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Title

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Indonesian Masters Degrees Students' Difficulties
in Pragmatic Understanding Based on Fields of Study and Gender

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1 Abstract

The present study aimed at determining the difference of pragmatic understanding among the masters degree students in Indonesia based on the fields of study and gender and exploring the causes of difficulties in Listening Part A TOEFL-like. The data were collected

with TOEFL-like Listening Test, retrospective questionnaire and analyzed quantitatively. It shows: (1) There is a significant difference of understanding the pragmatic meaning among the masters degree students in Listening Part A TOEFL-like based on the fields of study and gender; (2) There are five primary causes of pragmatic difficulty based on gender, namely, Speech Rate Delivery, Voice, Sentence Complexity, Mishearing, Colloquials and Sound Clarity.

Keywords: *Competence, pragmatic, TOEFL-like, gender, teaching materials*

Introduction

One the aspects studied in Psycholinguistics is understanding pragmatic meaning. Biologically, understanding auditory pragmatic meaning is affected by gender (Barati and Biria, 2011; Cocco and Ervas, 2012). To avoid pragmatic failure, the hearer should have sufficient inferential ability. Evidently, almost all utterances produced in daily communications imply pragmatic meanings. Low pragmatic competence which leads to pragmatic failure affects English language (Sirikhan and Prapphal, 2011). In line with it, Arifuddin and Susanto (2012) state that inferring pragmatic meaning are difficult for the Indonesian learners of English which leads to pragmatic failure and low proficiency.

There have been a number of studies focusing on the relationship between English language proficiency and pragmatic failure (Sujana, et al., 2003; Arifuddin and sujana, 2004; Saukah, 2010; ETS, 1997; ETS, 2012; ETS Researcher, 2008) and gender and pragmatic meaning of auditory utterances (Barati and Biria, 2011; Cocco and Ervas, 2012; Arifuddin, 2013). However, none of those studies focused on gender and pragmatic understanding of the postgraduate students from diverse disciplines in masters degree programs. This makes the present study *authentic*. This authentic study is urgent to study. In line with it, Thijittang and Le (2009) suggest that more research on pragmatics, including the role of gender in pragmatics, need to be conducted. In relation to Indonesian context, “Why is it urgent?” Based on the local TOEFL Score reports, the TOEFL mean scores of some postgraduate (Masters and doctors degrees) students of Indonesian universities, namely, BU of Malang, STAINP and UPGB, according to gender are low. How about the TOEFL scores of the diverse masters degree students in West Nusa Tenggara?

Accordingly, the present study aims at exploring: (1) the difference of pragmatic understanding tested in Listening section Part A TOEFL-like between male and female

students of the diverse masters degrees; and (2) the causes of difficulty in understanding pragmatic meaning tested in Listening section Part A TOEFL-like between male and female students of the diverse masters degrees. As a result, the research findings of the present study are beneficial for: 1) Language Centers as a reference for the design of TOEFL training materials and training strategies which contributes to the improvement of pragmatic competence and English language proficiency and 2) The management of Self-Access Center.

Literature Review

TOEFL-like is synonymous with published TOEFL practice tests. In the Listening section of this proficiency test assesses the test-takers' pragmatic competence (or understanding). To avoid pragmatic failure, the hearer should have sufficient inferential ability. Evidently, almost all utterances produced in daily communications imply pragmatic meanings. Low pragmatic competence which leads to pragmatic failure affects English language proficiency (Thijittang and Le, 2009; Lee, 2010; Sirikhan and Prapphal, 2011). In line with it, Arifuddin and Susanto (2012) state that inferring pragmatic meaning are difficult for the Indonesian learners of English which leads to pragmatic failure and low proficiency.

Currently, even the learners of English language show low English proficiency (Sujana, et al., 2003; Saukah, 2010). In the broader context, Saukah (2000) reports that the TOEFL mean score of the Indonesian lecturers of English is only 390.50, and Listening section is the most difficult. This finding is consistent with the one reported by ETS (1997) showing that the mean scores of Listening section, Structure and Written Expression and Reading Comprehension are 63.7, 69.7 and 69 respectively. A study conducted by Arifuddin and Sujana (2004) and Sujana, et.al. (2003) indicate that pragmatics in short conversations contributes to students' English proficiency.

Based on some score data summaries (ETS, 2012; ETS Researcher, 2008), TOEFL scores are inseparable from gender. The mean scores and standard deviation of each section categorised according to gender are always different. This finding implies that ETS realizes that gender potentially affects TOEFL scores.

Some studies show that gender affects the understanding of the pragmatic meaning of auditory utterances (Barati and Biria, 2011; Cocco and Ervas, 2012). In addition, Arifuddin's (2013) doctoral dissertation which examined the relationship between gender and implicature understanding of the short conversations in TOEFL listening involving a few English language

students from different semesters confirms that finding. ³ Thijittang and Le (2009) suggest that more research on pragmatics, including the role of gender in pragmatics, need to be conducted.

Methodology

The present study employed 'Mixed-methods'. ¹⁰ Data were collected with TOEFL-like Listening test Part A, retrospective questionnaire and semi-standard interview guide and then analysed quantitatively with Two-way Anova and qualitatively.

Participants

The present study employed total sampling drawn from 85 students of the four masters degree programs, namely, English language Education, Educational Administration, Public Management, and Science Education of the postgraduate program of the University of Mataram Indonesia who had just attended the TOEFL training in the 'matriculation' (or orientation) provided for program the freshmen.

