

Unpacking the Nexus between Teachers' Awareness of Pragmatics Instruction and Their Classroom Practices

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Abstract

Developing learners' pragmatic competence is claimed to be influenced by teachers' awareness of pragmatic instruction. However, this awareness and the way teachers teach pragmatics in their classrooms have been rarely explored. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the extent of English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' metapragmatic awareness and their instruction of pragmatic features. To achieve this goal, a 30-item questionnaire was adapted and administered to 300 EFL teachers and analyzed in terms of the four components of the questionnaire, including Language teachers, Language learners, Colleagues and institutes, and Coursebooks and exams. Moreover, the classes of 30 teachers were observed based on a 20-item observation checklist that was developed by the researchers and analyzed qualitatively. Results indicated that the teachers' awareness of pragmatics was relatively high only in one of the components of pragmatic awareness, namely language teachers. However, observation results indicated that they did not consistently teach pragmatic features in their classes. In addition, it was revealed that, except for the component of Language teachers, the differences between less and more experienced teachers' mean scores on the other components of pragmatic awareness questionnaire were not statistically significant. The low levels of awareness and corresponding practice could be attributed to the fact that meager attention is devoted to pragmatic instruction in teaching education programs.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Pragmatic awareness, Pragmatic instruction, Instructional practice

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1. Introduction

Pragmatic competence is currently conceived as one of the key components of communicative competence, playing a crucial role in using L2 properly (Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Basturkmen & Nguyen, 2017; Ishihara, 2011; Taguchi & Roever, 2017). For this reason, raising L2 teachers' and learners' pragmatic awareness has become one of the prime goals in second language education, and hence some researchers have investigated the teachability of different aspects of pragmatic competence in EFL classes (e.g., Alcón-Soler, 2015; Bardovi-Harlig, 2013, 2016; Culpeper, Mackey, & Taguchi, 2018; Martínez-Flor, 2008; Plonsky & Zhuang, 2019; Rose, 2005). In addition, the paucity of opportunities for exposure to the target language in the EFL context, where learners do not interact with native speakers of the target culture on a regular basis, can make acquiring target language pragmatics more challenging for both learners and teachers. Thus, it is purported that they tend to become less sensitive to appropriateness of pragmatic features and they try to place more importance on grammatical accuracy, instead (Derakhshan & Arabmofrad, 2018; Derakhshan & Eslami, 2020; Köylü, 2018; Taguchi & Yamaguchi, 2019). In other words, the EFL contexts like Iran could be less conducive to developing pragmatic competence as there are scant opportunities for having direct interactions with native speakers or competent users of English. Therefore, it can be argued that this lack of adequate pragmatic instruction could have an adverse impact on the ability of EFL learners to communicate appropriately in natural contexts. Another setback in the way of developing pragmatic competence in the EFL context is that the materials used suffer from paucity of pragmatic information and that education hardly sensitizes EFL teachers and learners to the sociocultural aspects of the target language (Meihami & Khanlarzadeh, 2015; Savvidou & Economidou-Kogetsidis 2019). As Taguchi (2012) argues, if EFL teachers

are encouraged to think about culturally appropriate ways to use the target language in communication, they become more aware of their own abilities for pragmatic analysis and try to highlight and cover the pragmatic contents in their classes.

In the literature, there have been encouraging reports that instructional intervention can result in acquisitional gains in various areas of pragmatics (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013, 2016a; Culpeper, Mackey, & Taguchi, 2018; Plonsky & Zhuang, 2019; Taguchi, 2011, 2015, 2019; Taguchi & Roever, 2017). These findings, overall, demonstrate that there is an urgent need for appropriate pragmatic instruction in different contexts for EFL teachers and learners. As Povolná (2014) asserts, it is essential to determine how to raise EFL teachers' awareness of L2 pragmatics in order to help them implement appropriate tasks to foster pragmatic competence of their learners. In fact, EFL teachers' awareness should be raised to make them aware that it is highly essential to equip EFL learners with linguistic tools to enable them to comprehend and produce the target language in a contextually appropriate manner. To support this claim, Basturkmen and Nguyen (2017) and Savvidou and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2019) have documented that L2 learners who do not receive instruction in pragmatics may considerably differ from the learners who have been exposed to enough pragmatic competence instruction in their classes. However, despite the growing interest in L2 pragmatics, little in-depth research has been carried out on the awareness of EFL teachers towards teaching pragmatic features and how they practice them in their own classrooms. Moreover, exploring the matches and mismatches between the teachers' level of awareness and actual practices with regard to pragmatics has been left far less explored. Against such a backdrop, this study set out to examine the extent to which Iranian EFL teachers are aware of pragmatic

instruction and if they translate their level of awareness into actual practices in EFL classrooms.

