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## Exploring the Pragmatic Awareness and Competence of EFL Instructors at Tertiary Level

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the perceptions of EFL instructors employed in the Schools of Foreign Languages of various universities in Turkey concerning their awareness of pragmatics and pragmatic competence. The sequential mixed method design was used in this descriptive study. The researchers administered a 12-item questionnaire with 61 participants to collect the quantitative data. In addition, to delve into the results obtained from the quantitative data, a two-session focus group interview was conducted with 10 participants to obtain the qualitative data. With regards to data analysis, the data obtained from the quantitative part of the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics. For the qualitative part of the research, inductive content analysis was applied to analyze the perceptions of EFL instructors to be able to ascertain their pragmatic awareness and competence. The results revealed that EFL instructors at the tertiary level had a moderate level of awareness of pragmatics and teaching pragmatics. Most university instructors underscored that they recognize the value of instructing students about pragmatics and cross-cultural issues. Accordingly, they attempt to adopt teaching strategies and practices that consider the needs of the linguistically and culturally diverse students. The outcomes of this study will be of use to foreign language instructors, curriculum designers and policymakers to act and recognize the importance of teaching of pragmatics in foreign language education.

**Keywords:** pragmatics, pragmatic awareness, pragmatic competence, teaching pragmatics

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## Introduction

Living in a global village, where people can communicate and do business with each other without boundaries, the English language is used as the main medium of cross-cultural communication. Consequently, using English as a lingua franca (ELF) for intercultural communication has brought new challenges to foreign language teaching at the tertiary level. EFL teaching at the university level should equip Turkish young adult learners to become compatible professionals. They need to learn English to be active participants in face-to-face and digital contexts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. An important aspect of communicative competence in L2 is pragmatic competence, which is described as having a wide range of skills that are not just limited to having a good level of knowledge of language forms and functions, but also understanding norms of social interaction and cultural appropriateness (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Taguchi & Röver, 2017). This description may sound daunting to many Turkish EFL teachers. No matter how challenging this might be, English teachers need to help learners increase their pragmatic awareness so that learners can actively take part in interactions in their professional and personal lives (Taguchi, 2018; Yuan, 2012). To elaborate, learners should be able to distinguish between the meanings of utterances and use them in appropriate situations (Çetinavcı, 2018; Yu, 2006). As Karatepe (2001) points out

“Learners may entirely depend on social and contextual variables of their native culture. This may lead them to assess the weight of these variables incorrectly. Equally, they may fail to make an appropriate decision about carrying out a certain speech act. There is also a possibility for learners to make an inappropriate decision about the type of politeness strategy which can be used in a certain context of the situation. Then, learners may resort to their L1” (p.179).

This situation was described as a ‘pragmatic failure’ by Thomas (1983) and an intercultural communication breakdown (Keckes et al., 2018; Warga & Scholmerge, 2007, p. 221). Pragmatics is defined as “the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication” (Crystal, 2008, p.379). That is, a good level of knowledge of pragmatics is expected to enable learners to not only perform appropriately but also to interpret implied messages in interaction to participate in the ongoing interaction (O’Keeffe et al., 2019). Along the same lines, pragmatic competence is defined as ‘the ability to use language appropriately in a social context’ (Taguchi, 2009). Learners with pragmatic competence, then, can distinguish between the meanings of utterances and use them in the appropriate situations. If learners have low pragmatic competence, it may lead to intercultural misunderstandings in instances where these learners experience pragmatic failure because they have violated the pragmatic norms of the target language. This situation emphasizes the importance of clear assistance in the development of pragmatic competence in foreign language teaching for students (O’Keeffe, et al., 2019). Along with its crucial role in communication, a separate Pragmatics Module was included in the ELT teacher education programmes in Turkey as an elective course in 2018 (Çimen & Gezeğin, 2021). While this certainly is good news, the Pragmatics course has to compete with many other courses offered. Thus, it is possible for a graduate of an ELT department to complete the program without taking a Pragmatics course. To address this shortcoming, this study aims to investigate Turkish ELT teachers’ attitudes towards the teaching of the features of pragmatics.

## **EFL teachers and Pragmatics**

When learners do not have access to linguistic or social tools, it can be difficult to provide them with rich and meaningful interaction. Moreover, the traditional syllabus still focuses on grammatical topics, neglecting interactive and authentic communicative activities that could help learners develop sociopragmatic competence (Mede & Dikilitaş, 2015). Hence, to foster learners' sociopragmatic competence, authentic interactional opportunities can be offered through digital L2 pragmatics learning applications like Words at Work, Plotagon, Powtoon, and Toontastic (Blattner & Fiori, 2011; Blyth & Sykes, 2020; Civelek & Karatepe, 2021; Lomicka & Lord, 2016; Wain et al., 2019).

Teachers' perceptions of what should be taught impact their daily instructional decisions (Nishimuro & Borg, 2013). What teachers say and do individually in the classroom is thought to be heavily influenced by their cognition, skills, values, etc. apart from curricular decisions and administrative regulations and other stakeholders (Basturkmen, 2012; Farrell, 2007; Ishihara, 2010).

