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# **Investigating Second Language Teachers' Pragmatic Awareness through Intercultural Virtual Exchange.**

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# Introduction

Interest in **internationalisation** in higher education led to a growing interest in **intercultural language use**.

**Pragmatic Awareness**, crucial for successful L2 teaching, is often overshadowed by grammar and vocabulary focus.

## Challenges for Teachers:

- Limited pragmatic knowledge and awareness.
- Difficulty applying pragmatic knowledge in practice.

# The aims of the study

- Exploring the pragmatic awareness and perceptions of a group of pre-service EFL teachers.
- Examining pre-service EFL teachers' meta-pragmatic awareness.
- Investigating the role of VE and raising EFL pre-service teachers' pragmatic awareness

# What is pragmatic competence?

The ability to “ **perform** language functions appropriately in a given context” (Bachman, 1990, p. 90).

“The ability to appropriately **interpret** and **respond** to social and cultural cues” (Roever, 2022).

*“Appropriateness”*

# Productive Pragmatics vs Receptive Pragmatics

## Productive Pragmatics Skills

- Appropriate performance of context-related responses :
  - Appropriate language use in different social contexts
  - Appropriate performance of language functions

## Receptive Pragmatics Skills

- Pragmatic interpretation and comprehension:
  - Interpreting and understanding communicative intentions and non-literal speech
- Awareness of pragmatic norms:
  - Understanding sociocultural norms

# Virtual Exchange

“The engagement of groups of learners in online intercultural interactions and collaboration projects with partners from other cultural contexts or geographical locations as an integrated part of their educational programmes”

(O’Dowd, 2018. p. 01)

# Pragmatic competence in Virtual Exchange Context.

## Goals :

- Establishing authentic instructional material.
- Developing personal relationships.

## Some research studies:

- Belz and Kinginger (2002): Formal (V) & informal (T) pronouns to address in French language.
- O'Dowd (2006): How telecollaborative exchanges expose learners to a broader range of discourse options beyond traditional classroom settings.
- Schneider and von der Emde (2006): the dialogic management of conflict.
- Conversational style, the negotiation of multistep collaborative projects, the performance of apologies, the presentation of opinions, and the negotiation of positive and negative face

(see Belz, 2003, 2006; Kramsch & Thorne, 2002; O'Dowd, 2003; Ware, 2005).

# Methodology - Study Context

- European **E-LIVE** project (Engaging Languages in Intercultural Virtual Exchange)
- Erasmus+ Cooperation partnerships in school education (KA220-SCH) 2021-2024
  - Utrecht University (UU, Netherlands),
  - Université Clermont Auvergne (UCA, France),
- ✓ Aimed at promoting intercultural communication of future language teachers and training in collaboration through virtual exchange



Utrecht University





# Pedagogical design


Task 1: Language Biographies


Task 2: Teaching experience


Task 3: Exploring Technology


Task 4: Task Design

Pre-task


Video presentation of personal experience of multilingualism (Flip) 


Individual reflection on teaching experience (Moodle forum) 


Preparation group assignement (Frame VR) 


Initial task idea for school virtual exchange 


Task

Commenting/ replying video presentations of partners 


Exchange on teaching experiences and teaching systems and intercultural comparison (BigBlueButton) 

Performinf and recording the machinima (Frame VR) 

Exchange and feedback on partner's task (BigBlueButton) 

Task design and formalisation in task template (Genially) 

