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Developing pragmatic competence using digital tools: Exploring performance-based approach to teaching speech acts and politeness in foreign language learning

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Abstract

One primary task often overlooked in language teaching is helping learners know when and how to use speech acts and politeness strategies in a foreign language. This study was structured to test if a technologically supported way of teaching helps foreign language learners develop their pragmatic skills. A mixed-methods quasi-experimental study was implemented and 144 university students at intermediate-to-advanced levels of English formed the experimental and control groups. Learners in the experimental group did activities online through Zoom role-plays, used VR-based simulations and responded to Flipgrid assignments, but those in the control group used traditional textbooks and exercises. Quantitative data from learners was gathered using two types of tasks (Discourse Completion Tasks and Pragmatic Judgement Tests), speech production tasks and a survey that asked about their attitudes. ANCOVA was conducted to adjust for initial differences, MANOVA was used to see changes in appropriateness, politeness and fluency and multivariate regression helped explore whether digital engagement and previous proficiency could predict results. Consistent and accurate results were seen with a Cronbach's Alpha ($\geq .86$) and a Cohen's Kappa of .81. Students in the experimental group made more progress on the post-test ($F = 28.09, p < .001$) since the differences were large (Cohen's $d = 0.87$ for total scores) and digital engagement was the biggest factor linked to better pragmatics. Using NVivo, semi-structured interview data from 20 participants were organised under key themes like strategies learners use, differences in cultural awareness and digital difficulties. Participants in the study unveiled that they began to pay more attention to how what they do fits with society's expectations. Together, the results provided evidence that tasks designed for performance in digital environments can greatly enhance a person's pragmatic skills by offering authentic, personal and cultural opportunities to use language appropriately in context.

Keywords: Pragmatic competence Digital language learning Speech acts, Politeness strategies, Virtual reality (VR), Mixed-methods research, Technology-enhanced language teaching



1. Introduction

Pragmatic competence is an important aspect of good second and foreign language communication. Although grammar and vocabulary are important in language learning, knowing how to use language to take action in context, manage politeness and notice social cues makes a learner good at communicating. Thomas (1983) discovered that even when participants use language comfortably, flaws in using it socially can lead to many misunderstandings which shows why teaching must cover both aspects of language.

Usually, pragmatics was given little space in traditional language classrooms; teachers preferred students to learn about it by themselves when practising language, not through instruction. Rose (2005) and Taguchi (2015) argue that lacking organised instruction has led to a mismatch between learners' grammar and their correct use of language. Speech acts such as requests, apologies, refusing assistance and giving a compliment, are typically not well taught, so many EFL learners do not understand how to use proper politeness in different situations (Al-Awawdeh & Kalsoom, 2022). Since pragmatic skills are not generally taught, it is important to find new ways that help students develop these skills directly. As a result of modern digital tools, practical teaching can now be embedded in meaningful and performance-based situations. Using video, virtual reality and apps for both immediate and delayed communication, learners can participate in practical communication sessions and check their choices with each other. González-Lloret (2023) asserts that online settings help develop pragmatic awareness since they give learners a chance to repurpose the texts and data they view and to use practices found in daily communication. Even so, using these tools in the application requires careful organisation and matches with learners' language and cultural backgrounds.

Being aware of different cultural practices greatly contributes to the way learners interact politely around the world. Kecskes (2014) points out that pragmatic concerns are important since they involve learners switching between their home culture's behaviour and language use and those of the language they are learning. Since learners often face communication in many global contexts, it is especially important to consider the ways English is spoken differently around the world. So, successful pragmatic instruction should build up how participants think about and use language, instead of only teaching rules for use (Al-Awawdeh, 2017).