Instruments

¹ Data were collected with: a) TOEFL-like Listening test, adapted from TOEFL Practice Tests, which assesses pragmatic understanding; b) retrospective questionnaire and c) semi-standard interview guide. The test was employed to determine the students' pragmatic understanding tested in Part A TOEFL-like based on gender. Meanwhile, the retrospective questionnaire and interview were used to collect data about the causes of difficulty in pragmatic understanding. All the instruments were tried-out empirically and validated by the experts (or expert judgment).

Procedure

The present study was conducted as follows: 1) The researchers conducted a survey in order to identify and select the departments and participants appropriate with objectives of the present study. Of the seven masters degree programs of the University of Mataram, only four departments which introduced TOEFL during the 'matriculation' or orientation program for the freshmen; 2) Selection of the participants; 3) Preparing and trying-out the research instruments; 4) Testing the pragmatic competence of the students from the four departments with Listening Part A TOEFL-like; 5) To guarantee the validity and reliability of the data, the researchers immediately distributed the questionnaire to the participants and then interviewed them; 6) Data were collected through the listening test.

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Data Analysis

Data were analyzed with Two-way Anova, while those gathered with questionnaire and interview were analyzed with 'iterative qualitative Analysis of Yin (2011). The results of the analyses were displayed, described, analyzed (or interpreted) and discussed.

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Findings and discussion

This section presents the research results organised according to the order of the research questions. For practicality, the data are displayed with tables and graphs. The data are used as the bases for the analysis. The findings are discussed in the subchapters of this section by relating them to relevant theories or findings of the previous studies.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asks whether there is any significant difference of pragmatic understanding tested in Listening Section Part A TOEFL-like between male and female masters degree students from various departments.

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Below are the hypotheses tested to answer the first research question:

1. "There is no significant difference of pragmatic understanding tested in Listening Part A TOEFL-like of diverse masters degree programs."
2. "There is no significant difference of pragmatic understanding tested in Listening Part A TOEFL-like between male and female students the masters degree programs."
3. "There is no interaction between the masters degree programs of study and gender in affecting pragmatic understanding tested in Listening Part A TOEFL-like."

Table 1 *Scores of Pragmatic Understanding tested in Listening Part A TOEFL-like of Masters Degree Students*

No.	Male	Raw Scores	Female	Scores
Masters Degree in English Language Education				
1	SA	15	NS	21
2	ANW	13	N	26
3	HM	9	NI	4
4	Sah	18	IS	5
5	MUK	18	LN	18
6	SAL	11		

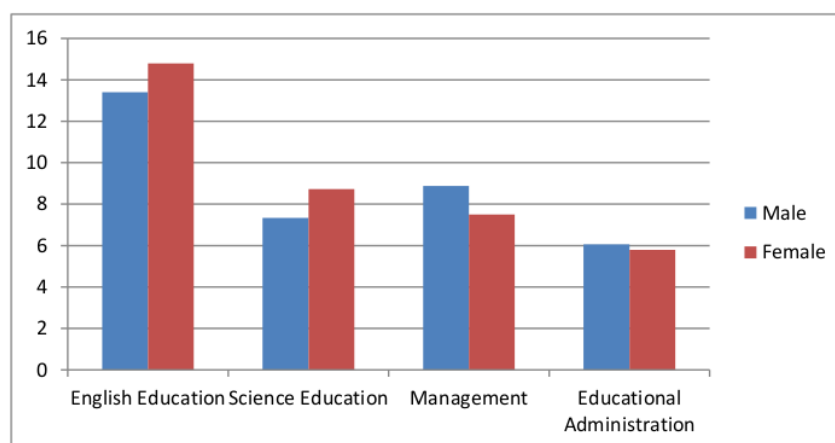
7	UB	10		
	Mean	13.42	14.8	
Masters Degree in Science Education				
	Male		Female	
1	MHB	5	XX	10
2	LWA	8	HID	5
3	MH	7	XY	8
4	AH	3	HK	9
5	AG	8	YY	6
6	LLH	10	AF	16
7	FA	8	BQA	4
8	TW	12	BB	1
9	EK	5	BC	6
10	HER	6	SY	6
11	ZR	7	FES	18
12	LK	9	SS	20
13			RA	7
14			IM	11
15			HAS	6
16			FS	7
17			AAT	5
18			CS	9
19			YX	10
	Mean	7.33	8.7	
Masters Degree in Manegement				
	Male		Female	
1	MA	26	EY	7
2	YE	26	NP	7
3	MAF	6	MUL	8
4	MNR	13	NMD	11
5	IN	2	HS	13

6	ZMT	7	AL	7
7	HN	6	NA	3
8	SF	2	RA	4
9				
	Mean	8.88		7.5
Masters Degree in Educational Administration				
	Male		Female	
1	SY	6	SF	5
2	SAP	3	TS	3
3	DP	7	SR	3
4	SAH	6	SK	5
5	HAF	7	AY	5
6	SUP	5	TL	7
7	SYAF	4	VM	9
8	LAY	5	BSY	8
9	MF	10	EZ	7
10	UA	3		
11	ZUL	7		
12	AM	7		
13	MS	5		
14	MUL	4		
15	DR	9		
16	MUN	9		
	Mean	6.06	Mean	5.8

Table 2 *Summary of Means of Raw Scores of Pragmatic Understanding Tested in Listening Part A TOEFL-like of Masters Degree Students*

No.	Study Program/Department	Total Means of Raw Scores		Ranks
		Male	Female	
1	English Language Education	13.4	14.8	14.42 I
2	Science Education	7.33	8.73	8.193 II
3	Management	8.88	7.5	8.19 III
4	Educational Administration	6.06	5.8	5.96 IV

Graph 1 *Scores of Pragmatic Understanding Tested in Listening Part A TOEFL-like of Masters Degree Students*



Using the standard of converted scores, the converted scores and rankings of pragmatic understanding tested in Listening Comprehension Part A TOEFL-like are as follows.

