Comparative Effect of Piagetian Symmetrical Vs. Vygostskyan Asymmetrical Scaffolding on EFL Learners' Pragmatic Competence

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ABSTRACT: *Scaffolding is considered a salient part of EFL education for developing different language skills, especially for better communication, and its inevitable impact on learners' psychological processes. The present experimental study primarily investigates the impact of Piagetian symmetrical vs. Vygotskyan asymmetrical scaffolding on EFL learners' pragmatic competence. To this end, the researcher chose approximately 77 intermediate EFL learners based on the results of piloted OPT. Then, the participants were randomly assigned to two groups of 35 and 42 EFL learners. In one group, symmetrical scaffolding (Peers' assistance) was employed, and in the other, asymmetrical scaffolding (teachers' assistance) was implemented as the treatment. The data analyses revealed that participants' pragmatic competence improved significantly through Vygotskyan asymmetrical scaffolding, suggesting learners receive assistance from teachers or competent peers. The findings of this article embrace pedagogical and theoretical implications for EFL curriculum planners, practitioners, teachers, learners, and material developers.*

KEYWORDS: Piaget; Vygotsky; scaffolding; intermediate EFL learners; pragmatic competence

INTRODUCTION

Teaching philosophy incorporates diverse interdisciplinary theories, approaches, beliefs, and perspectives in order to enlighten the path toward effective education. It embeds certain psycho-pedagogical assumptions which serve as the foundation for education in various sociocultural contexts. This study is part of research drawn from my second MA thesis on Piaget and Vygotsky's scaffolding theories in EFL settings. Many educators have discovered various methods, characteristics, activities, interactions, and behaviors related to classroom settings (Steven-Fubrook, 2020). Teaching specific skills involves various scaffolding strategies as a kind of help and assistance for learners to encourage them to move toward ZPD, an undeniable concept from a

sociocultural perspective, especially when pragmatic competence dealing with culture-based communicative rules is concerned.

Scaffolding is a metaphor for assistance and plays a significant factor in the EFL context of education. Scaffolding is a process where a teacher assists a learner with a slight verbal signal to understand what he cannot initially comprehend. They describe the scaffolding process as involving the adult's managing the part of the task beyond the learner's capacity. Many scholars have studied scaffolding methods appropriate for various skills for their significance in teaching as a facilitator and motivators. Besides, they have also been probing scaffolding techniques and their impact on EFL learners' different psychological perspectives. (Kouicem, 2020; Fryirs, 2022). Approaches and procedures should be appropriately tailored to meet the needs of the EFL educational settings.

In EFL classes, teachers and students often exchange their ideas, thoughts, opinions, and feelings directly or indirectly in spoken or written language. Most teachers use spoken language to present the learning material. In order to make teacher-students interactions more efficiently and quickly understood, it requires teachers to utilize effective scaffolding methods in transferring pragmatic or communicative skills. Teachers and students create utterances with a systematic grammatical structure and sentences to express themselves and communicate with each other. While uttering, they carry out some actions, referred to as a speech act. As for teachers, they act while speaking to make students understand their utterances and deeply understand the context when a statement occurs. Speech acts can be exerted through language functions such as making requests, apologizing, complaining, refusing, complimenting, etc. Pragmatic competence cannot undoubtedly be separated from the idea of speech acts. English language teachers should accommodate practical scaffolding approaches to communicate appropriately among different cultures.

In some countries, learners need more chances to communicate in English. This paper focuses on how teachers can improve EFL learners' pragmatic or communicative competence using appropriate scaffolding techniques. Many EFL students need help understanding the practical aspect of a culture-bound conversation, and they need help communicating pragmatically in English. However, globalization has necessitated the use of English as the primary international communication medium for transmitting information, transactions, professional contacts, academic studies, and commercial pursuits. The communicative conventions of formality and politeness vary in different geographical locations as it is strongly culture-bound. This can sometimes cause social distance as properties of meaningful communication and rules of appropriacy are not observed properly (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996, p. 211). That is why pragmatic competence is crucial for language learners to adapt and fit in with a target culture. Instructional methodologies, materials, and activities should have suitable discourse samples about authentic interactions and potential use (Widdowson, 1990).