There have been many advances in classroom teaching, but only a limited number of studies address how to connect the use of performance-based pedagogy, digital learning tools and explicit pragmatic instruction. A lot of the past work has examined each realm separately, with most focusing on digital language tools (such as Flipgrid or VR) or traditional strategies to teach pragmatics. It is still important to fully explore how learning through online, interactive activities can improve learners' ways of using language in social situations. To help fill this gap, this study investigates ways to enhance pragmatic skills through a careful instructional programme supported by technology.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- a) To what extent does a performance-based, digitally mediated instructional approach improve EFL learners' use of speech acts and politeness strategies compared to traditional instruction?
- b) What is the relationship between learners' level of digital engagement and their development of pragmatic competence?
- c) How do learners perceive the use of digital performance tasks in developing their strategic use of language, politeness, and intercultural awareness?

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Review of Conceptual Studies

There are various concepts that are significant in this study, mainly in unveiling efforts by previous studies to interrogate the impacts of traditional methods of teaching pragmatic skills in foreign language

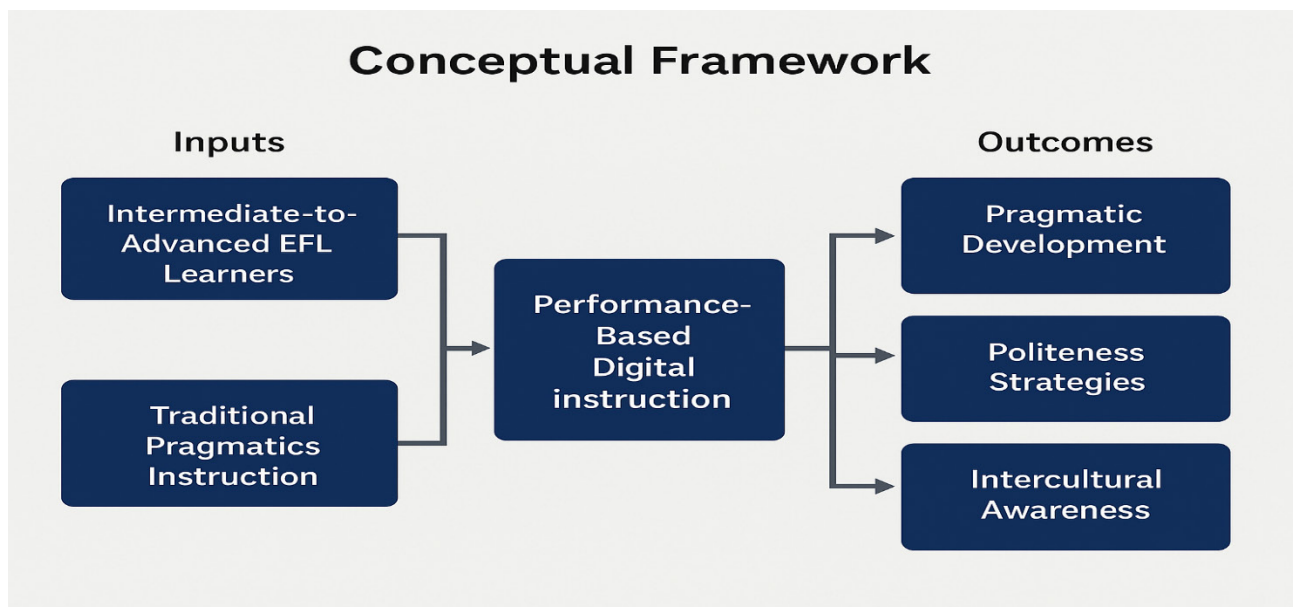


Fig 1: Conceptual structure of the study

According to the framework, digital learning, based on performance tasks, forms the connection between students' background and their learning context and measurable improvement in the use of the language. The design starts with advanced EFL learners who have previously encountered pragmatics instruction that involved mostly learning abstract forms apart from context. After that, these learners try out digitally delivered activities that need them to act and reflect on using language in real-life situations. The outcome trajectory highlights three key dimensions aligned with the study's aims: pragmatic development, politeness strategy use, and intercultural awareness. The outcomes cover both the use of language and the understanding of the cultural context needed for real communication. The model makes sure the research's main purpose is to analyse how digitally enhanced, practical lessons contribute to EFL learners' correct use of speech, respect for traditions and effective adaptation to cultural expectations worldwide.

a. Teaching Pragmatics in EFL Contexts

Teaching about pragmatics in EFL classes has long been something given minor status within foreign language instruction. An emphasis on grammar and vocabulary in traditional curricula often means learners can speak grammatically correct sentences, but do not understand how to adjust their communication to fit the context and usual cultural norms (Thomas, 1983; Rose, 2005). When form and function are not aligned, it supports the idea that pragmatics should be central to any pedagogical model of communicative competence (Khasaneh & Alwawdeh, 2024).