Table 3 *Converted Scores and Ranks of Pragmatic Understanding Tested in Listening Part A TOEFL-like*

No.	Study Program/Department	Converted Scores of Each Study Program Based on Gender	Ranks
1	English Language Education (Female)	390	I
2	English Language Education (Male)	370	II
3	Management (Male)	350	III
4	Science Education (Female)	350	III
6	Science Education (Male)	337	IV
7	Educational Administration (Male)	332	V
5	Management (Female)	330	VI
8	Educational Administration (Female)	330	VI

The range of scores of pragmatic understanding tested in Listening Part A TOEFL-like is 330 to 390. English Language Education (Female) (390) is in the highest rank followed also by the English Language Education (Male) (370). Management (Male) and Science Education (Female) position the third rank (350). Meanwhile, Science Education (Male) and Educational Administration (Male) place the fourth (337) and the fifth (332) respectively. Finally, Management (Female) and Educational Administration (Female) place the lowest rank (330). Below is the summary of 'Two-way' ANOVA.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
A	809.75	3	269.9	28.96
B	367.62	1	367.62	39.4
AB	75.03	3	4,485.2	481.2
Residual	671	72	9.32	

Study Program/Department Variable (A):

1. $df = (p-1)/pq(n-1) = (4-1)/8(9) = 3/72$.
2. Critical Value F at level of significance $0.05 = 2.76$.
3. $F_{obtained} = 28.96$ and $F_{table} = 2.76$. Thus, there is a significant difference.
4. Conclusion: There is a significant difference of pragmatic understanding tested in Listening Part A TOEFL-like among the diverse departments of the masters degree program.

Gender Variable (B):

1. $df = (q-1)/pq(n-1) = 1/8 (10-1) = 1/79$.
2. Critical Value F at level of significance $0.05 = 4.00$. Thus, there is a significant difference.
3. Conclusion: There is a significant difference of pragmatic understanding tested in Listening Part A TOEFL-like between male and female students of diverse masters degree programs.

AB (Interaction):

1. $df = (p-1)(q-1)/pq(n-1) = (4-1)(2-1)/8 (10-1) = 3/72$.
2. Critical value F at level of significance $0.05 = 2.76$.
 $F_{obtained} = 28.96$ and $F_{table} = 2.76$. Thus, there is a significant difference.
3. Conclusion: There is an interaction between the programs of study and gender in affecting pragmatic understanding tested in Listening Part A TOEFL-like.

Based on the Analysis of Variance, it indicates that:

1. There is a significant difference of pragmatic understanding tested in Listening Part A TOEFL-like of diverse masters degree programs.
2. There is a significant difference of pragmatic understanding tested in Listening Part A TOEFL-like between male and female students the masters degree programs.
3. There is an interaction between the masters degree programs of study and gender in affecting pragmatic understanding tested in Listening Part A TOEFL-like.

Females' superiority in understanding pragmatic meaning appeared in the converted scores of Listening Part A TOEFL-like that they attained. The range of the scores of pragmatic understanding in Listening Part A TOEFL-like of the students from the various departments is 330 to 390. As described earlier, English Language Education (Female) (390) is in the highest rank followed also by the English Language Education (Male) (370). Management (Male) and Science Education (Female) position the third rank (350). Meanwhile, Science Education (Male) and Educational Administration (Male) place the fourth (337) and the fifth (332)

respectively. Finally, Management (Female) and Educational Administration (Female) place the lowest rank (330). Based on the obtained converted scores, it indicates that there is a different level of pragmatic understanding among the diverse masters degree students. Besides, based on the ranks, females outperformed males in understanding pragmatic meanings in Listening Part A TOEFL-like. The research findings just mentioned are relevant with studies conducted by Yate (2010), Cocco and Ervas (2012), John *et al.* (2003), Farashayian and Hua (2012) and Arifuddin (2013) which indicate that females outperformed males in pragmatic understanding, in answering inferential comprehension questions of auditory proficiency tests in particular.

Above all, the masters degree students of English Language Education found it difficult to understand pragmatic meanings.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 deals with the causes of difficulty of the pragmatic understanding based on gender.

