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## **Pragmatic and Discourse Competence in English as an Indicator of Life Skills and Key Factor in Successful Language Communication**

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**Abstract:** Language is a powerful means of communication. English language enables to get success in life and make good relations. Communication doesn't mean to speak or write a single sentence. It requires discourse competency and stretches of speech. The learners of a language must be aware of the context in which he is communicating. Use of familiar words and positive language convey the information correctly. Good conversation is a skill which boosts one's image and promotes self-confidence and intelligence. One who has the ability to communicate effectively is bound to succeed in life. The success of academic pursuit depends on clear coherent, discourse and pragmatic competence. The present study explores the need for discourse and pragmatic competence for effective communication that may enable today's youth to make keen judgement, better articulation, good interpersonal relations, positive image and efficacy. Effective communication proves an indicator of life skills in sustaining positive image and balanced personality of youth of 21st century. The present paper deals with the issue of how communicative competence is related to discourse and pragmatic competence and life skills. Effective communication skills in English enable today's youth to compete in the global market. The present study consists of five sections. Introduction and literature review is the first section. The second section includes objectives and effectiveness of good communication as a core component of life skills. The third section focuses on discourse and pragmatic competence as indicators of English as life skills. Features of discourse and pragmatic competence comprise the fourth section. The fifth section concludes the study with suggestions.

**Key words:** Competence, pragmatic, communication, life skills, efficacy, relevance, coherence

### **Introduction**

Imbibing life skills in today's globalised competitive and industrial scenario becomes imperative. To investigate the effect of Life Skills in the development of employable skills, good communication skills, good human values and healthy and progressive attitude of the youth is the objective of this research paper.

Present society is not like the traditional society when religion used to be the base of education that used to nurture the basic human values among youths and discourse and pragmatic rules were not given too much importance. It is felt that today in the current disharmony prevailing in the society not only morality and human values are declining day-by-day but also standards of spoken English.

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The possibility of development and all kinds of progress can be expected only through the medium of instruction, education and communicative competence. The character of our adolescents cannot be built by bookish knowledge. Duane Alwin, sociologist from University of Michigan noted that in 1920's parents wanted their children to learn confirmative obedience, respect for elders and religion. In 1990s the same values were replaced by ability to think for themselves, to be responsible for their decisions, to take initiative and to be tolerant of diversity. In the modern world of globalisation increasing demands of youth for freedom to make choices and go abroad for study, expectation of parents from children, stress for enhancing skills, effective communication, management of retaining relationships, over dependence on information technology, change in life style have increased stress in today's youth to achieve perfection in discourse and pragmatic competency to adapt to the new social setup.

Life skills are abilities to be developed in every youth to enable them to face the challenges of life and optimise the same to live a happier, productive and healthier life. Life Skills enable a youth to actualise behaviour change. For this, it needs to be intimately linked with the different life skills, the ability for adaptive and positive behaviour that enables individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of every day's life. Adapting a new behaviour needs to change not only on the parts of students but in parents and teachers perception also. Pragmatic competence associated with imbibed Life Skills enables individuals to think rationally and take positive action to ensure personal well-being and productive social relationships. Several activities are organised to provide life skills education for the benefit of the students which help them to develop necessary skills for increasing their employability and coping with the challenges and adverse circumstances of life. Main purpose of this study is to assess the impact of discourse and pragmatic competence, communicative competence and life skills education on the students in strengthening interpersonal relationships, coping with emotions and stress, changing aggressive and violent behaviour and increasing self-confidence. It has been confirmed from the studies in India that there is a relationship between education, economic status and education and social and emotional empowerment of an Individual. Personality and behaviour of an individual is shaped by good communication skills, interpersonal relations during one's formative stage of life. Imbibing competence in communication, discourse and pragmatic rules, teaching life skills and the training of leading stress free life that has been ignored by teachers and parents till 20th century enables the youth to overcome adverse situations and have positivity. Having communicative competence trains today's youth to compete in tough competition of the global market of 21st century. The youth constituting around forty percent of India's population can become valuable partners in the nation's development when they are skilled having social discourse and competence.

The present study is an effort to explore the necessity of communicative competence and life skills training to prepare youths to take positive actions and think rationally to ensure personal wellbeing.