As Kasper and Rose (2002) explained, pragmatic competence is made up of pragmalinguistic resources as well as knowledge of factors such as power, how close a person is to others in a conversation and their intent within the conversation. As a result, learners should be taught separately how language works as well as given situations where they can build meaning with others. In teaching materials, learners require being taught an effective range of ways to express requests, say no, apologise or offer compliments according to the culture.

For many years, experts have questioned how much pragmatic skills can be trained through direct instruction. At first, educators thought that learning pragmatics happened through immersion and chance tastes of language in class, but more recent findings show that working on specific aspects of pragmatics in relevant activities creates much better results (Taguchi, 2015; Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2020). It was found by Sadeghi and Sharifi (2013) that learners who study speech acts with direct

explanations did much better than those who merely noticed them by example.

Even so, teaching the practical aspects of language in EFL settings is difficult since the community and the learners have different cultural experiences. Due to cultural differences such endeavours tend to fail when involving politeness or face management in important situations. According to Kecskes (2014), teachers should adopt intercultural pragmatics by helping learners understand how their first and second language practises differ and leading them to adapt their speech and translation skills to another culture.

Learners' practical skills are closely influenced by the curricular materials they use. Vellenga (2004) showed that authentic speech is largely missing from most EFL textbooks which simply include plain dialogue without including all the details of speaking strategies. Because textbooks tend to lack context, teachers should include examples and exercises that teach students to use what they learn in practice (Nwaikpo, 2025). Therefore, instructional design should carefully include needed practical material in all parts of language education.

It is generally agreed by today's scholars that, with teaching support, pragmatic competence can be learned, and shared and is crucial for success. In addition, for instruction to work well, it should help students negotiate meaning, preferably done with others in real or similar settings (Murray, 2010). The approach in this area builds a path for using technology and practical lessons that can raise the effectiveness and significance of pragmatics education.

b. Performance-Based Instruction in Language Learning

Over the last few years, learning that centres on what learners produce, how they use language in actual situations and the authenticity of tasks has become popular. Using constructivist ways, this model prefers language use during tasks instead of just learning language rules. In this area, making learning experiential gives a good structure for teaching how communication works in different cultural contexts (Tatsuki & Houck, 2010).

Within pragmatic instruction, learners can practise dynamic speaking through role-plays, enact television scenarios and case simulations and get real-time feedback along the way. Félix-Brasdefer (2021) believes it is important to use such strategies because they bring pragmatics out from the world of theory and into the daily, conversational actions of learners. As a result, speakers can simply revise their work and improve at speaking and writing appropriately (Nwaikpo, 2025).

A key strength of performance-based instruction lies in its capacity to operationalize strategic competence—the learner's ability to adapt language use to achieve communicative goals under context-specific constraints. Ishihara and Cohen claim that learners can cheque their assumptions, assess the results they get and change their behaviour when using performance tasks. Building a collection of strategies for each situation depends on this loop in challenging or culturally important situations.

In addition, performance-based instruction is well suited to assessment for learning, because it offers practical information on language abilities to both teachers and students. Thanks to rubrics, peers and the instructor, learners can see what they said and also understand how it worked or did not work (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2020). Using the cycle presented in the book supports learners in embracing common social practices and developing their language abilities.

