The teaching of pragmatics by native and nonnative language teachers: What they know and what they report doing

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Abstract

The paper focuses on how nonnative teachers of a target language (NNTs) deal with pragmatics in their classes. It starts with a discussion of what pragmatics entails. Next, issues relating to the teaching of pragmatics are identified, such as the language background of the teacher, comparisons between second- (L2) and foreign-language (FL) instruction, and the potential role of digital media and other means in providing models for pragmatic behavior. Then, an international survey is presented which probed into the experiences of NNTs of various languages while teaching the pragmatics of their language of instruction. A total of 113 teachers were asked to indicate what they taught with regard to pragmatics, 30 native-language teachers (NTs) and 83 NNTs. They were also asked to report on their experience as teachers of L2 and FL pragmatics (e.g., if they encountered classroom moments when they did not feel like an authority on some aspect of pragmatics, what they did about it). Since pragmatics is a meeting of language and culture, the teacher respondents were asked to assess their knowledge regarding pragmalinguistics (i.e., the language forms) and sociopragmatics (sociocultural knowledge). In addition, they were asked to give their opinion regarding similarities and differences between the teaching of FL as opposed to L2 pragmatics, as this traditional dichotomy gives way to a more hybrid reality in an increasingly globalized world. Similarly, they were asked about their methods for teaching pragmatics (e.g., their use of digital media and their handling of dialect differences). Finally, they were asked to suggest areas in which

they would like to see research conducted that would inform the teaching of pragmatics. The paper reports the findings from the study, including statistical differences in reported teaching of criticism, sarcasm, and cursing, as well as in the use of digital media and in having students gather data on pragmatics.

1. Introduction

At the present time increasing attention is being given to the teaching of the pragmatics of the target language (TL). Taguchi (2015), for example, reviewed 58 studies over the last 30 years focusing on the teaching of pragmatics in TL instruction. One finding from this exhaustive study was that the explicit teaching of pragmatics can make a difference for TL learners. Consequently, the role of teachers cannot be underestimated since pragmatics can be challenging for learners to acquire on their own. The focus of this paper is one that is not necessarily investigated, namely, how nonnative teachers (NNTs) of an L2 or an FL deal with pragmatics in their classes worldwide, as compared with native teachers (NTs).

Especially given the rise of the World Englishes literature where local varieties of the TL may be preferred, it would appear that for learners to approximate some TL norm would be unnecessary and perhaps even inappropriate. If this is the case, then, NNTs need not worry about teaching to some TL standard. The case of English is usually given to support this argument. For years, the model for pragmatics was unquestionably the same model as for English as a foreign language (EFL), namely, a model based on idealized norms of U.S. or British English. The World Englishes movement would suggest that the USA and the UK are an inappropriate standard for pragmatics (Galloway & Rose, 2015). Rather, the pragmatics need to be those of the local players. There is also the English as a lingua franca (ELF) movement which likewise sees nonnative Englishes as different rather than deficient (Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011). Whereas EFL has its theoretical roots in theories of L1 interference and fossilization, ELF prefers theories of language contact and evolution. As a result, while in EFL code-switching is regarded as evidence of a gap in nonnative speakers' (NNSs) English knowledge, in ELF it is viewed as a bilingual pragmatic resource. Users of ELF are seen as skilled communicators who make use of their multilingual resources in ways not available to monolingual native speakers (NSs), and who prioritize successful communication over notions about using English "correctly" (Jenkins et al., 2011).

Of course, it is important to bear in mind that not all EFL teachers necessarily embrace the tenets of ELF. There are those who continue to teach toward the native English speaker norm, even if they pay lip service to ELF. A study by Asmari (2014) of English teaching practices of over 200 predominantly NNS EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia found that while the majority of NNS teachers favored the use of ELF, which would mean exposing their students to NNS varieties of English and possibly overtly teaching these varieties, in their actual language instruction the teachers apparently adhered to a NS norm, whether British, American, Canadian, or Australian, especially in written work. Among other things, they reportedly strove for a native-like pronunciation.

The current article reports a study comparing NTs and NNTs with regard to their handling of pragmatics, starting with a brief description of what pragmatics is and the challenge of comparing NTs with NNTs in terms of how they teach it in the TL classroom. Then the results of an international survey intended to probe into the experiences of NTs and NNTs of various L2s and FLs are reported. The survey looked at what the NTs and NNTs reported teaching with regard to pragmatics, their experience as teachers of TL pragmatics, their self-assessment of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge, their opinion concerning the L2-FL distinction as applied to pragmatics, their methods for teaching TL pragmatics, and their suggestions regarding information/research to inform the teaching of pragmatics.

2. The role of pragmatics in the language that students learn and use

If learners wish to say something to someone, they 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 we do it in our native or dominant language. It is not enough just to know the vocabulary and the grammar (e.g., the verb forms). *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). Pragmatics includes politeness/impoliteness, speech acts (greetings, thanks, requests, compliments, apologies, complaints, etc.), conversational style, humor, sarcasm, teasing, cursing, discourse markers, conversational implicature, and deixis (see Cohen, 2017).

3. The challenges of learning pragmatics

A study investigating the development of L2 Chinese formulaic competence among intermediate-level college students from the USA in a semester of study abroad in Beijing underscored the challenges of learning pragmatics (Taguchi, Li, & Xiao, 2013). This rigorous study found that the learners showed only modest gains in both appropriateness and fluency in Chinese pragmatics. The finding was attributed to these intermediate-level students' lack of lexical and syntactic knowledge, and their lack of both sociopragmatic (sociocultural) and pragmalinguistic (language-focused) knowledge. These students had reached the intermediate level and were still found to be lacking in their ability to produce pragmatically formulaic phrases such as when hiring a cab, withdrawing money at a bank, bargaining, ordering in a restaurant, asking for the washroom, and ending a phone call.

