ARTICLE

Utilization of Translation as a Strategy to Enhance Pragmatic Competence in Second Language Acquisition: A Study on Learners of German as a Foreign Language

Misnah Mannahali [1]* , Helaluddin [2] , Adriana Sabrina Saidi [3] , Muftihaturrahmah Burhamzah [1] ,
Syarifah Fatimah [1] , Alamsyah [1]

[1] *Dapertement of Foreign Language Education, State University of Makassar, Makassar 90224, Indonesia*
[2] *Department of Islamic Banking, State Islamic University Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten, Serang 42116, Indonesia*
[3] *Faculty of Education and Social Sciences, University of Münster, 48149 Münster, Germany*

ABSTRACT

This study examines how translation-based instruction can support the development of pragmatic competence in learners of German as a foreign language. Adopting a mixed-methods approach with a quantitative focus, the research involved B1-level university students divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group received targeted instruction in contextual translation, while the control group continued with conventional lessons that did not include translation activities. Data collection included pragmatic performance tests, learner perception surveys, and semi-structured interviews. The results indicate a clear advantage for learners exposed to translation strategies, as the experimental group achieved significantly higher post-test gains (mean increase = 19.2, $p = 0.003$) compared to the control group, whose progress was limited and statistically non-significant ($p = 0.081$). Qualitative insights revealed that translation helped learners engage more deeply with the social and cultural dimensions of language. Participants reported increased awareness of indirect meaning, greater sensitivity to politeness conventions, and improved ability to adjust their language use across different contexts. Overall, the findings suggest that, when thoughtfully applied, translation can be far more than

a linguistic exercise. It functions as a reflective and intercultural learning tool, helping students connect linguistic form with social function. As such, translation offers valuable pedagogical potential in preparing language learners for authentic, context-sensitive communication in real-world settings.

Keywords: Translation Strategies; Pragmatic Competence; German Language Learning; Second Language Instruction; Intercultural Communication

1. Introduction

Pragmatic competence plays a vital role in second language learning, significantly impacting how effectively learners navigate cross-cultural communication and succeed in mastering a foreign language [1]. This competence involves not just knowing the language but also understanding how to use it appropriately within different social and cultural settings, including aspects such as speech acts, implied meanings, and polite expressions [2,3]. Many learners struggle with these pragmatic aspects because the social rules and communication habits of their native language often differ from those of the target language, which can result in pragmatic transfer errors [1]. For this reason, effective teaching strategies that help learners grasp these pragmatic nuances in context are essential.

An increasingly recognized approach to fostering pragmatic competence in language learners is the strategic use of translation. Beyond aiding comprehension of vocabulary and grammar, translation offers a gateway into the nuanced social and cultural contexts embedded in the target language-contexts that are essential to understanding pragmatic meaning [4,5]. By engaging in comparative analysis between their first language and the target language, learners become more attuned to pragmatic variations across languages, thereby enhancing their intercultural communicative sensitivity [6,7]. Furthermore, when translation is framed within authentic communicative contexts, such as the analysis of real-life discourse, it becomes a powerful pedagogical tool for supporting meaningful and contextually grounded pragmatic development.

The Interlanguage Pragmatic Acquisition Theory has been extensively developed through the contributions of various scholars, beginning with Kasper and Rose [1,8–10] who define the field as the study of non-native speakers' use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language. They emphasize that learners of a second language

are not only acquiring linguistic forms but are also learning to use language appropriately within specific social contexts. Pragmatic development, therefore, is an interactive process shaped by input, pragmatic awareness, and feedback [1]. Building upon this foundation, Kasper and Rose [8–10] argue that L2 pragmatic development does not follow a linear or universal trajectory but is influenced by individual learner variables, the quantity and quality of language exposure, and sociocultural contexts. A key concept introduced in their work is *metapragmatic awareness*—the learner's ability to consciously attend to and reflect on sociocultural norms embedded in language use. They further highlight the importance of authentic interaction and explicit pragmatic instruction in facilitating such development [11,12]. Taguchi [13,14] expands on these insights by framing interlanguage pragmatics as involving both linguistic competence and cognitive processing abilities that evolve with practice and exposure. According to her, elements such as cross-linguistic awareness, processing speed, and the frequency of pragmatic encounters significantly affect a learner's pragmatic performance. Taguchi [13,14] also underscores the pedagogical value of translation as a tool to enhance metapragmatic sensitivity in bilingual and foreign language learners. Similarly, refs. [11,12] draw a critical distinction between *pragmalinguistic* knowledge—relating to the linguistic realization of speech acts—and *sociopragmatic* knowledge—concerning sociocultural appropriateness. She observes that L2 learners frequently face greater difficulty with sociopragmatic norms than with linguistic forms, highlighting the need for culturally rich input and real-world interaction to foster native-like pragmatic competence. Ellis [15] contributes by asserting that pragmatic acquisition is highly *input-sensitive*, wherein learners construct pragmatic knowledge by noticing, comparing, and internalizing contextualized language use. He supports the view that interaction with native speakers and attentive observation of contextual cues are central to pragmatic development. Taken together, these perspectives con-

verge on the notion that Interlanguage Pragmatic Acquisition is a context-driven, learner-mediated process that integrates L1–L2 transfer, input quality, and the cultivation of metapragmatic awareness. In this regard, translation strategies serve as an effective metacognitive mechanism through which learners can reflect upon and refine their pragmatic abilities in cross-cultural communication settings [8–15].

