Teaching pragmatics: Nonnative-speaker teachers' knowledge, beliefs and reported practices

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Abstract

Teachers' backgrounds, knowledge, experiences and beliefs play a decisive role in what and how they teach, and research on teacher cognition indicates that teachers' knowledge plays an important part in guiding their classroom teaching (Basturkmen, 2012). At the same time, the inclusion of pragmatics in teacher development and training courses and the integration of language and culture in the foreign language learning curriculum have been seen as a necessity by a number of authors (e.g., Basturkmen & Nguyen, 2017; Byram, 2014; Ishihara, 2011, 2014). Yet, the knowledge and skills necessary to teach the L2 pragmatics and cultural awareness may not come automatically to all L2 teachers, and without adequate teacher education and/or sufficient exposure to the target L2 culture, it is not surprising that some language teachers feel uncomfortable about being a source for target language pragmatics (Cohen, 2016). Through the use of semi-structured interviews, this qualitative study aims to explore how Greek-speaking, non-native speaker teachers handle the teaching of target language pragmatics and culture, and, more specifically, to investigate their professional knowledge, beliefs, and reported practices in relation to the teaching of pragmatics and culture in their EFL classroom.

Keywords: teaching pragmatics, culture, teachers' knowledge, beliefs, practices, nonnative-speaker teacher

Introduction

Recognition of the importance of pragmatics in the teaching of second and foreign languages is increasing amongst teachers and researchers (Basturkmen & Nguyen, 2017). To date, the research in the field of second language pragmatics has provided an increased understanding of learners' pragmatic performance and their development of pragmatic competence in instructed settings.

However, much less is known regarding teachers' pragmatic abilities, awareness and/or professional knowledge vis-à-vis pragmatics. Yet, research on teacher cognition indicates that teachers' backgrounds, knowledge, experiences and beliefs play a decisive role in what and how they teach (Basturkmen, 2012). In particular, Borg (2015) emphasizes the important role of beliefs in how teachers mediate professional knowledge and integrate it into classroom practice.

The necessity of the inclusion of pragmatics in teacher development and training courses and the integration of language and culture in the foreign language learning curriculum have been argued by an increasing number of authors (Basturkmen & Nguyen, 2017; Byram, 2014; Ekin & Damar, 2013; Ishihara 2010a, 2011; McConachy, 2018). This is mainly because the knowledge and skills necessary to teach L2 pragmatics and intercultural awareness may not come automatically to all L2 teachers. Teaching L2 pragmatics can be challenging for any language teacher due to a lack of teaching materials (Basturkmen & Nguyen, 2017; Eslami & Eslami-Rasekh, 2008; Limberg, 2016; Vásquez & Sharpless, 2009), limited in-depth knowledge of pragmatic theory to draw on (Denny & Basturkmen, 2011), or even students' reluctance to adopt target language pragmatic norms (Savic, 2014). Teaching L2 pragmatics can be a particular challenge for teachers who have themselves acquired the language as a foreign language and who may have had less exposure to the language as it is used within authentic interactional contexts.

Research studies which compare how native-speaker teachers (henceforth NTs) and non-native speaker teachers[i] (henceforth NNSTs) handle the pragmatics of the target language (e.g. Rose, 1997) have been rather scarce (Cohen, 2018a). Even more sparse has been the literature on NNSTs' professional knowledge, beliefs and reported practices in relation to the teaching of L2 pragmatics, their role in classroom settings, and the extent to which they help their students develop intercultural sensitivity in the target language (e.g. Ishihara, 2010a). The present study aims to make a contribution to this understudied area. Through the use of semi-structured interviews, it aims to explore how ten, Greek-speaking NNSTs handle the teaching of target language (henceforth TL) pragmatics and culture, and, more specifically, to investigate their professional knowledge, views, and reported practices in relation to the teaching of pragmatics and culture in their EFL classroom. Drawing on phenomenology as a qualitative educational research design (Cresswell, 1998), this study sets out to access the perceptions and understandings of teaching the TL pragmatics and culture, as it is reported by this group of NNSTs themselves.

This qualitative study therefore aims to gain some insights into the following research questions:

1. What is the non-native-speaking EFL teachers' professional knowledge about pragmatics, culture and the teaching of L2 pragmatics?
2. What are the teachers' beliefs in relation to the importance of pragmatics and culture in the L2 classroom?
3. What are the teachers' reported practices regarding the importance of pragmatics and culture in the L2 classroom?