Even when a teacher education program offers a pragmatics course, it fails to include a pedagogical component that provides teachers with pragmatics instruction of the target language (Eslami & Eslami-Rasekh, 2008; Baştürkmen & Nguyen, 2017). Pragmatics was covered solely on a theoretical level, such as examining speech acts or politeness rather than from a more practical, pedagogical standpoint in most programs. As a result, no actual pedagogical preparation for pragmatic instruction was provided to teachers (Ishihara, 2011). Thus, teacher education in the domain of pragmatics remains to be insufficient (Cohen, 2016).

Finally, teachers' beliefs and attitudes about their teaching practices are highly influenced by their background, their knowledge about language and its teaching, their teaching and learning experiences, and views (Ishihara, 2010). Teacher education, classroom practice, and experiences both within and outside the classroom all contribute to teacher knowledge. This knowledge is sculpted, altered, modified, transformed, or reinforced rather than being a static entity (ibid). Ishihara (2010) states that teachers' knowledge should comprise (a) subject-matter knowledge (e.g., in-depth understanding of a variety of pragmatic norms in the target language, knowledge of metapragmatic information (i.e., how to talk about pragmatics), (b) knowledge of pedagogical-content (e.g., how to teach and assess L2 pragmatics), (c) general pedagogical knowledge in general (e.g., how to teach and assess), (d) learners; knowledge, local curriculum, and educational environments (e.g., sensitivity to the subjectivity and cultural identity of students, cultural awareness of the students, identities, pragmatics-focused curriculum knowledge, understanding of the role of L2 pragmatics in educational settings) (pp. 23-24).

## **The Role of Pragmatics course in Turkish EFL Context**

A critical aspect to consider at foreign language education in higher education in Turkey is whether instructors, particularly non-native EFL instructors at tertiary level, have the pragmatic awareness and knowledge to include pragmatic forms into their normal educational programs. Pragmatics has long been considered a vital component of language teachers' knowledge. It can be said that the majority of ELT programs in Turkey have a pragmatics course in the education curriculum; however, the opportunity to practice pragmatic features of the target language are not given enough importance in this course because theory is at the focus. An effective instructor of L2 pragmatics is expected to have some qualifications such as

having an awareness of pragmatic norms and pragmatic variation. They are also expected to provide pragmatic focused instruction and assessment. Moreover, sensitivity to learners' cultures is also another issue that instructors should consider. In other words, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and knowledge of the learners and the educational context can all be considered as the qualifications of a successful L2 instructor in terms of pragmatics (Mitrani, 2016).

Studies investigating pragmatic awareness have generally focused on speech acts such as compliments (Bulut & Ozkan 2005; Dilek, 2020), apologies ( Aydın, 2013; Balcı, 2009), complaints (Deveci, 2010), refusals (Genç & Tekyıldız, 2009; Han & Burgucu-Tazegül, 2016; Hergüner & Çakır, 2017), and requests (Balcı, 2009; Burgucu-Tazegül et al., 2016; Gazioğlu & Çiftçi, 2017; Güneş & Ortaçtepe, 2019; Karagöz & İsisag, 2019; Kılıçkaya, 2010). Interlanguage communicative competence is another facet of pragmatic competence studied by Turkish researchers (Atay, 2005; Bektaş-Çetinkaya, 2012; Çetinavcı, 2012; Hişmanoğlu, 2011; Sarıçoban & Öz, 2014). Furthermore, several authors argued both for the integration of pragmatics in teacher development and training courses, and the inclusion of language and culture into foreign language learning curricula (Ekin & Damar, 2013; Karatepe, 2001 & 2016; Tulgar et al., 2017). This is because not all L2 teachers possess the knowledge and abilities required to teach L2 pragmatics and intercultural awareness. For any language teacher, teaching L2 pragmatics can be challenging because of several factors, such as a shortage of teaching materials (Basturkmen & Nguyen, 2017; Eslami & Eslami-Rasekh, 2008; Limberg, 2016; Vásquez & Sharpless, 2009), their rudimentary understanding of pragmatic theory (Denny & Basturkmen, 2011), and students' unwillingness to embrace pragmatic standards in the target language (Savic, 2014). Teaching L2 pragmatics can be particularly difficult for teachers who learned the language as a second or foreign language and have had less exposure to it in authentic interactional circumstances. Regarding studies in the Turkish context, one can infer that there is a scarcity of research in terms of pragmatic awareness of EFL instructors at university level despite the growing importance of L2 pragmatic instruction at higher education.