Uno [16] explains that the essence of an instructional strategy lies in how information is processed and delivered to learners in order to effectively achieve educational goals. He further draws on several expert perspectives to clarify the meaning and function of instructional strategies in educational settings. First, an instructional strategy can be understood as any chosen activity or intervention that supports and facilitates students' progress toward specific learning objectives. It is not limited to delivering content but includes intentional choices about how the learning process is designed to help learners succeed. Second, an instructional strategy refers to the specific approaches used to implement teaching methods within a given learning environment. This involves determining the scope, structure, and sequence of learning activities to ensure they provide meaningful and coherent learning experiences. Third, an instructional strategy encompasses all aspects of instructional content as well as the procedures or stages of learning that educators use to guide students toward their goals. This includes not only the steps involved in instruction but also the thoughtful organization of materials and instructional packages designed for delivery. Fourth, an effective instructional strategy also involves selecting appropriate types of practice that align with targeted learning outcomes. Every behavioral or performance objective expected from the learner must be reinforced through structured opportunities for application and practice. In essence, instructional strategy is a comprehensive framework that integrates content, methods, and learner engagement in a deliberate way to ensure that learning is purposeful, structured, and practice-oriented. The framework on language learning strategies underscores the significance of cognitive tools—particularly translation—in fostering language proficiency [4]. Positioning cognitive strategies such as translation as a central component in language development is both a valid and effective pedagogical approach. Translation, whether from the first language (L1) to the target language (L2) or vice versa, can significantly enhance learners' understanding of linguistic structures, vocabulary, and subtle shades of meaning. In addition, it fosters critical and analytical thinking, which are essential elements of cognitive development. Elaboration: Cognitive strategies like translation contribute meaningfully to language acquisition in several key ways: (1) Enhanced Comprehension, translation requires learners to actively engage with the language, unpack meaning, and find accurate equivalents in another language. This process deepens their grasp of sentence structure, grammar, and other fundamental aspects of the target language; (2) Vocabulary Expansion, During translation tasks, learners are exposed to a wide range of vocabulary and expressions. They learn not only new words but also how these words function in different contexts, allowing them to construct meaningful sentences more confidently; (3) Critical Thinking Practice, Translation is far more than substituting words from one language to another. It demands a nuanced understanding of context, intent, and communicative purpose. Through this process, learners refine their critical and analytical thinking skills; (4) Cognitive Skills Reinforcement, Language and cognition are deeply intertwined. The ability to think is shaped by the language one uses, and vice versa. Using translation as a learning tool strengthens both cognitive and linguistic abilities simultaneously; (5) Access to Multilingual Information, Translation opens up access to diverse sources of knowledge written in various languages. Learners can explore books, articles, and media not available in their native language, broadening their intellectual horizons. Practical Applications: (a) Text Translation Tasks—students can translate short texts or paragraphs from their first language into the target language or vice versa. Tools such as dictionaries, thesauruses, and online resources may assist in the process; (b) Oral Translation Practice—learners can practice interpreting conversations or speeches between L1 and L2. They might record themselves speaking and then translate it, or listen to audio and produce a translation in response; (c) Micro-Translation Exercises—students may translate short phrases or sentences for example, lyrics, quotes, or idiomatic expressions as a way to develop sensitivity to linguistic nuance and figurative language.

While translation is a powerful cognitive strategy, it should not be used in isolation. To develop well-rounded language competence, learners must also engage in a variety of communicative activities such as reading, writing, speaking,

and listening. When integrated thoughtfully, translation can serve as a bridge to deeper understanding and more robust language skills. Translation not only facilitates comprehension of linguistic meaning but also deepens learners' grasp of pragmatic context, thereby accelerating second language acquisition[17,18]. Supporting this perspective, research by Hatim[7] reveals that translation can be especially effective in demystifying nuanced elements of pragmatic competence, such as politeness strategies and culturally specific speech act conventions that may not be easily accessible through direct instruction alone.

The challenges posed by pragmatic transfer both positive and negative are a central focus within the framework of Linguistic and Pragmatic Transfer Theory[2]. Linguistic transfer theory refers to the process through which knowledge of a learner's first language (L1) influences the acquisition or use of a second language (L2). This influence can be either positive, when similarities between the two languages facilitate learning, or negative, when structural differences lead to errors or interference in L2 use. As Odlin[19–21] explains, *"transfer refers to the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired."* There are several forms of linguistic transfer: (a) Positive Transfer occurs when similar linguistic patterns in L1 and L2 enable learners to produce correct forms and structures in the target language; (b) Negative Transfer (often called *interference*) arises when dissimilarities between the two languages cause learners to make errors, particularly in grammar, pronunciation, or usage; (c) Interlanguage is the evolving linguistic system that L2 learners develop, which often reflects patterns or rules from their L1. This transitional language system may include both correct and incorrect forms as learners progress toward L2 proficiency. Linguistic transfer plays a critical role in second language acquisition, especially in areas such as morphosyntax, phonology, and vocabulary. Understanding how L1 influences L2 can help language educators anticipate common learner errors and design instructional strategies that minimize negative transfer while leveraging positive transfer to support learning outcomes. Teachers who are aware of transfer patterns can better scaffold instruction, provide targeted feedback, and create learning environments that acknowledge learners' linguistic backgrounds as resources rather than

