

What Native and Nonnative Teachers Report About Their Pragmatics Instruction

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While many English instructors identify themselves as native (NTs) or nonnative teachers (NNTs), others would place themselves along a multidimensional continuum from NNT to NT. An international survey was conducted to investigate the viability of the distinction between NTs and NNTs. Before considering the survey results, a case is made that there are advantages both to having learned English natively as well as to having learned it as a nonnative speaker (NNS). Examples of possible advantages for both NTs and NNTs are provided. Responses to a 19-item questionnaire were obtained from 113 participants, the aim being to gain information as to how the level of target-language (TL) ability may impact pragmatics instruction. The study generated numerous suggestions for ways that NTs and NNTs can compensate for areas in which they might feel that they lack the knowledge to provide accurate instruction in certain areas of TL pragmatics.

Keywords: target language, native- and nonnative-speaking teachers, pragmatic ability

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this article is on how prospective and practicing teachers who are native speakers (NSs) or nonnative speakers (NNSs) of the TL deal with pragmatics in the classroom. Especially with the upsurge of focus on multilingualism and World Englishes, the research literature with respect to pragmatics has appeared to downplay the significance of whether teachers are NTs or NNTs of the TL. Whereas numerous studies comparing NTs and NNTs of English do not focus on the intersection of language and culture (e.g., Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014), a recent study by Huang (2018) on EFL student and NT/NNT

perceptions acknowledged perceived differences in NT/NTT classroom instructional behavior, but did not go into the details regarding pragmatics. Rather, references were simply made to differences in the handling of “culture” – an amorphous term covering many areas. Huang’s conclusion was that NTs of English were reported to deal with culture implicitly and NTTs more explicitly. In their volume focusing expressly on second language (L2) pragmatics, Taguchi and Roever (2017) did not mention this distinction among teachers at all, but rather focused on lingua franca pragmatics (pp. 252–256).

Yet, the reality is that there are issues here worth discussing that could benefit all players involved. In the same way that there are advantages to being an NS despite numerous issues surrounding how to define native speaker status, there are also advantages to being an NNS with regard to teaching TL pragmatics. Examples of both NTs and NNTs will be provided, drawing largely on an international survey of both groups of teachers. Examples are provided of how it may be advantageous in the teaching of pragmatics in the classroom to be either an NT or an NNT. The article ends with numerous suggestions as to how NTs and NNTs could compensate for areas in which they feel that they lack the knowledge to teach their learners the specifics about pragmatic performance in some specific TL area, such as in how to criticize, how to be funny, or how to be sarcastic.

DEFINING TERMS

Comparing the NT with the NNT

The difficulty in defining what *native speaker* means (see Davies, 2003) carries over to attempts at describing the nativeness of language teachers since there can be differences among so-called NTs and NNTs. Undoubtedly, the case can be made for how language proficiency level and teaching competency may interact in ways that all but preclude the possibility of making dichotomous distinctions. In other words, the characteristics of NTs and NNTs could be more properly viewed as being along a multidimensional continuum, with a variety of different tracks so that instructors do not develop their ability to teach pragmatics in linear fashion from less to more proficiency in the TL.

Consider the case of the NT who may have been exposed to several

languages from birth and consequently is a fluent speaker of other languages as well, and consequently also highly knowledgeable about the pragmatics in those other languages. Then there are NTs with varying amounts of contact with their L1, which they are teaching. While some may never leave the L1 community, others are living in another speech community where their use of the L1 is affected by the use of one or more other languages. There can also be NTs who have lost contact with certain aspects of their L1 and so could be considered more like heritage language users. Then we must add to the mix the number of years that they have been teaching their L1 since this could have an impact on their facility with the language in the various skill areas. In addition, some NTs are more natural teachers than others, and some are more knowledgeable about the pragmatics in their L1 than are others. Consequently, it can be rather a challenge to locate a given NT along a unidimensional continuum.

Just as with NTs, there are numerous possible sources of difference among NNTs. NNTs can have differing exposure to the TL, not just by virtue of time spent living in a community where it is spoken as the dominant language but also as a result of their own personal contact with that language. Having the language available in the community does not necessarily mean that the NNTs develop native-like ability in its pragmatics. Then there are NNTs who do achieve an exceptionally high level of competence in that language – especially when that language is English, which is currently enjoying a *lingua franca* status in the world. Where do they fit along a continuum?

