



The (Non-)Teaching of Pragmatics in an EFL Context

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ABSTRACT

Pragmatics is an area that may be underrepresented in ESL/EFL teaching. This study aims to investigate to what extent pragmatics is taught in an international EFL setting. For this purpose, 28 class sessions taught by 17 teachers from seven different cultural backgrounds were observed for their inclusion of pragmatic features in their classes. The results indicate, despite teaching in an international school setting, these teachers did not make pragmatics an important component of their teaching. Pragmatics accounted for only 8.5 percent of the total observation time and when dealt with, it was handled incidentally when there was a moment to emphasize a pragmatic feature or when the textbook included a section or task relevant to pragmatics. Teachers' incidental treatment of pragmatics signals its importance in language teaching. Thus, suggestions are made to include pragmatics in materials in EFL programs and in teacher education programs.

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Statement of Publication Ethics

The study has been conducted by following publication ethics. The ethics committee approval has been obtained for the current study: Final International University Ethics Committee, 17/11/2021, 100/050/REK.010

Authors' Contribution Rate

All the authors contributed to the data collection, analysis and manuscript writing.

Conflict of Interest

This study has no conflict of interest.

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Introduction

English is the global language used around the world by people whose first language may or may not be English. People travel more today than before as international arrivals statistics demonstrate (The World Bank, 2022a) and people need to engage in communication with people in English when they travel for almost any reason such as for business, education, tourism, journalism, etc. It is also possible now to easily communicate even if you do not travel. Within the past two decades, the Internet has spread around the world (The World Bank, 2022b) and new communication technologies have appeared. In the past, communication was possible with landlines and not very frequent because of the cost of making international calls. The advent of new digital technologies and mobile communication devices has transformed the way people communicate from a distance and has made such communication affordable and ubiquitous as indicated by the increase in the number of internet users (The World Bank, 2022b). Now, people do not need to rely on text or voice alone but can do all within the same communication act. Even people who do not travel can be in contact with others from different cultures and language backgrounds, which makes interpersonal language skills and knowledge of language use indispensable for second language learners and users.

The area that deals with language use is pragmatics and it is an essential part of language competence (Roever, 2009). It is, however, not uncommon to see English users from different backgrounds having communication breakdowns or misunderstandings. People may find one another inappropriate or rude if they are not apt to use language in context efficiently. Since successful interpersonal communication entails knowledge of language use in context, teaching pragmatics in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes is essential. However, pragmatic aspects of language have not received enough attention in teaching EFL; including textbooks published to teach English as a second or foreign language (see Konakahara, 2011; Nu & Murray, 2020; Vellenga, 2004). Thus, EFL teachers need to take initiative and supplement their methods and materials to teach pragmatics. Whether they do so, however, is a question to pursue. In the introduction of their book, *Teaching and Learning Pragmatics*, Ishihara and Cohen (2010, p. ix) suggest that substantial research has been done on pragmatics in the past few decades but “not much of this empirical work has as yet been systematically applied to the L2 classroom and few commercially available textbooks offer research-informed instruction. In addition, few teacher education programs seem to deal with the practical application of pragmatics theories.” Given this, it seems a challenging task for EFL teachers to include pragmatics in their teaching. Thus, this descriptive study is an attempt to investigate to what extent pragmatics is taught in an EFL context.

Literature Review

Various definitions of pragmatics broadly focus on language use, or meaning, in communicative contexts (e.g. Cutting, 2002; Dimitracopoulou, 1990; Graddol et al., 1994; McNamara & Roever, 2006) and it is “determined by the conditions of society” (Mey, 2001, p. 6). Since communication necessitates extending and interpreting meaning, contextual factors that are beyond the surface level meaning naturally influence the

communicative act and since knowledge of language involves being able to communicate with it, pragmatics becomes an essential part of the knowledge of language. Various models of language competence include pragmatics as part of the knowledge of language (e.g. Bachman, 1990; Littlewood, 2011). Ishiara and Cohen (2010, p. 5, citing Yule, 1996) state that people need pragmatic competence to be able to “interpret the intended meanings, assumptions, purposes or goals, and the kinds of actions that are being performed” not just to decode the literal meaning. If a person is only able to understand the literal meaning without intentions or purposes, that communication is likely to fail. For example, “yeah, you are great”, intended as a sarcastic message, would mean the exact opposite of the intended meaning when understood literally. Similarly, when one does not know how to apologize, make requests, give compliments, or refuse invitations appropriately within a speech community, failed communicative acts are inevitable.