obstacles. In second language acquisition, pragmatic transfer can occur when learners apply communicative norms from their first language (L1) to their use of the second language (L2). This transfer often reflects culturally ingrained patterns of interaction and may influence how learners express politeness, make requests, give refusals, or engage in conversation. Such transfer can significantly affect communicative effectiveness, especially when learners unconsciously apply first-language norms in second-language contexts. Developing awareness of these cross-linguistic influences is therefore critical and must be supported by targeted instructional strategies[22]; In this regard, the strategic and reflective use of translation can serve as a powerful pedagogical tool to raise learners' sensitivity to pragmatic differences and reduce the risk of miscommunication[5,6].

In addition to the established frameworks discussed, Sociocultural Theory[23,24] provides further insight into how learners internalize pragmatic norms through interaction and mediation. According to this theory, learning is a socially situated process, and tools such as translation act as mediational means that guide learners in developing higher-order thinking and communicative skills. This aligns with the role of translation as a reflective and interactive practice that supports not only linguistic development but also social cognition in language learning. Moreover, Leow's[25] Nnticing Hhpothesis underscores the importance of consciousness in language acquisition, suggesting that learners must notice pragmatic features in the input in order to acquire them. Translation, by making contrasts between L1 and L2 salient, aids learners in this noticing process, thereby promoting deeper learning and retention of pragmatic norms[26–28].

Contextual Learning Theory, as articulated by Brown and Larson-Hall[29], underscores the necessity of embedding language instruction within authentic and meaningful communicative contexts. Johnson's[30] Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) is an approach that encourages students to find relevance in what they learn by linking academic subjects to the realities of their daily lives. This connection spans personal experiences, social environments, and cultural backgrounds, making learning more meaningful and engaging. Sanjaya[31] outlines three essential principles at the core of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL). First, CTL prioritizes student engagement through active discovery, where learners are encouraged to build understanding

based on their own experiences rather than merely absorbing information. Learning becomes a dynamic process in which students play a central, participatory role. Second, CTL aims to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-life experiences. Students are guided to see the relevance of what they study by connecting academic concepts with situations they encounter in their daily lives. This meaningful linkage helps deepen understanding and makes the knowledge more lasting and practical. Third, CTL focuses on real-world application. It moves beyond rote learning by equipping students with the ability to apply what they have learned to authentic life challenges. Instead of accumulating knowledge for short-term recall, students develop competencies that serve them in navigating everyday situations. Translation involves more than transferring words between two languages; it requires conveying meaning in a way that resonates equally with both source and target language readers. As described by refs. [32–35], this concept of *dynamic equivalence* is achieved when the target audience interprets the translated message in a manner comparable to how the original audience would have understood it. Achieving this kind of equivalence requires a translators to move beyond linguistic accuracy and engage deeply with cultural and contextual nuances. Translators must be sensitive not only to grammar and vocabulary, but also to the cultural expectations, social structures, and worldview of the target audience. Refs. [36–38] draws on broad competencies, including ecological awareness (such as knowledge of local environments and natural resources), material culture and technologies, social systems and roles, belief systems, and the intricate features of linguistic structure. Only by mastering these elements can a translator bridge languages in a way that is both faithful and meaningful. When translation strategies are situated within real-world dialogues or interactional scenarios, they provide learners with tangible opportunities to activate and apply their pragmatic knowledge in relevant ways [39,40]. Such an approach resonates strongly with the core tenets of communicative language teaching, which regards social interaction as the cornerstone of effective language acquisition [41,42]. The communicative approach to language teaching centers on cultivating learners' ability to use language effectively and appropriately in real-world interactions. It treats communicative competence not just as a desirable outcome but as the primary aim of language education. This approach also emphasizes the integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, while highlighting the interconnected nature of language functions in meaningful contexts. Unlike traditional methods that rely on rote memorization or isolated drills, communicative learning places students in authentic scenarios where they actively engage with language. It provides learners with genuine opportunities to develop and apply their language skills in both receptive and productive tasks through purposeful conversations, contextual reading, and collaborative writing. Drawing on the insights of refs. [43,44], the communicative approach is characterized by several core principles: a focus on meaning over form, the use of functional rather than memorized language, the importance of context, and an emphasis on using language to communicate rather than simply studying its structure. It encourages learners to experiment with language, interact meaningfully with peers, and draw on any available tools to support communication. Teachers guide rather than dictate the learning process, fostering autonomy and cooperation. Ultimately, communicative language teaching nurtures fluency, fosters confidence, and aligns language learning with learners' intrinsic motivations and communicative needs.

