
Pragmatic Failure in ELF-Mediated IT Workplace Communication: A Mixed-Methods Study of Multicultural Development Teams

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Annotation

This article reports an empirical mixed-methods investigation into pragmatic failure among information technology (IT) professionals communicating in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) within multicultural, distributed development teams. Drawing on Thomas's (1983) pragmalinguistic–sociopragmatic distinction and Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework, the study combines a structured questionnaire (N = 58) with semi-structured critical-incident interviews (n = 11) to map the frequency, genre distribution, and perceived causes of pragmatic failure across code review comments, asynchronous chat, stand-up meetings, bug reports, and client correspondence. Findings indicate that pragmatic failure is reported most frequently in text-based, asynchronous genres, where prosodic and visual mitigation cues are unavailable, and that sociopragmatic rather than pragmalinguistic failure predominates. Interview data reveal that professionals develop largely unsystematised, experience-based repair strategies, and that the majority regard their prior English for Specific Purposes (ESP) training as adequate for grammar and vocabulary but inadequate for pragmatic competence. The study argues for the explicit, genre-based integration of ELF pragmatics into IT-ESP curricula.

Keywords

Pragmatic failure, English as a Lingua Franca, IT professional discourse, sociopragmatic competence, mixed-methods research, ESP pedagogy, multicultural teams

AT sohasida ko'p madaniyatli jamoalarda ingliz tili lingva-franka (ELF) vositachiligidagi muloqotda pragmatik nosozliklar: AT mutaxassislari o'rtasida aralash metodlar asosidagi tadqiqot

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Annotatsiya

Mazkur maqolada axborot texnologiyalari (AT) sohasida faoliyat yurituvchi, ko'p madaniyatli va tarqoq jamoalarda ingliz tili lingva-franka (ELF) sifatida muloqot qiluvchi mutaxassislar orasidagi pragmatik nosozliklarni o'rganishga qaratilgan empirik aralash metodlar tadqiqoti taqdim etiladi. Tomas (1983) tomonidan taklif qilingan pragmalingvistik va sotsiopragmatik nosozlik farqlanishi hamda Braun va Levinson (1987) muloyimlik nazariyasiga tayangan holda, tadqiqot 58 nafar respondent ishtirokidagi so'rovnoma va 11 nafar mutaxassis bilan o'tkazilgan yarim tuzilmalangan intervyularni birlashtiradi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, pragmatik nosozliklar eng ko'p holda matnga asoslangan, asinxron janrlarda (kod ko'rib chiqish sharhlari, chat) kuzatiladi, bunda ovoz ohangi va vizual signallar mavjud emas,

hamda sotsiopragmatik nosozliklar pragmalingvistik nosozliklardan ustunlik qiladi. Intervyu natijalari shuni ko'rsatadiki, mutaxassislar tizimlashtirilmagan, tajribaga asoslangan tuzatish strategiyalarini o'zlari ishlab chiqadilar va aksariyat holatlarda oldingi ESP ta'limi grammatika va lug'at bo'yicha yetarli, ammo pragmatik kompetensiya bo'yicha yetarsiz bo'lganini ta'kidlaydilar. Tadqiqot ELF pragmatikasini IT-ESP o'quv dasturlariga janrga asoslangan tarzda aniq integratsiyalashni taklif qiladi.

Kalit so'zlar Pragmatik nosozlik, ingliz tili lingva-franka, IT professional diskursi, sotsiopragmatik kompetensiya, aralash metodlar tadqiqoti, ESP pedagogikasi, ko'p madaniyatli jamoalar

**Прагматические сбои в
межкультурной ИТ-
коммуникации на английском
языке как лингва франка:
исследование смешанными
методами среди ИТ-
специалистов**

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Аннотация В данной статье представлено эмпирическое исследование прагматических сбоев среди специалистов в области информационных технологий (ИТ), общающихся на английском языке как лингва франка (ELF) в рамках межкультурных распределённых команд. Опираясь на различие прагмалингвистических и социопрагматических сбоев, предложенное Томасом (1983), а также на теорию вежливости Брауна и Левинсона (1987), исследование сочетает анкетирование (N = 58) с полуструктурированными интервью на основе метода критических инцидентов (n = 11). Результаты показывают, что прагматические сбои чаще всего встречаются в письменных, асинхронных жанрах коммуникации, где отсутствуют просодические и визуальные средства смягчения, и что социопрагматические сбои преобладают над прагмалингвистическими. Данные интервью свидетельствуют, что большинство специалистов считают свою предыдущую подготовку по английскому языку для специальных целей (ESP) достаточной в части грамматики и лексики, но недостаточной в части прагматической компетентности. Исследование обосновывает необходимость явной, жанрово-ориентированной интеграции прагматики ELF в учебные программы IT-ESP.