Post-task

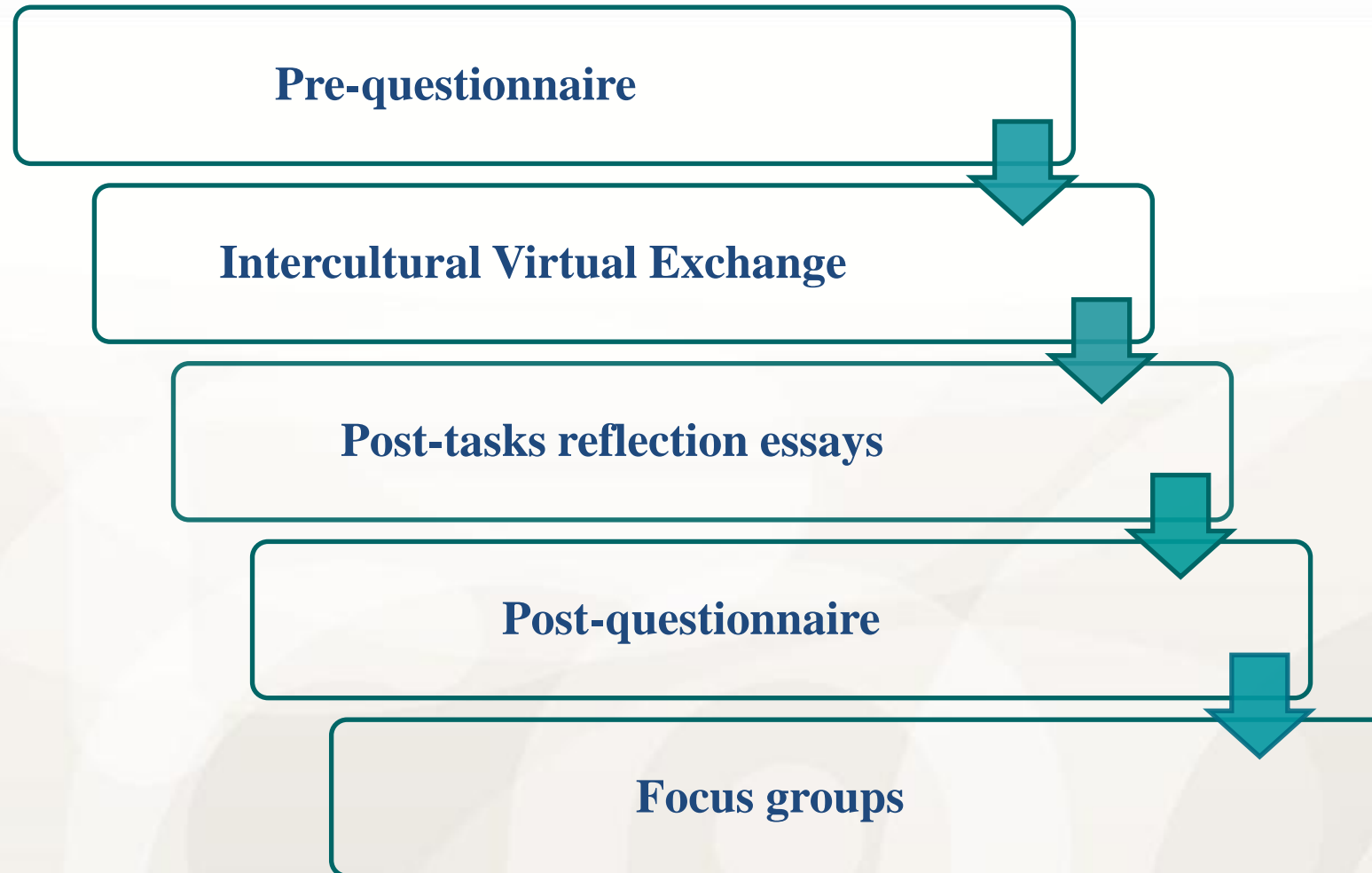
Individual task reflection (communication, collaboration, pragmatic competence, intercultural experience, digital tools) (Moodle wiki) 

# Participants

- Duration : nine weeks in Autumn 2023
- Introduce VE and VE task design
- UU – ‘Language Curriculum’: Master course
- UCA – ‘Training for Pedagogical Innovation – Telecollaboration’: Master course (18 hours)