2. Materials and Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods design [45,46], with a primary emphasis on quantitative analysis complemented by qualitative insights, to explore the influence of translation strategies on the development of pragmatic competence in learners of German as a foreign language [47]. The participants were undergraduate students enrolled in a German language education program who had completed at least one semester of study and demonstrated intermediate proficiency aligned with the B1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) [48]. Quantitative data were gathered through a pragmatic competence test designed to evaluate learners' ability to comprehend and produce contextually appropriate expressions in real-world communication scenarios. Additionally, a structured questionnaire was distributed to capture learners' perceptions regarding the integration of translation strategies during instruction. To enrich the quantitative findings, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected members of the ex-

perimental group to delve into their cognitive processes and personal reflections on the use of translation as a learning tool[49]. The research procedure began with a pre-test to establish learners' baseline pragmatic competence, followed by an instructional intervention in which the experimental group received targeted instruction incorporating translation strategies. These strategies were embedded within communicative tasks that reflected real-world usage, including bidirectional translation of authentic texts such as conversations, idiomatic phrases, and culturally nuanced expressions between German and Indonesian[47,49]. The instructional design aimed to enhance learners' metapragmatic awareness and strengthen their sensitivity to pragmatic appropriateness in various social contexts.

In contrast, the control group received conventional communicative instruction that excluded all translation-based activities. Both groups followed similar curricula regarding topics and learning objectives; however, translation was used exclusively in the experimental group as a pedagogical tool to promote pragmatic competence. This clear instructional separation ensured that any differential learning outcomes could be reliably attributed to the presence or absence of translation-focused training. After the instructional phase, a post-test was administered to measure potential gains in pragmatic performance. Quantitative data were analyzed using independent and paired-sample t-tests to compare pre- and post-test results across groups[50]. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed through thematic analysis[51–53], allowing for the identification of recurring themes related to participants' experiences and the perceived role of translation in fostering pragmatic awareness[54].

Ethical approval for this research was obtained from the institutional ethics committee prior to data collection, ensuring compliance with academic and professional research standards[48]. All participants were fully briefed on the objectives, procedures, and potential risks of the study, and written informed consent was obtained prior to participation. As part of the qualitative component, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of learners from the experimental group to gain deeper insight into their cognitive engagement and affective responses toward the use of translation strategies in their learning process[49]. The

interview guide and consent procedures were reviewed and approved during the ethical clearance process. All interviews were audio-recorded with participant permission, transcribed, anonymized, and stored securely in accordance with institutional data protection policies. Interview data were used solely for the purposes of research and analysis.

3. Results

Table 1 provides a comparative overview of the average pre- and post-test scores for both the experimental and control groups, measured across five key dimensions of pragmatic competence: speech act comprehension, application of politeness strategies, interpretation of conversational implicatures, cultural appropriateness, and stylistic adaptability in formal and informal interactions. Learners who received explicit instruction through translation-based strategies exhibited marked improvements across all indicators. Notably, their ability to understand speech acts rose substantially, with scores increasing from 12.4 to 17.6 out of 20, while the control group showed only a marginal gain (12.1 to 13.2). A comparable pattern emerged in the use of politeness strategies, where the experimental group improved from 11.8 to 17.2, significantly outpacing the control group's modest progress. Particularly strong effects were observed in learners' ability to interpret implied meanings and align language use with cultural expectations. The experimental group demonstrated gains of over five points in both conversational implicature and cultural appropriateness, underscoring the value of translation as a tool for deepening pragmatic awareness and cross-cultural sensitivity. Furthermore, the data show that translation strategies enhanced learners' flexibility in shifting language styles between formal and informal settings. The experimental group advanced from a baseline score of 12.0 to 17.3, suggesting that learners developed not only linguistic precision but also communicative adaptability. In sum, these findings affirm the pedagogical value of incorporating translation-based instruction in the pragmatic training of German as a foreign language. Compared to the more traditional teaching methods used in the control group, this approach fostered a more robust and context-sensitive development of communicative competence.

Table 1. Pragmatic Competence Assessment Outcomes.

Pragmatic Indicator	Max Score	Average Pre-Test Score (Experimental)	Average Post-Test Score (Experimental)	Average Pre-Test Score (Control)	Average Post-Test Score (Control)
Understanding of speech acts	20	12.4	17.6	12.1	13.2
Use of politeness strategies	20	11.8	17.2	11.5	12.6
Comprehension of conversational implicature	20	10.9	16.4	10.8	11.9
Cultural appropriateness of language use	20	11.5	17.0	11.0	12.0
Adaptation to formal/informal contexts	20	12.0	17.3	11.9	12.5

Table 2 presents the results of a perception survey completed by participants in the experimental group, aiming to evaluate their views on the role of translation in fostering pragmatic competence in German as a foreign language. The questionnaire, composed of five targeted statements, was designed to capture students' experiences regarding how translation supported their understanding of social meaning, politeness conventions, and communicative readiness in authentic contexts. The responses reveal a consistently positive outlook toward the strategy. The highest mean score (4.7) was assigned to the statement, "Translation is an effective strategy for learning pragmatics," reflecting strong agreement among participants that translation significantly contributed to their pragmatic development. Similarly, the item addressing politeness—"Translation improves my ability to use polite forms in communication"—received a nearly equivalent rating (4.6), indicating perceived growth in sociolinguistic competence. Participants also acknowledged translation's role in heightening their awareness of cultural nuances. Statements such as "I became more aware of cultural differences through translation tasks" (mean = 4.3) and "Translation helps me understand the social meaning of expressions" (mean = 4.5) point to an increased sensitivity to the sociocultural dynamics of the target language. Finally, learners reported improved confidence in practical language use, with the item "I feel more confident using German in real-life situations" scoring 4.2. This suggests that translation not only enhances pragmatic understanding but also supports learners emotionally in navigating authentic communicative settings. Taken together, these insights affirm that translation functions not merely as a linguistic exercise but as a meaningful and effective pedagogical strategy to support pragmatic competence, intercultural awareness, and learner confidence in second language acquisition.

