

Beyond the Dice: Developing Sociolinguistic and Pragmatic Competence through the *Language & Society* Board Game

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ABSTRACT

This study develops and evaluates an educational board game, *Language & Society*, designed to enhance sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence in higher education. Unlike existing language learning games that predominantly focus on vocabulary or grammar, this board game explicitly integrates sociolinguistic variables (power relations, social distance, and levels of formality) into gameplay mechanics, offering a non-digital, classroom-friendly medium that simulates contextualized social interactions through role-based and scenario-driven tasks. It employs a Research and Development (R&D) approach adapted from Borg and Gall's ten-stage model into six essential phases: needs analysis, product design, expert validation, design revision, small-group testing, and final evaluation. The study aims to develop the board game and to evaluate its feasibility, acceptability, and perceived benefits. It does not aim to test the game's effectiveness in improving sociolinguistic or pragmatic competence. The game integrates context-based scenarios, pragmatic tasks, social role interactions, and challenge-based activities. Expert review and small-group testing with university students were conducted using perception-based instruments (expert review checklists and student response questionnaires) with data analyzed using descriptive statistics. Results indicate high perceived feasibility (approximately 85%), categorized as feasible, with students reporting perceived increases in engagement, reduced communication anxiety, perceived enhanced metapragmatic awareness, and greater self-reported confidence in using contextually appropriate language. This feasibility score reflects expert judgment and student perceptions of the product, not evidence of improved pragmatic competence. These findings indicate that a systematically designed board game can be feasible and acceptable as an instructional medium in a single institutional context and that it has the potential to support the bridging of grammatical accuracy and appropriate language use. However, given the small purposive sample (N = 32) from one institution, these findings should not be generalized to broader populations without further research. This study is positioned as a research and development (R&D) and feasibility/validation study, not as an effectiveness study; therefore, it does not claim to demonstrate measurable improvement in pragmatic competence. This study contributes to innovative instructional media development and offers a replicable model for integrating pragmatic instruction into game-based learning.

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1. Introduction

Language is fundamentally a social practice in which meaning is created through interaction in particular situations. In real-life communication, speakers must constantly modify their language choices based on social relationships, cultural norms, and situational demands rather than relying only

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in grammatical knowledge. This perspective is central to sociolinguistics, which views language as inseparable from the social environment in which it is used. The concept of communicative competence introduced by Dell Hymes (1972) highlights that effective communication requires not only grammatical accuracy but also the ability to use language appropriately in different contexts. This idea was further elaborated by Michael Canale and Merrill Swain (1980), who identified sociolinguistic competence as an essential component of communicative competence, emphasizing the importance of contextual appropriateness in language use.

Language skills in the context of education are not only related to mastery of grammatical aspects (Marjokorpi, 2023), but also include understanding of social context (Tao & Gao, 2022), power relations (Flores & Rosa, 2023), and norms of politeness that underlie language use (Rahmawati & Utomo, 2024). Sociolinguistic and pragmatic studies position language as a social practice that is always bound to the situation, participants, and purpose of communication. However, sociolinguistic and pragmatic learning in higher education still tends to focus on conceptual and theoretical understanding (Marcet & Sasamoto; 2023; Amine, 2024), with limited learning media that are able to simulate real communication situations contextually (Morady & Mirfendereski, 2025). Students' poor application of sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge to daily communication practices is impacted by these limitations. In academic, professional, or digital contexts, students frequently struggle to make appropriate linguistic decisions despite having a theoretical understanding of concepts like politeness, speech acts, or power relations. This instance highlights a disconnect between language learning theory and practice.

Pragmatic competence, which deals with how meaning is expressed and understood in context beyond the literal meaning of words, is closely linked to sociolinguistic competence. In addition to using language to carry out communicative acts like requesting, apologizing, suggesting, and refusing, pragmatics considers cultural norms, indirectness, and politeness strategies (Maiklad & Numtong, 2025). However, studies in second language acquisition have consistently demonstrated that pragmatic competence does not develop in tandem with grammatical knowledge. As noted by Gabriele Kasper and Kenneth Rose (2002), even students with high grammatical proficiency levels may find it difficult to make statements that are appropriate for their context. Similarly, according to Taguchi (2015), learners' capacity to develop pragmatic awareness is hampered by their limited exposure to contextualized communicative situations, especially in foreign language contexts where opportunities for genuine interaction are frequently limited.

Teaching sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence is still undervalued in many language classrooms, despite its vital role in communication (Kamalvand & Mohammadi, 2024). Instructional practices tend to focus on grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension, as these aspects are easier to organize and evaluate (Liu & Saad, 2025). As a result, students can demonstrate excellent academic achievement while remaining unable to apply language appropriately in real-world situations. In an increasingly interconnected world, the mismatch between linguistic knowledge and communicative ability presents a serious concern, particularly because effective communication across cultural boundaries is crucial (Wang, Jiang, Liu & Jin, 2026). The use of language that is grammatically accurate but contextually inappropriate may lead to misunderstanding, incorrect interpretation, or unintended negative reactions.

A recent systematic review by Qi and Chen (2025) on technology integration in developing L2 pragmatic competence found that while digital tools, including games, show promise for pragmatics instruction, the evidence base remains limited, with most studies focusing on specific speech acts (e.g., requests, apologies) and lacking longitudinal data on sustained competence development. Ishihara and Cohen (2021) emphasize that the development of pragmatic competence extends beyond theoretical knowledge, requiring learners to engage in contextualized communicative situations and consider the sociocultural factors that shape language use.

Nevertheless, creating contextualized learning opportunities within classroom environments continues to be a major challenge. Shahini (2021) argued that conventional instructional materials, including textbooks and scripted dialogues, frequently portray simplified and predictable communicative situations that fail to capture the complexity of real-life interactions. As noted by Renandya & Nguyen (2022), these instructional materials rarely provide learners with opportunities to experience the diversity, uncertainty, and spontaneous nature of real-life communication. Consequently, learners are provided with few opportunities to explore language use, negotiate meaning, and adapt

their responses to evolving social contexts. According to Van (2023), this limitation highlights the urgent need for pedagogical approaches that are capable of simulating contextualized communication while preserving the structure of formal learning environments.