The author of this article has studied 12 languages beyond his native English over the course of his lifetime. While he has achieved relative pragmatic control in, say, four of these, he has found that even with these languages he is capable of pragmatic failure (see Cohen 1997, 2001). It is more his pragmatic failures than his pragmatic successes that have made him acutely aware that pragmatic performance benefits from explicit instruction—that learners trend not to acquire rules for pragmatic appropriateness through osmosis. Here is just one example from only one of the languages he has dealt with: When studying Japanese he learned that he could fill his pauses with *eeto* or *ano*, and so he did his best to fill as many pauses as he could that way. Then, eventually a native-speakin interlocutor expressed annoyance at his overuse of these pauses. He explained to the author that he was filling his pauses too much—that natives prefer to use silence or nonverbal cues more. Something else he did not realize until it was pointed out to him was that he should use *eeto* when filling pauses in communication with people of equal or lower status, and *ano* with people of higher status. Put differently, *ano* is more formal and *eeto* is more informal. He was blithely using them interchangeably, totally unaware of this pragmatic distinction.

This anecdote is included in this paper to emphasize the crucial role that teachers can play in explicitly teaching those pragmatic aspects of a TL which can be of real benefit to learners as they move forward in their use of a language. One of the interesting findings in the review of pragmatics instruction cited above (Taguchi, 2015) was that implicit teaching of pragmatics was found to be as effective as explicit teaching if it involved noticing and processing activities. In other words, having learners first derive the target form-function-context mappings from input and then reinforce the mappings by processing them consciously had an impact, and it was also found that engaging learners in this process clearly called for an informed teacher. Simple exposure to input, even

typologically enhanced, was seen to have a shortfall in producing learning with regard to pragmatics. So the question of concern for this study was to look at possible advantages or disadvantages of NTs and NNTs when it came to providing this explicit or guided implicit instruction.

4. NT and NNT advantages and disadvantages regarding TL pragmatics

Some twenty years ago, Rose (1997) noted that the literature on NNTs' handling of pragmatics in their instruction was sparse. Not much has been added to the literature since then. If anything, there has been an effort to downplay the role that being an NNT may play in the handling of TL pragmatics. Akikawa (2010), for example, expressed the view that whether the language instructor is an NT or an NNT is a lesser issue in effective pragmatic instruction than are demonstrable linguistic and pragmatic competence, along with appropriate professional development. The position that she takes is that the key to a teacher's success is having critical awareness and acceptance of pragmatic diversity. This allows teachers, whether NTs or NNTs, to help their students develop cultural sensitivity and tolerance so that they can observe and analyze pragmatic norms different from their own and make their own pragmatic choices (Akikawa, 2010; see also Ishihara, 2008, 2010).

There are clearly language educators and classroom teachers who view the NT-NNT distinction as a relatively minor issue, especially with regard to the pragmatics of English. In addition, there is a literature which supports the view that it is a myth to consider NTs as superior to NNTs (Mahboob, 2010). See, for example, recent volumes which describe and promote the status of World Englishes (Matsuda, 2012; Marlina & Giri, 2014). The case is eloquently made in various chapters in these publications that there is a need to recognize regional varieties of English in their own right (e.g., Japanese English), without applying U.S. and British standards for what is considered acceptable. For example, if Japanese and Korean business associates are conversing among themselves in English in Seoul, it is reasonable to assume that they may rely to some extent on their own first-language (L1) pragmatics. Yet there do not appear to be guidelines for how to actually teach the pragmatic features of a World English, such as teaching the local Japanese variety of English pragmatics to Japanese speakers.

Putting aside the issue of which variety of the TL is to be taught, there still is the issue of whether there are advantages and disadvantages for NTs and NNTs when it comes to the teaching of TL pragmatics. A cleverly designed study looked at the handling of pragmatics by the same person who was concurrently teaching French as an NT and German as an NNT (Aslan, 2015). A qualitative analysis of interviews and classroom observations over six weeks revealed that

the participant teacher's French NT and German NNT identities influenced her teacher cognition. The observations, corroborated by the interviews, indicated that she had different knowledge bases for her native language French and nonnative language German, the former being implicit and the latter explicit.

In her NNT teaching of German she drew from her high level of proficiency in German grammar in responding successfully to student questions, which gained her respect from the students. In fact, in German class she presented students with morphological analyses of words and verb conjugations and tried to elicit grammatical information, and her teacher talk mostly consisted of metalinguistic terms and concepts, such as predicates, prepositional phrases, and subject/object pronouns. In the French class, on the other hand, her use of grammatical terminology was observed to be considerably less frequent. In fact, in one of the classes observed, she explicitly stated that she did not want to be asked why a particular grammatical form or feature was an exception to a rule. She had difficulty explaining the grammaticality and appropriateness of some of the utterances students generated. The teacher reported that her NT intuitions and knowledge of French did not help her much in explaining grammatical phenomena (Aslan, 2015, p. 257).