In addition, using performance-based approaches can improve a student's motivation and interest. Acting on meaningful tasks in and with their community encourages participants to think and feel more about their studies (Mugford, 2022). When it comes to politeness, it is important to become involved, because how you feel toward someone matters a lot in how language is understood.

c. Digital Tools for Pragmatic Development

Teaching English as a Foreign Language can greatly gain from where digital technologies and useful teaching meet. Digital tools add new options for learners to interact and also make it possible to

learn speech acts and politeness strategies by practising out of sequence and using multiple means of communication. González-Lloret (2023) observes that technology-based contexts are sufficient to teach students the steps necessary for pragmatic ability.

Services like Flipgrid mean learners can video record themselves giving responses, and then watch and discuss their work as a learning exercise. With these tools, learners get a chance to pay attention to tone, formality and context which are shielded from politeness. Additionally, with Zoom and similar platforms, learners can participate in interactions that require negotiating, refusing and saying sorry during live conversations (as Culbertson et al., 2017, report).

Using VR and avatars for simulations is an improved way to teach digital pragmatics. Learners use their bodies in these spaces to act and interact, giving meaning to their learned strategies in cultural and spatial settings. Numerous studies indicate that VR technology improves students' notice of proxemics, different gestures and turn-taking which are features usually forgotten during usual instruction but are key to language use in society (González-Lloret, 2023).

2.2. Review of Empirical Studies and Research Gap

Investigations into teaching pragmatics in EFL settings have often shown that speech acts and being polite can be successfully taught. According to Rose (2005), students who learned about speech acts directly did better than those who only experienced them naturally, when it came to knowing how to communicate appropriately and in context. Along these lines, Sadeghi and Sharifi (2013) showed, using a quasi-experimental approach, that exposure to instruction that focused on specific forms of pragmatic use benefited EFL participants in interacting through indirect requests and avoiding potentially face-threatening actions. Despite demonstrating how helpful explicit instruction can be, most of these studies are held back by old, unrelated teaching practices that omit real-world applications.

Félix-Brasdefer (2021) made significant progress in this field, by having study participants perform spoken activities. Findings indicated that students achieve better results from using feedback and rehearsal than from learning rules without its use. Still, the majority of these interventions were designed for classroom use, without many digital resources included. As a result, it is not clear how technology will provide the same or better learning outcomes as in-person pragmatic teaching when meeting in person is not possible.

The value of digital tools in pragmatic development has been increasingly investigated and González-Lloret (2023) notes that computer games and VR technology can provide realistic circumstances for pragmatic learning. She demonstrated that, through digital technology, learners come across a wide variety of uses for society's language and can experiment with forms safely. Still, a lot of these studies report on learner involvement and feelings more than they do on how much a learner can do using educational tasks or assessment cheques.

Culbertson et al. (2017) observed that a video interface can be controlled by voice-enabled learners to repair their mistakes, organise talking turns and follow the right level of politeness in conversations. Yet, the work concentrated on system design and short-term results, without keeping long-term observations or other comparisons in mind. Additionally, this research did not add reflective feedback tools which greatly contribute to lasting pragmatic skills elsewhere than in the classroom.

With their WeChat-influenced China-Foreign Language curriculum, Jiang and Li (2018) documented the clear effects of cross-cultural online communication on students' pragmatic skills. Most learners observed that indirectness was more common in talk and that speech act behaviour differed between different settings. Though researchers largely investigated intercultural pragmatics, they did not use learner performance to assess the effectiveness of instruction nor the level of proficiency which is necessary to generalise and learn from their findings.

Schauer (2009) provided a clear view of how students' interlanguage pragmatics develops as they progress through time. These studies pointed out that realistic environments where participants

can interact help children build useful skills. In many places, it is not easy for learners to participate in these environments when they are limited by either distance or organisational barriers. For this reason, we need learning models that bring technology into the classroom in ways that mimic the advantages of actual immersion.

Yet, research has not fully looked at using digital tools, hands-on activities in class and performance-based pedagogy together using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Only a few studies have looked at how learners gain pragmatic skills through digital tasks organised with rubric-based scores and feedback. Additionally, in digital performance contexts, little is known about how learners understand or respond to difficulties related to politeness and intercultural communication. The study tackles this problem by applying mixed methods and digital instruction to look at both what is learned and how this learning supports the use of strategies in real life.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study Approach

A mixed-methods quasi-experiment was used in this study to find out how helpful digital tools are in using a performance-based way to teach speech acts and politeness in learning a foreign language. The design integrated both quantitative and qualitative data to capture not only the measurable outcomes of the intervention but also learners' subjective experiences. Use of these approaches helped researchers understand both the usefulness and the progress of pragmatic language development in individuals.

