DESIGNING PRAGMATIC FORMULA FOR LOCAL ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Language teaching materials play a significant role in language learning as it provides input for learners. The language input should contain all of the aspects of communicative competence, one of which is pragmatic competence. This is because pragmatics deals with language use in context. Learning a language is not merely about learning how to make grammatically correct sentences, but it is also about how to use the sentence appropriately. Thus, learners should be exposed to pragmatics to be able to use the language they learn in context. For this reason, this study aims to design a pragmatic formula for English language teaching materials (textbooks) development as previous studies on pragmatics on English language textbooks reported that many of them, particularly the local ones contain insufficient pragmatic knowledge. The present research employed a qualitative approach by referring to the earlier studies on pragmatics in language textbooks. Findings indicated that it was not an easy assignment to design pragmatic formula as it required a lot of observation of teaching materials and pragmatic judgment by a native speaker of American English.

Keywords: pragmatics, language coursebooks, materials development

INTRODUCTION

Pragmatics has become a significant issue in materials development. It is related to how sufficient or adequate pragmatic information language textbooks have. Most studies on pragmatics in language textbooks indicate that the textbooks lack pragmatic knowledge (Harwood, 2014; Ren and Han, 2016; Nu and Murray, 2020) which may have a negative impact on learners' pragmatic competence.

Pragmatics is defined as communication and its interpretation which involve a speaker and a hearer (Yule, 1996) while Crystal (2003) defined pragmatics as the study of language use and how it affects communication. The core problem of pragmatics in materials development lies in some aspects of pragmatics called metapragmatic, sociopragmatics, and pragmalinguistics.

Earlier studies reported that these three aspects of pragmatics have been a central issue in language textbooks which has raised the problem of the under-representation of pragmatics in

language textbooks (Ren and Han, 2016). In addition, teachers seem to overlook pragmatics, particularly metapragmatic, sociopragmatics, and pragmalinguistics because they focus more on linguistic competence so that learners can only make grammatically correct sentences, yet they lack knowledge of how to use the sentences appropriately with sufficient metapragmatic information which will result in sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic appropriateness.

For this reason, this particular topic should be further and deeply investigated to be able to design a pragmatic formula for language textbooks, especially for English language textbook development and for assisting English language teachers to increase their pragmatic awareness in language teaching.

According to Griffith (2006), Pragmatics is about 'how we interpret utterances and produce interpretable utterances either way taking account of context and background knowledge." Thus, context and background knowledge are imperative to investigate why people produce particular utterances and the function of the utterances. This, in the end, will result in how we are supposed to use a language by considering some pragmatic aspects such as speech acts, metapragmatic, sociopragmatics, and pragmalinguistics.

Concerning this present research, four aspects of pragmatics were employed:

