense of worth in the culture of target language by neglecting the time and space of communication, the identity and status of speakers and the occasion of communication, which leads to the barrier of the communication and results in the interruption of the communication and failure to achieve a satisfactory desired communicative aim. Failure of this kind is called pragmatic failure.”* Qian (1997, p.195)

## 5.1. Types of Pragmatics Failure

Thomas (1983) distinguished between two major types of pragmatic: pragmalinguistic failure and sociolinguistic failure.

### 5.1.1. Pragmalinguistic failure

Learners in English language classroom tend to acquire a great deal of the language through their own efforts. What they learn in the classroom consists to large part of grammar but when it comes to communication, especially with native speakers, they end up mismatching pragmatic force of utterances. For Thomas (1983) pragmalinguistic failure “*occurs when the pragmatic force mapped by S onto a given utterance is systematically different from the force most frequently assigned to it by native speakers of the target language, or when speech act strategies are inappropriately transferred from L<sub>1</sub> to L<sub>2</sub>.*”

According to liu (2004) pragmalinguistic failure is related to linguistic deficiency “*caused by differences in the linguistic encoding of pragmatic force*». In this perspective, pragmalinguistic failure happens when the pragmatic force of a linguistic structure differs from the normally assigned linguistic structure by a native speaker. Pragmalinguistic failure is considered as a linguistic problem results from differences in the linguistic encoding of pragmatic force. (Thomas, 1983) She points out that this type of pragmatic failure may be caused by two main identifiable sources: “teaching-induced errors” and “pragmalinguistic transfer”, where speech-act strategies are transferred inappropriately from L<sub>1</sub> to L<sub>2</sub>.

*“The inappropriate transfer of speech act strategies from one language to another, or the transferring from the mother tongue to the target language of utterances which are semantically/syntactically equivalent, but which, because of*

*different 'interpretive bias', tend to convey a different pragmatic force in the target language”(Thomas,1983, p.101)*

Native speakers tend to assign utterances certain pragmatic force, for example, “can you X?” is likely to be interpreted as a request rather than a question as to one’s ability to do X. In other languages, French and Russian, for example, the opposite is true. Similarly, the utterance X, would you like to read?, which in an English classroom would be a highly conventionalized polite request/directive to do so, in a Russian classroom often elicited the response no, I wouldn't (from students who had no intention of being rude, but who genuinely thought that their preferences were being consulted) (Thomas, 1983 p.101)

Another source of pragmalinguistic failure is Teacher-induced errors, in EFL language classroom learners do not have enough opportunity to be exposed to an authentic English environment and to interact with native English speakers. The classroom and the textbooks constitute the major sources of the foreign culture and pragmatic knowledge. But, teaching techniques applied by English teachers may increase the possibility for a pragmatic failure. In addition, English syllabus in the University does not contain enough focus on pragmatic knowledge and cultural information. Pragmatics as a subject of study is introduced only in the seventh semester for first year master students. Students can achieve high scores in exams but commit pragmatic failure in real-life communication.

*« Though a large amount of linguistic knowledge is covered, there is not enough of the pragmatic knowledge that is needed in cross-cultural communication. Textbooks usually provide standard patterns of different utterances used in practical interaction. However, in the real situation, foreigners do not necessarily follow*

*these patterns. Therefore, students may have difficulties in understanding what foreigners say and they may commit pragmatic failures since they always make utterances according to the rules and patterns they have learnt in class.*"(Zheng Lihui and Huang Jianbin, 2010, p.48)

### **5.1.2. Sociopragmatic Failure**

The second type of pragmatic failure is referred to as sociopragmatic failure "*which I use to refer to the social conditions placed on language in use*" (Thomas, 1983, p.99).in other words, it is the study of social and cultural components in language use, essentially the use of language that is appropriate to different social context. It stems from the different intercultural perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behavior concerning the size of imposition, social distance, rights and obligations of the participants.

Thomas suggests that this type of pragmatic failure is more difficult to overcome and to correct since it requires from learners to change their beliefs and value system. "*Sociopragmatic decisions are social before they are linguistic, and while foreign learners are fairly amenable to corrections which they regard as linguistic, they are justifiably sensitive about having their social (or even political, religious, or moral) judgment called into question.*"(Thomas, 1983, p.104)

Some examples of sociopragmatic failure derive from:

- a) The size of imposition: for example, what a person considers a free good (i.e. asking 'what time is it?') varies depending on the relations and the situation.
- b) To make reference in the L2 to something taboo in that culture, although this topic can be openly discussed in the L1.

c) Power and social distance assessments that vary interculturally, for example, teachers in some cultures have more power over students than in others. (Lucia Fernandez Amaya, 2008, p.13)

## **6. Causes of Pragmatic Failure**

### **6.1. Pragmatic Transfer**

Speakers in cross-cultural communication are guided by certain cultural norms. In accordance with these conventions, they select what to say in a communicative situation and evaluate other people's speech. EFL learners are greatly impacted by their own cultural conventions and while communicating with foreigners they subconsciously apply the conventions of their mother tongue to the target language leading to a breakdown in communication. Kasper (1992) defines pragmatic transfer as *"the influence exerted by learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production, and acquisition of L2 pragmatic information."*

Pragmatic transfer involves the use of one's sociolinguistic rules of speaking when communicating with the host speech community (Wolfson, 1989). If this transfer leads to pragmatic failure, it is considered as negative pragmatic transfer. Sociolinguistic rules of speaking, termed as social rules of speaking, refers to the norms and values that dictates what is considered as appropriate to say, to whom, and under what conditions (Wolfson, 1989), for instance, American English speakers, expressing disagreement without mitigation could be interpreted as rude.

### **6.2. Inadequate Pragmatic Knowledge**

The lack of a full and appropriate knowledge of sociolinguistic rules of speaking (pragmatic knowledge) can lead to cross-cultural pragmatic failure.

Inadequate pragmatic knowledge can result from inappropriate teaching methods and lack of practice.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter we have discussed that pragmatic competence is an integral part of communication. Pragmatic failure, which refers to the inability to understand what the speaker means, may result from the inadequate knowledge of pragmatic aspects, namely, implicature, speech acts, politeness, situational routines, and cooperative principles.

In the next chapter we will discuss pragmatics in language classroom and the difficulties that prevail over developing adequate pragmatic competence.

## **Chapter Two: Pragmatics and Classroom Instruction**

## **Introduction**

Pragmatics constitutes one of the most important components of EFL classroom. Language learners should be supplied with adequate knowledge of pragmatics. Teachers face difficulties in teaching pragmatics because of one or a combination of several factors that may prevent them from ensuring an accurate understanding of aspects of pragmatics that learners will need in their communication especially in native contexts. In this chapter, we will discuss the importance of pragmatics in EFL classroom and the difficulties that instructors face in instructing and developing learners' pragmatic competence.

### **2.1. Pragmatics and Language Instruction**

There are two main sources or channels from which EFL learners develops pragmatic competence: exposure to input and production of output through the use of the target language in the classroom, or from a planned pedagogical interventions directed towards the effective acquisition of pragmatics (Kasper and Rose, 2002)

Language classrooms are seen as poor environments for developing pragmatic competence compared with outside classroom environment, this can be traced back to the insufficient or lack of interaction with native speakers of the target language. This imposed great demands on adequate instruction. EFL class activities often focus on de-contextualized language exercises, which do not offer an exposure to the sociolinguistic input that would facilitate the acquisition of the pragmatic competence.

Research results has shown that many aspects of pragmatic competence cannot be acquired without a focus on pragmatics instruction (Kasper, 2000).The plain exposure to the target language is insufficient , in addition , pragmatic functions and

relevant contextual factors are not salient to learners and therefore are not likely to be noticed (Schmidt, 1993).

Kasper (1997) recognizes that the state of incompatibility between linguistic proficiency and pragmatic performance as evidence of the necessity of instruction in pragmatics. Thus, unless some instruction, pragmatic competence will not develop automatically or sufficiently. The reason that is argued by Leech (1983, p.31), behind pragmatic failure can be ascribed to learners' ignorance of the pragmatic rules of the foreign language they are studying, and the transfer of the norms of the learners' community to the target language community.

### **2.1.2. Pragmatics and Classroom Interaction**

In EFL classroom, the teacher dominates and controls the interaction and Learners receive a very little chance to interact amongst themselves freely. Thomas concludes that classroom interaction (discourse) can be partly responsible for pragmatic failure revealed by the inappropriateness in the usage of propositional explicitness. Holmes (1983:97) says: *“The teacher-pupil relationship is as asymmetrical one; the teacher is older and more knowledgeable than the pupils. The teacher is expected to be in control, to preserve an appropriate social distance from pupils, and to instruct and inform children: to teach them the body facts and skills the society values”* From this perspective of the teacher as knowledge holder, gives him/her the full control over the classroom and most of their directives takes the form of commands.

Holmes expands this view by saying that teacher's directives *“... utterances intended by the teacher as suggestions, such as “would you like to do a puzzle? Will almost certainly heard as commands, given the social constraints on classroom*

*interaction and the form of social relationship between teacher and pupil.*” (Holmes, 1983, p.112). Creating a healthy learning atmosphere in the EFL setting (classroom) requires teachers to sit or to stand in front of a row of learners who are following him/her attentively and give them instructions that cannot be wrongly interpreted as anything else (e.g. orders or commands).

Holmes perceived that despite of the social constraint on classroom interaction, misunderstanding occurs. She illustrates this point with an example of students who put up their hands despite the fact that they don't know the answer when the teacher says:” Hands up”.

Classroom interaction is remarkably distinct from outside classroom interaction. Pragmatic instruction should be directed towards providing students with the appropriate linguistic tools that permits the realization and the comprehension of linguistic actions in context (Rueda, 2006: p.171). Kasper & Schmidt (1996) in Rueda (2006) states that pragmatic instruction has received a great deal of interest because of the decrease of the opportunities for the full range of human interactions resulting in the learners ‘difficulty in acquiring language use patterns and sociolinguistic ability. In EFL context, such as Algeria, learners do not have a direct contact with English native speakers. But they still have other chances to interact with natives via the virtual world (internet).

According to Kasper (in Rueda, 2006) classroom interaction does not supply learners with appropriate input required for the production of linguistic actions needed for authentic communication in target language. Therefore, pragmatic instruction in EFL classroom should fulfill three main functions:

- (1) Exposing learners to appropriate target language input.
- (2) Raising learner's pragmatic awareness.

(3) Arranging authentic opportunities to practice pragmatic knowledge

(Rueda, 2006)

### **2.1.3. Pragmatic Competence Teaching**

Pragmatic competence is vital for language learners and should be given its due potential because learners will face serious communicative problems if this competence is undervalued; however research carried out by Echeverria Castillo (2009) indicates that developing pragmatic competence seems to be neglected by teachers in the English language classroom. He asserts that EFL teachers “*often do not include this area of English because of a lack of time, knowledge or awareness of the importance of its use in daily life*” (2009: 2).

Pragmatic competence should be given priority in EFL language classroom and not be neglected in favor of other aspects of the language, for instance, grammar, reading or writing.

*“[although] elements such as fluency and accuracy are important for effective performance, learners (...) may encounter themselves in a difficult position when they have to interact with native speakers of English, because they have received extensive training in areas such as grammar, listening, and speaking, reading and writing, but not in the pragmatic elements that are a significant part of the language”* (Echeverria Castillo, 2009, p. 1-2).

Many scholars share the view that pragmatic competence is not learned merely by exposure, educators are mainly concerned with how to go about the task of teaching culture ‘*not as if it were a fifth skill to be added on to L2 study but by taking cultural context as central*’ (Kramsch1993: 13)

In another view pragmatic competence “*is not a piece of knowledge additional to the learners’ existing grammatical knowledge, but it is an organic part of the learners’ communicative competence*” (Kasper 1997: 2). In this case the teacher according to Thomas (1983) plays the following role: “*Equip the student to express her/himself in exactly the way s/he chooses to do so –rudely, tactfully, or in an elaborately polite manner. What we want to prevent is her/his being unintentionally rude or subservient.*”(p.96) .She means that the teacher has to provide and equip learners with the necessary knowledge in order to be able to make their own decision on how to use the target language.

Bardovi-Harlig (1996) suggests that teachers play undeniable role in raising learners’ pragmatic awareness. Among the different ways she suggested to promote pragmatic competence, teachers can help learners think about how a particular speech act differs in their own language by leading a classroom discussions and data collection outside the classroom context.

Holmes and Brown (1987) developed a set of studies that aims to facilitate pragmatic competence.

*To succeed in a world where English is used for international interpersonal communication, it is necessary to master the English language. Thus we need to (...) [be able} to adapt our language to an ever increasing number of topics, areas of interest and communication situations. We must be able to distinguish between spoken and written styles and informal and formal styles. Moreover, when using the language in communication, we must also be able to take cultural norms and conventions into consideration*

(Udtanningsdirektoratet 2010: Objectives of the Subject section, Para. 2).

In this perspective in order to develop a pragmatic competence , students are in need to more than knowing the “basics of pragmatics” they should be able to know how to perform speech acts according to the cultural context of the interaction.