2. Review of Literature

There is a consensus among pragmatics researchers that pragmatic competence, as a pivotal component of communicative competence, must be instructed in L2 classrooms (Basturkmen & Nguyen, 2017); hence, knowledge of pragmatics must be construed as an inseparable element of language teachers' knowledge base (Basturkmen & Nguyen, 2017; Byram, 2014; Ekin & Damar, 2013; Ishihara 2011; McConachy, 2018) due to the fact teachers' knowledge, expertise, experiences, and belief systems play an instrumental part in the materials they teach and the methodology they adopt (Savvidou & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2019). It has been stipulated that a teacher must possess some qualifications to instruct L2 pragmatics more efficiently. As Ishihara (2011) argued, this entails "an awareness of pragmatic norms and pragmatic variation (subject matter knowledge), the ability to provide pragmatic-focused instruction and assessment (pedagogical content knowledge), and sensitivity to learners' cultures and subjectivity (knowledge of the learners and the educational context)" (p. 2). It must be noted that metapragmatic awareness does not foster naturally, meaning that it requires teachers to be educated about pragmatics (Savvidou & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2019). However, despite this special prominence, it has been reported that most teacher education programs fail to allocate adequate time to attention to instructional pragmatics (Hagiwara, 2010; Vásquez & Sharpless, 2009).

Examining the inclusion and instruction of pragmatics in 100 Master's-level TESOL programs was the focus of a study conducted by Vásquez and Sharpless (2009). The results of their study indicated that only a quarter of the investigated programs entailed specific sessions on pragmatics. Even these

programs dealt with pragmatics on the theoretical level rather than preparing the participating teachers to instruct pragmatics on the actual level of their classroom practice. Cohen (2016) carried out a study including 30 native-language teachers and 83 non-native language teachers. The teachers were asked to self-assess their knowledge of socio-pragmatics and pragmalinguistics. Besides, they self-reported the pedagogical practices they performed in their classes. Results of the study indicated that nonnative teachers (NNTs) felt less competent and less confident compared with native teachers (NTs) when it came to teaching various aspects of pragmatics. Moreover, the NTs encouraged their learners to search and accrue information on pragmatic issues they covered whilst NNTs did so comparatively less and drew upon L1 pragmatics to explain the problematic parts with regard to pragmatics.

Savvidou and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2019) have recently explored non-native teachers' professional knowledge, beliefs, and self-reported practices with regard to pragmatics. Results of their qualitative study demonstrated that the teachers' knowledge of pragmatics was shallow and restricted to theoretical issues, which implied that teacher education programs were not efficient enough to equip the teachers with practical methods for instructing and assessing pragmatics. Moreover, with regard to their beliefs, it was found that, although the teachers attached special value to teaching pragmatics, they pointed out that there were formidable barriers such as contextual factors, lack of confidence, and scarce exposure to L2 in their way of teaching pragmatics. What is more, their self-claimed practices showed that they mainly covered overt aspects of culture like food and festivals rather than delving into covert layers of culture such as values and politeness. In another study, Tajjedin and Shirkhani (2017) found that EFL teachers were not able to correct pragmatic errors of their students and that the teachers believed lack of pragmatic

competence was the main reason for this problem and exposure to pragmatic training courses was suggested to cope with this issue.

Despite the significance of pragmatics in general and teachers' pragmatic awareness in particular, EFL teachers' pragmatic awareness with regard to the role of language teachers, language learners, colleagues and institutes, and coursebooks and exams has not been adequately investigated. To address this gap, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the Iranian EFL teachers' pragmatic awareness?
2. To what extent are less and more experienced Iranian EFL teachers different in terms of pragmatic awareness?
3. What are the Iranian EFL teachers' practices in teaching L2 pragmatics?
4. What are the matches and mismatches between Iranian EFL teachers' practices and their pragmatic awareness?

3. Method

3.1 Participants

Participants included Iranian EFL teachers selected from private language institutes in five populated cities of Iran based on convenience sampling. There were two groups of participants: the teachers who responded to the questionnaire and the teachers whose classes were observed. A total of 300 Iranian EFL teachers (123 males & 177 females) with the age range between 22-43 attended the study on a voluntary basis. All the participants held B.A. or M.A. in English and their teaching experience ranged from 1 to 18 years. Thirty teachers were chosen from the 300 ones through the convenience sampling method and their classes were observed. Based on the dichotomy made by Larsen-Freeman (2001) and Papay and Kraft (2015), the observed teachers with 1-5 years of teaching were considered less experienced and those with 6 years of teaching and more were considered experienced. Among the respondents, 18 female and 12 male teachers agreed to be

observed. Then their classes were observed to explore what they did in practice with regard to teaching pragmatics.

3.2 Instruments

In order to gather the required data in this study, two instruments were used: a questionnaire and a classroom observation checklist.