In addition, NNTs are likely to differ with respect to how proficient they actually become in the TL, with some becoming better at certain skill areas in the TL than others (strong in teaching the pragmatics of aural/oral communication but less so in teaching the literacy skill). This may be a function of how many other languages they have studied or their language aptitude and language strategy repertoire, along with both their knowledge of linguistics and their ability to make practical use of this knowledge. Furthermore, NNTs may differ not only with respect to their knowledge base regarding pragmatics in the TL but also with respect to their ability to perform this knowledge in a pragmatically appropriate way in a given situation.

Although these are valid concerns that could render NT–NNT comparisons too simplistic, the approach taken in this article is to leave the question of just how simplistic the distinction is as an open,

empirical question for each English teacher to investigate personally. The purpose of the workshop at the KOTESOL Conference in Seoul in October 2019, upon which this article is based, was more to raise awareness of possible issues than to make definitive statements as to their reality in the given instructional context, with the given teachers, the given resources, and their specific learners. So, in this article when mention is made of the NT–NNT distinction, the assumption will be that a comparison is being made between teachers at two ends of the continuum, rather than those that fall somewhere along this multidimensional continuum.

Describing Pragmatic Ability

Pragmatic ability is the ability to deal with meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader), and to interpret people’s intended meanings, their assumptions, their purposes or goals, and the kinds of actions (e.g., making a request) that they are performing when they speak or write (Yule, 1996, pp. 3–4). Taguchi and Roever (2017, p. 2) would add to this that “while definitions of pragmatics may vary, several elements stand out as common features: language, meaning, context, and action ... pragmatics involves a complex interplay between linguistic forms, context of use, and social actions.”

There are numerous areas in which a person’s pragmatic ability may be called for (for extensive coverage of the field, see a recent definitive volume edited by Taguchi, 2019). For example, it may be crucial for NNSs to have at least a modicum of control over just how polite or impolite they are sounding – whether orally or in writing. NNSs may not be aware, for example, of how bossy they might come across in an email when they use “please” followed by what can be interpreted as an order. Not only is delivering a polite-sounding request challenging at times, but so is the appropriate delivery of other speech acts as well, such as greetings, thanks, compliments, apologies, complaints, criticism, teasing, and cursing. Aside from being aware of politeness issues in the performance of speech acts, there is likely to be a need to have a sense as to acceptable conversational patterns within the speech community. For instance, it may be necessary to learn about how the local speech community deals with turn-taking – such as the amount of wait time to allow the interlocutor, ways to break into a conversation – as well as knowing how to deal with silence.

Other issues in pragmatics include knowing what is funny and what is not – both in terms of interpreting jokes correctly and in terms of being able to intentionally produce humor. A related issue that can be most challenging for nonnatives is correctly perceiving sarcasm and being able to generate it appropriately if necessary. Both of these areas touch on what is referred to in the literature as *conversational implicature* – which involves interpreting that which is implied. So, for example, if a friend’s reply to a question “How was the show?” is “The seats were comfortable,” then the implication is that the show was not very good.

Performing pragmatics may be challenging even for an NS when, for example, it comes to certain speech acts, such as issuing an appropriate apology. That being the case, how much more challenging it is likely to be for an NNS. Learners need to determine the *situationally appropriate utterances*: what can be said, to whom, where, when, and how. There is a powerful influence working *against* the appropriate use of the TL – namely, how it is done in the native language (L1) or dominant language. It is not enough just to know the vocabulary and the grammar (e.g., the verb forms). It may also be that the pragmatically acceptable grammatical form in the given local case may diverge from the textbook form. So, for example, it may be appropriate in a given speech community to use “ain’t” as opposed to “isn’t” or “aren’t.”

I have studied 12 languages beyond English L1 over the course of my lifetime. While I have achieved relative pragmatic control in, say, four of these, I have the sense that even with these languages I am capable of pragmatic failure (see Cohen, 1997, 2001). It is more my pragmatic failures than my pragmatic successes that have made me acutely aware that pragmatic performance benefits from explicit instruction – that learners tend not to acquire rules for pragmatic appropriateness simply through osmosis.

The Effect of NS or NNS Status on ESL/EFL Pragmatics Instruction

In the last few years, there have appeared some excellent volumes dealing with research on TL pragmatics. The two previously cited books by Taguchi and Roever (2017) and by Taguchi (2019) have covered a myriad of topics relating to pragmatics, but neither has dealt even tangentially with the issue of concern in this paper: the similarities and differences between NTs and NNTs in the handling of pragmatics. It

would appear that the literature making such comparisons has been sparse (e.g., Rose, 1997). Part of the explanation would be that whether a teacher is an NT or an NNT is often seen as a lesser issue in effective pragmatic instruction than is demonstrable linguistic and pragmatic competence, along with appropriate professional development (Akikawa, 2010). The argument follows that critical awareness of pragmatic diversity allows teachers to support their students in developing cultural sensitivity about TL norms and in making their own pragmatic choices (Akikawa, 2010; Ishihara, 2008, 2010).