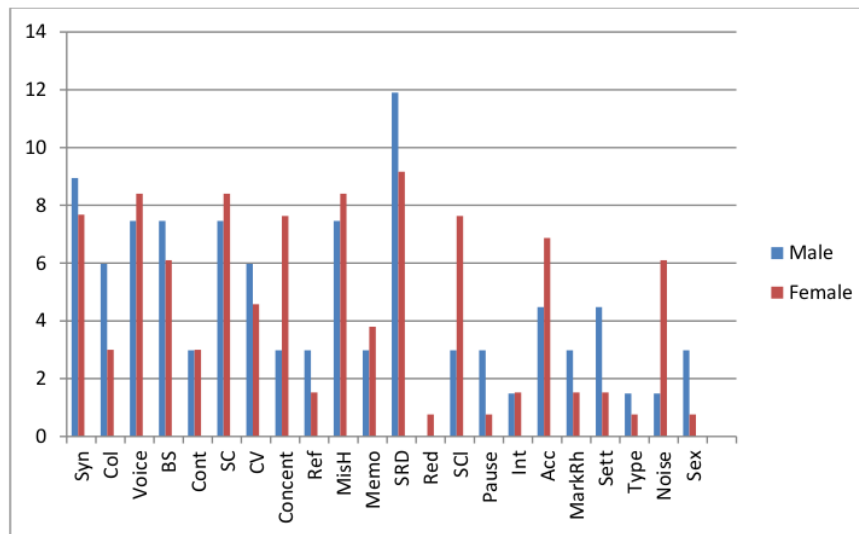
The following tables and graphs display the causes of difficulty of pragmatic understanding based on gender.

Table 4 *Causes of Difficulty of Pragmatic Understanding of the Masters Degree Students of Science Education*

	Male		Female	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Synonym (Syn)	6	8.95	10	7.68
Colloquial (Col)	4	5.97	4	3
Voice	5	7.46	11	8.4
Blended Sounds (BS)	5	7.46	8	6.1
Context (Cont)	2	2.98	4	3
Sentence Complexity (SC)	5	7.46	11	8.4
Cultural Value (CV)	4	5.97	6	4.58
Concentration (Concent)	2	2.98	10	7.63
Referent (Ref)	2	2.98	2	1.52
Mishearing (MisH)	5	7.46	11	8.4

Memory (Memo)	2	2.98	5	3.8
Speech Rate Delivery (SRD)	8	11.9	12	9.16
Redundancy (Red)	0	0	1	0.76
Sound Clarity (SCI)	2	2.98	10	7.63
Pause	2	2.98	1	0.76
Intonation (Int)	1	1.49	2	1.52
Accent (Acc)	3	4.48	9	6.87
Rhetoric Markers (MarkRh)	2	2.98	2	1.52
Setting (Sett)	3	4.48	2	1.52
Type of pragmatic question (Type)	1	1.49	1	0.76
Noise	1	1.49	8	6.1
Sex	2	2.98	1	0.76
Total frequencies	67		131	
Number of students	9		19	

Graph 2 *Causes of Difficulty of Pragmatic Understanding of the Masters Degree Students of Science Education*



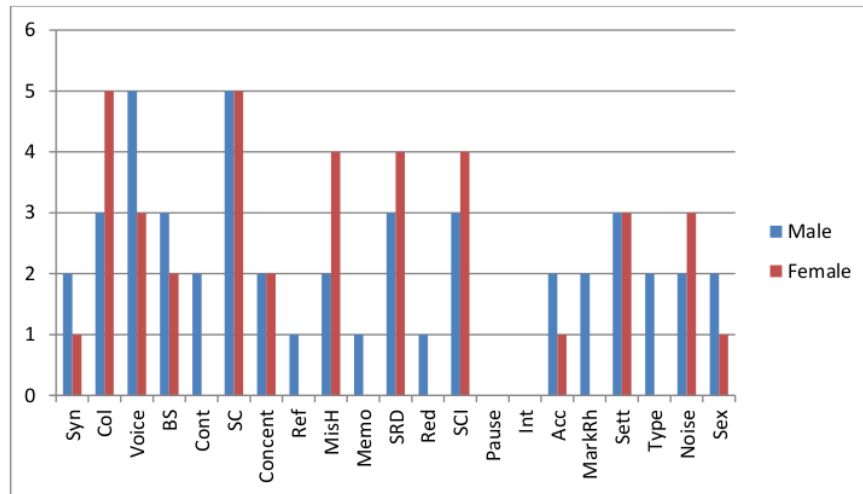
To the masters degree students of Educational Science, the primary causes of difficulty in understanding auditory pragmatic meanins are ‘Speech Rate Delivery’ (SRD), ‘Synonyms’ (Syn), ‘Voice’, ‘Sentence Complexity’ (SC), ‘Mishearing’ (MisH), ‘Sound Clarity’ (SCl), and ‘Noise’. The least cause (or factor) is ‘Redundancy’ (Red), even faced by female students only.

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Table 5 *Causes of Difficulty of Pragmatic Understanding of the Masters Degree Students of English Language Education*

	Male		Female	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Syn	2	3.85	1	2.5
Col	3	5.77	5	12.5
Voice	5	9.6	3	7.5
BS	3	5.77	2	5
Cont	2	3.85	0	0
SC	5	9.6	5	12.5
CV	6	11.5	2	5
Concent	2	3.85	2	5
Ref	1	1.92	0	0
MisH	2	3.85	4	10
Memo	1	1.92	0	0
SRD	3	5.77	4	10
Red	1	1.92	0	0
SCl	3	5.77	4	10
Pause	0	0	0	0
Int	0	0	0	0
Acc	2	3.85	1	2.5
MarkRh	2	3.85	0	0
Sett	3	5.77	3	7.5
Type	2	3.85	0	0
Noise	2	3.85	3	7.5

Sex	2	3.85	1	2.5
Total frequencies	52		40	
Number of Students	7		5	

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Graph 3 Causes of Difficulty of Pragmatic Understanding of the Masters Degree Students of English Language Education