Background

The need for L2 pragmatic instruction

In the field of L2 pragmatics, pragmatic ability has been used to refer to the ability of second or foreign language learners to produce and comprehend socially and culturally appropriate communicative acts (Basturkmen & Nguyen, 2017). It is one key component of communicative competence (Bachman, 1990), and is seen as involving both pragmalinguistic knowledge (i.e. knowledge of the different

linguistic realizations available for performing pragmatic functions), and sociopragmatic knowledge (i.e. knowledge of the social and contextual variables governing language use) (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983). As Kasper (1997) explains, it is clear from Bachman's (1990) communicative model that "pragmatic competence is not extra like the icing on the cake. It is not subordinated to knowledge of grammar and text organization but co-ordinated to formal linguistic and textual knowledge and interacts with "organizational competence" in complex ways" (Kasper, 1997). Pragmatic ability involves dealing with meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader), and interpreting 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). Therefore, phenomena such as politeness/impoliteness, email writing (e.g., email openings, closings etc.), speech acts (requests, apologies, greetings, thanks, compliments, complaints, etc.), conversational style, humor, sarcasm, teasing, cursing, discourse markers (see Cohen, 2016), all fall within the realm of pragmatics. Since what is considered appropriate performance of such speech acts is dependent on the cultural assumptions of language users, pragmatics can be seen as a meeting of language and culture (Cohen, 2016).

The conventional wisdom within L2 pedagogy is that second/foreign language learners need not only to become able to formulate speech acts linguistically, but they also need to be able to accomplish these goals *appropriately* as social actors in dialogue with others in a range of sociocultural contexts. Learners need pragmatic competence if they are to avoid unintentional pragmatic violations of the politeness norms of the target language. These pragmatic failures can result in misunderstandings which arise from the hearer misconstruing the speaker's intentions and recognizing the force of the speaker's utterance differently to what the speaker intended. Unlike L2 grammatical errors that are easily recognizable by non-linguists as the result of one's linguistic deficiency, the source of pragmatic failures is not easily recognized by hearers, and speakers are more harshly judged. Pragmatic failure can therefore reflect badly not so much on the speaker as a learner but as a person (Thomas, 1983, p. 97) and "can in turn lead to negative judgments about a speaker's personality or moral character" (Vasquez & Sharpless, 2009, p. 6).

Despite the importance of pragmatic ability, it is well-documented that "high levels of grammatical competence do not guarantee concomitant high levels of pragmatic competence" (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999, p. 686). Even though the exact nature of the relationship between grammatical and pragmatic competence is still unclear (Barron, 2003), it has been argued that pragmatic competence may take longer to develop (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). One factor discussed frequently in the literature is that exposure to the L2 alone is unlikely to be sufficient for developing pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Niezgoda & Röver, 2001; Taguchi, 2008). This is particularly the case for EFL learners, where exposure to natural language use is likely to be extremely limited. More specifically, it is generally acknowledged that the language classroom does not guarantee the development of full target language norms as classroom interaction provides few opportunities for plentiful incidental pragmatic input (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Swain, 1985). Vasquez and Sharpless (2009) explain that the classroom environment provides a limited source of pragmatic input since it produces a very constrained range of discourse patterns which result from a "a relatively stable institutional roles of teacher and student" (2009, p. 7).

In view of such limitations, the need for more explicit pedagogical intervention has been argued by an increasing number of scholars, and evidence for the effectiveness of explicit teaching has now accumulated (e.g. Alcón, 2005; El Shazly, 2017; Felix-Brasdefer, 2008a, 2008b; Halenko & Jones, 2011; Nguyen & Pham, 2015; Nguyen, 2018; Rezvani et al., 2014; Safont-Jorda, 2003; Takahashi, 2001). Empirical studies have now confirmed that pragmatic intervention, especially explicit instruction, can have positive effects on learners' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic choices and on

teaching culture-specific information. Some of these studies have documented that the pragmatic performance of L2 learners who do not receive pragmatic instruction or receive pragmatic instruction implicitly differs significantly from those learners who receive explicit pragmatic instruction. Such evidence for the advantage of explicit teaching has supported Schmidt's (1993, 2001) influential noticing hypothesis which argues that simple exposure to the target language is insufficient for learners and that learners cannot learn the linguistic features in question unless they notice them.

The fact that pragmatic ability develops best with some explicit instruction means that language teachers need to have sufficient knowledge and awareness of the pragmatic issues at hand and, importantly, of how to go about incorporating them in their teaching. This does not necessarily mean that it is the role of teachers to impose L2 pragmatic norms on learners. Rather, they are expected to sensitize students to pragmatic meanings and develop students' pragmatic awareness so that they become able to notice and interpret pragmatic meaning when they encounter it outside their classrooms (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005), and make successful pragmatic choices. As Bardovi-Harlig (2001, p. 32) has argued, even though "the adoption of sociocultural rules as one's own L2 may be an individual decision…[p]roviding the information so that a learner can make that choice is a pedagogical decision." This recognition is particularly important when considering that pragmatics is closely tied up with culture, and more specifically with the underlying cultural values and beliefs that lead to specific communicative choices (Meier, 2010). As McConachy (2019, p. 3) explains, "notions such as appropriateness, politeness, directness etc., are ultimately anchored in culturally shaped assumptions regarding the rights and responsibilities of speakers in concrete situational and interpersonal contexts." Thus, for teachers to be able to deal with pragmatics in the classroom, they need not only to be pragmatically competent themselves but also able to recognize L1-L2 pragmatic differences (which would enable the learners to avoid unsuccessful pragmatic transfer) and utilize their "broader capacity for reflection on pragmatic decision making and interactional effects" (McConachy, 2018, p. 28). The knowledge, skills and awareness needed for teaching L2 pragmatics are increasingly complex, and it is important to know more about L2 teachers' professional knowledge and its role in the classroom (Basturkmen & Nguyen, 2017; Vasquez & Fioramonte, 2011).