Ishiara and Cohen (2010, p. 3) list three factors for pragmatically successful communication including overall language proficiency, social factors such as age, gender, social status, etc., and past experience communicating with speakers who have functional pragmatic ability. Thus, it may be difficult for students in an EFL environment to function in pragmatically-appropriate ways for they are unlikely to have sufficient experience communicating with pragmatically-competent speakers despite the affordances the Internet provides for intercultural communication. For such successful communication to take place, experience in a context is rather essential because contextual factors are fluid rather than constant unlike syntactic or morphological properties of a given language that do not tend to change to a great extent. Since “contexts of use tend to be rather different from culture to culture, and consequently from language to language” (Mey, 2001, p. 263), developing pragmatic knowledge becomes a challenge for second language learners. Since speech acts, an important component of pragmatic ability, are culture-dependent, they may not be valid across cultures (Mey, 2001, p. 263), which can further complicate pragmatic knowledge and skills.

The implication of this for a speaker is that they need to analyze the conditions that make the utterances appropriate in a given situation in a given speech community. When utterances by an L2 speaker or interpretations of utterances by an L2 speaker are not appropriate, then miscommunications are likely and a possible negative appraisal of the L2 speaker’s personality as being impolite by his/her interlocutors (Brock & Nagasaka, 2005, p. 17). Further, Taguchi (2012) propounds that knowing the grammar and lexis of a language is not sufficient for proficiency, being able to speak appropriately and understand the intentions of another speaker are the key elements of successful learning of a language. This suggests that second language learners are to develop their pragmatic competence in order to be able to communicate appropriately according to the sociocultural values of the target language. This may be achieved through effective exposure to pragmatic instruction by EFL learners in EFL settings because “some necessary features of language and language use are quite subtle and not immediately noticeable by learners” (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003, p. 38). Hence, when students acquire the basic knowledge of pragmatics, they could be more responsive to speakers' intended meanings in communication. With frequent practice of pragmatic features, students are more likely to

be proficient in communication with the speakers of the target language. According to Liu (2007) pragmatic instruction is crucial for EFL students as most of the language learning takes place in classrooms. If it is not part of instruction, even students with a high level of grammatical proficiency may not have developed a sufficient level of pragmatic competence. They will tend to show a wide range of competence in language use (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003, p. 38), which suggests that pragmatics needs to be a part of ESL/EFL instruction.

The teaching of pragmatics has been a point of interest for some researchers within the past couple of decades and this interest has continued till recent years. In experimental conditions, researchers have found evidence that instruction in pragmatics may help learners develop various pragmatic skills through a variety of instructional modes. In some of these recent studies, researchers focused on the effect of instruction on pragmatic awareness and development from different contexts with learners with different L1 backgrounds (e.g. Alsuhaibani, 2022; Barón et al. 2020; Civelek & Karatepe, 2021; Çetinavcı, 2019; Derakhshan & Arabmofrad, 2018; Gazioğlu & Çiftçi, 2017; Glaser, 2016; Nguyen et al., 2019; Takimoto, 2020; Nguyen & Pham, 2022; Yılmaz & Koban Koç, 2020). These studies were conducted with students with different L1 backgrounds in different contexts such as Arabic, German, Japanese, Persian, Spanish, Turkish, and Vietnamese. In these studies, the researchers tested the effect of different instructional methods including consciousness-raising, corpus-based, deductive and inductive teaching, explicit instruction, feedback, metapragmatic instruction, task-based instruction, video-enhanced input on learning pragmatic aspects of speech acts, implicatures, and politeness. Despite this variety in topic, methods, L1 background, and context, however, all these studies conclude that instruction works in experimental conditions.