Especially with regard to the pragmatics of English, it has even been considered a myth that NTs may have certain advantages over NNTs (see Mahboob, 2010). Recent volumes promote World Englishes (Matsuda, 2012; Marlina & Giri, 2014) and question norms for pragmatic behavior. In support of this position, one could argue that NNTs would have certain advantages over NTs in some areas such as TL grammar, given that they might well have studied the language formally. Furthermore, an NNT's years of experience teaching pragmatics might actually make this teacher more effective in teaching TL pragmatics than the NT who relies solely on intuition. In addition, the NNTs' multicultural background may provide them advantages in teaching TL pragmatics – especially local varieties. On the other hand, however, it could be argued that NTs may well have advantages over NNTs by virtue of their exposure to the language from birth. This advantage could show up in subtle areas such as the use of sarcasm and ways to criticize behavior effectively, even after one takes into account the multidimensional variables that could play a role in the development of NNTs as language instructors.

METHOD

An interest in exploring both the similarities and differences between NTs and NNTs with regard to the handling of TL pragmatics prompted the design and implementation of a study to investigate these issues more fully through an international survey (see Cohen, 2018, Chapter 4, for full details). In part, this study was conducted to see whether it made sense to tease out similarities and differences, or rather to assume that they were inconsequential, which is what some of the World Englishes literature cited above might suggest.

Research Questions

- RQ1. How do NNTs and NTs report their handling of pragmatics in the TL classroom?
- RQ2. What areas in TL pragmatics do they report teaching: To what extent do they provide explicit instruction re pragmatics, use digital media, and teach about dialect differences in pragmatics?
- RQ3. How comfortable do they feel about being a resource for TL pragmatics?
- RQ4. What do they report doing if they do not feel like an authority on some aspects of TL pragmatics?
- RQ5. How knowledgeable do they feel they are about sociopragmatic (sociocultural) and pragmalinguistic (language form) issues relating to the specific TL?
- RQ6. How do they motivate learners to learn TL pragmatics?
- RQ7. In what areas in the pragmatics of the TL might they want to obtain more information or see the results of research?

Instrumentation

An online survey instrument was constructed for NTs and NNTs with minor differences between the NNT and the NT versions (see the Appendix for a composite questionnaire, combining the two versions). The questions on the survey were prompted by issues raised in the research literature on L2/FL pragmatics (see Taguchi & Roever, 2017). An effort was made to include a range of speech acts – from those receiving considerable attention to those that have received minimal attention in the pragmatics research literature, such as criticism (e.g., of a person’s behavior or appearance) and sarcasm. Since it appears that there has not been such a survey conducted in the past, it was not possible here to build on previous work from international sampling of teachers’ reporting as to how they deal with TL pragmatics instruction.

The survey instrument was piloted with a mixed group of 15 NTs and NNTs, and subsequently some changes were made in the questions. Teachers were asked to focus just on the language course in which they were most likely to teach about pragmatics, and to indicate the extent of coverage that specific areas of pragmatics were likely to receive (see the Appendix).

Sampling

An invitation to respond to the survey was sent directly to over 100 professors and graduate students worldwide via email, along with an open invitation on my personal website, on LinkedIn, and on Facebook. The first invitation went out July 25, 2015, and responses to the survey were accepted until September 20 of that same year. Since the call for respondents was totally voluntary, not so surprisingly those who responded all had had and/or were currently engaged directly or indirectly with TL language instruction involving pragmatics. In addition, given the average number of years that they had been teaching (see below), it would be assumed that they were highly proficient in the language that they were teaching, although they were not queried as to their language proficiency.

There were 113 respondents to the survey – from the U.S., China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Australia, New Zealand, Spain, the UK, and elsewhere. There were 83 NNT respondents, natives of 23 languages: English (29), Mandarin (10), Vietnamese and Persian (6 each), Indonesian (4), Japanese and Arabic (3 each), and 14 other L1s. They were teaching 9 TLs: English (53), Spanish (13), German (11), and 6 others. They had been teaching language for an average of 10 years and were teaching at the beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels about evenly. As to their background for teaching pragmatics, only one referred specifically to formally acquiring knowledge about pragmatics, and six indicated being in a relationship with a TL speaker or having lived in the TL country.