3.2.1 Pragmatic Awareness Questionnaire

To measure the EFL teachers' pragmatic awareness, the Pragmatic Awareness Questionnaire designed by Mohammad-Bagheri (2015) was adapted. The questionnaire comprised 30 items requiring EFL teachers to evaluate their pragmatic awareness based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (5). The questionnaire starts with a number of general items addressing the participants' university degree, major, years of experience, highest level they had ever taught, the language institute(s) at which they had been teaching, the ELT coursebooks they had taught, and whether or not they had ever been to an English country before. The questionnaire began with a short explanation on the concept of pragmatic awareness to brief the respondents about what is exactly meant by pragmatic awareness. The main body of the questionnaire entailed four components: Language teachers, Language learners, Institutes and colleagues, and Coursebooks and exams. The Language teacher component, entailing 10 items, measured the EFL teachers' level of pragmatic awareness. It covered items that addressed if they taught and assessed pragmatic features in their classes as well as their idea about teaching pragmatics in teacher training courses and if the pragmatic knowledge of the teacher should be considered for development in his/her career. The second component, containing 10 questions, dealt with the status of EFL learners in classes. The items asked if the EFL learners were curious about pragmatic issues and asked any questions about it, how well they were aware of the pragmatic features, and if

their errors in classes received enough attention by their teachers. The third component of the questionnaire, comprising 5 items, was related to the supervisors and colleagues. They were aimed to uncover if pragmatic features were covered and discussed in teacher training courses. The last component of the questionnaire, consisting of 5 questions, was related to coursebooks and exams. These items probed if the textbooks covered pragmatic features and if the pragmatic contents of the textbooks sufficiently enhanced the pragmatic competence of the EFL students. Another aspect considered in this component was about exams. It aimed to examine if the textbooks included any questions assessing pragmatic knowledge of the students and if the exams administered in their courses encouraged EFL students to pay more attention to the pragmatic features of their coursebook. The reliability of the questionnaire was estimated through running Cronbach's alpha, and the reliability of Language teachers, Language learners, Colleagues and institutes, and Coursebooks and exams components were .86, .83, .85, and .84 respectively. The reliability of the whole questionnaire was .88, which is acceptable (Pallant, 2013).

3.2.2 Class observation checklist

To answer the third and fourth research questions, the EFL teachers' classes were observed. Observations were done according to a predefined checklist including 20 items. These items were developed considering the following factors: the approach to teaching pragmatic features, the approach chosen for correcting errors and giving feedback, various ways for assessing pragmatic features, and the tasks for engaging learners with pragmatic features. Each item was measured based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (1= never, 2= rarely, 3= sometimes, 4= often, 5= always). It was also investigated whether the EFL teachers highlighted the pragmatic features of the textbooks. The classes of the EFL teachers were observed by the second researcher. It

should be noted that in order not to affect the activities run in the classroom, the researcher sat at the back of the classroom where it was assured that he did not affect the EFL teacher's and students' performance.

3.3 Data Collection

The data were collected in two distinct phases. Each phase is described as follows.

The study commenced with the administration of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed among 300 EFL teachers working in different language institutes in five cities of Iran. The questionnaire was given to the participants at their workplaces, and they were invited to fill it out. Before the participants went through the questionnaire, the relevant information was provided, including the aims of the research, various sections of the questionnaire, and simple explanations. In this phase, the researchers aimed to investigate the pragmatic beliefs of Iranian EFL teachers.

In the second phase, the classes of 30 EFL teachers were observed by the second researcher to see if the teachers taught and highlighted the pragmatic features in their classes and to investigate the matches and mismatches between the metapragmatic awareness of Iranian EFL teachers and their practices. In actuality, the second phase aimed at exploring if EFL teachers dealt with the pragmatic contents included in the ELT instructional materials and if it was according to their awareness of pragmatics instruction. To do this, the observation was run based on a checklist designed and developed by the researcher. The researcher sat at the back of the classroom and filled out the checklist when the EFL teacher was doing his/her instructional responsibilities.

3.4 Data Analysis

The collected data from the 30 items of teachers' Pragmatic Awareness Questionnaire (PAQ) literacy scale. Before conducting Principal Axis Factoring (PAF), the suitability of data for factor analysis was examined. First, the normality was checked using the skewness and kurtosis measures of

the items. To meet the normality assumption, the items' statistics should range between -2 and +2 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The results indicated that all items' statistics ranged between -2 and +2, meeting the assumption of normality. The 30 items were reduced into four factors which totally explained 94% of the total variance and all items loading factors exceeded .4, indicating that all items were included in the factors. Next, different independent samples *t*-tests were run to see whether or not the less and more experienced teachers differed regarding their pragmatic awareness. To answer the last research question, the researchers compared the participants' responses given to each item of the questionnaire with those of the checklist prepared and evaluated by the second researcher.

