
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Evaluating Pragmatic Input in Moroccan EFL Contexts: Sociopragmatic and Pragmalinguistic Perspectives

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| ABSTRACT

Pragmatic competence presents a multifaceted challenge, deeply rooted in linguistic and cultural factors. Within the Moroccan context, despite the increasing interest in the study of pragmatics, most research primarily documents speech acts without adequately considering the students' backgrounds or the received pragmatic input. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the pragmatic input of English speakers in Morocco. Employing a mixed-methods approach, it examines the pragmatic competence of 30 students, including both English majors and non-English majors from various schools in Morocco. A Google form questionnaire was utilized to assess both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge in relation to pragmatic input. The findings indicate a moderate overall awareness of pragmatics yet reveal significant deficiencies in sociopragmatic awareness, likely attributable to the reported deficiencies in pragmatic input. Notably, the study also shows that students are well aware of and exposed to authentic materials, especially through media, yet they do not focus on the pragmatic aspects of language in favor of other skills. These results underscore the necessity for curricular reforms that integrate pragmatic elements more holistically, particularly pragmatic instruction, thereby paving the way for future research to refine educational strategies and enhance pragmatic proficiency.

| KEYWORDS

Sociopragmatic. Pragmalinguistic. Moroccan context. Moroccan EFL. Curricular reforms. Pragmatics. Pragmatic competence. Pragmatic input

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 01 June 2024

PUBLISHED: 13 June 2024

DOI: 10.32996/ijllt.2024.7.6.7

1. Introduction

Various Second language acquisition, a field replete with diverse theoretical perspectives, continues to intrigue researchers with its complex nature. Central to this realm is the concept of input, which serves as a critical foundation for language learning. Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) posits that learners progress in their second language when they encounter linguistic input that is slightly above their current level of proficiency, which he termed "i+1". This hypothesis suggests that understanding input that is just beyond the learner's current ability is crucial for language acquisition, as it pushes the learner to expand their linguistic boundaries. Alongside this, Schmidt (1990) introduced the Noticing Hypothesis, which emphasizes the importance of conscious awareness of linguistic forms within the input. According to this hypothesis, if learners do not notice certain aspects of the language input, acquisition of those aspects will not take place.

Further expanding the discussion, Swain's Output Hypothesis (1985) suggests that using the target language, whether through speaking or writing, is not just about practicing what they already know; it is also a powerful method to stimulate further learning. He argues that when learners produce language, they are forced to think about it on a deeper level, which helps them understand and acquire it better. This means that speaking or writing in a new language could help learners notice what they lack in terms of

knowledge, refine their language skills, and become more accurate and fluent. Additionally, using the language in real conversations provides valuable interaction and feedback, which are essential for learning.

While these studies offer valuable insights, they often miss the finer points of pragmatic competence in second language learning. Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in social situations, involving an understanding of how meaning is created and interpreted in different communicative contexts and cultural settings. Unfortunately, to the knowledge of the authors, most studies on this phenomenon often overlook the role of input in this process. Ignoring the input provided to learners results in an incomplete understanding of learning outcomes.

To address this gap, our study focuses on the role of pragmatic input in both structured and unstructured teaching environments. Pragmatic input encompasses the transmission of pragmatic knowledge and norms through educational materials and communicative activities, aimed at helping EFL learners use language meaningfully in various contexts and enhance their pragmatic competence. Along this side, our research aims to explore the pragmatic competence of Moroccan EFL learners, with a specific emphasis on how they process and utilize the linguistic input they receive in different communicative scenarios. We will assess their ability to use language in socially and culturally appropriate ways and investigate whether deficiencies in pragmatic input contribute to any limitations in their pragmatic competence. Thus, the study will proceed with two primary research questions:

1. To what extent do Moroccan EFL learners demonstrate pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge?
2. Can the limited pragmatic knowledge of Moroccan EFL students be attributed to a deficiency in adequate input?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Input in EFL Contexts

The role of input in language acquisition, though relatively new as a research area, has garnered significant attention worldwide. In the context of Morocco, with its diverse linguistic landscape, this focus becomes even more pertinent. Bailey and Fahad (2021) contribute to this discourse by exploring the intricacies of input in second language learning, emphasizing its growing importance in modern educational practices. They argue that mere exposure to a new language is insufficient; learners must engage with material that slightly exceeds their current linguistic capabilities. In other words, the content presented to the learners should be one that relates to what they know and yet extends further. This notion aligns with Krashen's Comprehensible Input Hypothesis, which Ting (2004) revisits. Ting posits that second language acquisition is most effective when learners interact with content that is understandable yet challenges their existing knowledge boundaries. Adding a layer of complexity, Ai (1988) employs information theory to refine the "i+1" concept, proposing that the ideal novel input ranges between 0 and 2.8 bits of new information. This perspective highlights that not all new information is equally beneficial; there is an optimal level of novelty that facilitates learning. Ting (2004) further discusses how input frequency, intensity, and salience play crucial roles in language development, suggesting that these factors must be carefully balanced to maximize learning outcomes. These studies underscore a fundamental shift in how we perceive language learning, challenging the traditional notion that immersion alone suffices for language acquisition. Instead, they advocate for a more rigorous approach that considers the quality and complexity of input.