Within this context, game-based learning has gained increasing attention as an effective approach to improving language acquisition (Casanova-Mata, 2023). In line with the evolution of contemporary learning approaches, game-based learning has been identified as a potential strategy for overcoming this gap (Rye, Sousa & Sousa, 2025; Ivanović, 2024). By incorporating educational games, the learning process becomes more interactive, enabling learners to engage actively, reflect on their experiences, and collaborate with others (Keramati, Keramati & Arefian, 2024; Rye, Sousa & Sousa, 2025). However, the use of board games as a medium for linguistic learning, especially those that explicitly integrate sociolinguistic and pragmatic concepts, is still very limited. Therefore, the development of creative products in the form of educational board games is an alternative, relevant and innovative solution in language learning in higher education. Educational games provide interactive learning environments that encourage learners to engage actively in meaningful activities instead of passively absorbing information. Through gameplay, learners are encouraged to make decisions, solve problems, and interact with others, thereby facilitating experiential learning (Çoban & Gökteş, 2023). According to Yan, Lowell, & Yang (2024) emphasized that games provide learners with situated learning experiences enabling them to acquire knowledge through participation in meaningful contextual activities. In language education, this approach has been shown to increase learner engagement, motivation, and communicative interaction. Games can also reduce anxiety and create a supportive environment in which learners feel more comfortable using language in new ways. (Aydin & Rianita, 2022). As highlighted by Jonathon Reinhardt (2019), game-based learning can effectively bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical language use by embedding learning within interactive experiences. Recent meta-analyses have provided empirical support for these benefits: Barrun and Gilbas (2024) reported a large overall effect size ($ES = 1.19$) for game-based learning on English language gains, while Nitisakunwut and Hwang (2023) identified key design parameters, including feedback mechanisms, narrative context, and adaptive difficulty, that moderate effectiveness in mobile game-based language learning.

However, the effectiveness of game-based learning is not universally supported, and the literature presents a more nuanced picture. Several meta-analyses and systematic reviews have reported mixed or conditional effects, questioning the assumption that game-based approaches are inherently superior to traditional instruction. For instance, Clark et al. (2016), in a comprehensive meta-analysis of digital game-based learning, found that while games generally produce positive effects, the magnitude of these effects varies considerably depending on instructional design, learner characteristics, and contextual factors. The authors concluded that the medium itself, whether game-based or conventional, is less important than the instructional quality and pedagogical strategies employed. Similarly, Wouters et al. (2013) reported that game-based learning yielded modest learning gains but noted that the effects were often confounded by additional instructional support provided alongside gameplay. More critically, some studies have found no significant advantage of game-based approaches over well-designed traditional instruction for certain language outcomes (Hung, Yang, Hwang, Chu, & Wang, 2018; Zainuddin, Shujahat, Haruna, & Chu, 2020). These conflicting findings suggest that the success of game-based learning depends less on the use of game and more on how games are designed, implemented, and integrated with pedagogical objectives.

Furthermore, research specifically examining board games in language learning contexts, while generally positive, also reveals important limitations. Bareford (2023), in a systematic review of analog board game applications in higher education, found that while board games promote engagement and collaborative learning, studies often suffer from small sample sizes and lack of rigorous outcome measures. Poole's (2025) systematic review, while affirming the potential of board games, emphasizes that their effectiveness critically depends on thoughtful implementation and active participant involvement. The review notes that many board game interventions suffer from methodological weaknesses, including small sample sizes, lack of control groups, and overreliance on self-reported data. Sousa et al. (2022), in their systematic literature review on analogue games in learning processes, similarly found that while board games can facilitate meaningful and engaged learning experiences, the evidence base remains fragmented, with significant variation in quality and rigor across studies. These mixed findings highlight the need for more systematically designed and rigorously evaluated game-

based learning interventions, particularly those targeting complex competencies such as sociolinguistic and pragmatic skills.

Board games present several advantages for educational practice, making them especially well suited for using in classroom settings. They are accessible (Nautiyal, Silverio & Salvador, 2024), cost-effective (Santos, 2023), student engagement, motivation, and active participation (Nadeem, Oroszlanyova & Farag, 2023; Thurairasu, 2022), adaptable to different learning contexts (Retalis, 2008), making them suitable for diverse educational settings (Pope, 2021). Unlike digital games, board games do not depend on technological resources and can promote direct face-to-face interaction among learners. Through structured gameplay involving turn-taking, role-playing, and scenario-based tasks, board games can create opportunities for meaningful communication (Wu, Chen & Huang, 2014), as tools to strengthen mastery of linguistic forms (Aydin & Çakır, 2022; Shakhmalova & Zotova, 2023) and drill-based learning (Udeozor et al., 2023; Beltrán-Palanques & Bernad-Mechó, 2024).

Nevertheless, despite these advantages, many existing board games for language learning primarily focus on vocabulary acquisition (Naderi & Moafian, 2023; Chowdhury et al., 2024; Gkouzioti, 2024; Lin et al., 2026), grammar practice (Phuong, Nguyen & Nguyen, 2017; Ardi & Rianita, 2022; Rahmaddian & Fakhurriana, 2023; Dehghani Tafti & kang, 2026), and basic language skills (Ritonga et al., 2022; Crompton et al., 2024), with limited attention to sociolinguistic and pragmatic dimensions of language use. Sociolinguistic and pragmatic studies emphasize that language competence includes not only structural accuracy, but also the ability to choose utterances that are appropriate to the social context, power relations, social distance, and cultural norms. However, sociolinguistic and pragmatic learning in higher education is still dominated by text-based approaches and conceptual discussions (Masuda, Ohta & Tsujihara, 2025; Beltrán-Palanques & Bernad-Mechó, 2024), with limited learning media that are able to represent the dynamics of social interactions in a simulative and participatory manner.

Several studies have begun to integrate games into pragmatics learning, but most are digital-based (Meeprom, 2020) and focus on specific cultural contexts or limited scenarios (Taguchi, 2023). Moreover, many of these studies often treat pragmatics as a supporting component rather than a central focus, and few studies identified in the present review have systematically developed and validated board games that address the complexity of contextual language use. The development of educational board games specifically designed to reflect the diversity of social spaces and social relationships within local higher education context remains limited. In addition, few educational innovations have successfully combined visual elements, game mechanics, and sociolinguistic-pragmatic theories within one integrated learning product.

This review of the literature reveals a clear theoretical and conceptual gap. While game-based learning has been widely explored, the majority of studies have focused on discrete linguistic components such as vocabulary or grammar, with pragmatics treated as a secondary concern rather than a central design principle. Furthermore, the limited research on pragmatics instruction through games has predominantly employed digital platforms, which, while offering certain advantages, may not always be accessible or pedagogically suitable in all educational contexts. More critically, few studies identified in the present review have systematically operationalized sociolinguistic variables, such as power relations, social distance, and levels of formality, into board game mechanics. This absence is significant because these variables are foundational to pragmatic competence, as emphasized in the work of Hymes (1972), Canale and Swain (1980), and more recent scholars (Taguchi, 2015; Ishihara & Cohen, 2021). Consequently, there remains a gap between theoretical frameworks of pragmatic competence and the practical design of instructional media intended to develop it.

