The Role of Vlog Assignments In Developing Pragmatic Skills Among Students at University Level

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Abstract : Effective speaking involves not only linguistic competence but also pragmatic skills, which are often overlooked in traditional language instruction. While previous studies on vlogs in language learning have primarily examined linguistic aspects, the role of pragmatic competence remains underexplored. This study addresses this gap by investigating the impact of vlog-making assignments on pragmatic skill development among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, utilizing Speech Act Theory as the theoretical framework. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the research analyzed vlogs from five students. The findings revealed that students predominantly used Representatives and Expressives, demonstrating their capacity to convey contextually appropriate observations, opinions, and emotions. These results highlight the potential of vlog-making assignments in enhancing both linguistic and pragmatic communication skills. The study's limitations, notably the small sample size and qualitative design, underscore the need for expanded research with more diverse samples to comprehensively understand how vlog assignments influence pragmatic skill development. Despite these constraints, the research advocates for integrating digital tools in language education and emphasizes the importance of assessment methods that holistically evaluate linguistic and pragmatic competencies.

Keywords: Communicative Competence, Pragmatic Skills, Speech Act, Vlogs.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a fundamental skill in language learning, encompassing more than just vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Effective speaking also requires communicative competence, which integrates linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic skills to enable meaningful communication in real-life contexts (Bailey, 2005; Hymes, 1972). Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emphasizes the practical application of language, highlighting that proficiency in speaking involves the ability to convey meaning appropriately to different audiences and contexts (Canale & Swain, 1980; Savignon, 2008). This broader perspective on speaking proficiency reflects the necessity of pragmatic competence—skills related to adaptability, contextual awareness, and appropriate language use (Richards, 2006; Thornbury, 2005). In the context of English language teaching (ELT), integrating pragmatic skills into speaking instruction aligns with the goal of fostering holistic communicative

competence. While linguistic skills form the foundation, pragmatic competence allows learners to navigate the complexities of real-world communication, bridging the gap between form and function in language use (Bachman & Palmer, 2010).

Despite its importance, the development of pragmatic skills in speaking often receives limited attention in instructional practices and assessments, which tend to prioritize linguistic accuracy (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). This gap calls for innovative approaches that address both linguistic and pragmatic components in speaking instruction. One emerging instructional strategy is the use of vlog-making assignments. Research suggests that vlogs serve as effective tools for enhancing linguistic skills such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, as they encourage learners to practice, revise, and produce spoken content (Ersan et al., 2022; Jin, 2024; Sun, 2009). Moreover, vlog-making fosters learner autonomy and confidence, as students take ownership of their learning and refine their speaking through repeated practice (Mandasari & Aminatun, 2020; Rahmawati et al., 2018). Peer feedback incorporated in vlog projects also promotes collaborative learning, allowing students to learn from one another (Authar & Muflihah, 2020).

However, current studies on vlog assignments primarily focus on linguistic aspects, often neglecting the development of pragmatic skills essential for achieving communicative competence (Rose & Kasper, 2001). Pragmatic skills, which include the ability to use language appropriately according to context and audience, are critical for effective communication but are frequently overlooked in traditional speaking assessments (Cohen, 2019). Addressing this gap, the present study explores the role of vlog-making in fostering pragmatic skills among EFL learners. This study employs Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962) as a framework to analyze students' vlog productions, focusing on how intent and context influence communication. By investigating the impact of vlog-making on pragmatic skill development, this research aims to provide insights into how this instructional approach can support a comprehensive understanding of speaking proficiency. The research question guiding this study is: How do vlog-making assignments contribute to the improvement of pragmatic skills in speaking? Through this investigation, the study seeks to inform educational practices in ELT, emphasizing the need to integrate both linguistic and pragmatic components in speaking tasks to enhance learners' overall communicative competence.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive methodology to explore how vlog assignments contribute to the development of pragmatic skills, guided by Speech Act Theory. This methodology is well-suited to education research, as it provides a detailed understanding of authentic language use and its alignment with communicative functions in educational contexts (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative descriptive approach emphasizes the naturalistic examination of data, allowing researchers to capture the nuances of students' performance without manipulation or experimental constraints. By analyzing vlogs as a form of authentic assessment, this study seeks to provide insights into how EFL learners develop and apply pragmatic skills in real-world communication tasks.