## **Problem Situation**

The role of pragmatic awareness for EFL instructors has been gaining more significance as they need to prepare foreign language learners for successful cross-cultural communication. This means that teaching pragmatics strategies becomes vital for an EFL instructor. Instructors of English encounter some problems such as not being able to use their pragmatic knowledge while teaching. One of the most fundamental reasons is that the higher education system in Turkey does not place sufficient emphasis on this field. As a result, instructors' pragmatic skills are less developed than those of native speakers. As instructors are the primary source of learning, having them with a high level of pragmatic awareness becomes a critical factor in the development of learners' pragmatic competence. For effective communication, it is necessary for teachers to provide learners with information about the cultural norms and various strategies in terms of pragmatic learning. In brief, instructors must be proficient in pragmatics in order to improve learners' pragmatic awareness. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the Turkish EFL instructors' pragmatic awareness at tertiary level.

## Purpose and Significance of the Study

This research study attempts to shed some light onto the issue of teaching pragmatics in higher education in Turkey by investigating instructors' perceptions of pragmatics. The findings of this study help to examine how Turkish instructors view the place of pragmatics in their classroom practices. There has been no empirical study conducted to show whether Turkish EFL instructors at preparatory schools are aware of pragmatics and pragmatics teaching. To date, in the discipline of second and/or foreign language pragmatics, research has led to a better understanding of pragmatic performance of learners and the development of pragmatic competence in instructional situations. However, there is limited research regarding competence, awareness and/or professional knowledge of EFL instructors about pragmatics at the tertiary level.

Thereupon, the study addresses the following main research question with its sub-research question:

RQ1. What are EFL instructors' perceptions of pragmatics and teaching pragmatics?

1.1. What are the perceptions of EFL instructors about teaching linguistic knowledge versus pragmatic knowledge and teaching English communicatively?

1.2. What are the perceptions of EFL instructors about teaching practices regarding teaching pragmatic knowledge?

1.3. What are the perceptions of EFL instructors about identity and culture in ELT and the need for learners to understand other Englishes?

1.4. What are the perceptions of EFL instructors about the factors affecting teaching pragmatics?

## Method

### Research Design

The sequential explanatory mixed-methods design was employed in the study as it was the most appropriate approach to provide the general picture of the research problem and generate broader inferences from the findings. In this approach, the quantitative data was collected in the first phase followed by qualitative data collection (Creswell, 2013; Ivankova et al., 2006; Mason, 2006) to investigate the EFL instructors' perceptions of pragmatics and teaching pragmatics with the aim of reaching more EFL instructors, the researchers in this study conducted an online questionnaire to ensure sufficient data collection from different contexts and regions of Turkey.

### Participants

The participants of the study were instructors in English preparatory programs at various Turkish universities. The participants were 61 non-native speakers (NNSs) EFL instructors, 53 of whom were employed at state universities<sup>4</sup> and eight of whom were employed

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<sup>4</sup> Abdullah Gül U, Adıyaman U, Afyon Kocatepe U, Akdeniz U, Aksaray U, Amasya U, Anadolu U, Ankara U, Atatürk U, Balıkesir U, Bandırma Onyediy Eylül U, Bartın U, Bilecik Şeyh Edebali U, Boğaziçi U, Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal U, Burdur Mehmet Akif U, Bursa Technical U, Bursa Uludağ U, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart U, Çukurova U, Dicle U, Dokuz Eylül U, Düzce U, Ege U, Erciyes U, Eskisehir Osmangazi U, Gazi U, Gaziantep U, Gebze Teknik U,

at private universities<sup>5</sup>. Table 1 given below details the background information of the participants.

**Table 1**

*The Demographics of the Participants*

Variable	Groups	N
Gender	Female	46
	Male	15
Earned degree	BA	17
	MA	33
	PhD.	11
Teaching experience	2-5 years	8
	5-10 years	10
	10-15 years	6
	More than 15 years	37
Experience of being abroad	Yes	23
	No	38
Taking pragmatics and/or pragmatics related courses before	Yes	15
	No	46
Type of employed university	State	53
	Private	8

## Data Collection Tools

Both quantitative and qualitative instruments were used to collect data. The survey questionnaire which was partially adapted from Ji (2007) and Vu (2017) was used as a quantitative data collection tool in the study. However, the researchers modified the items in the questionnaire based on the feedback and comments provided by the two experts to make them relevant to the scope of the study.

The first part of the questionnaire aimed to collect demographic information: gender, teaching experience, educational background, the experience of travel abroad, and their pragmatics learning background. The demographic information was used to choose participants for the subsequent focus groups for interviews. The second part contained 12 items, which comprised of five different dimensions, namely, teaching linguistic knowledge versus pragmatic knowledge and teaching English communicatively (three items), teaching practices regarding teaching pragmatic knowledge (four items), identity and culture in English teaching and the need to understand other Englishes (three items), and factors affecting teaching pragmatics (two items).

Furthermore, an online focus group interview with 10 instructors via Zoom was conducted to delve into their perceptions and experiences about pragmatics and their teaching of pragmatics and to triangulate the results that emerged from the survey questionnaire. The interview questions were formed based on the results of the questionnaire. In this situation, purposeful (convenience) sampling was deemed useful and practicable (Cohen et al., 2007).