#### **2.1.4. The Importance of Teaching Pragmatics**

Pragmatic competence doesn't spring overnight unless learners received practice and exposure to authentic language use. The ultimate goal of teaching pragmatics in EFL classroom according to Hui (2007):

*“For avoiding miscommunication caused by cultural difference, being familiar with diverse cultures and pragmatics is essential...in other words; the teaching and the learning of pragmatics would release the difficulties of international communications for both native and non-native speakers” (p.1).*

For Bardovi-Harling and Mahan-Taylor (2003), the major purpose of pragmatic instruction is to raise learners' pragmatic awareness and offer them choices about their target language interactions. *«the goal of instruction in pragmatics is not to insist on conformity to a particular target norm, but rather to help learners become familiar with the range of devices and practices in the target language” (p.3).” with such instruction, learners can maintain their own cultural identities and participate more fully in the target language communication, and gain control of the force and outcome of their contributions” (kondo, 2003, p.1)* Pragmatics and language teaching are interwoven:

*“Pragmatics and language learning are inherently bound. Pragmatics provide language teachers and learners with a research based understanding of the language forms and functions that are appropriate to the many contexts in which a language is used-an understanding that is crucial to a proficient speaker’s communicative competence”* Bouton in Guerra (2003, p10).

The objective that lies behind the teaching of English as EFL is to produce competent learners who can communicate in different situations and contexts. Teresa (2009) asserts that this involves” *being able to control a wide range of language functions, which are how speakers use language for requesting, congratulating, apologizing, complaining, consoling, and promising, among many other functions”* (p.1).

### **2.1.5. The Goals of Teaching Pragmatic Competence**

The major aim of instruction in pragmatics is to raise learner’s pragmatic awareness and to offer them choices for their classroom interaction and to assist them to gain familiarity with the range of pragmatic devices and practices in the target language. With such instruction, learners can maintain their own cultural identities and participate fully in communication with a control on both intended force and outcome of their contributions (Giles and Coupland, 1991).

In order to shape a good pragmatic competence for EFL learners, the following should be taken into account since language learning involves reading, writing, listening and speaking do not occur in vacuum; In the course design, objectives and goals should be made to meet the learners’ needs to help them improve communicative competence.

Since the primary objective behind language learning is to offer fluency and accuracy in written as well as spoken modes of communication, language teachers have to pay attention in designing communicative activities that is used in favor of developing communicative competence.

Teachers should design the appropriate course material to motivate learners and engage them in the pragmatic, coherent and functional uses of language for communicative purposes. *“The functional study of language means, studying how language is used. For instance, trying to find out what the specific purposes that language serves for us, and how the members of a language community achieve and react to these purposes through speaking, reading, writing and listening”* Erton (1997,p.7).

For learners to conduct communication with accuracy, they must well develop the pragmatic competence. There exist a number of useful activities that can be employed to develop pragmatic competence. Furthermore, learners should be aware of the necessity of such a competence in acquiring the target language. *“Linguistic behavior is social Behavior. People talk because they want to socialize, in the widest possible sense of the world : either for fun, or to express themselves to other humans, or for some ‘serious’ purposes, such as building a house, closing a deal, solving a problem and so on.”*

(Mey, 1993, p.185-6).

This suggests that communication occurs in a meaningful context that is governed by rules, *“Such a context naturally presupposes the existence of a particular society, with its implicit and explicit values, norms, rules and laws, and with all its particular conditions of life: economic, social, political and cultural.”* (Mey, 1993, p.186-7).

## **2.1.6. Challenges of Teaching Pragmatic Competence in EFL**

### **Setting**

Teachers, non-native speakers, in EFL contexts need to be well trained and predisposed to teach pragmatic aspect of language. Teachers, the first pillar in developing communicative competence, should be provided with the pragmatic course so that *“they can help their students see the language in context, raise consciousness of the role of pragmatics, and explain the function pragmatics play in specific communicative event”* (Brock and Nagasaka, 2005, p.20)

ELT material is considered as the second pillar in developing the learners’ pragmatic competence. It is vitally important that language teaching materials include pragmatic materials in order to assist learners to develop this important competence. Teachers will make use of this materials as a major source of pragmatic knowledge because as Brock and Nagasaka (2005) points out: *“teachers in EFL settings, where there are relatively few opportunities for students to use the language in communicative contexts”*

### **6.1. Challenge Related to Course Books**

Learners’ pragmatic divergence can be assigned to the impact of the instruction and the instructional materials being used by the teachers rather than being attributed only to the learners’ insufficient pragmatic knowledge or partial pragmatic control. One of the challenges that EFL teachers encounter is related to the pragmatic value of the materials being exploited.

Practitioners are dissatisfied with how materials are presented, in other words these materials are pragmatically inadequate in the sense that students are occasionally given models that contextually appropriate. *“The responsibility for teaching the pragmatic aspects of language use falls on teachers. However, as*

*language teachers, we face certain challenges. These include lack of adequate materials and training, which are the result of a lack of emphasis on pragmatic issues in ESL language methodology recourse” (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005, p.199).*

## **6.2. Challenge Related to Courses in Teachers’ Training**

Pragmatic competence constitutes a key component of strategic competence, including how learners use specific language forms so that to perform the intended language functions. According to Vallegna, et.al (2007, p.20) EFL/ESL classrooms lack authentic language input and teachers do not typically have the necessary skills to create pragmatic learning exercises for their students.

Competence in pragmatics involves the understanding of the following concepts:

- Language varies its structure systematically according to functions (e.g. starting or ending a conversation, expressing disagreement, apologizing, requesting, refusing, etc.).
- Politeness and appropriate language use varies according to contextual features.
- Contextual features have different levels of importance in different languages.
- Speakers make sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic choices when expressing speech acts. (Vallenga,et all, 2007, p.21)

## **6.3. Challenge Related to Language Class Size**

Another challenge that is considered as a barrier to the realization of pragmatic competence in EFL setting is the unmanageable class size. Large classes reduce the learners’ opportunity to interact due to the limited contact hours.

Pragmatic learning is affected greatly by such a factor because learners have a little chance to practice language in context.

#### **6.4. Challenge Related to Teachers' Sense of Self-Efficacy**

The two actors involved in the teaching and the learning processes are the learner and the teacher. The latter's beliefs and perceptions are especially critical because they are given essential role in determining what learner's need to learn and how to make them learn best. Research in this area shows that these perceptions and beliefs carried out by teachers have a considerable effect on their instructional practices, classroom behavior, and their students' achievement.

In many cases, teachers are not interested in pragmatic/communicative functions in the classroom. Omaggio (in Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor, 2008) states the following reasons which drive teachers to ignore and put aside intercultural/pragmatic competence in the EFL class:

- Teachers usually have an overcrowded curriculum to cover and lack the time to spend on teaching culture, which requires a lot of work;
- Many teachers have a limited knowledge of the target culture and , therefore, afraid to teach it;
- Teachers are often confused about what cultural aspects to cover (p.165).

#### **6.5. Challenges Related to the Attitude toward English Language**

Attitudes hold by learners towards the use of English outside classroom context can have a negative influence on the development of pragmatic competence.

In this respect Algerian learners consider speaking English out of the university as a "showing off".

#### **6.6. Challenges Related to Learners' Level of Target Language Proficiency**

Inter-language pragmatics becomes interested in how the learners' level of target language proficiency affects the pragmatic competence development. Researchers

found that pragmatic ability progresses in line with language proficiency (Rose, 2000).

### **6.7. Challenges Related to pragmatic Teaching Methods**

Pragmatics is an integral aspect of language; it should not be conceived as a separable language aspect that calls for special and independent teaching methods. Childs (in Bouchard, 2011) states:

*“Pragmatics is not an optional add-on. It is a necessary facet of language and of language learning. That is because the whole point is no longer grammatical form but communication of meaning, and that is based on situations. The emphasis is on appropriate patterns, whether they are grammatical or not”* (p.40) this argument places emphasis on the teaching pragmatics but it does not neglect the equal importance of the knowledge of grammar in communicative competence.

The combination of the two aspects creates the required condition to repair pragmatic failure.

### **6.8. Challenge Related to the Availability of Inputs**

Research carried in EFL settings informs that the range of communicative functions (speech acts) and the realization strategies are narrowed and restricted in terms of pragmatic input and the associated opportunities for practicing discourse organization strategies. Kasper (1997) says that learners may not be able to detect input features that are relevant. Input should be made salient through “input enhancement», an implicit instructional technique that provides no meta-pragmatic information, so that to attract learners’ attention and raise their consciousness about the target features.

Takahashi (2001) makes the distinction between three main kinds of input enhancement: explicit teaching, featuring meta-pragmatic explanation about *form-*

*function* relationships of the target structures; *form-comparison*, in which students conduct a comparison between their own speech acts realizations and those associated with native speakers; and *form-search*, in which students identify the target strategies.

## **Conclusion**

EFL teachers aim through the teaching of pragmatics to produce competent communicators that can interact freely and naturally in native contexts. Pragmatics should be given its due place in EFL classes and should not be undervalued or neglected because learners will face several problems when it comes to communication. The teaching of pragmatics may encounter several difficulties that are attributed to teachers, materials, and learners. In the next chapter we will discuss the findings of data obtained through the questionnaire administered to teachers' and learners' of 1<sup>st</sup> year Master department of English Khenchela University as well as suggestions and recommendations for future research.

# Field Work

## **Introduction**

In order to identify the reasons that lie behind the poor pragmatic competence of first year Master students and to check their perceptions of the subject under study after being exposed to the modules of pragmatics; this chapter will be devoted to analyzing data obtained through the use of the questionnaire and the interview which are designed to provide us with the required data for our research.

First, a presentation of the population under study, to whom the questionnaire was administered, will be reviewed. Second, we will provide an analysis of the students' questionnaire. This data analysis will permit us to construct valid and reliable results about our hypothesis, if pragmatics is given enough time and accompany theory with practice; learners will develop complete and full pragmatic competence that will allow them to avoid cross-cultural pragmatic failure.

Second, the analysis of the interview which was conducted with the teacher of pragmatics will be discussed to inform the findings obtained from the questionnaire.

### **1. Methodology of Research**

We opt for the use of descriptive method which will permit us to identify the reasons behind the poor pragmatic competence of first year master students and moreover to collect the needed data about the subject under investigation. We didn't opt for an experimental study because of the limited period of time and its requirement of replication. Research findings may provide with a theoretical framework for future research that may opt for other methods use like the experimental one.

## **1.1. Population(Participants)**

For the current study, we deal with a sample of (33) Master students, from the total population of first year Master students about (200) postgraduate English student of the department of English, Abbess Laghrour University.

Our sample consisted of thirty three (33) students of both genders, males about 5(16.66%) and females about 25(84.33%). We assume that our sample of students would be homogeneous in terms of cultural environment.

### **1.1.2. Choice of the Sample**

The reason that lies behind our purposeful selection of first year Master students department of English at Khenchela University to work with is that we do believe that they have enough cultural knowledge and communicative competence and because the module of “Pragmatics” is introduced only during this year of study (precisely in the second semester).By the end of this year students normally are able to communicate effectively without any failures that would be attributed to the knowledge of language use.

The choice of teacher in charge of teaching pragmatics because he can provide us with the necessary data required in our study.

## **1.2. The Questionnaire**

*“A questionnaire is a form which is prepared and distributed for the purpose of securing responses.”*(Yogesh Kumar Singh, 2006, p.191). The major aim of using questionnaire is to investigate the learners’ perceptions about the importance of pragmatics, and to discover what difficulties that can affect the development of

pragmatic competence. It consists of 27 items, 11 likert scale items, 15 closed-ended questions and one (01) open-ended question.

### **1.2.1. Procedures: (Description of the questionnaire)**

The distribution of the questionnaire took place in April 14/2014 with students of first year Master students Department of English Abbess Laghrour University. The choice of this period to administer our questionnaire because by the end of the year students normally gain enough familiarity with pragmatics.

Our respondents are postgraduate students of English. They have been studying English for four years. Therefore, they got a lot of exposure to the English language and its culture.

Our sample is thirty three (33) students from a total population of about 200 students of first year Master of the English Department. Our subjects are postgraduate, Didactic of Languages and Cultures, in Abbess Laghrour University. We have selected 1<sup>st</sup> year Master students because they have been studying culture for three(03) years and pragmatics for one (01) semester which means that they are aware of the importance of “pragmatic competence”

The questionnaire was administered to thirty three (33) students in the session of culture and they were given time limit of 15 minutes to answer. An introducing paragraph precedes the 27 items. All items are spread out of three main sections, each one aimed to provide a specific set of information that would serve a relative aim, organized in a deductive order from general to specific elements. The following is a brief description of each section:

**Section One:** Background Information about Respondents (01→04)

It contains four major items designed to get general information about the students' sex, university studying background.

**Section two:** Students' Views about Studying Pragmatics (05→16)

The second section, which is made up of 11 questions of a likert scale is meant to supply us with student's general opinions of the importance of pragmatic competence in communication.

**Section three:** Student's views on Teaching Pragmatics in EFL classroom (17→ 27)

This section is designed to provide us with closely connected information related to pragmatics in terms of interest, difficulty, and communication. At the end of this section students are given a direct statement to permit respondents to reveal their suggestions to avoid breakdown in communication.