Teacher cognition and the challenges of teaching pragmatics

Given the increasing importance of L2 pragmatic instruction, a number of studies have more recently focused on pragmatics from the point of view of teachers and teacher education (e.g. Cohen 2016, 2018a; Ishihara, 2010a, 2010b, 2011; McConachy, 2013, 2019; Vellenga, 2011). There is now strong recognition amongst scholars of the necessity of the inclusion of pragmatics in teacher development and training courses, and the need to help teachers strategically integrate linguistic and cultural dimensions of learning (Basturkmen & Nguyen, 2017; Byram, 2014; Ekin & Damar, 2013; Ishihara 2010a, 2011; McConachy, 2018).

However, it has been argued that language teacher education programmes across the world tend not to focus on the pragmatic aspects of language, or neglect having a pedagogical component on training teachers on how to actually teach the pragmatics of the target language (Eslami & Eslami-Rasekh, 2008; Basturkmen & Nguyen, 2017; Rose, 1997). Vásquez and Sharpless (2009) carried out a nationwide survey in the USA in order to determine where, how, and to what extent pragmatics is covered in the curriculum of 100 Master's-level TESOL programmes. Their study revealed that despite the need for teachers to understand the study of pragmatics and how pragmatics can be taught, less than one quarter of the programs surveyed offer a dedicated pragmatics course in their curriculum. For most programmes where pragmatics received primary coverage, pragmatics was treated on a more general or theoretical level (e.g. covering speech acts, or politeness theories), rather than on a more practical, pedagogical level. Teachers were therefore not offered any actual pedagogical training for

pragmatic instruction, presumably because of the assumption that when given the theory and equipped with subject matter knowledge, they could devise instructional strategies on their own (Ishihara, 2011). A similar situation for language teacher education elsewhere is also reported by Hagiwara (2010).

The inadequate provision of teacher education in the area of pragmatics is a significant problem for teachers, and it is not surprising that some language teachers feel uncomfortable about being a source of knowledge for L2 pragmatics or explaining pragmatics issues to their students (Cohen, 2016). Some authors (e.g., Economidou-Kogetsidis *et al*, forthcoming; Denny & Basturkmen, 2011) have argued that teaching L2 pragmatics can be an even greater challenge for a NNST as they might be unfamiliar with or less confident about the pragmatics of the target language, particularly if they never had sufficient exposure to the L2 pragmatic practices of the varieties of English relevant to the particular teaching context. Contrary, however, to this line of thinking, there is also the argument that NNSTs' multicultural background may provide them with an advantage in teaching L2 pragmatics, and that NNSTs' years of experience teaching pragmatics may make them more effective than some NSs who might rely on intuition alone (Cohen 2018b). At the same time, it has been argued that it is not so much the NS-NNS distinction that makes the difference but rather the critical awareness of pragmatic diversity is what allows teachers to support their learners in developing cultural sensitivity about pragmatic norms and in making their own pragmatic choices (Akikawa, 2010; Ishihara, 2008, 2010b: cited in Cohen 2018b).

Cohen's (2016, 2018a) recent study carried out an international survey with 83 nonnative teachers (NNTs) and 30 native teachers (NTs) of an L2 or an FL in order to examine how the two groups deal with pragmatics in their classes. More specifically, Cohen's study aimed to "look 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" (Cohen, 2016, p. 563). The general finding of the study was that while the two groups share many of the same challenges in teaching TL pragmatics, certain aspects of pragmatics are handled differently. Overall, NNSTs felt less knowledgeable and less comfortable about the teaching of TL pragmatics and about serving as a resource for information about the specifics of pragmatics in the target language. Commenting on those moments when they did not feel like an authority with respect to pragmatics, most NNTs explained that they would check with NSs, with the Internet, and with other sources.

