

Pragmatic Elements in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Textbooks in Senior High Schools of Pekanbaru

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the pragmatic elements present in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks used in senior high schools in Pekanbaru, Indonesia. Specifically, it examines the coverage of speech acts, metapragmatic strategies, and contextual variables in two widely used textbooks: Buku Sarana Elektronik (BSE) and Pathway to English, for grades X, XI, and XII. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach with document analysis techniques, drawing data from the textbooks and interviews with English teachers in Pekanbaru. The findings reveal that the coverage of speech acts in both textbooks is incomplete, with an overemphasis on directives such as commands, requests, and suggestions. These speech acts, often face-threatening, require higher pragmatic competence from learners, which the textbooks do not adequately support. Additionally, metapragmatic information provided in the textbooks is limited and focuses more on pragmalinguistics than sociopragmatic factors, leaving students underprepared for real-life communication where social norms and contextual variables such as power dynamics play a crucial role. The textbooks also lack diversity in contextual variables, with most dialogues featuring interactions between individuals of equal power and little social distance, reducing learners' exposure to various social roles and communication contexts. The study concludes that both BSE and Pathway to English fail to provide sufficient pragmatic content and suggests that future textbook design should include a broader range of speech acts, metapragmatic

strategies, and diverse social contexts to better develop learners' pragmatic competence. The findings have significant implications for improving the effectiveness of teaching materials in Indonesian EFL classrooms.

Keywords: Pragmatic Elements; English Textbooks

INTRODUCTION

Any community's daily life depends heavily on communication. For a variety of reasons, people interact with one another. Brown and Yule separated two talk macro-functions of language: interpersonal and transactional activities (Cutting, 2021). The transactional function of language is used to express factual information, such as news reports or weather forecasts. Meanwhile, social relationships, individual attitudes, solidarity, and maintaining societal cohesiveness are maintained through the interactional function, which includes activities like welcoming, apologizing, and giving advice (Cutting, 2021). According to Brown and Yule (1983), most human interaction serves an interpersonal function, which facilitates social bonding and communication in daily life.

To communicate effectively, people must know not only what to say but also when, where, and to whom they are speaking. Communication is not just about stringing words together; it involves understanding the context and the social rules of conversation. Language learners must therefore go beyond grammar rules and vocabulary to communicate successfully. They need to be aware of how meaning is created in context and select appropriate linguistic forms based on the situation and the audience.

Pragmatic competence, the ability to use language appropriately in different contexts, has become a critical goal in language education. As Yule (2019) suggests, pragmatic competence enables learners to interact more effectively by understanding when and how to use language appropriately. Inadequate pragmatic knowledge can lead to miscommunication and confusion, particularly in intercultural settings (Taguchi & Roever, 2017). Thus, it is essential that classroom instruction includes the teaching of pragmatics, encompassing both linguistic and sociocultural knowledge (Taguchi, 2015).

Despite the increasing recognition of the importance of pragmatic competence, research shows that many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks still lack sufficient coverage of pragmatic elements (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014; Vasquez & Sharpless, 2020). For instance, textbooks may present grammatical structures and vocabulary but often fail to address pragmatic elements such as speech acts, politeness strategies, and contextual variation. While several studies have examined the integration of pragmatics into language teaching materials (Taguchi, 2015; Jiang, 2020), there remains a notable gap in research focusing on high school EFL textbooks in specific regions, such as Pekanbaru, Indonesia. The lack of region-

specific studies highlights the need for a more localized analysis of how pragmatic elements are presented in textbooks used in Indonesian classrooms.

Recent studies emphasize the importance of teaching pragmatics in EFL classrooms as it enhances learners' ability to use language in socially and culturally appropriate ways. According to Taguchi (2015), pragmatic competence involves both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge—learners need to understand not only how to perform speech acts but also how to modify their language according to the social context. For example, Jiang (2020) noted that speech acts like requests, refusals, and apologies are often inadequately represented in textbooks, leading learners to struggle in real-life interactions. Furthermore, Vasquez and Sharpless (2020) observed that textbooks often overlook sociocultural variation, which is crucial for learners to avoid pragmatic failure.

Although pragmatic competence is essential for effective communication, many textbooks continue to emphasize form over function, leaving learners unprepared for authentic language use (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014). In Indonesia, few studies have systematically examined how pragmatic elements are integrated into high school EFL textbooks, particularly in regions like Pekanbaru. This research seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the pragmatic content in textbooks used by senior high school students in Pekanbaru.