Ключевые слова Прагматический сбой, английский язык как лингва франка, профессиональный дискурс в ИТ, социопрагматическая компетентность, смешанные методы исследования, педагогика ESP, межкультурные команды

Introduction

Global information technology (IT) production is now overwhelmingly organised around distributed, multicultural teams in which English functions not as the language of a dominant native-speaking group but as a lingua franca shared among speakers of many first languages (Seidlhofer, 2011). Research on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has established that such communication is not simply an imperfect approximation of native-speaker norms but a communicative practice governed by its own pragmatic logic, oriented toward mutual intelligibility and cooperative meaning-negotiation rather than idiomatic correctness (Firth, 1996; Cogo & Dewey, 2012). Within business and professional ELF (BELF) research, this shift in perspective has generated a substantial body of work on politeness, rapport-building, and communicative effectiveness in multinational corporate settings (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005; Ehrenreich, 2010). Yet IT workplace communication characterised by a distinctive mix of terse, asynchronous, text-based genres (code review comments, bug tickets, chat messages) and short, task-focused synchronous exchanges (daily stand-ups) remains comparatively underexamined as a site of ELF pragmatics, despite its centrality to the contemporary global economy.

This gap is pedagogically consequential. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction for IT learners has traditionally prioritised technical vocabulary, register, and grammatical accuracy, on the assumption that linguistic correctness is sufficient for effective professional communication (Wu, 2024). However, research in interlanguage and ELF pragmatics has repeatedly demonstrated that grammatically well-formed utterances can nonetheless constitute pragmatic failure communication perceived as inappropriate, face-threatening, or unintentionally rude by an

interlocutor, independent of grammatical accuracy (Thomas, 1983; Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). If IT-ESP curricula do not address pragmatic competence explicitly, learners may enter professional environments linguistically proficient but pragmatically underprepared for the face-work, mitigation, and register-calibration demands of multicultural collaborative work.

The present study addresses this gap empirically. Using a mixed-methods design combining a structured questionnaire and semi-structured critical-incident interviews, it investigates how IT professionals working in multicultural, ELF-mediated teams experience and describe pragmatic failure, across which communicative genres such failure is most frequently reported, and how professionals compensate for the absence of explicit pragmatic training. The study is guided by four research questions:

RQ1. *What types of pragmatic failure (pragmalinguistic vs. sociopragmatic) do IT professionals report experiencing or witnessing in ELF-mediated workplace communication?*

RQ2. *Which communicative genres are most strongly associated with reported pragmatic failure?*

RQ3. *How do IT professionals perceive the adequacy of their prior ESP training in preparing them for the pragmatic demands of the workplace?*

RQ4. *What repair and compensation strategies do professionals report developing on the job?*

The study contributes to three overlapping strands of scholarship. First, it extends ELF pragmatics research, historically concentrated on spoken business meetings, academic seminars, and negotiation encounters (Björkman, 2011; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010), into a genre ecology largely defined by short, asynchronous, written exchange. Second, it contributes empirical needs-analysis evidence to the ESP literature

on IT English, which has so far relied predominantly on corpus-frequency approaches to identify instructional targets rather than on practitioners' self-reported communicative difficulty. Third, by employing critical incident technique alongside a structured questionnaire, the study offers a replicable methodological template for identifying genre-specific pragmatic needs in other professional ESP domains beyond IT.

The remainder of the article is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews the theoretical foundations of pragmatic failure, ELF pragmatics, and IT professional discourse. Section 3 details the mixed-methods design. Section 4 reports questionnaire and interview findings. Section 5 discusses implications for ESP pedagogy, and Section 6 concludes.