4. Results

4.1 Status of Teachers' Pragmatic Awareness

The first question aimed at examining the status of Iranian EFL teachers' pragmatic awareness. Results of the descriptive statistics are given in Tables 1 to 4.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for EFL Teachers' Pragmatic Awareness Regarding Language Teachers

	Mean	*SD	SDA %	D %	N %	A %	SA %
1. I am familiar with the concept of pragmatics in language teaching	3	.78	0	22.3	48	25.3	3.3
2. Pragmatic competence is important for me as a teacher	3.13	.66	0	22	49.3	25.3	3.3
3. I evaluate my own pragmatic competence as very good	2.83	.78	0	22	52.7	21.3	4
4. I try to improve my pragmatic competence	2.4	.70	0	22	49.3	24.7	4
5. Pragmatics is an important aspect of language teaching	3.16	.57	0	22	48.7	24	3.3
6. The instruction of pragmatic competence should be part of an effective language teaching program	3.23	.65	0	22	46.7	26	3.3
7. The measurement of learners' pragmatic competence should be part of an effective language testing program	3.21	.59	0	22.7	53.3	26.7	4

8. Teacher training workshops are required to raise language teachers' awareness of pragmatics	3.43	.62	0	22	53.3	22	3.3
9. Teachers' pragmatic competence should be considered as one of their qualification for a teaching career	2.43	.47	0	21.3	54	20.7	3.3
10. Teachers' pragmatic competence should be considered as a factor in their promotion and professional development	3.30	.67	0	22	46.7	24	4

Note. SD=Standard Deviation, SDA= Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, SA= Strongly Agree

As displayed in Table 1, the highest mean score ($M=3.43$) was obtained by item 8: "Teacher training workshops are required to raise language teacher's awareness of pragmatics." As it can be seen in the table, the same percentage of teachers agreed and disagreed (22%), 53.3 percent of the teachers chose neutral, and 3.3 percent of them strongly agreed with this item. This shows that there is a lack of knowledge in teaching pragmatics as teachers believe it can be compensated through teacher training workshops. Regarding items 4 and 9, which obtained the lowest mean ($M=2.4$). These two items respectively read: "I try to improve my pragmatic competence" and "Teachers' pragmatic competence should be considered as one of their qualification for a teaching career." The table shows that about 25 percent of the teachers agreed with item 4 and nearly 21 percent agreed with item 9. Around half of the participants were neutral for these items and about 20 percent were disagreed with it. It shows that the majority of teachers are not interested in considering their pragmatic awareness as a qualification for their job. In Table 2, the results for EFL teachers' pragmatic awareness regarding Language learners are presented.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for EFL Teachers' Pragmatic Awareness Regarding Language Learners

	M	*SD	N %	Se %	So %	U %	A %
11. I make my students aware of the significance of pragmatic competence in language learning	3	.78	0	21.3	64	13.3	1.3
12. I assess my students' pragmatic competence through various activities...	3.13	.66	0	25.3	60	13.3	1.3
13. I pay attention to my students' pragmatic errors	2.83	.78	0	25.3	60	13.3	1.3
14. I correct my students' pragmatic errors	2.4	.70	0	24.7	60	13.3	1.3
15. I care about pragmatic competence in evaluating my students' classroom activities	3.16	.57	0	25.3	48.7	13.3	1.3
16. I encourage my students to notice the pragmatics features of the textbook to improve their pragmatic competence	3.23	.65	0	24	61.3	13.3	1.3
17. The exams in this language center include sufficient items to assess students' pragmatic competence	3.21	.59	0	24.7	60	13.3	1.3
18. My students ask me questions about pragmatic issues	3.43	.62	0	19.3	66	13.3	1.3
19. My students are aware of their pragmatic competence	2.43	.47	0	25.3	48.7	13.3	1.3
20. My students pay attention to the pragmatic features	3.30	.67	0	23.3	60	16	0.7

Note. M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, N=Never, Se= Seldom, So= Sometimes, U= Usually, A= Always

As observed in Table 2, the highest mean (M=3.4) belonged to item 18, which reads, "My students ask me questions about pragmatic issues." According to the table, the response sometimes was selected by 66% of the teachers. This shows that learners are to some extent interested in learning pragmatic features. The lowest mean was obtained by items 14 and 19 (M=2.4): "I correct my students' pragmatic errors" (item 14) and "My students are aware of their pragmatic competence" (item 19). As the table

shows, about 25% of the teachers responded seldom for both items and the same percentage of teachers selected *usually* and *always* responses. Regarding item 14, the response sometimes was chosen by 60% of the participants while 48% of the teachers selected this response for item 19. It shows, according to the teachers, that learners were not aware of pragmatic features and most of the time they were not corrected by their teachers.