Table 2. Student Perceptions of Translation as a Pragmatic Learning Strategy.

Question Item	Mean Score (Experimental Group)
Translation helps me understand the social meaning of expressions.	4.5
I became more aware of cultural differences through translation tasks.	4.3
Translation improves my ability to use polite forms in communication.	4.6
I feel more confident using German in real-life situations.	4.2
Translation is an effective strategy for learning pragmatics.	4.7

Table 3 captures the central themes that emerged from semi-structured interviews with students in the experimental group, offering qualitative insight into their experiences with translation as a tool for learning pragmatics in German as a foreign language. The thematic analysis yielded five key categories reflecting the multifaceted impact of translation on their learning process. The first theme, *heightened pragmatic awareness*, highlights how translation encouraged learners to pay attention to nuanced meanings, such as implied intentions or indirect speech acts, which they had previously overlooked. One participant remarked, *"I never realized how one phrase can mean something totally different in German."* The second theme, *greater sensitivity to cultural variation*, emphasizes how learners began to question the universality of politeness and realized that communicative norms are culture-bound. A student observed, *"It was eye-opening to see how politeness varies across languages."* Another prominent theme was *increased reflection on linguistic appropriateness*. Through repeated translation activities, learners became more deliberate in how they selected language based on context. One respondent shared, *"Translation made me think twice before choosing words in a dialogue."* Translation also appeared to

boost *learners' communicative confidence*. Several participants expressed that the process made them feel more capable of engaging in real-world interactions. As one explained, *"I felt more prepared for speaking situations after the translation sessions."* Finally, the theme of *cognitive engagement* emerged, indicating that translation required deeper processing beyond word-for-word substitution. It fostered intentional thinking about meaning, context, and appropriateness. One

learner expressed this clearly: *"It forced me to think about meaning, not just words."* Collectively, these insights suggest that translation is not merely a linguistic support tool but a transformative strategy that cultivates metacognitive awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and communicative readiness. The interview findings underscore its value as a pedagogical approach for developing pragmatic competence in second language acquisition.

Table 3. Analysis of Interview Findings on the Use of Translation Strategies in Pragmatic Learning

Emerging Theme	Illustrative Quote
Increased pragmatic awareness	'I never realized how one phrase can mean something totally different in German.'
Recognition of cross-cultural differences	'It was eye-opening to see how politeness varies across languages.'
Reflection on speech appropriateness	'Translation made me think twice before choosing words in a dialogue.'
Improved confidence in real-world use	'I felt more prepared for speaking situations after the translation sessions.'
Cognitive engagement through translation	'It forced me to think about meaning, not just words.'

Table 4 illustrates a comparative analysis of pre-test and post-test scores between learners who underwent translation-based training (experimental group) and those who received conventional instruction (control group). At baseline, both groups demonstrated nearly identical levels of pragmatic competence, with average pre-test scores of 62.3 and 61.8, respectively, indicating equivalence in initial performance. Post-intervention results, however, reveal a substantial divergence in learning outcomes. Learners in the experimental group achieved a marked improvement, with post-test scores rising to 81.5, an increase of 19.2 points. Meanwhile, the control group showed only a modest gain of 5.4 points, reaching an average of 67.2. Statistical analysis confirmed the significance of this disparity. The *p*-value

associated with the experimental group's gain was 0.003, indicating a robust and statistically meaningful effect. In contrast, the control group's *p*-value of 0.081 suggests that the observed improvement was not statistically significant. These findings offer compelling evidence for the pedagogical value of translation-based approaches in pragmatic instruction. Not only did the training enhance learners' conceptual understanding, but it also translated into improved performance in the real-life application of pragmatic skills such as using appropriate speech acts, managing politeness, and interpreting implied meaning in authentic German discourse. The contrast in outcomes between the two groups highlights the superior efficacy of translation-integrated instruction over traditional language teaching methods.

Table 4. Evaluating the Impact of Translation Strategy Instruction on Pragmatic Competence.

Group	Pre-Test Mean Score	Post-Test Mean Score	Score Gain	*p*-Value
Experimental	62.3	81.5	19.2	3
Control	61.8	67.2	5.4	81

4. Discussion

This study set out to explore the pedagogical potential of translation strategies in enhancing pragmatic competence among learners of German as a foreign language. By employing a mixed-methods design, the research triangulated

findings from quantitative test scores, learner self-reports, qualitative interview data, and comparative assessments to build a comprehensive picture of the intervention's impact. The synthesis of results offers compelling support for the inclusion of translation as a purposeful instructional strategy in second language education.

