



The Role of Story-Based Instruction for Enhancing English Language Learning among Young Learners in Libyan Primary Schools

Basma Mohammed Ashbahy

English Department, Abu-Isa Faculty of Education, Zawia University, Zawia, Libya

b.shbahy@zu.edu.ly

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-2461-9025>

دور التدريس القائم على القصة في تعزيز تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية لدى المتعلمين الصغار في المدارس الابتدائية الليبية

بسمة محمد الشباهي

قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية التربية أبو عيسى، جامعة الزاوية، ليبيا

Revised: 02-03-2026; Accepted: 17-03-2025; Published: 20-03-2026

تاريخ الاستلام: 2026/4/04 - تاريخ المراجعة: 2026/05/04 - تاريخ القبول: 2026/05/16 - تاريخ للنشر: 2026 /06/05

Abstract:

The main aim of teaching and learning English in Libyan primary and nursery schools is to enhance and develop children's ability to communicate effectively in English. Therefore, the present project seeks to explore the role of story-based language teaching in enhancing English language learning among young learners in Libyan primary schools. The study aims to promote communicative competence, vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, and positive attitudes toward learning English as a foreign language. In other words, it is designed for beginner-level learners aged seven to eight years.

It's Mine! is the selected storybook, providing an engaging and meaningful context through which young learners can interact with language in an imaginative and enjoyable environment.

The project integrates a range of pedagogical activities, including Total Physical Response (TPR), storytelling, games, songs, flashcards, drama, and self-assessment tasks. These activities are grounded in established theories of second language acquisition and young learner pedagogy, emphasizing meaningful input, learner engagement, and social interaction.

The project demonstrates how story-based teaching can create a learner-centred classroom environment that supports language development while fostering active participation, motivation, and creativity. The findings suggest that the integration of stories and interactive activities can contribute significantly to the development of children's communicative skills and enhance the overall effectiveness of English language teaching in Libyan primary education.

Keywords: Young Learners; Storytelling; English as a Foreign Language (EFL); Communicative Language Teaching; Vocabulary Development; Primary Education; Libya, Language Learning Motivation.

الملخص:

يتمثل الهدف الرئيس من تعليم وتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية في المدارس الابتدائية ورياض الأطفال في ليبيا في تنمية وتطوير قدرة الأطفال على التواصل الفعّال باللغة الإنجليزية. ومن هذا المنطلق، يسعى هذا المشروع إلى استكشاف دور التدريس القائم على القصص في تعزيز تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية لدى المتعلمين الصغار في المدارس الابتدائية الليبية. ويهدف إلى تنمية الكفاءة التواصلية، واكتساب المفردات اللغوية، وتحسين مهارات الاستماع، وتعزيز الاتجاهات الإيجابية نحو تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية. وبعبارة أخرى، صُمم هذا المشروع ليستهدف المتعلمين المبتدئين الذين تتراوح أعمارهم بين سبع وثمان سنوات.

وقد تم اختيار قصة "It's Mine!" لتكون الكتاب القصصي المعتمد في المشروع، لما توفره من سياق مشوق وذو معنى يتيح للأطفال التفاعل مع اللغة في بيئة خيالية وممتعة. كما يدمج المشروع مجموعة متنوعة من الأنشطة التربوية، من بينها أسلوب الاستجابة الجسدية الكلية (TPR)، وسرد القصص، والألعاب التعليمية، والأغاني، والبطاقات المصورة، والتمثيل الدرامي، وأنشطة التقويم الذاتي. وترتكز هذه الأنشطة على نظريات راسخة في اكتساب اللغة الثانية وتعليم الأطفال، مع التركيز على توفير مدخل لغوي ذي معنى، وزيادة اندماج المتعلمين، وتعزيز التفاعل الاجتماعي.

ويُبرز المشروع كيف يمكن للتدريس القائم على القصص أن يخلق بيئة صافية تتمحور حول المتعلم، تدعم تنمية اللغة وفي الوقت نفسه تعزز المشاركة الفاعلة والدافعية والإبداع لدى الأطفال. وتشير النتائج إلى أن دمج القصص والأنشطة التفاعلية

يمكن أن يسهم بصورة كبيرة في تطوير المهارات التواصلية للأطفال، وأن يعزز الفاعلية العامة لتعليم اللغة الإنجليزية في مرحلة التعليم الابتدائي في ليبيا.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المتعلمون الصغار، سرد القصص، اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغةً أجنبية (EFL)، التدريس التواصلية للغة، تنمية المفردات، التعليم الابتدائي، ليبيا، الدافعية لتعلم اللغة.