Diving deeper into the topic of input methodologies and pragmatic capabilities, Ghavamnia, Eslami-Rasekh, and Dastjerdi (2018) offer an important perspective on how different input-based instructional approaches can shape a learner's pragmatic communication skills. Their discourse is particularly salient in the Moroccan EFL landscape, which is experiencing an intensified focus on enhancing pragmatic competencies. This evolving understanding urges educators to design curricula that not only immerse learners in the language but also strategically stretch their linguistic abilities to foster deeper comprehension and proficiency.

As the exploration of English as a Foreign Language unfolds, the discussion brings to light recent advances in Morocco's pedagogical approaches. In the context of the ever-evolving Moroccan EFL setting, recent studies have illuminated new facets of language acquisition that challenge traditional approaches. Aqachmar (2022) makes a pivotal contribution by examining the role of comprehensible input within Morocco's unique EFL environment, framed by Krashen's Input Hypothesis. He argues that mere exposure to English is insufficient for achieving high levels of proficiency. Instead, the content must be carefully curated to reflect the learners' cultural realities and resonate with their personal experiences. This culturally attuned approach not only makes the learning process more engaging but also facilitates a more profound understanding of the language. Moreover, this approach could serve as an effective tool to bridge the gap between the students' overall linguistic knowledge and their real-life experiences. In other words, by connecting theoretical understanding with practical application, students could be prompted to navigate real-world communicative situations more effectively. Aqachmar's study also highlights the necessity of aligning educational materials with the learners' individual learning paths. He contends that a one-size-fits-all methodology falls short in addressing the diverse needs of EFL learners. By tailoring content to meet these specific needs, educators can significantly enhance the effectiveness of language instruction.

Overall, the exploration of input in language acquisition reveals a critical need for a paradigm shift from traditional immersion methods to more sophisticated, input-based approaches. While Bailey and Fahad (2021) and Ting (2004) underscore the necessity of challenging learners with complex, comprehensible input, Ai (1988) refines this by quantifying the optimal level of new information. Ghavamnia et al. (2018) take this further by showing how such methodologies enhance pragmatic skills, particularly in the Moroccan EFL context where pragmatic competence is increasingly prioritized. Aqachmar (2022) argues convincingly for the importance of culturally relevant and individually tailored content, challenging the one-size-fits-all approach.

2.2 *pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics*

In alignment with the perspectives of Leech and Thomas (1983), pragmatics can be conceptualized as encompassing general pragmatics and two central sub-areas: pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. General pragmatics is viewed through the lens of conversational principles, focusing on linguistic communication by examining cooperative principles and Grice's maxims. These maxims include guidelines for effective and cooperative communication, such as being truthful, informative, relevant, and clear. On the other hand, pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics delve into more specific and localized conditions of interaction. Pragmalinguistics looks at how linguistic resources, like speech acts and politeness strategies, are employed in communication, while sociopragmatics explores the social rules and norms that influence how language is used in different contexts.

Pragmalinguistics is a fascinating area of pragmatics that looks at how the grammatical aspects of language are used in communication. According to Leech (1983), it focuses on the unique tools a language offers for conveying specific meanings, like the intent behind a statement (illocutionary meaning) or the relationship between speakers (interpersonal meaning). These tools include strategies like being direct or indirect, using modification devices, and following certain conversational routines to express attitudes or feelings. Here, Tran (2003) expands on this by noting that pragmalinguistics also covers the conventions of language use—how people choose their words and structures to get their point across. This includes not only what is said but how it is said, using elements like intonation, stress, and rhythm (prosody) to add layers of meaning. These prosodic features can emphasize certain points, show attitudes, or convey politeness, all of which are essential for effective communication. Moreover, pragmalinguistics explores how different grammatical structures serve specific functions in conversation. Understanding this relationship helps us interpret what people mean in different contexts, making it easier to navigate and understand various social interactions. Essentially, pragmalinguistics provides a deeper look into the mechanics of how we use language to communicate effectively and appropriately in everyday life.

On the other hand, sociopragmatics, as defined by Leech (1983), explores the relationship between language use and social structure. It is the sociological side of pragmatics, focusing on the broader social and cultural factors that influence meaning. While pragmalinguistics zeroes in on the grammatical aspects of language use, sociopragmatics examines how socially constrained factors like social status, power dynamics, and the perceived importance or risks of a communicative act impact linguistic interactions. It emphasizes how these factors determine the appropriateness of language use in various social contexts. It delves into how an individual's understanding of societal rules, norms, and practices shapes their language use. This field also investigates how people's perceptions of what is appropriate in a given social situation influence their communicative competence, guiding them through the complexities of language use in different social settings.

Additionally, sociopragmatics looks at the role of social identity in language use. It examines how factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, and other social identities shape communication and how these identities are constructed and maintained through language. The relationship between language and power is also a key focus, exploring how certain language varieties and forms are privileged over others and how this privilege shapes communicative interactions. By understanding these dynamics, sociopragmatics provides insights into how social identities and power structures influence language use and communication.

Considering the relationship between culture and language, it is challenging to distinctly separate pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. Yet, for the purpose of this research, pragmalinguistic knowledge pertains to the knowledge of linguistic resources like discourse markers, modals, and feedback responses. In contrast, sociopragmatic knowledge addresses language use perspectives. This distinction aligns with Ellis's (1994, p. 159) definition of interlanguage pragmatics, emphasizing the performance and acquisition of speech acts by L2 learners.