Addressing this gap, the current study offers a novel educational board game, *Language & Society*, which is designed as a learning medium based on the simulation of social spaces. Conceptually, this board game differs from the language-learning games identified in the present review in three fundamental ways: (1) it explicitly operationalizes sociolinguistic constructs, power relations, social distance, and formality levels, as core gameplay mechanics rather than supplementary content; (2) it systematically integrates multiple pragmatic dimensions (speech acts, politeness strategies, and contextual interpretation) into a single cohesive product; and (3) it adopts a non-digital format that prioritizes face-to-face interaction and immediate peer feedback, which are critical for developing sociolinguistic awareness but often diminished in digital environments. These features are presented as design characteristics of the game, not as claims that no other board game has ever addressed these

dimensions. This board game not only presents communication scenarios but also requires players to make linguistic decisions based on sociolinguistic and pragmatic variables, including power relations, social distance, levels of formality, and interactional context. In this study, the board game is developed as the primary output, possessing both educational and artistic value. The integration of visual illustrations, social-space symbols, and game mechanic distinguishes it from conventional learning media.

This study is therefore positioned as a research and development (R&D) and feasibility/validation study rather than an effectiveness study. Its aim is to develop and evaluate the feasibility, acceptability, and perceived benefits of the board game, not to establish causal evidence of improved sociolinguistic or pragmatic competence. The primary objective of this study is: 1) to develop and design the educational board game *Language & Society* as a sociolinguistics and pragmatics learning medium, 2) to evaluate the game's feasibility from technical, pedagogical, and practical perspectives.

2. Methods

This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) approach to develop and evaluate an educational board game titled *Language & Society*. The R&D process in this study was followed by Borg and Gall's ten-stage development model, a widely recognized approach for designing and validating educational products that respond to real instructional needs (Maydiantoro, 2021). Given the extensive nature of the original model, the present study adapted it into a streamlined process consisting of six essential stages: 1) needs analysis, 2) product design, 3) expert validation, 4) design revision, 5) small-group product testing, and 6) final product evaluation. The six phases are described ahead.

2.1. Research Design and Approach

This study adopted a product-oriented R&D design focused on developing and evaluating the feasibility of an instructional board game. As a feasibility study, the evaluation design employs perception-based instruments, expert validation checklists and student response questionnaires, to assess content validity, pedagogical appropriateness, and user acceptability. This approach aligns with established R&D frameworks (Richey & Klein, 2007; Plomp & Nieveen, 2013), where the initial development phase prioritizes establishing product feasibility through expert judgment and user perceptions before proceeding to efficacy testing with experimental designs.

2.2. Participants and Setting

The study was conducted at Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia, during the 2025/2026 academic year. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique in which participants are chosen based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Patton, 2015). The selection criteria were: (1) enrollment in a sociolinguistics or pragmatics course, (2) minimum intermediate English proficiency (CEFR B1 level, as determined by institutional placement tests), and (3) willingness to participate voluntarily.

A total of 32 undergraduate students from the English Language Education program participated in the small-group product testing phase. The participant demographics were as follows: 24 female (75%) and 8 male (25%), with ages ranging from 19 to 23 years ($M = 20.8$, $SD = 1.2$). All participants were in their third year of study (Semester 5 or 6) and had completed at least two semesters of linguistics courses, including Introduction to Linguistics and Language Acquisition. Regarding English proficiency, 18 participants (56.25%) reported intermediate level, 9 participants (28.125%) reported upper-intermediate, and 5 participants (15.625%) reported advanced, based on self-assessment aligned with the CEFR descriptors and corroborated by institutional English course grades (mean GPA = 3.2 out of 4.0, $SD = 0.4$). All participants had prior experience with game-based learning activities in educational settings, though none had used a board game specifically designed for sociolinguistics or pragmatics instruction.

The relatively small sample size is consistent with established practices in R&D feasibility testing, where small-group trials typically involve 10–30 participants (Borg & Gall, 1983; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, given the exploratory and developmental nature of this study, the sample size was deemed adequate for initial feasibility assessment.

2.3. Reserach Procedures

2.3.1. Phase 1: Needs Analysis

The first stage of the study was a needs analysis conducted over three weeks. In the first week, needs analysis questionnaires were administered to 45 undergraduate students to identify their perceived difficulties in applying sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge. In the second week, classroom observations were carried out to document instructional practices and student participation patterns. In the third week, document analysis was conducted to examine the coverage of pragmatic and sociolinguistic content in the official syllabi and course materials. The detailed findings of this phase are presented in the Results section (see Table 1).

2.3.2. Phase 2: Product Design

In the design stage, the structure and mechanics of the board game were conceptualized. We carried out team discussion meetings composed by the researchers and a game designer, aiming to define the objective of the game and the elements for its component, including the targeted audience, the scenario, the gameplay flow, and the content of the cards of the game. We created some initial concepts through a brainstorm of individual and collective ideas of the team and the inclusion of contents related to the sociolinguistics and pragmatics context. An illustrator carried out the development of the art through editing techniques and digital image drawing. The board game was structured around multiple types of cards representing different communicative dimensions, including contextual scenarios, pragmatic tasks, social role interactions, request-based expressions, and communication challenges. The design aimed to srike a balance between structure and flexibility, enabling players to engage in guided yet dynamic communicative interactions.

2.3.3. Phase 3: Expert Validation

The purpose of the expert review stage was to obtain expert judgment on the *Language & Society* board game met the required standards of quality, relevance, and feasibility before field testing. This stage involved an expert review of the board game prototype by qualified experts in relevant fields. This stage involved two experts: one specializing in sociolinguistics and pragmatics, and the other in instructional media design. The experts evaluated the prototype using a structured questionnaire consisting of 25 items across five subscales: Content Validity, Pedagogical Appropriateness, Design Quality, Game Mechanics, and Usability and Language Clarity. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with an open-ended section for qualitative feedback.

The validation process followed these steps: (1) one week prior to the validation session, experts received the complete game prototype, game guide, and validation questionnaire to familiarize themselves with the materials; (2) the session began with an introductory briefing where researchers explained the game's purpose, target users, and theoretical underpinnings; (3) experts independently reviewed all game components and engaged in trial gameplay; (4) experts completed the validation questionnaire, providing both quantitative ratings and written comments; (5) researchers conducted follow-up discussions with each expert to clarify feedback and gather additional suggestions; and (6) researchers analyzed the quantitative ratings and qualitative feedback to calculate feasibility scores and guide subsequent revisions.

The experts assessed the game's content relevance and accuracy, alignment with learning objectives, clarity of instructions and gameplay, visual and functional design, and practical usability for classroom implementation. The validation outcomes were used to assess the product's feasibility and guide revisions before proceeding to small-group testing.

2.3.4. Phase 4: Design Revision

Based on the results of expert validation, the board game underwent a design revision process. Revisions were made to improve content accuracy, instructional clarity, visual design, and game mechanics in accordance with the expert' recommendation. Adjustments were also made to enhance readability, playability, and alignment with the intended sociolinguistic and pragmatic learning objectives. The revised version of the *Language & Society* board game was then prepared for field testing.