1. Speech acts

Speech acts are defined as doing things with words (Cutting, 2002). They are presented as conversations or dialogues in language textbooks. Any relevant materials dealing with function, e.g., function in English, can be discussed from speech act perspectives. Speech acts in English language textbooks are commonly found in conversations, and lists of phrases or expressions which are taught through particular topics such as making invitations, giving directions, describing people, arranging a meeting, chairing a meeting, etc.
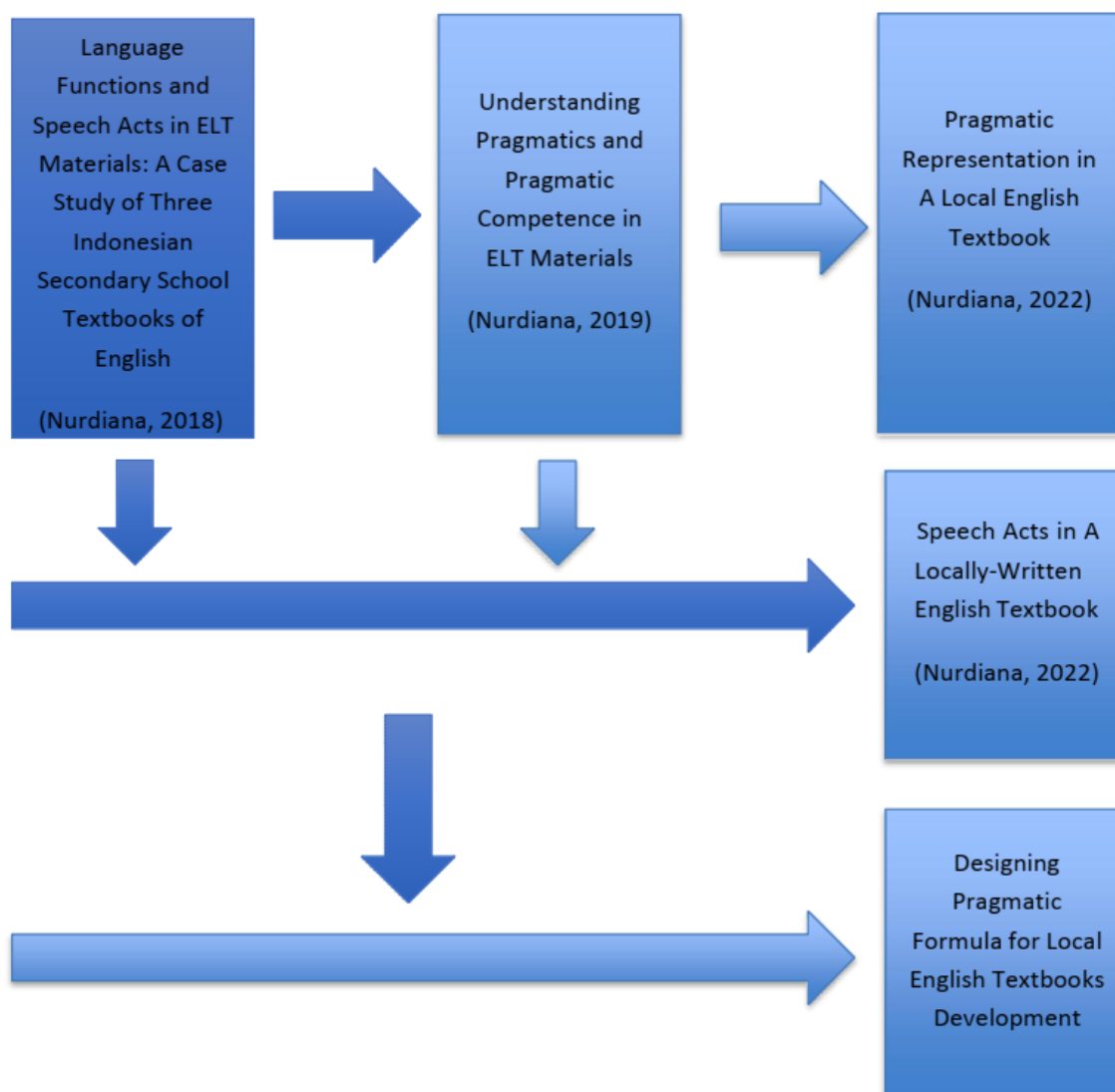
2. Metapragmatic Information

Metapragmatic information consists of pragmatic information such as setting (where a conversation takes place), social relationship (to whom the language is used), and topic (what speaker and hearer are talking about) (Blundell, et al., 1982; Nguyen, 2011). This pragmatic information plays an important role in language use in context.

3. Sociopragmatics and Pragmalinguistics

Sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics were first introduced by Thomas (1983). These two terms represent pragmatic failure—a term which is defined as "the inability to understand what is meant by what is said". However, the inability in this context could apply to not being able to use particular language expressions in certain situations appropriately. In language textbooks, this is represented by the use of formal and inaccurate/inappropriate language in all of the conversations written in the textbooks.

This present research aims to fill in the gap of the previous studies which mostly discussed the under-representation of pragmatic information in English language textbooks. Most of them did not provide any solutions in a more practical way, e.g. redesigning a conversation that integrates metapragmatic information, sociopragmatics, and pragmalinguistics. In addition, this research was conducted based on the following diagrams showing the author's previous studies on pragmatics in language textbooks.

