

Article

L2 Pragmatics Instruction in the Greek EFL Classroom: Teachers' Competence, Beliefs, and Classroom Challenges

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Abstract

While Greek EFL learners' pragmatic competence has been frequently investigated, few studies have focused on Greek EFL teachers' pragmatic knowledge. Complementing these earlier studies based on semi-structured interviews, we employed an extended online questionnaire and discourse completion tasks (DCTs) to explore the pragmatic competence of 72 Greek EFL teachers. Pragmatic comprehension was evaluated using scenarios that required participants to assess speech acts, while their ability to produce pragmatically appropriate responses was also assessed. Likert-scale items explored teachers' perceptions about L2 instruction and their own abilities in this regard. Findings suggest that Greek EFL teachers possess an above average level of pragmatic competence, which nevertheless has not led to them systematically integrating L2 pragmatics instruction in their classrooms. Additional qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews suggest that teachers' lack of integration of explicit pragmatics instruction is not due to their not recognizing its importance, but rather to feeling inadequately prepared to implement this, which in turn points to the lack of emphasis on L2 pragmatics in teacher education programs. We catalog the most significant challenges in incorporating L2 pragmatics instruction in Greek EFL classrooms in terms of teacher and learner factors, as well as the Greek EFL context itself.

Keywords: pragmatic competence; teaching L2 pragmatics; Greek EFL teachers; beliefs; challenges

1. Introduction

Pragmatic competence—the ability to use language appropriately in various social and cultural contexts—has gained increasing attention in second and foreign language education. While teaching vocabulary and grammar remains central in most EFL classrooms, pragmatics instruction has been comparatively overlooked (Crandall & Basturkmen, 2004). This imbalance persists despite extensive research supporting the value of teaching L2 pragmatics in order to help develop learners' communicative competence (Fordyce, 2014; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Taguchi, 2009). Moreover, studies have shown that mere exposure to the target language is insufficient for acquiring pragmatic competence (R. Schmidt, 1993), and that targeted instruction plays a vital role in raising learners' pragmatic awareness (Kasper, 1997a).

2. Previous Research on L2 Pragmatics Instruction

The situation in the Greek EFL context reflects the global trend. Although an increasing number of studies have investigated Greek learners' use of pragmatics (Bella,



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2012; Economidou-Kogetsidis et al., 2018; Ifantidou, 2011, 2013), limited attention has been paid to the role and readiness of teachers in facilitating such instruction (Savvidou & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2019; Economidou-Kogetsidis et al., 2021). Research in teacher cognition emphasizes that educators' beliefs, prior experiences, and professional knowledge significantly shape their classroom practices (Borg, 2015). Therefore, understanding teachers' own pragmatic competence and their attitudes toward teaching pragmatics is essential, particularly in EFL settings, since teachers often learned the language in formal, non-immersive contexts and may not have received adequate training in this domain.

2.1. The Importance of Pragmatics Instruction

It is now widely recognized that acquiring a second language (L2) involves more than just learning its vocabulary and grammar. Becoming proficient in a target language (TL) also requires understanding the social and cultural norms that govern communication. This includes selecting appropriate language forms based on context, expressing intentions effectively, and engaging collaboratively in communicative tasks (Taguchi, 2019). According to Bardovi-Harlig (2004) from an SLA perspective, pragmatics includes speech acts, conversational structure, implicature, discourse management, and sociolinguistic aspects such as the use of address forms.

The importance of teaching L2 pragmatics has been well established through extensive research going back to Wildner-Bassett (1984). In a meta-analysis, Taguchi (2015) reviewed 95 studies on L2 pragmatics instruction conducted between 1984 and 2014, illustrating the sustained academic interest in this topic. Despite their varied methodologies and objectives (e.g., Alcón Soler & Martínez-Flor, 2008; Cohen, 2008; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Fordyce, 2014; Kasper & Rose, 2001; Taguchi, 2009; Takimoto, 2009; Van Compernelle, 2014), all of these studies collectively stress the necessity of including pragmatics instruction in L2 curricula. Numerous teaching resources and textbooks (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 2004; Tatsuki & Houck, 2010; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010) provide practical guidance for incorporating pragmatics into language teaching.

An early and influential argument for explicit instruction came from R. Schmidt (1993), who asserted that mere exposure to the TL is not sufficient for pragmatic development because many pragmatic features are subtle and culturally bound, and without conscious noticing, learners are unlikely to acquire them. Similarly, Kasper (1997b) emphasized that, in the absence of instruction, certain pragmatic competencies may not develop adequately and advocated for identifying which pragmatic elements are teachable in order to determine the most effective instructional methods. Kasper (1997a) also cited various studies using pre-test/post-test designs that compared implicit and explicit instructional methods (e.g., Bouton, 1994, 1982; Kubota, 1995; Morrow, 1996; Olshtain & Cohen, 1990; Tateyama et al., 1997; Wildner-Bassett, 1984, 1994; as cited in Kasper, 1997a). These studies generally confirmed the value of pragmatics instruction, particularly in structured environments.

Explicit instruction—often grounded in R. W. Schmidt's (1990) 'noticing hypothesis'—provides metapragmatic explanations that enhance learner awareness and promote intentional learning (Roever, 2009). In contrast, implicit instruction relies on learners acquiring TL features subconsciously, without direct explanation. A growing body of research confirms that explicit instruction is more effective than implicit instruction in fostering L2 pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin, 2005; Fordyce, 2014; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Jeon & Kaya, 2006; Koike & Pearson, 2005; Nguyen et al., 2012; Taguchi, 2015; Takahashi, 2010). Nonetheless, classroom practice often involves a combination of the two approaches. Teachers may adapt instructional methods based on learners' proficiency levels, learning styles, motivations, and the nature of the pragmatic features being taught (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Taguchi & Roever, 2017). This flexibility reflects the need to tailor

instruction to diverse learner needs while maintaining a focus on fostering communicative competence in real-world contexts.

2.2. EFL Teachers and the Instruction of L2 Pragmatics

The demonstrated impact of L2 pragmatics instruction on learners' development has highlighted the multifaceted role EFL teachers play in this process. As primary sources of L2 input in foreign language classrooms, teachers function not only as conveyors of linguistic knowledge but also as cultural mediators who bridge the gap between learners' L1 cultures and the sociocultural norms of the target language (TL). Their responsibilities extend beyond presenting pragmatic forms; they serve as facilitators, guiding learners toward effective use of language in context (Aboulghazi et al., 2024; Sciberras, 2016). This role demands that teachers foster an environment where learners can meaningfully engage with pragmatic features, develop intercultural awareness, and understand how language functions within sociocultural frameworks.

To fulfill this responsibility, EFL teachers must be pragmatically competent themselves. As Ishihara and Cohen (2010) emphasized, teachers should not only model appropriate language use but also cultivate cultural sensitivity. Similarly, Kasper and Rose (2002) noted that teachers should be thoroughly familiar with the pragmatic norms of the TL, enabling them to integrate such practices effectively into their instructional methods. Their metapragmatic awareness plays a critical role in helping learners understand how, when, and why to use specific linguistic forms appropriately.

The distinction between native teachers (NTs) and non-native teachers (NNTs) is particularly relevant in L2 pragmatics instruction. While research comparing them is limited, studies challenge the assumption that NTs are inherently better suited to teaching pragmatics. Akikawa (2010) argued that competence depends more on pragmatic awareness, linguistic proficiency, and training than on nativeness. In fact, NNTs may have distinct advantages. Cohen (2018) and Mahboob (2010) suggested that NNTs can sometimes teach pragmatic features more effectively than NTs, especially within the framework of World Englishes, which recognizes localized norms. NNTs often possess strong formal knowledge of grammar, an ability to explain pragmatic features explicitly, and cross-cultural awareness grounded in their own experiences. Research also highlights the relational benefits NNTs bring. Sharing a linguistic and cultural background with learners may enhance empathy and communication (Chun, 2014; Kidd, 2016). Kidd emphasized the value of NNTs in pragmatics instruction, while Rose (1997) advocated targeted professional development involving theory and pragmatic analysis in both L1 and TL.

Taken together, these findings reinforce the notion that EFL teachers—regardless of nativeness—play a crucial and complex role in L2 pragmatics instruction. Their effectiveness depends on their ability to model pragmatic competence, design culturally grounded teaching practices, and critically engage with both TL norms and learner needs.

