


Chapter 4

Artificial Intelligence– Assisted Error Analysis: Developing Pragmatic Competence in EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the intersection of Artificial Intelligence, error analysis, and pragmatics to enhance pragmatic competence in EFL learners. Pragmatic competence, which involves understanding and using language according to social and cultural norms, remains a challenge, particularly in cross-cultural contexts. AI-powered error analysis tools can help diagnose and address pragmatic errors by providing real-time feedback on aspects like politeness, speech acts, and cultural appropriateness. Recent AI advancements in natural language processing (NLP) enable systems to detect and correct pragmatic missteps, offering learners tailored suggestions. As a result, AI can refine direct requests to more polite forms, helping learners better navigate social interactions. Additionally, AI-driven platforms provide immersive environments for practicing pragmatic skills. Despite challenges in encoding dynamic cultural norms, AI has the potential to transform pragmatic competence teaching, with continued research needed to enhance its effectiveness and address cultural biases.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Our departure point is the inevitable intersection of Artificial Intelligence (AI), pragmatics, and error analysis, which opens promising avenues for enhancing pragmatic competence in second language (L2) and foreign language (FL) learners. While Pragmatic competence—understanding and producing language that fits the social and cultural norms of the target community (Taguchi, 2019)—remains a significant challenge for learners it seems unavoidable to discuss how AI-powered error analysis tools can be leveraged to diagnose, illustrate, and address pragmatic errors, thus fostering deeper linguistic and cultural understanding.

One key aspect to reach the previously mentioned objective is understanding the role of Error Analysis in Pragmatic Competence development. Error analysis has historically been a cornerstone of linguistic research, offering insights into the interlanguage development of learners. Pragmatic errors, such as inappropriate speech acts or misinterpretations of implicatures, often arise from L1 transfer or insufficient exposure to the cultural underpinnings of L2 norms (Thomas, 1983). For example, over-apologizing in certain cultural contexts may signify politeness in the L1 but appear excessive or even insincere in the L2.

Recent works, such as Macías Borrego (2023), emphasize the importance of integrating pragmatic error analysis into language syllabi. By analysing these errors, educators can identify gaps in learners' ability to navigate socially nuanced interactions. Moreover, pragmatic error analysis provides insights into how learners internalize language use, underscoring its critical role in achieving communicative competence.

In this light, it can be stated that AI has revolutionized error analysis and learners feedback by automating the detection of patterns in large datasets (Macías, Borrego, 2023). Recent developments in natural language processing (NLP) allow AI to analyse both grammatical and pragmatic errors with increasing precision (Tetreault, Blanchard, & Cahill, 2014). Unlike traditional methods, AI systems can evaluate linguistic output in real-time, offering learners feedback on their pragmatic appropriateness. Illustrating this situation, research by Huang, Liu and Wang (2022) highlights how AI-enhanced tools provide learners with immediate feedback on context-sensitive aspects of communication, such as register, politeness, and idiomaticity. These tools help bridge the gap between formal instruction and authentic language use, guiding learners in refining their pragmatic skills. Similarly, Macías Borrego (2024) also highlights AI's ability to monitor written discourse, identifying pragmatic missteps that may otherwise go unnoticed. This capability is crucial for addressing subtleties in cross-cultural communication, such as distinguishing between indirect requests and direct commands.

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