THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND L2 PRAGMATIC DEVELOPMENT DURING STUDY ABROAD
(Hubungan antara Pengalaman Pribadi dan Pengembangan Pragmatik Bahasa Kedua selama Studi di Luar Negeri)

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Abstrak

Bahasa kedua (L2) memiliki peran penting dalam pengembangan pragmatis. Selain itu, konteks studi di luar negeri memberikan potensi untuk pengembangan kompetensi pragmatis, namun pelajar L2 mungkin tidak begitu menyerupai penutur asli. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat hubungan antara pengalaman pribadi dan perkembangan pragmatis L2 di kalangan mahasiswa Indonesia selama belajar di luar negeri. Data dikumpulkan dari percakapan mereka di WeChat karena mahasiswa yang terlibat dalam penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa Indonesia yang saat ini sedang kuliah di China. Wawancara mendalam juga dilakukan untuk mendapatkan informasi detail terkait pengalaman pribadi mereka selama studi di luar negeri. Selain itu, bahasa Inggris dan bahasa Mandarin adalah bahasa instruksi yang digunakan dalam perkuliahan sebagai komunikasi formal dan informal. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa Indonesia menggunakan empat fungsi pragmatis, yaitu berterima kasih (thanking), memuji (complimenting), meminta (requesting), dan memuji diri sendiri (self-praising). Meminta (requesting) adalah strategi yang paling sering digunakan oleh mahasiswa Indonesia yang mengambil bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa pengantar perkuliahan, sementara strategi berterima kasih (thanking) merupakan strategi yang paling banyak digunakan oleh mahasiswa Indonesia yang menggunakan Bahasa Mandarin sebagai Bahasa pengantar perkuliahan. Selain itu, perkembangan pragmatis mereka selama belajar di luar negeri dipengaruhi oleh empat faktor, yaitu pengetahuan pragmatis, kemahiran L2, kompetensi antar budaya dan interaksi sosial, serta variasi individu dimana faktor-faktor ini lebih banyak digunakan dalam strategi pujian (complimenting).
Kata-kata kunci: *pengembangan pragmatik bahasa kedua, pragmatik rutin, pengalaman pribadi, studi luar negeri*

Abstract

The L2 setting plays a significant role in pragmatic development. Moreover, the study abroad context provides the potential for the development of pragmatic competence. However, L2 learners may not perform according to native speakers' norms. The present study aims to explore the relationship between personal experiences and L2 pragmatic development among Indonesian students during study abroad. The data were collected from students' conversations on WeChat since the participants involved in the study are Indonesian students who are currently pursuing their degrees in China. In-depth interviews were also conducted to obtain detailed information related to participants' personal experiences during study abroad. In addition, English and Chinese are the language instructions used in classrooms for formal and informal communications. The results of the study show that Indonesian students employ four pragmatic functions, namely thanking, complimenting, requesting, and self-praising. Surprisingly, requesting is the most frequent strategy employed by Indonesian students enrolled in English, while the thanking strategy is mainly employed by Indonesian students enrolling in Chinese-taught programs. Moreover, their pragmatic development

during study abroad is affected by four factors, including pragmatic knowledge, L2 proficiency, intercultural competence and social interactions, and individual variation. In contrast, these factors were highly used in complimenting strategy.
Keywords: *L2 pragmatic development, pragmatic routines, personal experiences, study abroad*

INTRODUCTION

The development of pragmatic competence in second language (L2) learners is a topic of interest in applied linguistics. Linguistic scholars have also examined the importance of learning a second or a foreign language (Bosker et al., 2014). Study Abroad (SA) is thought to aid in the advancement of the target language and the exploration of the learning culture. As a result, acquiring a second language (L2) allows language learners to explore their linguistic abilities and cultural limitations. They must perform the role of intercultural speakers since they are required to be pragmatically and culturally competent as L2 learners. Additionally, they must be able to interact in language with various interlocutors in terms of their attitudes, society, and conventions.