- **UU – 5 participants.**
- **UCA – 13 participants.**

# Research Protocol



# Data Analysis

## Part I: Investigating EFL Pre-service Teachers' Pragmatic Knowledge and (Meta-)pragmatic Awareness

# Data Analysis and Discussion

## 1. Defining pragmatic competence.

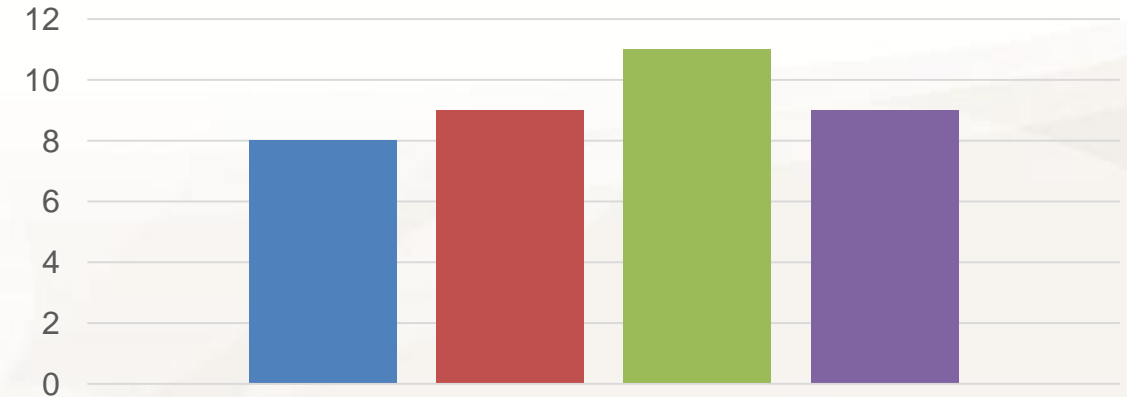
### *a. In the pre-questionnaire :*

Perceptions on pragmatic competence	Frequency
Being able to interpret and understand communicative intentions and non-literal speech	08
Being able to understand sociocultural norms.	09
Being able to use the language appropriately in different social contexts	11
Being able to appropriately perform language functions (speech acts: requests, apologies, refusals, ... etc)	09
None of the above suggestions	00

Receptive skills

Productive skills

Pre-service teachers' perceptions of PC



- Interpret and understand communicative intentions and non-literal speech
- Understand sociocultural norms.
- Use the language appropriately in different social contexts
- Appropriately perform language functions

**b. In the post-questionnaire:**

*The ability of adaptation*  
The ability of adaptation adapter son langage **g**  
it's using strategies to adapt your talking and interactions with others.

*How to communicate in the right tone according to the people in front of you*  
*Being able to adapt the language according to different situation.*  
*it's using strategies to adapt your talking and interactions with others.*

*How to communicate in the right tone according to the people in front of you*  
It is to be able to use language correctly so that the message people to understand is understood.  
*It is to be able to use language correctly so that the message people to understand is understood.*

To deal with communication? *To deal with communication?*  
The ability to use a language in different settings with the appropriate register.  
The ability to use a language in different settings with the appropriate register.

## d. Individual comparative analysis

The participants	Pragmatic competence definitions	
	In the pre-questionnaire	In the post-questionnaire
1. Nahla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being able to interpret and understand communicative intentions and non-literal speech;</li> <li>• Being able to use the language appropriately in different social contexts;</li> <li>• Being able to appropriately perform language functions (speech acts: requests, apologies, refusals, ... etc) ;</li> <li>• Being able to understand sociocultural norms</li> </ul>	I am not sure
2. Melanie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being able to interpret and understand communicative intentions and non-literal speech</li> </ul>	i think this is a competence I have
3. Josh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being able to use the language appropriately in different social contexts;</li> <li>• Being able to appropriately perform language functions (speech acts: requests, apologies, refusals, ... etc) ;</li> <li>• Being able to understand sociocultural norms. ;Being able to interpret and understand communicative intentions and non-literal speech</li> </ul>	The ability to use a language in different settings with the <b>appropriate register</b> .
5. Elsa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being able to use the language appropriately in different social contexts;</li> <li>• Being able to understand sociocultural norms. ;Being able to appropriately perform language functions (speech acts: requests, apologies, refusals, ... etc) ;</li> </ul>	It is to be able to use language correctly so that the message people to understand is understood.
4. Connie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being able to interpret and understand communicative intentions and non-literal speech ;Being able to use the language appropriately in different social contexts;</li> <li>• Being able to appropriately perform language functions (speech acts: requests, apologies, refusals, ... etc) ;</li> <li>• Being able to understand sociocultural norms</li> </ul>	the use of language according to the context
9. Oriah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being able to interpret and understand communicative intentions and non-literal speech ;</li> <li>• Being able to appropriately perform language functions (speech acts: requests, apologies, refusals, ... etc) ;</li> <li>• Being able to understand sociocultural norms. ;</li> <li>• Being able to use the language appropriately in different social contexts</li> </ul>	it's using strategies to adapt your talking and interactions with others