2.3.5. Phase 5: Small-Group Product Testing

The implementation stage was conducted by testing the board game with undergraduate students in a language-related course. During this stage, students participated in gameplay sessions designed to simulate contextualized communication scenarios. Data were collected primarily through student response questionnaires. Classroom observations were also conducted to contextualize the questionnaire responses, but they were not analyzed as a separate data source.

2.3.6. Phase 6: Final Product Evaluation

The evaluation stage focused on analyzing the data obtained from expert validation and student responses to determine the feasibility of the developed board game. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, with scores converted into percentages to determine the level of feasibility. The results were then interpreted based on predefined criteria to categorize the product as very feasible, feasible, or otherwise. The evaluation findings were used to finalize the board game as a learning medium for sociolinguistics and pragmatics.

2.4. Data Collection Instruments

2.4.1. Expert Validation Questionnaire

The expert validation questionnaire was designed to assess the board game's quality across multiple dimensions. The instrument consisted of 25 items distributed across five subscales: (1) Content Validity (5 items), (2) Pedagogical Appropriateness (5 items), (3) Design Quality (5 items), (4) Game Mechanics (5 items), and (5) Usability and Language Clarity (5 items). Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Sample items included: "The communicative scenarios accurately represent sociolinguistic variables such as social distance and power relations" (Content Validity); "The game mechanics encourage learners to negotiate meaning and reflect on language choices" (Game Mechanics); and "The instructions are clear and easy to follow" (Usability).

The instrument was reviewed for face validity by two independent researchers prior to use. Because the expert review involved only two experts, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated based on their ratings across the 25 items. The resulting $\alpha = .86$ indicates good internal consistency across the items as rated by these two experts. However, this coefficient should be interpreted with caution, as alpha values based on very small samples are statistically unstable and are reported here as a practical indicator of item consistency rather than as robust psychometric evidence (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

2.4.2. Student Response Questionnaire

The student response questionnaire was designed to capture participants' perceptions and self-reported benefits of the learning experience following gameplay sessions. It does not measure actual competence development. The instrument consisted of 20 items distributed across four subscales: (1) Engagement and Motivation (5 items), (2) Peer Interaction and Collaboration (5 items), (3) Perceived Learning Benefits (5 items), and (4) Usability and Enjoyment (5 items). Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Sample items included: "The board game made learning sociolinguistics and pragmatics more interesting" (Engagement and Motivation); "I was able to practice using contextually appropriate language during gameplay" (Perceived Learning Benefits); and "I felt comfortable making language choices without fear of judgment" (Usability and Enjoyment).

Reliability analysis based on the responses of 32 students yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of $\alpha = .91$, indicating excellent internal consistency for this sample (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

2.5. Data Analysis

Data from the expert validation and student response questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically means and standard deviations, calculated using SPSS version 26.0. The average scores were converted into percentages to determine the level of feasibility, following the criteria adapted from Akker (1999) and adopted in numerous educational product development studies (e.g., Fajeri et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2025):

Percentage Range	Feasibility Category
81% - 100 %	Very feasible
61% - 80 %	Feasible
41% - 60 %	Moderately Feasible
21% - 40 %	Less Feasible
0% - 20 %	Not Feasible

Qualitative data from expert feedback, open-ended questionnaire responses, and classroom observations were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Classroom observation notes were used only to contextualize the questionnaire findings and were not subjected to separate thematic analysis. The analysis involved (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, and (5) defining and naming themes. This qualitative analysis provided complementary insights to the quantitative feasibility ratings.

2.6. Limitation of the Evaluation Design

Several methodological limitations are acknowledged. First, the evaluation relies primarily on perception-based instruments (expert validation and student self-reports) rather than objective assessments of learning outcomes. As this study focuses on establishing product feasibility and user acceptability, this approach is appropriate for the current phase of development. However, future research should incorporate objective measures, including pre-test/post-test comparisons using discourse completion tasks (DCTs), pragmatic judgment tests, and role-play assessments, to measure actual improvements in sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence resulting from the board game intervention. Second, the study lacks a comparison or control group receiving conventional instruction, which prevents causal attribution of any observed improvements to the board game itself. Future experimental studies with randomized controlled designs are recommended to strengthen causal claims. Third, the small sample size ($N = 32$) and purposive sampling limit generalizability to broader populations. These limitations are acknowledged and addressed further in the conclusion and recommendations for future research.

3. Results and Discussion

This study resulted in the development of a board game named *Language & Society* using the Borg and Gall development model, comprising six iterative stages. The following discussion elaborates each stage in detail, highlighting how sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence were embedded throughout the development process.

3.1. Needs Analysis Results and Interpretation

Phase 1 (needs analysis) identified three main findings, which are summarized in Table 1. First, students reported difficulties in applying theoretical knowledge of politeness, speech acts, and contextual language use to practical communication situations. Second, classroom observations showed that instruction was predominantly lecture-based, with limited opportunities for contextualized speaking or interactive tasks. Third, document analysis indicated that existing materials focused mainly on theoretical explanations, with few application-oriented activities.

These findings resonate with the meta-analytic evidence reported by Ren, Li, and Li (2023), who established that while pragmatic instruction yields a substantial overall effect ($g = 1.656$), its benefits are contingent upon explicit and metapragmatic approaches. This confirms that pragmatic competence does not develop automatically alongside syntactic or lexical knowledge. Consequently, the gap identified in the needs analysis points to a systemic pedagogical need for explicit, contextualized practice that helps learners transfer grammatical knowledge into socially appropriate performance.

This imperative for explicit and contextualized instruction faces a practical obstacle: conventional classroom settings rarely offer repeated, low-stakes opportunities for learners to navigate the complex interplay of social status, contextual cues, and strategic politeness. Within this context, game-based learning, particularly through board games, emerges as a pedagogically viable intervention. Conaway and Rouault (2024) demonstrate that cooperative board game interactions organically

generate speech act clusters and structured turn-taking sequences, compelling players to continuously assess interlocutors' positions, interpret indirect moves, and recalibrate their communicative strategies. Complementing this, Poole (2025) affirms that board games are effective in enhancing communicative competence while reducing language anxiety and increasing learner motivation, though their success critically depends on thoughtful implementation. Taken together, these theoretical and empirical justifications validate the design of the *Language & Society* board game as a targeted pedagogical tool to bridge the gap between grammatical precision and sociolinguistic-pragmatic flexibility.