It is evident that study abroad experiences have a significant impact on language learning. The studies highlight various aspects of this impact, including linguistic and extralinguistic skill acquisition (Lou & Sun, 2022), language proficiency and anxiety (Thompson & Lee, 2014), acquisition of specific linguistic features (Isabelli-García, 2010), second language identity formation (Bennu, 2021), and individual differences in oral proficiency gain (Anderson, 2014). However, there is a need to consider both the learning products and the experiences of students in their host communities to gain a comprehensive understanding of language learning in study-abroad

contexts. Lou & Sun (2022) highlight the importance of studying abroad as an opportunity for individuals to acquire and improve their linguistic and extralinguistic skills. It is suggested to emphasize the need for further research in this area, particularly from the perspective of student researchers.

Numerous earlier studies looked at the development of L2 learners in terms of the impact of instruction on pragmatic routines in academic discourse, the creation of teaching resources that used spoken corpus to teach pragmatic routines, and the comparison of corpus-based resources and activities for teaching pragmatic routines. Several studies have examined the factors that influence L2 pragmatic development, such as prior pragmatic knowledge, L2 proficiency, and study-abroad experience (Matsumura, 2001; Taguchi & Roever, 2017). Matsumura (2001) suggests that the amount of prior pragmatic knowledge that L2 learners have obtained may affect their development of pragmatic competence in the target speech community, whereas it discusses the importance of teaching L2 pragmatics and highlights the need for research in this area. Taguchi (2011) also explores the effect of L2 proficiency and study-abroad experience on pragmatic comprehension, finding that both factors play a role in pragmatic development (Taguchi, 2011).

Additionally, Taguchi (2007) investigates the development of speed and accuracy in pragmatic comprehension in L2 learners, suggesting

that the development of pragmatic knowledge and processing capacity may not align perfectly. Kasper (2001) provides a comprehensive overview of four perspectives on L2 pragmatic development, highlighting the importance of considering various factors in understanding this process. It emphasizes the importance of prior pragmatic knowledge, L2 proficiency, and study-abroad experience in the development of pragmatic competence in L2 learners. It also highlights the need for further research and the importance of considering multiple perspectives in studying L2 pragmatic development. Therefore, the present study investigates the relationship between personal experiences and L2 pragmatic development during study abroad.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Pragmatic Routines During Study Abroad

Study abroad experiences have been found to have a positive impact on the acquisition of pragmatic skills in second language learners. Cohen & Shively (2007) conducted a study on the acquisition of requests and apologies in Spanish and French by study abroad students. They found that study abroad experiences, along with strategy-building interventions, can enhance pragmatic acquisition during study abroad (Cohens & Shively, 2007). Furthermore, Taguchi (2011) investigated the effect of L2 proficiency and study-abroad experience on pragmatic comprehension. The study found that study-abroad experiences have a selective effect on pragmatic development, similar to the effect of L2 proficiency (Taguchi, 2011). This suggests that study abroad experiences can contribute to the development of pragmatic skills in second language

learners. In addition, Taguchi et al. (2016) examined the effects of intercultural competence and social contact on speech act production in a Chinese study-abroad context. The study found that exposure to a community full of pragmatic input and practice, which is often experienced during study abroad, can be beneficial for pragmatic development (Taguchi et al., 2016). In addition, sociocultural adaptation and intensity of interaction influence pragmatic gains during study abroad (Sánchez-Hernández & Alcón-Soler, 2019).

This suggests that adaptation to a new sociocultural context and the level of interaction with native speakers can impact the development of pragmatic skills. Sociocultural adaptation plays a role in the development of pragmatic production during study abroad (Sánchez-Hernández, 2018). Therefore, these studies highlight the importance of study abroad experiences in the development of pragmatic skills in second language learners. Exposure to a new sociocultural context, interaction with native speakers, and the use of strategies and interventions can enhance pragmatic acquisition during study abroad.