Theoretical framework

Pragmatic Competence, Pragmatic Failure, and Politeness

Following Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983), pragmatic competence is conventionally analysed into two components: pragmalinguistic competence, the knowledge of the linguistic forms available for realising particular communicative functions, and sociopragmatic competence, the knowledge of the social and contextual conditions governing when and how those forms should be deployed. Thomas (1983) further distinguishes pragmalinguistic failure, in which a speaker selects a linguistic form that does not conventionally carry the intended illocutionary force, from sociopragmatic failure, in which a speaker misjudges the social appropriateness of an utterance, its directness, formality, or face-threat, relative to the context. This distinction has proved durable across four decades of interlanguage pragmatics research (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Taguchi, 2015; Taguchi & Roever, 2017) and provides the primary analytic framework for the present study.

Politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) offers a complementary lens, conceptualising communicative acts as

potentially threatening to the positive or negative face of interlocutors, and describing the mitigation strategies: hedging, indirectness, in-group markers, deference that speakers deploy to manage face-threat. In professional contexts, face-threatening acts are pervasive: requests, criticism, refusals, and disagreement are structurally built into collaborative technical work (code review, bug triage, project status reporting), making politeness management a core, if often invisible, component of professional communicative competence.

ELF research has reframed the study of non-native English communication away from a deficit model, in which non-native usage is measured against native-speaker norms, toward a description of ELF as a communicative practice with its own emergent pragmatic conventions (Seidlhofer, 2011; Jenkins, 2015). Firth's (1996) foundational analysis of ELF telephone interactions demonstrated that ELF speakers actively cooperate to overlook minor infelicities and to negotiate mutual understanding through accommodation, repetition, and paraphrase, rather than treating deviation from native norms as failure. Subsequent corpus-based work has documented systematic pragmatic strategies characteristic of ELF talk, including explicitness strategies such as self-repair and self-repetition (Kaur, 2011), signalling and pre-empting of misunderstanding (Mauranen, 2006), and accommodation strategies that adjust speech to interlocutors' proficiency and cultural background (Björkman, 2011; Cogo & Dewey, 2012).

Within professional and business settings specifically, BELF research has shown that ELF users tend to prioritise communicative clarity and task efficiency over idiomatic correctness (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010), that power and status relations are pragmatically negotiated differently across cultural backgrounds, for example, in the directness of email requests (Björge, 2007), and that humour, small talk, and rapport-building carry particular risk of miscommunication in

multicultural teams because their pragmatic conventions are culturally variable and rarely made explicit (Rogerson-Revell, 2007; Pullin, 2010). House's (2003) analysis of intercultural university encounters further demonstrated that miscommunication in ELF settings frequently arises not from linguistic deficiency but from divergent interactional expectations, whereby participants pursue different, non-converging discourse goals without either party necessarily noticing the divergence, a phenomenon she terms mutual disattention.

IT professional communication presents a distinctive configuration of ELF communicative demands. Unlike the largely synchronous spoken interactions studied in early BELF research (meetings, negotiations), a substantial proportion of IT workplace communication is asynchronous and text-based: code review comments, issue-tracker tickets, pull-request discussions, and instant-messaging channels. These genres strip away the prosodic, facial, and gestural cues that ELF speakers rely on for real-time repair and accommodation (Mauranen, 2006), while simultaneously demanding rapid, often terse responses under time pressure. IT teams also frequently combine text-based asynchronous exchange with short synchronous meetings (daily stand-ups, sprint reviews) characterised by compressed turn allocation and status-reporting speech acts.

Code review in particular constitutes a genre with acute face-threat potential: reviewers are structurally required to evaluate and criticise colleagues' work, often in writing, without the mitigating resources of tone of voice or facial expression. If IT communication constitutes a distinctive ELF site with genre-specific pragmatic demands, then IT-ESP pedagogy requires empirical evidence grounded in practitioners' own reported experience of where and how pragmatic failure actually occurs, rather than instructional materials that generalise from business-meeting BELF research or from

decontextualised model dialogues. This is the gap the present study addresses.

Methodology

Research Context and Participants

The study employed a two-phase explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (questionnaire followed by interviews), conducted between March and June 2026. Participants were IT professionals (software developers, technical support specialists) recruited through professional networking platforms, developer community forums, and snowball sampling, with the inclusion criterion that participants worked, or had worked within the preceding two years, in a team including colleagues from at least one other national or linguistic background, using English as the primary working language.