Hacettepe U, Harran U, İnönü U, İstanbul Medeniyet U, İstanbul Technical U, İzmir Demokrasi U, Kafkas U, Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam U, Karabük U, Karadeniz Technical U, Kocaeli U, Kütahya Dumlupınar U, Malatya Turgut Özal U, Marmara U, Muğla Sıtkı Koçman U, Ondokuz Mayıs U, METU, Pamukkale U, Selçuk U, Sivas Cumhuriyet U, Süleyman Demirel U, Trakya U, Yalova U, Yozgat Bozok U.

<sup>5</sup> Atılım U, Bahçeşehir U, Başkent U, Beykent U, Biruni U, İstanbul Medipol U, İstinye U, Yeditepe U.

## Data Collection Process

The questionnaire form, which was created using Google Docs, was sent to the instructors after getting approval from the ethical committee of Bursa Uludağ University in the 2021 Fall semester. The focus group interviews were carried out for two weeks towards the end of the term after the analysis of the questionnaire.

One of the researchers hosted two group meetings (acting as a moderator) with five-ten interviewees via Zoom, which has a 40-minute time limit. The interviews for each participant lasted approximately five-seven minutes. The total time recorded was reported as 80 minutes. The participation of the interviewees was voluntary, and their answers were kept anonymous. The interviews were conducted in Turkish, which was the mother tongue of the participants and the researchers. The questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. To find answers to the main research question followed by sub-questions, descriptive statistics such as frequency and mean values of the items were calculated and presented to reveal the participants' perceptions about pragmatics and pragmatics teaching.

Furthermore, the inductive content analysis technique was used to analyze the data that emerged from the focus group interviews to support the quantitative data findings. In inductive content analysis, categories are created from the raw data which are unstructured (Thomas, 2006). In this research, for the analysis of the interview data, the interview transcriptions from the video recordings were examined and carefully read several times by the researchers. Concepts and categories were identified directly from the raw data and researchers wrote memos about the categories. This helped them to discover the associations, links, and relationships between the categories (Patton, 2002). To mitigate the subjectivity of two raters and to produce more valid and rigorous analysis, a third rater was used to check the first two raters' interpretations and coding of the qualitative data. In this process, a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software called Weft QDA (Weft QDA, 2007) was used.

## Validity and Reliability

The internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire revealed a Cronbach's alpha score of  $\alpha = .72$ , which indicated acceptable reliability for the survey to be used in the study (Büyüköztürk, 2002). To ensure the validity of the study, the interview questions which were framed by the questionnaire items were checked by two experts with a PhD in ELT, and the final form of the items was reached according to the direction of the experts' opinions and suggestions. To minimize or avoid threats to the study, the researchers followed the steps recommended by Polit & Beck (2010), i.e., standardizing the conditions under which the research study was to be carried out; obtaining as much information as possible about the participants; deciding when and where the study was to be conducted and choosing an appropriate research design.

## Ethical Issues

The study was conducted with volunteer EFL instructors who were informed about the aims and processes of the study. In addition, it was assured that their views would be kept private and not be shared except for the academic purposes. Pertaining to ethical consideration, the study was conducted after getting the approval document of Bursa Uludağ

University Ethics Committee dated 26.11.2021 and numbered 10. This study had no funding and there is no conflict of interests.

## Findings

The overall result of the study indicated the participants' perceptions of pragmatics and teaching pragmatics at the tertiary level were at moderate level. Considering that the last point that could be gained from the questionnaire is 12 and the maximum point is 60, participants' overall score on their perceptions of pragmatics and teaching pragmatics is found to be 39.83 which is between "Neutral" (M=36) and "I agree" (M=48) being mostly closer to "Neutral". The detailed results are presented under the following research questions.

### RQ1: What are EFL Instructors' Perceptions of Pragmatics and Teaching Pragmatics?

Table 2 below indicates to what extent the participants developed knowledge about teaching pragmatics based on the categories formed in the questionnaire.

**Table 2**

*Mean scores of the Questionnaire Categories*

Categories	Min.	Max.	M	SD
Identity and Culture in ELT	2	4.50	3.49	0.45
Factors affecting teaching pragmatics	1.50	4.50	3.10	1.06
Teaching practices regarding teaching pragmatic knowledge	2.25	3.75	3.08	3.08
Teaching linguistic vs pragmatic knowledge and communicative English	1.67	4.33	2.62	.558

The results in Table 2 indicated that the EFL instructors displayed a moderate level of knowledge and perceptions of pragmatics and teaching pragmatics which means there are some gaps in their awareness and knowledge in the field.

### ***RQ. 1.1. Perceptions of EFL Instructors About Teaching Linguistic Knowledge Versus Pragmatic Knowledge and Teaching English Communicatively***

Table 3 displays the descriptive results of the participants' perceptions about teaching linguistic knowledge versus pragmatic knowledge and teaching English communicatively.