Appropriate pedagogies, methodologies, and instructional materials are necessary in order to help learners become successful intercultural individuals aware of pragmatic rules and structures. English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching has intended to equip learners with communicative competence, consisting of grammatical knowledge and pragmatic competence (Hymes, 1970). English language teaching accommodates the learners' need for language functions and cross-cultural understanding. Scaffolding from peers or teachers hugely influences the speed and effectiveness of learning pragmatic skills. It acts as a facilitator. However, what specific type of help is more effective for what specific skill can be the research topic, especially when pragmatic competence is concerned.

This study probed the comparative impact of Piagetian symmetrical and Vygotskyan asymmetrical scaffolding on EFL learners' pragmatic competence. Barely any previous research has concentrated on this issue, which is also considered psychological and educational. Despite receiving different scaffolding procedures from their peers in groups, some students need to be more capable of proper and effective communication by observing the pragmatic rules involved. Appropriate exposure to the language and encounters with the target culture might sparkle learners' enthusiasm for learning English and ease their navigation through the target culture, which eventually can enhance their pragmatic skills. Learners should get acquainted with diverse techniques related to communicative or pragmatic skills, and it might encourage them to establish a relationship with others which is called communication itself.

Scaffolding
Scaffolding is highly acknowledged and recommended as an effective instructional technique providing support, elaboration, manifestation, demonstration, reflection, and explanation (Blake, 2015). It has attracted the attention of scholars in cognitive psychology and those practicing teaching as it elaborates on teacher-learner or learner-learner interactional dynamics. Scaffolding has been implemented in various educational platforms with students from different backgrounds. The concept of scaffolding received different definitions with a deepening meaning. Scaffolding was first introduced by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) and implied an adult's assisting role in a child's cognitive development. The term similarly refers to the temporary scaffolds used to hold buildings under construction. It metaphorically signifies the help the child receives to solve a problem, carry out a task, or achieve a goal beyond his capability. Wood et al. (1976) believe that the scaffolding happens when the adult is guiding the learner toward the comprehension, perception, and performance of a task that is initially beyond his potential.

Knowledge is not created individually but in cooperation and collaboration under the guidance of a more capable person. Therefore, the learners can grow and develop to the next higher level through "scaffolding" when teachers or other more capable peers facilitate learning. Through scaffolding, the child can reach his highest capability in ZPD which is beyond his current potential. Development is hindered when there is no guidance or support in learning and interaction (Blake, 2015; Malik, 2017). Scaffolding can be practiced through exchange, cooperation, support,

assistance, and collaboration provided by the teacher, mother, or a more knowledgeable peer. Later, he does not need further assistance when he becomes competent, autonomous, and independent enough. Teachers function as facilitators in the act of transference of knowledge by supplying feedback and appropriate scaffolding. Instructive scaffolding requires simple and clear instructions, directions, goals, tasks, feedback, expectations, and sources to reduce anxiety and increase efficacy (Fryirs, 2022; Hyuen et al., 2020; Veraksa et al., 2022).

There are different stages of scaffolding. At the macro level: it is the general advancement determined by the syllabus designers or curriculum planners. Meso-scaffolding concentrates on the tasks that should be performed, and micro-scaffolding involves the interaction between the instructor and student or peers (Malik, 2017). "Fading" occurs when the student can independently perform the task without the need for any further assistance or scaffolding. He develops a sense of confidence and responsibility to reach his goals. However, the teacher remains vigilant throughout the learning process, from dependence to independence, regarding any flaws in production or comprehension. The integration of these stages defines the dynamic nature of scaffolding.

Scaffolding activities in educational settings can be conducted in various ways to improve and advance learning and accommodate learners' needs. Scaffolding is provided through simplification and explanation of the complicated and novel material. Applying tables, graphs, and visuals can effectively facilitate the learner's accomplishment to the next levels of conception (Xi & Lantolf, 2021).

