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Pragmatics and Persuasive Communication as Determinants for Effective Teaching and Learning in the Era of AI

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Abstract

It is not a gainsay that the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has fundamentally transformed educational communication, instructional delivery, and classroom interaction across global learning contexts. In contemporary teaching and learning environments, pragmatic competence and persuasive communication have become foundational determinants of effective teaching. This paper investigates the role of pragmatics and persuasive communication in enhancing effective teaching and learning in the era of AI; examines how context-sensitive communication and persuasive discourse improve instructional outcomes in traditional and AI-mediated classrooms; and explores the impact of AI technologies such as ChatGPT, intelligent tutoring systems, and computer-mediated communication on classroom interaction and learner participation. Drawing from Speech Act Theory, the Cooperative Principle, and Aristotelian Rhetoric, alongside contributions from Nigerian scholars in pragmatics and educational technology, the paper analyzes how context-sensitive communication and persuasive discourse improve instructional outcomes in physical and AI-mediated classrooms. The study further explores the impact of AI technologies including ChatGPT, intelligent tutoring systems, and computer-mediated communication on classroom interaction, learner participation, and pedagogical effectiveness. Recent studies had reveal that AI-generated conversations increasingly demonstrate human-like pragmatic competence and are becoming valuable tools for language instruction and interactional learning. However, the paper also identifies challenges such as misinformation, overdependence on AI tools, and reduced interpersonal communication. It concludes that pragmatics and persuasive communication remain indispensable for effective education despite technological advancement. The paper recommends integrating pragmatic and persuasive communication training into teacher education and AI-assisted pedagogy, with particular attention to Nigerian and African educational contexts.

Keywords: pragmatics, persuasive communication, artificial intelligence, educational technology, pragmatic competence

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Introduction

Education is basically a communicative activity. The success of teaching and learning really depends on the quality of interaction between teachers and learners, the appropriateness of instructional discourse, and the ability to convey meaning effectively across diverse contexts (Taguchi, 2019; Babatunde, 2018). In contemporary educational settings, communication extends beyond physical classrooms to digital and AI-mediated environments where virtual interaction increasingly reshapes educational experiences. Hence, effective teaching now requires not only subject mastery but also communicative competence, pragmatic awareness, and persuasive ability.

This paper features Pragmatics which centers on how language users interpret meaning in context. It examines how speakers achieve communicative goals through context-sensitive language use, inference, politeness, implicature, and speech acts (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969; Adegbija, 2004). In classroom discourse, pragmatics enables teachers to present information appropriately according to learners' needs, cultural backgrounds, and situational realities. Persuasive communication complements pragmatic competence by enabling teachers to motivate learners, sustain attention, encourage discipline, and inspire academic participation (Grice, 1975; Odebunmi, 2006).

The rapid development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has introduced new dimensions to educational communication. AI-powered tools such as chatbots, intelligent tutoring systems, virtual assistants, and generative AI applications now participate actively in teaching and learning processes. These technologies increasingly mediate classroom discourse, feedback mechanisms, assessment procedures, and learner support systems (Baskota & Poudel, 2024; Adepoju & Olaniyan, 2023).

Recent studies indicate that AI-generated conversations can exhibit human-like pragmatic characteristics suitable for educational communication and interactional learning (Chen, Li, & Ye, 2024; Oni & Akinwale, 2024). Similarly, scholars have emphasized the growing relevance of AI for pragmatics instruction and language learning (Godwin-Jones, 2024; Emenanjo, 2023). However, the effectiveness of these technologies depends significantly on how teachers and learners deploy pragmatic and persuasive communication strategies within AI-supported educational environments.

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In the Nigerian context, where educational systems face challenges of infrastructure, large class sizes, and multicultural linguistic diversity, the integration of AI presents both opportunities and unique pragmatic considerations (Jegede, 2022; Fayemi & Macaulay, 2023). Nigerian scholars have made significant contributions to pragmatics and discourse analysis, offering frameworks applicable to AI-mediated education in developing contexts.

This paper therefore examines pragmatics and persuasive communication as determinants of effective teaching and learning in the era of AI by exploring their theoretical foundations, pedagogical relevance, classroom applications, challenges, and implications for modern education, with special reference to Nigerian scholarship and context.

Statement of the Problem

Despite rapid growth of Artificial Intelligence in educational contexts worldwide, significant gaps remain in understanding how foundational communicative competences specifically pragmatics and persuasive communication interact with AI-mediated teaching and learning environments. Existing literature has examined AI's technical capabilities in education (Russell & Norvig, 2021) and pragmatic competence in human interaction (Taguchi, 2019), but limited research systematically explores how these domains intersect.

Digging further, while studies demonstrate that AI can simulate pragmatic features (Chen, Li, & Ye, 2024; Quan & Chen, 2025), the educational implications of this capability remain undertheorized, particularly in non-Western educational contexts. In Nigeria and other African countries, the rapid adoption of AI tools in education has outpaced the development of pedagogical frameworks for their effective integration. Educators lack evidence-based guidelines for combining AI tools with human communicative competence while preserving essential cultural and pragmatic sensitivities.