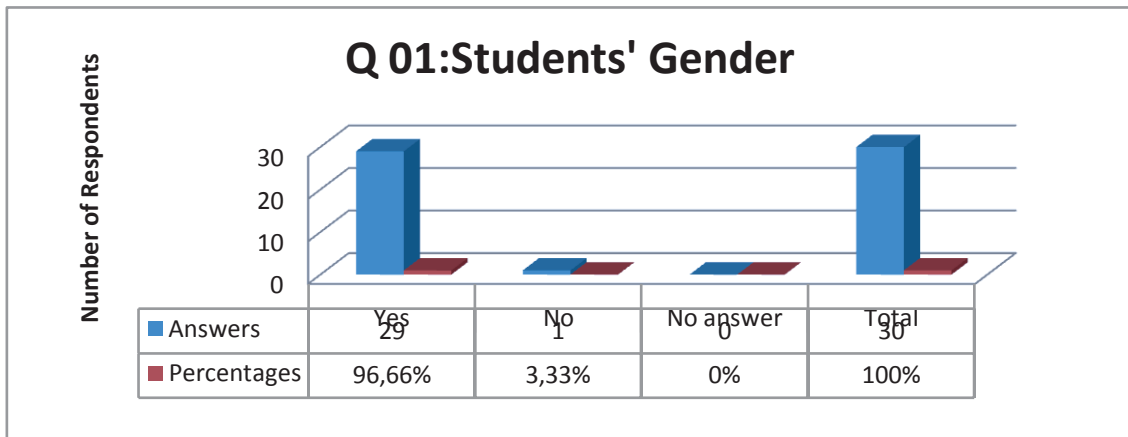
### **1.3. Data Collection and Analysis**

#### **1.3.1. Data analyses**

Data will be treated in graphs, and information will be presented and analyzed accordingly to the order of items in the questionnaire. When administering the questionnaire, students attaining the lecture of culture were 99 out of 200. When filtering the questionnaire 30 copies contained no answer, 22 copies contained similar answers; therefore, they would not be taken into consideration. The number of copies to be analyzed is 33.

**Section one:** (01→04)

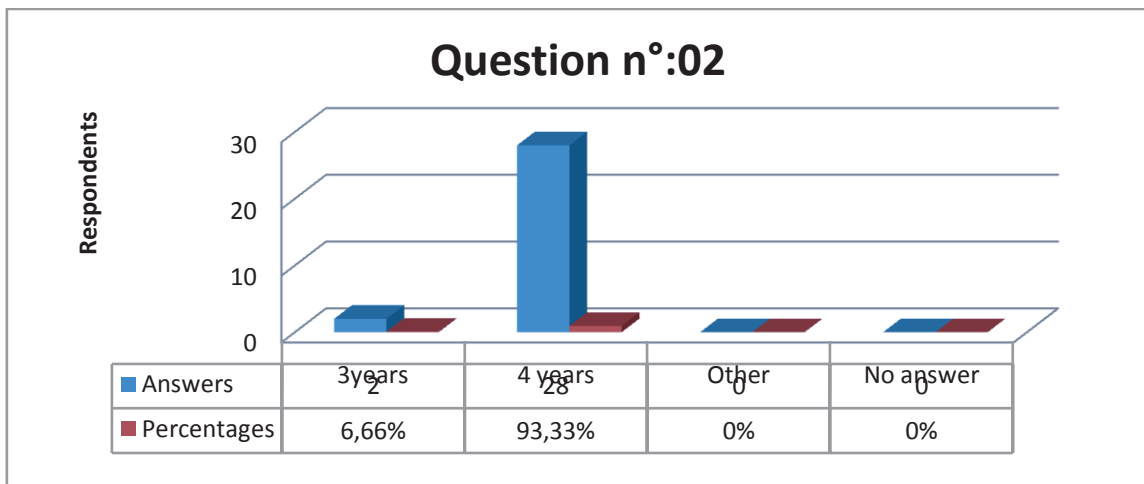
**Item 01:** Gender



**Figure n° 1: Students' Gender**

It is clear from the figure above that the leading majority is females with 25 (83.33%), which exceeds males' number constituting only 5(16.88%).

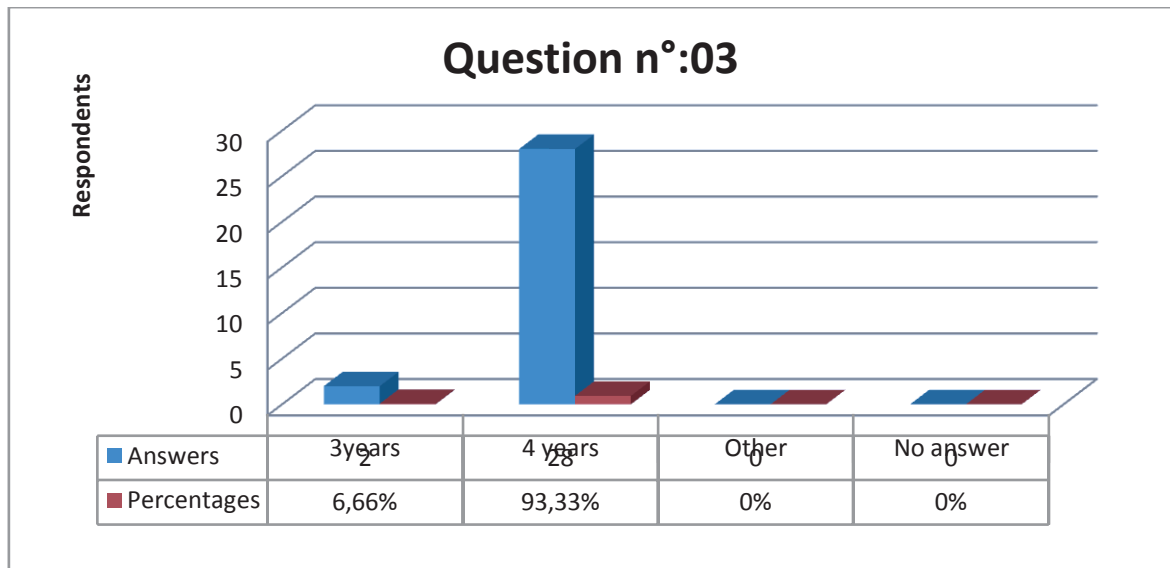
**Item 02: Have You Graduated from Khenchela University?**



**Figure n° 02: University of Graduation**

The findings show that the majority of the first year Master students have graduated from University of Abbess Laghrour 29(96.66%) and only 1(3.33%) have graduated from another university without mentioning its name.

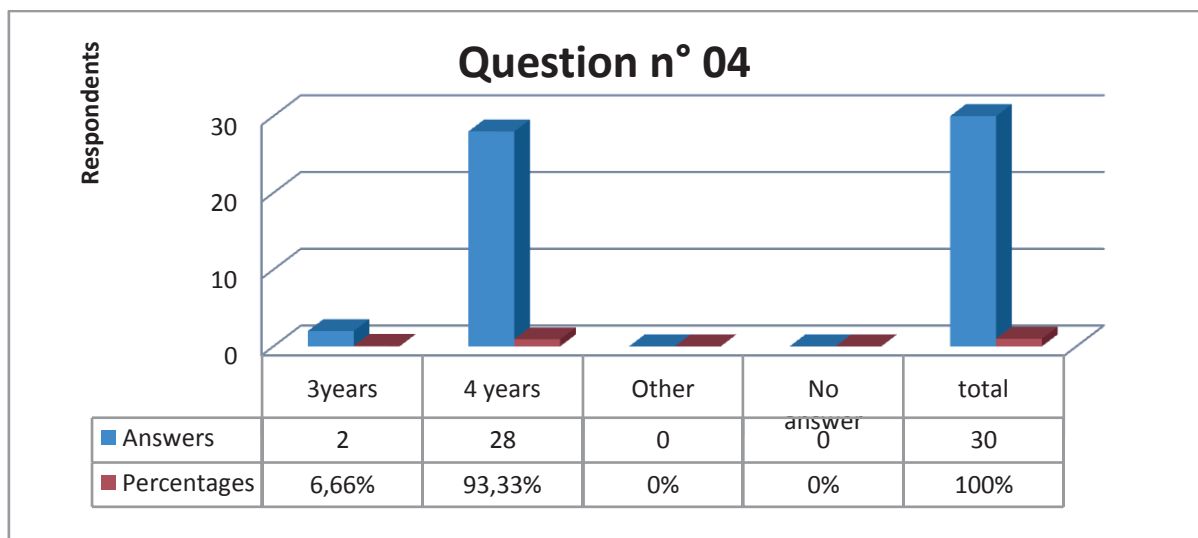
**Item 03: Was Studying English Your Choice?**



**Figure n°03:** Choice of Studying English

The results provide us with the information that the leading majority 26(86.66%) of the learners selected to study English by their own while 4(13.33%) the choice was imposed.

**Item n° 04: How Long Have You Been in the University?**



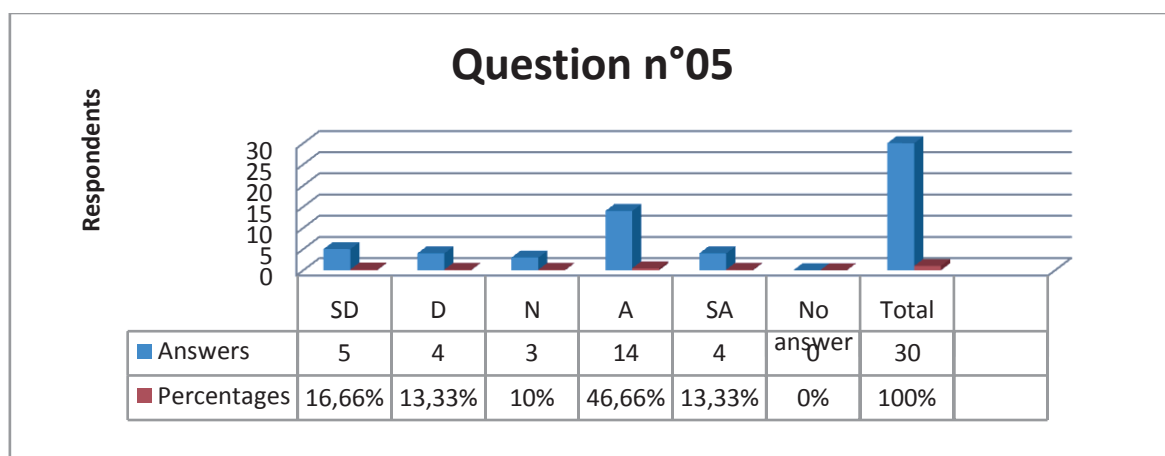
**Figure n°04:** Years of Study

The results shows that the leading majority of the learners 28(93.33%) have been studying English for a time period of four (04) years whereas only 2(6.66%) for three (03) years. This results show some learners misunderstood the question because being in first year Master degree means that they are studying English for four (04) years.

## Section One

This section revealed that we are dealing with heterogeneous population in terms of gender; the leading majority is formed by females. Our subjects have been studying English for four years (04) which may suggest that they have very satisfying communicative competence.

**Item n°05:** I believe learning English grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation mean learning English.

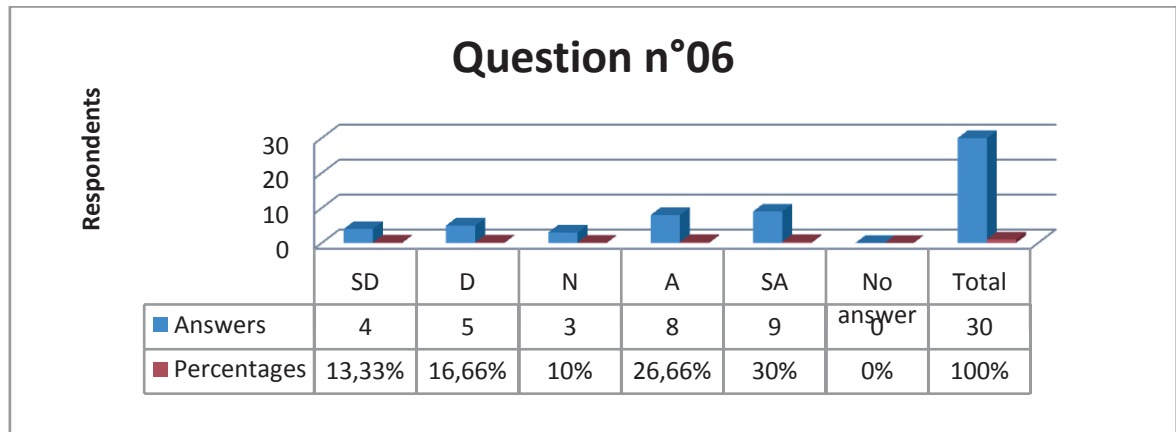


**Figure n° 05:** Communicative Competence

The findings indicate that English learning is restricted to the linguistic aspects only 14(46.66%) agree with this statement, 5(16.66%) strongly disagree which suggest that these learners are aware of the importance of other aspects besides the linguistic ones, 4(13.33%) disagree, and the same percent strongly agree while 3(10%) are natural

which means that they are not aware of the importance of these aspects in carrying effective communication.