It is important to note that the study distinguishes between knowledge and competence. Pragmatic knowledge refers to what students know about the topic of pragmatics, whereas competence refers to the actual practice of these elements in real-life situations. Thus, pragmatic knowledge involves the ability to judge situations accurately in context, while pragmatic competence is the ability to apply this knowledge in real-life communication.

2.3 Studies on Pragmatics in Morocco

In the Moroccan setting, notwithstanding students' proficiency in areas such as grammar and vocabulary, EFL learners frequently encounter challenges in mastering pragmatic competence (Hmouri 2021). Consequently, many EFL classrooms lack authentic communicative activities, limiting students' opportunities to develop and enhance their pragmatic skills. In tandem with this observation, Ezzaoua (2020) noted deficiencies in the content of numerous Moroccan EFL textbooks, particularly in the domain of pragmatic instruction. This insufficiency in pragmatic input is further magnified by the cultural differences between Moroccan Arabic and English, giving rise to issues associated with pragmatic transfer. Loutfi (2016) offered an illuminating insight into this domain, positing that Moroccan EFL learners frequently adopt direct request strategies characteristic of Moroccan Arabic. Such a transfer, albeit unintentional, can lead to communication in English that native speakers might perceive as inappropriate or overly direct.

Supporting this observation, Ezzaoua (2020) identified significant deficiencies in the pragmatic content of numerous Moroccan EFL textbooks, particularly in the domain of pragmatic instruction. This lack of focus on pragmatics deprives learners of crucial tools needed for effective and contextually appropriate communication and is exacerbated by the pronounced cultural differences between Moroccan Arabic and English, complicating the learners' ability to transfer pragmatic norms appropriately. The issue of pragmatic transfer is especially salient here; Loutfi (2016) provided valuable insights, highlighting that Moroccan EFL learners frequently adopt direct request strategies characteristic of Moroccan Arabic. This unintentional transfer can lead to significant miscommunications, as native English speakers might perceive these direct requests as overly blunt or rude, hindering effective communication and integration into English-speaking environments. Furthermore, this problem extends beyond language mechanics to cultural competency, as the lack of pragmatic input in educational materials means that students are not only linguistically ill-prepared but also culturally ill-equipped to navigate social interactions in English. This oversight in curriculum design underscores a critical gap where the integration of pragmatic competence is undervalued. There needs to be a concerted effort to revise and enhance EFL teaching methodologies and materials in Morocco, incorporating comprehensive pragmatic instruction into the curriculum and training educators to deliver this content effectively, with textbooks revised to include pragmatic elements that reflect real-life communicative situations.

Addressing these challenges necessitates a multipronged approach. Hmouri (2021) emphasized the urgent need to revitalize the EFL curriculum in Morocco by integrating activities focused on pragmatics. This includes incorporating real-life communicative situations that require students to practice and develop their pragmatic skills. Complementing this curriculum overhaul, there is a pressing need to enrich teacher training programs with strategies specifically designed to impart pragmatic competence. Educators must be equipped not only with theoretical knowledge but also with practical techniques to teach pragmatics effectively. Concurrently, the issue of pragmatic transfer, particularly in understudied speech acts such as compliment response, or requests requires meticulous attention and targeted instructional interventions, as highlighted by Loutfi (2016). These interventions should aim to mitigate the unintentional transfer of culturally specific pragmatic norms that may lead to misunderstandings in English communication. By addressing these areas, the Moroccan EFL education system can better prepare students for the complexities of real-world language use, ultimately fostering more competent and culturally aware English speakers.

Another worth mentioning study is that of Ed-Deraouy and Sakale (2024) provides an insightful look into how Moroccan EFL learners handle speech acts such as requests, apologies, and compliment responses. Their research shows how factors like power dynamics, social distance, and the degree of imposition influence students' language choices. Importantly, the study reveals that these learners don't just follow set rules; they actively adjust their language to fit various social contexts. However, this flexibility also highlights major gaps in how pragmatics are currently taught, pointing to a need for more focused and practical instruction in this area. The researchers suggest that updating the curriculum to include more explicit and targeted pragmatic instruction could help students become more effective communicators in diverse situations. This approach supports the broader educational reforms recommended by scholars like Hmouri (2021) and El Hiani (2013), aiming to foster a well-rounded development of communicative skills among Moroccan learners.

The Moroccan higher education landscape, as highlighted by El Hiani (2013), has made significant progress in linguistic instruction. However, current pedagogical strategies still fall short of adequately addressing the pragmatic dimensions of language learning. A notable gap exists between traditional language instruction, which often emphasizes grammar and vocabulary, and the pragmatic competence needed for genuine, effective communication. This gap highlights the urgent need for a paradigm shift in teaching methodologies, incorporating more real-world scenarios and context-driven exercises to familiarize students with the complexities of speech acts in diverse settings. Therefore, the Moroccan education system must embrace a more holistic approach to language instruction. This approach should focus on bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, ensuring that students are not only linguistically competent but also pragmatically skilled. Real-world scenarios and context-driven exercises should be a core component of the curriculum, allowing students to practice and master the subtleties of speech acts.

By doing so, the education system can produce graduates who are not only fluent in English but also capable of effective, contextually appropriate communication in diverse social and cultural settings.

