

## The Level and Nature of EFL Learners' Motivation to Learn Pragmatics

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**Abstract** - Despite the significance of motivation and pragmatic competence for L2 learners, surprisingly, research into L2 pragmatics learning motivation is almost non-existent. The aim of the present study was to investigate the level and nature of Indonesian EFL learners' motivation for L2 pragmatics learning. A total of 76 Indonesian-speaking sophomores studying international business management was asked to fill out a tailor-made, 29-item online questionnaire designed to measure the level and nature of their motivation for L2 pragmatics learning. It was found that (i) Indonesian EFL students' motivation for L2 pragmatics learning was insufficiently high, (ii) their intrinsic motivation was the highest compared to other types of motivation, and (iii) their external motivation was surprisingly low. These findings can be explained in the light of the students' previous instructed foreign language learning experiences which placed undue emphasis on the formal aspects of the target language, while marginalizing the social ones. Pedagogically, the findings imply that, owing to the malleability of human motivation, EFL teachers should employ principled instructional methods to promote their students' L2 pragmatics learning motivation. Be that as it may, further studies need to be conducted to (in)validate the above-mentioned findings, taking into consideration the limitations of the present study.

**Keywords:** L2 learning motivation, L2 pragmatics motivation, self-determination theory, Indonesian EFL learners, interlanguage pragmatics

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Motivation can be defined as something that “moves a person to make certain choices, to engage in action, to persist in action” (Ushioda, 2020, p. 751). Notwithstanding such seemingly simple definition, motivation is an elusive concept (Ryan, 2019). Interestingly, the elusiveness of the concept does not prevent it from being “enthusiastically embraced by both researchers and classroom practitioners, resulting in a fast-changing and rapidly expanding theoretical landscape” (Ryan, 2019, p. 409). In fact, relative to other learner characteristics, motivation seems to have generated the most extensive research in the field of second language (L2) learning (Dornyei & Ryan, 2015). The popularity of the concept of motivation among L2 teachers stems from the widely held belief that motivation is what directs and energizes the L2 learning process. It is assumed to be one of the most crucial factors determining the success of L2 learning, both formal and informal L2 learning (Chik, 2020). Moreover, such popularity has also been triggered by the general surge of interest in learner autonomy in L2 education (Jacobs & Renandya, 2016), along with the widespread deployment of technological tools for L2 pedagogical purposes (Benson, 2013).

Surprisingly, the popularity of the concept of motivation has barely penetrated into the field of L2 pragmatics despite the immense significance of pragmatic competence for L2 learners, and consequently research into L2 motivation in relation to L2 pragmatics learning is still a rare commodity (see Taguchi & Roever, 2017). It is even more surprising to note that research into the extent to which L2 learners are motivated to learn pragmatics of the target language is almost non-existent. This state of affairs has led to a knowledge gap, that is, almost nothing is known about whether or not L2 learners are indeed motivated to learn L2 pragmatics. To address such knowledge gap, drawing on the self-determination theory of human motivation the study reported on in this paper was specifically designed with the aim to investigate the level and nature of L2 learners’ motivation for L2 pragmatics learning operationalized as learning how to use L2 politely according to contexts.

Self-determination theory (SDT) is a social psychological theory of human motivation, personality, and wellness investigating what drives people to act and how their act is regulated (Ryan & Deci, 2017). SDT has been scientifically attested to be of practical value across multiple domains (Lamb, 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2019), including foreign language education (McEown & Oga-Baldwin, 2019). SDT consists of six different mini-theories, each describing a particular aspect of human motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Of particular relevance to the present study is the organismic integration theory (OIT), a theory which explicates why people carry out an activity that is inherently uninteresting and how ambient social practices can support or undermine autonomous or self-determined engagement. Within OIT, internalization is a prominent concept which

refers to the process of taking in external regulations (e.g., values, attitudes, emotions) and subsequently integrating them into one's sense of self so that they become one's own (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Internationalization is driven by people's desire to satisfy their three basic psychological needs, namely the needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2017). That is, internalization allows people to acquire new material (i.e., feeling efficacious), develop a sense of connectedness to others (e.g., feeling cared for by others), and enact a behavior on their own volition, independently of external controls.