In Table 3, the results for EFL teachers' pragmatic awareness regarding Colleagues and institutes are presented.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for EFL Teachers' Pragmatic Awareness Regarding Colleagues and Institutes

	M	SD	N %	Se %	So %	U %	A %
21. Pragmatics is addressed in the institute's teacher training courses (TTC)	1.53	1.26	74	10	14.7	0.7	0.7
22. My colleagues and I discuss the issues related to pragmatic competence	1.98	.77	73.3	9.3	16	0.7	0.7
23. Supervisors and colleagues comment on my pragmatic ability and appropriateness	1.43	1.02	71.3	8.7	16.7	0.7	0.7
24. My colleagues and I discuss the need to emphasize pragmatics features in the course book	1.98	.77	71.3	12	15.3	0.7	0.7
25. Supervisors and colleagues consider my pragmatic competence as feature of my professional efficacy	1.43	1.02	73.3	12.7	12.7	13.3	1.3

Note. M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, N= Never, Se= Seldom, So= Sometimes, U= Usually, A= Always

As it is shown in Table 3, the response *never* was chosen by about 74% of the teachers for items 21, 22, and 25, which read "Pragmatics is addressed in the institute's teacher training courses," "My colleagues and I discuss the issues related to pragmatic competence," and "Supervisors and colleagues

consider my pragmatic competence as feature of my professional efficacy," respectively. Items 23 and 24, worded as "Supervisors and colleagues comment on my pragmatic ability and appropriateness" and "My colleagues and I discuss the need to emphasize pragmatics features in the course book," were responded by 71.3% of the participants as *never*. It indicates that the majority of the participants believed that colleagues and institutes almost never focused on teaching pragmatics competence. In Table 4, the results for EFL teachers' pragmatic awareness regarding course books and exams are presented.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics for EFL Teachers' Pragmatic Awareness Regarding Coursebooks and Exams

	*M	SD	N %	Se %	So %	U %	A %
26. Activities in the course books include features related to pragmatic competence	1.53	1.26	56	24	7.3	8.7	4
27. Activities in the course books are sufficient for improving my students' pragmatic competence	2.55	.82	56	21.3	16	8.7	4
28. There are supplementary materials in this institute to teach pragmatic competence to students	1.53	1.26	56.7	24	3.3	8.7	4
29. There are questions in the institute's exams which assess students' pragmatic competence	2.12	.80	55.3	20.7	15.3	8.7	4
30. The institute's exams encourage students to focus on pragmatic features in their course books	2.12	.80	56.7	20.7	16	8.7	4

Note. M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, N= Never, Se= Seldom, So= Sometimes, U= Usually, A= Always)

As shown in Table 4, the response *never* was selected by more than 55% and *seldom* by about 20% of the teachers for all the 5 items while less than 10% of the participants chose the responses *usually* or *always*. This also shows that all the items had a low mean (from M=1.53 to M=2.55). As such,

there are not enough activities or supplementary materials focusing on teaching pragmatic features available in the institutes.

4.2 Novice and Experienced Teachers' Pragmatic Awareness

The second research question aimed at comparing less and more experienced EFL teachers' pragmatic awareness. The two groups' responses related to the four components of pragmatic awareness were analyzed using four independent samples *t*-tests. Results are presented in the Table 5.

Table 5

T-Tests for Comparing Less and More Experienced Teachers' Pragmatic Awareness Regarding Language Teachers

	Means		t-test		
	Less	More	t	df	Sig.
1. I am familiar with the concept of pragmatics in language teaching	2.5	3.5	6.6	298	.001
2. Pragmatic competence is important for me as a teacher	2.7	3.3	6.1	298	.001
3. I evaluate my own pragmatic competence as very good	2.1	2.73	5.43	298	.001
4. I try to improve my pragmatic competence	2.3	2.5	1.52	298	.12
5. Pragmatics is an important aspect of language teaching	3.1	3.16	0.76	298	.21
6. The instruction of pragmatic competence should be part of an effective language-teaching program.	2.6	3.4	4.2	298	.001
7. The measurement of learners' pragmatic competence should be part of an effective language testing program	3.1	3.3	0.46	298	.08
8. Teacher training workshops are required to raise language teachers' awareness of pragmatics	2.9	3.53	4.12	298	.001
9. Teachers' pragmatic competence should be considered as one of their qualification for a teaching career	2.4	2.43	0.94	298	.34
10. Teachers' pragmatic competence should be considered as a factor in their promotion and professional development	3.2	3.4	0.72	298	.45

As displayed in Table 5, the sum of mean scores of the more and less experienced teachers on the first component are 31.25 and 26.9, respectively.

The results of *t*-test show that the means of the two groups are statistically different ($p = .05$), favoring the more experienced teachers. With regard to the two groups' means on individual items of teachers' awareness, results show that except for items 9, 10, 7, 5, and 4, the two groups' means on the other items are statistically different, favoring the experienced teachers.