Generally, while existing studies have provided invaluable insights into the pragmatic competencies of Moroccan EFL learners, there remains a significant gap in empirical research specifically examining the influence of pragmatic input on these learners. The current literature primarily focuses on the manifestation of pragmatic failures and the overarching importance of speech act knowledge. However, there is a lack of in-depth exploration into the root causes of these failures, particularly the potential impact of limited pragmatic input. Addressing this gap presents a valuable opportunity for further research, which could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics of pragmatic competence among Moroccan EFL learners. By investigating the sources of pragmatic failures and the role of pragmatic input, future studies could contribute significantly to improving language instruction and enhancing communicative competence in this context.

3. Methodology

3.1 participants

The participants in this study included students from two distinct academic backgrounds: English majors and non-English majors. This diverse group was selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of pragmatic input across different academic orientations. Specifically, the study focused on a diverse cohort of university students in Morocco, targeting 15 English majors from Ibn Tofail University and a similar number of students from the Faculty of Medicine, ENSA, Economics, and ENCG in Tangier. The sample comprised 7 males and 8 females from both groups, all within a close age range and with similar years of learning English (see Table 1). Participants were chosen through a randomized selection process to ensure a broad representation of the Moroccan EFL learner population.

Table 1: The participants

	Average Age	Male	Female	Years of learning English
English majors	20,1	7	8	5,7
Non-English majors	19,7	7	8	5,6
Both	19,9	14	16	5,7

3.2 Data Collection Procedures

For data collection, we used a detailed 12-item Google Form questionnaire to explore the pragmatic input provided to Moroccan EFL learners. Adapted from the works of He and Yan (1986), Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998), and Li and Fan (2002), and later revisited by Chen, Li, and Chen (2020), the questionnaire ensured reliability and validity (see the appendix). Questions 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 10 assessed the student's ability to interpret and use language forms effectively in various situations, evaluating their pragmalinguistic knowledge. Questions 2, 4, 8, 9, 11, and 12 focused on understanding social contexts, examining roles in conversations, social distance, and cultural norms and values, thereby gauging sociopragmatic skills. The latter part of the questionnaire captured participants' perspectives, beliefs, and attitudes regarding their exposure to pragmatic input, uncovering their subjective experiences, challenges faced, and feedback about their learning process.

3.3 Data Analysis Procedures

The survey was delivered to participants using a Google Form. Participants were assured that the survey was solely for academic research. Once a satisfactory number of responses were received, the data were compiled. The researchers evaluated the answers from the first part of the survey and quantitatively analyzed the responses from the second part. In the first part, participants earned one point for a correct judgment and an additional point for providing a suitable supplementary answer. Each item in this section had a maximum score of two points, making the total possible score for the entire survey 24 points. The benchmarks for evaluating participants' pragmatic competence were established based on the overall knowledge of the researchers. For the second part, the data was qualitatively analyzed to provide a clear perspective of the views regarding the pragmatic input.

4. Results

4.1 pragmatic knowledge of Moroccan EFL learners.

Table 2 reveals pivotal insights into the pragmatic knowledge of Moroccan EFL learners, combining the results of both English majors and non-English majors. The overall average score of 9.5 out of a possible 24 highlights a significant gap, with students erring in approximately 61% of their responses. This suggests a moderate level of proficiency in pragmatic understanding, which is further divided into two components: pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. It is noteworthy that students fared marginally better in pragmalinguistics with an average score of 5, compared to sociopragmatics, which stood at 4.6. This disparity is not statistically significant, as indicated by the results of the Paired-Samples T-test ($t = 2.04522$, $df = 30$, $Sig. = .000$).

Table 2: Subjects' genal score in every category

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pragmalinguistics	1	11	5	2,652
Sociopragmatics	0	10	4,6	2,749
Total	3	19	9,5	2,685

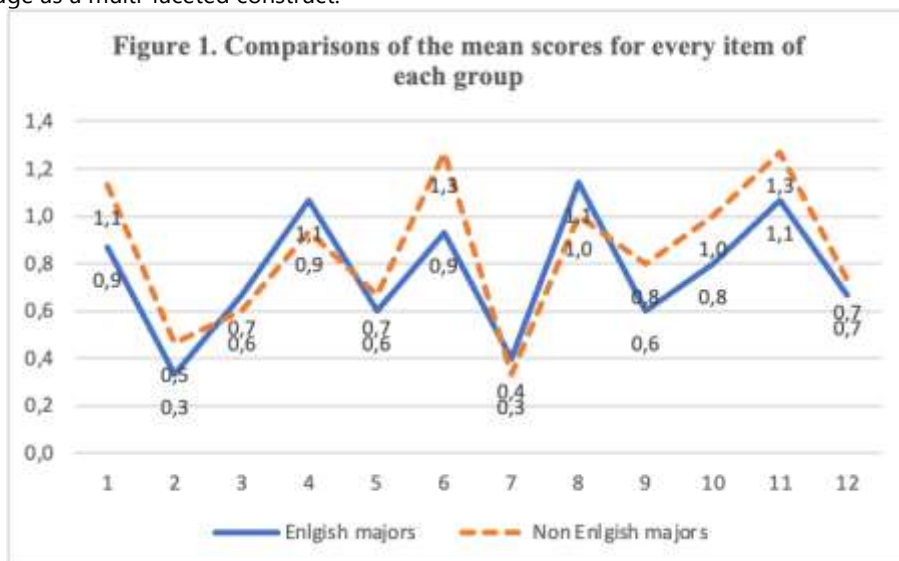
Table 3 presents an intriguing outcome: non-English majors slightly outperformed English majors in the overall scores across the three evaluated categories, with non-English majors achieving a mean score of 10.2 out of 24, while English majors scored slightly lower. Both groups scored below the halfway mark, with non-English majors correctly answering 42% of the items and English majors answering 37.5%. This suggests a significant area for improvement for both groups. The similarity in scores, regardless of major, indicates that studying English does not significantly enhance the development of pragmatic knowledge in the tested areas. This finding implies that factors other than the student's major may influence the acquisition of these skills and that both groups could benefit from improved instructional approaches targeting pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competencies. Therefore, it's essential for educational programs to integrate more targeted and practical training in pragmatics across various fields of study, ensuring all students are equipped with effective communication skills.