**Table 3**

*The Descriptive Statistics of Participants' Perceptions on Teaching Linguistic vs Pragmatic Knowledge and Communicative Language Teaching*

The Items	N	Certainly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Certainly Agree (%)	X	SD
Teaching linguistic knowledge vs pragmatic knowledge and communicative English							2.62	.886
2. The equal importance of linguistic knowledge and pragmatic knowledge.	61	1.6	4.9	13.1	57.4	23.0	3.95	.845
1. Learning English in terms of its grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.	61	14.8	45.9	21.3	13.1	4.9	2.47	1.05
7. Teaching English communicatively vs teaching grammar & vocabulary	61	63.9	31.1	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.45	.765

Based on the results presented in Table 3, 80.4% of participants agreed that linguistic knowledge (e.g., pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary) is as important as the knowledge of how to use the language (Item 2). One of the interviewees (I10) clarified the issue as follows: "Teaching linguistic knowledge such as grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary is necessary since it serves as a tool for our students to be able to speak to other people appropriately." On the other hand, more than half of the participants (60.7 %) disagreed with this idea (Item 1). One of the instructors (I13) commented that instructors were aware of the fact that learning English was not just limited to these aspects of language. She said that learners need to observe language use in different contexts. She wishes that her students could go abroad to do this, but she knows that this is very unlikely to happen.

Moreover, most of participants (95%) indicated that teaching English communicatively is as important as teaching grammar topics and vocabulary items. Interview data also confirms that they think that 'it is critical to teach both the linguistic and pragmatic aspects of the target language to develop communicative competence of the students. Thus, they will be more competent at expressing themselves easily in certain contexts.

### ***RQ 1.2. Perceptions of EFL Instructors About Teaching Practices Regarding Teaching Pragmatic Knowledge***

Table 4 presents the descriptive results of the participants' perceptions about teaching practices regarding teaching pragmatic knowledge.

**Table 4**

*The Descriptive Statistics of Participants' Perceptions on Teaching Practices Regarding Teaching Pragmatic Knowledge.*

The Items	N	Certainly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Certainly Agree (%)	X	SD
Teaching practices regarding teaching pragmatic knowledge							3.08	2.19
8. Teaching pragmatic knowledge at a certain level of language proficiency.	61	3.3	24.6	16.4	31.1	24.6	3.49	1.20
5. Raising students' awareness of cultural information and appropriate language use vs teaching specific pragmatic knowledge	61	3.3	3.3	44.3	41.0	8.2	3.47	3.47
3. Correcting inappropriate words	61	3.3	24.6	13.1	50.8	8.2	3.36	3.36
4. Providing students with cultural knowledge	61	21.3	62.3	13.1	1.6	1.6	2.00	.752

Table 4 shows that 55.7% agreed that the knowledge of pragmatics should be taught when students reach a certain level of language proficiency. Five of the interviewees reiterated this belief. One of the participants (I1) said that she once tried to raise the pragmatic awareness of students in the beginners' group. Unfortunately, it did not work. She then concluded that it was too early for them to learn about pragmatics. Another participant (I10) commented:

"Although they come to a good level of proficiency, they are unaware of the pragmatic elements of the target language because they have not been in different environments with different people where the target language is spoken before, so they do not know how to talk appropriately with others." (I10)

Alongside this, nearly half of the participants (49.2%) believed that raising students' awareness on the issues related to culture and appropriate language use is more useful than teaching specific pragmatic knowledge whereas 44.3% of them were hesitant about this. Our participants appeared to think that what is needed is experiencing intercultural experiences which seems to be beyond their reach in the Turkish EFL context. Similar to what I13 stated earlier in the text, one of the participants pointed out that to raise students' awareness, they needed to interact with NSs. Knowing the likelihood of this is very low, she recommended that

"[teachers should] carry out projects where they can meet with students from different parts of the world on a common platform on language learning. Once the student has gained this experience, he or she will already gain awareness and sensitivity towards different cultures and cultural elements."

Along the same lines, I2 reported that she used videos and role-play activities where students first observe NSs and later practice. She claims that this could contribute to learners'

knowledge about cultural issues. Another respondent, I9, claimed that she tried to raise her students' pragmatic awareness by using authentic texts on cultural issues in reading classes.

When to correct inappropriate language is another thorny issue for teachers to tackle. More than half of the participants (59%) stated that they often corrected their students' inappropriate use even when the sentences were grammatically correct. One of the participants told an anecdote to exemplify her point as follows:

I5: "I once taught 'Teaching Turkish to Foreigners' course to the foreigners. There were many foreign students in my class. Some of them didn't know how to talk to their teacher. For example, s/he called you "sen" (2nd person singular pronoun in Turkish). Since they came from different cultures, I tolerated it up to a point, but I saw that they kept saying it, then I needed to correct it."

Furthermore, the majority of participants (83.6%) declared that they knew how to provide students with cultural knowledge and appropriate language use. Some of the interviewees (N=5) explained the methods they used to provide students with cultural knowledge and appropriate language use. Participant I6 explained "I do not make a special effort to teach specific pragmatic elements such as how to say and express, certain speech acts etc.", However, she specifically aimed to raise her students' intercultural awareness by leading them to reflect on any cultural differences they observed in specific videos.