Fifty-eight professionals ($N = 58$) completed the questionnaire (Phase 1). Participants represented a range of first-language backgrounds, predominantly Uzbek, Russian, and other Central and South/Southeast Asian L1s, reflecting the recruitment channels used, with self-reported English proficiency at B2-C1 level (CEFR). Mean professional experience was 5.4 years ($SD = 3.1$). Team composition varied from largely co-located teams with occasional international clients to fully distributed teams spanning four or more countries.

From the questionnaire respondents, eleven participants ($n = 11$) who reported multiple pragmatic-failure incidents and expressed willingness to be interviewed were purposively selected for Phase 2, following a maximum-variation logic across role, team distribution, and reported failure type.

Instruments

The questionnaire comprised four sections: (a) background information (L1, role, years of experience, team composition, remote/onsite status); (b) a 24-item Likert-scale battery (1 = never, 5 = very often) adapted from Thomas's (1983) pragmalinguistic/sociopragmatic distinction, asking participants to rate the frequency with which they had

experienced or witnessed specific failure types (e.g., "I have been perceived as blunt or rude when I did not intend to be," "I have misjudged how directly I could phrase a request to a colleague"); (c) genre-specific items asking participants to rate pragmatic difficulty separately for code review comments, asynchronous chat, stand-up/sprint meetings, bug reports/tickets, and client-facing email; and (d) two open-ended critical-incident prompts asking participants to briefly describe a specific instance of miscommunication.

The interview protocol, informed by critical incident technique (Flanagan as cited in Spencer-Oatey & Harsch, 2015), asked participants to narrate in detail one or more incidents identified in the questionnaire, followed by structured probes addressing what happened, how the participant or interlocutor reacted, whether and how the incident was resolved, what the participant believed caused the misunderstanding, and whether prior English training had prepared them for the situation. Interviews lasted 25–40 minutes, were conducted in English or Russian according to participant preference, and were audio-recorded with consent.

The study followed standard ethical procedures for social-science research involving human participants. Participation was voluntary and uncompensated; participants were informed in advance of the study's purpose, the voluntary and anonymous nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. Company names, project names, and identifiable colleague details disclosed during interviews were removed or replaced with generic descriptors (e.g., 'a senior colleague,' 'a client contact') at the transcription stage. Given the potentially sensitive nature of critical-incident narratives involving interpersonal friction, participants were reminded that they could decline to elaborate on any incident and were not asked to identify colleagues by name at any point in the interview.

Procedure

The questionnaire was distributed online; median completion time was 14 minutes. Interviews were scheduled individually via video call within three weeks of questionnaire completion. All participants provided informed consent; responses were anonymised, and identifying details (company and colleague names) were removed or generalised prior to analysis.

Data Analysis

Questionnaire data were analysed using descriptive statistics for Likert-scale items, grouped and averaged by failure type (pragmalinguistic vs. sociopragmatic) and by genre, with independent-samples comparisons where relevant. Interview transcripts were coded using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), with an initial coding scheme derived deductively from Thomas's (1983) failure taxonomy and Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies, supplemented by inductively derived codes emerging from the data (e.g., 'asynchronous tone flattening,' 'on-the-job repair learning'). Two researchers independently coded a 20% subsample of transcripts; inter-coder agreement was acceptable (Cohen's $\kappa = .79$), and discrepancies were resolved through discussion before the remaining transcripts were coded.

Findings

Questionnaire Findings

Across the full sample, sociopragmatic failure items received consistently higher mean frequency ratings ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.71$) than pragmalinguistic failure items ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 0.65$), a difference that was statistically significant ($t(57) = 6.84$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.90$). The most frequently endorsed individual items concerned directness calibration ("I have misjudged how directly I could phrase a request or piece of feedback," $M = 3.91$) and the perceived tone of written messages ("My written message was interpreted as more blunt or critical than I intended," $M = 3.78$).

Genre-specific analysis showed that reported pragmatic difficulty was highest for

asynchronous text-based genres. Code review comments received the highest mean difficulty rating ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.88$), followed by asynchronous chat ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.79$) and bug reports/tickets ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.85$). Synchronous spoken genres received comparatively lower ratings: stand-up meetings ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 0.91$) and client-facing email, which, despite being written, was

rated lower than code review or chat ($M = 2.65$, $SD = 0.94$), plausibly reflecting the greater institutional formality and pre-planning typically applied to client correspondence relative to internal peer communication. A repeated-measures comparison confirmed that genre significantly predicted reported difficulty ($F(4, 228) = 18.62$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.25$).