Yet, many second language learners or users may still be experiencing difficulties in using language in context employing pragmatic conventions of English as pragmatics is not systematically treated in teaching second/foreign languages (Nguyen & Canh, 2019). This may be because pragmatics is not represented as much as other aspects of language in teaching education programs (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003, p. 37). Consequently, teachers may not feel they are well-equipped to teach pragmatics. Non-native teachers may have further issues without experience in the target language communities. Savvidou and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2019), for example, report that Non-native teachers (NNTs) of English face difficulties in determining which pragmatic feature is suitable for L2 at different ages and language levels. In the same vein, in Cohen's (2016) survey study, native teachers (NTs) were reported to be more comfortable teaching pragmatics and more knowledgeable about sociocultural contexts. Similarly, Economidou-Kogetsidis et al. (2021) compared email production by native teachers and NNTs and how they perceive emails addressed to faculty and identified differences between the two groups.

However, the native and non-native distinction alone may not be sufficient to explain the issue. Szczepaniak-Kozak and Wąsikiewicz-Firlej (2018) compared NTs and NNTs of EFL in Poland in terms of their use of request speech acts as part of the natural class discourse and found that there were differences between them, yet classroom context

provided a constraint on the input relevant to pragmatics and native teachers did not enrich the input. They assert, as a result, that training in pragmatics should be a part of teacher certification programs. Since such differences are identified, their classroom practices pertaining to pragmatics may be influenced. In this regard, Atay (2005) argues “generally, L2 teachers do not teach pragmalinguistic information as they are not consciously aware of it or they lack the relevant knowledge themselves.” Tajeddin and Khodaparast (2020), on the other hand, report that teachers did not consistently teach pragmatics in their classes, although they demonstrated awareness of pragmatics. Further, Vásquez and Fioramonte (2011) report teachers’ difficulties in teaching pragmatics due to curriculum constraints. Examination constraints may also interfere with the teaching of pragmatics. Teachers may end up paying more attention to the grammar and lexicon of ESL/EFL lessons if examinations constrain them in this regard causing an oversight in terms of communicative competence.

Self-reported data from teachers about what they do in class is useful (e.g. Cohen, 2016), yet it is essential to see what EFL teachers actually do in their classes. Thus, this study aims to find out to what extent pragmatic features are taught in an international university where both the students and teachers come from different backgrounds. The majority of the studies in instructional pragmatics involve contexts where teachers and student participants fit into a profile such as sharing a first language (see for example Taguchi, 2015). Since pragmatics would be needed in an international school setting where the teachers and students come from different backgrounds, investigating the actual practices of EFL teachers in such a context may yield different results than in monolingual settings because of a possible authentic need to use pragmatic features.

Methodology

Research design and publication ethics

The current study utilizes a qualitative research method to examine to what extent pragmatics is taught in the School of Foreign Languages of a university in North Cyprus. Before the observations, approval from the ethics committee of the university was obtained. Furthermore, all the participants signed a consent form and willingly accepted the researchers to observe their lessons at the English preparatory program of the university. The learners were also informed about the study.

Context

The university is an international one where the majority of the student body is composed of international students. The university has faculties that offer English-medium programs. Upon enrolling in the university, the students take a proficiency test if they fail to document language proficiency in English. Those students who do not pass the test attend the intensive English program for at least one semester, with the majority attending the program for two semesters.

Participants

The participants were 17 EFL teachers at the university. Thirteen of the participants were female and four were male with an age range of 25 to 46 years. All the participants had B.A or M.A. degree in English Language teaching or related fields of study and certificates to teach English. Five of them were pursuing doctoral degrees at institutions in Cyprus and the UK in English language teaching and education at the time of the study. The teachers were from different countries around the world with different language and educational backgrounds such as Iran, India, Morocco, Turkey, Cyprus, the UK, and Cameroon. They were not formally involved in teaching pragmatics. Since the student and teacher body has an international makeup, there is potential to incorporate the teaching of pragmatics due to this international and intercultural contact.