The data for this research consist of 5 vlogs submitted as a final exam project for the Intercultural Communication course by English Department students from Class 3A at University of Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung. The project required students to create either vlogs or podcasts, with 21 students opting for vlogs. However, most vlogs employed voice-over narration rather than direct speech. To ensure the analysis focuses on observable speaking performance, the researchers selected 5 vlogs where students predominantly addressed the camera directly. This selection allowed for a more accurate examination of real-time language use, including audience engagement and message delivery. The selection was also guided by data availability and ethical considerations, as informed consent was obtained from all participants for academic purposes. Using these criteria ensures that the analysis remains focused on the most relevant examples of students' speaking performance, aligning with ethical research practices (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

This study applies Speech Act Theory, introduced by Austin (1962) and further developed by Searle (1969), as its analytical framework. The theory provides a lens to examine how language functions as a tool for action, focusing on the intent and communicative purpose behind spoken utterances. Specifically, the study analyzes illocutionary acts, which represent the intended meaning or function of a speaker's words, such as requesting, informing, or apologizing. To systematically analyze students' vlogs, the following categories of illocutionary acts are used: 1) Representatives: Speech acts where the speaker commits to the truth of a proposition, such as informing, describing, or asserting (e.g., *"The weather is sunny today"*). 2) Expressives: Acts expressing the speaker's psychological state, such as thanking, apologizing, or congratulating (e.g., *"Thank you for joining me today"*). 3) Directives: Speech acts aimed at getting the listener to perform an action, such as

requesting, commanding, or suggesting (e.g., *"Please join me for a jog"*). 4) Commissives: Acts committing the speaker to a future action, such as promising, offering, or planning (e.g., *"I will submit the assignment by tomorrow"*). 5) Declarations: Acts that bring about an immediate institutional or social change, such as declaring or appointing (e.g., *"You are promoted"*).

The researchers organized the data by grouping utterances into these categories, performing a thematic analysis to identify patterns and variations in the use of illocutionary acts. This analysis highlights how students navigate context and audience to achieve communicative goals, revealing their strengths and areas for improvement in pragmatic competence (Miles et al., 2014). By examining the pragmatic functions of language in students' vlogs, this study contributes to understanding how vlog-making assignments serve as an effective pedagogical tool for developing both linguistic and pragmatic competencies. The findings aim to inform educators about the role of authentic assessments in enhancing communicative competence, particularly in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. The focus on real-world applications of language aligns with educational principles that prioritize learner-centered and context-sensitive approaches to teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). This study emphasizes the importance of integrating speaking tasks that develop both linguistic and pragmatic skills, offering practical insights into the use of vlogs as a method to foster comprehensive language learning outcomes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of illocutionary acts in student vlogs reveals several critical aspects of their language use, contributing to the development of pragmatic skills among EFL learners. The results indicate that Representatives are the most frequently used illocutionary acts in student vlogs. Students consistently describe events, share observations, and present factual information to their audience. For example, one student vividly detailed their surroundings by stating, *"Today is quite a good day because it wasn't really rainy at all. It's really clear, the sky is really clear."* This highlights the students' tendency to create a shared understanding of events and settings, enhancing narrative coherence and making communication more engaging. Such descriptive language allows the audience to visualize the experiences, fostering a deeper connection. This preference aligns with the inherent descriptive nature of vlogging, where verbal commentary complements visual elements to produce immersive storytelling experiences (Brown & Yule, 1983). The predominance of Representatives

underscores the importance of context in shaping language use (Hymes, 1972; Savignon, 2008), suggesting that vlogs provide a naturalistic context for practicing contextually appropriate language, which is a cornerstone of pragmatic competence.

Expressives emerge as the second most frequently used illocutionary act, showcasing students' tendency to convey emotions such as excitement, frustration, or fatigue. For instance, one student humorously expressed frustration over a friend's lateness by saying, *"One of my friends just come here, he just late about 2 hours late. We say it's okay, yeah, just 2 hours late."* This use of humor reflects the student's ability to address frustration while maintaining a light-hearted demeanor, making the vlogs more relatable and authentic. Such emotional expressions contribute to audience engagement, aligning with Goffman's (1959) concept of self-presentation, where emotional authenticity plays a crucial role. The frequent use of Expressives highlights students' efforts to convey emotions and engage authentically with their audience, reflecting their sociolinguistic competence and supporting the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which prioritize meaningful, context-sensitive communication (Savignon, 2008).

While Directives are less frequently employed, they play a crucial role in fostering audience engagement. Phrases like *"Let's go"* and *"So just stay tuned"* demonstrate how students actively invite viewers to participate in their narratives. This strategic use underscores an understanding of the interactive nature of digital media, where audience involvement is key. Although the overall frequency of Directives is limited, their presence highlights the students' conscious efforts to connect with their audience, making their content feel more dynamic. This finding supports Bachman and Palmer's (2010) framework of communicative competence, which incorporates the ability to manage interactional aspects of communication. Occasional use of Commissives primarily serves to express future plans or intentions, as seen in a student's statement, *"I think I will go home now."* This forward-looking perspective contributes to narrative continuity and coherence, demonstrating the students' ability to maintain a logical flow in their vlogs. This aligns with Halliday's (1978) concept of the interpersonal function of language, where expressing intentions fosters trust and rapport with the audience. The notable use of Commissives by some students reveals an additional layer of pragmatic skill: the ability to use language to express future intentions and create narrative coherence.