2.3. Challenges in Teaching L2 Pragmatics

While the value of L2 pragmatics instruction is increasingly recognized, several challenges persist. Numerous studies (Cohen, 2016; Ishihara, 2011; McConachy, 2019; Vellenga, 2011) have pointed out that many language teacher education programs continue to underrepresent pragmatic components, offering limited or purely theoretical exposure. For instance, Vásquez and Sharpless (2009) found that only a small number of TESOL Master's programs included dedicated coursework in pragmatics, and even fewer addressed it from a pedagogical standpoint. This lack of practical training leaves many educators—especially non-native teachers (NNTs)—feeling underprepared to teach the pragmatic aspects of the TL (Aboulghazi et al., 2024; Cohen, 2016; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Marcet, 2024). Cohen's

(2016) comparative study of NTs and NNTs revealed that NNTs reported lower confidence and familiarity with pragmatics instruction, often due to limited exposure and formal training.

Beyond teacher preparation, contextual barriers in EFL environments also hinder effective pragmatics teaching. Large class sizes, time constraints, curriculum demands, and exam-oriented instruction tend to prioritize grammar and vocabulary over intercultural communication (Taguchi & Roever, 2017). Teachers often cite a lack of materials and institutional support as major limitations (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Savvidou & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2019).

Even when pragmatics is addressed, assessing students' receptive and productive abilities remains a challenge. Ishihara (2010) emphasized the need for assessments that target linguistic, cultural, and analytic dimensions of pragmatic competence. However, many instructors avoid such assessments due to uncertainty about how to evaluate pragmatic behavior effectively (Cohen, 2016). Consequently, L2 pragmatics instruction remains inconsistently implemented and insufficiently assessed.

2.4. EFL Teachers' Knowledge, Beliefs and Attitudes

Parallel to limited research on native (NT) and non-native (NNT) teachers effectiveness, even less attention has been paid to their knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes regarding L2 pragmatics (Cohen, 2018). Yet, these factors play a critical role in shaping instructional practices (Basturkmen, 2004; Ishihara, 2010).

Wilkins's (2008) model highlights how teacher knowledge emerges from both formal training and personal experience whether as educators or as former L2 learners. This knowledge is dynamic and continually shaped through reflection and practice. According to Ishihara (2010), a teacher's understanding of L2 pragmatics should encompass both theoretical and practical dimensions. Yet, more recent research shows that although teachers hold positive attitudes toward pragmatics instruction, they often have only limited or intuitive knowledge which limits their ability to teach pragmatics with confidence (Aboulghazi et al., 2024; Glaser, 2023).

Teachers' beliefs—understood as evaluative judgments held consciously or unconsciously—are closely tied to their knowledge and often guide their classroom decisions (Borg, 2003). For instance, if a teacher equates proficiency with grammatical accuracy alone, they may overlook pragmatics instruction altogether. However, research shows that beliefs do not always align with actual teaching practices (Basturkmen, 2004; Borg, 2003; Breen, 2001). This gap may be influenced by personal traits (e.g., introversion), institutional constraints, or curricular demands beyond the teacher's control (Ishihara, 2010).

2.5. EFL Teachers' Pragmatics Instruction: Global and Greek Perspectives

Recent years have seen a growing interest in EFL teachers' pragmatic awareness and instructional practices across diverse contexts. Nevertheless, the relevant literature is mainly limited to student theses and dissertations. Studies in different countries have highlighted key challenges and gaps in teachers' pragmatic competence and their ability to teach pragmatics effectively.

In Thailand, Pinyo (2010) found that EFL teachers exhibited only moderate competence in making requests, attributing their difficulties to limited understanding of pragmatic concepts, negative L1 transfer, and linguistic deficiencies. Similarly, research in Iran by Mirzaei and Rezaei (2012) revealed that teachers tended to neglect L2 pragmatics in favor of grammar, vocabulary, and reading instruction, which hindered learners' development of communicative competence. In Turkey, Bektas-Cetinkaya (2012) observed that pre-service teachers lacked native-like pragmatic skills, largely due to minimal opportunities for real-

life English use. Her findings highlighted the need for explicit instruction in pragmatics during teacher education programs. Likewise, [Korkmaz and Karatepe \(2023\)](#) reported that Turkish university instructors demonstrated moderate awareness of the importance of teaching pragmatics, making efforts to address learners' intercultural needs. Focusing on a Vietnamese university context, [Vu \(2017\)](#) showed that while teachers recognized the value of pragmatic competence, their instructional approaches were shaped by personal L2 learning experiences and constrained by a lack of textbook content, methodological expertise, and pedagogical training in pragmatics. More recent intervention studies ([Glaser & Martínez-Flor, 2025](#); [Marcet, 2024](#)) have confirmed that even a brief structured training and support in planning, teaching and reflecting on pragmatics can significantly enhance teachers' pragmatic awareness, confidence and readiness to include L2 pragmatics instruction in their classrooms.

In contrast to these studies, research on pragmatics in Greece has predominantly focused on learners, with studies by [Bella \(2011, 2012\)](#) exploring how residence length and exposure influence L2 learners' pragmatic development in Greek. Her findings indicated that while more frequent interaction with native speakers led to improvements in request strategies, some aspects of internal modification still lagged behind, reinforcing the need for pedagogical support and explicit instruction. [Tzanne et al. \(2009\)](#) further validated the teachability of pragmatics by demonstrating the effectiveness of metapragmatic analyses using media texts to enhance students' awareness. [Michail \(2016\)](#) conducted an intervention study in Greek EFL classrooms using explicit metapragmatics instruction, which led to improved pragmatic and intercultural competence, particularly in performing apologies. These findings highlighted the relevance of addressing cross-cultural pragmatics within local EFL settings. More recently, [Economidou-Kogetsidis et al. \(2021\)](#); [Economidou-Kogetsidis and Halenko \(2022\)](#) investigated pragmatic transfer and request strategies in advanced Greek learners of English. Results showed persistent L1 influence and performance gaps compared to native speakers, even at higher proficiency levels. These findings reaffirmed the necessity of targeted instruction in L2 pragmatics.

Importantly, two studies have explored EFL teachers' pragmatic competence in Greece. [Savvidou and Economidou-Kogetsidis \(2019\)](#) found that although non-native English-speaking teachers (NNTs) valued pragmatics, their limited theoretical grounding and institutional constraints restricted classroom implementation. Similarly, [Economidou-Kogetsidis et al. \(2021\)](#) showed that despite advanced proficiency, NNTs lacked critical pragmatic awareness and struggled with appropriate email formulation. Both studies underscore the need to strengthen pragmatic training in teacher education programs.

2.6. Goals of the Study

Compared to grammar and vocabulary, pragmatics instruction remains marginal in Greek EFL classrooms. Yet, to effectively support learners in developing sociocultural competence, non-native English-speaking teachers must first be equipped with both the awareness and the practical tools to teach L2 pragmatics. The challenges they face -ranging from limited exposure to authentic language use to inadequate teacher training- can hinder their ability to integrate pragmatics meaningfully into their lessons. A further challenge relates findings, confirmed by several cross-cultural studies, that have shown notable differences in speech acts and politeness strategies across languages, specifically between Greek and English ([Sifianou, 1992, 1993](#); [Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2002](#)). These differences are often shaped by culture-specific evaluations of power, distance, and imposition ([Brown et al., 1987](#), [Terkourafi, 2004](#)). In Greek society, a strong distinction between in-group and out-group members—rooted in historical and geographical factors—significantly influences

both verbal and non-verbal communication (Triandis & Vassiliou, 1972; as cited in Sifianou, 1993; Terkourafi, 2009).

This study investigates the teaching of L2 pragmatics by assessing Greek EFL teachers' pragmatic competence in relation to their beliefs and the specific challenges they face in incorporating pragmatics instruction into the classroom. By investigating these areas, we seek to provide a clearer picture of the current landscape regarding teachers' L2 pragmatics and inform future directions in teacher training and classroom practice. More specifically, we investigate the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent do Greek EFL instructors have the necessary pragmatic competence to teach second language pragmatics?

RQ1.1: Is there any correlation between instructors' pragmatic competence and their years of teaching experience?

RQ2: What are Greek EFL instructors' beliefs and attitudes towards second language pragmatics?

RQ3: What challenges do Greek EFL instructors face in integrating pragmatics instruction in their EFL classrooms?

3. Methods

3.1. Participants

The participants in this study were recruited by posting a call for participation on the social media of dedicated teacher groups and consisted of 72 Greek, non-native EFL instructors. The NNTs (6 male; 64 female; 1 other; 1 preferred not to say) were, on average, 40 years old (age range: 22 to 68; SD = 11). Most resided in Athens and Thessaloniki, though some were from smaller cities and islands, and four resided abroad. The majority (84.72%) held degrees in English Language and Literature/Linguistics, with an average of 17 years of teaching experience (SD = 10.60, range: 0.5–45 years). Most NNTs worked in the private sector (48.61%, 19.44% public sector, 25% self-employed, 5.56% unemployed, 1.39% other). Twelve of the 72 questionnaire participants (10 female, 2 male) additionally participated in the follow-up interviews. The NNT interviewees had an average age of 42 years (range: 25–68, SD = 14), and most held degrees in English Literature, Language, or Linguistics with an average of 21 years of teaching experience (range: 4–45 years). Participant recruitment and consent processes followed the ethical procedures set out in Leiden University guidelines. For copies of the consent forms used, see Appendices A and B.