4.1. Advancing Pragmatic Competence through Translation-Based Instruction

The results presented in **Table 1** demonstrate that learners in the experimental group made notable gains across all key dimensions of pragmatic competence, ranging from interpreting speech acts and applying politeness strategies to navigating cultural appropriateness and adapting language to context. Particularly striking were the improvements in learners' ability to shift between formal and informal registers and their increased sensitivity to indirect meaning—both considered foundational to pragmatic fluency. These findings align with the principles of Interlanguage Pragmatic Acquisition Theory (8), which underscores the evolving and contextually driven nature of second language pragmatics. Within this framework, translation served as a scaffolding tool, bridging linguistic knowledge and situational appropriateness, and helping learners internalize pragmatic norms in a culturally meaningful way. Building on these results, it becomes evident that translation does more than support linguistic accuracy; it fosters learners' ability to make nuanced pragmatic choices based on contextual cues. Through repeated exposure to authentic communicative situations and guided comparison between source and target languages, learners were able to reflect critically on how meaning is constructed, negotiated, and adapted in social interaction. This process not only enhanced their awareness of language variation but also empowered them to respond more flexibly and appropriately in diverse communicative settings. As such, translation-based instruction acted as both a cognitive and intercultural mediator, reinforcing the functional use of language in real-life discourse and strengthening the learners' readiness for cross-cultural communication.

4.2. Learner Perspectives on the Relevance of Translation

Data from **Table 2** provide further validation of the intervention's effectiveness through the lens of learner perception. The consistently high ratings across survey items reflect strong learner engagement and recognition of translation as a valuable learning strategy. The highest-rated statement, "Translation is an effective strategy for learning pragmatics" (mean = 4.7), along with similarly high responses regarding politeness, cultural awareness, and communica-

tive confidence, signals that learners found the approach both impactful and relevant to their communicative needs. These findings resonate with (4)'s perspective on cognitive strategies in language learning, suggesting that translation plays a crucial role in meaning-making and intercultural understanding. Moreover, the affective dimension of learners' responses, particularly in relation to increased confidence and motivation, speaks to the broader pedagogical benefits of translation that extend beyond linguistic accuracy.

Expanding on these insights, it is evident that learners did not perceive translation as a mechanical or outdated exercise, but rather as a dynamic tool that helped them connect abstract language rules with concrete communicative functions. Many respondents indicated that translation tasks enabled them to better understand not just what to say, but *how* and *why* certain expressions are used in specific contexts—especially in relation to politeness norms and indirect speech. This suggests that translation fosters a deeper level of metacognitive engagement, where learners are actively reflecting on form, meaning, and context simultaneously. Furthermore, the positive emotional responses reported by learners highlight the motivational value of translation in the classroom. Increased confidence, as indicated by the item "I feel more confident using German in real-life situations" (mean = 4.2), reflects a shift in learners' perceived communicative competence, which can play a significant role in language retention and sustained participation. When learners feel capable and culturally attuned, they are more likely to take risks in conversation, initiate interaction, and engage more fully with the target language.

Taken together, these findings emphasize the multifaceted relevance of translation—not only as a linguistic support mechanism but as a catalyst for learner agency, cultural sensitivity, and communicative readiness. Integrating translation into language pedagogy, therefore, responds to both the cognitive and affective needs of learners, making it a powerful strategy for holistic second language development.

4.3. Deepening Metapragmatic Awareness and Cultural Insight

Qualitative insights derived from **Table 3** reveal how translation activities prompted learners to engage in deeper cognitive and metacognitive reflection. Participants frequently described becoming more aware of the subtle so-

cial meanings embedded in language and more attentive to the appropriateness of their speech in different cultural contexts. Themes such as "thinking beyond words," "reflecting on speech appropriateness," and "recognizing cultural variation" highlight the reflective nature of translation-based learning. These observations are well aligned with (2)'s emphasis on metapragmatic awareness as a cornerstone of successful cross-cultural communication. The interviews illustrate that translation did not merely function as a linguistic exercise but operated as a reflective mechanism for examining how language, meaning, and culture intersect in real-world interactions.

4.4. Quantitative Validation of Instructional Impact

As shown in **Table 4**, the experimental group recorded a significant improvement in post-test scores, with an average increase of 19.2 points ($p = 0.003$), in contrast to the control group's modest gain of 5.4 points, which was not statistically significant ($p = 0.081$). These quantitative results provide strong empirical support for the effectiveness of translation-based instruction. The data corroborate previous research[22,55], which argues that raising learners' awareness of pragmatic norms—especially those that differ from their native language—requires explicit, reflective, and culturally grounded instruction. Translation, as evidenced here, fulfills that role by offering learners a structured yet flexible tool to decode and reproduce pragmatic meaning in a second language.

Toward a Broader Pedagogical Perspective

Collectively, the findings of this study support a reimagining of translation's place in foreign language pedagogy. Far from being a passive or outdated technique, translation, when employed strategically, emerges as a cognitively rich, culturally responsive, and pragmatically effective instructional method. Its power lies in its ability to link linguistic form with communicative function, promote reflective awareness, and cultivate learners' intercultural competence and autonomy. In an era where language learning is increasingly framed within global, multicultural, and digital contexts, the strategic use of translation can serve as a catalyst for more authentic, socially aware, and pragmatically competent communication. As this study shows, when translation

is reframed not as a mechanical conversion of words but as a critical interpretive practice, it holds immense potential to enrich the second language classroom.