It is possible that especially in an FL instructional context, the teaching of TL pragmatics is a challenge for both an NT and an NNT. If the teacher encourages the FL learners to have extensive interactions with NSs (whether live or over the Internet), perhaps these interactions could lead to the kind of noticing that results in pragmatic awareness to offset the disadvantage of not being in an L2 context. While study abroad programs are viewed as means for getting learners to be more comfortable with TL pragmatics, a recent study by Félix-Brasdefer and Hasler-Barker (2015) produced only mixed results for U.S. study abroaders to Mexico. They found that even if the students are in a highly supportive study abroad program directed by an NT from their home institution, where there is access to a TL conversation club, field trips, participation in conferences in the TL, volunteer activities (e.g., in orphanages, medical centers, and other places), outings to cinemas and theaters, and guided visits to various public offices, the outcomes may still be mixed, with some gains but not impressively so.

So, there are clearly challenges associated with the learning of TL pragmatics that involves both the specific context for learning and the teacher's knowledge about and experience in teaching the pragmatics of the TL (see Ishihara, 2014). Certainly, the individual learner factor can play a role. Some FL learners can beat the odds through their own determination to learn the language. It may be that a given teacher, whether an NT or NNT, is particularly well versed at instilling in learners a strong motivation to learn the TL, which offsets the challenge of being in an FL context, removed from easy contact with the TL.

5. A study to explore the handling of pragmatics by NTs and NNTs

The interest in exploring the possible role of nativeness of the teacher in TL pragmatics instruction, then, prompted the carrying out of an international survey.[1] The concern was to see whether along with high competence and functioning ability in the TL language, knowledge of TL pragmatics, and teaching experience, the teacher's nativeness in the TL might have its own role to play. The main research question for the study was: What are the reported similarities and differences between native and nonnative teachers in their handling of TL pragmatics in the language classroom?

5.1. Instrumentation

An online survey instrument was constructed for NTs and NNTs, consisting of 20 questions. There were minor differences between the NNT and the NT versions. Survey Monkey was used to assist in this effort. The survey instrument was piloted with a mixed group of 15 NTs and NNTs in July of 2015, and subsequently some changes were made in the questions. The survey questionnaire explored the following:

1. How do NTs and NNTs handle pragmatics in the TL classroom?
2. What areas in TL pragmatics are taught?
3. To what extent does the teacher provide explicit instruction regarding pragmatics, use digital media, and teach about dialect differences in pragmatics?
4. How comfortable do teachers feel being a resource for TL pragmatics?
5. What do teachers do if they do not feel like an authority on some aspects of TL pragmatics?
6. How knowledgeable do teachers feel they are about sociopragmatic (sociocultural) and pragmalinguistic (language-form) issues relating to the specific TL?
7. How relevant do teachers think the L2-FL distinction is in dealing with TL pragmatics?
8. How might teaching activities differ according to whether it is an L2 or an FL context?
9. How do teachers motivate learners to learn TL pragmatics?
10. In what areas in pragmatics might teachers want to obtain more information/see the results of research?

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[1] One of the early researchers in the pragmatics field, Meryl Siegal (from Laney College, Oakland, CA) provided useful feedback in the early stages of the study design and the construction of the survey instruments.

5.2. Sampling and data collection procedures

An invitation to respond to the survey was sent to over 100 university professors and graduate students via email. The invitation was also posted on the author's website, on LinkedIn, and on Facebook. The first invitation went out on July 25 and responses to the survey were accepted until September 20. There were 113 responses altogether, 83 of whom were from respondents to the NNT survey. These respondents were native speakers of some 23 languages (English: 29, Mandarin: 10, Vietnamese and Persian: 6 each, Indonesian: 4, Japanese and Arabic: 3 each, and 14 other L1s). They reported being NNT of some nine TLs at the university level: English (53), Spanish (13), German (11), and 6 others. Respondents had been teaching language for an average of 10.6 years. They represented beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels about evenly, with most teaching at the intermediate level (66%) and slightly fewer teaching at the advanced level (60%).

There were 30 respondents to the NT survey. They were NSs of seven languages: English: 5, Japanese: 5, French: 1, Spanish: 2, Catalan: 1, Chinese: 1, and Danish: 1, and were native-language teachers of five TLs at the university level: English: 21,[2] Japanese: 4, Spanish: 3, Danish: 1, and French: 1. Respondents had been teaching language for an average of 17.2 years, an average 6.6 years longer than the NNTs. They reported teaching all three levels robustly, with 75% teaching advanced level courses.

With regard to the language teaching context, 32 of the NNTs taught their TL as an FL and 51 taught it as an L2. As for the NTs, 22 taught their TL as an FL and 8 taught it as an L2. Some teachers reported teaching pragmatics in other kinds of courses as well. Such courses included teacher preparation courses, heritage language courses, linguistic courses, language for academic purposes courses, and courses focusing on culture writ large, sociolinguistics, and special topics within pragmatics such as politeness.

5.3. Data analysis procedures

Survey Monkey provided basic statistical analysis (means and percentages) for closed items. Chi-square analyses were performed using Social Science Statistics (www.socscistatistics.com/tests/chisquare/) to compare NNTs' and NTs' reported handling of pragmatics in the classroom, and Pearson correlations using Minitab 17 (www.minitab.com/) to see whether years of teaching and teaching level were related to reported coverage of pragmatics and comfort teaching pragmatics. The open-ended responses by the NTs and NNTs were content analyzed.

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[2] One was a native speaker of Cantonese in Hong Kong but dominant in English, which he reported teaching.

5.4. Results

With respect to the areas of pragmatics that they reported covering and the results for which are presented in Tables 1 and 2, the NTs reported significantly more teaching of criticism[3] (X^2 = 8.28, p < .05) and sarcasm (X^2 = 9.39, p < .05). Whereas neither group of teachers reported very much attention to cursing in their instruction, still NNTs reported more coverage of cursing (X^2 = 9.47, p < .05). In other categories, the teachers were relatively similar in what they reported. So the finding here was that the nativeness of the teacher had some impact on the reported handling of a few of the more subtle speech acts, like expressing sarcasm and criticizing. In addition, NNTs in this sample reportedly taught students how to interpret and deliver curses more than NTs did.