Piagetian and Vygotskian Scaffolding
Constructivism, with a dominant educational philosophy influenced by the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky, observes students as the active constructor of information and engage in structuring information within themselves and their process. They believe that the outer context, with its plural interactions, plays a crucial part in an individual's growth. Piaget perceives cognitive development as a result of interactions with classmates or peers. At the same time, Vygotsky sees it as a result of interaction with adults or a more knowledgeable peer standing at a higher zone of proximal development (ZPD)(Kouicam, 2020). Both theoreticians maintain the significance of learning through scaffolding processes depending on interactions with others.

Piagetian educators focus on their students as learners in a learner-centered and constructivist-based view where students as individual learners learn through accommodation and assimilation (Piaget, 1965, 2000). The school of constructivism sees the child as an active and engaging agent in the learning process as he interacts dynamically with people around him. His internal dialogue also proves that he cannot be considered a passive receiver of knowledge (Damon & Phelps, 1989). Throughout the years, he accumulates expertise and adds to the previously acquired one, whether through assimilation, accommodation, or transformation of the preexisting knowledge that evolves with a new one. Piaget focuses on the child's independent force of curiosity and motivation, known as the "natural epistemologist" (Wood, 1986, p. 16), or when they learn from each other.

Teachers who favor this approach provide experience-based educational opportunities and believe in EFL learners' individual qualities, attitudes, curiosity, security, safety, interest, cognition, and concentration steps to complete a task without using a particular logical or sequential order (De Vries, 2002). Piaget defined knowledge as the ability to modify, transform, and carry out a task. Learning occurs as a result of active engagement in assimilation and accommodation. Knowledge is built on simple observations and operations until the mental capacity is grown enough to grasp abstraction (Hyun et al., 2020). Optimal teaching occurs on the operational abilities of the students on the route to excel built on preexisting structures and abilities.

By contrast, Vygotskian social interactionist constructivism concentrates on the significance of the interaction with external reality in learning phenomenon as he asserts, "human learning presupposes specific social nature and a process by which children grows into the intellectual life of those around them" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 34). He believes that besides an actual internal intellect, a child's potential intellect is known as the zone of proximal development (ZPD)that can be acquired from the environment through problem-solving under some guided assistance or in collaboration with others who know more. This encourages student feedback, involvement, and endeavors to see their progress with the educational aims. However, Vygotsky did not specify or manifest the hows of this developmental interaction in the ZPD with all the dynamicity it involved through the scaffolding process. Students benefit from interactions with more capable peers or teachers. The sociocultural theory proposed by Vygotsky (1978, 1987) suggests teacher-learner communication in the learning process. He thinks the educational process is beyond face-to-face interaction or the simple transmission of knowledge; therefore, he focuses on dialogue and co-construction.

According to Vygotsky, education does not occur in isolation, and learning precedes development in the ZPD. Through guidance or scaffolding from a more capable peer, the learner reaches the potential beyond his actual developmental level. Learning precedes development, where language is the leading vehicle (tool) of thought and where the internalization of social speech is mediated by inner private speech (Daniels, 2001). Through social interactions, learners learn how to adapt and adjust their behavior to different environmental situations. Mediation is central to learning, where interacting with adults and peers in cooperative social settings allows the learner to observe, imitate, and develop higher mental functions. Vygotskian educators extended the concept of the ZPD to pedagogical activity, where it meant "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (1978, p. 86).

Differences between Vygotsky and Piaget can be discussed in terms of the nature of the stimulus, the nature of knowledge and psychological instruments, the origin of the nature of self-regulation, the nature of novelty in intellectual development, the direction of development, the concept of social development and the role of language in development, the logical or proto-logical structure

of turn-taking, the pertinence of responses (whether in action or verbally expressed), and agreements and disagreements, the content of the interaction, and role of a participant. However, the focus here is on the nature, types, and benefits of scaffolding in the EFL context, so we limit the extensions of their theories solely to this particular field. (Pishghadam et al. 2011, Nassau & Cummings, 2000; Hammond, 2002; Jacob, 2001; Veraksa et al., 2022). The research conducted by Piaget and Vygotsky has had significant effects and advances on the methods and approaches of teaching, especially in the EFL context. Both have offered favorable opinions of the field of education by presenting explanations for educational goals.