Ultimately, teachers' backgrounds, knowledge, experiences and beliefs all have an impact on what teachers teach and how they teach it (Ishihara, 2010a). Teacher knowledge comes from teacher education, classroom practice and experiences inside and outside the classroom, and this knowledge is not a stable entity but something which is shaped, revised, modified, transformed, or reinforced. Ishihara (2010a) explains that in terms of teacher knowledge and teachers' ability to teach pragmatics effectively, teachers' knowledge should include, (a) subject-matter knowledge (e.g. knowledge of a range of pragmatic norms in the TL, knowledge of metapragmatic information (i.e. how to discuss pragmatics)), (b) pedagogical-content knowledge (e.g. how to teach and assess L2 pragmatics), (c) general pedagogical knowledge (e.g. how to teach and assess), (d) knowledge of learners, local curricula and educational contexts (e.g. sensitivity to learners' subjectivity and cultural being, knowledge of learners' cultures, identities, knowledge of the pragmatics-focused curriculum, knowledge of the role of L2 pragmatics in the educational contexts) (Ishihara, 2010a, pp. 23-24; Bardovi-Harlig, 1992; Meier, 2003).

Teachers' knowledge and beliefs are inextricably intertwined. Despite the various definitions offered for the term "teachers' beliefs," "the term is generally used to refer to evaluative propositions which

teachers hold consciously or unconsciously and which they accept as true while recognising that other teachers may hold alternative beliefs on the same issue" (Borg, 2001, cited in Basturkmen, 2012, p. 282). With specific reference to the teaching of pragmatics, teachers' beliefs may relate to their beliefs about language and about (language) learning and teaching, about the subject matter (i.e. about the nature of pragmatics), about the role and place of pragmatics and culture in the classroom, or about the relationship between language and culture. Ishihara (2010a, p. 25) also makes reference to some additional, more general areas of teachers' knowledge and beliefs, such as learning in general, the nature of knowledge, learners and their characteristics, teachers' perceptions about their own efficacy, teachers' roles, teaching context, and the curriculum.

According to Pajares (1992) and Borg (2003), teachers' early beliefs tend to perpetuate and are not easily subject to change. At the same time, a number of factors shape these beliefs and mediate professional knowledge. It has been argued that the four important factors that shape teacher cognition are their own experiences as language learners, their experiences outside the classroom, their formal teacher education and professional development, and their classroom teaching experiences (Borg, 2003; Calderhead, 1996; Pajares, 1992). For example, if a teacher believes that film extracts can be a useful tool for teaching speech acts and pragmatics, it might be because he/she has read an article about the role of film in promoting pragmatic awareness in the L2 classroom (Ishihara, 2010a).

Teachers' beliefs are also likely to affect their practices in the classroom, and several studies have shown that teacher cognition and classroom practices are interrelated (Basturkmen *et al.*, 2004; Borg, 1999; Woods, 1996). If a teacher, for example, does not believe in the value of pragmatics as a means of providing insight into culture, it is likely that they will not devote much teaching time to culture or pragmatics. However, the literature (e.g. Basturkmen *et al.*, 2004; Borg, 2003; Breen, 1991; Breen *et al.*, 2001; Burns, 1996) collectively suggests that beliefs and practices do not necessarily correspond. Therefore, what teachers may do in the classroom may not cohere with what they believe, as a number of factors may often intervene. Such factors may be personality factors (the teacher being an introvert or an extrovert), classroom experiences, practices prevailing in the educational community or educational institution, curriculum constraints, policies and other factors that are beyond the teachers' control (Ishihara, 2010a). Differences between beliefs and practices may also be expected as a teacher's practice may reflect at one time one belief and at another time a belief that is different to the former belief (Basturkmen, 2012).

Against this background, the purpose of the present study is to gain insights into the nature of teachers' professional knowledge, beliefs and pedagogical practices. The study therefore examines how a number of NNSTs handle the teaching of target language pragmatics and culture by investigating their cognitions, views and reported practices in relation to the teaching of pragmatics and culture in their EFL classroom. The study hopes to make a contribution to the understudied area of teachers' pragmatics and NNST's cognition and aspects of pragmatic practice in order to establish the extent to which these teachers would serve or would be willing to serve as an appropriate source for L2 pragmatics.

Methods and Procedures

Participants

The participants in the present study consisted of a group of nonnative-speaking teachers (NNSTs). The NNSTs were 10 female EFL teachers. Their ages ranged from 23 to 40 years (4 were between 20-30 years, 6 were between 31-40 years) and their teaching experience varied from 3 years to 18 years (mean average was 9 years). All ten teachers had experience teaching English as a Foreign Language in

the private sector (foreign language institutes and private English-medium mainstream schools). From these NNSTs, 2 teachers also had experience teaching EFL to older teenagers in a state mainstream school and 3 teachers had experience in teaching in adults in tertiary education. The L1 of all 10 teachers was Greek (6 teachers were Greek nationals and 4 teachers were Cypriot nationals). The teachers resided permanently in Greece (4) and Cyprus (6). Only one teacher had lived in an English-speaking country for the duration of her undergraduate studies. All 10 teachers had completed a Master's degree in TESOL. Of these teachers, less than half (4) had received some training in pragmatics or culture as part of their university studies. All the interviews were conducted in English.