Data collection and analysis

For the purpose of the study, we observed 28 class sessions. The class sessions observed ranged in length from 30 minutes to 85 minutes. A total of 1375 minutes of teaching was observed. During the observations, we used an observation form, containing activities observed, procedures, timing, materials, interaction, topic, and the focus of the lesson. We prepared a list of pragmatic features to guide us while observing the classes. To analyze the data, we used a coding sheet. The data in the observation form was transferred to a coding sheet to record time allocation, the number of activities in general and the number of activities focusing on pragmatic features, specific pragmatic features, the type of teaching and materials, and the nature of the activity, which allowed to analyze the teaching of pragmatics descriptively. We cross-examined the analysis to establish consistency in coding. Following the coding procedures, we then calculated minutes, percentages, the numbers of materials, activities and the like. Follow-up interviews were also conducted with 6 teachers. Questions directed to the teachers centered on their educational background related to pragmatics, their perception of the importance and benefits of pragmatics, the curriculum, their teaching practices, materials, recourses related to pragmatics.

Procedure

We initially obtained ethics committee approval before conducting the study. Next, we talked to the administration of the School of Foreign Languages of the university to ask for their consent to approach the instructors. After their consent, we asked the instructors for their permission to observe their classes. Those who agreed signed the informed consent form. We, then, scheduled observation sessions and conducted the observations over three weeks. After the observations, we analyzed and coded the forms and running commentary. We then interviewed six teachers and analyzed the data qualitatively to corroborate the findings from the observations.

Findings

The first finding pertains to the amount of time spent on pragmatics in EFL classes in the context. The total length of the class sessions observed was 1375 minutes. The

findings show that of this total time, only 117 minutes involved some teaching of pragmatics, accounting for only 8.5 percent of the teaching time. Considering the importance of pragmatics as essential knowledge in successful interpersonal and intercultural communication, even in an international environment, pragmatics does not seem to be getting sufficient attention. Table 1 depicts this finding.

Table 1. Time allotted to pragmatics

	Time allocation in minutes (%)
Time spent on pragmatics	117 (8.50)
Time spent on other aspects of language	1258 (91.50)
Total	1375

A related finding is with respect to the number of sessions that included aspects of pragmatics in teaching. The analysis revealed that of the 28 sessions observed, only 10 included some teaching of pragmatics, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of classes that included pragmatics

	Number (%)
Classes teaching pragmatics	10 (35.7)
Classes not teaching pragmatics	18 (64.3)
Total	28 (100)

Ten sessions out of 28 seems to be high enough as about 36% of sessions included pragmatics. However, when considered together with the total time spent on teaching pragmatic aspects, which accounts for only 8.5% of the sessions, it seems that the sessions that included pragmatics dealt with it in passing rather than having extended tasks and activities.

As pragmatics is an area to teach in its own right, whole class sessions could be allocated to teach it, but it was not the case in this context. There was only one session that made it a major component where a teacher taught a planned lesson on writing polite emails. This is relevant to another finding. Of these 10 sessions, four of them included incidental components. It was in the form of opportunistic explanations of pragmatic features brought up by the course book or through student output leading to teacher explanation, without much intentional planning to teach pragmatic features. Only six sessions seemed to include intentional teaching, four of which also included spontaneous components. These findings are significant in that there seems to be an oversight about pragmatics. Usually, teachers in this context do not plan to teach pragmatics and do not make it an important component of their teaching as evident in the minimum amount of intentional teaching activities and the minimum amount of time spent on pragmatics.

This minimal teaching of it, however, does not mean that pragmatics was not used as part of the class discourse. For classroom management purposes, pragmatic features such as speech acts were frequently used as shown in the following exchanges:

T: Now, I want three students to read the description for me.

(Students read it)

T: Thank you very much. Excellent!

T: Would you mind opening the door or A/C for me, please? I feel a bit stuffy.

(A student opens the door.)

Students also demonstrate some use of pragmatic acts as in the following:

S: Sorry to interrupt you miss.

S: Sorry I am late.