1. Introduction

Second language education has seen significant movements from behaviorism to cognitivism, and from positivism to post-positivism. This shift has steadily offered a transition from a closed approach to an open approach (Jacobs & Farrell, 2001). The idea of communicative competence alludes to what a speaker must know in order to function effectively and suitably in particular social settings within a specific discourse network (Bachman, 1990). Hence, pragmatic skill is one of the essential segments of communicative fitness. As declared by Murray (2011) and Fulcher and Davidson (2007), pragmatic skill is a comprehension of the connection amongst form and setting, which empowers individuals to properly express and translate implied meanings.

Eslami and Eslami-Rasekh (2008) expressed the importance of students' pragmatic competence as "the ability to utilize the language to express a broad assortment of functions, and decipher their illocutionary force in discourse, as dictated by the sociocultural context in which they are utilized" (p. 178). Olshtain and Blum-Kulka (1985) suggest that non-native speakers should acquire sociocultural norms in addition to syntactic skills. They state that if capable non-native speakers lack sufficient sociocultural grasp, they will experience failure in communication. The capacity to comprehend the propriety of an expression inside a given setting and to pick one possible form over another is one of the most essential abilities identified with pragmatic skill (Alsaeh, et al., 2026).

2. Literature Review

2.2 Theoretical Framework of Pragmatic Competence

Numerous linguists and specialists have utilized the term competence in various settings to allude to different sorts of knowledge, for example, sociolinguistic competence, interactional competence, social skill, communicative competence, strategic competence, discourse competence, and pragmatic competence (Deda, 2013). The term competence, however, was

initially introduced by the father of modern linguistics, Noam Chomsky. Chomsky defines competence as follows:

"Linguistic theory is basically concerned with a perfect speaker-listener, in a totally homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory constraints, distractions, changes of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance" (Chomsky, 1965, p. 3).

Pragmatic competence refers to the capacity to understand, construct, and exchange meanings that are both accurate and fitting for the socio-cultural conditions in which communication happens. There have been diverse definitions with regard to pragmatic competence. For example, Bachman (1990) distinguished pragmatic competence as an essential component of communicative language ability, identifying it as a major aspect of illocutionary competence, which is a mix of discourse acts and functions alongside the appropriate utilization of language in context (as cited in Barron, 2003, p. 173).

2.3. Pragmatic Ability and Contextual Meaning

Also, Richards (2000) stated that pragmatics is particularly concerned with the connection between context and language. In his examination, he brings up how the interpretation of language depends upon the speaker's knowledge, how the structure of sentences is affected by the relationships amongst speakers and listeners, and how speakers utilize and comprehend utterances (Richards, 2000, p. 67). Yule (1996) prescribed that pragmatics is the study of the association among linguistic forms and the users of those forms; he added that pragmatics is the search for contextual meaning, which investigates the interpretation of what individuals mean in a specific context and how the context impacts what is said. Fraser (1983) described pragmatic competence as "the knowledge of how a hearer makes sense of what a speaker is signaling and perceives the expected illocutionary force conveyed through subtle cues in the speaker's utterance" (p. 29).

Mey (2001) expressed that pragmatics is identified with the societal context of language use in communication. Similarly, Yule (1996) proposed that "pragmatics is the investigation of the connection between the semantic form and the users of that form" (as cited in Mey, 2001, p. 24). Yule clarifies that "the investigation of what speakers mean, or speaker meaning, is called pragmatics. Pragmatics is the investigation of contextual significance, which analyzes the

interpretation of what individuals mean in a specific context and how the context impacts what is said (2006, p. 112). Leech includes that pragmatics is the investigation of how utterances have meanings in specific situations. (1983, p. 21). Moreover, Grundy likewise expresses that pragmatics is the investigation of language utilized as a part of contextualized communication and the usage standards related with it (Grundy, 2000, p. 27).

Moreover, pragmatics concerns the function of language in communication and the speaker's intention or significance while expressing an utterance toward a listener. Fraser (1983) characterized pragmatic skill as "the knowledge of how a recipient figures out what a speaker is stating and perceives the proposed illocutionary force conveyed through subtle cues in the speaker's expression." (p. 29). Jiang (2020) analyzed trends in usage-based and pragmatic language processing research from 2010 to 2019, identifying a growing emphasis on pragmatic functions, neurocognitive methods, and bilingualism in second language acquisition.

To sum up, pragmatics, in general, is about intercultural communication. In order for second language students to acquire pragmatic ability, they have to obtain communicative skills and social understanding. Therefore, pragmatics is one of the fields of study regarding meaning in the language process utilized to communicate between societies. It enables listeners to make inferences in understanding what the speaker intends. Besides the theoretical understanding of pragmatics, it is also very important to see how these notions are turned into teaching methodologies and students' development in acquiring language skills.