Data collection

Semi-structured interviews

In order to gain insights into NNST's professional knowledge, beliefs and practices of pragmatics, culture and the teaching of L2 pragmatics, the study collected qualitative data using semi-structured interviews. The interviews were approximately 25-30 minutes in length.

The questions asked focused on eliciting information regarding the teachers' knowledge, perceptions and practices in relation to pragmatics. This was done through questions which explored teachers' beliefs about specific issues in instructional pragmatics, what they understood by the term "pragmatics," what they thought about the role of culture and pragmatics in the L2 classroom, how confident they felt about teaching pragmatics, and how they would teach it. Specific questions regarding the pragmatics of email writing, and email teaching and politeness were also asked. These questions were designed to inquire about email writing, directness, formality (tone), email structure etc. and to establish which email aspects these teachers view as important. Finally, another set of questions focused on teachers' experiences and aimed to explore teachers' classroom and outside experiences and beliefs in relation to their NNS identity and their ability to teach culture and pragmatics.

Sampling

As is typical in phenomenological research, the sampling strategy is based on purposive sampling, which allows a relatively small sample of between 3 to 15 members to be investigated in order to explore the beliefs and practices of that particular group (Creswell, 1998). As such, the present study exploited typical case sampling (Patton, 1990) in which the sample shares similar characteristics of a population of NNSTs who are Greek speakers, female and in their twenties and thirties. The majority of this population have never lived in an English-speaking country, they have been educated to postgraduate level and work in the private education sector. The use of such a sample elicits data which is illustrative and, while it may not be generalisable, it does provide insights into this particular population.

Data analysis

Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) steps for thematic analysis, full orthographic, verbatim transcriptions were produced of each interview. The aims of the analysis were to present detailed, rich description of the entire data-set. In the first phase the researchers familiarized themselves with the data through repeated reading of the transcripts. Next, the transcripts were coded into initial themes. The coded extracts were then collated into a hierarchical map. Throughout the process, the coded extracts were

reviewed to ensure coherence. Finally, themes were identified and named and from this process, several sub-themes emerged. Data were jointly coded by the researchers and an ongoing dialogue was maintained in order to clarify and code categories into themes and sub-themes. The researchers were aware of the need to preserve teachers' voices and represent them as accurately as possible. In the presentation of findings, pseudonyms are used to preserve anonymity.

Findings and Discussion

The following section outlines and discusses the main themes emerging from the interviews that relate to the research questions asked, namely, NNSTs' professional knowledge, beliefs and reported practices in relation to the importance of pragmatics and culture in the L2 classroom. The themes discussed were repeatedly expressed by almost all participants in different ways and with different phrasing. However, due to word length restrictions, only themes with high recurrence among participants are discussed here. Key quotations have been selected to illustrate these main themes.

Teacher knowledge

The interviews identified three different knowledge domains. The first was teachers' familiarity with the notion of "pragmatics," the second was their knowledge of politeness norms, and the third was perceptions of their own pragmatic abilities, illustrated by "incidents" in intercultural communication. Findings revealed a noticeable gap between teachers' understanding of the theoretical notion of "pragmatics" (i.e. knowledge of what pragmatics is/ familiarity with the notion of "pragmatics") and their more intuitive understanding of pragmatic phenomena (i.e., knowledge of how L2 pragmatics works in communication). For some teachers, the term "pragmatics" was itself an unfamiliar one, even though the term was later explained to them during the interview. For instance, Emilia commented:

> *It's my first contact with the topic, I don't know a lot about it but it has to do with a language in context and not just some antique meaning and…umm…I think in language it's very important to be aware of the pragmatics element in conversation.*

Meanwhile, others remembered it as a vague memory connected to their studies at university. Christiana recalled:

> *It's been a long time, well, we have been taught pragmatics at university but as a term I'm not familiar with it that much like… I don't know pragmatics…something to do with real life situations.*

Similarly, Stella also had a faint memory of the term commenting:

> *Well, pragmatics rings a bell from my bachelor's degree, the first semester but generally I think that pragmatics, in general has to do with how we, let's say, live.*

Stella also went on to describe it as a complex and possibly confusing concept, noting:

> *It can be a little bit subjective, something can be expressed completely different in Greek and something can be used in a totally different manner in English, for example, and usually this is what confuses students.*