### **RQ 1.3. Perceptions of EFL Instructors About Identity and Culture in ELT and the Need for Learners to Understand Other Englishes**

Table 5 shows the descriptive results of the participants' perceptions about identity and culture in ELT and the need for learners to understand other Englishes.

**Table 5**

*The Descriptive Statistics of Participants' Beliefs on Identity and Culture in ELT and the Need for Learners to Understand Other Englishes*

The Items	N	Certainly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Certainly Agree (%)	X	SD
Identity and Culture in ELT							3.49	0.96
10. The need for understanding other Englishes other than native English (e.g., American, British).	61	1.6	4.9	9.8	47.5	36.1	4.11	.896
9. Keeping the identity and culture of learners of English.	61	1.6	6.6	13.1	54.1	24.6	3.93	.891
6. Students' being able to speak English like native speakers.	61	3.3	13.1	21.3	36.1	26.2	2.31	1.10

Table 5 shows the dimension which most respondents agreed upon in English teaching and learning pragmatics was the issue of identity and culture in ELT and the need for learners

to understand other Englishes (M= 3.49). That is, 83.6% of participants agreed that learners needed to understand other Englishes as well as the American and British varieties. Similarly, seven interviewees highlighted the importance of understanding other Englishes.

They underlined the fact that English is a global language, and it does not belong to one specific nation. For example, one interviewee (I9) argued that ‘maybe they would do business with a Malaysian or an Indian. So, they will have to understand their culture, the way they speak English.’. Most of the interviewees seem to believe that it is their responsibility to prepare professionals of the future for different intercultural communication situations. I4 argued that students should be familiar with the Pacific varieties of English, such as Singaporean English.

The participants appear to be worried that their students are exposed to so many different foreign elements that 78.7% of them maintained that it was important for learners of English to keep their identity and culture. In the interview, almost all of them seemed quite concerned about this issue. One of them (I7) even quoted Mustafa Kemal Atatürk to emphasize that those nations who fail to keep their national identity will be doomed to become prey to other nations.

While many of our participants appear to have agreed that their students will be actors in intercultural communication in the future, 62.3% claimed that they wanted their students to adapt to the NS accent whereas 21.3% of the participants stated that they were unsure about it. However, in the interview, five teachers offered their perspectives regarding the issue. For example, I6 demanded that she wanted her students to speak as fluent as NSs. However, she also explained that this was not her main goal in the classroom. She said that she aimed to help her students to speak English that was intelligible enough to be active participants in their interactions. Another interviewee (I1) admitted that NNS teachers probably should not be used as role models in terms of pronunciation and accent. However, both I10 and I1 agreed that in the digital world, students could be exposed to different accents and a variety of different Englishes. Therefore, teachers are not the only role model. Teachers appeared to be a little unhappy about this point, fearing that students might sound strange if they tried to imitate pop stars and internet personalities.

#### ***RQ 1.4. Perceptions of EFL Instructors About the Factors Affecting Teaching Pragmatics***

Table 6 displays the descriptive results of the participants’ perceptions about the factors affecting teaching pragmatics.

**Table 6***The Descriptive Statistics of Participants' Perceptions on the Factors Affecting Teaching Pragmatics.*

The Items	N	Certainly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Certainly Agree (%)	X	SD
11. Influence of the mother tongue and other people.	61	1.6	23.0	26.2	32.8	16.4	3.39	.897
12. Pragmatic content in textbooks.	61	14.8	23.0	29.5	31.1	1.6	2.81	1.06

The results in Table 6 revealed that although nearly half of the participants (49.2%) stated that their approach to learning and teaching pragmatics in particular and English, in general, was influenced by their mother tongue and by other people around them, 26.2 % of them were hesitant and 24.6 % of them disagreed about this point. Our participants had different ideas about this issue. For example, I4 sounded certain that her mother tongue, Turkish, did not facilitate her process of learning English. Another interviewee, I8, said that transferring from L1 could lead to misunderstandings in a multilingual class. She gave the following example: "For example, if there is a student from the Czech Republic in your class and a student from the class says 'selamün aleyküm' while entering the classroom, Turkish students, students from the Turkic Republics or students of Arab origin understand what that student means, but that Czech student cannot, so there may be a misunderstanding in communication." In this case, we see not only linguistic transfer but also socio-pragmatic behaviour.

The participants were also asked to comment on the content of the coursebook they use in terms of Pragmatics. The results also revealed that there was uncertainty about the existence of pragmatic content in textbooks. 37.8% of the participants disagreed that the textbook(s) used at Prep Schools contain adequate pragmatic information whereas 32.7 % of them agreed that they do, and 29.5 % of them were uncertain about it. The uncertainty about this issue was clarified by some of the interviewees (N=4).

It seems that the reason why teachers' ideas vary about the pragmatic coverage of their coursebook is that they were not free to use the content even though pragmatics is represented in it. Although the book included some sections on 'functional language' (I1 used the term), teachers were told not to teach these. Three interviewees explained that they had to skip parts related to pragmatics because the syllabus is loaded. They work hard to prepare students to pass the proficiency test at the end of the academic year. They have to focus more on grammar and vocabulary rather than appropriate use of language. All three interviewees who commented on this seemed upset because of this.