In a certain context of daily life, the speech community will always communicate pragmatic routines (Tahir & Hamzah, 2023) such as thanking, apologizing, requesting, greeting, insulting, complementing, and offering (Aijmer, 2014). Additionally, the application of pragmatic procedures in the SA setting aids L2 learners in developing their interpersonal and communication skills with NSs as well as other language users. As a result, it enables individuals to participate more fully in the community's use of the target language (TL). The opportunities of the learners' interactions, as well as their routines, determine their competence

level (Roever, 2012); in addition, the recognition is reliant on the exposure of the learners' routines. Based on their purpose and significance, pragmatic routines are divided into different categories. The degree to which the meaning category is connected to particular circumstances is demonstrated.

The pragmatic routines developed by L2 students while studying abroad have been the subject of numerous studies. Sánchez-Hernández (2018) examined how sociocultural adaptation affected the growth of pragmatic production while studying abroad with an emphasis on the production of pragmatic routines. Based on the quantitative analysis of this mixed-method study, it was discovered that the development of socio-cultural adaptations had a partial impact on pragmatic gains and a direct impact on the cultural background of the learners. In addition, the qualitative analysis revealed that those socio-cultural adaptations, background culture, and gains had an impact on pragmatic routine production.

Sánchez-Hernández & Alcón-Soler (2019) investigated how L2 learners developed pragmatically while studying abroad. This study concentrated on identifying pragmatic procedures that were influenced by sociocultural adaptation. The study claimed that taking into account study-abroad opportunities was crucial for developing practical routines. Dwyer (2004) explored how long study abroad programs were. This study examined the effects of program length on five learning outcomes, including student academic decisions, career development, personal and social growth, foreign language use and commitment, and intercultural competence and awareness. It was determined that the study abroad program had a significant impact on the aforementioned results. Surprisingly, this study asserts that the impact under investigation would endure for as long as fifty years.

Because students are required to be interculturally competent (Root & Ngampornchai, 2013), Taguchi (2018) views the exposure of cultural competence as a feature to support L2 learners' pragmatic development. Additionally, intercultural competence is a collection of skills required for one to relate linguistically and culturally with others in an effective and suitable manner (Sinicrope et al., 2007). Similar to this, the level of interaction students' experiences while studying abroad can have a big impact on how well they recognize and use common expressions. A study focused on the usage of the customary expression in L2 pragmatics and examined the competency, duration of stay, and intensity of interaction used by English language learners in host environments (Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos, 2011). This study demonstrated that learners' customary expression had a substantial impact on both performance and interaction intensity. Contrarily, neither the length of the study nor the creation of conventional phrases, notably in L2 pragmatic development, were significantly impacted.

Study Abroad and Personal Experiences

Study abroad (SA) is an increasingly popular option for students seeking to broaden their horizons, gain intercultural competence, and enhance their academic as well as personal development. They come into contact with several others who do not speak English as their first language. Students have the chance to learn about a variety of topics through SA experiences, including language, educational environments, cultural exchange, and

differences. It is believed that by participating in SA, students can learn the L2 while they are studying. It is thought that SA helps learners explore more about gaining the pragmatic context when speaking with native speakers or other language users, which might result in the students having a high level of pragmatic competence. It may improve language proficiency, boost classroom interaction, and lessen anxiety in the study of foreign languages.

Previous studies have examined the personal or academic experiences of students who study abroad. Goldoni (2013) investigated the students' study-abroad immersion experiences. The study's context examined the learners' opportunities for interaction with the host community while they were studying abroad, as well as the cultural clash, miscommunication, and misunderstanding situations they encountered in their daily interactions that could be carried out through online communication, such as social media. Focusing on this study led to the recommendation that it was crucial to give students a pre-departure experience, a worthwhile study abroad program that would help them better understand their sociocultural identities, cultural values, learning objectives, and program expectations. Kinginger (2013) did a study on identity and language in the context of studying abroad with regard to the learners' identities. This study focused primarily on how identity affects how well students learn language skills when studying abroad and whether they choose suitable or inappropriate language. Additionally, it described how to design language learning opportunities holistically and looked at how pragmatic skill development was especially connected to learner identity. The classification of nationality or status as a foreigner, gender, linguistic heritage, age,

and ethnicity were also identified in this study. Naturally, identity and pragmatic environment were taken into account for each factor that affects learners' study abroad and language learning.