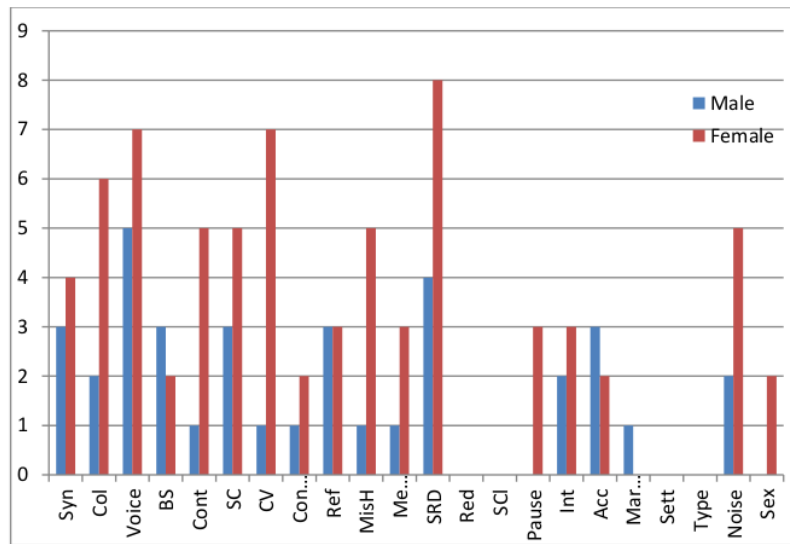


To masters degree students of English Language Education, the primary causes of difficulty in pragmatic understanding include 'Sentence Complexity', 'Voice', 'Colloquial', 'Mishearing', 'Speech Rate Delivery', 'Sound Clarity', 'Setting' (Sett), and 'Noise'. Two causes of difficulty do not appear, namely, 'Pause' and 'Intonation'. Besides, 'Context' (Cont), 'Reference', 'Memory' (Memo), 'Redundancy', 'Discourse Markers' and 'Type of Questions' (Type) were only faced by male students.

Table 6 *Causes of Difficulty of Pragmatic Understanding of the Masters Degree Students of Educational Administration*

	Male		Female	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Syn	3	7.317	4	4.76
Col	2	4.88	6	7,1
Voice	5	12.195	7	8.3
BS	3	3.317	2	2.38
Cont	1	2.44	5	5.952
SC	3	3.317	5	5.952
CV	1	2.44	7	8.3
Concent	1	2.44	2	2.38
Ref	3	7.317	3	3.57
MisH	1	2.44	5	5.952
Memo	1	2.44	3	3.57
SRD	4	9.756	8	9.52
Red	0	0	0	0
SCl	0	0	0	0
Pause	0	0	3	3.57
Int	2	4.88	3	3.57
Acc	3	3.317	2	2.38
MarkRh	1	2.44	0	0
Sett	0	0	0	0
Type	0	0	0	0
Noise	2	4.88	5	5.952
Sex	0	0	2	2.38
Total frequencies	41		84	
Number of Students	16		9	

Graph 4 *Causes of Difficulty of Pragmatic Understanding of the Masters Degree Students of Educational Administration*



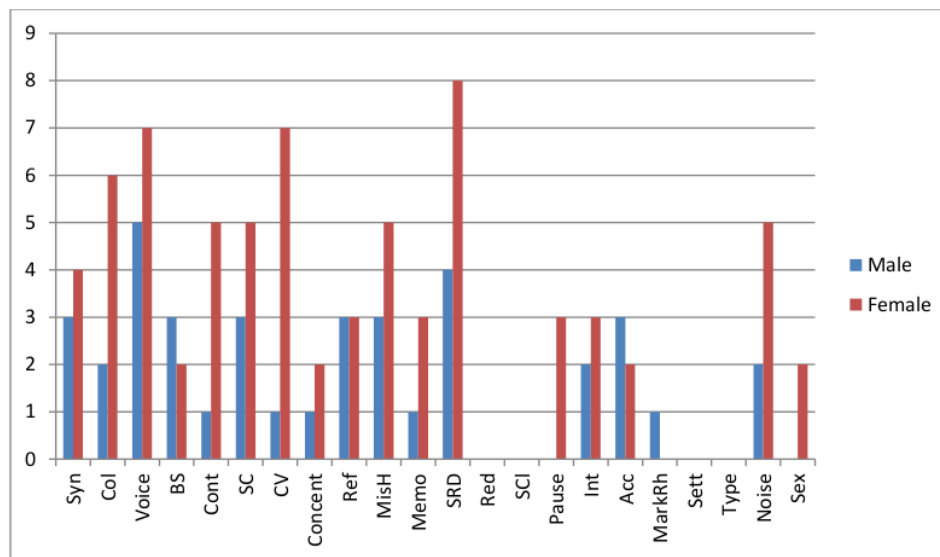
The primary casues of Causes of Difficulty of Pragmatic Understanding the Masters Degree Students of Educational Adminstration include ‘Speech Rate Delivery’, ‘Voice’, ‘Cultural Value’ (CV), ‘Colloquials’, ‘Mishearing’, and ‘Noise’. Surprisingly, four causes of difficulty do not appear, namely, ‘Redundancy’, ‘Sound Clarity’, ‘Setting’, and ‘Type of Questions’. In addition, ‘Pause’ and ‘Sex’ were found to be difficult only for female students, while ‘Discourse Markers’ was difficult only for male students.