### Conclusion, Discussion, and Implications

The current study attempted to explore the perceptions of EFL instructors' awareness of pragmatics and teaching pragmatics in language classrooms. The first sub-research question of the first main research question of the study which sought to find out the perceptions of EFL instructors about the relationship between linguistic knowledge and

pragmatic knowledge and teaching English communicatively revealed generally moderate results which means that teachers want to teach pragmatics during lessons, but they have to focus intensively on the grammatical aspects of the language due to exam-oriented educational context in Turkey. Most of our participants believed that teaching pragmatic knowledge was just as important as teaching linguistic knowledge, similar to the findings reported by Ariani et al. (2021), and Takkaç Tulgar (2017). Our participants tend to think that it is critical to teach not only linguistic knowledge (grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation) but also knowledge on pragmatics and culture since there may be opportunities for them to study or pursue a career abroad in the future. Hence, all participants appear to have agreed that teaching only the linguistic aspects of the target language should not be the only goal of language teaching (Chen, 2011).

Many of the participants also declared that teaching English communicatively was just as important as teaching grammatical points and vocabulary items of English. Hence, incorporating pragmatic instruction into the curriculum is essential to help learners use language appropriately in different situations, as reported in Bastürkmen and Nguyen (2017), Eslami and Eslami-Rasekh (2008), Ivanova (2018), Takkaç Tulgar et al. (2017). Our participants showed greater enthusiasm for teaching English to foster intercultural communicative competence to prepare next-generation adults for increasingly more multilingual situations (Sun, 2013; Tajeddin et al., 2018).

The second sub research question of the first main research question of the study, which aimed to reveal the participants' perceptions about teaching practices regarding teaching pragmatic knowledge, again resulted in moderate scores for EFL instructors. More than half of the instructors stated that pragmatic knowledge should be taught once students achieve a particular language level, as shown in studies by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986), Niezgodna and Röver (2001), Wannaruk (2008) and Taguchi (2011). They claimed that pragmatic competence required a foundational level of general language skills. Conversely, the participants in this study believed that the knowledge of pragmatics develops through explicit instruction in the classroom context even if their students had reached a satisfactory level of proficiency. This finding also echoes the claims made by Michail (2014), Nu et al. (2020), Rose and Kasper (2001), Tajeddin and Bagherkazemi (2021) and Takimoto (2006) which state that explicit pragmatics instruction is more beneficial in raising learners' awareness and attention towards the appropriate ways of using the language than implicit instruction. They also maintained that appropriate use of language requires a higher understanding of the context, something which is not attainable by students as easily as claimed by Özdemir (2011).

Moreover, although nearly half of the instructors maintained that it is more beneficial to raise students' understanding of how to obtain cultural information and how to use language appropriately in certain contexts than teaching specific pragmatic knowledge, roughly half of our participants were undecided about this issue. However, our interviewees pinpointed the need for supporting student mobility (e.g., Erasmus) to develop intercultural awareness. The benefit of such programmes has been reported in the literature (Fidan & Karatepe, 2021; Holmes et al., 2015; Taguchi, 2011). They acknowledged that as learners are exposed to foreign language culture, they gradually start to appreciate the cultural differences.

More than half of the instructors posited that they frequently addressed their students' errors when they used words or phrases inappropriately even if they were grammatically correct. This finding contradicts Ivanova's (2018) findings that teachers admitted that treating students' pragmatic errors systematically was difficult for them to handle. In the same vein, the

teachers in Vu (2017) and Watman and Watman (2019) stated that they correct students' pragmatic errors immediately otherwise they might cause misunderstanding and communication breakdown. The analysis of the interview data indicated that instructors expected students to be aware of the politeness norms of the target language because politeness is an important culture-specific part of pragmatics, as stated by Ivanova (2018). Also, similar to the findings reported in Savvidou and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2019) and Watman and Watman (2019), the majority of our participants claimed that they knew how to teach appropriate language use and cultural issues as they adopt culturally appropriate teaching styles.

The findings of the study revealed that the issue of identity and culture in ELT, as well as the requirement for learners to understand other Englishes, was the dimension which EFL instructors most frequently agreed upon for English teaching and learning of pragmatics. Our interviewees argued that their students should be familiar with other Englishes such as Singapore English and Malaysian English, in addition to American and British varieties as they need to communicate with non-native speakers of English rather than native English speakers from different lingua-cultural backgrounds. Similar findings were reported in McKay and Brown (2015), Tajeddin et al. (2018) and Tajeddin and Alemi (2020).

Our findings further revealed that more than half of the EFL instructors claimed that they wanted their students to speak English as fluent as native speakers whereas a substantial number of the participants stated that they were hesitant on this point since students communicate more with non-native speakers than with native speakers both inside and outside the classroom. Unlike the results of the present study, the results of the studies conducted by He and Zhang (2010) and Tajeddin et al. (2018) showed that most of the teachers preferred their students to speak English like a native speaker despite there being more non-native users of English than native ones in the world. To put it succinctly, achieving a native speaker accent is very impressive, but it is not necessary because of the multilingual dimension of English use.