Table 1 NNTs' reported coverage of TL pragmatics, N = 83

	Extensive coverage	Fair amount of coverage	Some coverage	Little coverage	No coverage	Total respondents
Politeness/impoliteness	**26%**	**41%**	**31%**	**3%**	**0%**	
	20	32	24	2	0	78
How to make requests	**21%**	**48%**	**26%**	**6%**	**0%**	
	17	39	21	5	0	82
How to apologize	**13%**	**33%**	**35%**	**18%**	**1%**	
	10	26	27	14	1	78
How to compliment and respond to compliments	**6%**	**28%**	**35%**	**29%**	**4%**	
	5	22	28	23	**3**	80
How to complain	**5%**	**29%**	**24%**	**35%**	**6%**	
	4	23	19	28	5	79
How to criticize	**5%**	**18%**	**32%**	**35%**	**13%**	
	4	14	25	27	10	78
Greetings and leave-taking	**31%**	**38%**	**19%**	**10%**	**3%**	
	25	30	15	8	2	80
Thanking	**28%**	**43%**	**21%**	**8%**	**3%**	
	22	34	17	6	2	80
Conversational style (e.g., turn-taking, appropriate listener responses)	**14%**	**35%**	**19%**	**22%**	**10%**	
	11	28	15	17	8	79
Humor	**6%**	**16%**	**26%**	**33%**	**19%**	
	5	13	21	26	15	80
Sarcasm	**3%**	**6%**	**20%**	**30%**	**41%**	
	2	5	16	24	32	79
Teasing	**4%**	**5%**	**13%**	**38%**	**41%**	
	3	4	10	30	33	80
Cursing	**3%**	**3%**	**18%**	**32%**	**45%**	
	2	2	14	25	35	78
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"	**16%**	**19%**	**47%**	**11%**	**6%**	
	13	15	37	9	5	79
Conversational implicature (i.e., the implied meaning as interpreted by listeners based on content and knowledge of how conversations work)	**10%**	**26%**	**28%**	**30%**	**6%**	
	8	21	22	24	5	80

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[3] The speech act of criticizing is meant here rather than literary criticism.

Table 2 NTs' reported coverage of TL pragmatics , N = 30

	Extensive coverage	Fair amount of coverage	Some coverage	Little coverage	No coverage	Total respondents
Politeness/impoliteness	17%	37%	43%	3%	0%	
	5	11	13	1	0	30
How to make requests	17%	43%	37%	3%	0%	
	5	13	11	1	0	30
How to apologize	7%	27%	47%	17%	3%	
	2	8	14	5	1	30
How to compliment and respond to compliments	7%	27%	27%	33%	7%	
	2	8	8	10	2	30
How to complain	7%	27%	27%	33%	7%	
	2	8	8	10	2	30
How to criticize	13%	27%	23%	27%	10%	
	4	8	7	8	3	30
Greetings and leave-taking	30%	33%	27%	7%	3%	
	9	10	8	2	1	30
Thanking	20%	40%	33%	7%	3%	
	6	12	10	2	1	30
Conversational style (e.g., turn-taking, appropriate listener responses)	20%	40%	27%	10%	3%	
	6	12	8	3	1	30
Humor	3%	13%	37%	40%	7%	
	1	4	11	12	2	30
Sarcasm	0%	17%	23%	43%	17%	
	0	5	7	13	5	30
Teasing	0%	10%	13%	60%	17%	
	0	3	4	18	5	30
Cursing	0%	0%	10%	50%	40%	
	0	0	3	15	12	30
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"	20%	30%	27%	10%	13%	
	6	9	8	3	4	30
Conversational implicature (i.e., the implied meaning as interpreted by listeners based on content and knowledge of how conversations work)	10%	33%	33%	10%	13%	
	3	10	10	3	4	30

For the NNTs there were no significant correlations between years of teaching and reported coverage of pragmatics. In contrast to the findings for the NNTs, for the NTs, there were four significant correlations between number of years teaching and the extensiveness of reported pragmatics coverage: apologies (r = .39, p < .05), complaints (r = .40, p < .05), conversational style (r = .47, p < .01), and sarcasm (r = .38, p < .05). While the extent of reported comfort at teaching pragmatics correlated significantly with reported extent of coverage of politeness (r = .37, p < .001) and of requests (r = .32, p < .01) for the NNTs, there were no significant correlations for the NTs.

As for the level teaching, those NNTs teaching higher levels reported more coverage of implicature (r = .33, p < .01) and those teaching lower levels reported more coverage of greetings and leave takings (r = .32, p < .01). As for the NTs, those teaching higher levels reported significantly more teaching of criticism (r = .38, p < .05). We should note that although significant, for the most part the correlations were generally low.

Regarding their reported methods for teaching pragmatics, as presented in Tables 3 and 4 NTs reported significantly more use of digital media than did the NNTs (x^2 = 12.85, p < .01). There was no statistical difference between the two teacher groups in terms of reported explicitness used in their teaching of pragmatics, nor in the extent to which they reported teaching about regional and dialect differences.