Table 7 *Causes of Difficulty of Pragmatic Understanding of the Masters Degree Students of Mangement*

	Male		Female	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Syn	3	7.317	4	4.76
Col	2	4.88	6	7.1
Voice	5	12.195	7	8.3
BS	3	3.317	2	2.38
Cont	1	2.44	5	5.952
SC	3	3.317	5	5.952

CV	1	2.44	7	8.3
Concent	1	2.44	2	2.38
Ref	3	3.317	3	3.57
MisH	3	3.317	5	5.952
Memo	1	2.44	3	3.57
SRD	4	9.756	8	9.52
Red	0	0	0	0
SCI	0	0	0	0
Pause	0	0	3	3.57
Int	2	4.88	3	3.57
Acc	3	3.317	2	2.38
MarkRh	1	2.44	0	0
Sett	0	0	0	0
Type	0	0	0	0
Noise	2	4.88	5	5.952
Sex	0	0	2	2.38
Total frequencies	41		84	
Number of Students	5		10	

Graph 5 *Causes of Difficulty of Pragmatic Understanding the Masters Degree Students of Management*



The primary causes of difficulty of pragmatic understanding the Masters Degree Students of Management include 'Speech Rate Delivery', 'Voice', 'Cultural Value', 'Colloquials', 'Context', 'Sentence Complexity', 'Mishearing', and 'Noise'. Surprisingly, four causes of difficulty do not appear, namely, 'Redundancy', 'Sound Clarity', 'Setting', and 'Type of Questions'. In addition, 'Rhetoric Markers' was faced only by male students and 'Pause' and 'Sex' were found to be difficult only for female students, while 'Discourse Markers' was difficult only for female students.

Importantly, as shown in the four graphs just displayed, the majority of the totals of each type of cause of difficulty in pragmatic understanding that female students faced are higher than those faced by male students. It is due to the matter of different number of the students according to sex. The number of female students is more than that of male students. However, based on the total percentage of each cause of difficulty in understanding meaning (See Tables 1 to 7), the percentage of each cause of difficulty (or error) that female students faced is lower than the one faced by male students.

In the masters degree of Educational Administration, there are four causes of difficulty in pragmatic understanding that the students did not face, namely, 'Redundancy', 'Sound Clarity', 'Setting', and 'Type of Questions'. And 'Rhetoric Markers' was only faced by male students. Of the four masters degree programs, there are three programs or departments which place 'Speech Rate Delivery' in the first rank of cause of difficulty in understanding pragmatic meaning tested in Listening Part A TOEFL-like. This a 'novel' finding. The detail of the causes

of difficulty in understanding pragmatic meaning is displayed in Tables 1 to 7 and Graphs 1 to 4. For practicality, below is the summary of the causes of difficulty in pragmatic understanding of the students from the for departments or programs according to gender.

Table 8 *Rankings of Causes of Difficulty in Pragmatic Understanding*

Based on Gender

	Male		Female		Male & Female
	Total of Causes	Rank	Total of Causes	Rank	Rank
SRD	40	I	20	II	I
Voice	39	II	18	IV	II
SC	34	III	17	V	III
MisH	25	IV	21	I	IV
Col	23	V	19	III	V
SCI	22	Vi	20	II	V

Table 9 *Total Causes of Difficulty in Pragmatic Understanding Based on Gender for Each Type of Pragmatic Question*

Question	Meaning		Inference		Reference		Deictic		Presupposition		Prediction		Total	
s	g		e		e		c							
Causes	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Syn	5	5	6	4	4	3	4	4	2	2	2	0	23	17
Col	4	4	8	5	4	3	5	4	2	2	1	1	23	19
Voice	13	6	15	8	3	1	5	2	2	1	1	0	39	18
	(II)													
BS	4	3	4	5	2	1	2	2	2	0	1	1	14	12
Cont	4	3	4	5	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	13	13

SC	12	6	15	7	2	1	4	2	2	1	0	0	34	17	52
(III)															
Concent	5	4	5	6	2	1	3	3	2	0	0	1	17	15	32
Ref	3	3	5	4	1	1	2	2	0	1	0	0	11	11	22
MisH	5	4	9	5	4	4	5	5	2	2	1	1	25	21	47
(IV)															
Memo	4	3	5	3	1	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	10	10	21
SRD	13	7	15	9	3	1	6	2	2	1	0	1	40	20	60 (I)
Red	1	2	2	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	6	4	11
SCI	3	5	6	6	4	3	5	4	2	2	2	0	22	20	42 (V)
Pause	2	2	2	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	7	5	12
Int	3	3	2	2	1	0	2	1	1	1	0	0	8	7	16
Acc	4	3	5	4	1	1	2	2	0	1	0	0	12	11	23
MarkRh	3	2	3	1	1	0	2	1	1	1	0	0	10	5	15
Sett	3	3	4	5	1	2	2	2	0	2	1	0	11	14	25
Type	3	2	3	2	1	0	2	1	1	1	0	0	10	6	16
Noise	4	5	5	6	2	1	4	2	1	1	0	1	16	16	32
Sex	1	2	1	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	5	8
Total & Rank	99	77	12 4	91	40	26	6 1	46	2 5	22	1 1	7	36 7	26 6	
<div> <div>II</div> <div>IV</div> <div>I</div> <div>III</div> <div>VI I</div> <div>VIII</div> <div>V</div> <div>VI</div> <div>IX</div> <div>X</div> <div>XI I</div> </div>															
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<div> <div>II</div> <div>I</div> <div>IV</div> <div>III</div> <div>V</div> <div>VI</div> </div>															