3.2. Participants

In total, 144 intermediate-to-advanced English learners, between 18 and 25 years old, took part in the study. Participants were chosen from both English and Linguistics departments at three publicly funded universities. All participants tested at least a B1 level on the CEFR, as confirmed by placement tests given at our institution. The researchers put 72 participants into each group, Experimental and Control groups. The research was approved by the institutions taking part and before the study started, all participants agreed to take part.

3.3. Instructional Intervention

Members of the Experimental Group learned to use requests, apologies and to decline politely using a performance-based method offered on computers and other digital platforms. The learners did interactive role-plays on Zoom, worked in simulations that used VR avatars and sent asynchronous videos using Flipgrid. Most of the teaching focused on what students would need in everyday life and how to act socially. Alternatively, the Control Group received teaching following the standard process, with most lessons based on textbooks, the teacher's explanations and exercises covering specifically how to form polite scenarios. In total, participants were involved for six weeks and met for two sessions that lasted 90 minutes each week.

3.4. Instruments and Data Collection Processes

All quantitative data were gathered with the help of different instruments. Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) and Multiple-Choice Pragmatic Judgment Tests were used as pre- and post-tests to assess learners' overall pragmatic competence. They finished with tasks that called for oral speech and for putting their skills to use by email or in online chats. Later, a list of criteria was devised to measure the usefulness, politeness level and contextual relevance of what the learners said in the task. Finally, an attitude survey using a 5-point Likert scale was administered post-intervention to gauge learners' perceptions of the digital tools used, their engagement levels, and perceived learning outcomes.

After collecting the numerical data, we interviewed 20 subjects in total, each group consisting of 10 participants, using a form of sampling that looks for the widest range of views. These interviews

looked into how learners handle politeness, what they understood by digital tasks and how they are aware of cultural practises in different situations.

3.5. Data Analysis Procedure

The data were examined with SPSS, using version 27. An ANCOVA was run to find out whether there were differences between groups in the post-test while adjusting for the pre-test. The effect of an instructional method was observed using a MANOVA for appropriateness, politeness and fluency among several outcome variables. We used Cohen's *d* to estimate how much learning the groups improved. Using digital engagement and previous proficiency as covariates, multivariate regression was used to study predictive variables. Reliability of both survey and rubric measurements was assessed with Cronbach's Alpha while for scoring performance tasks, Cohen's Kappa was used to ensure all evaluators were consistent.

Transcripts from the interviews were examined using thematic analysis aided by the program NVivo 14. Learner strategies, cultural awareness and digital issues surfaced as the main themes during the open and axial coding of the data. Data were triangulated with quantitative results to validate the interpretations and ensure a comprehensive understanding of learners' pragmatic development.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Results

The results of the quantitative and qualitative data analyses are presented in this section. This paper aimed to determine if using a digitally aided approach to teach performance skills improves learners' skill in using speech acts and politeness in English as a foreign language. Demographics of the participants are presented first, then key results from statistical analyses and qualitative information are summarised. The study included 144 participants across two groups:

- i. Experimental (*n* = 72)
- ii. Control (*n* = 72).

All participants were enrolled in undergraduate English or Linguistics programs and had intermediate to advanced English proficiency. The demographic breakdown is presented in Table

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Variable	Experimental Group (<i>n</i> = 72)	Control Group (<i>n</i> = 72)	Total (<i>N</i> = 144)
Mean Age	20.6	20.8	20.7
Gender			
Male	33	35	68
Female	39	37	76
English Proficiency			
Intermediate (B1–B2)	40	42	82
Advanced (C1–C2)	32	30	62

The results of the demographic features show evidence of academically diverse students that participated in the study. The demographic features consistently influence the results of the main study.

a. Pre-Test Results

To ensure baseline equivalence, both groups completed a **pragmatic competence pre-test** comprising Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) and Pragmatic Judgment Tests. Results were analyzed using independent-samples *t*-tests.