## 2. Awareness of aspects of Pragmatic Competence

### *a. In the post-questionnaire.*

*Josh:*

- Learners need to **understand** the difference between written and spoken language as well as the use of **formal and informal** language in both contexts

*Elsa:*

- Irony, humour in general. Strongly **cultural anchored** elements



### 3. Participants (Meta-)Pragmatic Awareness: pragmatic errors vs grammatical errors.

#### a. Intercultural pragmatic awareness:

- (1) Oriah: "C'est le côté « pompon » des français de « ce n'est pas comme ça qu'on dit !"
- (2) Oriah: "Les français font plus attention à la formule de politesse et J'ai l'impression que eux ils étaient plus directe dans la façon de s'exprimer".
- (3) Oriah: "On avait bcp de familiarité et on parlait un peu de la même manière. Et puis la France et les pays bas ce n'est pas les culture les plus éloignées donc c'est moins flagrant que les pays d'Asie"
- (4) Oriah: "Je pense qu'en français, on dit pas vraiment ce qu'on dit au lieu de dire que c'est bien, on dit que c'est pas mal. On a ce coté de parler différemment. Mais oui eux étaient plutôt straight forward"
- (5) Elsa: "C'était lié à ce que j'avais en tête comme concept français d'humour très directe, des choses un peut trop direct par rapport à l'anglais ou quoi que ce soit"

#### b. Pragmatic aspects realisation

- (6) Nahel: "Je faisait des effort par rapport à la politesse quand je voulais demander quelque chose pour ne pas être impolie"
- (7) Elsa: "j'avait très très peur de faire une poulette et de faire une blague sur qq chose qui puise ne pas etre un sujet de balgue au pays bas"

### c. Multimodal pragmatic awareness: verbal and co-verbal behaviour

(8) Elsa: “C’est vrai avec le langage non verbale j’étais très « **self-counscious** » à propos du mien parce que j’essayait de montrer mon engagement à travers mon langage non verbal pour **pas qu’elle pense ce que elle dit ne m’intéresse pas**”... “Oui j’avais l’impression qu’elle parlait beaucoup moins avec les mains bcp plus avec les expressions du visage contrairement à moi”