These quotations suggest that pragmatics had not featured as a major component in these teachers'

professional learning. This is in line with existing research which has shown that pragmatics tends to be underrepresented as an area of content knowledge in teacher education courses (Basturkmen & Nguyen, 2018; Eslami & Eslami-Rasekh, 2008; Hagiwara, 2010; Rose 1997; Vasquez & Fioramonte, 2011; Vásquez & Sharpless, 2009). Regarding teachers' knowledge of politeness norms, findings also highlighted that teachers' knowledge of the pragmatics of email writing and email politeness tended to focus on format (e.g. the use of salutations and closings), structure (e.g. the use of modal verbs, direct and indirect speech), context (e.g. the relationship between sender and receiver) and register (e.g. the tone and formality of speech. For instance, Georgia commented on the importance of structure as a key component in email politeness commenting:

> *The use of some words, umm, the sentence structure, I mean...language such as "could you please," "would you please"… yes, I look for these in a polite email.*

Another participant, Sophia, also stressed the importance of format, and specifically salutations and closings, as features of email politeness, commenting:

> *Exactly what I said before… how we start, how we say "hello," "how are you," linking words that students should include in their emails, how they finish an email, how they end up writing their name, or their surname if its formal… Well the way we express ourselves, the modal verbs we use, opening and closing remarks and the vocabulary.*

Emilia, also highlighted register, tone and formality as indicators of email politeness, asserting:

> *I think it depends on who you are sending the email to, for example if you are talking to a friend then even just a few lines, or incomplete thoughts might be fine, but when you email a teacher or your boss then you need to follow the norms, the structure for example when emailing teachers. I would never be very casual. I would be very formal. I think, for me that is what it means to be polite.*

In line with Economidou-Kogetsidis *et al.*'s forthcoming (2020) study, these findings suggest that NNSTs' knowledge of email politeness tends to focus not on content or minimising impositions, but on form and structure (inclusion of signature, salutation, introduction, explanation) and, in general, on email formality. In other words, when looking at the email genre from a pedagogical perspective, teachers tended to see the pragmatic domain primarily as a system of structural rules that need to be adhered to rather than as a system of communicative resources. During the interviews, however, some teachers referred to "incidents" in intercultural communication to reveal more context-sensitive perceptions of politeness issues which portrayed their own implicit knowledge. For instance, Alexia highlighted her understanding and experiences of pragmatic failure with a person from another culture she had met by commenting:

> *I found that I wasn't really polite with him because I didn't use appropriate modality and because my perception of the world might be different to his and when we had to speak we didn't have enough time to think of those things and we think in our own language. As I said before I didn't have the time to think how to express myself and I found myself making pragmatic mistakes.*

Here, Alexia's reflection on the experience allowed her to gain knowledge of the fact that selection of pragmatic forms is more than just a matter of following rules. She communicates a view of pragmatic selection that relates to how individuals view the world and reveals her understanding of the fact that speaking an L2 requires mediating between L1-based conceptions of politeness and those required by

the communicative situation. In this sense, L2 pragmatic use is closely associated with intercultural awareness (McConachy, 2019). From a slightly different perspective, Sophia identified her lack of intercultural awareness as the reason for cultural miscommunication when she visited Petra in Jordan:

> *We were speaking then with the Bedouins and they knew some English but we had this problem… I wanted to buy a key ring…and I was talking with one of the Bedouins and I said "yes I think I will buy this key ring for my home keys" and then I realised that these people were living in tents, they did not have any doors. So after that he didn't say anything and I thought "did he understand what I told him"?*

Effie, also expressed how lack of knowledge of appropriate register created cultural miscommunication between her and a Spanish-speaking friend:

> *She would say in Greek "Effie, se parakalo"*[Effie, please]*… she would say "Effie mporeis na mou doseis to vivlio parakalo" [TRANS:* Effie can you give me the book please]. *And that sounded a bit unnatural to me because in Greek she could've just said "Effie dose mou to vivlio" [TRANS: Effie, pass me the book]. She was more indirect than necessary because we are very, very close friends. It didn't make sense the way she kept being so indirect.*

Overall, as suggested by these examples, whilst teachers do not necessarily report strong theoretical knowledge of pragmatics, they have clearly derived intuitive and personalized knowledge of pragmatic issues in communication based on their own experiences as people, learners and teachers. This knowledge provides them with insights about the implications of pragmatic choices for impression management within communication and also the important role of intercultural awareness within the negotiation of meaning. In the next section, we explore teachers' beliefs about the importance of teaching pragmatics and connections between pragmatics, culture and identity.