Table 3. English and non-English majors' scores in the three categories

	Total	Sociopragmatics	Pragmalinguistics
English majors	9	4,2	4,8
Non-English Majors	10,2	5	5,2
Sig,	0,652	0,549	0,988

Figure 1 offers a comprehensive comparison of the mean scores for each item, categorized by group. It reveals that both English and non-English majors performed competently in specific situations, particularly those numbered 1, 4, 6, 8, and 11. In these scenarios, the students demonstrated a strong understanding and ability to provide correct responses. Conversely, both groups struggled significantly with situations 2 and 7, indicating a common area of difficulty. Additionally, they faced considerable challenges with situations 3, 5, 9, 10, and 12, where their performance was notably weaker.

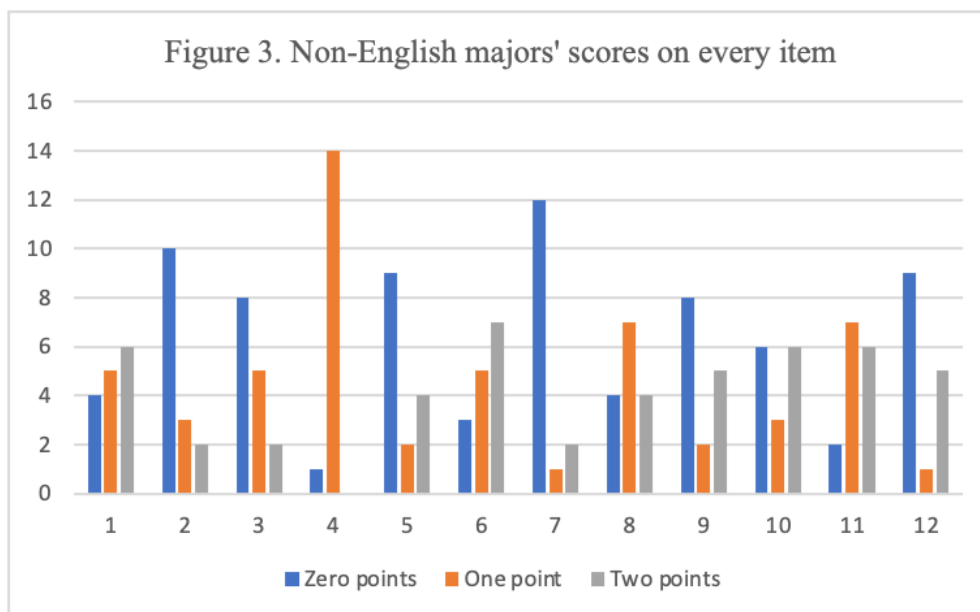
Upon closer examination, non-English majors demonstrated particular proficiency in situations 1, 6, and 11, outperforming their counterparts. Conversely, English majors showed a notable performance in situations 4 and 8. The scores for the remaining situations were closely matched between the two groups, suggesting a comparable level of pragmatic knowledge in those contexts. This performance underscores the variability in pragmatic abilities across different situational contexts and points to the complexity of pragmatic knowledge as a multi-faceted construct.



The analysis of English majors' scores across various items reveals significant performance patterns and areas of difficulty as displayed in Figure 2. A notable number of students scored zero points on items 2, 7, and 9, with 12 students failing item 2 and 11 students failing item 4, indicating these items were particularly challenging. These items were frequently answered with direct responses like "yes," "no," or "yes, it's okay," reflecting a direct acceptance strategy that overlooked the speech act and the intended meaning of the question. In contrast, items 4, 6, 8, and 11 showed a more balanced distribution of scores, with many students achieving one or two points, particularly on item 8, which received two points the most in comparison to all other items. In these cases, students opted for a variety of responses, often being overly polite with expressions such as "please" and an overuse of appreciation strategies. The results for items 1, 3, 5, 10, and 12 were mixed, displaying a spread across zero, one, and two points, suggesting varied levels of understanding and proficiency among the students. However, item 4 appeared to be the easiest for the students, as 14 of them scored one point on it. Overall, this analysis highlights specific areas where students struggle and excel, providing valuable insights for targeted instructional strategies.



Moving on to the scores of non-English majors, the zero score is less frequent but more balanced across most items. A number of students scored zero points on items 2, 5, 7, and 12. However, the mistakes here were often due to misunderstandings. These items were misjudged to be appropriate in terms of context in most of the answers. Item 4 received the highest one-point score, similar to that of English majors. Most students were able to judge the appropriateness of this item but could not provide a follow-up or alternative answer. Another well-performed item was number 8. Notably, items 6 and 11 were the most elaborated on. When judged correctly, a good number of students provided alternative answers. It is important to mention that the answers provided did not differ significantly from those of English majors. Most answers demonstrated a high degree of politeness and direct appreciation strategies.