Table 1. Summary of Needs Analysis Findings

Data Source	Key Findings	Implications for Game Design
Student questionnaires (N = 45)	Students struggled to apply theoretical knowledge of politeness, speech acts, and contextual language use in practice.	Game should provide contextualized, decision-rich scenarios requiring pragmatic choices.
Classroom observations	Instruction was predominantly lecture-based; limited opportunities for contextualized speaking or interactive tasks.	Game should promote active, peer-to-peer interaction and oral production.
Document analysis (syllabi, materials)	Materials focused on theoretical explanations; few application-oriented activities.	Game should operationalize sociolinguistic and pragmatic constructs into playable tasks.

This phase focused on identifying the core problems in current language learning practices, particularly in higher education settings. Preliminary observations and needs analysis conducted in higher education language classrooms reveal a persistent disjuncture between the theoretical endorsement of communicative competence and the instructional reality, wherein pedagogical practices remain heavily skewed toward grammatical accuracy at the expense of contextually sensitive language use. Students consistently demonstrated difficulties in selecting appropriate speech levels according to social hierarchies, interpreting implied meanings and indirect speech acts, responding appropriately in culturally nuanced situations, and deploying politeness strategies in authentic interactions.

3.2. Product Design and Development Outcomes

The development process yielded a fully realized board game titled *Language & Society*, consisting of a physical game board, five categorized card sets (Context, Pragmatic, Request, Social Role, and Challenge), a comprehensive rulebook, and supporting facilitation materials. The board layout features a clearly structured, color-coded pathway from “Start” to “Finish,” divided into distinct colored zones that correspond to different communicative task types. The card design is color-coded by category and features a situational prompt at the top, specific linguistic tasks in the center, and contextual cues at the bottom. To clarify how each sociolinguistic and pragmatic construct is operationalized in the game, Table 2 presents a systematic mapping of constructs onto game component, example tasks, and intended learning functions.

Table 2. Mapping of Sociolinguistic/Pragmatic Constructs onto Game Components

Construct	Game Component	Example Task	Intended Learning Function
Power relations	Social Role card	“You are a junior colleague asking a senior manager for a deadline extension.”	Choose appropriate indirectness and politeness strategies based on power asymmetry.
Social distance	Context card	“You are apologizing to a close friend versus a new acquaintance.”	Adjust formality and intimacy level according to social distance.
Speech acts	Pragmatic card	“Make a request, refusal, or suggestion in a given scenario.”	Practice contextually appropriate speech act realization.
Politeness strategies	Request card	“Request a favor from a professor.”	Select appropriate politeness strategies (negative/positive).
Contextual interpretation	Challenge card	“Interpret an indirect complaint from a coworker.”	Infer implied meaning and respond appropriately.

As presented in Figure 1, the board layout features a clearly structured, color-coded pathway from “Start” to “Finish.” This pathway is divided into distinct colored zones that correspond to different communicative task types. It progresses from simpler context-recognition tasks to complex role-based negotiations involving social hierarchies and power relations. Strategically placed symbols and numbered spaces intuitively guide players through escalating sociolinguistic challenges. They also minimize navigational confusion and ensure varied exposure to pragmatic functions such as speech acts, politeness strategies, and contextual interpretation. We have some examples of cards in Figure 2.

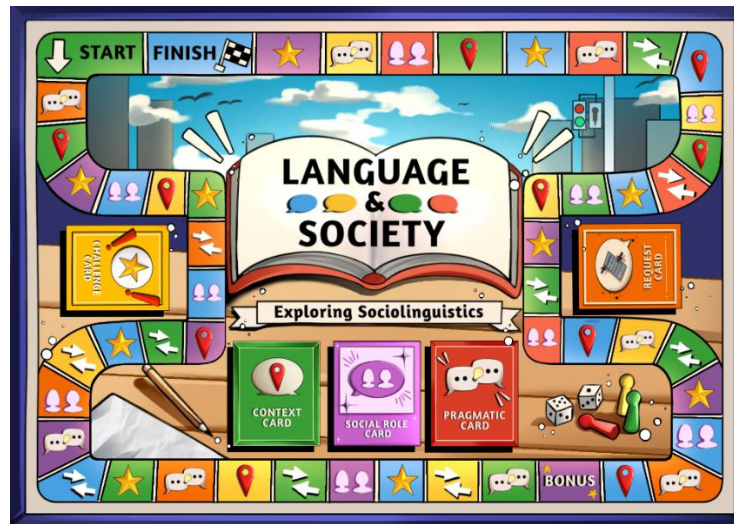


Figure 1. *Language & Society* board game



Figure 2. Example of cards, front and back

Concurrently, Figure 2 illustrates the card design. Each card is color-coded by category (Context, Pragmatic, Request, Social Role, and Challenge). The layout is clear and user-friendly. It comprises a situational prompt at the top, specific linguistic tasks in the center, and contextual cues at the bottom. These cues include social distance indicators, power asymmetry markers, and contextually situated details. This design ensures that players can quickly identify the pragmatic function required and access the necessary sociolinguistic information to formulate contextually appropriate responses during gameplay.

This comprehensive prototype was subsequently subjected to an expert review by two experts. One specialized in sociolinguistics and pragmatics, and the other in instructional media design. They assessed the product across multiple dimensions. These included content relevance and accuracy, alignment with learning objectives derived from pragmatic theories, clarity of instructions, and visual and functional design.

The expert review indicated several notable strengths. These included robust integration of sociolinguistic variables (such as social distance, power relations, and cultural norms) into the gameplay, clear alignment between each task type and its corresponding communicative objective, and high potential for facilitating interactive, experiential learning through meaning negotiation and peer feedback.

The iterative design and validation process finds empirical support in Poole's (2025) systematic review, which emphasizes that the pedagogical success of board games in language learning contexts critically depends on clear visual differentiation, intuitive navigation, and thoughtful implementation, precisely the principles that guided the board layout and card categorization in this development phase. Similarly, Conaway and Rouault (2024) demonstrated that well-structured board game mechanics, including turn-taking sequences and card-based prompts, naturally generate speech act clusters and authentic pragmatic negotiation, validating the present game's design choices regarding color-coded categories and progressive task sequencing. Despite these strengths, expert feedback identified areas requiring revision, particularly simplifying instructional language for better classroom usability, refining task descriptions to avoid ambiguity in role-based scenarios where multiple pragmatic interpretations are possible, and enhancing visual consistency across card types and board elements to maintain a cohesive aesthetic and reduce cognitive load during extended gameplay sessions.

These recommendations were systematically incorporated into the final prototype, resulting in a more polished, pedagogically sound, and user-friendly product. Ultimately, this rigorous development-validation-revision cycle underscores the indispensable role of iterative design and expert input in educational board game creation: expert feedback functions not merely as a quality assurance checkpoint but as a critical mechanism for bridging the gap between theoretical design intentions and practical classroom usability, ensuring that the final *Language & Society* board game is both firmly grounded in sociolinguistic and pragmatic frameworks and practically feasible for implementation in higher education language learning contexts, thereby establishing a solid foundation for subsequent field testing and efficacy evaluation.