Three female raters, aged 24 to 28, rated participants' answers to the Discourse Completion Task. Rater1 was a native English speaker based in the UK and working as a pharmacist. Rater2, one of this article's authors, was a non-native English speaker working as an English teacher, and a Master's student in Linguistics. Rater3 was a bilingual English-Italian speaker residing in the UK and pursuing a Ph.D. in Physics.

3.2. Materials

To examine the aforementioned research questions, the study collected quantitative and qualitative data through an online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

3.2.1. The Electronic Questionnaire

The online questionnaire (see Appendix A) addressed the study's first and second research questions, exploring Greek EFL teachers' pragmatic competence and their beliefs about L2 pragmatics instruction. Part I gathered demographic details about the participants, including their background and teaching experience. Part II included pragmatic comprehension scenarios, while Part III consisted of a DCT (pragmatic production scenarios). To be pragmatically competent, a language learner should be able to comprehend the pragma-

linguistic action as a listener and produce it as a speaker in adhering to TL sociocultural norms and conventions. Therefore, it is equally important to examine both participants' comprehension and production skills (Yamashita, 2008). Finally, Part IV examined Greek EFL instructors' beliefs and attitudes through Likert scale self-reports.

Pragmatic Comprehension Scenarios

Participants were presented with two scenarios consecutively. In the first scenario, they rated the appropriateness of an apology and justified their ratings, assessing their awareness of apology conventions in the TL community. The second scenario evaluated their ability to recognize a criticism implicature in a given dialog. The two scenarios were adapted from Ishihara and Cohen (2010, pp. 72, 269).

Discourse Completion Task (DCT)

The written DCT scenarios investigated teachers' ability to produce pragmatically appropriate responses concerning the speech acts of complaint, offer, and refusal (see Appendix A). Scenarios considered contextual factors like setting, social distance, and status. The specific speech acts were preferred because they represent what the participants are most likely to experience in their daily lives, and likely to occur in situations where they need to communicate with foreign speakers abroad or in their home country. In turn, the respondents were asked to respond spontaneously, without much thought. Although DCTs have been criticized for lacking authenticity (Beebe & Cummings, 1996; Yamagashira, 2001), they remain widely used due to their adaptability, ease of administration, and controlled data output (Barron, 2003; Cohen, 2020). Responses were rated on a 7-point Likert scale by three raters with explicit scoring criteria.

Likert Scale Self-Reports (Beliefs and Attitudes)

This section explored instructors' beliefs and attitudes toward teaching L2 pragmatics through a 7-point Likert scale with 12 statements focusing on teachers' beliefs and attitudes in instructing English pragmatics. The scale balanced time efficiency with accuracy (Finstad, 2010) and covered core features such as L1 influence, L2 pragmatics assessment, and teacher training. Questions regarding NNTs' own university studies and textbook content were included to identify challenges in incorporating pragmatics instruction, which were later compared with interview findings.

3.3. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews provided qualitative insights into the challenges Greek EFL teachers face in integrating L2 pragmatics instruction. They were conducted via Zoom, with participants giving informed consent beforehand. This method allowed for follow-up questions and deeper exploration of participants' views (Dörnyei, 2007). The interviews were conducted entirely in English and included four questions covering participants' familiarity with pragmatics instruction, teaching challenges, and any additional issues they wished to raise (see Appendix B).

3.4. Data Analysis

To answer the RQ1 (To what extent do Greek EFL instructors have the necessary pragmatic competence to teach second language pragmatics?), the analysis of pragmatic comprehension drew on participants' responses to two scenarios. In the apology scenario, participants rated the level of the speaker's apology based on a four-point multiple choice scale (High, Moderate, Low, Non-existent) adapted directly from Ishihara and Cohen (2010, p. 268). Furthermore, participants were asked to justify their rating. An inductive qualitative coding approach was applied and responses were categorized based on patterns

emerging directly from the data to identify the reasoning strategies they used when judging appropriateness. For the criticism implicature scenario, participants were asked what the colleague meant by her answer. The responses were grouped into the analytic categories, comprehension, no comprehension, uncertainty, and unclear, based on participants' ability to identify the conversational implicature.

The analysis of pragmatic production was based on the ratings assigned to the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) responses. The participants were asked to respond to three scenarios as part of a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) and their responses were evaluated by three raters on a 7-point rating scale, which was adapted from Taguchi and Kim (2018). The evaluation criteria, drawn from Sciberras (2016), included task requirement, pragmatic expression, directness, politeness/formality, and amount of information. Task requirement referred to whether the speaker's utterance successfully conveyed the intended speech act, while pragmatic expression focused on the appropriate use of pragmatic expressions. Amount of information assessed whether the utterance was sufficiently informative for the listener to understand the speaker's meaning. Directness considered the appropriateness of the level of directness or indirectness in the response, and politeness/formality involved evaluating the response's suitability based on the social distance, power dynamics, and seriousness of the act.

To ensure consistency in the evaluations, all raters received a detailed rating scale, explicit criteria for assessing the DCT responses, and detailed explanations and rating tables. Prior to rating, the raters met online to explain the rating scale and the evaluation process in detail. It is worth noting that the raters' scores were not unanimous, although they were consistent across the scenarios. Rater 3 consistently assigned the lowest scores, while Rater 2 assigned the highest. The only exception was in Situation C, where Rater 1 awarded the highest score. This variation in scoring underscores the complexity and challenges involved in evaluating L2 learners' pragmatic abilities, particularly when the assessment is made by language instructors with different backgrounds. As noted by Ishihara (2010), raters' language backgrounds, individual characteristics, and other external factors may have influenced their evaluations. In this case, the differences in the raters' linguistic and cultural backgrounds may have played a role in their ratings.

To address RQ1.1 (Is there any correlation between instructors' pragmatic competence and their years of teaching experience?), a Spearman correlation using R was conducted between the pragmatic competence scores and participants' years of teaching experience.

For RQ2 (What are Greek EFL instructors' beliefs and attitudes towards second language pragmatics?) and RQ3 (What challenges do Greek EFL instructors face in integrating pragmatics instruction in their EFL classrooms?), a mixed-methods analytic approach was applied. The Likert-scale questionnaire responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify trends in teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward pragmatics instruction. The analysis was mainly based on the mean scores. Interview data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis. Initial coding was applied to the verbatim transcripts, and codes were then grouped into broader themes that captured teachers' beliefs the challenges they reported in implementing pragmatics instruction. These themes informed the interpretation of the findings.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Pragmatic Comprehension: Receptive Competence

The scenario shown in (1) adapted from Ishihara and Cohen (2010, p. 269), was given to the participants to evaluate the appropriateness of a speaker's apology.

- (1) *You are in London for the Christmas holidays and are doing your shopping in Harrods. The department store closes in 30 min, and people are in a hurry to check out. You are walking*

carrying multiple bags while having a heated conversation with your partner on your mobile phone. A young woman accidentally knocks over some of your bags and causes you to drop your phone as well.

Young woman: Very sorry, but you were in my way!

Ishihara and Cohen (2010) suggest that in a similar situation, the listener is unlikely to perceive the speaker's response as a genuine apology. The primary concerns are that the phrase "very" serves more as a politeness marker rather than an indicator of genuine remorse and that the apology lacks the critical speech act strategy of "acknowledgment of responsibility." Consequently, the speaker does not fully assume responsibility for their actions. In line with Ishihara and Cohen's analysis, the present study categorized the appropriateness level of the apology as low.

The results indicate that a majority of respondents (62.50%) rated the apology as low (Table 1). The least selected option was high, while moderate and non-existent were chosen by an equal number of participants. This suggests that most participants successfully considered contextual factors, cultural cues, and speaker intention, demonstrating their ability to interpret pragmatic information effectively.

Table 1. Participants' rating of the level of apology appropriateness.

Appropriateness	Count	%
High	3	4.17%
Moderate	12	16.67%
Low	45	62.50%
Non-existent	12	16.67%
Total	72	100%

Participants were also asked to justify their ratings, and the dominant explanation was that the speaker failed to take responsibility for the accident, instead shifting blame onto the interlocutor. Many noted that the conjunction *but* undermined the sincerity of the apology, while others felt the speaker's tone lacked genuine remorse or politeness. A few participants emphasized cultural factors in their judgments. For instance, one participant explained that an English speaker would apologize and assist without making excuses, while another noted, "I don't think they'd ever say such a thing! The English are known for being polite."