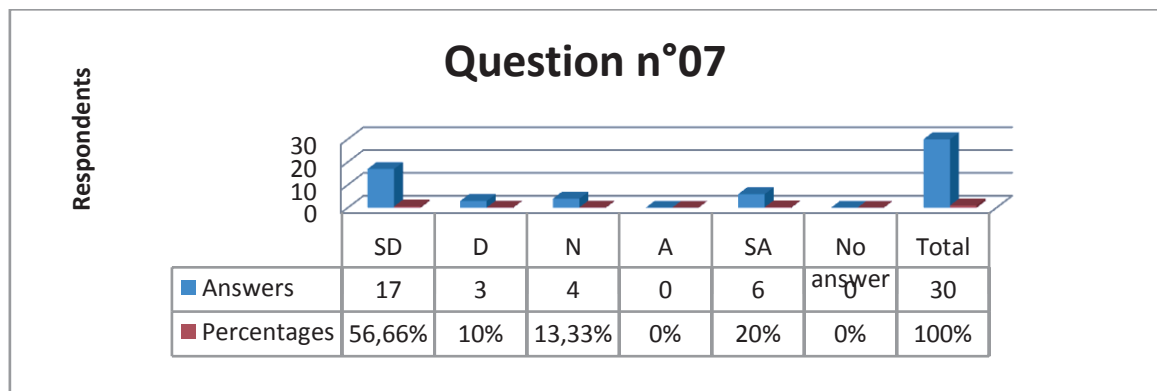
**Item n°06:** I think that the knowledge of how to use the language is as important as linguistic knowledge (e.g. vocabulary and grammar)



**Figure n°06:** the importance of pragmatic competence

The results suggest that the majority of learners are aware that the pragmatic competence (knowledge of how to use language) has equal importance with the linguistic competence 9(30%) strongly agree, 8(26.66%) agree, 3 (10%) natural, 5(16.66) disagree alongside with 4(13.33%) strongly disagree, meaning that the linguistic knowledge is enough to initiate and maintain communication.

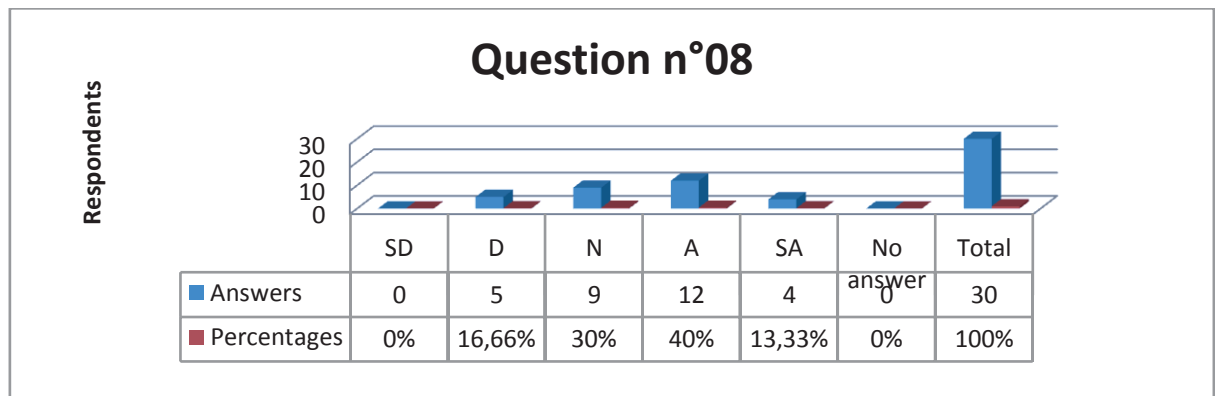
**Item n°07:** The main reason why I need to learn English is to pass the examination.



**Figure n°07: Purpose for Learning English**

It is clear that the main reason that pushed learners to study the English language is not only to pass examination 17(56.66%) strongly disagree,6(20%) strongly agree that they learn English only to pass examinations and not to serve other goals, 4(13.33%) are natural which may be interpreted as they have no aim in learning English, 3(10%) disagree.

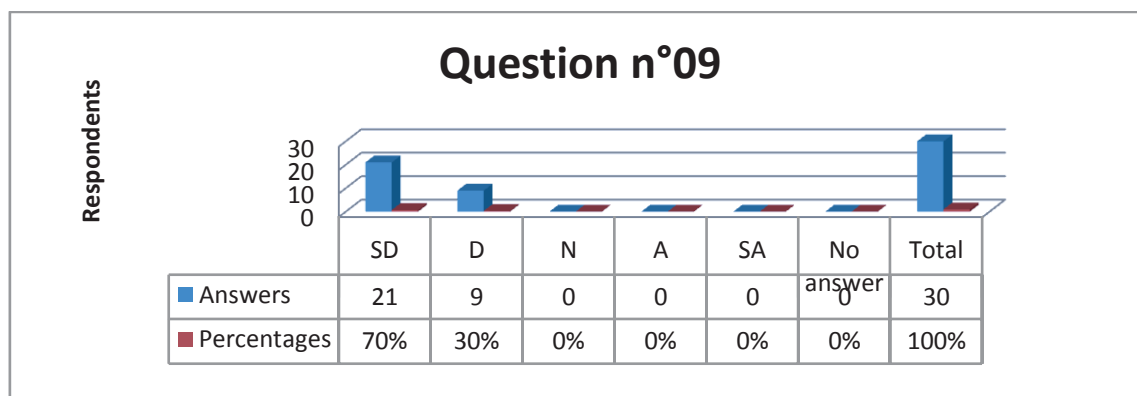
**Item n°08:** The syllabus provides much information on culture, conversation rules, usage, and on how to use English correctly.



**Figure n°08: The Syllabus**

The findings indicate that the learners agree that the syllabus carried out by teachers covers a great deal with the required knowledge about culture and language use 12(40%) agree while 9(30%) natural which may reflect their position towards the syllabus, 5(16.66%) disagree which may be understood that the syllabus does not provide the required information, and 4(13.33%) agree.

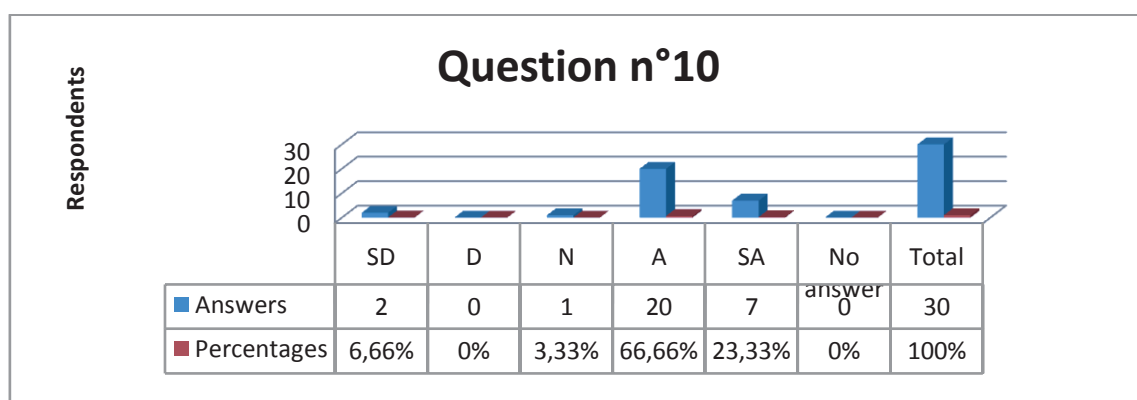
**Item n°09:** Communication activities are a waste of time in the English class.



**Figure n°09:** The Importance of the Communicative Activities

As it appears from the obtained results that learners are aware of the importance of the communicative activities in developing the communicative competence inside and outside the classroom, the leading majority 21(70%) strongly disagree, 9(30%) disagree with the statement that the communicative activities are merely a waste of time.

**Item n°10:** I admire the people who can communicate with others in English fluently and accurately.

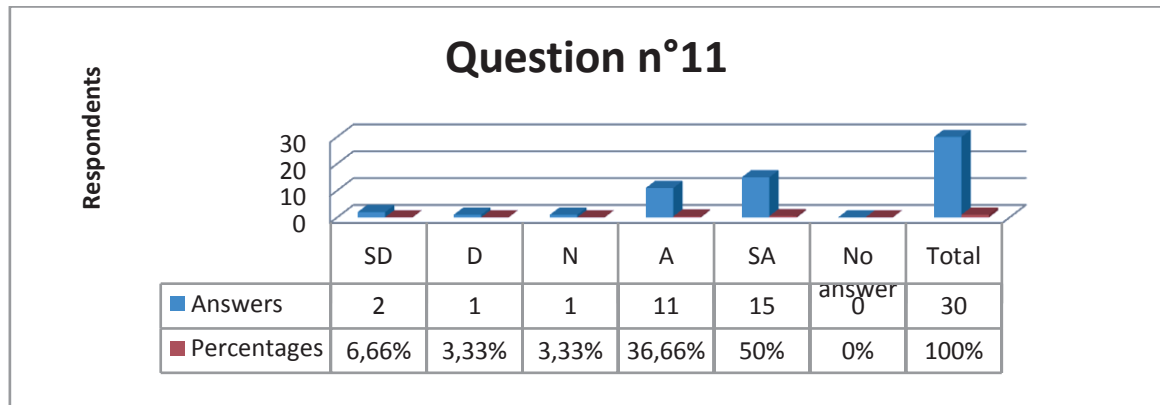


**Figure n°10:** Following a Model

From the findings, we can observe that the majority of the learners want to be effective and competent communicators and see the perfect model in people who can

interact accurately and effectively 20(66.66%) agree, 7(23.33%) strongly agree, 2 (6.66%) disagree, and 1(3.33%) natural.

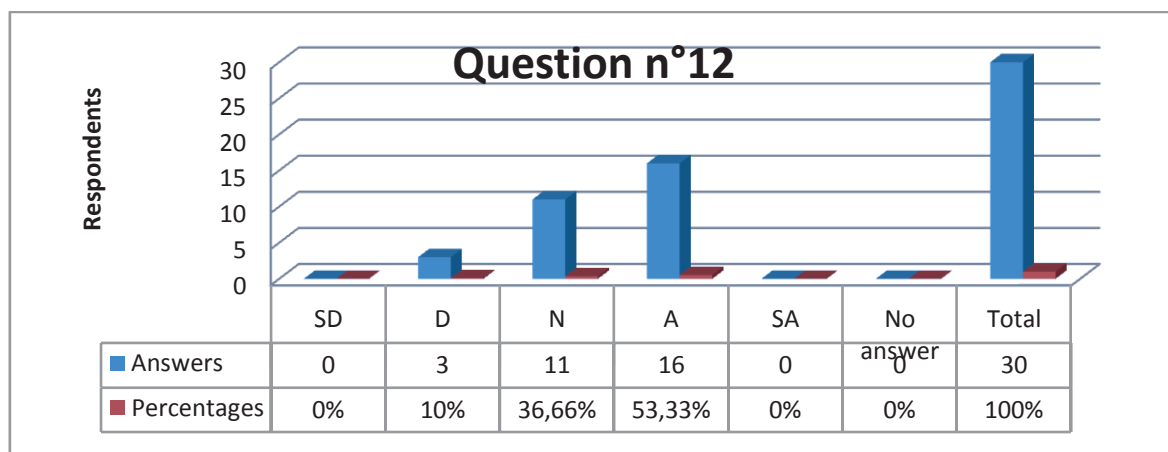
**Item n°11:** I think teachers should teach us how to communicate with people, and how to use English appropriately in the classroom teaching.



**Figure n°11:** Teaching Communicative Activities.

The findings indicates that the majority of learners need their teachers to teach them how to use English through assigning communicative activities that will build competent communicators 15 (50%) strongly agree, 11(36.66%) agree, while the remaining learners 2(6.66%) strongly disagree, 1(3.33%) disagree, 1(3.33%) natural which may suggest that these learners either found another way to absorb the language and use it effectively or they are not interested in the communicative function of the language.

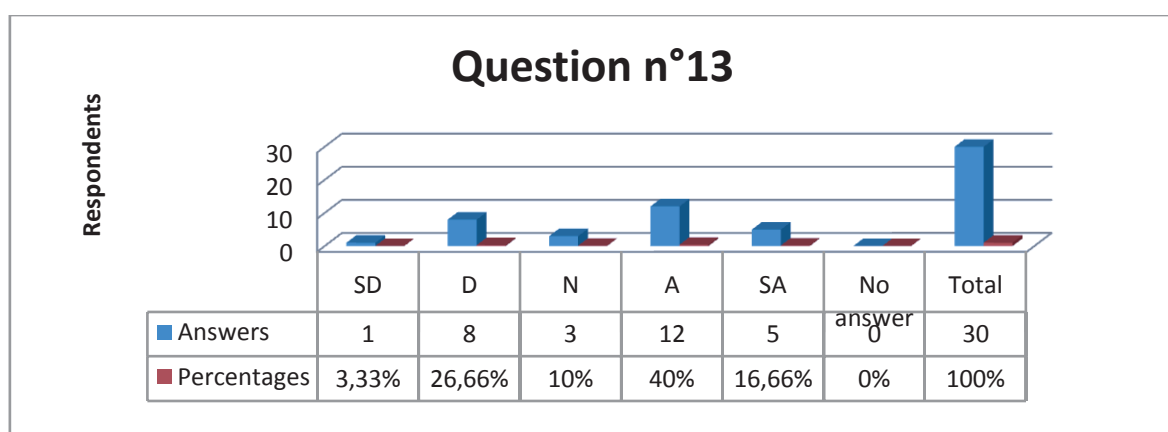
**Item n°12:** I know how to obtain cultural knowledge and appropriateness of language use in my learning.