Table 3 NNT methods for teaching pragmatics

	All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total	Weighted average
To what extent do you teach the pragmatics of the target language explicitly?	9% 7	39% 31	43% 34	10% 8	0% 0	80	2.54
To what extent o you have your students access digital media (e.g., movies, YouTube, etc.)?	11% 9	34% 27	33% 26	18% 14	4% 3	79	2.88
To what extent do you teach regional and dialect differences in pragmatics (e.g., the ways pragmatics differs in the Hispanic world)?	11% 9	13% 10	32% 25	32% 25	13% 10	79	3.22

Table 4 NT methods for teaching pragmatics

	All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total	Weighted average
To what extent do you teach the pragmatics of the target language explicitly?	13% 4	43% 13	37% 11	7% 2	0% 0	30	2.37
To what extent o you have your students access digital media (e.g., movies, YouTube, etc.)?	27% 8	17% 5	37% 11	20% 6	0% 0	30	2.50
To what extent do you teach regional and dialect differences in pragmatics (e.g., the ways pragmatics differs in the Hispanic world)?	7% 2	20% 6	37% 11	30% 9	7% 2	79	3.22

With regard to their comfort level about serving as a resource for information about the specifics of pragmatics in the TL, which is graphically shown in Figures 1 and 2, 53% of the NTs reported being very comfortable teaching TL pragmatics versus 37% of the NNTs, with the chi-square close to significance at the .05 level (x^2 = 5.28, p = .07). Another 55% of the NNTs reported being somewhat comfortable in comparison to 40% of the NTs.
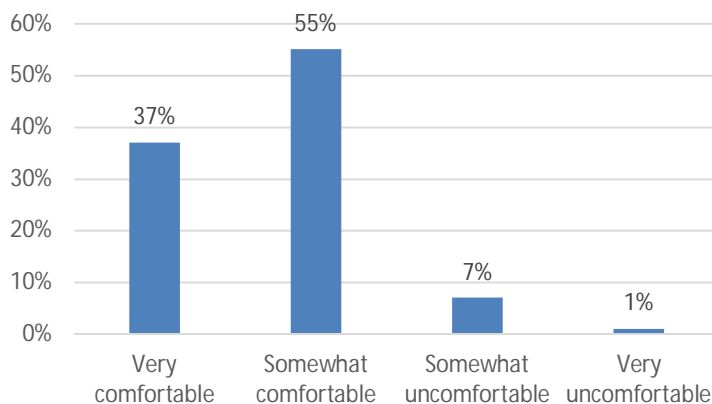
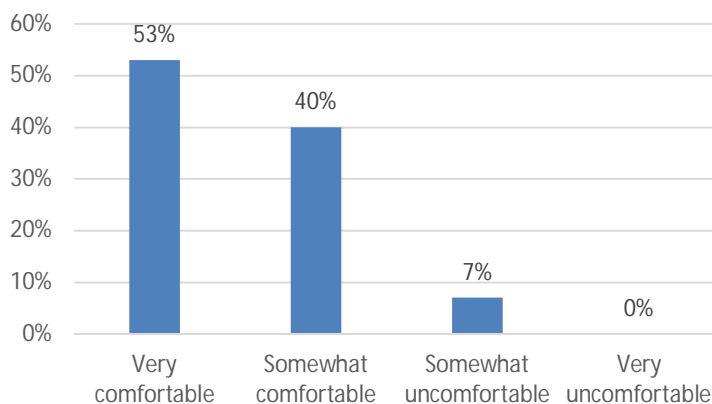Figure 1 NNTs' comfort level at teaching TL pragmatics (N = 83)

Figure 2 NTs' comfort level at teaching TL pragmatics (*N* = 30)

The teacher respondents were asked the following regarding their expertise in pragmatics:

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: (extensively, sometimes, seldom, never)

__I acknowledge my lack of knowledge to my students.
__I have my students serve as data gatherers.
__I teach what I know and hope it is adequate.
(For NNTs) __I use as a point of departure the pragmatics of my first language or of some other language.

As to what the NNTs and NTs reported doing if they encountered classroom moments when they did not feel like an authority on some aspect of pragmatics, both NTs and NNTs reported at least sometimes acknowledging to their students their lack of knowledge about some pragmatics issue, as presented in Tables 5 and 6. The NTs reported a significantly higher likelihood of getting their students to serve as data gatherers ($x^2 = 8.25$, $p < .01$). Significantly more NNTs reported teaching what they knew and hoping it was adequate[4] ($x^2 = 13.44$, $p < .01$). 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.

Table 5 When NNTs do not feel like an authority

	Extensively	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	Total	Weighted average
I acknowledge my lack of knowledge to my students	43% 35	51% 42	5% 4	1% 1	82	3.35
I have my students serve as data gatherers by checking with native speakers and then reporting back to the class.	14% 12	36% 30	25% 21	24% 20	83	2.41
I teach what I know and hope it is adequate.	31% 25	35% 28	23% 19	11% 9	81	2.85
I use as a point of departure the pragmatics of my first language or of some other language.	21% 17	41% 34	21% 17	17% 14	82	2.66

Table 6 When NTs do not feel like an authority

	Extensively	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	Total	Weighted average
I acknowledge my lack of knowledge to my students	40% 12	57% 17	0% 0	3% 1	30	3.33
I have my students serve as data gatherers by checking with native speakers and then reporting back to the class.	23% 7	47% 14	17% 5	13% 4	30	2.80
I teach what I know and hope it is adequate.	10% 3	48% 14	24% 7	17% 5	29	2.52

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, and with other sources and get back to their students right away. The NNTs' comments reflected a high level of knowledge about the issues and an impressive array of strategies for dealing with them, perhaps indicating that it was the more knowledgeable teachers who were willing to respond to this 20-tem survey. Here are some representative comments:

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[4] One NNT took offense at the wording since she felt that *explore* or *double check* should have been used instead of *hope*, since she did not teach something unless she was sure of it. Unfortunately, this wording problem was not flagged in the piloting of the instrument.