The 30 NTs who responded to the survey were natives of 7 languages: English (5), Japanese (5), French (1), Spanish (2), Catalan (1), Chinese (1), and Danish (1), and were native-language teachers of 5 TLs: English (21), Japanese (4), Spanish (3), Danish (1), and French (1). One was an NS of Cantonese in Hong Kong but dominant in English which he reported teaching. They had been teaching language for an average of 16 years, teaching all three levels robustly, with 75% teaching advanced-level courses. While many indicated that their NS intuition provided them insights for teaching TL pragmatics, some noted that learning other languages also contributed, as in this example:

Practical connections came from my experiences learning foreign languages, first Spanish as a high school student, then Mandarin and

Mongolian as an adult. Many of my students speak those three languages as their native tongues, so I have a window into their thinking both mechanically (first-language interference in grammar, spelling, and pronunciation), culturally, and emotionally.

With regard to the language teaching context, of the 83 NNTs, 39% taught the TL as an FL and 61% as an L2. Among the 30 NTs, 73% taught the TL as an FL and 27% as an L2. Some teachers reported teaching pragmatics in other kinds of courses as well, such as teacher preparation courses, heritage language courses, linguistic courses, language for academic purposes courses, and courses focusing on sociolinguistics and culture in general.

Data Analysis

Survey Monkey provided basic statistical analysis (means and percentages) for closed items. Chi-square analyses were performed in cases where the data lent themselves to statistical analysis. Open-ended data were content analyzed.

RESULTS

Teachers' Reported Handling of Pragmatics in Their Instruction

As for the areas of pragmatics that NTs reported covering, they reported being more likely to teach the speech acts of criticism and sarcasm than were the NNTs. Whereas neither group of teachers reported very much attention to cursing, NNTs reported providing more instruction on this topic. In other categories, the teachers were relatively similar in what they reported. With regard to their comfort level at serving as a resource for information about the specifics of pragmatics in the TL, 53% of the NTs reported being “very comfortable” teaching TL pragmatics vs. 37% of the NNTs.

Both NTs and NNTs reported at least sometimes acknowledging to their students their lack of knowledge about some pragmatics issue. Coupled with that, the NTs reported a significantly higher likelihood of getting their students to serve as data gatherers. A fair number of NNTs (62%) reported sometimes or extensively using as a point of departure

the pragmatics of their L1 or some other language when teaching the TL. Commenting on those moments when they did not feel like an authority with respect to pragmatics, most NNTs said they would check with NSs, with the internet or with other sources, and get back to their students right away. Here is a representative comment:

I base what I tell students on research and, when research isn't available, I use my own anecdotal observation – but if my only evidence is anecdotal, I tell students that fact so they don't overgeneralize. If I don't know about some pragmatic feature, I say so and tell students I will try to find out. Then I ask native speaker friends about the feature, if there is no published research available to consult.

As for comments by NTs about those moments when they did not feel like an authority, a fair number commented on their using such moments as an opportunity to gather data. Here is one representative comment:

Usually the confusion is over ambiguities or differences in context, etc. I discuss with the students these differences, then we gather data (I will survey my colleagues and sometimes also outside my school) and report back. These are “teachable moments.”

Activities That Teachers Reported as Helpful in Teaching TL Pragmatics

The NTs and the NNTs had similar responses with regard to activities that they reported using for teaching pragmatics. They reported the following four types of activities:

- Viewing segments from films, videos (from YouTube and elsewhere) and analyzing them (perhaps with a transcript).
- Role-play, perhaps based on models from film segments and videos
- Collecting data from TL speakers (in service encounters, in dorms, in cafeterias, restaurants, and the like).
- Small-group discussions of TL pragmatics.

Since the instruction is for those who presumably have perhaps limited contact with the language as it is spoken naturally in the

community, all the more reason then for students to depend on films and videos. It is interesting to note that the teachers included the importance of analyzing the segments. This makes sense in that without the analysis, the learners may not automatically attend to the pragmatics involved. The use of role-play can help to give the learners an opportunity to practice the TL pragmatics segments that they have been exposed to.

Especially in an FL context, it may be challenging to collect data from TL speakers engaged in activities other than, say, a Skype session. And even if they do collect data from TL speakers, their pragmatics may be altered if their performance is taking place in the speech community of the learners and not that of the TL speakers. One of the respondents gave specifics as to what the data gathering from students might look like:

Sending my ESL students out as ethnographers to observe specific types of interactions: greetings and leave-taking among young men in contrast to young women of their own age group (i.e., hands, voices, feet, proximity, verbal or grunting/shrieking expressions), gift-giving actions and verbal expression, phone calls, requests for directions around campus, expressions of disappointment, asking for and declining favors. These can be written up, but if possible, videotaped and analyzed.