METHODOLOGY

As seen in the diagrams above, this study was a follow-up investigation on incorporating metapragmatic information, sociopragmatics, and pragmalinguistics in local English language textbooks (Nurdiana, 2018; Nurdiana, 2019; Nurdiana, 2022; Nurdiana, 2022). Local English language textbooks are English textbooks written by Indonesians and published by Indonesian publishing companies and the Ministry of Education and Culture. It attempts to design pragmatic formula for local English language textbook development by employing a qualitative approach and conducting a pragmatic judgment task by a native speaker of American English. Below is the step-by-step research procedure for carrying out this research:

1. Selecting a local English textbook published by the Ministry of Education and Culture.
2. Compiling sources of data—conversations, phrases, language expressions (speech acts)—that lack metapragmatic information, sociopragmatics, and pragmatics.

3. Designing a pragmatic formula (by re-making conversations using appropriate language expressions or phrases that have been validated by the native speaker of English) to ensure that they contain adequate pragmatic information.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data of the research were taken from a local English textbook for the first graders of high schools. They were language expressions or speech acts of particular functions used in conversations or dialogues employed as the media to teach the expressions. After conducting a pragmatic judgment task with a native speaker of American English, the use of the expressions did not meet the requirement of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic competence. This implies that the expressions might be common in English, but how they were used was not pragmatically appropriate. Therefore, they should be revised by remaking the conversations by, for example, employing the expressions with an adequate amount of metapragmatic information so that they are sociopragmatically and pragmalinguistically appropriate.

The local textbook that became the data source for the present study was titled 'Developing English Competencies' published by the Ministry of National Education in 2008 (Doddy et al., 2008). It was written by Indonesians for the first graders of high schools. It consisted of six (6) chapters and two (2) reviews. The language functions covered in this book are:

- **Expressing greetings, introducing, meetings, and parting**
- **Showing happiness, affection (giving affection), and showing sympathy**
- **Inviting, Accepting Invitation, and Declining Invitation**
- **Making, accepting, and cancelling an appointment**
- **Compliment and congratulate others**
- **Expressing gratitude**
- **Expressing surprise and amazement.**

As the objective of this study is to design pragmatic formula for local English textbooks development, some conversation examples from the textbook were revised by integrating metapragmatic, sociopragmatic, and pragmalinguistic information. Below are examples of revised conversations that have been pragmatically assessed by a native speaker of American English.

A. Pragmatic Formula

Taking into account the theoretical framework used in this research, the pragmatic formula proposed is incorporating any information related to setting and social relationships in each speech act taught in the course book. Therefore, the language expressions or speech acts will be sociopragmatically and pragmalinguistically appropriate. For example:

Situation:

Cipto is waiting for Andi and Yani, his new colleagues, at the airport.

Andi : *Excuse me*. Are you Cipto?
Cipto : Yes. *I'm* Cipto Susanto.

Andi   : *How do you do, Cipto*? I'm Andi from University of Jakarta.
Cipto   : *How do you do, Cipto*. **Nice to see you**.
Andi   : **Nice to meet you, too**. Did you have a good journey?
Cipto   : Yes. It was fine, thanks.
Andi   : Let me help you to bring your suitcase.

Cipto   : That's very kind of you.
Andi   : Not at all. Let me introduce you to my friend.
Andi   : Yani, *this is Cipto*. Cipto, *this is Yani*.
Yani   : *Hello*, Cipto. **Nice to meet you**.
Cipto   : **Pleased to meet you, too**.

Source: Developing English Competencies for Senior High School (Grade X)

(Doddy et al., 2008)

First of all, the situation described in the textbook contained clear information about the social relationship between the speakers in the conversation. However, the expressions of meeting and greeting did not indicate sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic competence. The metapragmatic information was integrated, but the authors failed to incorporate sociopragmatic and pragmalingustic competence. Therefore, the proposed pragmatic formula for teaching speech acts through English textbooks can be seen below.

figure 1: pragmatic formula

Figure 1 shows that in any conversation integrated into language teaching materials, there must be these three aspects of pragmatics—metapragmatics, sociopragmatics, and pragmalinguistic,

According to the native speaker, the example of the conversation here, which is about meeting and greeting, lacked the aspects proposed in the formula. *Colleagues* are closely related to business context whereas this is teaching material for high school students. It should have covered topics that suit the high school context. Hence, the situation needs adjustment. For example, *colleagues* can be replaced by 'friends' which are more suitable for high school students.