In the second task, participants were asked to identify a conversational implicature, specifically an indirect criticism. The scenario in (2) was adapted from Ishihara and Cohen (2010, p. 72), with the intended implicature suggesting that the colleague's response implied dissatisfaction with the student's paper.

- (2) *You are working at an international summer school. During the break, you discuss a student's paper with a colleague.*

You: Have you finished reading John's paper?

Colleague: Yes, I read it yesterday.

You: What did you think of it?

Colleague: Well, I thought it was well-typed.

What does your colleague mean by her answer?

Table 2 shows that a significant portion of participants (47.22%) failed to recognize the criticism, offering responses that reflected a literal interpretation of the comment. On the other hand, 37.5% identified the implicature, with responses such as "She doesn't seem to think much of the paper," and "She isn't really satisfied." A few participants specifically noted irony, with one commenting, "She's either trying to find something positive or being sarcastic."

Finally, a small group ($n = 5$) expressed uncertainty, with some stating, “I am not really sure. Maybe it’s a positive comment, or maybe it implies something negative.”

Table 2. Participants’ responses to criticism implicature comprehension.

Criticism	Count	%
Comprehension	27	37.5%
No comprehension	34	47.22%
Uncertainty	5	6.94%
Unclear	6	8.33%
Total	72	100%

Overall, our findings from the understanding of apologies suggest that Greek EFL teachers’ abilities to correctly identify speech acts are good, although of course it would be desirable to cross-check this finding with a greater variety of speech acts. However, they struggled with identifying indirect criticism, a result consistent with prior studies indicating that conversational implicatures are more challenging for L2 learners, particularly when cultural knowledge is required (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Pratama et al., 2017). The study also suggests a link between proficiency, language exposure, and implicature comprehension. While participants had high proficiency, their exposure to English was limited to educational contexts, rather than full immersion in an English-speaking environment. This lack of immersion may explain their difficulties with recognizing conversational implicatures. Additionally, cultural differences in the expression of apologies may have influenced participants’ ability to evaluate the apology. In English, apologies are an essential politeness strategy and are often expressed more indirectly compared to Greek (Sifianou, 1992). Thus, Greek EFL teachers may be more familiar with apologies in L2 contexts than with conversational implicatures, which require deeper cultural awareness. The results highlight the diversity in different domains of pragmatic awareness by teachers, particularly when it comes to recognizing implicatures. This diversity can in turn hamper or complicate the integration of pragmatic teaching in the classroom; minimally, it highlights the need to teach pragmatics using a variety of methods.

4.2. Discourse Completion Task: Productive Competence

4.2.1. Situation A: Speech Act of Complaining

As illustrated in Table 3, the task requirement received the highest average rating (4.65) compared to the other evaluation criteria. Politeness/formality and directness were rated almost identically, with scores of 4.43 and 4.42, respectively. The use of pragmatic expressions was rated slightly lower at 4.20, while the amount of information provided in the responses received the lowest average score (3.89). Overall, the average rating for all criteria combined was 21.60 out of a possible 35 points (Figure 1).

Table 3. Raters’ average score per requirement in situation A.

Situation A	Task Requirement	Pragmatic Expressions	Directness	Politeness & Formality	Amount of Information
Rater 1	4.86	4.25	4.69	4.19	3.29
Rater2	5.08	4.15	4.57	4.50	4.22
Rater3	4.00	4.21	4.01	4.60	4.15
Total	4.65	4.20	4.42	4.43	3.89

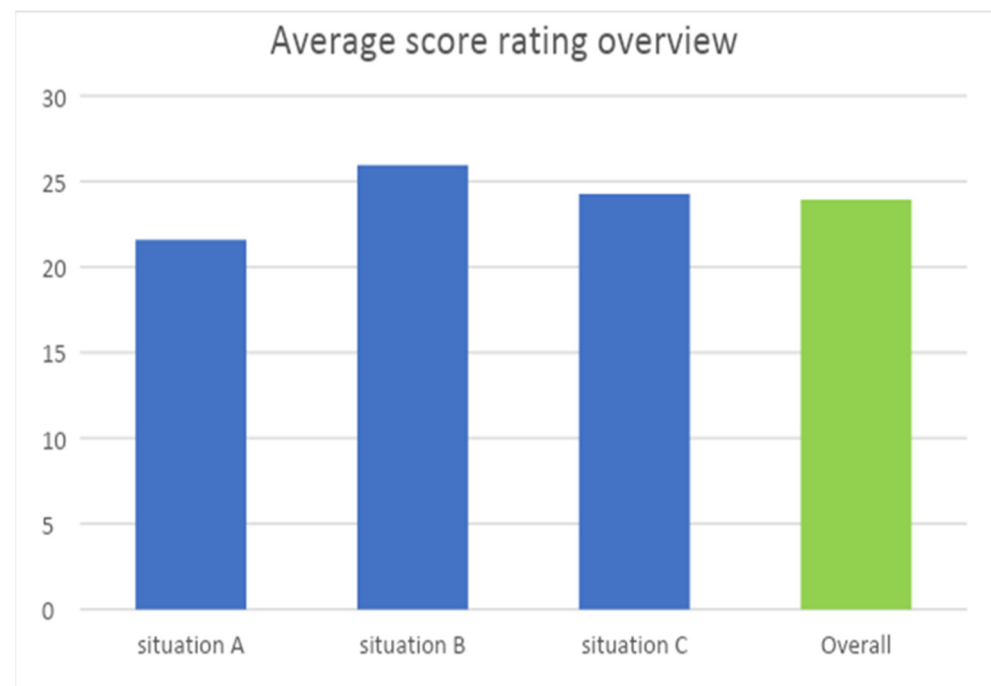


Figure 1. Rating score overview.

4.2.2. Situation B: Speech Act of Offer

Table 4 shows that all raters consistently rated the task requirement higher than other criteria, with an average score of 6.15. Directness was rated at 5.27, while pragmatic expressions followed closely with a score of 5, and politeness/formality was rated at 4.94. In this situation, participants performed the weakest in the amount of information criterion, receiving an average score of 4.60. The overall average score for all criteria in this situation was significantly higher than the previous one, reaching 25.96 out of a possible 35 (Figure 1).

Table 4. Raters' average score per requirement in situation B.

Situation B	Task Requirement	Pragmatic Expressions	Directness	Politeness & Formality	Amount of Information
Rater 1	6.21	5.58	6.01	5.42	4.36
Rater2	6.90	5.21	5.22	4.97	5.57
Rater3	5.35	4.18	4.58	4.44	3.86
Total	6.15	5.00	5.27	4.94	4.60

4.2.3. Situation C: Speech Act of Refusal

Table 5 presents a similar pattern to the previous situations, with the task requirement being rated the highest on average (5.44). However, in Situation C, participants scored lower on the pragmatic expressions criterion compared to the other aspects. They performed better in the other areas, receiving scores of 5.16 for the amount of information, 4.93 for directness, and 4.85 for politeness/formality. Overall, participants' pragmatic performance in Situation C was rated 24.27 out of 35 (Figure 1).

Across all three scenarios, participants performed best in Situation B, which involved offering help to an elderly man at the airport (25.96). The second-best performance was observed in Situation C, which involved a refusal speech act when participants turned down giving a ride to hitchhikers going in a different direction (24.27). As shown in Figure 1, participants found Situation A the most challenging, receiving an average rating of 21.60.

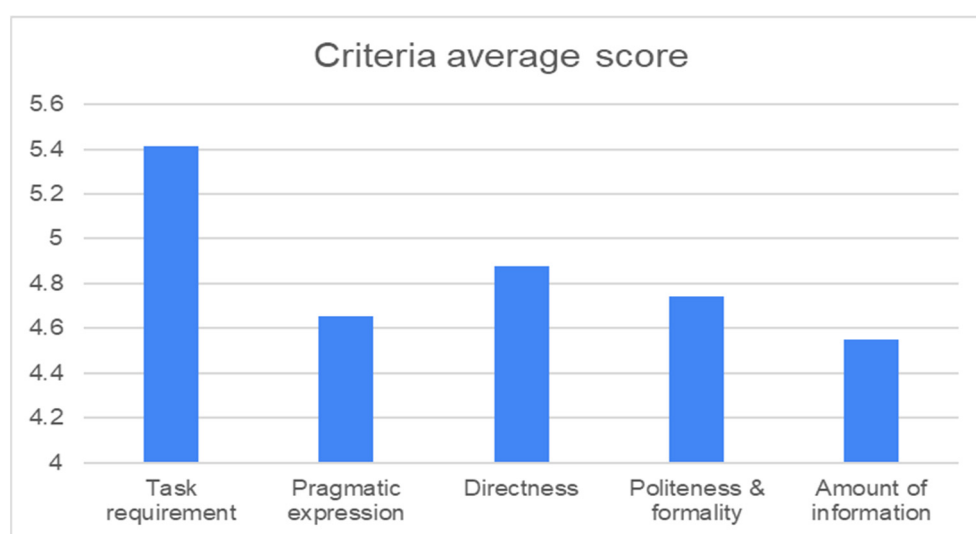
Table 5. Raters' average score per requirement in situation C.