Teachers and students gather to learn which is not possible without appropriate amount of communication in the path of the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings, or ideas between two or more people, resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other. Classroom interaction is defined as the patterns of verbal and non-verbal communication and the types of social relationship which occurs within the classroom. Classroom communication is divided into teacher-student interaction, student-student interaction, small-group interaction, and entire-classroom interaction. The teacher's role, therefore, is to enhance classroom interaction and guide students to become more reciprocal in their interaction. Creating classroom interaction requires the effective use of various techniques and implementing proper pedagogical scaffolding.

Pragmatic Competence

Empirical studies have analyzed the effect of instruction in developing practical knowledge dealing with various features. Pragmatic ability can be systematically developed through planned classroom activities. Research shows that learners only sometimes use knowledge, linguistic resources, and strategies when faced with a new language task. Blum-Kulka (1991) highlights that the main obstacle to learners' exploiting their general pragmatic knowledge base is their limited L2 linguistic knowledge or difficulty accessing it smoothly. These difficulties can certainly be aided by instruction, including input exposure to pragmatic realizations, discussions of the metapragmatic knowledge underlying communicative action, and engagement in communicative activities where learners can practice using the linguistic knowledge they have acquired. According to Kasper (1997), pragmalinguistics "includes strategies like directness and indirectness, routines, and a large range of linguistic forms which can intensify or soften communicative acts" (p.1). Pragmatic competence was defined as the "knowledge of conditions and manner of appropriate use (of the language), in conformity with various purposes" (p.224). Canale & Swain (1980) defined it as the knowledge of contextually appropriate language use "illocutionary competence, or the knowledge of the pragmatic conventions for performing acceptable language functions, and sociolinguistic competence, or knowledge of the sociolinguistic conventions for performing language functions appropriately in a given context" (p.90).

Explicit pragmatic instruction becomes even more critical in FL classrooms, where opportunities for human interactions are limited. Consequently, learners have more difficulties acquiring appropriate language use patterns (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996). These ideas constitute a rationale for pedagogical intervention, with the two-fold goal of first, making learners aware of their previous knowledge and the ways to take advantage of it by using their existing pragmatic foundations in appropriate sociopragmatic contexts and second, helping learners to attend to both the linguistic forms of utterances and the relevant social and contextual features with which they are associated (Schmidt, 1993). According to Kasper (2001), "the great potential of L2 teaching for developing learners' pragmatic ability lies in its capacity to alert and orient learners to pragmatic features encountered outside the classroom, encourage them to try out new pragmatic strategies, reflect on their observations and their own language use, and obtain feedback" (p.56). The subtle cultural differences in communication necessitate teaching pragmatics in the L2 classroom by incorporating different communicative behaviors like analysis of the context before speaking, managing turn-taking as both speaker and listener, knowing appropriate kinesics, and responding with timely feedback as a listener. Studies have proved that a communicative instructional practice can improve learners' interactional abilities (Domaneschi&Bambini, 2020; Ajabshir, 2019; Al Suhasbani, 2022; Chen, 2020). This study explored what type of scaffolding could have more significant outcomes in learning pragmatic skills.

RELATED THEORIES

Pragmatic competence plays a vital role because it improves understanding of how a language functions when used by interlocutors in different contexts. Austin (1962) first introduced the speech act theory, and he emphasizes utterances are more to the function of language than semantics. He also held three sorts of forces utterance has, locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary (Austin,1962). Speech acts are often related to the illocutionary meaning of the utterance because they are the uses to which language can be uttered. There are five types of speech acts or illocutionary acts based on the illocutionary force: verdictive, executive, commissives, behabitives, and expositive.

Searle (1979) developed the speech act theory and offered three main criteria to classify illocutionary acts: (a) illocutionary point, (b) direction of fit, and (c) sincerity condition expressed. According to its function, Searle(1979) pointed out five general tasks performed by speech act: a) assertiveness, b) directives, c) commissives, d) expressive, and e) declarative. As Searle pointed out, the triumphant declaration required an extra-linguistic institution, such as a legal institution or given institution with special authority and power. Context is the background knowledge assumed to be shared by both speaker and hearer, contributing to their interpretation of what is given by utterance (Leech, 1983).