The comparative data visualized in Figures 2 and 3 reveal some interesting distinctions in the mastery of pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics between English majors and non-English majors across a series of test items. English majors displayed a discernible, albeit varied, command over pragmalinguistic challenges. This is particularly evidenced by items 8 and 11, where exactly six English majors garnered the top score, indicative of full comprehension. In contrast, non-English majors showcased their comparative advantage in items 1, 6, 10, and 11, with an equal number of students achieving the maximum score, reflecting a potentially different instructional focus or inherent aptitude in these areas. The data also uncover areas of common difficulty; both student groups encountered substantial obstacles in items 2, 7, and 9, where students' responses frequently did not reach the threshold for scoring, indicating a general complexity in these items that transcends academic specialization. Furthermore, non-English majors encountered additional hurdles with item 12, where there was a significant tally of zero scores, suggesting a gap in understanding or perhaps a misalignment with their existing knowledge framework.

In summary, the initial part of the data collection reveals an overall concerning gap in the students' understanding of linguistic etiquette, indicating that their overall performance was not up to the expected standard. While their grasp of pragmalinguistic elements was better, yet to no statistical significance, their command over sociopragmatic aspects was less proficient. Interestingly, non-English majors slightly outperformed English majors, although the margin of difference was not statistically significant. This unexpected trend may be attributed to a tendency among English majors to provide minimalist responses, often resorting to simple affirmations or negations like 'yes' or 'no', without elaborating or correcting the context of the situation at hand. Moreover, a consensus among English majors was observed regarding the appropriateness of certain responses to situations that were, in fact, pragmatically unsuitable. A case in point is the widespread acceptance of the response 'I don't mind' in situation 7, which a majority of students deemed appropriate despite it failing to address the pragmalinguistic demands of the scenario.

4.2 Moroccan EFL learners' attitudes and reflection on pragmatic input

In the next part of the analysis, we observe profound deficiencies in the exposure and instruction of English linguistic etiquette. The data indicates that only 3 out of 30 respondents (10%) reported receiving direct instruction from English teachers on appropriate responses in specific situational contexts, pointing to a significant educational oversight. Furthermore, engagement in self-education through relevant literature was negligible, with only 2 out of 30 respondents (approximately 6.7%) exploring texts such as "Pride and Prejudice" or "How to Win Friends and Influence People," highlighting a lack of self-driven learning or accessible resources in this area. Regarding the consumption of English films, 21 out of 30 respondents (70%) regularly watched them, but their focus was mainly on language mechanics—accents, pronunciation, and vocabulary—rather than the culture or pragmatics of language.

Despite these results, there is a strong recognition of the importance of Western linguistic etiquette among the respondents, with 28 out of 30 (93.3%) acknowledging its necessity for effective cross-cultural communication and the avoidance of misunderstandings. This high level of acknowledgment points to an awareness among students of the value of pragmatic knowledge in language proficiency. It highlights the students' understanding that mastering language mechanics alone is insufficient; the ability to navigate the target culture and respond appropriately in various social contexts is crucial for achieving true fluency and preventing communication breakdowns. This recognition suggests a readiness and willingness among students to embrace more comprehensive and pragmatic-focused input, should it be made available to them. Thus, it could be stated that there is a stark gap between students' theoretical understanding of the importance of linguistic etiquette and their practical application of such knowledge, driven by the current nature of input or perhaps the educational strategies employed.

5. Discussion

The research at hand aims to dissect this very facet of language learning by scrutinizing the pragmatic knowledge of Moroccan EFL learners, a demographic whose linguistic journey epitomizes the challenges faced by many in non-English-speaking territories. The significance of this study is anchored in the global prevalence of English, necessitating not only the ability to construct grammatically correct sentences but also to navigate the challenges of cross-cultural interaction with finesse.

In regard to pragmatic knowledge, the overall score of pragmatic knowledge among Moroccan EFL students is unsatisfactory. This insufficiency is compounded by the lack of pragmatic input provided to the students, despite their recognition of the importance of such skills in navigating the complexities of second language learning. It was found that EFL learners are not presented with sufficient pragmatic instructions in class; instead, grammar, vocabulary, and other language skills take priority. This emphasis results in only a moderate level of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge.

Interestingly, a comparative analysis reveals that non-English majors slightly outperformed their English-majoring peers, although not to a statistically significant extent. This outcome, which might initially seem counterintuitive, could be explained by the broader educational experiences of non-English majors. These students may engage with the English language in more diverse contexts, thereby gaining more holistic exposure to its use. This finding highlights the potential impact of curriculum focus—while English

majors might be deeply involved in the intricacies of language structure and literature, non-English majors could be encountering English in practical, communicative scenarios that enhance their pragmatic proficiency.

Moreover, the pragmalinguistics knowledge of both groups is slightly higher than their sociopragmatic knowledge yet to no significant level. However, this slight differentiation echoes the sentiments work of Taguchi (2011), who posits that these elements of pragmatic knowledge often develop at disparate rates and are influenced by varying factors, including exposure and instruction. This means, perhaps with a greater representative number of populations, or with a focus on the comparison between the two elements, future studies can further investigate this gap. The shortage of pragmatic knowledge as attributed to pragmatic input does not result in the lack of pragmatic competence, however. Many studies within the scope of speech act in Morocco have proven that Moroccan EFL learners possess a good level of pragmatic competence (Edderaouy & Sakale 2024). thus, that means that the shortcomings of the knowledge at hand may be knowledge of judgment only, and does not reflect the actual ability of students to communicate or react effectively to the situation at hand.