According to SDT, motivation comes in three different categories, namely amotivation, extrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation. Amotivation is a motivational state in which "one either is not motivated to behave, or one behaves in a way that is not mediated by intentionality" triggered by one's failure to find value, rewards, or meaning in a behavior (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 190). Extrinsic motivation can be divided into four types: external, introjected, identified, and integrated. External motivation arises as a result of probable rewards or punishments. An externally motivated person is one who carries out an act in order to gain a certain reward or avoid a punishment; the person's act entirely depends on an external contingency. A student who learns English pragmatics because s/he wants to obtain a good grade on the English course is externally motivated. Introjected motivation is the type of motivation resulted from the feeling that "one 'should' or 'must' do something or face anxiety and self-disparagement" (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 185). If the student in our example above is motivated to learn English pragmatics because s/he feels embarrassed when her or his English sounds inappropriate according to contexts, then this student can be said to have an introjected motivation. Identified motivation is characterized by "a conscious endorsement of values and regulations" (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 187). People who have an identified motivation to do something can envision a personal value and significance of the act. A student who has an identified motivation to learn English pragmatics can clearly see such learning enterprise as of value for her or his English language skills. Integrated motivation represents the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation. With integrated motivation, "one brings a value or regulation into congruence with the other aspects of one's self" (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 188). A student having integrated motivation to learn English pragmatics finds that such learning act and other aspects of her or his self are blended into a harmonious whole. Finally, intrinsic motivation refers to the type of motivation people have when they engage in an activity which is inherently interesting, enjoyable, or fun (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Unlike extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation does not involve any contingency in the form of some desirable consequence. For example, a student who learns English pragmatics simply because s/he finds the learning activity interesting, enjoyable, or fun, while expecting nothing else from the effort s/he exerts on the activity, can be thought of as having intrinsic motivation.

Studies exclusively designed to examine L2 motivation in relation to L2 pragmatics learning are quite a few in number (Taguchi & Roever, 2017), as compared to those examining L2 motivation in relation to L2 learning in general (see Boo et al., 2015; Al-Hoorie et al., 2021; Mahmoodi & Yousefi, 2022). The former studies investigated the relationship between motivation and pragmatic awareness (Takahashi, 2005; Tagashira et al., 2011; Takahashi, 2012, 2015; Yang & Ren, 2019) and speech acts production (Tajeddin & Moghadam, 2012; Zhang & Papi, 2021). The findings revealed that pragmatic awareness was positively influenced by intrinsic motivation (Takahashi, 2005; Tagashira et al., 2011), communication-oriented motivation (Takahashi, 2012, 2015), intended learning efforts, attitudes toward the L2 learning community and attitudes toward learning English (Yang & Ren, 2019), and that speech acts production was significantly predicted by speech-act-specific motivation (Tajeddin & Moghadam, 2012) and learners' promotion focus (Zhang & Papi, 2021). While it is undisputable that research into L2 motivation conducted thus far has been successful in making a significant contribution to L2 pedagogy in general, and L2 pragmatics learning in particular, yet almost nothing is known about whether or not L2 learners are motivated to learn L2 pragmatics. With the exception of the study conducted by Tajeddin and Moghadam (2012), all of the above-mentioned studies examined learners' motivation to learn an L2 in general, instead of their motivation to learn L2 pragmatics per se, and probed its relationship with L2 pragmatics learning. Arguably, general L2 motivation and L2 pragmatics-specific motivation represent two different things. Accordingly, the issue of the nature of students' L2 pragmatics learning motivation has constituted an uncharted territory yet to be explored. The present study was specifically designed as an attempt to fill this lacuna and was guided by the following research question: *What is the level and nature of Indonesian EFL Learners motivation for L2 pragmatics learning?*

## **2. METHOD**

### **2.1 Research Design**

The research question above was explored using mixed-methods research, “a strategy of inquiry that allows the researcher to explore a research question from multiple angles potentially avoiding the limitations inherent in using one approach, quantitative or qualitative, independently” (Mackey & Bryfonski, 2018, p. 104). In particular, the sequential, explanatory design was used where the focus was on quantitative data and the qualitative data were collected to explain the quantitative data.