2.4. Interlanguage Pragmatics and Classroom Instruction

The field of interlanguage pragmatics has mainly concentrated on the study of output rather than judgment and interpretation. Studies on perception examine and judge the differences that may emerge in L2 speech and written simulations between learners and native speakers which, in contrast to output studies, are not easily manifested but are commensurately important. Learners' and native speakers' perceptions and judgments often differ (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). As noted by Rose and Kasper (2001), studies on perception reveal valuable information on the types of utterances learners receive as input and their awareness of the similarities and differences between the target language and their mother tongue.

Numerous studies have centered on foreign language (FL) learners since, compared to second language (SL) learners, they tend to receive less target language input, and their chances to generate the target language outside the classroom are rather scarce. Furthermore, learners do not always use their existing pragmatic knowledge in comparable target language situations;

this also lends support to the inclusion of instruction in interlanguage pragmatics to raise their awareness of their available L1 knowledge and promote its use in target language (TL) contexts (Rose & Kasper, 2001).

To address these challenges in learners' perceptions and input limitations, instruction has emerged as one of the most prominent applications of pragmatic research (Sykes & González-Lloret, 2020). In addition, recent research in the Libyan EFL context highlights the importance of teacher-related factors in language instruction. Alkarkhi and Hmouma (2025) found that teachers' well-being, resilience, supportive work environments, and job satisfaction significantly enhance foreign language teaching enjoyment, which can contribute to more engaging and effective classroom interaction. A substantial body of literature indicates that interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) research confirms the teach ability of pragmatic competence, particularly through explicit instruction on various pragmatic targets (Haghighi et al., 2018; Shakki et al., 2020). Kasper and Schmidt (1996) asserted that interlanguage pragmatics is defined as "the study of the development and use of strategies for linguistic action by NNSs." (p.150) Nguyen (2018) reports that pragmatic instruction has been considered an important method for increasing NNSs' attention to target community norms and patterns of behavior, thereby emerging as a standalone field aimed at improving pragmatic competence (Derakhshan & Shakki, 2021). Furthermore, Alsuhaibani adds that pragmatic instruction could make up for the limited chances for competence development in foreign language classroom environments (2020).

2.5. Technology and Pragmatic Competence

Empirical research shows that technology, enhanced methods of teaching English pragmatics to nonnative speakers (NNSs) have developed unevenly across different types of instruction and learning materials. The development is characterized by a major turning point from Computer, Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Computer, Mediated Communication (CMC) to Mobile, Assisted Language Learning (MALL), while the Robot, Assisted Language Learning (RALL) has just been introduced in 2020. Digital settings like these platforms are essential knowledge stores that aid pragmatic learning, according to Furniss (2016).

The use of mobile, based social networking tools in language teaching, especially WhatsApp, Facebook, and Telegram (Garca, Gmez, 2022), is rooted in the fact that they have synchronous messaging and can share various types of media, which creates very interactive spaces for L2 pragmatic engagement (Klimanova, 2021). Besides, based on a Meta, review of 73 studies,

Bykova et al. (2021) depict that explicit metapragmatic instruction combined with digital tools deeply enhances pragmatic proficiency.

Moreover, in a similar sense, Yousefi and Nassaji (2023) found that feedback given through technology, mediated channels is at least equally effective, if not more, than the traditional face, to, face one, especially when it comes to the understanding of pragmatics. Ultimately, integrating technology in education is necessary not only for recreating real, life instructional scenarios but also for offering solid structures that can help overcome friction and misunderstandings resulting from pragmatic incompetence (Lin et al., 2022).

3. Conclusion

To sum up, pragmatic competence is the key to successful communication in a second language, as it links at its core between linguistic knowledge and social interaction. By integrating the theoretical bases of it, identifying the issues that learners encounter, and using different instructional methodologies, including technology, assisted pedagogy, we can support the achievement of more effective communication through the use of different situations. With the increasing influence of intercultural communication in a globalized world, upgrading pragmatic competence should be at the forefront of EFL education. In fact, making explicit pragmatic development a priority will ultimately serve as a catalyst for the way to a communicatively competent society that not only values effective communication but also enhances relationships and fosters cooperation across cultures without the trouble of pragmatic failure.

References

- Alsuhaibani, Z. (2020). Developing EFL students' pragmatic competence: The case of compliment responses. *Language Teaching Research*, 26(5). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820932313>
- Alsaeh, F., Alriteemi, A., Kasheem, M., Shalghoum, N., Yahya, N., Hmouma, M., Masuwd, M., & Alouzi, K. (2026). Sustainable education practices and their impact on student learning outcomes in Libyan higher education. *Cigarskruie. Journal of Educational and Islamic Research*, 3(2), 203–301. <https://doi.org/10.65190/cigarskruie.v3i2.473>
- Bachman, L. F. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford University Press.