Since pragmatics does not seem to receive enough attention in planning, the materials involved in teaching pragmatics are not varied. Table 3 shows this finding. The teachers observed employed three types of instructional materials a total of nine times. Six of these instances involved the textbook. One teacher used a PDF that included components relevant to pragmatics and two used worksheets.

Table 3. Instructional materials used to teach pragmatics

Materials	Number of times used
Textbook	6
A PDF page on smartboard	1
Worksheets	2
Total	9

This finding shows that the textbooks could be a source for pragmatics teaching. This finding further demonstrates that the teachers do not plan instructional materials to complement the textbooks. Thus, if textbooks include informed treatment of pragmatics, then pragmatics could potentially find a major place in EFL teaching contexts. Yet, the teachers who were interviewed highlight a problem with respect to textbooks as they seem to believe textbooks are focusing on formal features of language such as language structures as evident from the following excerpt the teacher uttered during the interview.

Textbooks are more structure-focused, formal, not real-life oriented. (44, Female)

The same teacher also acknowledges that the book has “some short authentic videos set in the target language,” which may allow teachers to focus on some pragmatic features. Three other teachers who were interviewed also expressed that the textbooks did not include rich information, and authentic tasks to teach pragmatics. One teacher mentioned that the book has topics such as the ones related to responding to suggestions, yet she said “but I do not know if it is there to teach pragmatics” (26, Female). This may indicate that the teachers may not necessarily have sufficient training in pragmatics and its teaching. This teacher, for instance, mentioned that she did not study pragmatics as part of her undergraduate program in English Language Teaching, although she mentioned that she did in her master’s program. These remarks also suggest that teachers may need recourses to help them teach pragmatics and textbooks take the focal point, which emphasizes the need for textbooks rich in pragmatic input and practice.

In the classes we observed, we were also interested in the types of activities the teachers employed when teaching pragmatics. Since pragmatics entails the use of language in context, the types of activities that the teachers have their students do become an essential issue. In these classes, we observed five different ways of treatment of pragmatic content. Of these, one was an explanation of certain aspects of pragmatics in an unplanned manner where the teachers were touching upon the topic. Some of the other activities, however, may have the potential for creating the context for learning such as role-play and discourse completion tasks, especially the oral version. In such activities, students are supposed to perform certain speech acts, which may help develop pragmatic competence. Table 4 outlines these activities.

Table 4. Activities employed to teach pragmatics

Activity	Number of times used
Drilling and practicing	1
Lecturing	3
Role-play	1
Oral and Written DCT	3
Gap filling	3
Total	11

Within the ten sessions that focused on pragmatics, three main aspects of pragmatics, namely speech acts, implicatures and politeness received some attention. Some of these seemed to be intentional teaching whereas others included the teaching of the feature without an indication of pre-planning with teachers' providing instruction from their own experience as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Pragmatic features taught

Target pragmatic feature	Number of times taught	Teaching
Speech acts	6	
Greeting	1	Intentional
Apology	1	Incidental
Request	1	Incidental
Suggestion and advice	1	Intentional/ Incidental
Offer	1	Incidental
Complaint	1	Intentional/ Incidental
Compliments	1	
Implicatures	4	Intentional (2); incidental (2)
Politeness	5	Incidental (4); intentional (1)

The following exchange is an example of dealing with a pragmalinguistic item incidentally.

T: Let's listen. Okay. Let's listen one more time, and then-

S: Yes

T: I didn't ask. I said "let's listen one more time". If I ask I would say "Shall we listen one more time?" or "Would you like to listen one more time?" Okay, but when you say "let's", it means let's do it, yes?

This notion is also evident in the interview data. Teachers may feel the need to emphasize it although the curriculum does not as they believe it is an important part of language proficiency. Teachers expressed:

The curriculum does not significantly emphasize it. As I have experienced living in the target language, I do pay attention when the opportunity arises. (44, Female)

We don't consciously teach it, but as language teachers we unconsciously use them. We use them while giving examples from daily life and the curriculum doesn't introduce it for me. (25, Female)

If there is a relevant point, I mention it, but it's not part of the curriculum. (31, Male)

It is noteworthy that this teacher associates teaching pragmatics with her experience in the target language community, which may have made her more sensitive to the everyday functions of language in contexts of use. The teachers think that pragmatics is important in language teaching because of factors such as speaking skills, politeness, interpretation of meaning, and intercultural competence. The following remarks highlight the point.