Based on Table 8, the order of joint ranks of the causes of difficulty in understanding pragmatic meaning of males and females is: ‘Speed Rate Delivery’, ‘Voice’, ‘Sentence Complexity’, ‘Mishearing’, ‘Colloquial’ and ‘Sound Clarity’. For each gender, the ranks are as follows. To males ‘Speed Rate Delivery’, ‘Voice’, ‘Sentence Complexity’, ‘Mishearing’, ‘Colloquial’ and ‘Sound Clarity’, while to females ‘Mishearing’, ‘Speed Rate Delivery’, ‘Sound Clarity’, ‘Colloquial’, ‘Voice’ and ‘Sentence Complexity’. In reference to the detail, it

shows that there is a shared rank of causes of difficulty in understanding pragmatic meaning between males and females. It means that males dominate every cause of difficulty in pragmatic understanding. In other words, males have broader opportunities to attain lower level pragmatic understanding than females. This research finding is consistent with that of Arifuddin (2013) and Safa and Mahmoodi (2012) which indicate that females outperformed males in pragmatic understanding. Furthermore, Mishearing, 'Speed Rate Delivery' and 'Sound Clarity' have been the primary causes of pragmatic failure. And based on the total percentage of each type of cause of difficulty of pragmatic understanding (See Tables 1 to 7), the percentage of each type of cause of difficulty in pragmatic understanding that female students experienced is lower than that of male students. Thus, it is urgent to train students which focuses on overcoming such difficulties, and implicitly, males should be trained more intensively.

Regardless of the ranks and the obtained scores, the masters degree students of Language education also experienced pragmatic failure. Based on the data displayed in Table 1 to Tabel 3, the masters degree students of English Language Education achieved the highest score, and the masters degree students of Educational Administration got the lowest mean score. Pragmatic failure frequently makes communication problems. Some researchers have demonstrated that acquiring the rules of appropriate language behavior can be difficult even for fairly advanced learners and often leading them to pragmatic failure (Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Bouton, 1994; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996). It means that students from all departments need extended pragmatic competence in order to avoid pragmatic failure.

One of the causes of pragmatic failure is that pragmatic issues receive relatively little attention in the language classrooms (Kreutel, 2007). Besides, grammatical competence does not facilitate them to understand pragmatic meaning due to disparities between learners' grammatical development and pragmatic development (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1991, 1993; Omar, 1991; Takahashi & Beebe, 1987). In line with it, Bardovi-Harlig & Doernyei (1998) reported that even learners who exhibit high levels of grammatical competence may exhibit a wide range of pragmatic competence when compared with native speakers in conversations and elicited conditions. He and Yan (1986) investigated the pragmatic failure by Chinese learners of English as a foreign language and found that the learners' pragmatic development was not proportional to their grammatical development. In other words, pragmatic failure is also experienced by foreign language learners with high competence.

Those findings seems inconsistent with other research findings which show that there is a correlation between lexico-grammatical competence and pragmatic competence

(Khamyod dan Aksornjarung, 2011; Kasper, 2000). In relation to language proficiency, low pragmatic competence affects foreign language proficiency. This statement is reasonable because based on some studies on foreign language learners' pragmatic development (Yoshimi, 2001), it proved that learners receiving instruction in pragmatics outperformed those who did not. In the present study, the masters degree students of English language Education who were enriched with pragmatic-related knowledge achieved the highest pragmatic understanding.

A study conducted by Sirikhan (2011) shows that English proficiency is a variable which has a great effect on pragmatic ability. This agrees with Taguchi (2007) who supports that language background and English proficiency have influenced L2 pragmatic processing. The findings of this study also confirm the studies of Bardovi-Harling and Dornyei (1998) in that EFL/ESL learning content, and proficiency levels, affect the ability in pragmatic and grammatical awareness. Besides, the findings of this study correspond with some previous studies (Roever, 2005) in that the high language proficient participants had better performance in pragmatics tests than the low ones. This is similar to the findings of Matsumura (2003) who reveals that the overall level of proficiency in the target language plays an important role in the acquisition of pragmatic awareness. Other studies (Hill, 1997; Roever, 2005; Yamashita, 1996) indicate that the high proficiency participants show higher pragmatic competence than those with low pragmatic competence.

A closely related study was conducted by Li (2007) which examined the relationship between the two kinds of competence of 42 Chinese English learners with different levels of proficiency (high- and low-levels) in BeiHang University. The study indicates that there is a positive relationship between linguistic proficiency and pragmatic ability. The participants with high linguistic competence have high pragmatic ability and vice versa. She argues that pragmatics can be taught, and thus it is necessary to teach students pragmalinguistics as well as sociopragmatics.

It has been widely accepted that high proficiency L2 learners are generally more competent in interpreting implied meaning than low proficiency L2 learners (Lee, 2010). As categorised as low pragmatic EFL learners, the subjects' difficulty in understanding pragmatic meaning, including speech acts/language functions recognition, is reasonable. It has been widely accepted that high proficiency L2 learners are generally more competent in interpreting implied meaning than low proficiency L2 learners.

However, it is inconsistent with Liu's (2006) study indicating that the scores from other large-scale proficiency tests, like TOEFL and International English Language Testing System

(IELTS), do not correlate with pragmatic ability. Those who have higher scores do not seem to have correspondingly high pragmatic ability. A number of studies also point out that learners of English as a foreign language, who have excellent grammatical and lexical competence of the target language, still fail to convey their messages effectively due to, for instance, the lack of social appropriateness rules and pragmatic competence (Wolfson et al, 1989). This fact could be an important input for the orientation and strategies for the improvement of English language proficiency.