### **2.2 Participants**

A total of 76 EFL learners (76% females) recruited from three different intact classes agreed to participate in the present study. Their ages ranged from 19 to 21 years (Mean = 20 years, SD = .46 years). They were sophomores studying international business management in an undergraduate four-year applied degree program at a public polytechnic in Bali. The participants were not homogeneous in terms of their English proficiency level determined based upon their self-assessment: intermediate (60.6%), beginner (36.8%), and advanced (2.6%). Such subjective method of determining their English proficiency level was adopted since the majority of the participants (86%) stated that they had not taken any standardized English proficiency test. None of them reported using English on a daily basis outside the classroom. They stated that they had never visited any English speaking country. No financial reward was given to the participants in return for their participation in the study, yet extra 10 points were added to their final grade for the English course.

### **2.3 Instrument**

For the purpose of the present study, the research instrument was designed tailor made to measure the participants' level of motivation for learning L2 pragmatics per se drawing on self-determination theory of human motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). We decided to develop our own questionnaire simply by virtue of the fact that the very issue we addressed in the present study was unique; the issue of L2 pragmatics motivation as operationalized in our study has not been investigated by other researchers. The questionnaire consists of 28 items divided into four sub-scales (Intrinsic Motivation,  $k = 6$ ; Identified Motivation,  $k = 9$ ; Introjected Motivation,  $k = 7$ ; and External Motivation,  $k = 6$ ), in addition to some demographic questions, for example age, perceived level of English proficiency, etc. and an open-ended question asking the participants to indicate the reason why they were more motivated to learn L2 pragmatics or grammar. Integrated Motivation was not examined in the present study as it was deemed by the researchers to be irrelevant to the participants. Each individual item measuring the participants' level of L2 pragmatics motivation was written using a 6-point Likert-type scale: *Strongly Disagree*, *Disagree*, *Slightly Disagree*, *Slightly Agree*, *Agree*, and *Strongly Agree*. The decision to choose a 6-point scale, instead of the oft-used 5-point scale wherein the middle point is *Uncertain*, was to anticipate the tendency of those participants to opt for the middle point without first reading the statements (see Masuda et al., 2017). In doing so, it was hoped that the participants would read the statements carefully before deciding which point best met their perception. The questionnaire was rigorously developed strictly following the stages in Likert-type scale construction outlined in Phakiti (2021).

Each of the questionnaire items was loaded into Google Forms, which is a freely available online survey administration application. The questionnaire items were specially written to gauge the extent to which the participants were more motivated to

learn the L2 pragmatic as opposed to grammatical aspects (e.g., *Learning how to use English politely is more fun than learning how to use grammar accurately; Mastering the ability to use English politely will make it easier for me to get a job later than mastering the ability to use grammar accurately*). The wording of each item was carefully checked in order to ensure that it did not contain heavy jargon which certainly could threaten its comprehensibility. The questionnaire was written in Indonesian, which is the native language of the participants. The internal consistency coefficients for the four sub-scales out of which the entire questionnaire was constructed were as follows: Intrinsic Motivation (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .85$ ), Identified Motivation (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .91$ ), Introjected Motivation (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .84$ ), and External Motivation (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .83$ ). The questionnaire could, therefore, be viewed as having good internal consistency since the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  levels for the four sub-scales exceed the threshold level, .70 (see Dörnyei & Dewaele, 2023). Less technically speaking, it could be argued that the reliability of the questionnaire was considerably good. The questionnaire will be made available upon request.