Situation C	Task Requirement	Pragmatic Expressions	Directness	Politeness & Formality	Amount of Information
Rater 1	6.05	5.60	5.51	5.04	5.37
Rater2	6.53	4.96	5.42	5.37	5.82
Rater3	3.74	3.72	3.87	4.14	4.28
Total	5.44	4.76	4.93	4.85	5.16

The overall rating score of 23.94 out of 35, calculated from average scores across all situations and raters, indicates that Greek EFL teachers' demonstrated pragmatic competence is above average, making it sufficient for integrating pragmatics into their teaching. With an overall score of 68.41%, the findings from both pragmatic comprehension and production suggest that Greek EFL teachers possess a solid understanding of pragmatic concepts. These results contrast with previous studies (Bektas-Cetinkaya, 2012; Mirzaei & Rezaei, 2012; Korkmaz & Karatepe, 2023; Pinyo, 2010) that report inadequate pragmatic awareness among non-native teachers. However, they align with Sciberras (2016), who found that 74% of his participants' responses to the DCT were evaluated as completely or somewhat appropriate.

Notably, participants performed better in situations involving offers and apologies, while tasks involving refusal and conversational implicature posed more challenges. It is important to interpret these results with caution due to the subjectivity of raters' evaluations. Additionally, the lack of non-verbal communication in the DCT may have impacted the responses; in real-life communication, gestures and body language would have likely facilitated pragmatic interpretation.

An interesting pattern emerged in the *task requirement* criterion, where participants performed well in conveying the intended speech act. However, they scored lower on the *amount of information* (Figure 2), suggesting their responses were not as informative as required. This may stem from differences in Greek and English interactional patterns (Sifianou, 1992, 1993; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2002), potentially leading to confusion or misinterpretation in communication.

**Figure 2.** Criteria average score.

In sum, taking into consideration participants' overall performance in pragmatic comprehension and production scenarios, we can conclude that their pragmatic competence

is sufficient for them to teach pragmatics. Therefore, the reason for the low integration of pragmatics in their classroom teaching practices must be sought elsewhere.

4.2.4. Correlations with Background Information

Spearman correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between pragmatic competence and years of teaching experience. To date, no studies have specifically explored factors influencing teachers’ pragmatic competence or examined the correlation between pragmatic competence and teaching experience. The Spearman correlation showed no relation between participants’ pragmatic competence and their years of teaching experience ($r = 0.02, p = 0.86$). The absence of a correlation suggests that pragmatic competence does not naturally develop as teachers gain years of experience. Instead, pragmatic awareness and knowledge require explicit training, as classroom experience alone does not guarantee familiarity with pragmatics or the ability to teach them effectively and confidently. Moreover, being an experienced teacher does not necessarily mean being experienced in teaching pragmatics. A teacher with many years in the classroom may have extensive expertise in areas such as grammar, vocabulary or syntax, yet still lack the knowledge and awareness to address pragmatic features. This finding further supports the argument that teachers need explicit training in pragmatics so they can develop the necessary instructional strategies, classroom techniques, and assessment approaches required to effectively integrate pragmatics instruction in their teaching.

4.3. Self-Reported Attitudes and Abilities

In this section of the questionnaire, participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with 12 statements regarding their beliefs and attitudes toward L2 pragmatics teaching. Participants were first asked to define pragmatics. Table 6 shows that 94% of respondents correctly identified pragmatics as the use of language forms in specific situations, while only 4% linked it to speaking with a native accent. This indicates that most Greek EFL teachers understand pragmatics as relating to language use in context rather than fluency or vocabulary.

Table 6. Participants’ answers about what pragmatics refers to.

Pragmatics Refers To	Knowing What Language Forms to Use in What Situation	Speaking Fluently with a Native Accent	Have Rich Vocabulary in the Target Language
	68 94.44%	4 5.56%	0

Regarding beliefs about teaching L2 pragmatics, Table 7 reveals that teachers strongly agree ($M = 6.49$) that effective communication in L2 requires more than just grammar and vocabulary, aligning with the views expressed in Taguchi (2009, 2012) and Oda-Sheehan (2017). Additionally, teachers express a strong need ($M = 6.25$) for training in teaching L2 pragmatics, underscoring the importance of integrating pragmatics into teacher education. Teachers also recognize the influence of L1 on L2 pragmatics acquisition ($M = 5.42$), suggesting that L1 transfer may cause learners to deviate from L2 norms. However, they feel less affected by their own L1 ($M = 4.82$) in their pragmatic competence. In contrast to previous studies (e.g., Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Eslami & Eslami-Rasekh, 2008), Greek NNTs rate their pragmatic abilities as near-native ($M = 5.51$), a confidence that likely stems from their extensive teaching experience (17 years on average).

Table 7. Descriptive statistics on teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes toward L2 pragmatics.

Beliefs, Perceptions, Attitudes	Min	Max	Mean	SD
ST1: Effective communication in the target language requires more than just knowledge of grammar and vocabulary	3	7	6.49	0.8
ST2: I evaluate my pragmatic abilities as near-native	3	7	5.51	1.12
ST3: At university, I was adequately taught how to teach second language pragmatics	1	7	3.86	1.67
ST4: My lesson plans focus on socio-cultural aspects of the English language	1	7	4.96	1.33
ST5: There are enough pragmatic elements in the EFL textbooks that I use in my teaching	1	7	4.33	1.58
ST6: Second language pragmatics instruction is more effective than simple exposure in assisting learners' acquisition of L2 pragmatic features	1	7	4.71	1.52
ST7: It is necessary that EFL teachers receive training on how to teach second language pragmatics, in addition to teaching other aspects of the language (grammar, vocabulary)	4	7	6.25	0.92
ST8: The teachers' L1 affects greatly their acquisition of L2 pragmatics	1	7	4.82	1.47
ST9: The students' L1 affects greatly their acquisition of L2 pragmatics	1	7	5.42	1.39
ST10: It is important for the language teacher to have lived in the target culture	1	7	4.00	1.71
ST11: I think it is important to assess students' pragmatic abilities in the classroom	1	7	5.11	1.37

Moreover, teachers report incorporating socio-cultural aspects into their lesson plans ($M = 4.96$) and believe that explicit instruction in L2 pragmatics is more effective than simple exposure ($M = 4.71$), supporting [R. Schmidt \(1993\)](#) and [Kasper \(1997b\)](#). However, they have a neutral stance on whether living in the target culture enhances pragmatic competence. Some scholars (e.g., [Matsumura, 2003](#)) suggest that exposure to the target language—through studying, living, or working—enhances NNSs' pragmatic competence. In contrast, in a study of learners of Greek as a second language, [Bella \(2012\)](#) found that simply residing in the target culture was not sufficient for developing pragmatic awareness. The study highlighted that length of residence alone did not guarantee progress, especially for learners with limited opportunities for interaction with native speakers. Consequently, the participants may be neutral, recognizing that teacher education and training are key to developing competence in L2 pragmatics instruction.

When asked about the presence of L2 pragmatics in the textbooks they use, teachers were neutral ($M = 4.33$), with some acknowledging a lack of pragmatic content, in contrast to [Michail \(2016\)](#) and [Savvidou and Economidou-Kogetsidis \(2019\)](#), who emphasized this gap. The lowest mean score ($M = 3.86$) was given to the question about receiving adequate training on teaching L2 pragmatics at university, reflecting a common issue in teacher education programs globally ([Aboulghazi et al., 2024](#); [Eslami & Eslami-Rasekh, 2008](#); [Glaser & Martínez-Flor, 2025](#)).

When asked about the presence of L2 pragmatics in the textbooks, although the mean score is neutral ($M = 4.33$), nearly half of the teachers rated this with a 5, 6, or 7 on the Likert scale. This finding contrasts with [Michail \(2016\)](#), who argued that the absence of pragmatic input in language textbooks hinders the integration of L2 pragmatics as a key learning goal. It also differs from the results of [Savvidou and Economidou-Kogetsidis \(2019\)](#), who identified the lack of L2 pragmatics teaching materials as an additional challenge for teachers.