Assuming that learners are gathering TL data with pragmatic import, all the more reason then that the teacher engages them in small-group discussions in order to highlight the pragmatic features and to make sure that learners are clear as to how they function in the given context.

Ways That Teachers Motivated Their Students to Learn About TL Norms

The following are a series of quotes from the teachers themselves as to practices aimed at motivating their students to learn more about the norms for TL behavior:

- By saying: If you want to make sense, sound natural, and – more importantly – be polite, you need to learn TL pragmatics.
- I find that with my students (intermediate & advanced Spanish), I don't need to work hard to motivate them to be interested in

Spanish pragmatics. They generally find social norms to be fascinating! In part, it may be that in other classes instructors don't talk about pragmatics, so it is novel for them. In addition, there is a clear practical component to learning about pragmatics that I think they recognize.

- Through engaging materials, especially Russian-language music and movies. If they find something they really love, they are motivated to understand it. Also I emphasize how native speakers will react when they behave in pragmatically inappropriate ways, which I hope motivates them to at least be conscious of that dimension of language.
- I tell them that being a competent speaker requires not only being accurate but also appropriate.
- I make sure my German FL students have the opportunity to observe real (if possible, filmed) interactions among people who speak the target language; this way, they see that there are people just like them who observe the social and linguistic norms that they have been learning about.
- I tell my EFL students [in Italy] about my own interactional experiences with native speakers (storytelling grabs their attention, and I trust they trust I am telling them the truth). If there are international/Erasmus students in class, I always ask them to tell the class about how their way of doing things differs from ours and what problems, if any, this may have caused.
- I normally peak their curiosity by using humor or misunderstandings, and start from there [Spanish FL in Italy].
- I try to make my Iranian EFL students [Babol, Iran] watch English comedies because it seems interesting to most of them, or register in different social networks and be in touch with Americans.
- I just demonstrate it to my beginning Spanish and German FL students [female teacher, University of California at Santa Barbara]. I act like someone from that culture would act. I also try to get them excited about the culture. I show them things that they can connect with. I always interview all of my students at the beginning of the quarter to find out why they are taking the language and what their hobbies/activities are. Then I try to match my curriculum to that.
- With inter-cultural and cross-cultural examples. For example, I use service encounter interactions in US English and in comparable

settings in Spain and Latin America. My Spanish FL students [Indiana University] love the pragmatics of service encounters because they find it quite useful when they travel abroad.

As can be seen, the teacher respondents identified various motivators, mostly involving either live interactions or filmed ones, where cultural elements could play an important role in behavior. They also referred to the importance of music and especially of humor. Needless to say, bringing up the issue of politeness was also seen as a motivator in that learners generally did not like the embarrassment associated with being inappropriately impolite or, conversely, overly polite.

Areas of Pragmatics Where Teachers Wanted More Information on Pragmatics

The following are topics that the teachers identified as ones that they would welcome more information about, all having possible ramifications with regard to pragmatic behavior and especially to the avoidance of pragmatic failure. Some of the topics have a more robust research literature associated with them than do others (see Taguchi & Roever, 2017; see also Taguchi, 2019).

- Humor, sarcasm, teasing, and cursing.
- The expression of sympathy and compassion.
- Table manners.
- Interacting with different generations of speakers at, say, a family gathering (e.g., meeting their TL-speaking significant other's siblings, parents, and grandparents).
- Euphemisms for things like age, sex, and dying.
- How to pose questions during class, at conferences, and in the workplace.
- The pragmatics of online discussions engaging several participants using the same language.
- The pragmatics of diplomatic communication.
- Things people are more or less likely to discuss in the TL.
- Small talk.
- Invisible culture – behavior patterns in the TL community that learners do not realize are part of the shared culture, rather than individual idiosyncrasies.

- “English as a lingua franca” pragmatics (e.g., ELF pragmatics for business purposes).
- Differences in pragmatic behavior that may exist among the varieties of the TL (e.g., Spanish) around the world.
- The connection between grammar and pragmatics: the relevance of the resources of a language system to speakers’ uses of a language.
- Distinguishing pragmatic deviations due to lack of TL knowledge from pragmatic deviations by L1 speakers (such as due to boorish or gauche behavior).
- Prioritizing – determining the areas of pragmatics to be taught first or to be skipped if there is only limited instructional time.