One gesture, voice... we need to learn to teach better. For example, some gestures African students make... If I learn about such things, I can put them into teaching practice. (26, Female)

Although the remark focuses more on gestures, she highlights differences in communication patterns, which is relevant for teaching pragmatics. For other teachers, it was a crucial part of teaching a language.

It is a crucial part of teaching a language. It is the real language, verbal-nonverbal, used in the target language. (44, Female)

But as teachers, they should study pragmatics. They know the difference between use and usage and they can easily put the knowledge in practice and without pragmatics, we won't be able to teach properly. (25, Female)

These remarks may suggest that the teachers in this context believe that pragmatics is an essential skill to highlight, which may explain incidental teaching of it although the textbook does not necessarily include it.

Other instances of incidental exposure to pragmatic features are those moments when the materials included them such as dialogues. For instance, the following exchange was heard as part of an audio track of the textbook that the teacher was using.

A: Let's meet for coffee sometime?

B: Great idea.

In this listening activity, the focus was not on the pragmatic feature, but rather on different professions. Students were listening to the audio track and identifying different

professions. Whether this exposure is a teaching that could be attributed to pragmatics is uncertain, yet we included them as such in this study because they were somewhat exposing students to pragmatic features.

In another example, students practice a dialog about “solutions to problems.” The section in the book does not have an explicit focus on pragmatics, but dialogues include speech acts:

A: Can you replace it, please? It's broken.

B: I am sorry to hear that. Don't worry we can just replace it.

A: The keyboard is not working.

B: I am sorry. Let me replace it for you.

Some teaching, on the other hand, seemed pre-planned, or specifically focused on pragmatics. The following is an example of intentional treatment of pragmatic features. The topic in the textbook is culture and the teacher starts the exchange as the following:

T: What comes to your mind when I say “culture”?

Ss: Weddings, national holidays, clothes, food, dancing.

...

T: How to greet people?

(Students give examples and say the words in their language.)

Students, then, learn about formal and informal language for greeting followed by a video that deals with international etiquette. There are specific examples of pragmalinguistic formulas (e.g. Do you mind if I ask you a few questions?) and also aim to make the students become aware of different ways of politeness in different cultures specifically focusing on Japanese customs.

Another example of intentional teaching is when a teacher introduced how to write formal and informal emails. She explicitly went over the components of emails. She used a pdf material that she projected on the smartboard. She further discussed style. It could be said this was a needs-based teaching as in this context, the students frequently write emails to their professors that lack components like subject, greeting, salutation, or signature. Yet, such explicit focus was rare as evident from the findings.

Discussion

The findings of the study indicate that pragmatics was not a strong component of the lessons observed. Rather than focusing on whether pragmatics is teachable, which many studies have documented that it is (see the literature review section above and Jeon & Kaya, 2006; Taguchi, 2015 for reviews on the issue), the study took the approach to see whether it is actually taught. The results were not promising despite the setting being an international one. The lessons observed did not allocate a significant amount of time to pragmatics. The majority of the classes did not touch on pragmatic features at all and when they did, they mostly dealt with them in passing without necessarily including them as part of the instructional plan. The main material was the coursebook bringing up the feature, sometimes incidentally. Only three lessons included supplementary materials that include

pragmatic features. In this study, the majority of the teachers were NNTs and it may have influenced the choice of not making pragmatics an important component of the lessons. Teachers may not have felt comfortable including the issues in class. One teacher, for example, acknowledged that she did not know much about pragmatics when she was asked which aspects of pragmatics EFL/ESL students should learn. Furthermore, the two lessons that included intentional teaching of pragmatics with supplementary materials were bilingual speakers, one growing up in the UK, and another in a country where English is an official language. Taken together, these findings echo Cohen (2016) and Savvidou and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2019) in that NNTs may not be comfortable with choosing or teaching pragmatic features.