Several studies have examined the inclusion of pragmatics in EFL textbooks. Taguchi and Roever (2017) found that while textbooks provide basic linguistic input, they often fail to include necessary pragmatic information, such as how to perform speech acts appropriately in different contexts. Similarly, Vasquez and Sharpless (2020) highlighted the limited treatment of politeness strategies in many EFL materials, noting that this omission can hinder learners' ability to navigate social interactions effectively. Additionally, Jiang (2020) identified the need for more comprehensive instruction on sociopragmatic variation, particularly in contexts involving different power dynamics and social distances. This study aims to analyze the pragmatic elements in EFL textbooks used in senior high schools in Pekanbaru, focusing on the coverage of speech acts, metapragmatic strategies, and contextual variables. By identifying the strengths and gaps in these textbooks, this research seeks to contribute to the development of more effective teaching materials that enhance pragmatic competence in Indonesian EFL learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pragmatic Competence in Language Learning

Pragmatic competence is defined as the ability to use language in a socially and contextually appropriate manner. It includes both pragmalinguistic knowledge—how to use language forms to perform specific functions (e.g., requests, apologies, refusals)—and sociopragmatic knowledge, which refers to understanding the social norms and cultural expectations that govern language use (Taguchi & Roever,

2017). Pragmatic competence is critical for EFL learners because it allows them to navigate interpersonal interactions successfully, especially in intercultural communication (Taguchi, 2015).

Several studies have emphasized the role of pragmatic competence in language learning. For instance, Taguchi (2015) argues that teaching pragmatics in the EFL classroom helps learners better understand the relationship between linguistic forms and social meanings. Similarly, Jiang (2020) highlights the need for learners to be aware of contextual variables, such as power dynamics and social distance, which influence language choices in different situations. Without sufficient pragmatic competence, learners may experience pragmatic failure, leading to misunderstandings in communication.

The Role of Textbooks in Teaching Pragmatics

EFL textbooks are one of the primary tools used by teachers to introduce language learners to both linguistic and pragmatic elements. Textbooks are expected to provide learners with not only grammatical structures and vocabulary but also examples of how language is used in real-life situations (Vasquez & Sharpless, 2020). However, research has shown that many EFL textbooks fall short in covering pragmatic aspects, focusing predominantly on linguistic accuracy rather than pragmatic appropriateness (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014).

A study by Vasquez and Sharpless (2020) analyzed the representation of speech acts in popular EFL textbooks and found that while some pragmatic elements were present, they were not adequately contextualized. The study revealed that textbooks often present speech acts like requests and apologies without providing information on how to modify these acts based on different social contexts or power relationships. Similarly, Nguyen and Pham (2017) found that Vietnamese EFL textbooks largely ignored sociopragmatic considerations, such as politeness strategies and the degree of imposition, which are essential for learners to perform speech acts effectively.

Pragmatic Elements in EFL Textbooks

Recent studies have specifically examined the inclusion of speech acts, metapragmatic strategies, and contextual variables in EFL textbooks. According to Taguchi and Roever (2017), many textbooks provide basic examples of speech acts such as greetings, requests, and commands but often neglect more complex speech acts like refusals, complaints, and disagreements. These speech acts are crucial for learners to develop a fuller understanding of how to manage face-threatening acts in conversation. In their analysis of Chinese EFL textbooks, Jiang (2020) found that while speech acts like requests and suggestions were included, there was a lack of explanation regarding the social appropriateness of these acts in different contexts. For example, learners were not given adequate information on how to adjust their language based on factors such as the formality of the situation or the status of the

interlocutors. As a result, learners may struggle to use these speech acts appropriately in real-life situations.

Metapragmatic strategies, which provide learners with explicit information about how language should be used in specific contexts, are also underrepresented in many EFL textbooks. Ishihara and Cohen (2014) emphasize the need for textbooks to include metapragmatic information that explains the relationship between linguistic forms and their social functions. For example, learners should be taught not only how to make a request but also how to choose the level of politeness depending on the context. However, as Vasquez and Sharpless (2020) point out, many textbooks fail to offer this type of metapragmatic guidance, leaving learners with an incomplete understanding of how to perform speech acts appropriately.

Contextual Variables and Pragmatic Competence

Contextual variables such as social distance, power relations, and the degree of imposition play a significant role in determining how speech acts should be performed. These variables are crucial for learners to understand because they influence the language choices that are appropriate in different situations (Taguchi & Roever, 2017). For example, the way a learner makes a request to a friend will differ from how they make the same request to a teacher or an employer due to differences in power and social distance. Jiang (2020) examined the treatment of contextual variables in EFL textbooks and found that many textbooks do not adequately address how these factors affect language use. The study revealed that most dialogues in textbooks depict conversations between equals (e.g., friends or classmates), with few examples of how to navigate interactions where there is an imbalance of power or a significant social distance. This lack of diversity in contextual variables can lead to pragmatic failure when learners attempt to use English in more complex social situations.