Schmidt and Richards(1985) stated speech acts refer to all the actions people perform via speaking and the interpretation and negotiation of speech acts in a specific context or discourse. Cohen

(1996) held that a speech act is a minimal functional unit in communication. Yule (1996) viewed that the structural forms of declaratives, interrogatives, and imperatives and the communicative functions of statements, questions, and commands or requests are quickly realized. Leech's Politeness Principle and Grice's Cooperative Principles developed on the basis of the speech act theory. The politeness principle implies that people should minimize the expression of impolite beliefs and maximize the expression of polite opinions. As for the Cooperative Principle, Grice (1975) introduced four maxims with sub-maxims, which the interlocutors must follow to avoid misunderstanding and be successful communicators. These maxims involve the following: quality, quantity, relation, and manner. Brown and Levinson (1987) extended the politeness theory, proposing bold-on-record, off-record, negative, and positive politeness strategies.

REVIEW OF RESEARCH

Many foreign researchers focus on speech acts among teachers and students and study their interaction in the EFL context. Their research often combines speech acts with strategies and cross-cultural theories. In a paper titled "Speech Acts and Politeness Strategies in an EFL Classroom in Georgia," Kurdghelashvili(2015) did the research on the usage of speech acts and politeness strategies in an EFL classroom. They investigated the speech acts used by the teachers while the students performed mainly in responding to teachers' instructions, questions, and encouragement. His research findings showed that the students knew some pragmatic rules, but they practiced none of these acts.

In "Speech Act of Refusal Among English Language Teaching Students," Rezvani, Ismael, and Tok (2017) investigated the refusal strategies that are used mainly by English Language Teaching (ELT) students. The results suggested that the students primarily preferred indirect refusal and men mainly employed direct methods to an interlocutor of lower status, while women to an interlocutor of equal status. Furthermore, women tended to use more adjuncts than men in all three situations. In another paper titled "The Impact of Teacher Questioning on Creating Interaction in EFL: A Discourse Analysis", Al-Zahrani and Al-Bargi (2017) studied the effect of questions on fostering interaction in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. They explored the characteristics of questions to increase classroom interaction with descriptive and qualitative methods and proved that some question types significantly improved classroom interaction. They draw a conclusion that verbal questions generated different interaction levels according to the questions' features, such as cognitive level, complexity, type, and communication pattern. They noted that English language proficiency had a direct connection with the kinds of responses to questions. Additionally, they noticed that low proficiency level students displayed increasing anxiety when asked to use only English in the classes.

In "The Power of Directive Speech Acts in EFL Classroom Interaction," Sulistyani(2017) focused on describing the realization of directive speech acts in classroom interaction. He discovered that the teacher produced more utterances than students and directives were used in the form of

interrogatives, imperatives, and declaratives for various functions. He concluded that the directive speech act was a powerful type of act in classroom discourse. In "Speech Acts of Classroom Interaction," Azhari, Priono, and Nuriadi(2018) investigated the types and frequency of speech acts performed in terms of teacher-student interactions and analyzed strategies used by teachers and students in performing the illocutionary act of imperatives. Their study revealed that imperatives were used most, and students' pragmatic competence in performing such an act was inadequate.

In "A pragmatic analysis of the speech act of criticizing in university teacher-student talk," El-Dakhs, Ambreen, Zaheer, and Gusarova(2019) examined the realization of the speech act of criticizing by university teachers in their talk with students. The results showed the teachers' preference for indirect over direct criticism strategies and minimal use of modifiers, particularly internal ones. It was also found that the influence of the teacher's gender or years of teaching experience was negligible. At the same time, the severity of the situation was a critical factor in the choice of appropriate strategies. The results were interpreted concerning the existing literature and the theoretical model of politeness. In a paper titled "Speech Acts of Requests: A Case of Indonesian EFL Learners", Nugroho and Rekha (2020) delineated the most frequently used request strategies by Indonesian EFL learners and their reasons for utilizing such strategies. Their findings illustrated that EFL learners used conventionally indirect recommendations more regularly than other strategies. Furthermore, their study revealed that employing an indirect strategy depended on cultural factors and the social distance between the interlocutors. Faturrochman, Darmawan, and Hadi (2020) found teacher talk was in the form of questions and feedback, and directive sentences were mainly used in the classroom context.