## **2.4 Procedure**

The first author, who acted as the English instructor of the three intact classes from which the participants were recruited, administered the questionnaire in late June 2021 during an English class session conducted virtually on Google Meet. The link to the questionnaire was sent out to all of the students in the three classes via WhatsApp. The administration of the questionnaire followed an information session, also hosted during a virtual English class session, in which the participants were informed that they would take part in research which examined tertiary students' English language learning preferences. Yet the participants were not made aware of the ultimate purpose of the study, that is to delve into their level and nature of motivation for learning L2 pragmatics. They were also informed that their participation in the study was voluntary, in that they could choose at will whether or not they would partake in the study without any academic consequence. In fact, three students opted not to fill out the questionnaire. During the questionnaire administration the participants were encouraged to ask questions via WhatsApp about the clarity of the meaning of a statement, if they found it confusing or ambiguous. None of the participants raised any question, strongly indicating the absence of any ambiguity in the statements included in the questionnaire. In accordance with this, it could be inferred that the comprehensibility level of the statements in the questionnaire was sufficiently strong. Finally, no time limit was set within which the participants should complete the questionnaire, but responses were received within a time frame of 10-15 minutes.

## **2.5 Data Analysis**

To facilitate analysis, the data derived from the Likert-type scale responses, i.e., the responses to the 28 items measuring the quality of the participants' intrinsic, identified,

introjected, and external motivations, were coded using the following coding scheme: 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Slightly Disagree*, 4 = *Slightly Agree*, 5 = *Agree*, and 6 = *Strongly Agree*. The data were analyzed using one-sample *t*-test. All statistical analyses were done using a statistical software SPSS version 27.1. The qualitative data collected from the open-ended question asking the participants to disclose their reasons for being more motivated to learn pragmatics or grammar were thematically analyzed, and subsequently used to interpret the quantitative findings.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Results

The data set ( $N = 76$ ) was initially screened for normality of distribution and existence of outliers prior to its being subjected to descriptive and inferential statistical tests. It was found that there was no outlier in the data set as shown by the boxplot below (see Figure 1) and the data were normally distributed,  $K-S(76) = .05$ ,  $p > .05$ . Table 1 below shows the descriptive statistics of the students' L2 pragmatics learning motivation level, while Table 2 below shows the results of one-sample *t*-test for the entire data set and the data for the four types of motivation, as well as their effect sizes (Cohen's *d* indices). As can be seen from Table 2, all means were found to be statistically significant and that the effect sizes were large. It is to be noted that the figures shown in table 1 are aggregates of responses to all items in each scale and, as has been noted in the previous section, the four motivation scales are built out of different numbers of items (see previous section). As a consequence, the data displayed in Table 1 cannot elucidate posthaste the nature of the students' L2 pragmatics learning motivation level. For example, we cannot claim that the students' identified motivation is the highest, and their external motivation is the lowest, compared to other types of motivation. To meaningfully interpret the data, we need to go through two important steps: first, data normalization by dividing all figures in Table 1 above (excluding *N*) by their respective *k* (i.e., number of items) and second, data coding conversion from 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Slightly Disagree*, 4 = *Slightly Agree*, 5 = *Agree*, and 6 = *Strongly Agree* (see Data Analysis section above) into 1 = *Extremely Low*, 2 = *Low*, 3 = *Quite Low*, 4 = *Quite High*, 5 = *High*, and 6 = *Extremely High*, respectively.

Table 3 below shows the results of the data normalization process. It immediately shows that in general the students' motivation to learn L2 pragmatics can be considered insufficiently high, Total Motivation, Mean = 4.51, Median = 4.54, Mode = 4.07. The small magnitude of the standard deviation (Total Motivation, SD = .62) indicates a relatively high uniformity in terms of the students' perception of the value of learning L2 pragmatics: all students participating in the present study uniformly exhibit insufficiently high motivation to learn L2 pragmatics. The very small magnitude of the standard error

of the mean (Total Motivation, SE = .07) provides a strong indication that the sample of the present study was highly representative of the population from which it was drawn, i.e., Indonesian native speakers learning English as a foreign language in Indonesia. Standard error of the mean is a measure indicating to what extent consistent findings can be found across different sets of samples from the same population, where the value of 0 indicates perfect consistency (Urdu, 2022). This can be taken to mean that the findings of the present study represent those of the whole population.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics

	Intrinsic Mot.	Identified Mot.	Introjected Mot.	External Mot	Total Mot.
N	76	76	76	76	76
Mean	28.79	38.93	31.86	26.61	126.18
Std. error of the mean	.47	.80	.57	.47	1.99
Median	29.50	39.50	32	27	127
Mode	30	45	35	29	114
Std. deviation	4.08	6.97	4.93	4.12	17.33
Minimum	15	22	20	17	87
Maximum	36	54	42	36	168

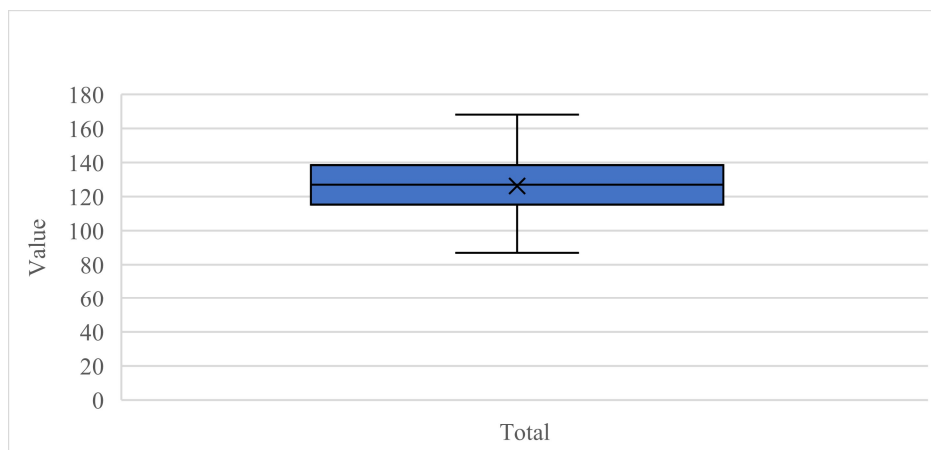
**Table 2.** Results of Inferential Statistics

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	95% Confidence Interval		Cohen's <i>d</i>
					Lower	Upper	
Intrinsic Mot.	61.46	75	.00	28.79	27.86	29.72	4.08
Identified Mot.	48.73	75	.00	38.93	37.34	40.53	6.97
Introjected Mot.	56.38	75	.00	31.86	30.73	32.98	4.93
External Mot.	56.32	75	.00	26.61	25.66	27.55	4.12
Total Mot.	63.49	75	.00	126.18	122.23	130.14	17.33

**Table 3.** Normalized data

	Intrinsic Mot.	Identified Mot.	Introjected Mot.	External Mot.	Total Mot.
N	76	76	76	76	76
Mean	4.80	4.33	4.55	4.44	4.51
Std. error of the mean	.08	.09	.08	.08	.07
Median	4.92	4.39	4.57	4.50	4.54
Mode	5	5	5	4.83	4.07
Std. deviation	.68	.77	.70	.69	.62
Minimum	2.5	2.44	2.80	2.83	3.11
Maximum	6	6	6	6	6





**Figure 1.** Boxplot

Table 3 above also reveals that the students were slightly more motivated to learn L2 pragmatics out of enjoyment or pleasure (i.e., intrinsically motivated), (Intrinsic Motivation, Mean = 4.80, Median = 4.92). By contrast, they perceived the value and significance of learning L2 pragmatics as the least motivators (Identified Motivation, Mean = 4.33, Median = 4.39). The students' introjected motivation was slightly higher than their external one, indicating that they were motivated to learn L2 pragmatics more for ego-related motives (e.g., they wanted to sound more competent in using English) than for instrumental purposes (e.g., they wanted to land a desired job). Interestingly, there was greater variability among the students when it comes to their identified motivational orientation, compared to other motivational orientations, as indicated by the magnitude of the standard deviation (Identified Motivation, SD = .77), while the degree of homogeneity of responses for the other three motivational orientations was virtually identical (Intrinsic Motivation, SD = .68; Introjected Motivation, SD = .70; External Motivation, SD = .69). This strongly suggests that when it comes to perceiving the value and significance of learning pragmatics as the driving force for their L2 pragmatics learning the students were less uniform; they did not seem to unanimously agree that they were motivated to learn L2 pragmatics because of the value and significance of such learning, in comparison with their perception of other motives (e.g., enjoyment, self-esteem, future career). The fact that the standard errors of the mean are virtually the same for the four types of motivational orientations strongly indicates consistency in findings across different samples of the same population from which the current sample of participants was selected. This is tantamount to saying, then, that the findings of the present study are transferable to the contexts similar to the one in the present study, which in turn strongly suggests, as has been noted above, that the generalizability of the findings of the present study can be considered to be adequate.