5. Conclusions

This study explored how translation-based instruction can shape the development of pragmatic competence in learners of German as a foreign language. Using a mixed-methods design, the research brought together insights from quantitative assessments, learner feedback, and qualitative interviews to offer a well-rounded understanding of the impact of translation strategies. The evidence strongly suggests that translation not only helps learners interpret and produce language appropriately but also supports their ability to adapt language use to diverse social and cultural contexts. Learners who received structured training in translation strategies showed statistically significant gains across several key aspects of pragmatic knowledge. In contrast, those taught through conventional methods exhibited only slight improvements. Beyond test scores, participants reported greater cultural awareness, increased communicative confidence, and deeper cognitive engagement with the social dimensions of language use. Taken together, these findings underscore the transformative potential of translation in language learning. When used with pedagogical intent, translation evolves from a mechanical linguistic activity into a reflective, intercultural practice. It serves as a bridge between form and function, enabling learners to develop the kind of nuanced, context-sensitive communication skills essential for authentic interaction in a second language.

Author Contributions

For research, M.M.: led the research as the principal investigator, overseeing the overall project design, coordination, and final manuscript preparation; H.: contributed to the conceptual framework development and supervised the quantitative data analysis; A.S.S.: was responsible for the design and administration of learner perception instruments and contributed to the data interpretation; S.F.: conducted the qualitative interviews and performed the thematic analysis of participant responses; M.B.: supported the development of teaching materials for the intervention and assisted in classroom implementation; A.: contributed to the literature review,

References

[1] Kasper, G., Rose, K.R., 2023. Pragmatic development in a second language. Blackwell Publishing: Oxford, UK.

[2] Taguchi, N., 2022. Second language pragmatics. Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK.

[3] Thomas, J., 2019. Meaning in interaction: An introduction to pragmatics. Routledge: London, UK.

[4] Oxford, R.L., 2021. Teaching and researching language learning strategies: Self-regulation in context, 2nd ed. Routledge: London, UK.

[5] Cook, G., 2016. Translation in language teaching: An argument for reassessment. Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK.

[6] Ellis, R., 2017. Understanding second language acquisition, 2nd ed. Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK.

[7] Hatim, B.A., 2012. Teaching and Researching Translation, 2nd ed. Routledge: London, UK.

[8] Kasper, G., Rose, K.R., 2023. Second Language Pragmatics: Interlanguage Pragmatic Development Revisited. Routledge: London, UK.

[9] Kasper, G., Blum-Kulka, S., 1993. Interlanguage Pragmatics. Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK.

[10] Kasper, G., Rose, K.R., 2002. Pragmatic Development in a Second Language: Language Learning: A Journal of Research in Language Studies, Volume 52 (Supplement 1). Blackwell Publishing: Oxford, UK. pp. 1-352.

[11] Bardovi-Harlig, K., 1999. Exploring the Interlanguage of Interlanguage Pragmatics: A Research Agenda for Acquisition. Language Learning. 49(4), 677–713.

[12] Bardovi-Harlig, K., Félix-Brasdefer, J.C., Omar, A.S., 2013. Pragmatics and Language Learning: Volume 13. National Foreign Language Resource Center: Honolulu, HI, USA.

[13] Taguchi, N., 2011. Developing Pragmatic Competence in a Foreign Language. Language Learning. 61(1), 223–267.

[14] Taguchi, N., 2022. Second Language Pragmatics: From Theory to Practice. Routledge: London, UK.

[15] Ellis, R., 2008. The Study of Second Language Acquisition. Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK.

[16] Uno, H.B., 2023. Teori motivasi dan pengukurannya: Analisis di bidang pendidikan. Bumi Aksara: Jakarta Timur, Indonesia.

[17] Chamot, A.U., 2005. LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGY INSTRUCTION: CURRENT ISSUES AND RESEARCH. Annual Review of Applied Linguistics. 25, 112–130. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190505000061

[18] Cohen, A.D., 2018. Strategies in learning and using a second language, 2nd ed. Routledge: London, UK.

[19] Odlin, T., 2003. Cross-linguistic influence. In: Doughty, C.J., Long, M.H. (eds.). The Handbook of Second Language Acquisition. Wiley: Hoboken, NJ, USA. pp. 436–486.

[20] Odlin, T., 2005. Crosslinguistic influence and conceptual transfer: What are the concepts? Annual review of applied linguistics. 25, 3–25. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190505000012

[21] Odlin, T., 2008. Conceptual transfer and meaning extensions. Handbook of cognitive linguistics and second language acquisition. Routledge: London, UK. pp. 316–350.

[22] Félix-Brasdefer, J.C., 2016. Teaching pragmatics in the

foreign language classroom: Lessons from research. Language Teaching. 49(4), 667–687.

[23] Lantolf, J.P., Poehner, M.E., Thorne, S.L., 2020. Sociocultural theory and L2 development. In: VanPattern, B., Keating, G., Wulff, S. (eds.). Theories in second language acquisition, 3rd ed. Routledge: London, UK. pp. 223–247.

[24] De Costa, P.I., 2007. JP Lantolf and SL Thorne: Sociocultural Theory and The Genesis of Second Language Development. Oxford University Press, 2006. Applied linguistics. 28(3), 477–480. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amm027

[25] Leow, R.P., 2018. Noticing hypothesis. In The TESOL encyclopedia of English language teaching. Wiley: Hoboken, NJ, USA. Volume 1.