4.4. Interview Results

In addition to the questionnaire responses, semi-structured interviews offered deeper insights into teachers’ beliefs and perceptions regarding L2 pragmatics, contributing to data triangulation by comparing interview findings with self-report results. This section presents the main themes emerging from the interviews, focusing on the challenges Greek EFL teachers face in integrating pragmatics instruction into their classrooms. The interviews were conducted in English, and a full orthographic, verbatim transcription was produced. The analysis was conducted based on Braun and Clarke’s (2006) steps for thematic analysis. Extracts from the participants’ answers are provided below using pseudonyms to preserve their anonymity.

4.4.1. Teachers’ Familiarity with Pragmatics

The first interview question, “What, in your view, is pragmatics?” aimed to assess teachers’ knowledge and familiarity with the concept of pragmatics. Findings (Table 8) revealed that teachers generally had an intuitive understanding of pragmatics, which aligned with four main themes: language in context, real-life applications, conveying meaning, and uncertainty.

Table 8. Repeated patterns in teachers’ view of pragmatics.

Themes	Quote Examples
Language in context	Deeper understanding of language context Context of communication The way we perceive language in context
Real life application	Things happening in real life The way you apply language in your everyday life Language that is spoken, not ‘teaching book’ English If we use the language effectively and if it has real life applications
Conveying meaning	What you convey through words What we mean rather what we say
Uncertainty	I’m not sure I’m not aware of the term I don’t know

Several teachers referred to the importance of context, either directly connecting pragmatics to *how we perceive language in context* or indirectly through examples. For instance, Niki gave the following example:

- (1)
When you’re visiting England, and you have friends that live there, what do you say when they have birthdays, when they’re celebrating something because that’s very different from what we say here in Greece.

However, some participants expressed uncertainty about their understanding of the term. Suzana admitted:

- (2)
I think it refers [to] when we use, for instance, a word it refers to the actual meaning of the word. But [...] I have to admit I don’t remember all the details at the moment.

Similarly, Amanda expressed doubt:

- (3)
I’m not absolutely sure about it, to be honest with you, but I have the feeling it’s the tone of your voice and, generally speaking, the mood that you convey through using words.

In cases where teachers were unfamiliar with the term, it was later explained during the interview.

The themes and quotes above suggest that most Greek EFL teachers possess a general, experience-based understanding of pragmatics, though they may lack the linguistic terminology to articulate it precisely. For instance, some participants associated pragmatics with concepts like the “*reality of language*” or “*spoken language*” without mentioning specific aspects such as speech acts, politeness, or implicature.

Even though professional knowledge of the notion of pragmatics is not a prerequisite for teaching L2 pragmatics effectively, teachers’ more general intuitive understanding and their uncertainty could indicate two things: either pragmatics was not a central component during their studies, or they do not include pragmatics in their continuous professional education. This is in line with Savvidou and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2019), who found a noticeable difference between teachers’ grasp of the theoretical concept of “pragmatics” and their more intuitive understanding of pragmatic aspects. Furthermore, the results of both studies showcase that teachers’ pragmatic education is limited, and therefore, they intuitively develop pragmatic knowledge based on their experiences. Although a few participants linked pragmatics to their studies, it did not seem to be a major component of their professional development after that, as they either struggled to recall the concept or associated it with only their past academic experiences.¹

Participants’ beliefs about their university preparation further support this conclusion. On a 7-point Likert scale, participants rated the statement “*At university, I was adequately taught how to teach second language pragmatics*” with an average score of 3.86, indicating dissatisfaction with their formal training. This aligns with their reported uncertainty during interviews and reinforces their view that explicit training in L2 pragmatics is necessary. Notably, they strongly agreed with the statement that EFL teachers should receive training on how to teach pragmatics, in addition to other language aspects (mean = 6.25).

Overall, the results highlight that while Greek EFL teachers may not have a comprehensive theoretical understanding of pragmatics, they have developed an intuitive, experience-based awareness of pragmatic aspects through their teaching practice. This underscores the need for targeted professional development to bridge the gap between experiential knowledge and theoretical understanding, ultimately empowering teachers to teach L2 pragmatics effectively and with confidence.

4.4.2. Incorporation of L2 Pragmatics Teaching

The second interview question explored teachers’ beliefs about whether they incorporate pragmatics sufficiently in their teaching. Analysis of their responses revealed three distinct perspectives: those who believe they sufficiently integrate pragmatics in their teaching; those who include pragmatics but feel they could do more; and those who acknowledge not incorporating pragmatics or are unaware of it.

Of those who reported actively incorporating pragmatics into their instruction, Niki highlighted the role of pragmatics in examination preparation:

- (4) *Students learn English for to achieve a certificate of competency in the other language, which is something they need to get a better job. So, in order to sit those exams, they must sometimes write a formal letter.*

Gina also strongly supported the inclusion of pragmatics, stating:

- (5) *It’s never enough [but] yes, because it’s something that should be included in teaching, because you should give examples of real-life [...] that students will meet in their further studies or life.*

Similarly, Lydia commented:

- (6) *I think I do because it’s the nature of the language, phrases, idioms [...]. Even if you don’t realize it, you do teach pragmatics*

A few teachers admitted including pragmatics in their teaching but felt that they could integrate it more effectively. Mary, for instance, acknowledged:

(7) *I could do it a bit more, I suppose, to be honest.*

This suggests an awareness of the importance of pragmatics but also a recognition of potential gaps in its implementation.

Finally, some teachers explicitly stated that they did not incorporate enough pragmatics in their teaching or were not fully aware of it. Matina admitted:

(8) *I don't think that I include enough pragmatics in my teaching, although some things are dealt with without actually understanding it.*

Similarly, Suzana initially responded:

(9) *I'm not, I guess, as I'm not aware of it 100%, probably not; I don't do that.*

Responses (4)–(9) highlight three key themes regarding teachers' perspectives on L2 pragmatics instruction. First, regardless of the extent to which they incorporate pragmatics, most Greek EFL teachers acknowledge its importance. Even those who admitted not integrating enough pragmatics expressed a desire to do so. Similar findings reported by Savvidou and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2019) align with previous research emphasizing the necessity of L2 pragmatics instruction (Aboulghazi et al., 2024; Alcón Soler & Martínez-Flor, 2008; Cohen, 2008; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Fordyce, 2014; Glaser, 2023; Kasper & Rose, 2001; Taguchi, 2009; Takimoto, 2009; Van Compernelle, 2014).

Second, a discrepancy exists between teachers' beliefs and practices. Comparing the interview responses with the questionnaire self-reports provides additional insights into their instructional decisions. As discussed earlier, little research has focused on teachers' knowledge and beliefs about teaching L2 pragmatics (Cohen, 2018). However, research suggests that teachers' beliefs significantly influence their instructional choices. In the questionnaire, most participants strongly agreed (mean = 6.49) that effective communication requires more than grammar and vocabulary knowledge. This belief likely explains why many teachers value L2 pragmatics instruction. Their awareness that mastering grammar and vocabulary alone does not guarantee communicative success reinforces the importance of teaching pragmatics.

Thirdly, most participants do not include pragmatic features in their lesson plans. Interestingly, some teachers seemed unaware that they were already incorporating pragmatics incidentally. This suggests that while pragmatics may be integrated indirectly, through grammar or vocabulary instruction, it is often not an explicit focus. This finding contrasts with studies advocating the systematic integration of L2 pragmatics instruction into curricula (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Cohen, 2008; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Taguchi, 2009). However, it aligns with the widely accepted notion that pragmatics has been largely neglected in second language teaching (Crandall & Basturkmen, 2004; Hymes, 1972; Taguchi & Roever, 2017). A possible explanation for the absence of structured pragmatics instruction is teachers' limited theoretical knowledge of pragmatics. Many participants reported feeling inadequately trained in teaching pragmatics during their university studies. Had they received more explicit instruction, they might be more confident in implementing structured pragmatic teaching and adapting their approach based on learners' proficiency, motivation, and learning styles.

4.4.3. Challenges in L2 Pragmatics Teaching

The interview findings further revealed several challenges Greek EFL teachers face when integrating L2 pragmatics instruction. As Table 9 shows, the most frequently cited obstacle was time constraints. Teachers often struggle to balance teaching pragmatics with

syllabus demands. As Mary explained, *“I try to make time for [pragmatics], but I can’t always manage because I have to prioritize.”*

Table 9. Repeated patterns of challenges in integrating L2 pragmatics teaching.