To recapitulate, the three most prominent findings of the present study are (i) that the students' of motivation for learning L2 pragmatics was not sufficiently high, (ii) that

the magnitude of their intrinsic motivation was the largest and (iii) that their external motivation was unexpectedly low. These three findings will be discussed in the light of current theorization and studies in SLA and general education in the following section.

### **3.2 Discussion**

The ultimate aim of the present study was to examine the level of Indonesian EFL students' motivation for learning L2 pragmatics operationally defined as learning how to use L2 appropriately (i.e., politely) according to the contexts deploying self-determination theory as the analytical framework. Overall, we found that the students were not sufficiently motivated to learn L2 pragmatics. Although the level of the students' motivation for learning L2 pragmatics cannot be said to be very low, lying between the categories of 'quite high' and 'high', yet taking into consideration how remarkably motivation holds sway in the success of L2 learning, such level of motivation could arguably be considered insufficient to trigger success in L2 pragmatics learning. This finding is significant for L2 pragmatics instruction and materials development as it provides invaluable information about the extent to which L2 students are motivated to learn L2 pragmatics. It could be argued that knowing L2 students' level of motivation for L2 pragmatics learning is vital for pedagogical decision making in L2 pragmatics instruction program. That is, equipped with knowledge of students' level of motivation teachers would be in a better position to deliver an effective and efficient L2 pragmatics instruction program than they are without such knowledge.

The finding that the students' level of motivation to learn L2 pragmatics was relatively low lends empirical support to the claim put forth by Loewen (2020, p. 166): "The acquisition of pragmatics probably figures only minimally in many learners' minds when they contemplate L2 learning." However, unfortunately, it is not congruent with the general consensus among SLA researchers that pragmatics learning is of paramount importance for L2 learners, as indicated by the rich array of empirical studies investigating L2 pragmatics learning, instruction, assessment, and cognitive processes (see Ren, 2022).

One possible explanation why the students in the present study were not highly motivated to learn L2 pragmatics is concerned with their belief of L2 pragmatics learning and how L2 pragmatics acquisition takes place. They seem to hold a belief that L2 pragmatics learning is not an endeavor worth pursuing since it will no doubt ensue once they have achieved a good mastery of the grammar, as one student clearly stated: "*In my opinion, if our grammar is correct, then our pronunciation must be good and correct, and of course we can make polite sentences or words.*" In quite the same vein, another student convergently mentioned that "*if we already have good and correct grammar skills, then we can automatically distinguish which sentences are polite and which are not.*" Indeed,

such perception utterly contradicts the finding of the study conducted by Sanjaya and Sitawati (2017) showing that L2 grammatical accuracy was not a significant predictor of L2 request strategy use. Another student claimed that being communicatively competent in an L2 is fundamentally equal to having a good mastery of the grammar, irrespective of whether the utterances produced are socially appropriate:

*“If students have good grammar, they will be more communicative in speaking English in everyday life. Without using grammar, sentences or paragraphs that are formed tend to have irregular patterns and ambiguous meanings. Therefore, it is important to have good and correct grammar.”*

Quite similar comments were made by two different students:

*“Students must have English skills with good and correct grammar because if they already know about the grammar, then when they speak, they will be more flexible, can choose polite language, if they can only speak polite English and their grammar is not understood, it is possible that when speaking they will have difficulty and are not able to organize their language well.”*

*“In my opinion, this is important because students are required to speak properly and correctly according to the rules. Good and correct English will reflect whether the person is educated or very proficient in English. Having good and grammatically correct English skills can make that person have several job opportunities such as an expert translator or maybe later become a teacher or open private English lessons.”*