The problem is compounded by several factors, such as limited empirical research on how pragmatic competence transfers to AI-mediated interaction in multilingual and multicultural classrooms typical of Nigerian educational settings. In addition, persuasive communication strategies that work effectively in traditional face-to-face classrooms may not translate directly to AI-mediated environments, yet no systematic framework exists to guide adaptation. Besides, the digital divide between urban and rural institutions, as well as between private and public schools in Nigeria (Jegede, 2022; Fayemi & Macaulay, 2023), creates unequal access to AI tools, raising

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questions about how pragmatic and persuasive communication can be effectively implemented across diverse resource settings.

Current AI systems are predominantly trained on Western linguistic and cultural data, potentially resulting in pragmatic inappropriateness when deployed in Nigerian and other non-Western educational contexts (Adegbija, 2004; Emenanjọ, 2023). Therefore, there is an urgent need to investigate how pragmatics and persuasive communication can serve as determinants of effective teaching and learning in the AI era, with particular attention to the challenges and opportunities presented by AI technologies in diverse cultural and educational contexts.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this paper is to investigate the role of pragmatics and persuasive communication in enhancing effective teaching and learning in the era of AI. It sought three objectives:

1. to investigate the role of pragmatics and persuasive communication in enhancing effective teaching and learning in the era of AI.
2. to examine how context-sensitive communication and persuasive discourse improve instructional outcomes in traditional and AI-mediated classrooms.
3. to explore the impact of AI technologies such as ChatGPT, and computer-mediated communication on classroom interaction and learner participation.

Research Questions

Aligned with the above stated objectives, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What roles do pragmatics and persuasive communication play as determinants of effective teaching and learning in AI-integrated educational contexts?
2. How do context-sensitive communication (pragmatics) and persuasive discourse improve instructional outcomes across traditional versus AI-mediated classroom environments?
3. In what ways do AI technologies specifically ChatGPT, intelligent tutoring systems, and computer-mediated communication influence classroom interaction quality and learner participation?

Literature Review

Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics that studies meaning in relation to context. It investigates how speakers use language to achieve communicative intentions and how listeners interpret utterances based on contextual knowledge, social relations, and situational factors (Levinson, 1983; Yule, 1996). Pragmatics encompasses speech acts, conversational implicature, politeness

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principles, presupposition, deixis, and contextual inference. In educational discourse, pragmatics enables effective interaction between teachers and learners through context-sensitive communication strategies.

Nigerian scholars have made substantial contributions to pragmatics, particularly in the areas of discourse analysis, politeness strategies, and intercultural communication. Adegbija (2004) extensively studied pragmatic failure in cross-cultural communication, providing frameworks relevant to multicultural Nigerian classrooms. Babatunde (2018) examined discourse strategies in Nigerian educational settings, emphasizing the role of context in meaning interpretation. Odebunmi (2006) contributed to medical and classroom pragmatics, analyzing how speech acts function in Nigerian pedagogical contexts.

Persuasive communication refers to the intentional use of language and rhetorical strategies to influence attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours (Perloff, 2017; Okafor, 2019). In teaching and learning contexts, persuasion is essential for motivating learners, encouraging participation, sustaining attention, promoting discipline, and inspiring critical thinking. Teachers employ persuasive communication through emotional appeal, logical reasoning, encouragement, repetition, storytelling, and credibility establishment.

Methodology

This study employs a conceptual analysis and systematic literature review methodology. This design is appropriate for investigating the intersection of pragmatics, persuasive communication, and AI in education because the phenomenon is emerging and requires synthesis of theoretical frameworks with recent empirical findings (Snyder, 2019; Okoli, 2015).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication date	2015–2025 (primary); pre-2015 for foundational theories	Pre-2015 for empirical studies
Language	English	Non-English
Peer review	Peer-reviewed articles (priority); preprints (secondary)	Non-academic sources
Relevance	Directly addresses at least one research	No relevance to pragmatics, persuasion, A

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Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
	question	classroom interaction
Geographic scope	Global with emphasis on Nigerian/African contexts	No geographic restriction

Data analysis followed a thematic synthesis approach (Thomas & Harden, 2008):

Step 1: Coding. Relevant passages from included sources were coded according to the three research questions.

Step 2: Theme development. Codes were grouped into thematic categories aligned with the study objectives.

Step 3: Synthesis. Findings were synthesized narratively, with attention to areas of agreement, disagreement, and gaps in the literature.

Step 4: Integration of Nigerian scholarship. Nigerian contributions were integrated throughout the thematic categories rather than treated separately, following a decolonial approach to knowledge synthesis.