Situation:

Cipto is waiting for Andi and Yani, *his new friends*, at the airport.

Since *colleagues* have been replaced by *friends*, the use of the expressions of meeting and greeting can be proposed as follows.

Situation:

Cipto is waiting for Andi and Yani, *his new friends*, at the airport.

Andi   : ***Hi.*** Are you Cipto?
Cipto   : Yes. ***Are you Andi or Andi?***
Cipto   : ***Glad to meet you***.

Andi   : *Me, too*. Did you have a good journey?
Cipto   : Yes. It was fine, thanks.
Andi   : *Can I help you with your suitcase*?
Cipto   : *Thanks.*
Andi   : *Oh, this is Yani.*
Yani   : *Hi, Cipto.*
Cipto   : *Hi, Yani. Nice to meet you.*

According to the native speaker, *friends* indicate informal relationships. Therefore, the language used should be informal, too. He further said that high school students in the US normally get to know each other through common topics of conversation among teenagers such as physical appearance (e.g., hats, t-shirts), books, music, or singers. They normally say "Hi, what's up?" though they do not know each other yet. The expressions "How do you do, nice to meet you, and pleased to meet you" are too formal as they are commonly used by older generations.

B. Pragmatic Formula Application

This section discusses examples of remade/revised conversations incorporating the pragmatic formula as well as the reasons why they need revising.

1. Inviting, Accepting Invitation, and Declining Invitation

Situation:

Robi invites Sandra to go to a movie.

Robi   : Hi, Sandra. There will be a great film tonight. It's about Nasreddin.
          Would you like to go to the movie with me?
Sandra : Of course. *I'd love to*. *When will you pick me up*?
Robi   : I'll pick you up at 7.30. *Be ready*.
Sandra : OK.

Source : Developing English Competencies for Senior High School (Grade X)

(Doddy et al., 2008)

This conversation contains unclear metapragmatic information. As a result, the expressions in italics are sociopragmatically and pragmalinguistically inappropriate. The native speaker said that 'I'd love to' is too formal as Robi and Sandra are most probably close friends and therefore, 'I'd love to' should be replaced by 'OK' or 'That would be great.' He further said that 'When will you pick me up?' indicated that Sandra has been waiting for quite a long time. It is commonly used by people who have a close relationship with one another. The expression 'I'd love to' is not a common expression for people who are not close to each other because it might be considered impolite. Meanwhile, 'be ready' implies one's feeling (the person is feeling upset) and he or she knows that his or her interlocutor likes to be or to come late. Below is the proposed conversation that includes the pragmatic formula.

Situation:

Robi and Sandra are classmates. Robi asks Sandra to go to a movie.

Robi   : Hi, Sandra. '*Nasreddin' is on at the cinema*.
          Do you fancy going to a movie?
Sandra : *It sounds great*.

Robi   : Good. *I'll pick you up at 7.30.*
Sandra : Ok/See you!

Here, the situation is clearer because the social relationship between Robi and Sandra is stated in the situation which determines whether the language expressions should be formal or informal.

2. Showing happiness, affection (giving affection), and showing sympathy

Situation:
Retno gets a good news about her job application. She is very happy.

Retno   : Mom, you know, I sent a job application to a big international
                  company near the downtown a couple of days ago and just now I got a
                  phone call from the company that I get accepted. I am going to work.
                  It's lovely.
Mother   : Yes, *that's wonderful*. Come on. Go tell your daddy.
Retno   : Yes, *I will*. *I'm so happy right now*.