METHOD

One hundred twenty-seven students took the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) exam, and 77 were assessed as potential intermediate learners. They were selected to participate in the experiment and were randomly assigned to two experimental groups experiencing different scaffolding treatments. Oxford Placement Test (OPT) consisted of 60 multiple-choice items and was used to measure EFL learners' general language ability as a placement test. A pilot study was run before administering the test.

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Results *of Reliability for OPT* No. of items	Reliability Method	Reliability Index
60	KR-21	0.90

A multiple choice discourse completion test (DCT) was used to measure learners' pragmatic competence with twenty situations requiring certain speech acts and discourse.

Results of Reliability for Discourse Completion Test No. of items	Reliability Method	Reliability Index
20	KR-21	0.86

The study adopted a quantitative approach to distinguish whether there is any significant impact of scaffolding on this variable. Before administering the instrument, a pilot study was run. After assessing the homogeneity of participants, only 77 students were selected. The same teacher was in charge of both groups implementing different treatments of asymmetrical and symmetrical scaffolding for seven sessions. The students were supposed to engage in activities, pragmatic tasks, and group exercises. They were receiving feedback from the teacher both implicitly and explicitly. Strategies and competence of speech acts (like apologies and requests) were provided through the help of a teacher or peers via symmetrical or asymmetrical scaffolding. The book taught was from the Top Notch series based on pragmatic competence to communicate language. It enables students to express themselves confidently, accurately and fluently in speaking, writing, reading and listening, emphasizing learning strategies to distinguish different speech acts presented in pragmatic activities. Tag questions, past perfect, modals(expressing possibility), causatives, noun and adjective clause, indirect speech, future in the past, conditional sentences, count and non-count nouns, and prepositions of geographical place.

The communication goals are developing cultural awareness and discussing types of treatments. Requesting and evaluating services, recommending, describing, and discussing books; describing and preparing for natural disasters; expressing regrets; describing technology and inventions; explaining wedding traditions, customs and holidays; bringing up a controversial subject and proposing solutions to global problems, warning about global warming and describing a geographical location. Vocabularies are about manners and etiquette, intensifiers, symptoms, dental emergencies, medication, planning an event, types of books, ways to enjoy reading, severe weather, adjectives of severity, emergency preparations and supplies, types of holidays, descriptive adjectives, describing manufactured products, political terminology, how to debate an issue

politely, geographical features, ways to describe possible risks and ways to talk about the environment.

For seven sessions, both groups received the same materials taken from their course book, followed by questions like true-false, multiple choice, matching, and open-ended questions. Both teachers and students were introduced to the concept of scaffolding and the function of assisting in reaching shared knowledge. Pragmatic structures were illustrated first, and then the students were asked to do the tasks cooperatively in pairs while observed by the teacher. The students were working together, and the teacher could assist whenever necessary.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

An independent t-test was used to prove that both groups had the same level of general language proficiency prior to the treatment. Then, a new independent t-test compared the two groups' mean scores on the pretests, followed by a paired-sample t-test to compare the groups' mean scores on the pre and post-tests of pragmatic competence and to evaluate. It intended to check the significant difference between the effects of symmetrical and asymmetrical scaffoldings on EFL learners' pragmatic competence. Four assumptions of interval data, independence of subjects, normality and homogeneity of variances were met before applying the parametric independent samples t-test.