It is to be borne in mind that the adverb *properly* in the second comment above was not meant to be used by the student in connection with social norms, but rather according to grammatical rules. It is interesting to note that having grammatically good and correct English is strongly associated with identity, that is “*whether the person is educated,*” implying that to be considered educated the only thing that an L2 speaker needs is a good command of L2 grammar, to the exclusion of other competencies including pragmatic competence, a perception which is incontrovertibly perversely counterintuitive and, more importantly, does not sit well with the current framework of communicative competence (e.g., Taguchi, 2023). Moreover, a good mastery of L2 grammar was also conceived of by the students solely as part of the pathway to future career success.

Another possible explanation why the students did not put much value on L2 pragmatics learning has to do with the idea that comprehensibility and intelligibility stems, not from socially appropriate L2 usage, but from correct grammar usage, as the comment from a student below clearly indicates:

*“In communicating we need to pay attention to grammar so that what is conveyed can be understood by others. As a student, you certainly need to learn good grammar to help you communicate in everyday life or life on campus.”*

It is also evident that grammatical competence (along with pronunciation skills), but not pragmatic competence, figured in the students’ mind as a significant factor influencing their self-esteem vis-à-vis L2 usage in real communicative events, as the following comment vividly shows: *“Because students will hesitate when speaking English or will feel afraid if their pronunciation or grammar is wrong.”* All in all, this boils down to the notion that it is L2 grammatical learning which unequivocally serves as the most essential ingredient in L2 learning, as one student explicitly stated: *“Because mastering grammar is the key to communication in English.”* This accounts for why L2 pragmatics learning “figures only minimally in many learners’ minds when they contemplate L2 learning” (Loewen, 2020, p. 166). The students’ conception of the significance of L2 pragmatic competence for comprehensibility and intelligibility mentioned above is obviously diametrically opposed to that of L2 pragmatics researchers. As in the words of Zhang and Papi (2021, p. 1): *“Lack of L2 pragmatic knowledge and the ability to use the language properly [according to social contexts] can affect the efficiency and quality of the communication, and cause misunderstandings.”*

The question which arises now is why L2 pragmatics learning did not attract sufficient attention from the students in the present study, or in other words, what triggered such a relatively low level of motivation for L2 pragmatics learning. We submit that it has something to do with their previous formal L2 learning experiences which have firmly ingrained in the students’ mind the notion that effective and efficient communication predominantly involves grammar knowledge per se. The pedagogical practice adopted in secondary schools in Indonesia has been the washback effect of the nature of English language exam, both at school and national levels. Sanjaya et al. (2022, p. 163) rightly argued that:

*In Indonesia, like in other foreign language learning contexts where the target language is not used as a means of communication on a daily basis at large, the teaching of English puts greater emphasis on the formal (e.g., grammar), instead of the functional (i.e., pragmatics), aspects of English (Zein et al., 2020), which is quite understandable given the main purpose of the English pedagogy; students are not expected to be able to use English in real communicative events outside of class ... but rather to prepare them to excel on the English national exam.*

Surprisingly, notwithstanding the induction of the so-called communicative and task-based language teaching approaches into the English education system in Indonesia since the mid-1990s, the absolute precedence given to the formal aspects over the functional ones unfortunately still prevails in secondary schools in Indonesia up to the present time (Sukyadi, 2015).

Another significant finding of the present study was that the students' intrinsic motivation was noticeably higher than other types of motivation, meaning that they were motivated to learn L2 pragmatics for its inherent pleasure, excitement, interest, or fun to a greater extent than for personal value, ego engrossment and external enticements. It is to be noted that the mean value of 4.80 for Intrinsic Motivation is slightly lower than 5.00 ("High") indicating that their intrinsic motivation for learning L2 pragmatics could not reasonably be considered to be sufficiently high. Yet compared with other types of motivation, students' intrinsic motivation can be deemed as comparatively high, which is indubitably good news. Ma et al. (2018) discovered that intrinsic motivation had a positive direct effect, and a positive indirect effect via the mediation role of self-efficacy, on EFL proficiency. Bailey et al. (2021) found that students' intrinsic motivation for writing practice had a positive direct effect on their online language course satisfaction which in turn served as a mediator for the indirect effect of their intrinsic motivation on their behavioral intention to use language learning technology. Chen and Kraklow (2015) reported that students' intrinsic motivation had a predictive power on their English learning engagement. The meta-analytic study conducted by Howard et al. (2021) documented that students' intrinsic motivation was positively related to their academic success and well-being. All this points to the critical role intrinsic motivation might play in L2 pragmatics learning. With that being said, further studies certainly need to be carried out to examine the extent to which this claim is legitimate.