Table 2. Pre-Test Scores for Pragmatic Competence by Group

Measure	Experimental Group (M ± SD)	Control Group (M ± SD)	t(142)	p-value
Speech Act Appropriateness	62.38 ± 9.15	61.92 ± 9.42	0.29	.773
Politeness Strategy Use	58.61 ± 8.88	59.01 ± 9.33	-0.26	.795
Contextual Sensitivity	60.44 ± 8.32	59.92 ± 8.65	0.36	.720
Total Pragmatic Score	60.48 ± 8.78	60.28 ± 8.91	0.13	.896

The results in table 2 indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in pre-test scores between the two groups across all measures ($p > .05$), indicating that participants began with comparable levels of pragmatic competence.

b. ANCOVA: Post-Test Scores Controlling for Pre-Test

An Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to compare post-test total pragmatic scores between groups while controlling for pre-test scores.

Table 3. ANCOVA Results: Total Pragmatic Post-Test Scores

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p-value	Partial η^2
Pre-Test Score	623.78	1	623.78	15.27	.000	.097
Group	1148.52	1	1148.52	28.09	.000	.167
Error	5696.31	141	40.38			
Total	—	—	—	—		

The following findings are evident in table 3:

- i. ANCOVA revealed a statistically significant effect of instructional method on post-test scores ($F(1, 141) = 28.09, p < .001$), even after controlling for pre-test performance.
- ii. The partial eta squared ($\eta^2 = .167$) indicates a large effect size, supporting the efficacy of the performance-based approach.

c. MANOVA: Multivariate Analysis of Post-Test Outcomes

A MANOVA was performed to examine the impact of instructional method on three dependent variables: Appropriateness, Politeness, and Fluency.

Table 4. MANOVA Results: Pillai's Trace

Multivariate Test	Value	F	df	p-value	Partial η^2
Pillai's Trace	0.318	22.18	3, 140	.000	.318

Table 5. Between-Subjects Effects from MANOVA

Dependent Variable	F	p-value	Partial η^2
Appropriateness	33.41	.000	.191
Politeness	29.76	.000	.174
Fluency	17.92	.000	.113

In tables 4 and 5, the following findings are evident:

- i. MANOVA indicated a significant multivariate effect of the instructional method on the combined dependent variables (*Pillai's Trace* = .318, $p < .001$).
- ii. Follow-up ANOVAs revealed significant improvements in all three areas, with appropriateness ($\eta^2 = .191$) showing the largest gain.

d. Effect Size (Cohen's d)

Effect sizes were calculated for each pragmatic subscale and the total score to determine the practical significance of instructional effects.

Table 6. Cohen's d Effect Sizes for Learning Gains

Measure	Mean Gain (Exp)	Mean Gain (Ctrl)	Cohen's d
Appropriateness	14.21	4.72	0.95
Politeness	13.03	4.16	0.91
Fluency	10.12	3.97	0.71
Total Score	12.45	4.21	0.87

The results in table 6 indicated that effect size calculations confirmed large gains in the Experimental Group, particularly in appropriateness ($d = 0.95$) and politeness ($d = 0.91$), affirming the substantial impact of the performance-based, digitally mediated instruction.

e. Multivariate Regression Analysis

To assess predictive factors for pragmatic gains, a multivariate linear regression was conducted. The dependent variable was the total post-test score; independent variables included digital engagement (survey-based composite score) and prior proficiency level.

Table 7. Multivariate Regression: Predictors of Pragmatic Development

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p-value
Digital Engagement	0.622	0.138	.429	4.51	.000
Prior Proficiency	0.338	0.124	.218	2.72	.007
Constant	42.12	3.15	—	13.37	.000
$R^2 = .38$					

Table 7 indicated that:

- Digital engagement was the strongest predictor of pragmatic development ($\beta = .429, p < .001$), followed by prior proficiency ($\beta = .218, p = .007$).
- The model explained 38% of the variance in post-test scores ($R^2 = .38$), emphasizing the pedagogical value of active digital participation.

f. Instrument Reliability

Internal consistency and inter-rater reliability were evaluated to validate instrument quality.