Beliefs

During the interviews, teachers expressed their views on the value of teaching pragmatics in connecting with cultural diversity. Firstly, many teachers believed that pragmatic instruction held intrinsic value for all L2 learners, irrespective of whether they planned to live in the target language culture. As Effie explained:

> *It's particularly important for learners because … even if you don't… even if you're not planning to live in the target country, you still meet people from different backgrounds in your everyday life. We live in a globalized world. We travel a lot. So I think it's really important; and, for me, when you learn a language, you need to know how to express yourself other than in that language without being abrupt.*

Furthermore, Alexia also believed that both native and non-native speakers should receive pragmatic instruction:

> *It should be taught in all schools everywhere both to native and non-native students. Even native speakers are not aware of the pragmatic aspects of language and they cannot behave or they cannot express themselves when they find themselves in situations when they have to speak to someone with higher rank. I think it is necessary.*

These findings suggest that teachers realise the need for learners to be aware of the relevant sociopragmatic factors at play during communication, and they believe that achieving pragmatic

appropriateness and success in intercultural communication is not solely the responsibility of L2 speakers. The burden for achieving pragmatic competence is therefore shifted away from L2 speakers and is made more equal for all language speakers.

However, while teachers believed in the value of pragmatic instruction, they also recognised significant teaching challenges. For teachers, challenges frequently derived from issues in the specific teaching context e.g. age of learners, lack of time and instructional materials. Effie, for instance, believed that the age of learner was an important consideration: *Young learners cannot grasp the sense as such because they are still exploring this second language in terms of the system. So they are still struggling with the meaning, the subject, the verbs… the tenses. But older learners like 14 year-olds, 14 years-old and older they could be taught this*, while for Alexia, lack of time and access to materials presented a challenge: *Firstly we have to find materials or videos or articles that may expose children to the pragmatic aspect of the language. It is not easy because we don't have the time*. Indeed, lack of readily available materials was seen to be a significant challenge to teaching, as Effie explained the reasons for not including pragmatics instruction in her teaching: *To be honest you don't see that much pragmatics in the textbooks, it's not a very common thing so we need to expand on this*. These comments confirm the lack of suitable published materials for teaching pragmatics (Limberg, 2016; Vellenga, 2015) including the limited nature of sociopragmatic information (Baturkmen & Nguyen, 2017), as well as Crandall and Basturkmen's argument (albeit made almost 15 years ago) that "by-and-large, the conventional approach to teaching speech acts in most currently available EPAs peaking textbooks is inadequate" (2004, p. 44).

Such issues were foregrounded by larger questions as to whether pragmatics is actually teachable and how concerns around culture and identity surface for teachers. For Sophia, the difficulty lay in teaching behaviours rather than other aspects of the language:

> *It is teachable in my opinion, but it's more difficult than the semantics or the real language because it's not only the language, it's something that has to do with the character and, let's say, the behaviour.*

Here, Sophia's comment locates the difficulty of addressing pragmatics in the fact that pragmatics is a form of behaviour and, as such, the teaching of pragmatics has implications for the expression of individual differences and beliefs. This links with early insights from Thomas (1983), who remarked that "sociopragmatic competence is much more difficult to deal with as it involves the student's system of beliefs" (Thomas, 1983, p. 22). The teaching of L2 sociopragmatic rules may require the students to adopt cultural behaviors different to those of their own culture or personal identities. Therefore, dealing with the dilemma between needing to expose learners to L2 norms while ensuring that such teaching does not threaten their identities is a significant pedagogical issue for teachers.

A related issue that emerged in the interviews is the perceived difficulty of explicitly addressing the relationship between culture and pragmatics. Several participants expressed concerns about not wanting to emphasise cultural differences between national groups as this may reinforce essentialist, and inevitably overly simplistic, views of culture. Emilia, for instance, explained her reluctance to teach pragmatics for fear of stereotyping: *It's not something I would teach, it's not in the syllabus…I don't want to be like okay the Britain's are like that, the Americans are like that… if it doesn't come up I don't teach it.* Such comments echo Omaggio-Hadley's (2001) findings that teachers are often insecure about teaching culture due to fear of touching on "sensitive issues." In many cases, reluctance towards addressing cultural content derives from teachers' belief that their limited exposure to the target culture leaves them unprepared for making comments, as Alexia explained:

> *So sometimes I lack confidence in that part of teaching. I try to be exposed through videos and stuff like this but I think that it's more important to live and be constantly exposed to the other culture.*

Teachers' beliefs about the importance of exposure to the target culture also appeared to affect their confidence to teach pragmatic norms more generally. Zoe comments:

> *But you need to have contact with English-speaking people. I think it would be better if someone has lived in the English-speaking country, maybe they would feel more confident and fluent.*