Again, let us keep in mind that these were requests from teachers in the field based on their perceptions and experiences. Especially researchers reading this article could look at this list as a potential call to action. Some of these topics may be of interest to researchers looking for areas in pragmatics that warrant further investigation in a given TL context – especially involving less-studied languages.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

This article dealt with an area that has appeared to have received somewhat limited attention in both the research literature relating to pragmatics, as well as in the pedagogically oriented literature – namely, the ways in which NTs and NNTs are similar and different with regard to the handling of TL pragmatics in their instruction. The survey of NTs and NNTs revealed both numerous similarities in reported handling of TL pragmatics and also certain areas of difference. For example, there were some areas where NNTs with considerable experience in language teaching and high TL proficiency nonetheless felt that they lacked knowledge about how to teach certain aspects of TL pragmatics. These NNTs also indicated somewhat less comfort than NTs in teaching about certain aspects of pragmatics as well. The findings would suggest that NTs’ intuitions about pragmatics may assist them in teaching learners how to be effectively critical and sarcastic, as well as how to respond appropriately to criticism and sarcasm. The caveat here is that relying on

NS intuition may be misleading, which is why both NNTs and NTs in this survey indicated that they gathered data from other sources if they were in doubt about some area of TL pragmatics.

The NTs also indicated greater use of digital media, possibly due to their relative ease at finding and using TL media or their many years of teaching experience. The NTs also indicated a willingness to use their students as data gatherers in cases where they were unsure of some issue in pragmatics to a somewhat greater extent than were the NNTs. What is encouraging about this finding is that it would indicate that at least with regard to this sampling of teachers internationally, the NTs were not just relying on their intuition, but also reported a willingness to learn more about their L1 pragmatics rather than just relying on their intuitions.

The NNTs reported more coverage of cursing than the NTs, which can be an important area for learners to have some control over. A case in point would be that of female undergraduate students of mine at the University of Minnesota who, upon returning from study abroad in a Middle Eastern culture, reported in retrospect that it would have been helpful to them to have been able to appraise catcalls on the street as possibly threatening.

It was also found that, not so surprisingly, NNTs reported relying on their L1 when they were not certain of the TL pragmatics. In the literature on transfer, it has been seen time and again that learners may fall back on their L1 when there are gaps in their TL knowledge. When such transfer is negative, it may result in pragmatic failure (see Ishihara & Cohen, 2014, Chapter 5, for examples). In addition, the survey provided a listing of activities that could be used in teaching TL activities both in FL and L2 situations. In addition, the data provided suggestions for how to motivate learners to want to study TL pragmatics, as well as an indication as to pragmatics areas for which teachers would like more information based on both research and practice.

Limitations

Since this study was conducted over the Internet with a portion of the participants remaining anonymous, no effort was made to determine the actual knowledge base of the NTs and NNTs about pragmatics, nor their pedagogical knowledge. Nor was there any way to verify the extent to which they actually practiced what they reported practicing. While the

reliability of the survey instrument was determined solely through piloting of the questionnaire items, the resulting data would suggest that the respondents were genuinely engaged in producing thoughtful responses.

While international in scope, the sample was still relatively modest and self-selective, and the NTs had on the average more teaching experience than the NNTs (an average of 16 years vs. 10 years). It is probably the case that teachers who were less knowledgeable about TL pragmatics declined to respond to the survey. In addition, the questions were in some cases only a first effort at probing the issues. Also, the fluctuation in responses would serve as an indication that it is difficult to arrive at consensus in such a survey effort. Both the NTs and NNTs were highly diverse, representing not only different L1s and TLs, but also many different regions of the world. Another limitation is that the TL proficiency of the NNTs was not measured, a task that would have called for instruments in a variety of languages and a willingness on the part of the NNTs to have their knowledge assessed. Undoubtedly, having knowledge of just how proficient or even “expert” they were in their respective TLs would have helped interpret the data in order to distinguish NT–NNT issues from other kinds of issues. Finally, it must be remembered that report of coverage of certain TL pragmatics issues does not speak to how reliable the reports actually were, nor does it speak to how effectively they were covered.

Despite the limitations of the study, the conducting of the survey appears to have constituted a useful exercise in an effort to better deal with the area of pragmatics instruction in the classroom.