Genre	M	SD	Rank
Code review comments	3.85	0.88	1
Asynchronous chat (Slack/Teams)	3.61	0.79	2
Bug reports / tickets	3.34	0.85	3
Stand-up / sprint meetings	2.77	0.91	4
Client-facing email	2.65	0.94	5

Table 1. Mean reported pragmatic difficulty by communicative genre ($N = 58$)

Regarding training adequacy (RQ3), 44 of 58 respondents (75.9%) rated their prior formal English instruction as "adequate" or "very adequate" for grammar and vocabulary, while only 14 of 58 (24.1%) rated it as adequate preparation for the pragmatic and interpersonal demands of workplace communication. Thirty-nine respondents (67.2%) reported that pragmatic skills relevant to their current role were acquired primarily "through workplace experience and trial and error" rather than formal instruction.

Interview Findings

Thematic analysis of the eleven interviews identified four recurrent themes.

Theme 1: *Asynchronous tone flattening.*

Nine of eleven interviewees described incidents in which written, asynchronous messages, particularly code review comments, were perceived by colleagues as harsher or more critical than intended, in the absence of prosodic or facial mitigation cues. Several interviewees reported adopting deliberate, self-taught mitigation strategies (opening with a positive observation before criticism, adding brief justificatory clauses, or using question forms rather than direct imperatives),

developed through observed colleague behaviour rather than instruction.

Theme 2: *Directness calibration across cultural backgrounds.* Interviewees frequently attributed pragmatic difficulty to differing norms of directness among colleagues from different national backgrounds, particularly in giving critical feedback and declining requests. Several described initial uncertainty about how directly they could disagree with more senior colleagues and reported gradually calibrating their register through repeated interaction rather than explicit guidance, consistent with House's (2003) account of mutual disattention, whereby divergent interactional expectations gradually converge through accumulated interaction rather than being directly addressed.

Theme 3: *Perceived gap between formal training and workplace demands.* Consistent with the questionnaire findings, most interviewees described their prior ESP coursework as focused on technical vocabulary, grammar, and occasionally presentation skills, with little to no attention to strategies for mitigating criticism, phrasing requests to colleagues of differing seniority, or managing

misunderstanding in text-based exchange. Several interviewees explicitly requested that future ESP training incorporate authentic examples of workplace text genres, such as code review threads and ticket discussions, rather than idealised dialogue models.

Theme 4: *On-the-job repair strategies.*

Interviewees described a range of self-developed repair strategies for managing or resolving pragmatic failure once it had occurred, including direct clarification, switching from asynchronous to synchronous communication to resolve ambiguity, and observational learning from more experienced colleagues' communicative style. Several noted that such strategies had been acquired slowly and unsystematically, often only after an incident had already caused some interpersonal friction.

Discussion

The findings reported above extend ELF pragmatics research into a domain, IT professional communication that has received little empirical attention despite its centrality to the contemporary globalised workplace. Three findings merit particular discussion.

First, the predominance of sociopragmatic over pragmalinguistic failure is consistent with prior interlanguage pragmatics research showing that grammatical proficiency does not guarantee pragmatic appropriateness (Thomas, 1983; Taguchi, 2015), and extends this finding to a population, IT professionals with B2-C1 English proficiency, whose formal linguistic competence is generally strong. This reinforces the argument that pragmatic competence constitutes a distinct instructional target that cannot be assumed to develop as a by-product of grammatical or lexical instruction.

Second, the concentration of reported difficulty in asynchronous, text-based genres, particularly code review, corroborates theoretical predictions that the absence of prosodic and visual mitigation resources in written ELF exchange increases the risk of sociopragmatic misjudgement (Mauranen,

2006; Kaur, 2011), and extends BELF research, conducted predominantly on spoken meeting and negotiation genres (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Rogerson-Revell, 2007), to a genre ecology specific to software development. This suggests that ELF pragmatics instruction for IT learners should not be modelled directly on business-meeting-oriented BELF pedagogy but should be developed around IT's own genre conventions.