The current study examines Indonesian students' experience during study abroad in terms of the context of the L2 pragmatic development, addressing the influence of the sociocultural adaptation of Indonesian students while acknowledging that the study-abroad context contributes more to some aspects, such as the pragmatic functions, the contextual factors, and the individual differences (Sánchez-Hernández & Alcón-Soler, 2019).

RESEARCH METHOD

The present study involved Indonesian students who are pursuing their degrees in China. The participants are enrolled in both English and Chinese-taught programs. The data were collected over a four-month period of their study. Moreover, all the participants are pursuing their bachelor's degrees at China universities. The data were obtained by collecting the participants' conversations on WeChat, both private chats and group conversations. The participants were asked to send their conversations during the period of data collection. The researcher also conducted an in-depth interview with five participants by using a random sampling technique to select the participants who would be willing to participate in interview sessions.

Furthermore, the collected data were then analyzed using NVivo software to help the researcher code and visualize as well as to report the findings (Bazeley & Richards, 2011). Before importing them into NVivo software, the data had to be reviewed by the researcher to ensure that all of them met the research criteria and requirements. It was also done to

ensure that all the data were correct and complete. The collected data were first imported into NVivo software for data coding. The data were in the form of text documents as the data transcripts. In order to ensure the data validity and reliability of the data, there were two coders who helped the researcher code the data. These two coders are university lecturers who are passionate about linguistics, particularly the pragmatic field. These coders were given full access to all data to code the data since they were asked to code the data individually based on the current research topic. During the data coding, all the coders created nodes based on the data imported into NVivo software. After doing data coding, the researcher visualized the data in the form of graphs in order to report the findings.

DISCUSSION

Pragmatic development during study abroad

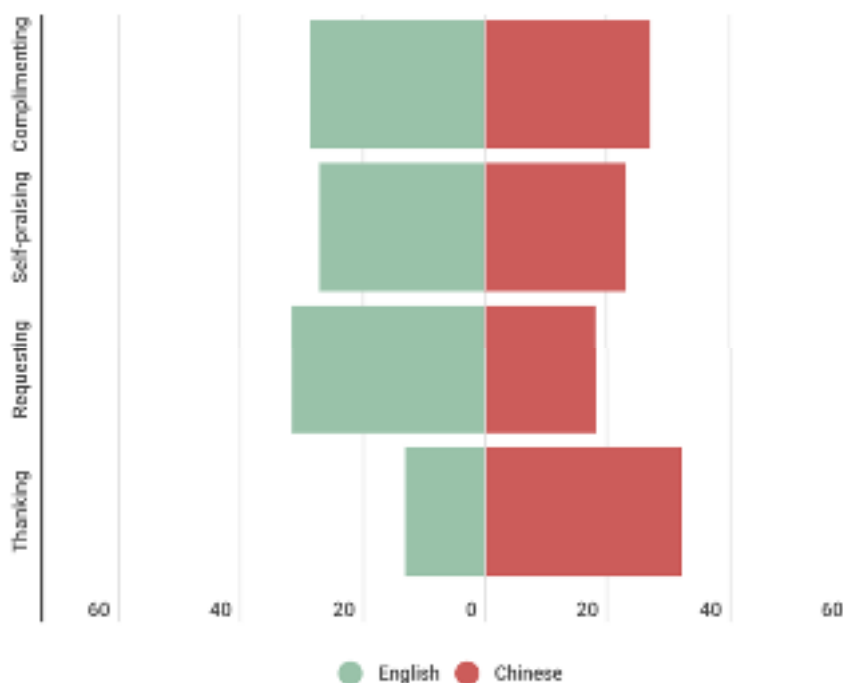The results of the study are illustrated in the following graph.

Figure 1. Pragmatic functions employed by Indonesian students during study-abroad

The findings indicate that Indonesian students highly employ the requesting strategy (31.5%) in English-taught programs. However, thanking (32%) is the most common strategy employed by Indonesian students in the Chinese-taught program. These findings are illustrated in the subsections below.

Thanking

Thanking as a pragmatic function in this study is seen in the example below.

A: I know. I might come, but the deadline is now, so I have to register now. I might come in a week.
B: Send problems in detail to email
A: Okay. *Thank you*. That helps.