Suggestions for Future Research

With regard to further research, there is undoubtedly a need to broaden the data base through more systematic sampling of teacher respondents from all areas of the world, as well as to refine the questions that are posed to teachers. In addition, it would be most helpful to collect classroom observation as well in order to corroborate teachers’ reported handling of pragmatics in the TL classroom. Fortunately, there has been at least one effort to replicate the study reported in this article. It involved 10 female EFL instructors, all NNTs in Greece or Cyprus who had experience teaching at FL institutes and private English-medium mainstream schools (Savvidou & Economidou-

Kogetsidis, 2019). The investigators collected data regarding what these teachers knew about pragmatics and what they reported teaching about it in the classroom. Among the more interesting findings was that reportedly when they did venture into teaching about TL culture, there was a tendency to focus on the visible layers of culture (e.g., food, festivals, and habits) rather than on “the hidden layers of culture” such as values, politeness, beliefs, attitudes, which this sampling of EFL teachers considered to involve issues that were “too alien or sensitive for them to touch on” (p. 53). Ironically, these are the issues involving pragmatics that are often of keen interest to numerous language learners.

Pedagogical Implications

With regard to pedagogical implications derived from this study, more could certainly be done to develop classroom activities that help in the instruction of TL pragmatics in the less-covered and more-challenging areas – activities that serve NTs and NTTs alike, both in FL and L2 teaching contexts. The findings from the survey reported on in this paper would appear to support the view that there are NT–NNT differences that might show up in TL instruction in the classroom, which warrants a discussion about measures that might be taken to deal with this issue (see Cohen, 2019, for guidelines regarding strategy instruction in pragmatics). In all fairness, the conversation needs to start by acknowledging NNTs for the fine work they do in teaching the TL and for their often admirable abilities in both performing and teaching TL pragmatics. The concern is in dealing with those areas of pragmatics that may currently be outside their comfort zone (perhaps dealing with teasing, sarcasm, humor, cursing, and other such areas). Being a NNT may make teachers even more mindful of pragmatics and motivated to educate themselves in this area. Rather than simply denying it is an issue, language educators might wish to make more resources available to NNTs and to NTs as well, so that both groups can teach TL pragmatics with greater comfort and facility.

For example, both NNTs and NTs may benefit from synopses of findings from research on TL pragmatic norms since NNTs may be unaware of the TL norms and NTs, while they have their intuitions, may have an anecdotal, idiosyncratic, or otherwise limited and/or inaccurate understanding of the actual pragmatic norms. And even if the textbooks cover these areas of pragmatics, the coverage may not reflect the current

normative behavior (Cohen & Ishihara, 2012). Both groups of teachers may also benefit from comparing pragmatic norms in different dialects since, as reflected in the NTs' comments, they are not necessarily aware of the TL norms for pragmatics in other countries where their L1 is spoken.

CONCLUSIONS

At a time when there is increasing interest in teaching pragmatics, there needs to be a commensurate concern with supporting NTs and NNTs alike to do the best possible job of this. A comment is in order with regard to the finding that years of teaching was reported to correlate positively with certain speech acts for the NTs. Why years of teaching experience correlated positively with reported teaching of certain speech acts for NTs and not for NNTs is a matter of speculation. Perhaps the longer this sample of NTs taught, the more they saw the benefits of introducing information about pragmatics. As for the NNTs, perhaps it was their relative lack of awareness of pragmatics or their intent to simply follow textbook lessons over the years that explained the lack of correlation between years teaching and report of inclusion of pragmatics, since they had a rather robust average of 10 years of teaching experience. On the other hand, perhaps this finding is suggestive of a slight deficit that the NNTs in this sample had in their ability to teach TL pragmatics, whether as an L2 or as an FL.

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FOOTNOTE

- ¹ Paper based on a workshop conducted at the Korea TESOL International Conference, Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul, South Korea, October 13, 2019.

APPENDIX

Composite Questionnaire for NTs & NNTs: Thoughts About Your Handling of Pragmatics in the Target Language Classroom

The concern of *pragmatics* is with intended meanings, assumptions, and actions in oral and written language. This questionnaire seeks to stimulate your thinking about how you handle the pragmatics of the language you are teaching.

This survey seeks to collect information on the experiences of native and nonnative language teachers as they teach their learners about the pragmatics of the target language, whether it be more a second-language experience (where the target language is spoken extensively in the learners' immediate community) or more a foreign-language experience (where the target language is not spoken extensively in the learners' immediate community). For the purposes of the questionnaire, pragmatics is viewed as dealing with intended meanings, assumptions, and actions in both oral language and written language (especially as used in texting and emailing).