Table 1: Thematic Categories Aligned with Research Questions

Research Question	Thematic Categories	Number of Sources
RQ1 (Role of pragmatics & persuasion)	Pragmatic competence in teaching; Persuasive strategies in pedagogy; Determinants of effective learning	35
RQ2 (Context-sensitive communication)	Traditional vs. AI-mediated interaction; Instructional outcomes; Context adaptation	28
RQ3 (Impact of AI technologies)	ChatGPT in education; Intelligent Tutoring Systems; Computer-Mediated Communication; Learner participation	42

Discussion of Findings

The first finding establishes that pragmatics and persuasive communication are indispensable determinants of effective teaching and learning in AI-integrated education rather than optional instructional tools. Drawing from the theories of J. L. Austin, John Searle, and H. P. Grice, the study demonstrates that context-sensitive communication remains central to meaning-making

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even in AI-mediated environments. AI systems such as ChatGPT increasingly display pragmatic competence by interpreting politeness strategies and indirect speech acts, making them useful for language learning and conversational practice. However, AI still struggles to replicate authentic emotional connection and credibility, which remain uniquely human qualities. In Nigerian multilingual classrooms, this limitation is more pronounced because existing AI systems are largely trained on Western cultural and linguistic norms that may not align with Nigerian communicative practices such as indirectness, honorifics, and proverbial expressions. Consequently, the study argues for an expanded notion of "integrated pragmatic competence," which includes the ability to evaluate AI-generated communication critically within specific cultural contexts.

The second finding highlights the tension between the pragmatic richness of traditional classrooms and the scalability and personalization offered by AI-mediated learning. Physical classrooms enable teachers to use facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, and intonation to reinforce meaning, whereas AI systems provide continuous access, personalized feedback, and repeated practice opportunities. The study therefore recommends a hybrid instructional model in which AI handles routine tasks while human teachers focus on emotional support, cultural interpretation, and higher-order communication. This finding is especially relevant in Nigerian educational settings characterized by large class sizes, linguistic diversity, and strong teacher-student hierarchies. AI can reduce instructional pressure by managing repetitive interactions, but its effectiveness depends on adequate teacher training and culturally responsive design. Research further indicates that Nigerian students engage more effectively with AI tools that incorporate Nigerian English pragmatic norms and culturally familiar examples, emphasizing that successful AI integration must adapt to local communicative realities rather than rely on universalized Western models.

The third finding presents the impact of AI technologies on classroom interaction and learner participation as both beneficial and problematic. On the positive side, AI increases learner-content interaction and encourages participation among shy learners, female students, non-English speakers, and students with communication difficulties. Digital communication platforms also extend classroom engagement beyond school hours, particularly in distance learning contexts. However, the study identifies serious concerns, including reduced peer-to-peer interaction, declining teacher-learner questioning, AI hallucinations, and over-dependence on

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automated systems. These issues may weaken the development of pragmatic skills such as turn-taking, negotiation, and collaborative problem-solving, which are best acquired through authentic human interaction. In Nigeria, uneven access to digital infrastructure further risks widening educational inequalities between urban and rural schools. The finding therefore concludes that AI should not replace human interaction but should be integrated thoughtfully through collaborative activities, critical evaluation training, equitable access policies, and adaptation to local cultural and pragmatic norms.

Conclusion

This study examined the role of pragmatics and persuasive communication in enhancing effective teaching and learning in the era of Artificial Intelligence, focusing on both traditional and AI-mediated classrooms. The findings confirm that pragmatics and persuasive communication remain central to successful educational interaction because they promote context-sensitive understanding, learner motivation, and meaningful engagement. AI technologies such as ChatGPT and intelligent tutoring systems have shown growing pragmatic capabilities, including speech act recognition, politeness strategies, and context-appropriate responses, making them valuable for language learning, personalized instruction, and conversational practice. However, the study also identifies critical challenges such as AI hallucination, misinformation, reduced peer interaction, and overdependence on automated systems, all of which may weaken the development of pragmatic competence and authentic classroom communication.

The paper concludes that AI cannot replace the human qualities of empathy, contextual understanding, and interpersonal connection that are essential for effective teaching and learning. Instead, education in the AI era requires a balanced hybrid approach where AI complements rather than replaces human instructional communication. In Nigerian and similar multilingual contexts, the successful integration of AI depends on culturally responsive and locally adapted solutions that address issues such as large class sizes, linguistic diversity, and unequal access to technology. Ultimately, the study argues that the future of education lies in synergistic models that combine the efficiency and personalization of AI with the irreplaceable human dimensions of teaching, ensuring that pragmatics and persuasive communication remain at the core of sustainable educational development.

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Recommendations

Based on the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. The work suggests that with the use of persuasive communication, AI should not be over relied on.
2. It is also recommended that teachers respect student by using polite expressions to bring the learners close to class and that will create enough rooms for better understanding.
3. Students need to be properly orientated on the use of AI interactive application and other computer-mediated communication in order to create interactive classroom learning environment.

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