Challenges in Integrating Pragmatics into Textbooks

While the inclusion of pragmatic elements in EFL textbooks is essential, there are several challenges to integrating these elements effectively. One challenge is that textbook writers may not have sufficient knowledge of pragmatics or may prioritize grammatical accuracy over pragmatic appropriateness (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014). Additionally, as Vasquez and Sharpless (2020) note, the inclusion of pragmatic content requires careful consideration of cultural differences, which can be difficult to represent in a textbook intended for a global audience. In the context of Indonesian EFL textbooks, there has been little research on how well pragmatic elements are integrated, particularly at the senior high school level. This study aims to fill that gap by analyzing the pragmatic content in textbooks used in Pekanbaru, Indonesia, and providing recommendations for improving the teaching of pragmatics in the classroom.

METHOD

This study is a content analysis, which is a research approach for drawing replicable and reliable conclusions from data (verbal discourse, written documents, and visual representations) and placing them in their context (Krippendorf, 2013). It allows for in-depth analysis of certain facts in order to make meaning from a different perspective. According to Krippendorf (2013), content analysis has been used in education to examine textbooks for sexual, racial, and national prejudices. This study aims to reveal pragmatic elements (speech acts, metapragmatic information, and contextual variables) presented in English textbooks titled: *Buku Sekolah Elektronik (BSE) grade X, XI, and XII* published by the Indonesian National Education Department and *Pathway to English* published by Erlangga. Craswell (2014: 32) defines as a data characteristic in qualitative research since it is derived from pragmatic aspects inside EFL textbooks as the document. This study could be described as a type of document analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Speech acts in *Pathway to English* and *Buku Sarana Elektronik (BSE)*

The findings of speech acts in *BSE* and *Pathway to English* show that not all five categories of speech acts are covered in *BSE grades X, XI, and XII*, and *Pathway to English grades X, XI, and XII*, implying that the overall coverage of speech acts is not thorough. And the emphasis of speech act instruction appears to be on commands, as this category of speech acts appears most frequently in the texts. Speech acts such as requests, demands, and suggestions are included in the directives. In actual life, those speaking behaviors are all face-threatening, primarily threatening the hearer's negative face. It appears that performing face-threatening speech acts successfully is difficult for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. From this vantage point, it appears plausible that directives account for the majority of BSE because they are practical knowledge that learners can utilize. However, many speaking acts fall under the category of directions. However, it is impossible in this study to further categorize them into more specific subcategories, which implies that the results of this study cannot tell the distribution of each subcategory in these books.

Meanwhile, the *Pathway to English* findings show that not all five categories of speech acts are covered in *Pathway to English Textbook grades X, XI, and XII*, implying that the total coverage of speech acts is not thorough. And the emphasis of speech act instruction appears to be on commands, as this category of speech acts appears most frequently in the texts. Speech acts such as requests, demands, and suggestions are included in the directives. In actual life, those speaking behaviors are all face-threatening, primarily threatening the hearer's negative face. It appears that performing face-threatening speech acts successfully is difficult for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. From this vantage point, it appears acceptable

that directions account for the majority of the content in the *Pathway to English* Textbook because they represent practical knowledge that learners can utilize. However, many speaking acts fall under the category of directions. However, it is difficult to further classify them into more specific subcategories in this study, which implies that the results of this study cannot tell the distribution of each subcategory in these books.

Metapragmatic Strategies in Pathway to English and BSE

The first finding of metapragmatic tactics in *Pathway to English Textbook* is that the metapragmatic provided is extremely limited. For example, in *grade XI* book chapter 1 about asking for suggestions, there are certain expressions such as, *can I talk to you? Do you have time to give me some advice on something? I need your advice on something. What would you do if you were in my shoes?* It is evident that the four sentences represent varying degrees of politeness, and learners cannot apply the four sentences at random in various situations and toward people with varying social roles. However, the book fails to clarify these differences to students, leading them to believe that there is no difference between those terms.

The second issue is that the content of metapragmatic information is heavily pragmalinguistic in nature. The use of language conventions and forms to convey meaning or conduct speech acts is referred to as pragmalinguistics. Every item of metapragmatic information in *BSE textbooks* focuses on the linguistic forms employed in executing speech acts while ignoring the sociopragmatic aspects. In *Pathway to English for Grade XII*, for example, expressions such as "*can I help you?*" are given. *Allow me to assist you; may I assist you? Do you require assistance? Would you like some assistance?* However, there is no presentation of sociopragmatic information, despite earlier research indicating that the knowledge is crucial for students, as sociopragmatic failure has become a significant obstacle deterring learners from communicating in English.