- *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.*

- *I may explain to students that any aspect of pragmatics can be perceived and practiced differently by different groups of people, or even by different individuals. Thus, that aspect should be seen in specific situations.*

- *I talk to my colleagues whom I think is expert in pragmatics. I also consult to books, recent updates on pragmatics as written in journals.*

- *I check on the internet to find more information, and I check with some teachers in the U.S.*

- *I use research-based information about the pragmatics of the language I teach.*

- *I confer with native speakers to hear what they have to say about the issue in question.*

- *I check with native speakers from a range of varieties of the language and then report back to the students.*

- *If I don't know, I let them know that I am unsure, check with a native speaker, and get back to them the next day.*

- *Given the diversity within the Spanish-speaking world, I stress to students that they need to be mini-ethnographers and observe the pragmatic norms of the place that they are visiting or where they are studying. I give as an example Carmen García's miscommunications as a Peruvian in Venezuela – she has an interesting article on how she was not successful in ordering coffee in a cafe. We also discuss Maria Placencia's work comparing pragmatic norms in Quito, Ecuador and Madrid, Spain.*

- *People say I have native-like fluency, and international test results confirm that I am "an expert user" of English; however, when it comes to areas such as humor, or certain disciplines such as philosophy, or religion, I seem to lag behind. Sometimes, I am quite useless.*

These comments would suggest that the NNTs who responded to this survey were aware both of research and of strategies for data gathering. As we see from the comments, one issue that emerged was the handling of dialect issues in pragmatics, such as for an English-speaking NNT teaching Spanish. Another issue was that voiced by a highly competent NNT of still not feeling competent enough with the pragmatics of the language to deal satisfactorily with humor. The overriding position was that of "when in doubt, ask a native speaker."

As for comments by NTs, a fair number commented on their using the moments where they did not feel authoritative as an opportunity to gather data, or, in other words, as teachable moments. In the first comment below, the NT underscored differences in norms for pragmatic behavior according to dialect, in this case for English:

- *I teach in different English speaking countries (e.g. I am from the United States but currently teaching in New Zealand), so reliability and fact-checking of pragmatics is*

a point shared between my non-native-English-speaking students and myself, a native English speaker but still a "foreigner."

- *Having spent 3 years in Austria and 1 year in Germany and some time in Hungary, and having a constantly teaching father who repeatedly reminded us and others (friends who were inappropriate) about the cultural ramifications of verbal, attitudinal, and bodily expressions, underscored my awareness and ability to articulate issues in various sociocultural contexts and interlocutors. Part of that though, is to admit I don't know everything, and that I may be mistaken in many assumptions, and not to generalize my understandings that are rooted in specific situations.*

- *I would consider myself very knowledgeable about a certain kind of Japanese language, but more current, informal, or highly dialectical speech I would readily acknowledge I am always in the process of learning about.*

- *I told my students that what I taught them only applied to dealings with foreigners, and even then, that they should follow the norm of what others did towards foreign visitors in the given context.*

- *I feel that pragmatic practices are constantly changing and are so community- and context-specific that full mastery of both the target language and sociocultural contexts seems like a mission impossible to me. Even in my home country, which I have been away from for two years now (although I do come back at least three times a year), I feel that I no longer have sound grasp of my L1 pragmatics.*

- *Due to being formally instructed on ESL pragmatics, having attended pragmatics conferences, having read numerous publications on pragmatics, and having conducted pragmatics-related research myself, I consider myself rather knowledgeable about sociocultural contexts and respective language variations.*

- [If not sure about some issue in pragmatics] *I take it as a research moment for all of us – "You guys research and I'll research and we'll come back tomorrow and discuss/compare results."*

- *I do my best to speak to my English-speaking colleagues or go to the relevant literature and then get back to my students as much as possible.*

- *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."*

- *I have students check COCA or MICASE[5] to look at usage. Or I have students ask friends. A standard assignment in my class is to have students bring in puzzling bits of conversation that they overheard. Some students love this assignment and ask pointed questions like, "How do you respond to 'You know what I mean?'" Or they ask about idioms like "Let's not get bogged down" that are highly frequent in teaching (but which I had never noticed!).*

These comments by the NTs reveal the similarities between their approaches and those of the NNTs as to strategies for getting accurate information about

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[5] COCA is the Corpus of Contemporary American English (www.corpus.byu.edu/coca/), and MICASE is the Michigan Corpus of American Spoken English (www.quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/c/corpus/corpus?page=home;c=micase;cc=micase).

pragmatics in response to students' queries, such as through data gathering, rather than relying on their intuition. In addition, the comments reflect the challenges an NT may face either in teaching in a country where a dialect of the TL different from their own is spoken, or in teaching in an FL context where they are losing contact with their L1.

The teachers were also asked a question to get at their knowledge of TL sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics:[6]

> Pragmatics focuses on how the language is interpreted in a given sociocultural context within the target language community. How would you assess your knowledge of the target language and of the sociocultural contexts in which the language is likely to be used? (Mark all that apply.)

As shown in Tables 7 and 8, there were differences in how knowledgeable the NNTs and NTs reported feeling when called upon to provide TL instruction about sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic issues. While only 37% of the NNTs felt very knowledgeable about both kinds of issues, twice as many NTs reported feeling very knowledgeable (73%; $x^2 = 34.77$, $p < .001$). More than half the NNTs reported feeling more knowledgeable about language than sociocultural issues in contrast to the 20% of NTs who reported this feeling.