**Literature Review:**

Pragmatic competency is the ability to express meaning beyond language rules. According to Bialystok (1993) pragmatic competency includes the speaker's ability to use languages for different purposes and listener's ability to understand the speaker's real intentions and the command of pragmatic rules. Kasper (1997) argues that a learner having high grammatical or linguistic proficiency might not necessarily show equivalent pragmatic development. The contrast between the said and the meant, and between the said and the implicated dates back to the 4th century rhetoricians Servius and Donatus, who characterized litotes- pragmatic understatement- as a figure in which we say less but mean more. ("minus dicimus et plus significamus," see Hoffmann 1987 and Horn 1991).

Discourse competence is the knowledge and skill required to produce and interpret texts considering their structural scheme and the linguistic standards of the different discourse genres that are used. There are four elements of discourse competency- strategic, linguistic, pragmatic and sociocultural. Discourse competence enables the learner to develop huge receptive and productive skills in English. Some people distinguish between situational competence, discourse competence and semi-linguistic competence. (P. Charadeau, 2000). Flexibility, handling turn-taking, thematic development, coherence and cohesion of the texts are the four criteria for the evaluation of discourse competence.

**Objectives of the Present Study:**

- To investigate the theoretical perspective of the constructs.
- To explore the importance of discourse and pragmatic competence in communication
- To determine the intended results of communication as a life skill
- To identify factors that contribute to discourse and pragmatic skills
- To enable the youth to communicate their concern and needs through skill development programmes and pragmatic skill.

**Effective Communication as a Core Component of Life Skill**

Importance of communication can be found in both professional as well as daily life of an individual. Our interpersonal relations and their quality depend on quality of communication. It is evident that mutual understanding of people that is helpful in maintaining our relations to flourish can be enhanced by effective communication. In our daily interaction, information, ideas, beliefs, emotions and attitudes are communicated by us that make us maintain our positions within various social contexts.

That can be possible when we are skilled in employing appropriate language forms and speech activities to ensure harmony and co-operation. It is a life long process to acquire communication skills in our mother tongue. We have to learn, add to, change and readjust our native language strategies to fit the new language and culture. We feel need of certain roles and activities when we have to face certain issues in our day-to-day life. Negotiation and conflict resolution are the life skills that we all need to move successfully in our social, personal and professional life.

Our need to communicate is also generated by others' need of input from us as we are social human beings. Effective and good communication leads to chances of success in performing the assumed activities and assigned roles in our career and social life.

### **English as a Life Skill:**

English is an international language that is used as the medium of instruction for all the cultures to communicate through various resources like books, movies and Internet etc. English as a Life skill is used as a vehicle to reach every corner of the world of knowledge. In 21st-century it has become necessary to use English for the progress and prosperity of the nation. The learners should be encouraged to achieve proficiency and competence in spoken English giving confidence and it is easy to learn it as other languages are. English is confidence building language giving unexpected results in the employment sector. Today parents are ready to afford expensive education in public schools with the aim of giving English education to their children. The learners need only a little push and confidence to have discourse and pragmatic competency to improve their related skills and personality with confidence for success in life. Being able to build rapport with others, speaking in a sophisticated way and having discourse competency following pragmatic rules can make the learners of English language more confident opening the new avenues of opportunities and relationships.

Most of the learners are well aware of the forms of English language but they are not skilled in language functions because most of our English language teaching materials are taught to make our learners structurally competent. Communicative competence demands the knowledge required to use language as a communication device in a given social context. Widdowson(1979)states," Knowing a language does not mean to understand, speak, read and write sentences, it means whole sentences are used to communicate effect". Grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competency, strategic and discourse competence are needed for communicating competence. A teacher should have a global perspective on the learner's communicative use of the language as far as its evaluation is concerned. Clear discourse and coherence abundant with discourse devices contribute to the success of second language communication.

### **Discourse and Pragmatic Competence as Indicators:**

The primary goal for college students seems to develop intellectually, physically, interpersonally and competently. The linguistic researchers consider competence as a form of knowledge and competence and development as a crucial job and ultimate goal in language learning and teaching. A discourse is developing where more than one sentence is linked in some way in a communication. It is known fact that a logical pathway is revealed through the discourse of any communication.

We have to be able to understand and express ourselves in English language to achieve discourse competence. Discourse competence is examined how well a learner communicates in the given context. The dynamics of discourse competence development as well as discourse making itself are contingent upon the first language of the learner their first language conception of the world and discourse constructed in the classroom of English Language. The proficiency level of an individual also determines these processes.