The example above shows how Indonesian student develops pragmatic proficiency explicitly. The target pragmatic feature employed is in the form of thanking expressing gratitude when he/she meets his/her expectations. At the same time, this pragmatic feature is

expressed when the request expression is provided. In this case, the Indonesian student let others know his situation. Then, he expects the solution by expressing a request implicitly. Moreover, by saying "*that helps*," it indicates that the pragmatic function of responses to thanks is minimized since the problems he faced were solved. On the other hand, his request was accepted, which can be linked to his thanking expressions.

In the Chinese context, the pragmatic function of thanking is illustrated below.

等待学院审批通过，物业会查验房间填退宿单，再传给你的导员，就可以了。
Please wait for the approval of the university. Someone who is in charge of it will check the room to fill in the return form, and then he/she will pass it to your supervisor. It will be fine.
好的 谢谢
Okay. *Thank you*

By receiving a positive response to a request, an expression of thanking as a pragmatic function is employed. It shows that an Indonesian student uses an expression of thanking in Chinese language (*xiexie*) or (*thank you*) to express gratitude and acknowledge the actions done by others. As illustrated, someone has confirmed that everything will be fine regarding the issue he faced.

Therefore, thanking is viewed as a pragmatic marker that serves the function of expressing gratitude, and sometimes, it is used to close a conversation or interaction. It is also necessary to understand the function of thanking and its cultural variation that can contribute to effective communication and the maintenance of positive social interaction since, in the current study, Indonesian students are pursuing their degree abroad, so it is a crucial thing to understand the

pragmatic marker or function when having social interactions.

Requesting

The request strategy employed by Indonesian students studying abroad pursuing their degree in the English program can be illustrated in the example below.

My friend is participating in the poster competition. *Kindly vote for number 7.* Thank you

The example above indicates the request strategy since it is expressed in requesting to do something (kindly vote for number 7). The use of "kindly" indicates a pragmatic marker used in requesting. Moreover, this word is used to convey politeness and gratitude that shows respect and appreciation for the addressee's potential compliance with the request.
Moreover, the request in Chinese is illustrated in the following example.

阿姨帮我朋友开门（401） 谢谢
Auntie, *kindly help my friend open the door* in room 401. Thank you

As described, another illustration is also expressed in the Chinese language. It is expressed by softening the directness of the request while expressing politeness as well. The example above also indicates that the speaker is aware of the potential both convenience and inconvenience of the request given.

Self-praising

The self-praising in the current study can be illustrated in the following example.

If anyone is interested, you guys can join this group (since there are many people who want to have a chess group, *I personally make one*)

The utterance above indicates self-praising (*I personally make one*), which means that this Indonesian student tries to show his positive self-praise in terms of his capacity and capability to do something. In this case, he has the ability to create and even manage the group. This is a positive innovation of self-praise since it can provide a positive contribution to others by showing a positive side of oneself.

Moreover, the Chinese example of self-praising is illustrated in the following example.

你好　我卡刷不了　9层的入口们　怎么办?

Hello, *I cannot use my card*. How can I enter my room, 9th floor?

As illustrated, self-worrying is expressed by Indonesian students. It shows that he believes that he cannot do something when he does not have anything related to it. In this case, he tries to show his self-praising by strategically employing a linguistic marker to manage the impression he creates. Thus, self-praising in the current study can be observed through how Indonesian students communicate with people from other countries on social media, particularly on WeChat.

Complimenting

The compliment found in the current study is illustrated in the following example.

After cleaning the living room, *studying while drinking tea are all perfect things.*

The pragmatic function of a compliment is that it shows the involvement of expressing a positive evaluation. As seen in the example above, the expression of compliment is expressed to show admiration regarding for has been done by others. Moreover, the utterance (*studying while drinking tea is all perfect things*) indicates an alternative suggestion as a positive evaluation since someone has cleaned the living room.

恭喜师姐!
Congratulations, sister!