Table 7 How knowledgeable NNTs feel about the language (pragmalinguistics) and the sociocultural (sociopragmatic) context

Answer Choices	Responses
Very knowledgeable about both the language and the sociocultural contexts	37% 31
More knowledgeable about the language than the sociocultural contexts	52% 43
More knowledgeable about the sociocultural contexts than about the language	6% 5
Still a learner in both the language and the sociocultural contexts within the target community	23% 19
Total respondents: 83	

Table 8 How knowledgeable NTs feel about the language (pragmalinguistics) and the sociocultural (sociopragmatic) context

Answer Choices	Responses
Very knowledgeable about both the language and the sociocultural contexts	73% 22
More knowledgeable about the language than the sociocultural contexts	20% 6
More knowledgeable about the sociocultural contexts than about the language	0% 0
Still learning about my language and norms for its use in different sociocultural contexts	17% 5
Total respondents: 30	

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[6] *Pragmalinguistics* deals with how language forms are used in pragmatics; *sociopragmatics* deals with the sociocultural knowledge needed to determine the appropriateness of pragmatic behavior.

The NNTs who commented about their knowledge of language and of sociocultural contexts indicated their wariness at making generalizations in class based just on their experiences, since the norms for appropriate pragmatic behavior could vary according to the sociocultural context, both within and across dialects. Some NNTs added the caveat that what they taught about TL pragmatics related only to interactions by NSs with foreigners. There were also the occasional pragmatics specialists who indicated acquiring their knowledge from research studies that they and others had conducted and from conferences. Here are some of their comments:

- *Italy is a very diverse linguistic and geographic territory. Although my knowledge is substantial, I can only offer an honest assessment of its extent while reiterating that possibilities of sociocultural contexts are endless.*
- *I would consider myself very knowledgeable about a certain kind of Japanese language, but more current, informal, or highly dialectical speech I would readily acknowledge I am always in the process of learning about.*
- *I told my students that what I taught them only applied to dealings with foreigners, and even then, that they should follow the norm of what others did towards foreign visitors in the given context.*

The NTs who commented about their knowledge of language and of sociocultural contexts indicated that they were constantly learning about pragmatics, especially given how it was always in flux:

- *Although I feel very comfortable teaching about the pragmatics of my native language, I acknowledge that great variety exists among the different varieties of Spanish, and I am constantly learning about other sociocultural contexts.*
- *I'm a native speaker of the language I teach and am very analytical about the pragmatics of my own language due to having been a second language learner in another language. Being able to relate to the difficulties my students encounter – particularly when they are unable to explicitly frame the problem beyond the understanding that something is wrong – is probably my most valuable asset.*
- *Of course I'm still learning and always will be! But having lived almost half my life outside my home state, and almost a decade outside the United States, I have become aware (through self-reflection, reading, and conversation) of the different sociocultural contexts for English, and I try to pass on these nuances to my students who may have only spent a month in an native English-language environment.*
- *As I was brought up in Japan and lived for 26 years with some working experience in Japan, I'm fairly confident about what I learned from my experience. However, as it has been a few decades since I left Japan and have got accustomed to the life in Australia, I sometimes feel that my knowledge might not be up to date any more. Society and people's norm seem to have changed to some degree in Japan for the past few decades, I need to be always mindful to updating my knowledge through various media.*

These comments by NTs about their sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge base simply underscore the previous comments about handling classroom moments of uncertainty regarding pragmatics. Again the issues of teaching in an FL context removed from contact with their L1 and also contending with dialect differences were raised as challenges that many NTs face. These comments also remind us that especially in FL contexts NTs are dealing with matters of multilingualism.

The teachers were asked the following question with regard to the FL-L2 distinction:

> 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. In your own experience as a language teacher, does this distinction still work for you? (Yes, Somewhat, No. Explain)

The contrast between NNT and NTs views on the relevance of this distinction did not yield a x^2 with a significant *p* value. As shown in Figures 3 and 4, while 61% of the NNTs deemed the distinction fully relevant and 30% somewhat relevant, 50% of the NTs found it fully relevant and 40% somewhat relevant.
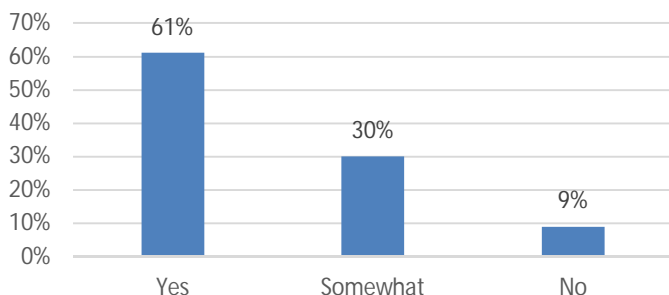

Figure 3 NNTs' view regarding the relevance of the L2-FL distinction (*N* = 80)
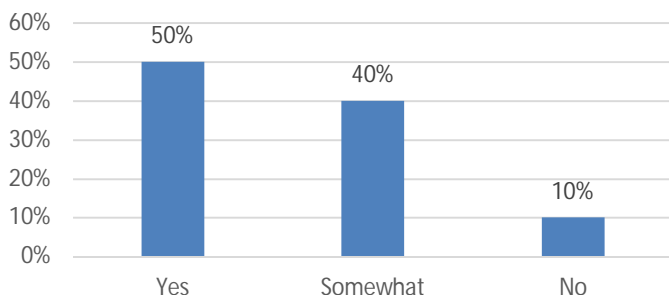