Themes-Challenges	
No challenges	
External factors	Time constraints Exam-oriented classes Teaching material/syllabus
Teacher factors	Teacher knowledge Other priorities
Learner factors	Students’ level of English

Another major challenge is the exam-driven nature of Greek EFL classrooms. Litsa highlighted that

(10) *what determines the Greek EFL classroom is the reality of students passing a B2 certification exam. It is an exam-driven market.*

In addition to exam-oriented classrooms, Chris noted that

(11) *parents pressure us to focus on certificates rather than language use.*

The lack of L2 pragmatic input in textbooks and rigid curricula also limits pragmatics instruction. Amanda described the syllabus as *“relentless,”* leaving little room for pragmatics. Mixed-ability classrooms and large class sizes further complicate pragmatics instruction. Mary and Liza mentioned that diverse student needs and undiagnosed learning difficulties require extra attention, making it difficult to incorporate pragmatics effectively. Suzana added that

(12) *in Greek public schools, classrooms often have 25 students, which makes it even harder to diverge from the curriculum.*

Teacher readiness was another key issue. Several educators admitted to having little formal training in pragmatics. Matina emphasized that

(13) *If you’re not taught how to use pragmatics, you can’t teach it.*

Amanda also recognized her own lack of expertise as a hurdle. Moreover, teachers’ perspectives shape their instructional focus—Orestis pointed out that grammar and syntax often take precedence over pragmatics in the classroom.

Teachers’ emphasis on other language skills is further compounded by challenges related to learners’ proficiency levels. Chris pointed out that students’ overall command of English plays a crucial role in their ability to grasp pragmatic aspects of the language. Amanda echoed this concern, emphasizing that young learners already struggle with fundamental skills like reading and writing, making the incorporation of pragmatics even more challenging.

However, not all teachers viewed pragmatics instruction as problematic. Niki argued that English, as a global language, is widely accessible through media such as films and music, reducing the need for explicit pragmatics instruction. Similarly, Tania dismissed the notion of challenges, attributing her success to thorough diagnostic assessments, up-to-date materials, and her own dynamic teaching style. While her response was somewhat vague, it suggests that individual teaching approaches and confidence levels may influence how educators perceive the integration of pragmatics in their classrooms.

Comparing these findings with the questionnaire responses revealed an interesting contradiction. While most teachers agreed that both their own and their students' L1 affect L2 pragmatics acquisition ($M = 4.82$ and $M = 5.42$, respectively), this factor was not explicitly mentioned in interviews. Additionally, despite recognizing the importance of assessing students' pragmatic abilities ($M = 5.11$)—a prerequisite for effective L2 pragmatics teaching (Ishihara, 2010)—none of the interviewees identified assessment as a challenge, suggesting a lack of structured evaluation methods. This is in line with Cohen (2016) who stated that language instructors, especially NNTs who believe they lack the ability to assess pragmatic behavior in the TL, typically refrain from evaluating students' comprehension of pragmatic skills within the classroom.

Overall, these findings align with previous research highlighting the difficulties of teaching L2 pragmatics (Eslami & Eslami-Rasekh, 2008; Basturkmen & Nguyen, 2017; Taguchi & Roever, 2017). Limited teacher training, external constraints such as exams and rigid curricula, and practical challenges like large, mixed-ability classrooms make pragmatics instruction difficult. However, a small number of teachers, particularly those with more experience or autonomy, reported successfully integrating pragmatics despite these challenges.

According to Cohen (2016), language instructors, especially NNTs who believe they lack the ability to assess pragmatic behavior in the TL, typically refrain from evaluating students' comprehension of pragmatic skills within the classroom. As a result, the fact that interviewees did not point out the assessment of pragmatics as a potential challenge, despite their belief that it is important to assess students' pragmatic abilities in the classroom ($M = 5.11$), may indicate the lack of a formal plan for learners' pragmatic assessment. Were they to assess the pragmatic aspects of the TL, they would likely stress the challenge of doing so.

Overall, our findings align with previous research highlighting the challenges of teaching L2 pragmatics. Despite their own competence, teachers often struggle with a lack of explicit training in how to teach pragmatics. While some teachers reported not facing challenges due to their experience and familiarity with TL culture, others pointed to external factors—such as mixed-ability classes, time constraints, exam-driven teaching, and a lack of pragmatic input in textbooks—as significant obstacles. These findings reflect earlier studies (Eslami-Rasekh et al., 2004; Michail, 2016; Taguchi & Roever, 2017) showing that external constraints and limited teacher preparation make integrating L2 pragmatics difficult in the EFL classroom.

4.4.4. Ways to Integrate L2 Pragmatics

In response to the final question, *“If you could include more pragmatics in your teaching, how would you do this?”*, most teachers favored role-play as a key method for teaching L2 pragmatics. For example, Mary emphasized the immersive nature of role play, stating,

- (14) *I'll give them something like a role play and say, you're going to be a shop assistant and I will be the grumbling customer.*

Many teachers also favored using authentic materials like films, videos, and articles to expose students to real-world language use. Orestis noted,

- (15) *I usually try to find real life conversations or videos coming from certain contexts to give students a real sense of how language is used in reality.*

Some teachers, like Litsa, suggested student presentations to discuss cultural differences:

- (16) *I might encourage my learners to present their favorite YouTubers or their favorite influencers. And this gives me the opportunity to talk about the different cultures.*

Matina also proposed inviting native speakers for direct exposure, commenting,

- (17) *I think maybe inviting a native speaker to talk with the students would be beneficial.*

These ideas are supported by previous studies suggesting that native speakers (Savvidou & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2019) may teach pragmatics more effectively. However, research has also shown that non-native teachers (NNTs) can be equally competent in teaching L2 pragmatics (Cohen, 2016; Mahboob, 2010).

Finally, Liza expressed her wish to incorporate L2 pragmatics in an exciting way.

- (18) *I would also like to get them into gaming if that were possible. I'm a gamer myself, and I have noticed it as well, but every gamer has one or two levels above in vocabulary than an ordinary student.*

Overall, teachers suggested methods like role-plays, authentic materials, and interactive presentations. These practices align with previous research (Savvidou & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2019; Ishihara, 2011), which found that teachers without formal training in pragmatics instruction often develop their own approaches. The teachers' strategies are communicative, reinforcing the idea that there is no single method for teaching L2 pragmatics (Bardovi-Harlig, 2004). Despite challenges such as rigid syllabi and large class sizes, the findings underline the need for better teacher training to equip educators with effective strategies for teaching L2 pragmatics.

Overall, the findings suggest that Greek EFL teachers are on the right track, creatively and accurately developing strategies for teaching L2 pragmatics. However, challenges such as teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and external constraints play a significant role in the extent to which pragmatics is incorporated into Greek EFL classrooms. Addressing these challenges is crucial. Additionally, the findings highlight the importance of teacher training in pragmatics instruction. While teachers have reported some useful instructional methods, explicit training in pragmatic teaching and, crucially, the development of targeted assessment of pragmatic skills would further enhance their effectiveness in teaching L2 pragmatics.

5. Conclusions

Our results show that Greek EFL teachers possess an above average level of pragmatic competence, with an average score of 23.94 out of 35 calculated by averaging scores across the three DCT situations and raters. The results of two comprehension situations, which demonstrated that participants have an adequate level of pragmatic comprehension, complement the DCT score and allow us to obtain an overall understanding of Greek EFL teachers' pragmatic competence. The above results lead us to the conclusion that participants' level of pragmatic competence allows them to incorporate pragmatics effectively into their teaching. Furthermore, considering that NNTs serve as primary sources of pragmatic input, the findings suggest that they are quite pragmatically competent role models for their learners. However, despite their self-reports of near-native pragmatic abilities, the actual results suggest that their competence may not fully align with this self-assessment, indicating that teachers may overestimate their pragmatic abilities. Moreover, no correlation was found between teaching experience and pragmatic competence. This finding suggests that NNT's pragmatic competence does not simply grow with years of teaching. Rather, it must be intentionally developed through formal instruction and training so teachers can acquire the awareness and tools required to teach pragmatics effectively.

Secondly, in terms of attitudes, while Greek EFL teachers did not explicitly report a deep theoretical understanding of pragmatics, they displayed an intuitive grasp of its importance, derived from their experiences as L2 learners and English teachers. This indicates that pragmatics may not have been a major focus during their formal education, nor integrated extensively into their professional development. Despite this, teachers strongly believe that training in how to teach pragmatics is essential for effective communication, yet they do not systematically include it in their lesson plans, often teaching it implicitly

without consciously realizing it. Given R. Schmidt's (1993) assertion that simple exposure to the TL is insufficient for L2 pragmatic acquisition and development, it is imperative that teachers teach pragmatic aspects purposefully rather than accidentally.