The results of the *t*-tests for comparing less and more experienced teachers' pragmatic awareness regarding Language learners are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

T-Tests for Comparing Less and More Experienced Teachers' Pragmatic Awareness Regarding Language Learners

	Means		t-test		
	Less	More	t	df	sig
11. I make my students aware of the significance of pragmatics competence in language learning	2.9	3	.041	298	.6
12. I assess my students' pragmatic competence through various activities...	2.8	3.15	.72	298	.015
13. I pay attention to my students' pragmatic errors	2.9	3	0.45	298	.62
14. I correct my students' pragmatic errors	3	2.9	0.45	298	.67
15. I care about pragmatic competence in evaluating my students' classroom activities	3	3.1	0.48	298	.68
16. I encourage my students to notice the pragmatics features of the textbook to improve their pragmatic competence	3.1	3.3	0.56	298	.21
17. The exams in this language center include sufficient items to assess students' pragmatic competence	3.1	3.21	0.46	298	.14
18. My students pay attention to the pragmatic features	3	3.30	0.73	298	.45
19. My students ask me questions about pragmatic issues	2.9	3		298	.67
20. My students are aware of their pragmatic competence	2.9	3		298	.67

As shown in Table 6, the mean scores of the two groups of teachers on individual items and the sum of the items on language learners are not statistically different, suggesting that the two groups had the same pragmatic awareness regarding the learners ($p > .05$).

The results of *t*-tests for comparing less and more experienced teachers' pragmatic awareness regarding Language institutes and colleagues and Coursebooks and exams are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

T-Tests for Comparing Less and More Experienced Teachers' Pragmatic Awareness Regarding Language Institutes and Colleagues and Coursebooks and Exams

	Means		t	t-test	
	Less	More		df	Sig.
21. Pragmatics is addressed in the institute's teacher training courses (TTC)	1.53	1.54	0.02	298	.97
22. My colleagues and I discuss the issues related to pragmatic competence	1.6	1.54	0.3	298	.75
23. Supervisors and colleagues comment on my pragmatic ability and appropriateness	1.53	1.64	0.5	298	.56
24. My colleagues and I discuss the need to emphasize pragmatics features in the course book	1.6	1.59	0.02	298	.9
25. Supervisors and colleagues consider my pragmatic competence as feature of my professional efficacy	1.4	1.5	0.28	298	.78
26. Activities in the course books include features related to pragmatic competence	1.8	1.59	0.7	298	.048
27. Activities in the course books are sufficient for improving my students' pragmatic competence	1.8	1.6	0.71	298	.47
28. There are supplementary materials in this institute to teach pragmatic competence to students	1.79	1.59	0.7	298	.48
29. There are questions in the institute's exams which assess students' pragmatic competence	1.8	1.6	0.71	298	.47
30. The institute's exams encourage students to focus on pragmatic features in their course books	1.79	1.59	0.72	298	.46

As shown in Table 7, the differences between the mean scores of the two groups of teachers on the items which deal with the teachers' pragmatic awareness regarding the two components, language institutes and colleagues and Coursebooks and exams, are not statistically significant ($p > .05$). This finding suggests that the two groups had similar pragmatic awareness regarding their colleagues and institutes.

4.3 Teachers' Pragmatic Practice

Investigating teachers' actual practices was the aim of the third research question. To this end, 30 of the participating teachers' classes were observed using a checklist. Results showed that the mean scores of the participants on items 2 and 9 (neglecting pragmatic errors and overlooking the textbook pragmatic features) were above 4, that is the highest mean, and 60% of the teachers often neglected pragmatic errors and 73% of the teachers often overlooked textbook pragmatic features. However, the teachers' mean scores on the other factors fell below 2, and about two thirds (about 67%) of the participants rarely practiced the other factors regarding pragmatic features. Results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Practice of Pragmatic Features

	Mean	N %	R %	S %	O %	A %
1. The teacher gives feedback on pragmatic errors	1.6	40	60	0	0	
2. The teacher neglects pragmatic errors	4.1	0	0	13.2	60	26.7
3. The teacher refers the students to complementary materials	1.3	73.3	20	6.7	0	0
4. The teacher uses tasks to assess students' progress regarding pragmatic points	1.4	60	33.3	6.7	0	0
5. The teacher explicitly explains sociopragmatic features of the pragmatics cases	1.4	60	40	0	0	0
6. The teacher gets the students to assess the appropriateness of speech acts they	2.0	26.7	46.7	26.7	0	0

perform						
7. The teacher encourages students to assess their peers' performance of speech acts	1.8	40	40	20	0	0
8. The teacher implicitly deals with the textbook pragmatic features	1.9	40	26.7	33.3	0	0
9. The teacher overlooks the textbook pragmatic features	4.2	0	0	0	73.3	26.7
10. The teacher adopts a deductive approach to teaching pragmatic features	1.7	26.7	73.3	0	0	0
11. The teacher adopts an inductive approach to teaching pragmatic features	2.1	6.7	73.3	20	0	0
12. The teacher corrects the pragmatic errors on the spot	1.6	33.3	66.7	0	0	0
13. The teacher corrects the pragmatic errors after a delay	2.0	26.7	46.7	26.7	0	0
14. The teacher highlights social distance, relationship and position between those performing a speech act in the textbook tasks	1.9	33.	40	26.7	0	0
15. The teacher compares L2 & L1 pragmatic features	1.9	20	66.7	13.3	0	0
16. The teacher encourages students to perform pragmatic features at production level	2.6	0	33.3	67.3	0	0
17. The teacher provides learners with required pragma linguistic resources. (fixed chunks and phrases)	1.6	33.3	66.7	0	0	0
18. The teacher assigns students some homework on pragmatic features of the textbook	1.8	20	80	0	0	0
19. The teacher encourages the students to personalize the pragmatic features	1.6	53.3	33.3	13.3	0	0
20. The teacher engages the students in metapragmatic discussions	1.5	53.3	40	6.7	0	0