Figure 4 NTs' view regarding the relevance of the L2-FL distinction (*N* = 30)

The following were principal activities considered helpful in teaching TL pragmatics in an FL situation:

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

The activities reportedly used in the L2 context for teaching TL pragmatics were much the same as those reportedly used in the FL context. There was, however, one activity only reported for the L2 context, namely analyzing samples of pragmatics in use by TL speakers:

> *I send 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 expressions, 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.*

There were numerous strategies reportedly used by NNTs and NTs alike to motivate their students to learn norms for TL pragmatics:

- *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 intermediate and advanced Spanish learners 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 here 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 the curiosity of my Spanish FL learners in Italy by using humor or misunderstandings, and start from there.*
- *I try to get my Iranian EFL students to watch English comedies because it seems interesting to most of them, or to register in different social networks and be in touch with Americans.*
- *I just demonstrate pragmatics to my beginning Spanish and German FL students (in California). 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.*
- *I use inter-cultural and cross-cultural examples. For example, I use service encounter interactions in U.S. English and in comparable settings in Spain and Latin America. My Spanish FL students love the pragmatics of service encounters because they find it quite useful when they travel abroad.*

It is encouraging to see from these comments that both NNTs and NTs are reportedly engaged in motivating their students to become better versed in the pragmatics of the TL that they are learning. Especially given the often formulaic nature of pragmatics in areas such service encounters, there are advantages if learners are not only grammatically accurate but also pragmatically appropriate as noted in the above comment. They may get a better price on some item at the market or just have a more enjoyable interaction. The use of humor or misunderstandings as a way for teachers to keep students motivated resonates since learners not only enjoy being entertained but can also learn and perhaps better retain what they have learned when the classroom moments are amusing.

Both NNTs and NTs alike expressed a desire to have greater access to pragmatics information and research findings in the following areas:

- Humor, sarcasm, teasing, and cursing: These are things that are normally left out of the curriculum but are a huge part of living in a culture. They are often speech acts that motivate students to learn.
- The expression of sympathy and compassion.
- Table manners.
- Interacting with different generations of speakers at, say, a family gathering (meeting their Spanish-speaking significant other's siblings, parents, and grandparents, for example).
- 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, as in an academic setting such as conferences.

- The pragmatics of diplomatic communication.
- Things people are more likely to discuss in the TL and things they are less likely to discuss.
- Small talk.
- Invisible culture: behavioral patterns in the TL community that learners do not realize are part of the shared culture, rather than individual idiosyncrasies.
- ELF pragmatics, and especially pragmatics for business purposes.
- More about the differences in pragmatic behavior that may exist among the varieties of 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: What areas of pragmatics should be taught first? What can be skipped if there is limited time?

This final collection of comments demonstrates how savvy the NNTs and NTs were about just what pragmatics can entail in areas such as table manners, small talk, euphemisms, extending condolences, and interacting with people across the age spectrum. Other comments played up areas that can be most instructive for practicing teachers, such as knowing which topics are and are not sociopragmatically appropriate to bring up in the given context (e.g., how much a new house or car cost, how much the monthly salary is, and so forth), and also distinguishing normative behavior for the TL community from idiosyncratic (boorish) behavior.

6. Discussion and conclusions

This paper has presented an issue that has perhaps not received much attention in the research literature, namely, the ways in which NTs and NNTs are similar and different with regard to the handling of TL pragmatics in their instruction. While NTs and NNTs share many of the same challenges in teaching TL pragmatics, there is nonetheless an NNT factor with regard to the handling of certain aspects of pragmatics. While the survey of 83 NNTs and 30 NTs showed many similarities in reported handling of TL pragmatics, it also indicated certain areas of difference, where NNTs felt less knowledgeable about the teaching of TL pragmatics and also trended towards feeling less comfortable at is 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, whether because being a NS made them more facile at findings and utilizing TL media, due to their many years of teaching experience, or for some other reason. 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 the NNTs, though both groups reported this strategy. What is encouraging about this finding is that it would indicate that at least with regard to this self-selected sample, the NTs were not just relying on their intuition.

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 study abroad students who find themselves in a culture where properly understanding off-colored catcalls may be important for their safety. The NNTs also reported relying on their L1 when they were not certain of the TL pragmatics, which could possibly be a source of misinformation regarding the TL if there were negative transfer in the process (see Ishihara & Cohen, 2014). In addition, the survey provided a helpful listing of activities that can be used in teaching TL activities both in FL and L2 situations. In addition, it gave helpful 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.

This study is clearly a preliminary effort. While international in scope, the sample was still relatively modest and with the NTs having over six more years of teaching experience than the NNTs. By virtue of it being a matter of self-selection into the sample, it most likely represented a more knowledgeable group of teachers with regard to the teaching of TL pragmatics. It is likely that teachers less knowledgeable about TL pragmatics declined to respond. 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 NTs and NNTs spoke with differing voices, especially in their open-ended explanations of responses. They represented 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 of coverage of pragmatics actually were, nor does it speak to how effectively they were covered.

Despite the limitations of the study, it stands as a useful exercise in an effort to better deal with the area of pragmatics instruction in the classroom. 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 (see Cohen, in press). A comment is in order with regard to the finding that years of teaching were reported to have a positive correlation 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 which explained the lack of correlation between years teaching and report of inclusion of pragmatics. On the other hand, perhaps this finding is suggestive of a slight deficit that NNTs have in their ability to teach TL pragmatics, whether as an L2 or as an FL.

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. On a pedagogical level, more can be done to develop classroom activities which 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 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. 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 which are currently 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.

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