Table 8. Instrument Reliability Scores

Instrument	Measure	Value	Interpretation
Attitude Survey (Digital Tools)	Cronbach's Alpha	.89	Excellent
Performance-Based Rubric	Cronbach's Alpha	.86	Good
Role-play Scoring (2 raters)	Cohen's Kappa	.81	Strong Agreement

Table 8 finally summarized that:

- All instruments demonstrated strong reliability. Cronbach's Alpha values exceeded the .80 threshold, confirming internal consistency.
- The Cohen's Kappa of .81 indicates high inter-rater agreement, ensuring that performance assessments were both valid and replicable.

g. Result of the Interview

To add to the statistics and learn more about what learners experienced, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 participants split equally between the groups. The interviews included questions on how learners regulate their politeness, what they think about tools for learning how to communicate and their knowledge of cultural rules in speech and writing. The data were written down and analysed using NVivo 14. By using open and axial coding multiple times, we found three main themes: strategies used by learners, their awareness of culture and problems with technology. These themes provide essential context for interpreting how and why the performance-based, digitally supported approach impacted learners' pragmatic development.

Table 9. Thematic Analysis of Interview Data

Theme	Illustrative Quote	Relevance to Study Focus
Learner Strategies	<i>"I tried to imagine how a native speaker would say it politely, like using 'Would you mind...' instead of 'Can you...'"</i>	Demonstrates the internalization of pragmalinguistic forms and social norms through guided performance tasks.
Cultural Awareness	<i>"In my country, we are more direct, but I learned that in English, being too direct can sound rude. So I changed how I make requests."</i>	Highlights increased sociopragmatic sensitivity and the impact of cultural comparison in shaping pragmatic choices.
Digital Challenges	<i>"Sometimes it was hard to act natural in front of the camera. It made me nervous, and I forgot what to say."</i>	Reflects performance anxiety and limited spontaneity in asynchronous digital tasks, informing future pedagogical design.
Authentic Engagement	<i>"I liked doing the video tasks because it felt like a real conversation, not just writing sentences in a book."</i>	Supports the value of performance-based activities for simulating real-life communication and fostering engagement.
Strategic Awareness	<i>"I started to pay attention to how tone and word choice affect how polite something sounds."</i>	Reveals growing metapragmatic awareness and the strategic adaptation of language for specific social contexts.

The thematic findings show that learners using the language learning tool began to use practical strategies, usually by comparing their own culture to the ways natives use language. It became clear how awareness of culture helped participants pay close attention to directness and the tone participants use when judging politeness. The use of digital performance tasks was appreciated by learners, but some noted that technology and performance nerves were issues for them. Importantly, the interviews showed that using the simulated tasks helped students think carefully about when and how to use language—supporting the main goal of the study.

4.2. Discussion of Findings

This study tested the usefulness of a digital, task-oriented method for helping EFL learners acquire the competence to use various speech acts and politeness methods. Results from each analysis show that using interactive digital tools made a positive difference in learners' ability to express themselves appropriately and fluently in polite ways. This agrees with González-Lloret's (2023) view that using tasks and technology in teaching can bridge the difference between what students can do with language in theory and what they can do in real situations.

Regarding group performance on the tests, learners in the experimental group did much better on all measures, especially as their scores for appropriateness and politeness were a full point on the scale higher (effect sizes of 0.95 and 0.91), respectively. The results support what Taguchi (2015) noted before which was that combining authentic practice and interactive lessons produces better results than

using just rules. Specifically, the large effect sizes and strong differences ($\eta^2 > 0.16$) between groups confirm the worth of using performances in cases where simulations in digital environments support socially based language activity.