Source : Developing English Competencies for Senior High School (Grade X)
(Doddy et al., 2008)

According to the native speaker, the expression 'It's lovely' in the conversation is not appropriate and common because it is commonly used by an older generation. Besides, it is normally used to talk about something nice, not to describe happy news. Based on pragmatic judgment task,
'Yes, I will'and I'm so happy right now' are not usual expressions although they are used to show happiness. 'OK' should replace 'Yes, I will'. Thus, the conversation can be remade as follows.

Situation:

Retno has just got a job. Then she tells her mother.

Retno   : Mom, you know, I sent a job application to a big international
                  company near the downtown a couple of days ago and just now I got a
                  phone call from the company that I was accepted. *I got the job.*
Mother   : *Congratulations*! Go tell your daddy.
Retno   : Ok. *I'm so happy right now*.

3. Expressing surprise and amazement

Below is an example of a conversation that shows the use of expressions of showing surprise and amazement.

A. Situation:

Sandi and Dina are talking about the accident which happened to an airline pilot they read about in the headline of a newspaper.

Dina : ***Good heavens***! Look at this. It says a pilot was nearly sucked out of
     the window of his plane. It was in mid air.
Sandi : ***Really****?* He didn't die, did he*?*

Source : Developing English Competencies for Senior High School (Grade X)

(Doddy et al., 2008)

The expression 'Good heavens!, according to the native speaker, is only used by an older generation. It should be replaced by 'Oh my God!' to indicate surprise. It might be pragmatically appropriate if the conversation is as follows.

Situation:

Sandi and Dina are talking about an accident that happened to a pilot. The news is in a newspaper headline.

Dina : ***Oh my God***! You must read this. A pilot was nearly sucked out of
     the window of his plane. It was in mid-air.
Sandi : ***It is so scary. Is he OK?***

B. Situation:

Wati chats with her best friend, Ria, at the school canteen. They talk about Ari who is the most favourite student in theirschool.

Wati : Do you know that Ari has a girlfriend?
Ria   : ***Are you kidding? That's not true***.
Wati : Listen, I got the news from his best friend, Frans.
Ria   : ***That's too bad***. Yesterday, he gave me a bar of chocolate.

Source : Developing English Competencies for Senior High School (Grade X)

(Doddy et al., 2008)

'That's not true' is an unusual expression used in this context. According to the native speaker, the common one is 'No way. Then, 'That's too bad' is not appropriately used here as it is used for bad news rather than for good news. The conversation would be more pragmatically appropriate if it is revised as follows.

Situation:

Wati and Ria are talking about Ari, the favorite student in school, in the school canteen.

Wati : Have you heard about Ari's girlfriend?
Ria   : ***He has a girlfriend?! No way!***
Wati : Yeah! Frans told me.
Ria   : He just asked me to go out. I thought he liked me.

The findings of the present study suggest the importance of pragmatics in language textbooks. Ignoring pragmatic norms can result in 'unnatural language use' in which speakers and hearers in conversations in a language textbook speak either too formally or informally. Blundell et al. (1982) propose three types of language use called formal, neutral, and informal as can be seen in the following table.

SETTING	**Pub**	**bus stop; shop**	**boardroom; ceremonial reception**
	⇩	⇩	⇩
TOPIC	the latest football match; a TV comedy program	weather; travel	an important business deal
	⇩	⇩	⇩
SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP	a friend; child; close colleague	a stranger in the street; taxi-driver; customs officer	a senior colleague
	⇩	⇩	⇩
PSYCHOLOGICAL ATTITUDE	relaxed; light-hearted	no strong feelings either way	very serious
	⇩	⇩	⇩
PROBABLE LANGUAGE	**INFORMAL LANGUAGE**	**NEUTRAL LANGUAGE**	**FORMAL LANGUAGE**

CONCLUSION

Language textbook authors should bear in mind that to teach speech acts that serve communicative functions, there are pragmatic norms they need to take into account namely metapragmatic information, sociopragmatics, and pragmalinguistics. They should be incorporated into conversations that become language input for English learners. These norms play an important role so that the learners have a wide range of language expressions they can use appropriately in daily communications. They will be knowledgeable of when to use those expressions, to whom they use them, and where they are supposed to use them.

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