This calls for a contemplation of the need for a balanced language instruction approach that not only emphasizes grammatical and lexical competencies but also integrates pragmatic instruction into the curriculum. The data implores a shift towards pedagogical strategies that recognize the value of teaching language as a tool for interaction, embedding cultural insights and contextual usage into the learning process. Such an approach could potentially cultivate learners who are not just linguistically adept but also pragmatically skilled, equipping them to navigate the global tapestry of English communication with confidence and cultural sensitivity.

The curriculum often serves as the blueprint for educational outcomes, and in the realm of EFL, its influence is paramount in shaping learners' competencies. The prevailing curricular design is frequently critiqued for its focus on grammatical precision and lexical richness, potentially at the expense of pragmatic fluency (Bachman & Palmer, 2010). Educational theories advocating for communicative competence, such as Canale and Swain's (1980) framework, call for an integrative approach that encompasses grammatical, discourse, strategic, and indeed, pragmatic competencies. The stark gap in pragmatic skills highlighted by the study's findings points to a curricular oversight that could be addressed by integrating these theories into practice. By doing so, the curriculum would support the development of comprehensive language proficiency, ensuring that learners are well-equipped to engage in effective and culturally sensitive communication in diverse contexts.

Revisions to the curriculum could take several forms. One effective approach is the incorporation of explicit pragmatic instruction that encompasses both pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. This would involve teaching forms of politeness, speech acts, and conversation strategies, as well as the cultural contexts that dictate their appropriate use. For example, integrating tasks that simulate real-life interactions, such as role-plays or situational analyses, could equip learners with a pragmatic toolkit that is applicable beyond the classroom. This practical experience would help students understand not only how to use language correctly but also how to use it appropriately in various social and cultural contexts.

Another important implication of the findings is that self-education in pragmatics is not a prevailing trend among learners, at least not consciously. This could be due to a range of factors, including a lack of awareness of the topic, motivation, or accessible resources. This underlines the necessity for instructional oversight where educators not only facilitate opportunities for pragmatic learning within the curriculum but also encourage and guide learners in their independent language pursuits. Advocating for the inclusion of culturally rich materials is an urgent need. Literature, films, and multimedia from various English-speaking cultures can serve as invaluable resources. The findings of the study suggest that the majority of the population studied is in constant exposure to this type of input. These materials can offer students insights into the subtleties of language use in different cultural contexts, facilitating a deeper understanding of the sociopragmatic fabric of the English language. The underutilization of literature and films for pragmatic learning among Moroccan EFL learners is, then, a significant shortcoming. This is in line with Lazar's (1993) early work declaring that this type of input provides a rich source of cultural and pragmatic cues, which are integral to mastering a second language. Films offer visual and auditory stimuli that can enhance learners' ability to interpret and produce language in a manner consistent with its social use (Kramsch, 1993). However, our findings suggest that these resources are not being harnessed to their full potential, with learners primarily focusing on language mechanics rather than the pragmatic and cultural aspects. Educators can leverage this by pointing out to pragmatic complexities within this type of media in the classroom. Additionally, real-life interactions, such as exchange programs or virtual collaborations with English-speaking peers, could further enrich learners' pragmatic abilities, allowing for the practical application of learned competencies in authentic communicative settings.

Building on this perspective, enhancing opportunities for direct pragmatic instruction can be achieved through a curriculum that emphasizes task-based learning, where tasks are designed to reflect real-world language use. Guided self-learning should also be a pedagogical focus, with educators recommending pragmatic resources and strategies for self-study, such as engaging with English media, participating in online forums, or using language learning apps that provide cultural and pragmatic insights. To

effectively incorporate these resources into learning experiences, educators can adopt an integrated approach involving structured activities that prompt learners to identify and reflect on the pragmatic aspects of the content. For example, teachers could use scenes from films to highlight and discuss cultural norms, conversational styles, and body language. Similarly, literature circles can be formed where students discuss the motivations behind characters' dialogues and choices, thereby unpacking the pragmatic underpinnings of the text.

In conclusion, teachers and educational institutions play a pivotal role in guiding students toward useful pragmatic resources and also providing them with pragmatic input. They must act as curators of content, selecting materials that are culturally diverse and representative of various English-speaking communities. Additionally, they should facilitate access to these resources by creating a library of curated media and texts, and ensure that there are structured opportunities within the curriculum for these resources to be explored and discussed. A critique of current educational strategies reveals a disconnect between the theoretical understanding of the importance of pragmatic competence and its practical application in language learning. While the theoretical value of pragmatics is acknowledged, as indicated by the high level of recognition among learners of its necessity, educational strategies seem to lag in effectively translating this understanding into practical skill development. The data suggests that there is a significant gap between acknowledging the importance of pragmatic skills and actually possessing them. To bridge this gap, educational strategies should pivot towards a more communicative and task-based approach, as recommended by Ellis (2003), where learners are not just passive recipients of knowledge but active participants in language use within meaningful contexts. This involves creating classroom activities that mirror real-life communication, such as debates, negotiations, and presentations that require learners to use language pragmatically and appropriately. Moreover, the practical application of pragmatic knowledge can be fostered through experiential learning strategies, including simulations, role-plays, and dramatizations that require students to navigate social interactions using the target language. Such strategies not only encourage the use of language in context but also allow learners to experiment with and refine their pragmatic skills in a supportive environment. By integrating these approaches, educators can better equip learners with the comprehensive language skills necessary for effective communication in a globalized world.

6. Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it becomes evident that Moroccan EFL learners, while possessing a basic level of pragmatic competence (Edderaouy and Sakale, 2024), they are significantly lacking on the levels of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge required for fluent and culturally sensitive English communication. This research has highlighted a fundamental gap in the pragmatic instruction provided within the Moroccan EFL curriculum, which is predominantly oriented towards grammatical and lexical proficiency at the expense of pragmatic fluency, resulting in a deficiency in pragmatic input.

Interestingly, the study also uncovered that non-English majors occasionally demonstrated slight superiority in pragmatic knowledge compared to their peers majoring in English. This suggests that their more diverse academic and real-world interactions with English may contribute to a broader, though not necessarily deeper, pragmatic knowledge. Such findings challenge traditional educational models and suggest the potential benefits of a curriculum that offers pragmatic engagement across various disciplines, not solely within language studies.

This study significantly contributes to the understanding of English language learning in Morocco by revealing that despite recognized gaps in pragmatic input, Moroccan EFL learners are capable of applying their limited pragmatic knowledge effectively in real-life scenarios. This suggests that current instructional shortcomings may be more reflective of curricular deficiencies than of the learners' abilities. Therefore, this paper advocates for a transformative shift in pedagogical strategies towards a more balanced approach that integrates pragmatic competence as a core component of language education. By embedding pragmatic tasks and culturally rich materials into the learning process, educators could enhance learners' ability to navigate the complexities of global English communication.

However, this study has several limitations. The focus was primarily on pragmatic knowledge in relation to input, without a thorough examination of the broader pedagogical contexts that influence educational outcomes in Morocco. A more detailed examination of curriculum design and real-life classroom observations could provide a more accurate picture of the nature of pragmatic input in the classrooms. While the study provided insights into the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic capabilities of Moroccan EFL learners, it did not fully explore other influential factors such as the interplay of cultural identity and language learning. Another pivotal issue is that pragmatic knowledge, as it diverges from pragmatic competence, is difficult to assess using questionnaires; role plays might yield better results. Future research should address these areas, potentially incorporating more comprehensive empirical methods to provide a deeper understanding of how Moroccan EFL learners acquire pragmatic knowledge and further develop pragmatic competence. This could include longitudinal studies and naturalistic observations that offer more granular insights into learners' pragmatic development over time and in varied communicative settings.

Funding: This research received no external funding

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Appendix

The questionnaire employed for the study

Gender	Age	Education	Years of learning English
<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Female			

Section A - Instructions:

For each dialogue, analyze whether the italicized parts are appropriate or not appropriate. Choose "yes" for appropriate answers, and "no" for inappropriate ones.

If you think the underlined parts are inappropriate (NO), please write the appropriate expressions on the other blank."

1. (in a bus)
A: Excuse me. Is this seat taken?
B: I'm afraid this seat is taken.
A: Thank you very much.
.....
2. Mrs. White: Please say hello to your family for me.
Tom: I'll do that.
.....
3. A: Excuse me, please. (passing someone in a cinema)
B: Certainly!
.....
4. A: Oh, you have had a haircut! It looks beautiful!
B: Thank you, do you really think so? I wasn't sure whether it suited me or not.
.....
5. (in the students' dormitory)
Andrew: Would you like to watch a football match?
Ahmed: Excuse me, but I'm not free.
.....
6. (One day, an American lady accidentally bumped into Josh)
Lady: I'm terribly sorry.
Josh: It doesn't matter.
.....
7. (Joyce is talking to her friend, Brenda.)
Joyce: I wonder if you'd mind posting this letter for me on your way home, Brenda?
Brenda: I don't mind.
.....
8. (One day, you went to see your American teacher, Kevin.)
Kevin: Would you like a cup of tea?
You: Yes, but I'm sorry to trouble you.
.....
9. A: You look pale. What's the matter?
B: I'm feeling sick. A cold, maybe.
A: Go and see the doctor. Drink more water. Did you take any pills? Chinese medicine works wonderful. Would you like to try? Put on more clothes. Have a good rest.
.....
10. A: Is Carrefour open on Sundays?
B: Of course.
.....
11. (A is taking a cab, and he says to the driver)
A: Excuse me, would you mind taking me to the airport?
.....
12. A: That's a lovely dress you've got!
B: Well, I went shopping on Saturday and happened to see it in one of the stores.
.....

Section B - Instructions:

Please answer each of the following questions relating to the previous 12 tasks.

1. Have your English teachers ever told you in class how we should respond in the listed situations? If they have informed you of the appropriate behavior in some or all of the above situations, please list the item numbers below.
.....
2. Have you ever read anything about linguistic etiquette in English? List the books/articles you probably have read.
.....
3. Do you often see English films? What do you care to know when you see English films?
.....
4. Do you think the knowledge of Western linguistic etiquette is necessary and important? Why or why not?