[26] Pavlović, N., 2010. What were they thinking?! Students' decision making in L1 and L2 translation processes. HERMES-Journal of Language and Communication in Business. 44, 63–87.

[27] Carrol, G., Conklin, K., Gyllstad, H., 2016. Found in translation: The influence of the L1 on the reading of idioms in a L2. Studies in Second Language Acquisition. 38(3), 403–443.

[28] Lee, Y., Jang, E., Choi, W., 2018. L2-L1 translation priming effects in a lexical decision task: evidence from low proficient Korean-English bilinguals. Frontiers in psychology. 9, 267.

[29] Brown, J.D., Larson-Hall, J., 2022. Second language research methods: Design and data. Routledge: London, UK.

[30] Johnson, E.B., 2007. Contextual Teaching & learning. Mizan Learning Center: Carrollton, TX, USA.

[31] Sanjaya, W., 2015. Perencanaan dan desain sistem pembelajaran. Kencana: Jakarta Utara, Indonesia.

[32] Nida, E.A., 1969. Science of translation. Language. 45(3), 483–498. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/411434

[33] Nida, E.A., 1991. Theories of translation. TTR: traduction, terminologie, rédaction. 4(1), 19–32.

[34] Panou, D., 2013. Equivalence in translation theories: A critical evaluation. Theory and Practice in Language Studies. 3(1), 1–6.

[35] Nida, E.A., Taber, C.R., 1972. Semantic structures. In: Smith, M.E. Studies in linguistics in honor of George L Trager. The Hague: Mouton, France. pp. 122–141.

[36] Sembiring, E.A., 2022. Students' Translation Process in Translating Descriptive Text at Tenth Grade of Smk Swasta Al Karomah Berastagi. Universitas Quality Berastagi: Sumatera Utara, Indonesia.

[37] Nasution, D.K., Sinar, T.S., Lubis, S., et al., 2017. Translating malay incantation texts of sea offerings into english: an analysis of translation techniques and translation accuracy. International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies. 5(2), 113–121.

[38] Nababan, M.R., Santosa, R., 2025. Translating for Young Minds: Techniques to Ensure Accuracy and Acceptability in Children's Bible Stories. Script Journal: Journal of Linguistics and English Teaching. 10(1), 94–107.

[39] Richards, J.C., Schmidt, R.W., 2017. Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics, 5th ed. Routledge: London, UK.

[40] Thornbury, S., 2019. How to teach speaking. Pearson Education: London, UK.

[41] Canale, M., Swain, M., 1980. Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. Applied Linguistics. 1(1), 1–47.

[42] Savignon, S.J., 2018. Communicative competence: Theory and classroom practice, 2nd ed. McGraw-Hill: New York, NY, USA.

[43] Gotębiowska, A., 1984. The functional-notional approach: From theory to practice: Finocchiaro, Mary and Brumfit, Christopher, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983, 235 pp. System. 12(3), 299–301. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/0346-251X(84)90010-1

[44] Tamam, M.I., Rosyidi, A.W., Mufidah, N., 2025. Arabic Speaking Skills Learning Model Based on the Communicative Approach of Finocchiaro and Brumfits Theory for Students in Pesantren. Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan. 10(2), 1460–1469.

[45] Ivankova, N.V., Creswell, J.W. 2009. Mixed methods. In: Heigham, J., Croker, R.A. (eds.). Qualitative Research in Applied Linguistics: A Practical Introduction, 1st ed. Palgrave Macmillan: London, UK. pp. 135–161.

[46] Peltonen, P., 2018. Exploring connections between first and second language fluency: A mixed methods approach. The Modern Language Journal. 102(4), 676–692.

[47] Jang, E.E., Wagner, M., Park, G. 2014. Mixed methods research in language testing and assessment. Annual Review of Applied Linguistics. 34, 123–153.

[48] Schneider, S., 2020. A critical analysis of the role of intercultural communication in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) Companion Volume (2020). Journal of Spanish Language Teaching. 7(2), 193–199.

[49] Adeoye-Olatunde, O.A., Olenik, N.L., 2021. Research and scholarly methods: Semi-structured interviews. Journal of the american college of clinical pharmacy. 4(10), 1358–1367.

[50] Andewi, W., Trinovita, D., 2024. Effect of Zoom on English Speaking for EFL Students. LinguaEducare: Journal of English and Linguistic Studies. 1(1), 17–28.

[51] Castleberry, A., Nolen, A., 2018. Thematic analysis of qualitative research data: Is it as easy as it sounds? Currents in pharmacy teaching and learning. 10(6), 807–815.

[52] Lochmiller, C.R., 2021. Conducting thematic analysis with qualitative data. The qualitative report. 26(6), 2029–2044.

[53] Clarke, V., Braun, V., 2014. Thematic analysis. Ency-

clopedia of critical psychology. Springer: New York, NY, USA. pp. 1947–1952.

[54] Ahmadova, A., 2025. The Pragmatics of Translation: Challenges, Techniques, and Innovations. EuroGlobal Journal of Linguistics and Language Education. 2(1), 4–14.

[55] House, J., 2018. Translation and interpreting in language teaching and learning. Routledge: London, UK.