The example above indicates congratulating someone on his/her achievements. In this case, the expression of congratulating others is expressed to show the compliment. The illustration above occurred when his friend was going to have a pre-defense. By sharing this information with the class group, where there are a lot of students coming from different countries in the group, they started congratulating their friend because of his achievements.

Factors Affecting Pragmatic Development During Study Abroad

The factors affecting pragmatic development during study abroad in the current study are illustrated in the following graph.
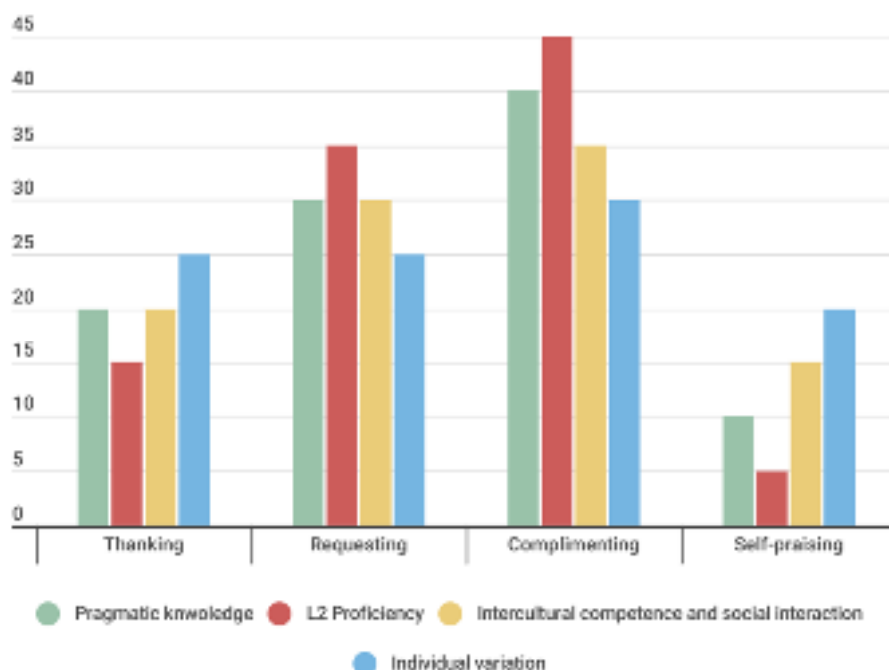
Figure 2. Factors Affecting Indonesian Students' Pragmatic Development During Study Abroad

As illustrated in the figure above, it shows that there are four factors affecting Indonesian students' pragmatic development during study abroad, namely pragmatic knowledge, L2 proficiency, intercultural competence and social interactions, and individual variation. These factors are mainly employed by Indonesian students in complimenting strategy, whereas L2 proficiency contributes a lot for Indonesian students to use compliment strategy, followed by pragmatic knowledge, intercultural competence and social interactions, and individual variations. In this case, it implies that Indonesian students studying abroad, both in English and Chinese-taught programs, tend to use a compliment strategy when interacting with each other.

The findings of the current study also provide insights into various aspects of pragmatic knowledge and its development in study-abroad contexts. It shows the pragmatic instruction and pragmatic functions used by Indonesian students studying abroad. Moreover, the findings suggest that Indonesian students not only employ pragmatic knowledge, but they also tend to use it to increase the language proficiency of their L2 by building up their awareness of contextually appropriate forms. They tend to manage the relationship between interpersonal and the desired ways in L2 communications. By doing this kind of thing, they show their cultural understanding underlying the linguistic forms as well. It is suggested that the study abroad context provides a positive impact on L2 proficiency and pragmatic competence, as well as their individual variations.

Furthermore, this L2 proficiency and pragmatic knowledge can shape Indonesian students' identity development, linguistic self-concept, and the environment for social interaction since they are aware of intercultural competence when they interact with others. Indonesian students could potentially develop the benefits of studying abroad for their L2 proficiency.