Interestingly, no instances of Declarations were found in the vlogs, consistent with the informal nature of the medium. The absence of formal announcements highlights the

adaptability of students' language to the social and contextual demands of vlogging, prioritizing relatability over formality. This finding reinforces the importance of audience and purpose in shaping pragmatic choices, as proposed by Austin (1962) and further emphasized by Thornbury (2005). The analysis also reveals the distribution of illocutionary acts among the students, as illustrated in Figure 1. Representatives dominate the illocutionary acts, with Expressives being common, allowing students to convey emotions and enhance authenticity. Notably, one student used Commissives more frequently, demonstrating a forward-looking narrative style. The limited use of Directives indicates an effort to invite audience participation, while the absence of Declarations aligns with the informal nature of vlogs. Overall, students predominantly use Representatives and Expressives, emphasizing their preference for informative and relatable communication in their vlogging.

These findings underscore the potential of vlog-making assignments in fostering pragmatic competence among EFL learners. By integrating various illocutionary acts, students demonstrate a holistic approach to communication that extends beyond grammatical accuracy. This aligns with the idea that pragmatic skills are essential for effective communication, enabling speakers to adapt language to various social and contextual demands (Rose & Kasper, 2001). This study contributes to the growing body of literature on pragmatic skills in language learning by demonstrating how digital platforms like vlogs can serve as practical tools for developing these skills. By applying Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962), the analysis highlights how vlog-making allows learners to navigate diverse communicative contexts, fostering their ability to adjust language use appropriately.

Furthermore, the findings align with CLT principles, which emphasize the importance of meaningful communication that integrates both linguistic and pragmatic elements. The results suggest that vlog assignments can be further refined and integrated into EFL curricula to enhance not only linguistic but also pragmatic competence. Future research should explore the dynamics of digital communication in greater depth, employing methodologies such as action research to assess the effectiveness of vlog-making in classroom settings. Such studies could provide actionable insights into how educators can design tasks that optimize the development of both pragmatic and linguistic skills, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of communicative competence in the digital age.
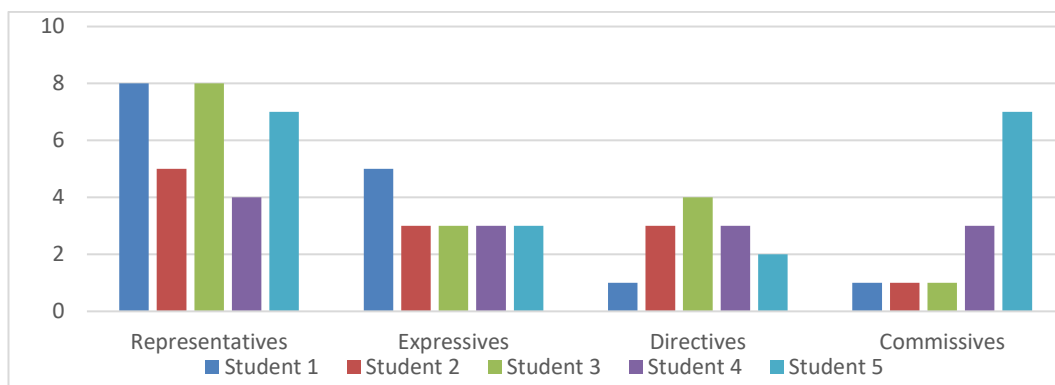
Figure 1. Students' Distribution of Illocutionary Acts

CONCLUSION

This study explored the influence of vlog-making assignments on the development of pragmatic skills among EFL students, finding that such tasks can enhance learners' ability to communicate effectively within specific contexts. The analysis showed that students predominantly utilized Representatives and Expressives in their vlogs, demonstrating their tendency to share factual details, express opinions, and convey emotions. These findings emphasize the value of vlog-making in fostering pragmatic competence and highlight the need to integrate modern digital tools into language teaching. Consequently, educators are encouraged to implement innovative assessment strategies that address both linguistic proficiency and the pragmatic aspects of communication, thereby supporting more holistic language development in EFL learners. Nonetheless, while the findings suggest a positive link between vlog assignments and pragmatic skill enhancement, further investigation—particularly through experimental or action research—is required to determine the depth and scope of this relationship. This study's limitations, including its qualitative descriptive methodology and small sample size, suggest that future research should involve larger, more diverse samples to better understand the factors influencing students' pragmatic development.

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