More importantly, the lack of targeted L2 pragmatics instruction can be explained by the significant challenges teachers face. These challenges include limited pragmatic knowledge, lack of formal instruction on how to teach pragmatics, and external factors such as large class sizes, a focus on exams and certificates, and an overemphasis on grammar and vocabulary learning. Additionally, the limited availability of pragmatic input in textbooks and rigid syllabi were identified as further barriers to integrating pragmatics instruction effectively in the classroom.

Despite the small scale of this study, the findings carry significant pedagogical implications. At this point, two critical questions arise: How can teacher education programs better prepare teachers to teach pragmatics effectively? What specific strategies can help overcome the challenges teachers face in the classroom? We believe that teacher education programs should encourage teachers to reflect on their identities as L2 learners and instructors, as well as their beliefs about pragmatics, since these factors can affect their instructional choices, as underscored in this study. Their metapragmatic awareness and pragmatic competence will help them achieve their ultimate goal: to adeptly help their students acquire the essential skills needed for successful intercultural communication.

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Data Availability Statement: The original contributions presented in this study are included in the article and Appendices A and B. Further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding authors.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

DCT	Discourse Completion Task
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
NT	Native Teacher
NNT	Non-native Teacher
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TL	Target Language

Appendix A

Informed Consent for the research project L2 Pragmatics Instruction in the Greek EFL Classroom: teachers' competence, beliefs, and classroom challenges.

Participant information

This research is designed to investigate Greek EFL teachers' pragmatic competence and the challenges they meet in teaching pragmatics. To this end, you are asked to answer a questionnaire that consists of three parts, and it takes approximately 15 min to complete. By signing this form, you agree that

- The researchers may use the information collected for research purposes.

All data will always be handled anonymously. I will never distribute the recordings and further information outside the research community, nor will anything gathered ever be used for commercial purposes. All the collected data will be saved on a personal laptop which will be secured with a passcode and will be only accessible to the researcher.

If you need more information, please contact omitted for peer review. You can withdraw from participation at any time during or after the study, by contacting the researcher at the above-mentioned email address. Your name will be permanently deleted from the collected data. Any other information that can be traced back to you will also be permanently deleted.

- ☐ I consent, begin the study
- ☐ I do not consent, I do not wish to participate

Dear participant,

Please answer the items of this questionnaire carefully and accurately. Be assured that the information obtained will be kept confidential and used only for academic purposes. Remember this is not a test.

Part one

1. Name (optional)
2. Gender
 - ☐ Female
 - ☐ Male
 - ☐ Other
 - ☐ Prefer not to say
3. Where were you born?
4. Where do you currently live?
5. How old are you?
6. Is one of your parents a native English speaker?
 - ☐ yes
 - ☐ no
7. If no: Age of first acquisition (indicate your age when you started learning English.
8. Have you ever lived, worked, or studied in another country? If yes, please state the country, the period of time you stayed (years, months, weeks, etc.), and the language you used.
9. Do you hold a degree in English literature/language/linguistics?
 - ☐ yes
 - ☐ no
10. If no, what did you study during your undergraduate studies?
11. In which country or countries did you obtain the degree(s) below?
 - ☐ Bachelor's degree
 - ☐ Master's degree
 - ☐ Ph.D.
 - ☐ Other
12. How many years of English teaching experience do you have?

13. Do you currently work as an English language teacher?
 - ☐ yes
 - ☐ no
14. If so, where do you work as an English language teacher?
 - ☐ Public sector
 - ☐ Private sector
 - ☐ Self-employed
 - ☐ Unemployed
 - ☐ Other/Prefer not to say
15. What levels of English do you usually teach?
16. How often do you hear, read, or use English outside of your job responsibilities? (e.g., friends, online groups, through travelling, or other interactions)
 - ☐ Never
 - ☐ Less than once a month
 - ☐ 2–4 times a month
 - ☐ A couple of days a week
 - ☐ Every day

Part two

In this section, we will provide you with some situations to measure the comprehension and production of L2 pragmatics.

17. You are in London for the Christmas holidays and are doing your shopping in Harrods. The department store closes in 30 min and people are in a hurry to check out. You are walking carrying multiple bags while having a heated conversation with your partner on your mobile phone. A young woman accidentally knocks over some of your bags and causes you to drop your phone as well.
Young woman: Very sorry, but you were in my way!
How would you rate the level of appropriateness of the young woman's apology?
 - ☐ High
 - ☐ Moderate
 - ☐ Low
 - ☐ Non-existent
18. What is your rationale for your choice?
19. You are working at an international summer school. During the break, you discuss a student's paper with a colleague.
You: Have you finished reading John's paper? Colleague: Yes, I read it yesterday.
You: What did you think of it?
Colleague: Well, I thought it was well-typed.
What does your colleague mean by her answer?
20. You are in London for a five-day winter holiday. Your flight was delayed for five hours, and you arrive at the hotel after midnight really tired. The only thing on your mind is a hot shower! Eventually, you enter the room only to realise that the hot water isn't working. You call the reception to complain. What do you say?
21. You are at the airport, and you see an elderly man struggling with a huge suitcase. You are travelling with only your backpack, so you offer to help. What do you say?
22. You and your friends are in Crete on a summer vacation and have rented a car in order to explore the island. Whilst driving to Matala, you see three hitchhikers and stop to ask where they are going. Unfortunately, they are headed to the opposite

direction from the one you intend on going. So, you have to refuse your offer and not take them with you. What do you say?

Part three

In this section, we will ask you some questions about your views on teaching pragmatics in the EFL classroom.

23. Please pick one of the following. Pragmatics refers to:

- ☐ Knowing what language forms to use in what situation
- ☐ Speaking fluently with a native accent
- ☐ Having a rich vocabulary in the native accent.

24. Rate your level of agreement with each statement.

Beliefs, Perceptions, Attitudes	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
ST1: Effective communication in the target language requires more than just knowledge of grammar and vocabulary								
ST2: I evaluate my pragmatic abilities as near-native								
ST3: At university, I was adequately taught how to teach second language pragmatics								
ST4: My lesson plans focus on socio-cultural aspects of the English language								
ST5: There are enough pragmatic elements in the EFL textbooks that I use in my teaching								
ST6: Second language pragmatics instruction is more effective than simple exposure in assisting learners' acquisition of L2 pragmatic features								
ST7: It is necessary that EFL teachers receive training on how to teach second language pragmatics, in addition to teaching other aspects of the language (grammar, vocabulary)								
ST8: The teachers' L1 affects greatly their acquisition of L2 pragmatics								
ST9: The students' L1 affects greatly their acquisition of L2 pragmatics								
ST10: It is important for the language teacher to have lived in the target culture								
ST11: I think it is important to assess students' pragmatic abilities in the classroom								

25. Please indicate the textbook that you use (please include the name of the textbook series; if you use the same series for all your classes, do not list every level separately).
26. Please provide your email address if you wish to be contacted with the results of this research when it is completed. (optional)
27. Can we use it to contact you for a follow-up interview?
- ☐ yes
 - ☐ no

Appendix B

Informed Consent

By signing this form you declare to have read the participant information below and have understood this information. You further declare to agree with the procedures described below.

Participant information

The current study aims to examine Greek EFL teachers' pragmatic competence and the challenges they meet in teaching pragmatics. To this end, your speech will be recorded during a semi-structured interview.

With signing this form you agree that:

- The researcher may use the recordings and other information gathered for research purposes.
- All data will always be treated anonymously. The researcher will never spread the recordings and further information outside the research community, nor will anything gathered ever be used for commercial purposes. If you need more information, please contact omitted for peer review. You can withdraw from participation at any time during or after the experiment, by contacting the researcher at the abovementioned email address.

I have read and understood the information and consent to participating in this research.

- ☐ *I consent*
- ☐ *I do not consent*

Questions

1. What in your view is pragmatics? Can you give some examples?
2. In your view do you include enough L2 pragmatics in your classroom?
3. If you want to incorporate pragmatics in your teaching what stops you from doing so?
4. (And if you would like more) how would you do incorporate the teaching of L2 pragmatics in your classroom?

Note

- ¹ Interestingly, a comparison of the interview responses with the questionnaire results reveals a discrepancy. In the questionnaire, all 12 interview participants correctly identified that pragmatics involves knowing what language forms to use in different situations. Yet, during the interviews, not all participants were familiar with the term itself, suggesting they intuitively understood pragmatics but lacked a clear theoretical grasp. Knowing what it is not pragmatics does not necessarily mean that they know what it is.

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