**Figure n°12: Learning Strategies**

From the obtained results we can deduce that learners know how to get knowledge by themselves using their own ways or learning strategies 16(53.33%) agree 11(36.66%) natural, 3(10%) disagree, suggesting that they may rely on the teacher to provide them with the necessary knowledge on language use and culture.

**Item n°13:** Tasks used in English class provide me knowledge and skills to improve my ability to use English appropriately.

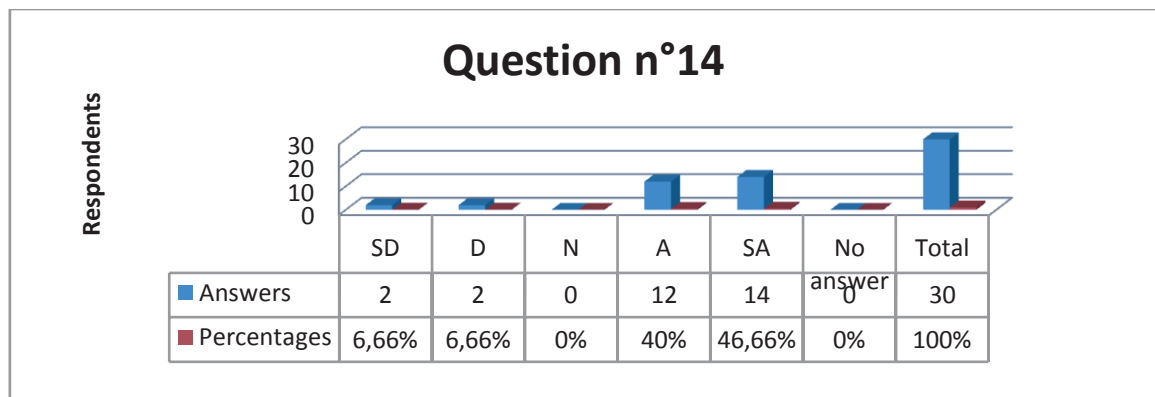


**Figure n°13: Classroom Activities**

It is apparent that tasks given to learners to fulfill inside the classroom aims to develop the necessary skills and competence in using the language 12(40%) agree,

while 8(26.66%) disagree which may be traced back to the degree of appropriateness of this tasks to the learners' level, 5(16.66%) strongly agree, 3(10%) natural, and 1(3.33%) strongly disagree.

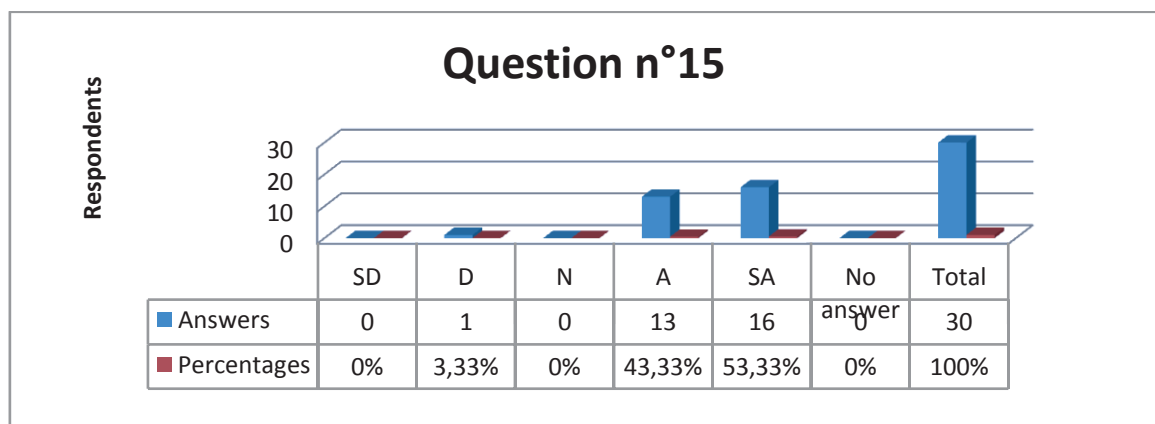
**Item n°14:** I prefer my English class to be focused on communicative language teaching and practice, with grammar explained when necessary.



**Figure n°14:** Classroom Focus

The leading majority of the learners wants to make language practice the focal aspect of the English class with a secondary emphasis on grammar point 14(46.66%) strongly agree, 12(40%) agree whereas, 2(6.66%) strongly disagree and disagree.

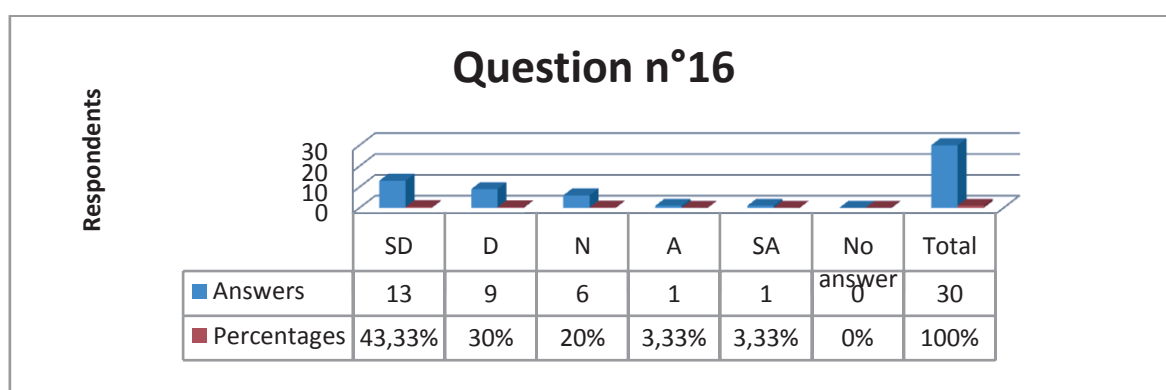
**Item n°15:** I think that teaching culture is necessary for developing communicative competence



### Figure n°15: Culture Teaching

It is clear from these findings that learners acknowledge the necessity of learning culture to improve their communicative competence 16(53.33%) strongly agree, 13(43.33%) agree while only 1(3.33%) disagree.

**Item n°16:** Learning pragmatics is unnecessary in EFL classroom.



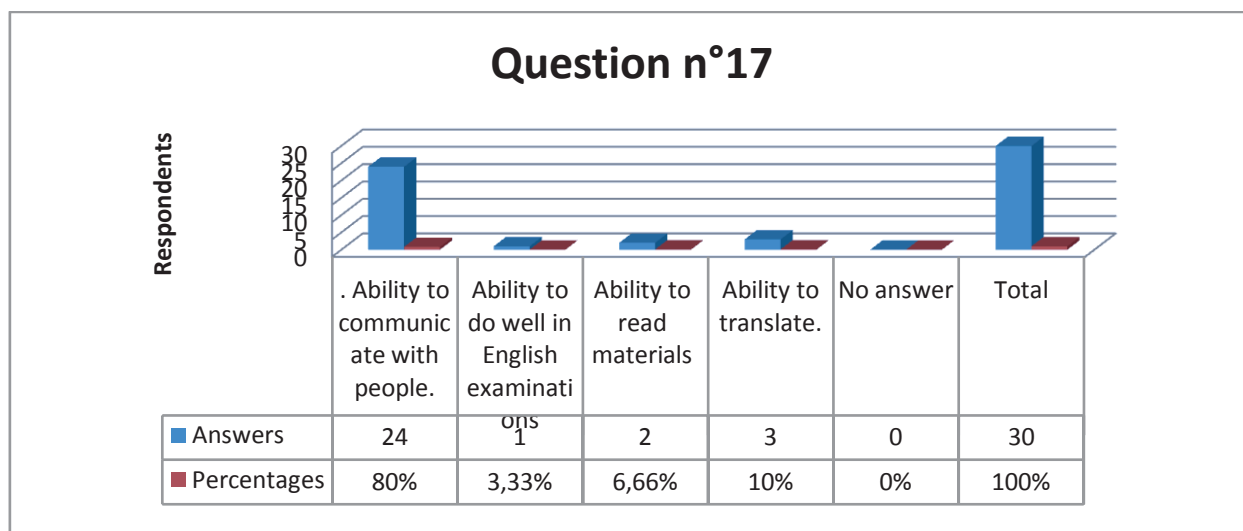
### Figure n°16: Pragmatics in EFL Classroom.

As the results suggests that learners find pragmatic necessary element in EFL classroom which reflects their awareness of its importance and role in communication 13(43.33%) strongly disagree with the statement, 9(30%) disagree, 6(20%) natural, and only 1(3.33%) either strongly agree or agree.

## Section Two

In this section, which is designed to collect data about the students' perceptions of the importance of studying pragmatics and its importance in effective communication, we found out that learners are aware of the vital role of pragmatics in communication which constitutes the main objective behind their selection of studying English.

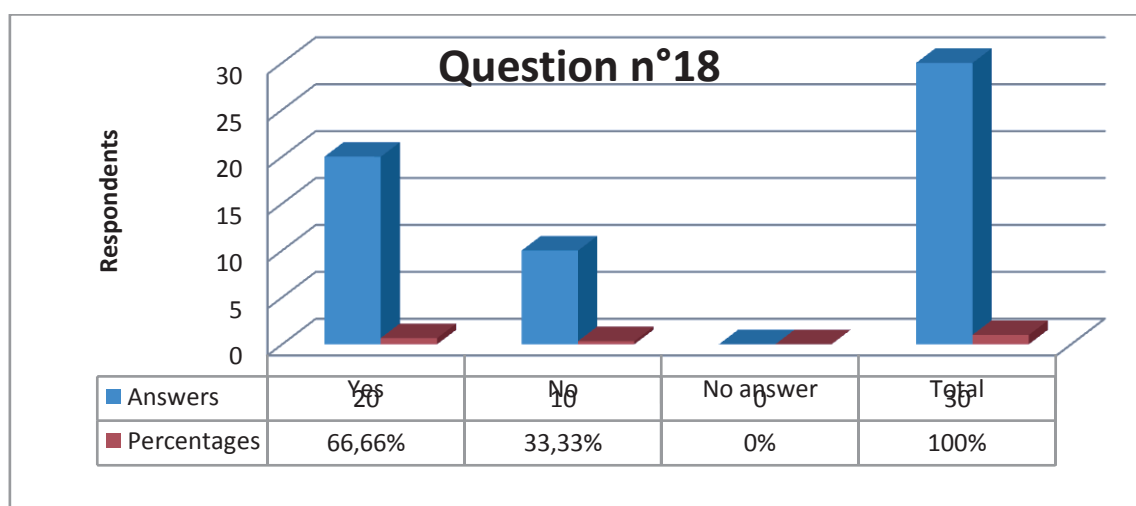
**Item n°17:** What kind of abilities do you want to develop mostly in learning English?



**Figure n°17:** Objectives of English Learning.

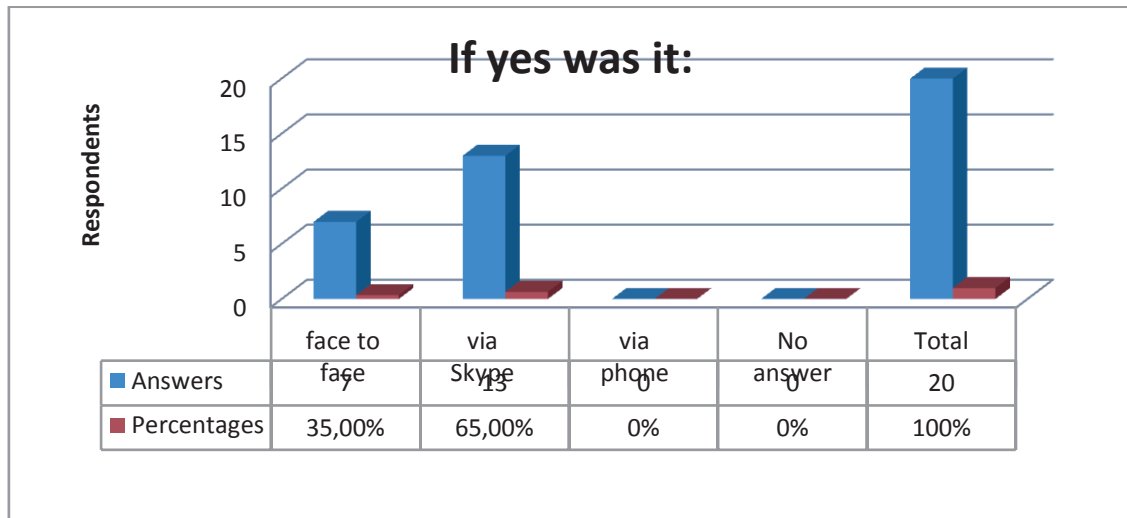
The results show that the major objective that lies behind learning English is communication 24(80%), 3(10%) aim to develop the capacity to translate, 2(6.66%) want to be able to read materials in English while 1(3.33%) wants to develop the capacity do work well in the exams.