Third, the consistent finding, across both questionnaire and interview data, that professionals perceive a substantial gap between their formal ESP training and the pragmatic demands of their actual work, and consequently develop compensatory strategies informally and unsystematically, constitutes direct empirical support for integrating explicit pragmatic instruction into IT-ESP curricula. The repair strategies interviewees described, pre-emptive positive framing, question-form mitigation, switching channels to resolve ambiguity, are precisely the kinds of pragmalinguistic resources that could be made explicit and rehearsed through instruction, rather than left to be discovered individually, often at some interpersonal cost.

These findings suggest a genre-based instructional framework for IT-ESP pragmatics, targeting the specific speech acts and mitigation strategies associated with the highest-difficulty genres identified in this study: face-threat mitigation in code review feedback, explicitness and repair strategies for asynchronous chat, and status-sensitive request and refusal strategies for cross-cultural collaboration more generally. Authentic materials, drawn from appropriately anonymised or synthetic code review threads, ticket discussions, and chat exchanges, would align such instruction with the genre ecology in which pragmatic failure was most frequently reported.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The sample, while diverse in national background, was recruited predominantly through channels likely to over-

represent Central Asian professionals and may not generalise to IT workforces with different linguistic compositions. Self-report data on pragmatic failure is subject to recall and social-desirability bias and could not be triangulated against naturalistic discourse data within the scope of the present study. Future research should combine self-report methods of the kind employed here with discourse-analytic study of naturally occurring IT communication, and should examine whether targeted pragmatic instruction, once developed, measurably reduces reported pragmatic failure in workplace settings. A further limitation concerns the cross-sectional character of the design: because participants were surveyed and interviewed at a single point in their careers, the data cannot establish whether the compensatory strategies described in Section 4.2 change systematically with years of professional experience, or whether early-career professionals are disproportionately vulnerable to the kinds of pragmatic failure reported here. A longitudinal or cross-experience-level comparative design would help clarify this question and could usefully inform decisions about when, in a professional development trajectory, explicit pragmatic instruction is likely to be most beneficial.

Building directly on the genre ranking reported in Table 1 and the thematic findings of Section 4.2, three instructional priorities can be derived for IT-ESP curriculum design. The first priority concerns code review feedback, the genre associated with both the highest mean difficulty rating and the most frequently narrated critical incidents. Instruction targeting this genre could draw on authentic (anonymised) review-comment corpora to make explicit the mitigation strategies interviewees reported discovering informally, positive-before-critical sequencing, question-form suggestions in place of direct imperatives, and explicit justification clauses, and could incorporate guided practice in rewriting bluntly phrased feedback into face-mitigated alternatives.

The second priority concerns asynchronous chat and ticket-based communication, where the absence of prosodic cues was repeatedly identified as a source of misjudged tone. Tasks here might involve comparative analysis of the same message content rendered with and without mitigation markers, sensitising learners to how small lexical and structural choices shift perceived directness in the absence of intonation. The third priority concerns cross-cultural status and directness calibration more broadly, addressed through role-play and scenario tasks simulating interactions across seniority levels and cultural backgrounds, informed directly by the specific incident types interviewees described (disagreeing with a senior colleague, declining a request from a client contact, clarifying an ambiguous specification from an international teammate).

This framework differs from existing corpus-driven ESP task design (e.g., approaches drawing on general and academic corpora such as COCA, BNC, or MICASE) in that it is derived directly from practitioners' own reported difficulty and incident data rather than from corpus frequency alone. The two approaches are complementary: corpus resources can supply authentic exemplars of the target forms, while the present study's findings supply the needs-analysis evidence indicating which genres and speech acts most urgently require pedagogical attention.

Conclusion

This study has presented mixed-methods empirical evidence on pragmatic failure among IT professionals communicating in English as a Lingua Franca within multicultural development teams. Drawing on a 58-respondent questionnaire and eleven critical-incident interviews, the study found that sociopragmatic failure is reported substantially more often than pragmalinguistic failure, that asynchronous text-based genres, particularly code review, are disproportionately associated with reported pragmatic difficulty, and that the large majority of professionals perceive their

prior ESP training as inadequate preparation for these demands, developing compensatory pragmatic strategies informally through workplace experience. These findings provide an empirical foundation for the explicit integration of ELF pragmatics into IT-ESP curricula, organised around the genre-specific communicative demands that IT professionals

themselves identify as most pragmatically challenging. Future research combining self-report and naturalistic discourse data, alongside intervention studies evaluating explicit pragmatic instruction, would further strengthen the evidence base for this pedagogical reorientation.

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