A proficient non-native speaker of English to replicate the speaking conventions used by native speakers of the same language who “has a unique capacity to produce fluent spontaneous discourse which exhibits pauses at clause boundaries and exhibits a wide range of competence.”(Davies2003:210).Krashen(1982)says that native like ,subconscious use of language is characteristic of the learners who have been internalising it in a naturalistic way. Comprehensible input with a little emphasis on grammar makes it possible. A number of factors like pedagogical, sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic are closely related to discourse construction and discourse competence development. Individual variables like age, gender, social class or nationality are included in sociolinguistic factors while psycholinguistic factors include anxiety and affective states like motivation personality and self-confidence. It has been indicated that some of the variables are correlated positively but the enhancement of discourse construction in its interactional dimension is not always the outcome of self-confidence. Our ability to communicate our intended messages in any socio-cultural context and to interpret the message of your formal intention is pragmatic competency. It is often not given the emphasis it deserves in the teaching of English. Consequently English speakers in India who lack pragmatic competence may produce the speech which is grammatically flawless but fail to achieve its communicative aims. Linguistic communication is a logical flow of ideas. When people want to convey or express their thoughts, ideas or information they use their mother tongue or English. But they can use either spoken language or written language manipulating linguistic structures with the knowledge of social relations and politeness to maintain pragmatic competence and produce effective written texts. Grammatical competence, discourse and pragmatic competence are essential part of communicative competence. Communicating competence cannot be improved without cultivating pragmatic competence. Learners have to master various pragmatic rules for effective communication. Time and space of communication are followed properly avoid violation of interpersonal norms and social conventions. If the speaker speaks ill-timed and improperly, he is neglecting the occasion of communication which is pragmatic failure. Modern technological developments have contributed to the importance of the spoken medium of language. The telephone, the radio, the tape recorder and many other devices help in solving problems of oral communication. The communicator's ability to articulate his ideas determines the success and growth of interpersonal relations.

### **Role of Discourse and Pragmatic Competence in Effective Communication:**

Pragmatics and discourse are integral part of the language. The method by which any information or idea is communicated in written or verbal form in intelligible fashion is called a discourse. Pragmatics involves the use of language to meet specific needs. When sentences are changed too much the conversation's progress is lost. The meaning of a sentence is also lost when a particular sentence is preceded or followed without the necessary information. Cohesiveness of a conversation is also lost because of such omissions and hinders common understanding.

Similarly, social rules of pragmatics must be followed failing which discourse can be affected. Following the rules of pragmatics time should be allowed to both the speaker as well listener in order to express their ideas.

Ideas can be rephrased to increase understanding and choice of words can cater to the listener's interest. Highlighting the various processes of communication Allen Louis says, "Communication is the sum of all the things an individual does when he wants to create understanding in the mind of others; it involves a systematic and a continuous process of speaking, listening and understanding." Correctness should be seen as a matter of effective communication, and that is dependent on conformity with the widely adopted habits of speech and writing.

### **Features of Discourse and Pragmatic Competence:**

Discourse can be easily understood in relation to social practice, products of specific routines cultivated in a given community and individual rhetoric of the speaker. Thus text rhetoric, cohesion, lexis and coherence etc. several aspects of text linguistics are included in discourse study. The ability to use language appropriately in different social situations is pragmatic competence. Use of a language depends on purpose, topic, situation and status of both the speaker and the listener.

### **Suggestions:**

1. Learners of second language must know to use certain words or expressions in right context. Strong vocabulary and grammatical rules will be helpful in improving communication skills provided that the learner has knowledge of the socio-cultural aspects of the language. Pragmatics and socio-cultural aspects of language should be part of language courses. The three aspects of language learning should be combined. These are linguistic, pragmatic and socio-cultural competence.

### **Conclusion:**

Language is a machine that constitutes the real world. We are living in a global world. In the 21st century, the age of competition and globalisation good and effective communication is the major component on which the success of an individual or organisation depends. English is the world language being used as lingua franca. Good communication skills in English is the growing demand of employers. Learners should develop linguistic competence along with pragmatic competence to be efficient in oral communication. The learners become conscious of different ways of communication used by human beings through discourse and pragmatics competence. It is discourse study that enables an individual to construct, manage and negotiate his real life discourses.

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