The finding of the present study that the students' external motivation is rather low (External Motivation, Mean = 4.44) is quite surprising. External motivation pertains to "behaviors driven by externally imposed rewards and punishments," such as career opportunities, school grades (Ryan & Deci, 2020). In Indonesia, the majority, perhaps all, of students learn an L2 (e.g., English) because they want to pass the exam or land a desired job in which the L2 competence is highly valued, and this should have triggered a high level of external motivation. The possible explanation of this seemingly unexpected finding is, again, concerned with the nature of the language exam the students take which is typically extremely biased toward assessing formal features of the L2 (grammar, vocabulary) (Sukyadi, 2015; Zein et al., 2020). Only very seldom does the language exam contain items which specifically tap into the students' L2 pragmatic competence. Bui and Nguyen (2022) found that the characteristics of language assessment significantly affected students' EFL motivation. To what extent employers give due attention to the pragmatic aspect of the English language spoken by a job applicant during an interview in Indonesia is currently unknown. Nevertheless, we surmise that employers are more easily impressed with the pronunciation, accuracy and fluency of the English language used by an applicant than they are with the social appropriateness of the utterances spoken. Indeed, pragmatic knowledge of the applicant might go unnoticed during the job interview. If this holds true, there is no reason why students should put a lot of effort into learning L2 pragmatics. These two factors (i.e., characteristics of language assessment at

school and what aspects attended to by employers during a job interview) might justify why the students in the present study did not display a sufficiently high level of external motivation for learning L2 pragmatics. Further research should address this issue.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this study we have discovered that the students' motivation to learn L2 pragmatics was insufficiently high. We argued that such relatively low level of motivation was an unfortunate byproduct of the students' previous formal L2 learning experiences which placed much greater emphasis on the formal features of the target language than on the social ones. The findings seem to have the following critically important pedagogical implication: L2 teachers need to implement principled instructional interventions in an attempt to change the students' attitude toward learning how to use the target language appropriately according to the context. This involves shaking the students' deeply ingrained misleading belief about learning an L2 (i.e., learning an L2 is primarily a matter of learning its grammar). An example of pedagogical intervention would be the teachers constantly showing how using an L2 inappropriately can bring about a detrimental social effect regardless of the accuracy level of the utterance produced. As far as materials development is concerned, learners' motivation can be influenced by making adjustments to the tasks they are assigned, as it is a variable state which fluctuates in response to the features of task design and implementation (Lambert, 2017).

Admittedly, the findings of the present study should be treated with caution in light of two major limitations. To begin with, the data for the present study were gathered merely using self-report method of inquiry through questionnaire comprising Likert-type scale items and only one open-ended question. Such method of inquiry is notoriously susceptible to "the potential frame of social desirability and self-report biases" (Liu & Oga-Baldwin, 2022, p. 14). Therefore, future studies should not rely exclusively on data generated from self-report method, but rather should also employ a qualitative method, for example an observation during a class session targeting L2 pragmatics, to gather supplementary data so as to arrive at a more fine-grained, robust analysis of the students' L2 pragmatics learning motivation. Another limitation of the present study deals with the sample size, which was very small ( $N = 76$ ) for a study which employed a questionnaire as the main research instrument to collect the data. Moreover, the EFL students participating in the study came from the same semester cohort and academic institution. Future studies should have a much larger sample size involving EFL students coming from different semester cohorts and diverse academic institutions to further improve the representativeness of the sample.

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