**Item n°18:** Have you ever communicated with a native speaker?



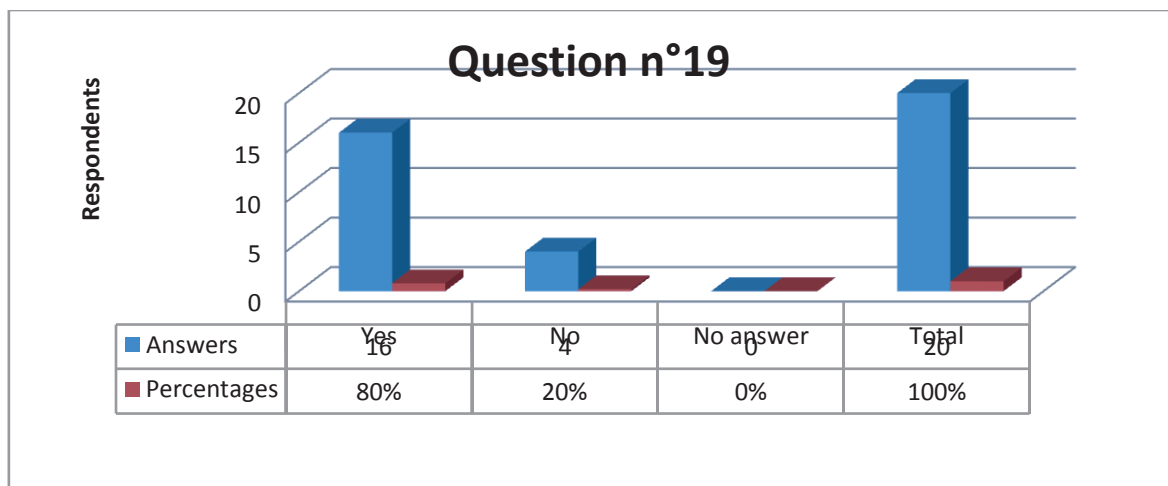
**Figure n°18:** Cross-cultural Communication.

As it is shown, the majority of learners interacted with native speakers 20(66.66%) while 10(33.33%) didn't have a chance to communicate with natives.



The leading majority communication with natives took place via Skype 13(65%) and 7(35%) was face to face, which confirms the previously found results that the aim of learning English is communication.

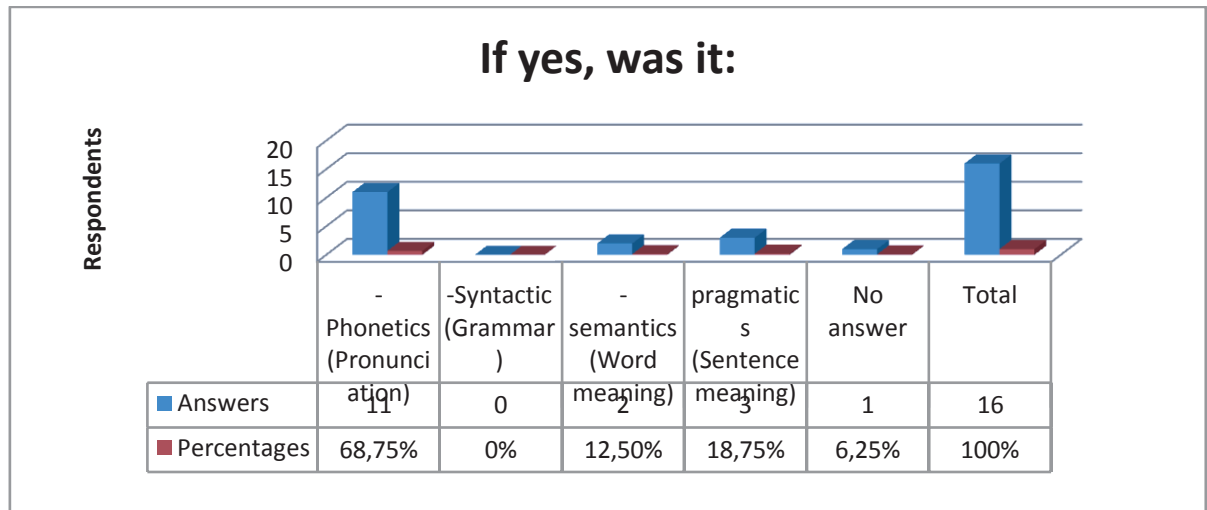
**Item n°19:** when interacting with natives have you faced any difficulties in understanding?



**Figure n°19:** Communication Breakdown

The findings clearly suggest that those learners (20), who carried out conversation with natives,

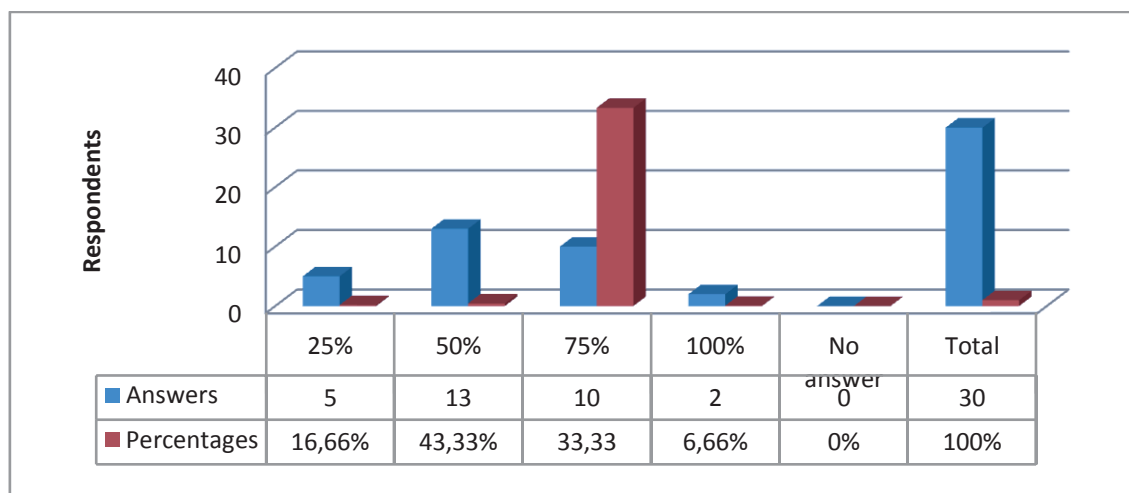
Faced difficulties 16(80%) said yes while 4(20%) said no.



**Figure n°20:** Level of Difficulty

This indicate that the major difficulty that learners have encountered while communicating with natives was at the level of pronunciation 11(68.75%) then the second difficulty was at the level of pragmatics 3(18.75%) after that semantics 2(12.50%) and no difficulty at the level of syntactic.

**Item n°20:** To what extent can you manage your message across when you talk to natives?

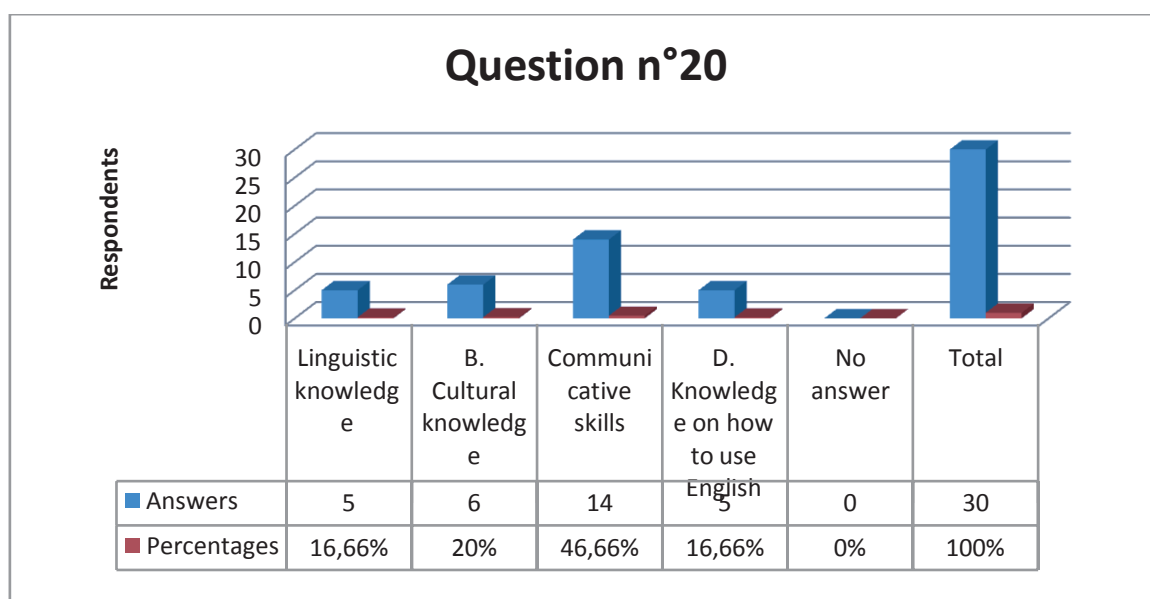


**Figure n°21:** Massage Management

The majority of learners have the required ability to carry out a conversation

13(43.33%) said that they can manage their message across 50%, 10(33.33% for 75%, 5(16.66%) for only the extent of 25% and 2(6.66%) for a complete degree of mastery 100%.

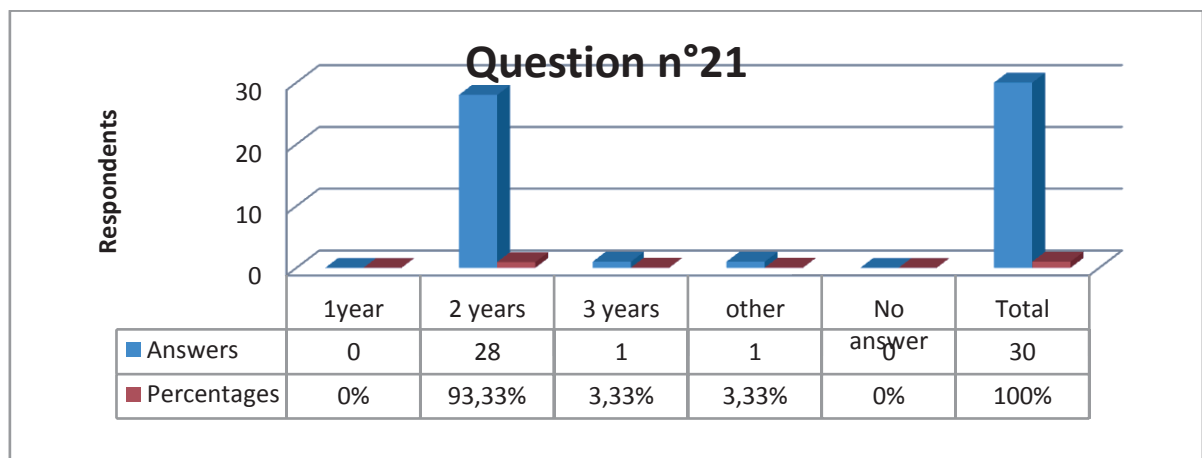
**Item n°20:** What kind of knowledge do you want to learn most in your English classroom teaching?



**Figure n°22:** Competence acquired through learning English.

This indicates that the leading majority of learners attempt to acquire communicative skills 14(46.66%) while 6(20%) seek to acquire cultural knowledge and 5(16.66%) wants to learn linguistic competence and pragmatic competence. This can be traced back to the fact that learners become reluctant when it comes to the study of pragmatics observing it as out of their concern due its assumed difficulty.

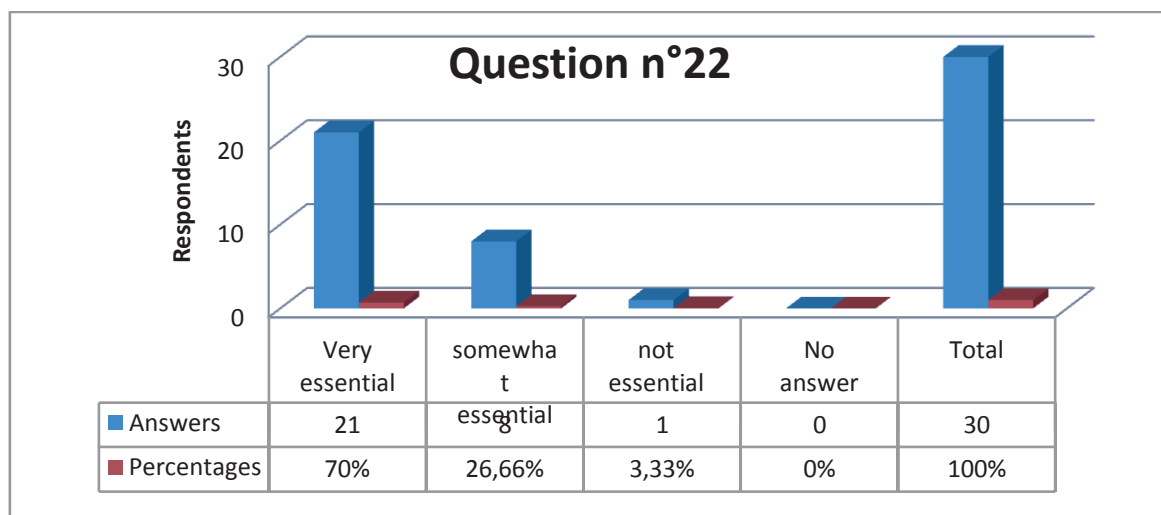
**Item n°21:** How long have you been studying pragmatics?