The findings of the current study show that pragmatic functions, including thanking, requesting, complimenting, and self-praising, were employed by Indonesian students during their study abroad. Leech (2016) proposes the politeness principle, which suggests that individuals adapt their speech acts to maintain politeness and avoid face-threatening acts since the pragmatic functions of speech acts can vary across cultures and contexts. This principle highlights the importance of considering cultural and contextual factors in understanding the pragmatic functions of speech acts. Pragmatic functions play a crucial role in effective communication by allowing individuals to achieve specific communicative goals and maintain positive social relationships (Alharbi & Mahzari, 2022). Politeness, as a pragmatic function, involves strategies such as positive and negative politeness to mitigate face-threatening acts (Horn & Ward, 2006). Speech acts, on the other hand, encompass various actions performed through language, including making requests, giving orders, and expressing opinions.

Understanding pragmatic functions is essential for effective communication across different cultures and contexts. By considering the theoretical perspectives and empirical studies discussed in this paper, individuals can enhance their communicative competence and navigate social interactions more successfully. As the present study shows, thanking strategy is one of the pragmatic functions employed by Indonesian students. It outlines various aspects such as routine formulae, responses to thanks, cultural variations, and the influence of surprise. These speech act variations highlight the importance of gratitude in social interactions and the role it plays in maintaining positive relationships (Barron, 2022). In addition, as described

in the current study, pragmatic requests involve the use of language to ask for assistance or favors, while compliments are positive expressions used to praise or admire someone (Tsutagawa, 2012). Understanding the nature, functions, and cultural variations of these speech acts is crucial for effective communication and maintaining positive social relationships. By considering the theoretical perspectives and empirical studies discussed in this paper, individuals can enhance their pragmatic competence and navigate social interactions more successfully.

As found in the present study, self-praising is one of the pragmatic functions employed by Indonesian students studying abroad. Self-praising is a complex pragmatic phenomenon that involves the act of praising oneself in social interactions (Dayter, 2018). It can serve various functions, such as enhancing one's self-image, asserting one's competence, or maintaining positive social relationships. The cultural and gender norms surrounding self-praise, as well as the application of politeness strategies and conversational mitigation, play a significant role in shaping self-praising behavior. By considering the theoretical perspectives and empirical studies discussed in this paper, Indonesian students can gain a deeper understanding of self-praising and its implications for effective communication and social interactions during study abroad.

Moreover, the findings also indicate four factors affecting pragmatic development among Indonesian students during study abroad. These factors include pragmatic knowledge, L2 proficiency, intercultural competence and social interaction, and individual variation. Matsumura (2001) suggests that the amount of prior pragmatic knowledge that L2 learners have obtained

may affect their development of pragmatic competence in the target speech community. At the same time, L2 proficiency in pragmatic comprehension plays a role in pragmatic development. Taguchi (2011) also highlights the impact of study-abroad experience on pragmatic comprehension and development regarding the effects of intercultural competence and social contact on speech act production in a study-abroad context.

The importance of considering the study abroad in pragmatic development of different contexts may present different opportunities and challenges (Taguchi & Young, 2019). However, the intensity of interaction with target language speakers during study abroad can influence pragmatic acquisition (Alcón-Soler, 2015). Therefore, the role of individual learner factors in pragmatic development during study abroad suggests that there is variation among learners. The importance of prior knowledge, proficiency, study-abroad experience, intercultural competence, social contact, context, intensity of interaction, and individual differences in understanding this process can influence pragmatic development during study abroad.

CONCLUSION

As the findings illustrate the relationship between personal experiences and pragmatic development, it is concluded that most Indonesian students in English-taught programs tend to employ the requesting strategy of the pragmatic function during study abroad. However, Indonesian students in Chinese-taught programs tend to use a thanking strategy during their study abroad period.

It also showed that four factors affecting pragmatic development among Indonesian students studying abroad include pragmatic knowledge, L2 proficiency, intercultural competence and social interactions, and individual variations. These factors are mainly employed by Indonesian students when they make compliments, whereas L2 proficiency contributes a lot to the use of compliment strategies of the pragmatic functions.

As the present study investigates Indonesian students' experiences and their pragmatic development during study abroad, it only explores Indonesian students studying in China, whereas most of them use WeChat as personal social media for communication. Future research may explore any other countries where Indonesian students are pursuing their degree with different language instruction used for formal and informal interactions.

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