*(M= Mean, N= Never, R= Rarely, S= Sometimes, O= Often, A= Always)

4.4 Nexus between Teachers' Pragmatic Awareness and Practice

The fourth question sought to explore the matches and mismatches between the teachers' pragmatic awareness and actual implementation of pragmatics. Regarding the four components of the questionnaire, the teachers' actual practices are matched with their awareness. According to Table 8, 60% of the

teachers ignored the pragmatic errors and did not give feedback on them (items 1 and 2). Pragmatic errors were not corrected on the spot by most of the teachers (33.3% chose *never* and 66.7% selected *rarely*) or after a delay by nearly 50% of the teachers (items 12 and 13). These are in line with item 13 (I pay attention to my students' pragmatic errors) and item 14 (I correct my students' pragmatic errors) of the questionnaire in which 60% of the teachers chose the response *sometimes*. About 73% of the teachers overlooked the pragmatic features of the textbook (item 9), 67.7% of them rarely provided learners with pragma linguistic feature recourses (item 17), and 73.3% of the teachers rarely referred learners to complementary materials (item 3). These practices are matched with the items 26, 27, and 28 of the questionnaire, reading that "Activities in the course books include features related to pragmatic competence," "Activities in the course books are sufficient for improving my students' pragmatic competence," and "There are supplementary materials in this institute to teach pragmatic competence to students," respectively. The learners were not engaged in metapragmatic discussions and they were not encouraged to personalize pragmatic features (items 19 and 20). In addition, the pragmatic features of L1 and L2 were not compared by the teachers as 20% of them never and 66.7% of them rarely compared L1 and L2 in their classes (item 15). Learners sometimes were encouraged to perform pragmatic features at the production level by about 67.3% of the teachers (item 16). This is in line with item 16 of the questionnaire, which states "I encourage my students to notice the pragmatics features of the textbook to improve their pragmatic competence." The response *sometimes* was selected by 67% of the teachers in answering this item.

5. Discussion

This study aimed at investigating EFL teachers' pragmatic awareness and their practices of pragmatics in classrooms. It also sought to explore the impact of teachers' experience on their pragmatic awareness and investigate the matches and mismatches between the teachers' pragmatic awareness and their pragmatic practice.

The findings revealed that the teachers' pragmatic awareness with regard to only one of the sub-constructs, namely Language teachers, was high. That is, they were relatively aware of the importance of the issues related to teaching pragmatics by Language Teachers. Nevertheless, their consciousness of the other three sub-constructs was significantly low. These findings are in line with Ekin and Damar's (2013) exploration of pragmatic awareness of teacher trainees in the EFL context of Turkey. Their study indicated that the trainees were generally aware of the theoretical issues about the importance of instructing pragmatics, yet their awareness was restricted and superficial. By the same token, Savvidou and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2019) indicated that teachers did not form a thorough knowledge of pragmatics during teacher education courses. Moreover, the results are in line with the findings from some studies in other contexts (e.g., Savic, 2018), indicating that EFL teachers' metapragmatic awareness as transpired in their views of politeness was radically varied and affected by the value systems they appreciated. Hence, Savic asked for incorporating some theoretically- and pedagogically-oriented courses in teacher training courses. One of the factors contributing to this restricted awareness of pragmatics could be teacher training programs. Glaser (2018) maintains that pragmatics is mostly considered as "a dispensable accessory rather than an integral component of L2 mastery" (p. 123). Given this, pragmatics is not incorporated into most of

the teacher training programs. In this way, prospective language teachers fail to develop a profound insight into various aspects of pragmatics.

The second objective of the study was to examine the differences between more experienced and less experienced teachers' pragmatic awareness. It was found that experienced teachers seemed to be more aware of different aspects of pragmatic instruction. This finding echoes the claims made in some of the studies (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, Mossman, & Su, 2017; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Jeon & Kaya, 2006; Yıldız Ekin & Dammar, 2013) that instruction of pragmatics increases learners' pragmatics competence and teachers' awareness. The results are in line with those of Cohen (2016) that indicated more experienced nonnative teachers might be more successful in teaching target language pragmatic features in comparison with native teachers who rely only on their intuition. Detailed analysis of the data showed that more experienced and less experienced teachers had the same level of pragmatic awareness with regard to learners, colleagues, and textbooks. This is supported by findings of previous studies such as Glaser (2018) and Ekin and Damar (2013), which indicated that participating teachers in their studies did not allocate enough time and attention to teaching pragmatics. This could be attributed to the teachers' low level of awareness of the practical applications of teaching pragmatics.