**Figure n°22:** Time period given to teaching pragmatics

These findings clearly suggest that learners have been studying pragmatics as a module for two (02) years 28(93.33%), 1(3.33%) for three (03) years, 1(3.33%) said that pragmatics is being taught only for one month. This results stands in contradiction with the information obtained from the administration on the department of English affirming that pragmatics is introduced only in the eighth (8<sup>th</sup>) semester.

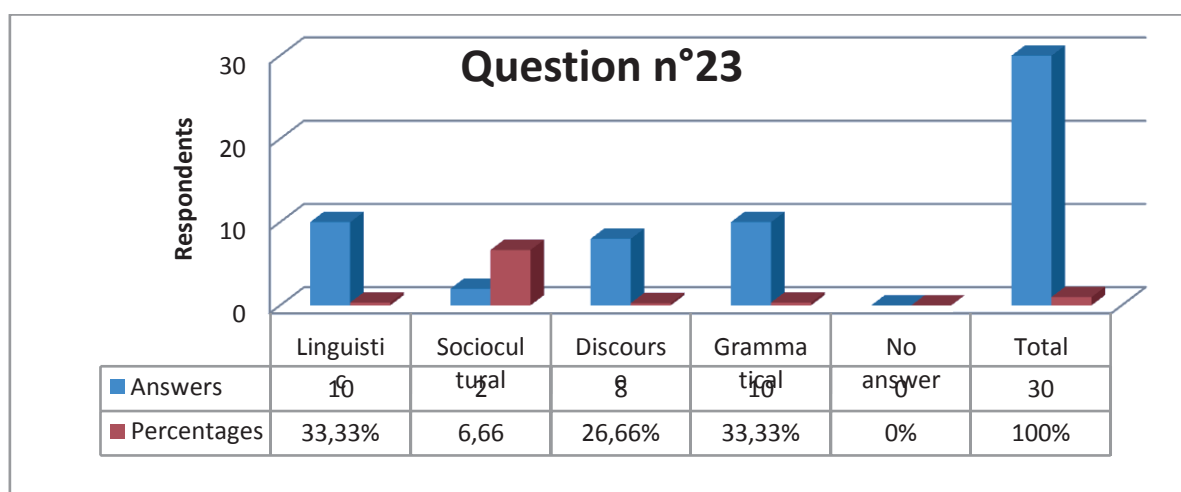
**Item n°22:** Do you find learning pragmatics:



**Figure n°23:** Importance of learning pragmatics.

According to these results learners recognize the importance of studying pragmatics as an independent subject matter 21(70%) said that it is very essential, 8(25.66) said that it is somewhat essential, and only 1(3.33%) said that it is not essential.

**Item n°23:** Which of the following communicative competencies do you believe you have more?

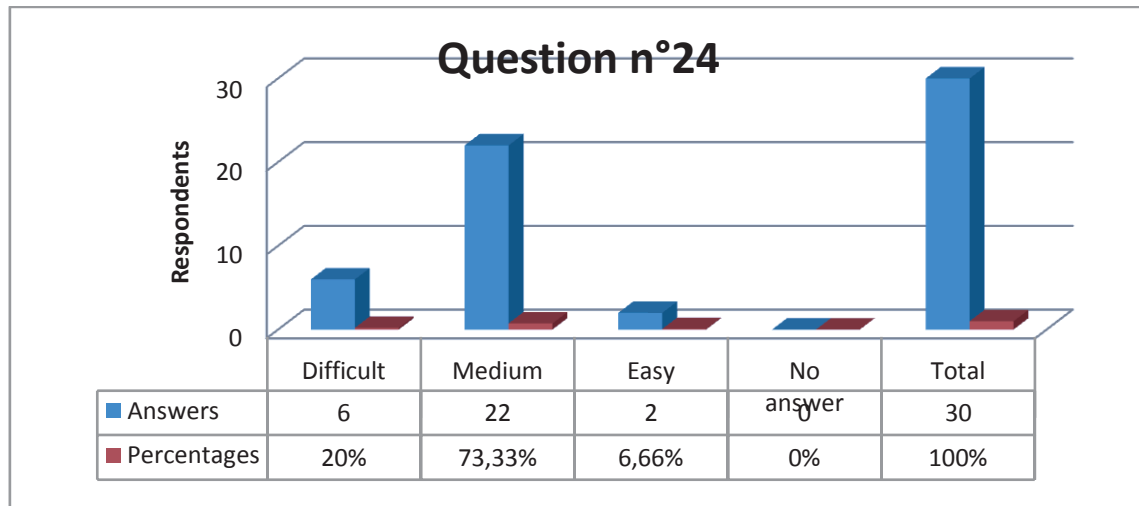


**Figure n°23:** Students' Communicative Competence.

From the obtained findings, we can deduce that developing sociocultural competence is ignored and instead great deal of concern have been given to linguistic competence

10(33.33%<sup>o</sup>, grammatical competence 10(33.33%), and discourse competence 8(26.66%). This may go back to the classroom focus.

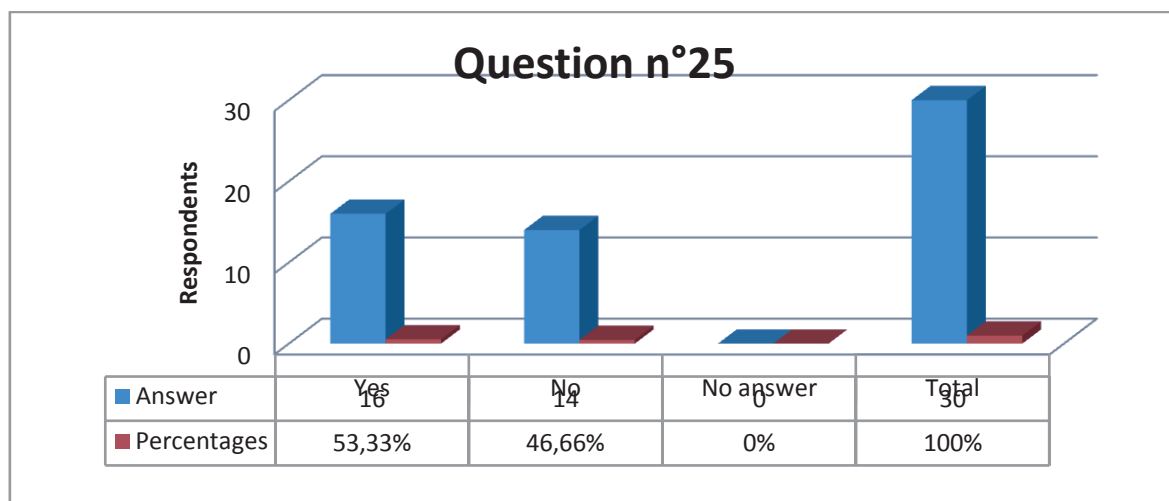
**Item n°24:** In respect to your current level do you find learning pragmatics:



**Figure n°25:** Pragmatics level of difficulty.

As it appears, the leading majority of the learners said that pragmatics as a subject matter is medium, attainable, 22(73.33%) while 6(20%) said it is difficult and only 2(6.66%) said that it is easy.

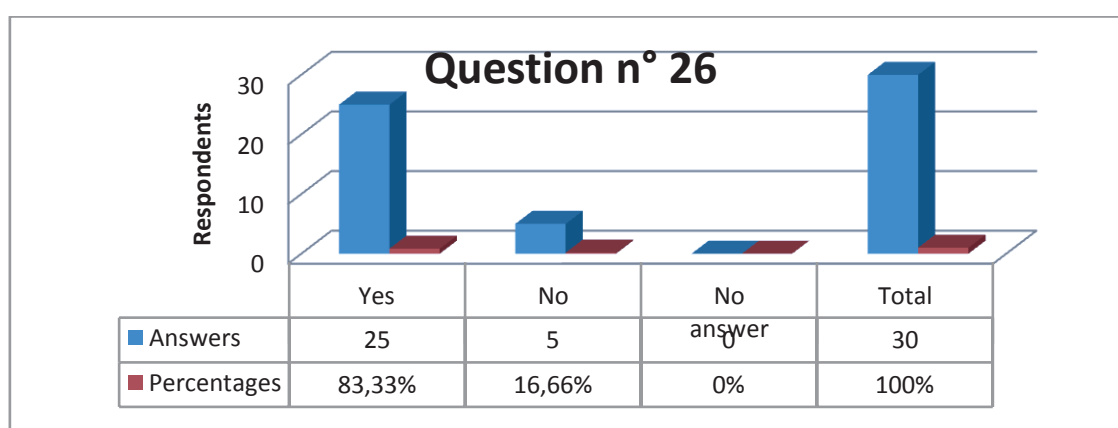
**Item n°25:** Do you think that not learning pragmatics from 1st year is the true reason behind the communicative failure that you faced or may face?



**Figure n°25:** Communicative failure

The results clearly show that pragmatics is not given enough time which results in breakdown in communication 16(53.33%) of our respondents said Yes whereas 14(46.66%) said No.

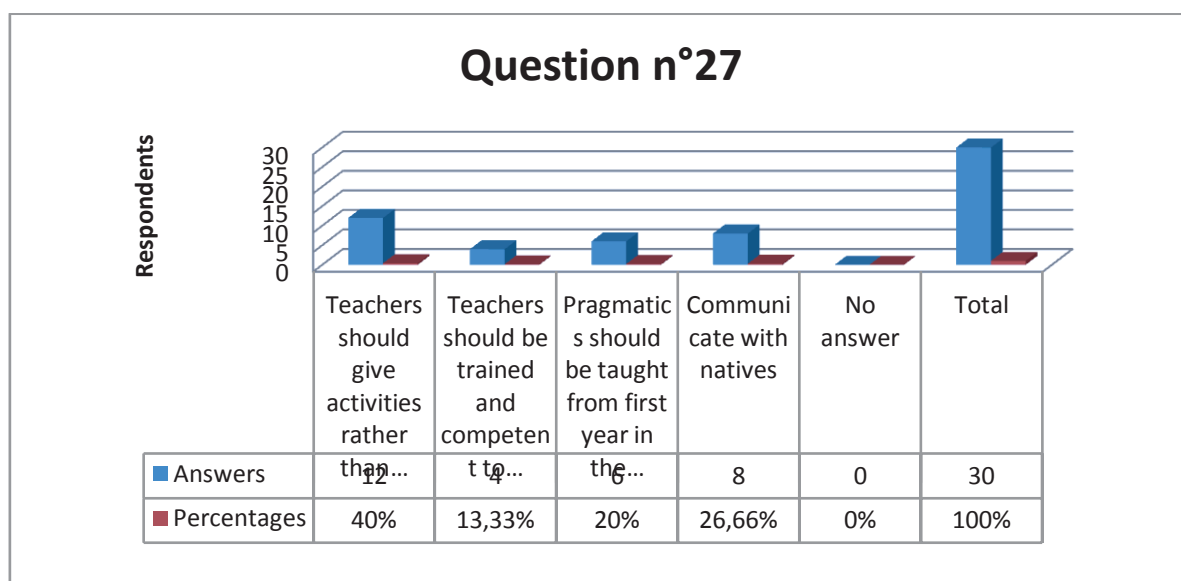
**Item n°26:** After studying pragmatics do you notice that your communicative competence improved?



**Figure n°27:** Communicative Competence Improvement.

It is apparent that studying pragmatics greatly improved learners’ communicative competence 25(83.33%) of our respondents said “Yes” and only 5(16.66%) said “No”.

**Item n° 27:** Your suggestion about how to improve pragmatic competence to avoid breakdown in communication:



**Figure n°28:** Students' Suggestions

The results indicate that the majority of learners wants pragmatics to be the classroom focus , practiced through activities that serve the learners' needs 12(40%), 8(26.66%) said that to improve the pragmatic competence learners have to practice communication every day with native speakers i.e. using the language in its appropriate context.6(20%) suggested that pragmatics should be introduced from the first year in the university to allow learners move smoothly from one level to another.4(13.33%) said that teachers should be trained and competent enough to teach pragmatics correctly .

### Section Three

The results obtained from this section showed that learners engaged in interaction with native speakers through different mediums (Skype, face to face, and phone).

They stated that they encountered difficulties in understanding what the speaker is

saying and meaning. They attributed the lack of pragmatic knowledge to the restricted amount of time given to teaching pragmatics and the insufficient practice inside and outside the classroom that will permit them to loop what they have learnt theoretically into real life communicative situations.

Learners suggested that pragmatics should be introduced in the 1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate level and accompany theory with practice inside and outside the classroom. In this respect, teachers and learners should collaborate to create healthy learning atmosphere that will allow learners to avoid failures in interaction.

## **The Teacher's Interview**

Interviewing is the most often used data collection tool to acquire people's insights on a phenomenon (Dornyei, 2007). We opted for the use of a structured interview and not of a questionnaire because we have only one teacher responsible for teaching pragmatics. We used the structured interview and not other type of interviews because we are seeking specific answers in short period of time (15min).