- Bardovi-Harlig, K. (2001). Evaluating the empirical evidence: Grounds for instruction in pragmatics. In K. R. Rose & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Pragmatics in language teaching* (pp. 13–32). Cambridge University Press.
- Barron, A. (2003). *Acquisition in interlanguage pragmatics: Learning how to do things with words in a study abroad context*. John Benjamins Publishing.
- Bykova, L., Lanskaya, J., Perova, T., Remaeva, J., & Voinova, A. (2021). Exploring the potential of Web 2.0 technologies for teaching second/foreign language writing in higher education. *Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers*, 13(1), 276–287.
- Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax*. MIT Press.
- Deda, N. (2013). The role of pragmatics in English language teaching. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 2(2), 225–240.
- Derakhshan, A., & Shakki, F. (2021). A meta-analytic study of instructed second language pragmatics: A case of the speech act of request. *Research in Applied Linguistics*, 12(12), 15–32.
- Eslami, Z. R., & Eslami-Rasekh, A. (2008). Enhancing the pragmatic competence of non-native English-speaking teacher candidates (NNESTCs) in an EFL context. *Instructional Pragmatics: State of the Art*, 178–197.
- Fraser, B. (1983). The domain of pragmatics. In J. C. Richards & R. W. Schmidt (Eds.), *Language and communication* (pp. 29–59). Longman.
- Fulcher, G., & Davidson, F. (2007). *Language testing and assessment: An advanced resource book*. Routledge.
- Furniss, E. (2016). Teaching the pragmatics of Russian conversation using a corpus-referred website. *Language Learning & Technology*, 20(2), 38–60.
- García-Gómez, A. (2022). Learning through WhatsApp: Students' beliefs, L2 pragmatic development, and interpersonal relationships. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 35(5–6), 1–19.
- Grundy, P. (2000). *Doing pragmatics* (2nd ed.). Arnold Publishers.
- Haghighi, H., Jafarigohar, M., Khoshsima, H., & Vahdany, F. (2018). Impact of the flipped classroom on EFL learners' appropriate use of refusal: Achievement, participation, perception. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 32(3), 1–33.

- Jacobs, G. M., & Farrell, T. S. (2001). Paradigm shift in second language education. *TESL-EJ*, 5(2), 1–17.
- Jiang, X. (2020). Trends in usage-based and pragmatic language processing and learning: A bibliometric analysis on psycholinguistics and second-language acquisition studies. In *Second language acquisition - pedagogies, practices and perspectives*. IntechOpen.
- Kasper, G., & Schmidt, R. (1996). Developmental issues in interlanguage pragmatics. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 18(2), 149–169.
- Alkarkhi, S. I., & Hmouma, M. A. A. (2025). *The effects of well-being, resilience, work environment and job satisfaction on foreign language teaching enjoyment in Libyan context*. IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 30(11), 49–68.
- Leech, G. N. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. Longman.
- Klimanova, L. (2021). The evolution of identity research in CALL: From scripted chatrooms to engaged construction of the digital self. *Language Learning & Technology*, 25(3), 186–204.
- Lin, M. F., Chen, Y., & Lai, Y. T. (2022). Promoting the sustainable development of rural EFL learners' email literacy through a Facebook project. *Sustainability*, 14(10), 6209.
- Mey, J. L. (2001). *Pragmatics: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Blackwell.
- Murray, N. (2011). *Conceptualising English as an international language: A pragmatic perspective*. Multilingual Matters.
- Nguyen, T. T. M. (2018). Pragmatic development in the instructed context. *Pragmatics. Quarterly Publication of the International Pragmatics Association (IPrA)*, 28(2), 217–252.
- Olshtain, E., & Blum-Kulka, S. (1985). Degree of approximation: Nonnative reactions to native speech act behavior. In S. M. Gass & C. G. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second language acquisition* (pp. 303–325). Newbury House.
- Richards, J. C. (2000). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics*. Longman.
- Rose, K. R., & Kasper, G. (2001). *Pragmatics in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

- Shakki, F., Naeini, J., Mazandarani, O., & Derakhshan, A. (2020). Instructed second language English pragmatics in the Iranian context. *Journal of Teaching Language Skills*, 39(1), 201–252.
- Sykes, J., & González-Lloret, M. (2020). Exploring the interface of interlanguage (L2) pragmatics and digital spaces. *CALICO Journal*, 37(1), 1–15.
- Vandergriff, I. (2013). Emotive communication online: A contextual analysis of computer-mediated communication (CMC) cues. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 51, 1–12.
- Yousefi, M., & Nassaji, H. (2023). The impact of corrective feedback on L2 pragmatics production in face-to-face and technology-mediated settings. *Language Teaching Research Quarterly*, 39, 305–328.
- Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.
- Yule, G. (2006). *The study of language* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.