The study also aimed to investigate the EFL instructors' perceptions about factors affecting teaching pragmatics. There were discrepancies among the participants about this dimension. In this regard, nearly half of the participants claimed that their mother tongue and other people around them influence how they learn and teach pragmatics in particular and other language topics in general, on the other hand, 26.2 % were hesitant and 24.6 % disagreed. The quantitative findings above showed that there exists a lack of agreement about the interference of L1 on pragmatics learning and teaching among instructors. However, in the light of robust qualitative interview questions during the interview, there revealed a consensus among the interviewees that it was inevitable that the way Turkish EFL teachers learned pragmatics or English in general was influenced heavily by their first language. Moreover, as evidenced in the findings of the studies by Karatepe and Civelek (2021), and Wyner and Cohen (2015), there is always the risk of pragmatic failure as a result of transferring language forms from L1. However, the findings of the study by Tajeddin et al. (2018) suggested that L1 pragmatic transfer enhances effective communication among non-native speakers in terms of mutual intelligibility which is one of the instances of dissonance between quantitative and qualitative findings.

EFL instructors also stated their perceptions about the pragmatic content in textbooks. The results demonstrated different opinions were put forward by the instructors regarding whether textbooks contained pragmatic content. While 37.8 % of the instructors disagreed that the textbooks used in their Preparatory Year provided appropriate pragmatic information, 32.7

% appeared to be satisfied with the information on pragmatics in their textbook. However, 29.5 % were seemingly unsure. This inconsistency might be due to the fact that the amount of pragmatic content in the EFL texts learners are exposed to varies substantially. EFL textbooks might fall behind directing learners in the use of pragmatic characteristics of English. The interview results revealed that instructors could not allocate enough time even if the textbooks included information on pragmatic elements because they had to prepare the students for the exams and they had to keep pace with the tight syllabus. As a consequence, their students could not benefit from a valuable source of information. That the topics related to pragmatics are not presented in a structured and planned manner in Turkish ELT departments was also reported in one of the author's PhD thesis. It is sad to report a similar finding in 2022. The same issue has also been reported in several recent studies, such as Mede and Dikilitaş (2015), Savvidou and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2019) and Vu (2017). It seems that as long as students' successful test scores are the focus of attention in language education, teaching pragmatics will be underrepresented in Turkish foreign language education.

The present study aimed to investigate EFL instructors' perceptions of pragmatics and pragmatics teaching in higher education. Our participants appear well aware that they teach English to prepare young adults to enable them to communicate on international platforms. The university instructors mostly realize the importance of teaching about pragmatics and intercultural issues. They reported that they attempt to do so when the opportunity arises. That is, when they notice inappropriate language use, they tend to correct it immediately. If instructors show immediate reaction to a learner's utterance, it helps the learner notice their pragmatic failure and understand what the true form is with regard to the social context in which it is used (Shirkhani & Tajeddin, 2017). Moreover, they try to benefit from what multi-lingual and multi-cultural classes can offer.

An important finding is that the syllabus is overloaded, and its main aim appears to prepare students for the final exam which is given at the end of the academic year. For this reason, the instructors are asked to skip the parts of their coursebook where topics related to pragmatics are covered mostly by the students. Our informants seem to be aware of the consequences of this decision for students' pragmatic knowledge, but the exam-oriented education system makes instructors work with their hands tied. In conclusion, the instructors are deprived of using very useful material to teach what they refer to as 'functional language'. They reported that they were doing their best to compensate for this loss in the limited time they could allocate. These findings lead the researchers to conclude that teachers cannot spare much time for raising students' pragmatological and sociopragmatic awareness in a structured and systematic way. However, like any other language topic, teaching issues related to pragmatics should become an inherent part of the language curriculum. It seems that as long as the test results of students are the focus of attention in language education, teaching pragmatics will lag behind in Turkish foreign language education.

This study also bears some limitations such as including classroom observations to triangulate the results obtained from this study. Thus, more systematic further study via in-class observations might provide additional insights into the pragmatics knowledge and skills learners pose besides the types of tasks which are frequently used by teachers to equip learners with the required pragmatics knowledge and skills.

As for the implications of the study, current EFL instructors could be provided with in-service training that focuses on the teaching pragmatic knowledge in language classes. Hence, the instructors who wishes to be competent at pragmatics due the increased awareness via

the training could become more eager to attend an Erasmus exchange or study abroad programs to equip themselves with pragmatics skills. Thus, and so, the instructors will be able to transfer what they have learnt in both in-service training and the experiences they would gain during Erasmus or study abroad programs into the classes and implement the most effective classroom.

### **Contribution Rate of the Researchers**

We declare that the authors contributed jointly to the research.

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### **Statement of Conflict of Interest**

There is no conflict of interest to disclose.

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