According to the study, students' sociopragmatic competence is underdeveloped due to their ignorance of varying degrees of imposition in different social contexts, and they are unable to change their expressions according to the context. Information on contextual variables should be supplied to increase metapragmatic knowledge. Information such as how to ask for recommendations and how to make an offer might be offered to students in the examples above to assist them realize the difference in executing the same speaking act. In conclusion, the metapragmatic information in *Pathway to English* is insufficient, and the metapragmatic information presented does not correspond to the speech acts.

Contextual Variables in Pathway to English and BSE

Students can learn how to communicate about future plans and other topics by participating in model conversations. All of these factors might contribute to students' pragmatic knowledge input, which is the initial stage in the development

of pragmatic competence. Although it is impossible for textbook designers to incorporate every event in real life, a broader range of contexts is likely to cause students to notice more speech acts. In the future, interviews and questionnaires can be used to investigate students' needs, and textbook writers can utilize this information to determine which situations should be included in textbooks.

Meanwhile, there are 14 different types of speaker relationships in both *BSE* and *Pathway to English*. The relationship between the speakers relates to their role in the discussion. In the context, some sorts of relationships are repeating. One disadvantage of this type of arrangement is that students may miss out on opportunities to learn how to communicate with others in diverse social roles due to insufficient input. Although language students can now acquire English through many media outside of the classroom, language teachers should educate them how to speak with others and how to use English effectively in classroom activities. In this scenario, textbooks continue to play a significant role in providing opportunities for English teachers and students to experience diverse models of dialogue.

Furthermore, the foregoing findings can offer insight on the coverage, range, and frequency of contextual variables in model conversations in textbooks. The textbooks' limited sorts of speaker relationships result in a limited range of contextual variables. The coverage, range, and frequency of the three contextual variables (social distance, power, and imposition degree) are shown that the majority of the model dialogues in *BSE* and *Pathway to English* are conversations between people with little social distance. This suggests that the majority of the characters in the dialogues are friends or are acquainted with one another. In the model dialogues, the power between the speakers is typically equal. Finally, comparing high and low imposition degrees reveals a stark discrepancy. Only nine models of dialogues in *BSE* and eight models of dialogues in *Pathway to English* feature high imposition talks.

Contextual variables influence the tactics needed to conduct specific speech actions in different circumstances. As a result, if the model dialogues chosen for textbooks fail to demonstrate a diversity of contextual variables, the textbooks may fail to present students with different speech act realization strategies and different language choices, resulting in pragmatic failure in real communication for EFL learners. Because this is a small-scale study on textbook analysis, it has significant drawbacks. First, because this book only used two textbooks to do the research, the results may not provide a complete picture of pragmatic components included in other English textbooks for senior high school students in Pekanbaru, Riau. More English textbooks may be added in the future to conduct a more thorough study.

The findings of this study reveal notable gaps in the coverage of speech acts, metapragmatic strategies, and contextual variables in the *Buku Sarana Elektronik* (BSE) and *Pathway to English* textbooks used in senior high schools in Pekanbaru. The absence of comprehensive speech act categories and insufficient

metapragmatic information in these textbooks align with previous research, which has shown that pragmatic elements are often overlooked in EFL instructional materials (Taguchi & Roever, 2017; Vasquez & Sharpless, 2020).

The analysis of speech acts in the BSE and Pathway to English textbooks indicates that not all five categories of speech acts—representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations—are adequately covered. Directives, such as commands, requests, and suggestions, dominate the content. This heavy emphasis on directives mirrors findings from other studies, such as Jiang (2020), who noted that speech acts related to commands and requests are more frequently presented in textbooks due to their perceived practical utility for learners. However, this focus on directives also presents a challenge, as these speech acts often involve face-threatening acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987), which require a higher level of pragmatic competence to perform successfully without offending the interlocutor (Vasquez & Sharpless, 2020). The omission of more complex speech acts, such as refusals and complaints, in both BSE and Pathway to English suggests that students may not be adequately prepared to handle these more socially sensitive interactions in real-life situations. These findings are consistent with the work of Nguyen and Pham (2017), who argued that without exposure to a broader range of speech acts, learners may struggle to perform face-threatening acts, which are essential for effective communication in many social contexts.