3.3. Expert Validation Results

Two experts, one specializing in sociolinguistics and pragmatics and the other in instructional media design, evaluated the prototype using a 25-item questionnaire across five subscales. The expert review yielded high ratings, with an average feasibility score of approximately 85%. The experts rated the game's content relevance, pedagogical appropriateness, visual design quality, game mechanics functionality, and classroom usability positively. Qualitative feedback identified areas for revision, particularly simplifying instructional language, refining task descriptions, and enhancing visual consistency.

This stage served as a critical quality assurance mechanism. It ensured that the *Language & Society* board game met established standards of content relevance, pedagogical appropriateness, and practical feasibility prior to field testing. A panel of qualified experts in sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and educational media systematically evaluated the prototype across multiple dimensions. These dimensions included the accuracy of communicative scenarios and social role representations against sociolinguistic and pragmatic frameworks, the clarity and usability of game mechanics, the appropriateness of visual design, and the overall alignment between gameplay elements and instructional objectives. The evaluation was conducted through both quantitative ratings and qualitative feedback. This multi-faceted validation approach aligns with established practices in educational game development research, wherein expert judgment is employed to assess content validity and instructional relevance before implementation. The experts' assessments focused on whether the game's Context, Pragmatic, Request, Social Role, and Challenge cards appropriately operationalized core pragmatic constructs such as speech acts, politeness strategies, and contextual interpretation, while also evaluating whether the progressive board layout and turn-taking mechanics effectively simulated contextualized sociolinguistic decision-making environments requiring players to navigate social hierarchies and power relations.

The validation findings are consistent with those reported by Aliyyah and Shofiyuddin (2025), whose development of the BOMCAR 7 board game for grammar instruction similarly employed expert validation within the ADDIE framework. Their study yielded high ratings (85.0%–91.6%) that confirmed pedagogical quality and classroom feasibility, which aligns with the feasibility score obtained in the present study. Furthermore, Nitipruteep's (2025) development of a botanical vocabulary board game utilized three content validity assessment forms administered to expert panels, with the Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) index averaging .75 and overall effectiveness rated at the highest level (mean = 4.71, SD = 0.40), demonstrating that systematic expert evaluation across multiple

component dimensions, vocabulary, game rules, and board layout, is essential for establishing content validity. The qualitative feedback obtained during the present validation process provided nuanced insights that complemented the quantitative ratings. These insights enabled targeted revisions to game components, particularly regarding the clarity of role-based task instructions, the authenticity of scenario representations, and the accessibility of language used in card descriptions. These revisions parallel the iterative refinement process documented in the development of the Arabic Scrabble game by researchers at IAIN Jember. In that study, expert validation questionnaires administered to media, material, and language experts resulted in the game being categorized as highly appropriate for vocabulary learning. Collectively, the expert review outcomes indicated that the *Language & Society* board game possesses content relevance, pedagogical soundness, and practical usability. These results establish its feasibility for subsequent field testing. They also reinforce the broader assertion that expert validation constitutes an indispensable phase in the research and development of game-based learning interventions. This is especially true for interventions targeting complex communicative competencies that require authentic contextualization and theoretical grounding in sociolinguistic and pragmatic frameworks.

3.4. Small-Group Testing Results and Interpretation

Small-group testing with 32 undergraduate students revealed consistently positive self-reported perceptions across engagement, peer interaction, and perceived learning benefits. Students reported that the gameplay created a low-anxiety, enjoyable environment that facilitated spontaneous oral production and reduced affective barriers. The turn-taking mechanics and role-based cards were perceived to foster substantive peer collaboration and mutual support in navigating pragmatic decisions. The student response questionnaire yielded a mean score equivalent to approximately 85% positive responses. These results reflect student perceptions and self-reported benefits, not objective measures of pragmatic competence.

These findings are consistent with Maranatha (2023), whose study on university students' perceptions of board games in English speaking classes similarly identified learning excitement, collaborative dynamics, and a non-threatening atmosphere as primary benefits, with participants prioritizing peer assistance over competitive winning. Furthermore, Khanchai et al. (2025) empirically demonstrated that gamified board game conditions significantly enhance multidimensional engagement, including flow, enjoyment, immersion, and social interaction ($p < 0.05$), compared to non-gamified counterparts, suggesting that game-based environments may sustain learner involvement and support contextualized language practice. Collectively, these results support the practical feasibility of the *Language & Society* board game as an instructional tool that has the potential to translate sociolinguistic and pragmatic theory into meaningful experiential practice, suggesting its potential readiness for broader classroom implementation and further efficacy testing.

3.5. Final Product Evaluation

The final evaluation phase synthesized expert review outcomes and student questionnaire responses to assess the feasibility, acceptability, and perceived pedagogical value of the *Language & Society* board game as an instructional medium intended to support the development of sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence in higher education. Throughout the iterative development process, formative evaluation was conducted at each stage, from initial analysis through design, expert review, and small-group testing, ensuring that issues were identified and addressed early, and that continuous refinements were systematically integrated into the evolving prototype. The final evaluation yielded a high feasibility score of approximately 85%, categorizing the product as "feasible" and indicating that it meets established criteria for use as an instructional medium in university-level language education across multiple dimensions, including content relevance, pedagogical appropriateness, visual design quality, game mechanics functionality, and classroom usability. This score is strictly a measure of perceived product feasibility and acceptability; it does not demonstrate that the board game improves sociolinguistic or pragmatic competence.

These findings are consistent with the results of Fajeri et al. (2024), who developed the "INBOS" board game for teaching Indonesian. They obtained a feasibility percentage of 84.7% from

media experts and 80% from material experts. These scores categorize the game as highly feasible and were reported by the original authors as effective for enhancing vocabulary mastery; however, the present study does not make such effectiveness claims.

Similarly, Putri et al. (2025), in their development of “MUSIC” board game for science learning, reported expert validation scores averaging 85.2% for media feasibility and 88.5% for material feasibility. In addition, student response questionnaires yielded 88.5% positive responses in small-group testing. These results further validate the benchmark of approximately 85% as a robust indicator of instructional game feasibility.

Beyond the quantitative feasibility assessment, student feedback in the present study provided rich qualitative insights. Students reported perceived increases in confidence in using contextually appropriate language across diverse social situations, perceived enhanced awareness of sociolinguistic variables such as social distance and power relations, and overwhelmingly positive perceptions of learning through gameplay. Students consistently reported that the game’s immersive, low-stakes environment facilitated meaningful peer interaction, reduced communication anxiety, and enabled them to experiment with pragmatic strategies without fear of judgment, thereby potentially fostering metapragmatic awareness through experiential practice. These findings are based on self-reported perceptions and do not constitute evidence of improved pragmatic competence.

