

Developing Intercultural Pragmatic Competence: An Evaluation of English Textbooks for Upper-Secondary School Students in Vietnam

Sunday, 28 July 2024 10:30 (30 minutes)

It is predicted that Asia will become the largest English-speaking continent (Graddol, 2006), pragmatic competence therefore should not be assessed based on how students blindly adopt native speakers' pragmatic norms without considering interlocutors' cultural backgrounds (Crandall & Basturkmen, 2004; Vellenga, 2004; McConachy & Hata, 2014; Abrams, 2020). While these studies examined pragmatic competence in classrooms, little has been done to investigate language textbooks in terms of pragmatic content, especially considering the Vietnamese context (Nguyen, 2011; Ton, 2017).

To address the gap, this study employs content analysis to evaluate the pragmatic content of two English textbooks for Vietnamese upper-secondary school students, including English Discovery 10 and English Discovery 11. This study examines three aspects: frequency of metapragmatic information, types of instructional activities and patterns of communication, using the metapragmatic information framework by Vellenga (2004) and the pragmatic-focused activity framework by Nguyen and Canh (2019). The coding was checked three times by two researchers to ensure intracoder and intercoder reliability.

The findings reveal a lack of metapragmatic information and awareness-raising activities that inform students of cross-cultural pragmatic differences. The textbooks also show a lack of diversity among L2 speakers as interlocutors' identity is often restricted to their names, thereby excluding important information regarding their relationships or cultural backgrounds. These findings, however, significantly contrast how the textbooks claim to promote students' intercultural pragmatic competence. This study provides practical implications for textbook designers and teachers so that adjustments can be made to improve students' pragmatic competence comprehensively, preparing them to communicate effectively in a globalized community.

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Session Classification: Parallel Oral Presentations

Track Classification: Teaching Methods and Applied Linguistics