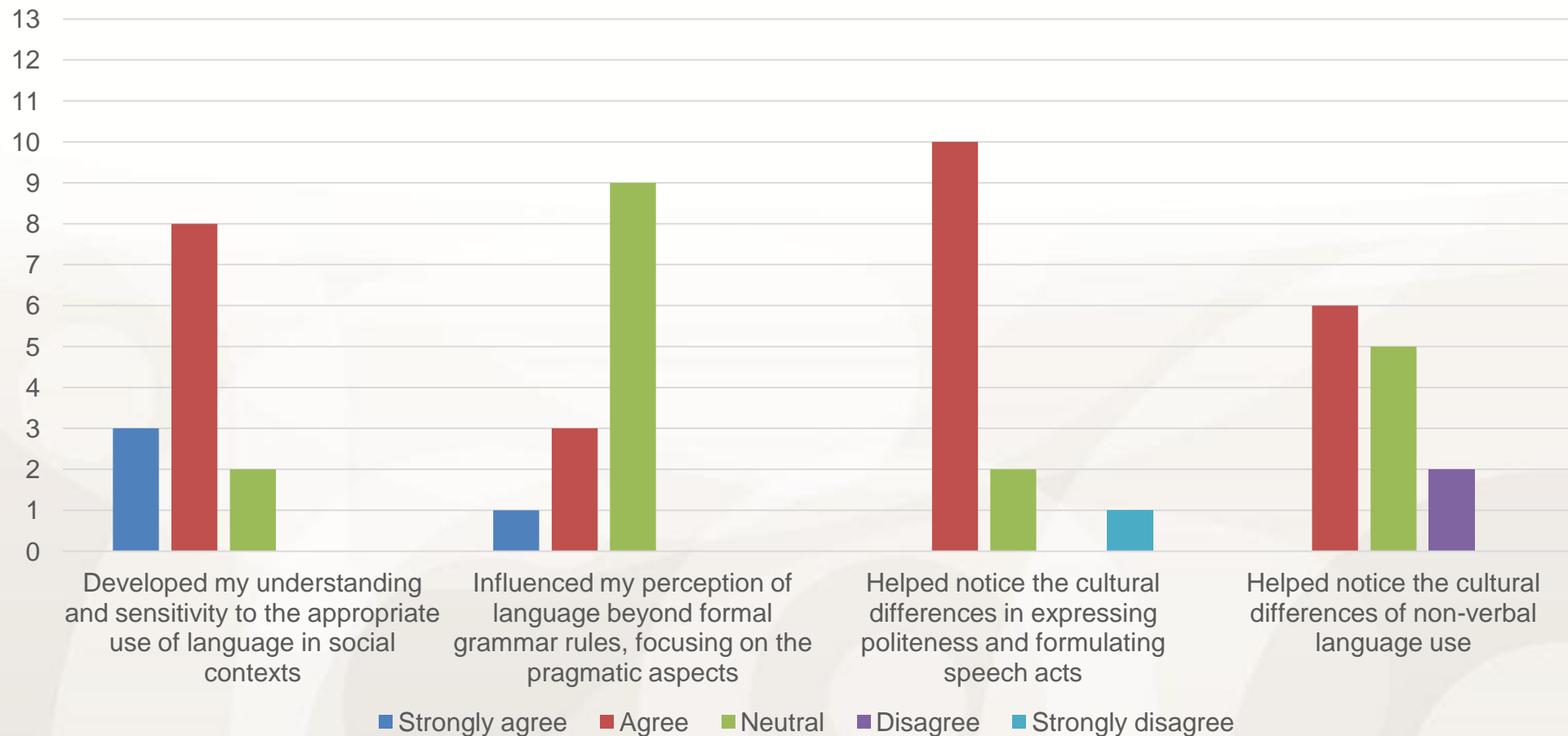
(9) Oriah: “Elle était sur les épaules et me parlait et moi, peut-être que c’est comme les clichés sur les italiens qui parlent avec les mains, je pense que nous aussi les français on a ce coté de parler beaucoup avec les main et eux pas du tout” ... “Je pense que c’est la différence qu’on a avec le pays Néerlandais”

(10) Ayna: “Au niveau de la politesse j’ai remarqué, et aussi par rapport, à physiquement, au niveau gestuel, j’ai parlé beaucoup plus avec les mains avec elle”

# Part II: Investigating the Role of VE in Raising (Meta-)pragmatic Awareness

## The Impact of of IVE on Participants' Pragmatic Awareness

### a. In the post-questionnaire.



*b. In the post-VE reflective essays.*

- Acquire linguacultural and digital knowledge
- Recognize insufficient understanding of pragmatics
- New language teaching objectives

Carrie: *“Cela apporte aux élèves des connaissances aussi bien linguistiques, culturelles mais aussi numériques et pragmatiques”*

Oriah: *“J’ai l’impression d’avoir mieux compris la mesure de la compétence pragmatique que j’avais tendance à associer à la compétence sociolinguistique”*

Carrie: *“Je trouve cette expérience pertinente et j’essaierai de la mettre à profit au cours de ma carrière de professeure d’anglaise”.*

# Conclusions

- A larger-than-expected number of teachers lacking pragmatic knowledge.
- EFL pre-service teachers' focus on practical application and performance of pragmatics over interpretation and comprehension.
- A noticeable shift in teachers' attention from productive to receptive pragmatics skills after the IVE experience.
- Interactions through IVE develop pragmatic awareness beyond verbal language use.
- VE promote authentic language use, meta-pragmatic discussions and intercultural comparisons. ((meta)-pragmatic awareness)

# Limitations of the study and directions for future research

- Short treatment period of pragmatic awareness.
  - Longitudinal examination and analysis using pre/post VE tests are needed.
- Cultural distance between the participants' socio-cultural background.
  - An analysis of participants' pragmatic competence during the videoconferencing sessions (Multimodal approach).
  - A self/peer-assessment tasks to promote meta-pragmatic competence.

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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# Pedagogical Implications

- Promoting a pragmatics-focused curriculum and instruction in Teachers trainings' institutions.
- To draw pre-service teachers' attention to ways of developing their own pragmatic awareness to improve their learners' pragmatic competence.
- To draw pre-service teachers' pragmatic awareness of co-verbal language use.