A critical distinction must be made in interpreting these findings. The results reported in this study primarily reflect student satisfaction and engagement and expert-reviewed product feasibility. These perception-based data do not constitute direct evidence of measurable learning improvement in sociolinguistic or pragmatic competence. Positive user perceptions, while valuable for establishing product acceptability, do not necessarily translate into demonstrable learning gains (Clark et al., 2016; Wouters et al., 2013). Therefore, the findings of this study should be interpreted as evidence of the board game’s feasibility and potential rather than as definitive evidence of its effectiveness in developing pragmatic competence.

The comprehensive evaluation across all phases indicates that the *Language & Society* board game represents a feasible and pedagogically promising intervention in the context of this study for integrating sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence into higher education language instruction. Generalization to other institutions or student populations requires further evidence. Building on these development outcomes, the following sections provide an in-depth discussion of the game’s feasibility, user acceptance, theoretical underpinnings, and the critical distinctions between perceived satisfaction and measurable learning outcomes.

3.6. Distinguishing Satisfaction, Engagement, and Learning Outcomes

A critical distinction must be made in interpreting these findings. The results reported in this study primarily reflect student satisfaction and engagement (as measured by the response questionnaire) and expert-reviewed product feasibility (as measured by the expert review checklist). These findings demonstrate that the *Language & Society* board game is well-received by students and judged by experts as pedagogically sound and practically usable. However, it is important to emphasize that these perception-based data do not constitute direct evidence of measurable learning improvement in sociolinguistic or pragmatic competence. Accordingly, all constructs measured by the student questionnaire, engagement, collaboration, perceived learning benefits, and enjoyment, are referred to as perceptions or self-reported benefits throughout this article, unless objective learning measures are explicitly introduced.

This distinction is essential because positive user perceptions, while valuable for establishing product acceptability, do not necessarily translate into demonstrable learning gains (Clark et al., 2016; Wouters et al., 2013). Research in educational technology has consistently shown that learners may report high satisfaction with an instructional intervention while showing limited actual improvement in targeted competencies (Hung et al., 2018; Zainuddin et al., 2020). Therefore, the findings of this study should be interpreted as evidence of the board game’s feasibility and potential—its capacity to engage students, create a supportive learning environment, and be perceived as beneficial—rather than as definitive evidence of its effectiveness in developing pragmatic competence.

3.7. *Theoretically-Grounded Analysis of Game Mechanics*

Understanding why the board game appears to facilitate sociolinguistic awareness requires examining its specific game mechanics through established educational theories. Below, we explain how five key game features promote pragmatic awareness.

3.7.1. *Role-Based Cards and Sociocultural Theory*

The Social Role cards, which assign players specific social identities (e.g., professor, student, boss, junior colleague) during gameplay, operationalize Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, particularly the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). By assuming roles with varying social status, players must engage in "scaffolded" pragmatic decision-making, they are prompted to select language forms appropriate to their assigned role and the role of their interlocutor. This process requires players to consciously consider social distance and power relations, externalizing what is often implicit knowledge. The presence of peers providing feedback further reinforces this scaffolding, as players receive immediate input on whether their language choices align with sociolinguistic expectations. This aligns with Lantolf and Poehner's (2014) concept of "mediation," where social interaction serves as the mechanism for internalizing pragmatic norms. However, the extent to which this mechanism actually leads to internalization remains to be tested empirically.

3.7.2. *Scenario-Based Tasks and Experiential Learning*

The Context and Challenge cards, which present contextualized communication scenarios (e.g., requesting a deadline extension from a supervisor, apologizing to a colleague for a mistake), directly instantiate Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle. Players (1) experience a concrete situation (the scenario prompt), (2) reflect on appropriate language choices (often through peer discussion), (3) form abstract concepts about pragmatic strategies (e.g., "I need to use indirectness because this is a formal context"), and (4) actively experiment by producing responses that are then evaluated by peers. This cycle, repeated across multiple gameplay rounds, reinforces the connection between contextual variables and linguistic choices, transforming declarative knowledge (knowing pragmatic rules) into procedural knowledge (applying them in real-time). This aligns with the findings of Taguchi (2023), who demonstrated that game-based instruction enhances productive request-making knowledge through iterative practice and feedback. Nevertheless, the present study does not provide direct evidence that this transformation occurred; it only suggests that the design creates conditions conducive to such learning processes.

3.7.3. *Integration of Theoretical Frameworks*

The two frameworks discussed above are not intended to be exhaustive or mutually exclusive. Rather, they are retained because they most directly explain the game's core design features: role-based cards and scenario-based tasks. Other frameworks, such as interactional competence, metapragmatic awareness, and affective factors, may also be relevant, but they are not presented here as empirically demonstrated mechanisms. Future research with objective measures of learning outcomes will be necessary to determine which theoretical mechanisms are actually activated during gameplay and to what extent they contribute to pragmatic development.

3.8. *Integration of Findings and Theoretical Implications*

The triangulation of expert review (confirming theoretical grounding and instructional alignment) and student feedback (confirming user acceptability, engagement, and perceived learning benefits) establishes a comprehensive evidence base for the board game's feasibility. Expert review indicated that the game's design appears to operationalize sociolinguistic and pragmatic constructs, including power relations, social distance, formality levels, and speech act strategies, within its card categories and gameplay mechanics. Student feedback, in turn, confirmed user acceptability, engagement, and perceived learning benefits across multiple dimensions. Nevertheless, while the game appears to facilitate pragmatic awareness through these theoretically grounded mechanisms, it is important to acknowledge that the current evidence supports claims about perceived benefits rather than documented learning gains. The specific mechanisms identified, scaffolded role-play, experiential learning cycles,

interactional competence development, metapragmatic reflection, and anxiety reduction, provide a theoretical explanation for why the board game has the potential to improve sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence. Future research employing objective performance measures will be necessary to confirm these theoretical predictions empirically.

3.9. Statistical Analysis of Student Responses

To provide additional insight into the meaningfulness of the student response data, supplementary inferential statistical analyses were conducted. These analyses were exploratory and were intended to examine whether the descriptive patterns in student perceptions were statistically consistent, not to test the effectiveness of the board game. While the primary purpose of this feasibility study was descriptive, additional analyses were performed to examine patterns in student responses. A paired-sample t-test was conducted to compare students' self-assessed confidence in using contextually appropriate language before and after gameplay sessions. Prior to analysis, assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were checked and met. A paired-sample t-test revealed a statistically significant increase in self-reported confidence scores from pre-gameplay ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 0.71$) to post-gameplay ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.62$), $t(31) = 7.84$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.39$, indicating a large effect size. This finding measures self-reported confidence, not pragmatic competence. While these findings reflect self-reported confidence rather than objective performance, they suggest that the board game experience may positively influence learners' self-perceptions of their pragmatic abilities. In addition, Pearson correlation analyses revealed moderate to strong positive correlations between the Engagement and Motivation subscale and the Perceived Learning Benefits subscale ($r = .68$, $p < .001$), suggesting that students who reported higher engagement also perceived greater learning benefits. Similarly, the Peer Interaction and Collaboration subscale correlated positively with Perceived Learning Benefits ($r = .61$, $p < .001$), supporting the theoretical expectation that collaborative gameplay may facilitate pragmatic awareness. It is important to note, however, that these findings are based on self-reported perceptions and should be interpreted with appropriate caution. The statistically significant differences and correlations reported here are exploratory and do not constitute direct evidence of improved pragmatic competence but rather indicate consistent patterns in student perceptions that align with theoretical expectations.