In this study, the teaching of pragmatics was mostly opportunistic. It may be an indication that the teachers feel the necessity to teach about some pragmatic conventions. Nguyen and Canh (2019) speculate that the reason why teachers do not focus on pragmatics may be due to their lack of awareness of its importance or their lack of training on it. The findings of this study suggest that it is the latter. The teachers had awareness of its importance, yet lacked the training needed to cover it in their classes. Another possible reason is that the teachers follow coursebooks adopted by the institution and they need to follow a set schedule implemented for the whole groups. Thus, a lack of planned teaching of pragmatics may be an indication that the coursebook does not have a clear focus on it. In a study on teachers' perception of coursebook adaptation for teaching pragmatics, Karatepe and Civelek (2021) found that the teachers did not consider the coursebook activities sufficient to teach pragmatics, but they reported that they did not adapt the activities. In the same study, the teachers reported lack of knowledge regarding pragmatics as the most common reason for this discrepancy. Other reasons reported by Karatepe and Civelek (2021) were heavy workload, test-oriented education system, lack of time, and learners' low proficiency levels. In the context of the current study, coursebooks do not seem to deal with pragmatic features explicitly and that may prevent teachers from developing an awareness of such features. Furthermore, since there are set quizzes and exams at intervals throughout the year, the teachers need to complete two units every week in order not to lag behind other groups because all the groups need to progress at a similar pace, which may also prevent teachers from adapting their materials. The exams may also create a washback effect by emphasizing grammar and vocabulary more so than sociocultural aspects of language as exams mainly focus on accuracy. Yıldırım (2010), for example, documented such effects with respect to the English component of the university entrance examination in Turkey. Students reported that their teachers focused on grammar and reading much more than speaking and writing during their high school English classes and they made use of tasks and activities that might help develop pragmatic awareness very infrequently.

The interview data revealed that the teachers had an opportunistic approach to teaching pragmatics. When there was a moment to emphasize it, the teachers used the occasion for teaching pragmatic features. Yet, there was uncertainty about what constitutes pragmatics or what to teach about it. One interesting finding from the interview data is that one teacher who lived in the target language community associated that she knew how

important it was because she lived in the target language community as she experienced language use in real life. This is, in some way, paradoxical because in an international environment where the common language of communication is English as in the context of the study, one might expect that the rules of use may be at the focal point. The reason for the paradox could be that in such international encounters where the communication does not usually involve native speakers and turns out to be a lingua franca communication, participants may be more tolerant of pragmatic divergences, which is a notion previously voiced about ELF communications (e.g. Seidlhofer, 2004; Elder & Davies, 2006).

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that pragmatics is not emphasized in an EFL context by teachers with different linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds in an international school setting. Although there may be constraints on teachers' choices such as coursebooks, time, and exams, a lack of emphasis on pragmatics in teacher education programs may be a factor. In this setting, pragmatics is usually highlighted briefly as part of linguistic courses in undergraduate ELT programs. It may also be listed as an elective course rather than being an integral part of the teacher education curriculum. Focusing on this need, Atay (2005), for instance, suggests a teacher training course on pragmatics that aims to raise trainee teachers' consciousness about pragmatics conventions and contexts. In her proposal, trainee teachers are initially given conceptual training about communicative competence and pragmatic competence and do a series of tasks including data collection, analysis, comparing native and non-native choices, assessment of samples, and role-playing and providing feedback. She also suggests a similar course of action for in-service teachers. Through such educational practice, teachers may become more sensitive to pragmatics and incorporate it in their teaching.

There is now a good body of research on instructional pragmatics and textbook evaluations. This study is an attempt to see the place of pragmatics in the actual teaching of pragmatics in an EFL setting. Although the findings cannot be generalized because the study was conducted in a specific school setting, given that the teachers come from different backgrounds, findings may have some relevance to different contexts. Further research may investigate the issue with more comprehensive qualitative designs to explore the reasons for teachers' choices. Then, concrete actions could be taken to address the issue.

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