The findings from MANOVA indicated that different parts of pragmatic production—appropriateness, politeness and fluency—responded to the teaching method, so it is best to develop this competence by doing many different tasks. It is clear from the data that, although pragmatic improvement was smaller, participants still spoke more naturally, suggesting that Ishihara and Cohen (2010) were right to claim that pragmatic exercises do not have to interrupt a person's normal speech patterns.

Digital participation more than any other factor was strongly linked with improved learners' proficiency in pragmatic skills after the assessment ($\beta = .429, p < .001$). This result extends what Culbertson et al. (2017) suggested which was that voice-driven, meaningful technology enables quick and helpful pragmatic feedback. Furthermore, what learners said about their understanding was consistent, as many connected their pragmatic awareness to working with tools like Flipgrid or VR-based role-plays.

We were able to discover how learners constructed and used politeness strategies thanks to qualitative data. Often, interviewees said they would switch from direct to indirect ways of speaking or tone, depending on how they perceived what was expected by those around them. This shows that Kasper and Rose (2002) are right: if participants both think about and use social norms in practice, they can see clear improvements in pragmatic speaking. It was often observed that learners compared L1 practises to L2 requirements, suggesting they are developing the kind of intercultural pragmatic competence described in Kecskes (2014).

However, some digital problems were found that make performance-based pragmatic instruction more difficult. Although most participants enjoyed the simple tools for their realness, a small number found it difficult to keep performances fresh and spontaneous on camera. According to Yates (2010), using technology sometimes makes it more challenging for students to put knowledge into practice, due to a heavier workload for both mind and feelings. To address these findings, we need learning activities online that increase a learner's confidence and are still authentic.

Interviews revealed how learners learned to see the influence of features like tone, modality and the words they use on how polite their talk becomes. This reflective stance was made possible, in part, by the performance review cycle embedded in the digital tasks (e.g., watching one's video submissions), reinforcing Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan's (2020) argument that conscious reflection is integral to pragmatic instruction. Evaluating and fixing your communication skills yourself reflects a professional level of pragmatic knowledge.

By triangulating the data, the study not only improves the study's rigour but also brings together areas where statistics and education are not always linked. By analysing the quantitative information, we find proof of learning growth; looking at the qualitative findings tells us why these gains came about. In other words, looking at digital engagement and past results in learning combines with how learners position themselves within cultural groups and cope with technology, to show a detailed path of learning.

Unlike the earlier studies that put too much stress on either classroom writing structure (Rose, 2005) or free digital exploration, this one demonstrates that moderately controlled computer activities aimed at practical tasks are the best approach. This study questioned the idea that pragmatics cannot be taught explicitly and supports that a carefully designed digital environment, together with an assessment focused on use, can help students learn pragmatics faster.

When put together, the results support a movement for a new method of teaching pragmatics that is rooted in tasks, supported by digital technology and adapted to everyone's needs. It concludes that engaging in digital learning supported by performance tasks can help students both produce language they can use and restructure their thoughts about how social language works. When participants

understand strategy and culture, they can handle real-world interactions more sensitively, more fluently and with a true sense of cultural awareness.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This research analysed how using performance-based instruction aided by digital technologies developed pragmatic skills in EFL learners. Findings from the quantitative analysis revealed improvement in using speech acts, being polite and choosing appropriate language, with large differences found among learners in the experimental group. Despite some digital task difficulties, the qualitative data showed that learners developed a greater awareness of language, became more sensitive to other cultures and became more engaged with their learning.

Combining performance tasks with technology greatly helped students improve their use of language. The participants not only became better at speaking and understanding pragmatic language but also gained skills that helped them change how they speak depending on the social situation. The alignment between statistical and thematic findings confirms that structured, interactive, and context-rich digital tasks can meaningfully enhance learners' real-world communicative ability.

It is therefore suggested that teachers in foreign language classes bring digital role-plays via video, virtual reality and recorded activity-driven tasks into their teaching of pragmatics. To reduce students' fears and encourage them to think, curriculum designers should guide digital work step by step. More investigation may reveal how such instruction affects learners as they use the language over time and in different parts of the world.

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