3.10. Comparison with Existing Literature

The present findings contribute to the growing body of evidence affirming that thoughtfully designed analogue games offer a promising pedagogical tool for fostering communicative competence in simulated, low-stakes environments. The study extends previous research in several important ways. First, unlike previous board games for language learning that primarily focus on vocabulary (Naderi & Moafian, 2023; Chowdhury et al., 2024) or grammar (Ardi & Rianita, 2022; Dehghani Tafti & Kang, 2026), the *Language & Society* board game explicitly targets sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence. This represents a conceptual shift from treating pragmatics as supplementary content to making it the central design principle. Second, the study suggests that non-digital formats may offer pedagogical potential comparable to that reported for digital game-based pragmatics instruction (Taguchi, 2023; Taguchi & Dixon, 2023), while offering advantages in accessibility and face-to-face interaction. This is particularly significant in educational contexts with limited technological resources. Third, the study provides a replicable model for systematically developing and validating game-based learning interventions through expert validation and iterative revision, addressing the methodological weaknesses identified in previous board game research (Poole, 2025; Sousa et al., 2022).

3.11. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Several limitations warrant acknowledgment. First, the study was confined to a single institutional context with a relatively small sample of undergraduate students ($N = 32$), which limits the generalizability of findings to broader learner populations and educational settings. Accordingly, all claims in this article should be understood as context-specific and exploratory. Second, the evaluation relied primarily on self-reported perceptions and expert judgments rather than direct measures of

pragmatic development, leaving questions about the extent to which gameplay translates into sustained, transferable communicative competence in real-world interactions. Third, the study lacked a comparison or control group, which prevents causal attribution of any observed improvements to the board game itself. Fourth, the absence of pre-test/post-test objective assessments, such as discourse completion tasks (DCTs) or pragmatic judgment tests, means that actual learning gains could not be measured.

Future research should address these limitations through:

1. Experimental designs incorporating control groups receiving conventional instruction to establish causality.
2. Pre-test/post-test objective measures, including discourse completion tasks (DCTs), pragmatic judgment tests, and role-play assessments, to measure actual improvements in sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence.
3. Larger-scale longitudinal studies to examine whether perceived benefits translate into sustained communicative competence over time.
4. Comparative studies examining the board game's effectiveness across different proficiency levels, cultural contexts, and instructional formats.
5. Digital or hybrid versions of the game to expand accessibility and allow for more sophisticated data collection on player interactions and pragmatic decision-making processes.
6. Investigation of the game's applicability beyond higher education, into secondary, vocational, or professional training contexts, to extend its pedagogical relevance and impact.

However, it is essential to distinguish between the demonstrated feasibility and user acceptance of the product and the as-yet-unmeasured effectiveness in producing measurable learning gains. The *Language & Society* board game represents an expert-reviewed pedagogical tool with strong theoretical foundations and positive user perceptions, establishing a solid foundation for future experimental research to investigate its actual impact on sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence. The developmental framework and validation procedures employed in this study serve as a replicable model for systematically bridging the gap between pragmatic theory and pedagogical practice through thoughtfully designed game-based interventions.

4. Conclusion

This research has systematically developed and expert-reviewed the *Language & Society* board game as an instructional medium intended to support the integration of sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence into higher education language learning. Through a comprehensive research and development process encompassing needs analysis, theoretical design, expert review, iterative revision, small-group testing, and final product evaluation, the study indicates that the board game is feasible and well-received as an instructional medium. The final feasibility score of approximately 85%, corroborated by consistently positive student feedback on engagement, reduced communication anxiety, and perceived learning benefits, supports the conclusion that the board game meets established criteria for classroom implementation in terms of content relevance, pedagogical appropriateness, design quality, and usability. This score reflects perceived feasibility and acceptability, not demonstrated improvements in competence. This study establishes development, feasibility, acceptability, and perceived benefits; it does not establish actual learning outcomes or effectiveness in improving sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence. Students reported high levels of engagement, meaningful peer interaction, and increased confidence in using contextually appropriate language, suggesting that the board game creates a supportive environment for practicing pragmatic strategies.

The findings carry several tentative implications. For language educators, the board game offers a potentially practical tool for creating contextualized communication practice that can be integrated into existing curricula without requiring advanced technological resources. However, its suitability for other contexts and populations remains to be tested. For curriculum developers, this study provides a replicable model for designing instructional materials that systematically operationalize sociolinguistic and pragmatic constructs. For researchers, the developmental framework and expert review procedures employed in this study serve as a preliminary model for designing and evaluating game-based learning interventions, while the findings provide a foundation for future efficacy studies. These implications are limited to the specific context of this study and should be interpreted with caution.

However, it is essential to acknowledge what this study has not demonstrated. The evidence presented primarily supports usability, feasibility, and learner acceptance, not definitive improvements in sociolinguistic or pragmatic competence. The evaluation relied on perception-based instruments without objective measures of learning outcomes such as pre-test/post-test comparisons or discourse completion tasks. Positive student perceptions, while valuable, are not equivalent to measurable learning gains. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as preliminary evidence of the board game's potential to support competence development, rather than as conclusive proof of its effectiveness. Several methodological limitations warrant acknowledgment, including the single institutional context, small sample size ($N = 32$), absence of a control group, and lack of long-term outcome measures. These factors limit generalizability and prevent causal attribution.

Future research should employ experimental designs with control groups, incorporate objective pre-test/post-test measures of pragmatic performance (e.g., discourse completion tasks, pragmatic judgment tests), and examine the game's effectiveness across diverse learner populations and educational contexts. Longitudinal studies are also needed to investigate whether perceived benefits translate into sustained real-world communicative competence. In conclusion, the *Language & Society* board game represents a pedagogically promising innovation in language education, offering a practical approach to integrating sociolinguistic and pragmatic instruction. However, its effectiveness in improving learners' communicative competence remains to be tested through further experimental research. Further rigorous experimental research is essential to establish its effectiveness in actually improving learners' communicative competence. The developmental framework employed in this study serves as a replicable model for designing and validating game-based learning interventions, while the findings provide a solid foundation for future efficacy studies.

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