The study also found that the metapragmatic information provided in the textbooks is limited and often pragmalinguistic in nature, focusing more on language forms rather than the appropriate use of these forms in different contexts. This finding aligns with Ishihara and Cohen (2014), who argued that many textbooks fail to provide adequate sociopragmatic information, leaving learners with only a superficial understanding of how language functions in real-world communication. The absence of sociopragmatic input, such as guidance on varying degrees of politeness and social roles, contributes to students' underdeveloped sociopragmatic competence, as identified in this study. Jiang (2020) also emphasized the importance of sociopragmatic input, arguing that learners must understand how to modify their language based on contextual variables such as power dynamics and social distance. Without this knowledge, students may experience pragmatic failure, as they cannot adjust their speech acts to fit different social situations. The findings of this study suggest that both BSE and Pathway to English fail to provide the necessary metapragmatic knowledge to help students navigate such variations, which could hinder their ability to communicate effectively in more complex social interactions.

The results also reveal a limited range of contextual variables in the textbooks, with most dialogues depicting interactions between individuals of equal power and little social distance. This lack of diversity in speaker relationships reduces learners' exposure to a variety of social roles and communication contexts. As a result, students may not develop the ability to adapt their language based on factors such

as the degree of imposition or power dynamics, which are crucial in real-life communication (Taguchi, 2015).

Research by Vasquez and Sharpless (2020) supports these findings, noting that textbooks often fail to represent diverse social contexts, which limits students' ability to apply pragmatic knowledge in different situations. The narrow range of contexts presented in BSE and Pathway to English may result in students being ill-prepared to manage conversations with individuals of different social statuses, which is a key component of sociopragmatic competence. Moreover, the small number of high-imposition dialogues in these textbooks suggests that learners are not being exposed to interactions that involve significant social risks, such as refusals or disagreements, which are common in everyday communication.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on the integration of pragmatics into EFL materials by specifically focusing on senior high school textbooks in Indonesia, a region that has received limited attention in previous studies. While prior research has examined pragmatic content in EFL textbooks in various global contexts (Nguyen & Pham, 2017; Jiang, 2020), this study provides a localized analysis of how pragmatic elements are presented in Indonesian textbooks. The findings underscore the need for more comprehensive coverage of speech acts and the inclusion of metapragmatic information that considers sociopragmatic variables, particularly in regions like Pekanbaru.

The implications of this research are significant for textbook writers and curriculum developers. To enhance students' pragmatic competence, textbooks must include a wider range of speech acts and provide detailed metapragmatic information that helps learners understand the social and cultural norms governing language use. Additionally, incorporating more diverse contextual variables in dialogues would allow learners to practice adjusting their language based on factors such as social distance and power dynamics. This would better prepare them for real-world communication, where these factors play a critical role in determining the appropriateness of language use (Taguchi & Roever, 2017). Future studies could expand on this research by analyzing a broader selection of EFL textbooks in Indonesia and other regions, as well as by examining how teachers implement pragmatic instruction in the classroom. Moreover, experimental studies could investigate the impact of textbooks with enhanced pragmatic content on learners' pragmatic competence, providing further insights into effective approaches to teaching pragmatics in EFL contexts.

CONCLUSION

The analysis revealed that while the textbooks have some potential to enhance students' communication skills, they fall short in several key areas necessary for fostering effective pragmatic competence. The primary issues include the inconsistent and incomplete coverage of speech acts, the lack of sociopragmatic input, and the absence of diverse contextual variables. These shortcomings may

hinder students' ability to use language appropriately in real-life interactions, particularly in situations involving social and cultural nuances. To improve future textbook design, it is essential to incorporate a more comprehensive range of speech acts, ensuring that learners are exposed to not only common directives like commands and requests but also more complex and socially sensitive acts, such as refusals, complaints, and apologies. Textbooks should also provide explicit metapragmatic strategies that guide students in understanding the contextual factors—such as social status, power dynamics, and politeness levels—that influence language use. Including exercises that reflect real-life, face-threatening acts and varying degrees of formality will better prepare learners for authentic communication.

Furthermore, sociopragmatic input should be emphasized by offering clear explanations of how social norms and cultural expectations shape language use. This can be achieved by integrating dialogues and activities that simulate a variety of social roles, relationships, and cultural contexts. This approach would help learners practice adjusting their language based on the situation, making them more competent in interacting across diverse settings. In terms of teaching practices, educators should supplement textbook content with authentic materials, such as role-plays, media clips, and real-world interactions, that illustrate how speech acts and pragmatic strategies are used in natural conversation. Teachers can also design classroom activities that encourage learners to analyze and discuss the sociocultural aspects of language use, thus deepening their understanding of pragmatics. By combining improved textbooks with interactive, context-based learning activities, students will gain the necessary skills to navigate communication effectively in both local and global contexts.

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