There are 19 questions in this survey, including both multiple-choice, short-answer, and open-ended items. Please focus just on the class or classes in which you are likely to teach the most about pragmatics. The questionnaire should take about 20–30 minutes to complete.

- 1) What is your native language? What is your dominant language now, if it is not your native language? _____
- 2) What language(s) do you teach?
- 3) For how many years have you been teaching this language (these languages)?
- 4) What levels of the language do you teach?
Beginning ____ Intermediate ____ Advanced ____ Other ____ (e.g., a course)
Please provide a brief description:
- 5) In several sentences, please describe how you develop knowledge about the target language pragmatics that enables you to instruct others in it (e.g., through either your intuition as a native speaker or

highly competent nonnative, coursework, the research literature, or websites).

6) Focusing just on the class level/course for which you teach about pragmatics, indicate the extent of coverage that the following areas of pragmatics receive in your current language classes:

4 – extensive coverage, 3 – a fair amount of coverage, 2 – some coverage, 1 – little coverage, 0 – no coverage.

- Politeness/impoliteness _____
- How to make requests _____
- How to apologize _____
- How to compliment and respond to compliments. _____
- How to complain _____
- How to criticize _____
- Greetings and leave-taking _____
- Thanking _____
- Conversational style (e.g., turn-taking, appropriate listener responses) _____
- Humor _____
- Sarcasm _____
- Teasing _____
- Cursing _____
- The temporal, discursive, affective, and indexical roles of discourse markers like “well,” “you know,” “so,” “I think,” “on the other hand,” “frankly,” and “as a matter of fact” _____
- Conversational implicature (i.e., the implied meaning as interpreted by listeners based on context and knowledge of how conversation works) _____

7) Please indicate the extent to which you think you would feel comfortable serving as a resource for information about the specifics of pragmatics in your language of instruction:

- very comfortable _____
- somewhat comfortable _____
- somewhat uncomfortable _____
- very uncomfortable _____

8) If you encounter classroom moments when you don't feel like an

authority on some aspect of pragmatics, what do you do about it? Indicate the extent to which you do the following:

3 – extensively, 2 – sometimes, 1 – seldom, 0 – never.

- a) I acknowledge my lack of knowledge to my students. ____
 - b) I have my students serve as data gatherers by having them check with native speakers and then report back to the class what they found out. ____
 - c) I teach what I know. ____
 - d) Other (please explain). ____
- 9) Pragmatics focuses on how the language is interpreted in a given sociocultural context within the target community. How would you assess your current knowledge of the target language and of the sociocultural contexts in which the language is likely to be used? (Mark all that apply.)
- Very knowledgeable about both the language and the sociocultural contexts ____
 - More knowledgeable about the language than the sociocultural contexts ____
 - More knowledgeable about the sociocultural contexts than about the language ____
 - Still a learner in both the language and the sociocultural contexts within the target community ____
- 10) It is said that teaching the pragmatics of a foreign language is more challenging than teaching the pragmatics of a second language since in foreign-language learning the learners are presumably not living in the target-language context.
- a) To what extent do you think this distinction has relevance to your situation?
Extensive relevance ____ Some relevance ____ Little or no relevance ____
 - b) As a foreign-language teacher, in what ways (if any) do you think your students' development of pragmatic ability is influenced by their lack of contact with the target language? Explain.

11) To what extent do you teach the pragmatics of the target language explicitly?

4 – all the time, 3 – most of the time, 2 – sometimes, 1 – rarely, 0 – never _____. Please comment.

12) To what extent do you have your students access digital media (e.g., movies, YouTube, etc.) in learning pragmatics?

4 – all the time, 3 – most of the time, 2 – sometimes, 1 – rarely, 0 – never _____.

Explain in several sentences how you use digital media.

13) To what extent do you teach regional and dialect differences in the use of pragmatics (e.g., the pragmatics of Korean English)?

4 – all the time, 3 – most of the time, 2 – sometimes, 1 – rarely, 0 – never _____.

14) How do you motivate your students to learn about the norms for target-language behavior? Explain in a few sentences.

15) Assuming you are teaching in a foreign-language situation, what activities do you think are most helpful in teaching pragmatics?

16) As a language instructor, what do you do if your students deviate from accepted norms for pragmatic behavior in the target language?

17) What if your students' deviations from target-language norms are on purpose – namely, an expression of their self-identity (sense of agency)? How do you deal with that in the classroom?

18) What areas of pragmatics would you like to have more information about?

19) Thinking about specific areas of pragmatics (such as those listed in question #6 above), in what areas of pragmatics might you be interested in seeing the results of research?