Of the four masters degree programs, there are three programs or departments which place 'Speech Rate Delivery' in the first rank of cause of difficulty in understanding pragmatic meaning tested in Listening Part A TOEFL-like. This a 'novel' finding. The detail of the causes of difficulty in understanding pragmatic meaning is displayed in Tables 1 to 7 and Graphs 1 to 4.

Generally, pragmatic failure relates to speech rate known as 'Speech Rate Delivery'. Liu (2009) reports that factors that affect listening comprehension of TOEFL are, for instance, tone, intonation, pronunciation, word recognition, background knowledge and speed of delivery. To foreign language learners, understanding messages or pragmatic meanings from high speed spoken language is difficult. This is relevant with Ur's (1989:254) statement that ⁹virtually every language learner initially thinks that native speakers speak too fast. Learners will nevertheless eventually need to be able to comprehend language delivered at varying rates of speed and, at times, delivered with few pauses.

As described earlier, 'Voice', ¹⁸which involves intonation, stress, rhythm and the like, determine pragmatic understanding. If a foreign language learner is not accustomed to hearing the target language voices or sounds, it generally causes listening difficulty, especially if the utterances imply pragmatic meanings. For example, understanding the pragmatic meaning from two blended sounds is difficult. According to Black (2006:17), paralinguistic features, such as, intonation, stress, and the like determine the understanding of pragmatic meaning.

Understanding pragmatic meaning relies heavily on the understanding of sentence structure or grammar, for instance, 'Sentence Complexity'. ¹¹The finding of the present study is consistent with Arifuddin's (2013) research finding. ⁷Another revealing point of the study was there is much stronger correlation between the lexico-grammatical and pragmatic competences of the female EFL learners than the male participants (Bulut, 2009).

The fourth rank of the causes of difficulty in pragmatic understanding is 'Mishearing', apart of sound or voice. 'Mishearing' is listening difficulty which may result from

unfamiliarity with the features of particular sounds. Kostin (2004:3) argues that the ⁶unfamiliarity with the phonological aspects and limited exposure to the target language may influence listeners' ability to comprehend conversations. Besides 'Mishearing', 'Sound Clarity' and 'Colloquials' have been the primary causes of understanding pragmatic meaning from auditory language. Another cause of difficulty of the pragmatic understanding is limited knowledge of synonyms or expressions. The finding of the present study is relevant with Mei-Xia's (2005) study indicating that unfamiliarity with synonyms and lack of vocabulary lead to pragmatic failure.

In addition, pragmatic understanding also relates to context familiarity. The finding of the present study is consistent with the statements of some scholars that familiarity with or knowledge of contextual language use contributes to foreign language learners' pragmatic understanding (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Alcon, 2005). Similarly, Crandall & Basturkmen (2004) also found that the use of language appropriate with context is one of the efforts to develop pragmatic competence.

Above all, both for males and females, there are five primary causes of difficulty in ¹understanding pragmatic meaning tested in ¹TOEFL-like based on the fields of the study and gender, namely, 'Speech Rate Delivery', 'Voice', 'Sentence Complexity', 'Mishearing', 'Colloquials' and 'Sound Clarity'. Based on the totals of the primary causes of difficulty that each gender faced, male students faced higher level of difficulty in pragmatic understanding than females. This figure also occurs in the other causes of pragmatic difficulty. This finding is relevant with the research result conducted by Cocco and Ervas (2012) which indicates that females tend show a higher level of pragmatic understanding than males. This females' superiority, according to Yate (2010), is due to their tendency to use figurative language, such as, irony in their verbal communication which requires pragmatic understanding.

Conclusion

It is concluded that: ¹1) There is a significant difference of pragmatic understanding tested in Listening Part A TOEFL-like of diverse masters degrees; b) There is a significant difference of pragmatic understanding tested in Listening Part A TOEFL-like between male and female students the masters degrees; c) There is an interaction between the masters degree programs of study and gender in affecting pragmatic understanding tested in Listening Part A TOEFL-like. Thus, understanding pragmatic meaning relies on gender and the departments of the masters degree students; 2) Both for males and females, there are five primary causes of

difficulty in pragmatic understanding according to their ranks, namely, 'Speech Rate Delivery', 'Voice', 'Sentence Complexity', 'Mishearing', 'Colloquials' and 'Sound Clarity'. Based on the totals of the primary causes of difficulty that each gender faced, male students faced higher level of difficulty in pragmatic understanding than females. This figure also occurs in other causes of pragmatic difficulty. It means that males dominate every cause of difficulty in understanding pragmatic meaning tested in Listening Part A TOEFL-like, so that males need more intensive training. In addition, TOEFL should be introduced to the freshmen, particularly during the orientation program. Since males dominate every cause of difficulty in understanding pragmatic meaning tested in Listening Part A TOEFL-like, they need more intensive training. In other words, biologically, there is a crucial role of gender in pragmatic understanding. Therefore, TOEFL training based on gender should be integrated, at least, with articulation (or orientation) program provided for the freshmen of the diverse master's degrees programs. This is relevant with Arifuddin's (2015) proposal that pragmatic-based instructional models of listening are prospective for boosting the language proficiency of the Indonesian learners of English.

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