The third objective of the study was to investigate the extent to which Iranian EFL teachers taught pragmatics in their actual classrooms. It was demonstrated that they failed to implement it to a sufficient extent. Moreover, as pointed out by Glaser (2018), teachers' lack of confidence in their pragmatic abilities might lead to feeling insecure about teaching it. This could arise from the fact that teaching pragmatics is not as straightforward as other components of language such as vocabulary and grammar. Pragmatics entails some intricacies and complexities that make its teaching demanding

and risky; hence, many teachers either avoid instructing it or show far less interest in it. Scarcity of teaching materials with a proper pragmatic focus could be construed as another reason behind failing to teaching pragmatics. In the same vein, a plethora of previous studies underscored that although the publications on pragmatic instruction have recently soared up (e.g., Ishihara & Cohen, 2010, Tatsuki & Houck 2010, Povolna, 2012; O-Keeffe, Adolphs & Clancy, 2011), teaching materials are still ineffective in enhancing learners' awareness of the socio-cultural variances (Eslami-Rasekh, 2011).

Another argument is that the findings were due to EFL teachers' lack of knowledge and academic awareness. This is also reinforced by referring to studies such as Eslami-Rasekh (2005) and Pasternak and Bailey (2004), which showed that non-native English-speaking teachers were not really sure of themselves about their English language proficiency level, and it seemed that their pragmatic competence lagged behind their organizational competence. The results are in line with those of Eslami-Rasekh's (2005) study, which found that intra-class correlations among Iranian EFL teachers proved that the raters were not homogeneous in their ratings and criteria. That is to say there was not consistency in their ratings. To further discuss the findings, we can draw on Tajjedin and Alemi's (2014) argument that one of the biggest challenges in pragmatic development is the existing education system in Iran, which has put more emphasis on teaching and assessing linguistic aspects of the target language than pragmatics. This system has hindered the development of EFL learners' pragmatic skills as they are not given essential feedback for further pragmatic development as teachers themselves have low pragmatic awareness. The system, in fact, has forced both EFL teachers and learners to follow traditional ways of teaching and assessment. The end product has been the type of foreign language education

in which the teacher provides learners with linguistic knowledge at the cost of marginalizing pragmatic competence.

The fourth objective of this study was to examine the convergences between pragmatic awareness and teaching pragmatics. It was found that there was a mismatch between the first aspect of pragmatic awareness and teaching pragmatics in action. More specifically, even though the participants' pragmatics awareness regarding the first component of the questionnaire, Language Teachers, was relatively high, it was not translated into actual practices. One of the reasons partly explaining this divergence could be that the teachers were mainly instructed on theoretical issues about pragmatics, hence they were not prepared to convert their awareness into actual practices. The findings are in line with those of Savvidou and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2019), who found there was a significant gap between teachers' understanding of theoretical concept of pragmatics and how pragmatics worked in communication and that it made them limited in implementing pragmatic practices in their classes. Tajeddin and Shirkhani (2017) also indicated that teachers who participated in their study stated they could not teach and correct their students because of their lack of pragmatic awareness. Making teachers competent in pragmatics and increasing their pragmatic awareness can encourage them to deal with pragmatic inappropriacy more effectively in their classes.

6. Conclusion and Implications

The findings of this study demonstrated that the teachers' pragmatic awareness with regard to only one of the sub-constructs, namely "Language Teachers," was relatively high. In contrast, their awareness of the other three sub-constructs was significantly low. Considering the experience of teachers and its relation to their pragmatic awareness the results indicated that the more experienced teachers were more aware of the concept of pragmatics but

regarding the implementation of pragmatic practices the findings showed that the majority of teachers did not use pragmatic features in practice. A rather wide gamut of factors, like ineffectiveness of teacher training programs, lack of quality teaching materials on pragmatics, and contextual factors could have played a role in forming this level of awareness and actual practice. In light of these findings, educational policy makers are recommended to incorporate teaching instructional pragmatics into pre-service and in-service teacher training programs and arm both practicing and prospective language teachers with positive mindsets on the critical importance of pragmatics as well as practical teaching methods and strategies to implement their pragmatic knowledge and awareness.

This study has a few limitations that should be acknowledged. First, this study was restricted to data collected through a questionnaire and observation checklist. Future studies are suggested to delve into this issue by adopting data collection tools such as interviews to gain deeper insights into the reasons underlying lack of pragmatic awareness and also failure to devote deserved attention to teaching pragmatics from the insider view of teachers themselves. Besides, this study only addressed the current status of teachers' awareness of pragmatics and their corresponding actual practices, so other researchers could explore the effects of teacher-training courses on developing the teachers' awareness of pragmatics and if their awareness could be translated into practice.

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