## **Analysis of the Interview**

The data to be reported in this section are closely related to our research questions. The interview is meant to help us collect data about the teacher's views on teaching

pragmatics and the importance of the pragmatic competence. In the analysis of the interview and the appendix (02) pseudonym in place of the teacher's real name is used.

**Q 01/ How long have you been teaching in the university?**

**Teacher:** I have been teaching in the university for 12 years

The teacher is an experienced and not a novice one which means that he knows everything about what the learners need for their learning.

**Q 02/ How long have you been teaching pragmatics?**

**Teacher:** I have been teaching pragmatics for two years.

From the teacher's answer we can understand that pragmatics is newly introduced.

**Q03/ Do you think that pragmatics is an important component of EFL? Why?**

**Teacher:** yes, because we cannot teach language without culture besides the communicative competence goes side by side with the pragmatic competence.

This answer suggests the teacher awareness towards the importance of pragmatics and the crucial role it plays in cross-cultural communication.

**Q04/ As a university teacher, how do you evaluate 1<sup>st</sup> year Master students' communicative competence?**

**Teacher:** Poorly satisfying.

This suggests that learners are not communicatively competent which may be explained by their lack of adequate understanding of language in use.

**Q 05/ How do you find teaching pragmatics?**

**Teacher:** I find it very difficult.

**Q06/What are the difficulties you encountered?**

**Teacher:** The main difficulty is the poor level of the students which prevent them from following the course, class size, lack of teachers and a unified syllabus as well besides the lack of teachers and the work conditions.

From the teachers' response we can understand that teaching pragmatics is not an easy task especially if combined with the poor level of the learners, in such a case the teacher will be confronted by a block in making learners absorb and understand pragmatics.

**Q07/ When teaching pragmatics, the focus is made on which aspect?**

**Teacher:** The focus is made on practical aspects.

This means that the class focus during pragmatics is on practical aspects that the learners need in their communication especially real life communication.

**Q08/ Do you believe that pragmatic competence is given enough time to be taught?**

**Teacher:** Yes.

**Q09/ Ok, in respect to first year Master students' language proficiency, does the module of pragmatics fulfill its meant pedagogical objective as a course?**

**Teacher:** Yes

By looking to the teacher's answer of question (08) and (09) , we can understand that pragmatics is given enough time to be taught which may suggest that the reason that lies beyond the learners poor communicative competence is attributed to other factors but not time.

**Q10/ Do you believe that pragmatics should be taught separately or incorporated with another module?**

**Teacher:** I believe that it should be incorporated with another module named discourse analysis which constitutes of semantic analysis, semiotic analysis, and pragmatic analysis.

This answer leads us to say that in order to develop the learners' communicative competence pragmatics should be linked with other components of the communicative competence in order to ensure an integral development of competent language learners.

**Q11/ what implication (s) does poor pragmatic competence has on real life communication?**

**Teacher:** Breakdowns in communication because learners master the linguistic competence and once they speak with a native speaker, who makes use of pragmatic aspects and idiomatic expressions that learners ignore, they fail in carrying communication.

This goes with the results of the questionnaire when students admitted that they faced breakdowns in communication when talking to natives because of lack of pragmatic competence.

**Q12/ What do you suggest improving learners' pragmatic competence?**

**Teacher:** introducing the module of sociolinguistics in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate level so that learners gain familiarity with the basic concepts that they will constitute a foundation when the module of discourse analysis is introduced in 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year postgraduate level (Master degree).

This answer highlights the necessity of introducing aspects of pragmatics in the early years of studying English. This will provide learners with the necessary skills and knowledge to avoid both pragma-linguistic failure and socio-linguistic failure.

## **Results and Discussion**

In the present research we have hypothesized that if pragmatics is given enough time to be taught and accompany theory with practice learners will develop full pragmatic competence that will allow them to avoid blocks in communication.

The findings of the present study indicate that giving more time to teaching pragmatics by introducing it at the very beginning of the learning process and allowing learners to practice communication inside and outside the classroom can help learners develop their pragmatic competence so that to avoid failure in communication.

The student's questionnaire showed that Learners are aware of the vitality of such a competence and they attribute their poor communicative level to the combination of the factors of time and practice given to teaching pragmatics. The obtained data from the questionnaire are in consistency with the results of the interview. The analysis of the interview suggested that teaching pragmatics is confronted by several challenges such as; class size, the small number of teachers, the lack of a unified syllabus, and

materials that would allow for intensive practice which would serve the improvement of the learners pragmatic competence and hence the communicative competence.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of the students' questionnaire and the teacher's interview on the one hand, allowed us to confirm our hypothesis that if pragmatics is given enough time to be taught and accompany theory with practice learners will develop full pragmatic competence that will allow them to avoid blocks in communication. On the other hand, it provided us the answer of our research questions that is the main reasons that lie behind the poor pragmatic competence of first year master students are; time and lack of adequate practice, besides, the poor pragmatic competence lead to breakdowns in the process of communication.

## **General Conclusion and Recommendations**

The attempt along this study, was to isolate the pragmatic competence as one of the many factors affecting communication of first year Master students department of English at Khenchela University. The aim was to investigate the reasons behind the poor pragmatic competence and the implication of the lack of adequate pragmatic knowledge on cross-cultural communication. Through literature review, it has been stressed that pragmatic failure arises from the lack of the pragmatic knowledge i.e. ignoring aspects of pragmatics will prevent the learners from understanding what is meant by what is said. Pragmatics plays a vital role in EFL classroom, instructors should combine theory with practice to ensure an adequate understanding of the aspects of pragmatics. First year Master students find difficulties in looping what they

learn in the classroom in real life communication. At the beginning of this research, we hypothesized, if pragmatics is given enough time to be taught and accompany theory with practice, learners will develop full pragmatic competence that will allow them to avoid blocks in communication (cross-cultural pragmatic failure).

In the first chapter, we discussed the relationship between language and culture and their interconnectedness, we have also presented the importance of the pragmatics and what is meant by cross-cultural pragmatic failure.

In the second chapter, we emphasized the importance of teaching pragmatics and the main challenges that face the teachers when teaching pragmatics in EFL classes.

For our field part, a combination of two main tools were used, a questionnaire and an interview. The questionnaire aimed at collecting data about the students' perceptions of pragmatics and its role in communication. The interview aimed at collecting data about the difficulties that faced teachers in teaching pragmatics and the implication of poor pragmatic competence on cross-cultural communication.

The results obtained from the analysis of the students' questionnaire showed that students are aware of the importance of pragmatics in communication precisely cooperative maxims. The findings of the interview suggests that teaching pragmatics is not an easy task because of several factors, namely, class size, the lack of a unified syllabus, and the poor communicative level of the learners.

The interpretation of the findings obtained from the analysis of the students' questionnaire and the teacher's interview helped us to answer the research questions and to confirm our hypothesis, pragmatics is given enough time to be taught and

accompany theory with practice, learners will develop full pragmatic competence that will allow them to avoid blocks in communication (cross-cultural pragmatic failure).

In order to attract learners' and teachers' attention to the unquestionable role of pragmatic competence in communication our recommendations are the following :

- Teachers should work according to a unified syllabus that moves smoothly from one level to another to ensure integrity of acquisitions.
- Learners should practice the language inside and outside the classroom so that to put theory into practice
- Classroom size should be minimized to create healthy learning atmosphere.

The advice that we want to provide instructors, of linguistics, culture, and pragmatics, with is that they must introduce materials that would serve the objective of learning English, exploit the modern technology in making learners interact with native speakers and try to analyze speech segments to enhance the development of the pragmatic competence.

We hope that our research attracts the attention of the teachers and the learners of the department of English -Khanchela university- and to provide a reference for future research.

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## Appendix 01

### Students' Questionnaire

Dear students

This questionnaire is aimed at collecting data about the importance of pragmatics in avoiding communication failure. Please answer the questions as objectively as possible by ticking or by providing full statement wherever necessary. The information obtained will be kept confidential and used only for the purpose of academic research. I do appreciate your unconditional collaboration and participation in emphasizing the importance of pragmatic competence in communication.

**Thank You**

#### Section one: background information about respondents

1. Sex:

Male ♂

Female

2. Have you graduated from Khenchela University?

YES

NO

If "NO" mention the name of your university

.....  
.....

3. Was studying English your own choice?

YES

NO

4. How long have you been in the university?

3years

4years

other

#### Section two: your views about pragmatics

**Part A:** The likert 1-5 rating scale is used .You can choose only one answer to each question.

1=strongly disagree    2=Disagree    3=Neutral    4=Agree    5-Strongly agree

5	I believe learning English grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation mean learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I think that the knowledge of how to use the language is as important as linguistic knowledge	1	2	3	4	5

	(e.g. vocabulary and grammar).					
7	The main reason why I need to learn English is to pass the examination.	1	2	3	4	5
8	The syllabus provides much information on culture, conversation rules, usage, and on how to use English correctly.	1	2	3	4	5
9	Communication activities are a waste of time in the English class.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I admire the people who can communicate with others in English fluently and accurately.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I think teachers should teach us how to communicate with people, and how to use English appropriately in the classroom teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
12	I know how to obtain cultural knowledge and appropriateness of language use in my learning	1	2	3	4	5
13	Tasks used in English class provide me knowledge and skills to improve my ability to use English appropriately.	1	2	3	4	5
14	I prefer my English class to be focused on communicative language teaching and practice, with grammar explained when necessary	1	2	3	4	5
15	I think that teaching culture is necessary for developing communicative competence	1	2	3	4	5
16	Learning pragmatics is unnecessary in EFL classroom.	1	2	3	4	5

## Part B: your views on teaching pragmatics in EFL classroom

Please choose only one answer from the following choices to each question.

17. What kind of abilities do you want to develop most in learning English?

- A. Ability to communicate with people.
- B. Ability to do well in English examinations.
- C. Ability to read materials related to my major.
- D. Ability to translate.

18- Have you ever communicated with a native speaker?

YES

NO

If yes was it:

A-face to face

B-via Skype

C-via phone

**19-**when interacting with natives have you faced any difficulties in understanding?

YES

NO

If yes was it at the level of:

A-Phonetics

B-Syntactic

C-semantic

D-pragmatics

**20.** To what extents can you manage your message across when you talk to natives?

25 %

50%

75%

100%

**21.** What kind of knowledge do you want to learn most in your English classroom teaching?

A. Linguistic knowledge (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation)

B. Cultural knowledge.

C. Communicative skills

D. Knowledge on how to use English

**22.** How long have you been studying pragmatics?

1year

2years

3years

other

**23.** Do you find learning pragmatics

Very essential

somewhat essential

not essential

**24.** Which of the following communicative competencies do you believe you have most?

A. Linguistic competency

B. Socio-cultural competency

C. Discourse competency

D. Grammatical competency

**25.** In respect to your current level, do you find learning pragmatics:

A. Difficult

B. Medium

C. Easy

**26.** Do you think that not learning pragmatics from 1st year is the true reason behind the communicative failure that you faced or may face?

YES

NO

**27.** After studying pragmatics do you notice that your communicative competence improved

YES

NO

**28.** Your suggestion about improving communicative competence to avoid pragmatic failure:

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## **Appendix 02**

### **Teacher's Interview**

**Q 01/ how long have you been teaching in the university?**

**Teacher:** I have been teaching in the university for 12 years

**Q 02/ how long have you been teaching pragmatics?**

**Teacher:** I have been teaching pragmatics for two years.

**Q03/ Do you think that pragmatics is an important component of EFL? Why?**

**Teacher:** yes, because we cannot teach language without culture besides the communicative competence goes side by side with the pragmatic competence.

**Q04/ As a university teacher, how do you evaluate 1<sup>st</sup> year Master students' communicative competence?**

**Teacher:** Poorly satisfying.

**Q 05/ How do you find teaching pragmatics?**

**Teacher:** I find it very difficult.

**Q06/What are the difficulties you encountered?**

**Teacher:** The main difficulty is the poor level of the students which prevent them from following the course.

**Q07/ When teaching pragmatics, the focus is made on which aspect?**

**Teacher:** the focus is made on practical aspects.

**Q08/ Do you believe that pragmatic competence is given enough time to be taught?**

**Teacher:** yes.

**Q09/ Ok, in respect to first year Master students' language proficiency, does the module of pragmatics fulfill its meant pedagogical objective as a course?**

**Teacher:** yes

**Q10/ Do you believe that pragmatics should be taught separately or incorporated with another module?**

**Teacher:** I believe that it should be incorporated with another module named discourse analysis which constitutes of semantic analysis, semiotic analysis, and pragmatic analysis.

**Q11/ what implication (s) does poor pragmatic competence has on real life communication?**

**Teacher:** Breakdowns in communication because learners master the linguistic competence and once they speak with a native speaker, who makes use of pragmatic aspects and idiomatic expressions that learners ignore, they fail in carrying communication.

**Q12/ What do you suggest improving learners' pragmatic competence?**

**Teacher:** introduce the module of sociolinguistics in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate level so that learners gain familiarity with the basic concepts that they will constitute a foundation when the module of discourse analysis is introduced in 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year postgraduate level (Master degree).