Skewness and Kurtosis Test of Normality for Pragmatic Competence Scores in the Two Groups (Pretest & Posttest)

	Group	N	Skewness	Std. Error	Skewness Ratio	Kurtosis	Std. Error	Kurtosis Ratio
Pretest	Symmetrical	35	-.754	.398	-1.897	.965	.778	1.240
	Asymmetrical	42	-.077	.365	-0.210	-.629	.717	-0.878
Posttest	Symmetrical	35	-.075	.398	-0.190	-.638	.778	-0.821
	Asymmetrical	42	-.525	.365	-1.438	-.187	.717	-0.261

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Descriptive Statistics of Two Group's Scores Pragmatic Competence Scores (Pretest; Scores out of 20)

Group	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
Symmetric	35	12.89	2.011	.340
Asymmetric	42	13.29	2.190	.338

Independent Samples T-test for Pragmatic Competence (Pretest)

			T-test for Means			
Levene's Test for Variances						
			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
Factor	F	Sig.				Mean Diff.
Equal variances assumed	.800	.374	.828	75	.410	.400
Equal variances not assumed			.835	74.258	.407	.400

Independent samples t-test failed to find any statistically significant difference (*t* (75) = .83, *p* = .41*, p* > .05) in pragmatic competence scores for the Symmetrical Group (= 12.89) and Asymmetrical Group (= 13.29) on the pretest in which the *t* observed was below the *t* critical of 1.98. Therefore, it was shown that the students in the two groups revealed similar pragmatic competence abilities at the beginning of the study. Then, another independent samples t-test was performed to compare the Symmetrical and Asymmetrical Groups' pragmatic competence scores on the post-test.

Descriptive Statistics of Two Group's Scores on the Posttest of Pragmatic Competence (Posttest; Scores out of 20)

Group	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
Symmetrical	35	13.06	2.248	.380
Asymmetrical	42	15.31	2.300	.355

Independent Samples T-test for Pragmatic Competence (Posttest)

Levene's Test for Variances			*T*-test for Means			
Factor	*F*	*Sig.*	*t*	*df*	*Sig.* (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.
Equal variances assumed	.001	.970	4.322	75	.000	2.252
Equal variances not assumed			4.331	73.077	.000	2.252

Independent samples t-test detected a statistically significant difference (t (75) = 4.32, p = .000, p < .05) in pragmatic competence scores for the Symmetrical Group (= 13.06) and Asymmetrical Group (= 15.31) and on the post-test, in which the t observed is more than the t critical (1.98) with the mean difference of 2.52 (out of 20); accordingly it is claimed that asymmetrical scaffoldings are more effective than symmetrical scaffoldings in improving EFL learners' pragmatic competence. It manifests that the groups' mean score of pragmatic competence is nearly similar on the pretest. However, the mean for the Asymmetrical Group is significantly higher than the symmetrical Group on the post-test. Therefore, the results indicate that Vygotskyian asymmetrical scaffolding responds better than Piagetian symmetrical scaffolding when the enhancement of pragmatic skills is considered.

Teachers should no longer be seen as intimidating authority figures that impel students to perform tasks independently in a rigid class environment. They can motivate and encourage students by being a source of assistance, helping the learners grow and progress in different skills by providing valuable opportunities for interaction and collaboration among students where students can enthusiastically learn from more capable peers. Teacher-student active engagement in the learning process can foster a dynamic and mutually beneficial learning environment where all students can thrive and experience success. EFL teachers could integrate both scaffolding approaches in their classes to facilitate pragmatic skill development for the learners. Subtle language nuances and pragmatics of authentic text can be well understood when students and teachers are in a scaffolding and assisting stance.

CONCLUSION

The entire experience revealed that learning pragmatics differs from learning other language skills. Teachers are advised to implement some additive strategies and scaffolding techniques to facilitate the tasks and develop pragmatic skills via the knowledge provided by ZPD. Commiserating with EFL learners about the struggles of practical learning and implementing the beneficial techniques

are important. EFL teachers are expected to supply learners with comfort, joy, interest, and motivation in the EFL classroom. Dedicated and committed teachers develop a sense of cooperation and collaboration among peers and try to make this difficult endeavor of acquiring skills in a second language much more accessible. By implementing promising approaches, they can assist students in surmounting this hurdle by inspiring them to communicate in a foreign language. Piaget and Vygotsky's different assumptions on cognitive development and the nature of scaffolding can enlighten the education path. Their theories present influentially practical ideas on how teachers teach certain material in a developmentally appropriate manner. Their theories were used here to enhance learners' pragmatic competence as a key variable that frequently concerns and challenges practitioners in language classrooms. Implementing scaffolding strategies effectively enhance EFL learners' pragmatic competence.

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