The impact of teachers' perceptions about their own pragmatic knowledge and their subsequent lack of confidence is also reported in the literature (Ghanem, 2015, Cohen, 2016; Denny & Basturkmen, 2011; Vu, 2017). However, these beliefs might be misplaced as research suggests that exposure to the L2 culture alone is not sufficient for developing NNSTs pragmatic confidence (Taguchi, 2008, Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor 2003; Niezgoda & Röver, 2001). Another issue closely related to teachers' confidence and willingness to teach pragmatics is the belief that non-native speaker teachers are disadvantaged compared to native-speaker teachers, both in terms of the amount of time needed to prepare for teaching and that there is a general preference towards native speaker teachers amongst students (Economidou-Kogetsidis *et al.*, forthcoming 2020; Ghanem, 2015). Eliza explained it as: *They have an advantage, yes, someone who is an American, Australian, Canadian or British, whatever, I think they will have an advantage over a Greek speaker.* While NNSTs perceived NTs teachers as having an advantage, they were also keen to reconcile their conflicting identities as both non-native speakers and EFL teachers. Sophia felt annoyed by the discrimination she perceived around being a NNST;

> *As a non-native speaker I am a bit angry when people, students, parents, schools, ask for native speakers of the language. We need to understand that it's about knowing the language and how to speak the language and not about having the perfect pronunciation. Yes, the goal is to communicate appropriately with other people…*

From a different perspective, Emilia discussed the advantages of her non-native speaker identity in relation to teaching:

> *To be honest I don't think the native teacher is better than the non-native teacher. For me it doesn't matter… perhaps a non-native speaker can understand where the learner is coming from, for example, if we are doing something and the learner has a question being a non-native teacher I can understand why he is confused, whereas a native speaker will be like…"that's just the way it is."*

Such a comment indicates that for some teachers, awareness of their positioning as non-native speakers, along with their own perceived pragmatic limitations, were offset by their need to forge a positive self-identity. Specifically, membership of this group (NNSTs) allowed Emilia to establish a supporting self-identity and enabled her to focus on the positive distinctions between her group and NTs. Indeed, social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 2010) makes a valuable contribution to understanding how NNSTs attempt to reconcile conflicting aspects of their personal and professional identities (Varghese et al., 2005). While SIT can provide a useful framework for understanding the perceived attitudes of NNSTs toward their own social group and others, it may not explain how these identities evolve over time.

Reported practices

As far as their teaching practices were concerned, these NNSTs reported their teaching practices in relation to the curriculum, content, methods and materials. Firstly, findings suggest that NNSTs felt that their ability to teach pragmatics was constrained by the demands of the curriculum and, as such, it was rarely included in their teaching. As Georgia explained, the curriculum was determined by the Ministry of Education:

> *There's too little I can do about the content of the language teaching, depending on the situation and on context I may incorporate some elements in my teaching and teach about pragmatics in the target language… but it's not something I decide, it's Ministry policy and they decide what we teach, how and when. So we don't teach it…we try through the stories to teach them about English culture, nothing specific…*

Similarly, Alexia added that limited time and the need to prioritise exam preparation over pragmatic instruction was also a consideration:

> *The time is limited and sometimes even though I want to do more things than I do I don't really have the opportunity to teach them and that's why I sometimes feel disappointed. I'd like to give more things and they don't have the time. And, you know those external factors, I have to prepare students for exams.*

Moreover, in relation to subject-matter, findings indicate that lessons are based on familiar content. Effie explained that teaching the target language depends on exposing learners to a specified order of structures and skills that does not prioritise culture:

> *When most of the lessons are structured, grammar comes first, then vocabulary, then reading skills, then writing skills, and then listening skills. There's a lot to cover…that has more priority than culture.*

This neglect of pragmatic instruction in favour of teaching grammar, vocabulary and the four major skills is also reflected in existing research (Eslami & Eslami-Rasekh, 2008; Rose 1997; Basturkmen & Nguyen 2018). Despite these comments suggesting the difficulty of finding time to incorporate pragmatic instruction into the curriculum (Omaggio-Hadley, 2001; Sercu, 2006; Sercu et al., 2005; Vu, 2017), teachers also reported that pragmatics instruction often tends to emerge from spontaneous teachable moments, as illustrated by Christiana:

> *Again if it pops up in the lesson then we do…for example, we don't have the polite plural in English but we do in Greek we tell them …sometimes students ask how English people are polite then when they don't have the plural so we get into the "would," "could you," "please," and "thank you."*

The teaching of politeness clearly creates potential for dealing with the relationship between pragmatics and culture in a more explicit way. However, teachers reported a tendency to focus more on aspects of culture such as food, clothing and festivals, as these are most represented in coursebooks. Zoe described her focus on fashion and food when dealing with culture: *Mainly because the course books actually include some things, for example fashion in other countries, some cooking recipes, we talk about something like that, about food in England.* Stella also described her reasons for teaching about routines and eating habits while aware that she might be in danger of stereotyping the L2 culture:

I get the chance to talk about their cultures, what British do, what Americans do. For example, in the morning Americans love to have a cup of coffee. British love to have a cup of tea. I mean their routines. What Americans love doing, mainly about their eating habits because they love it more… talking about eating habits, it's more familiar to them to talk about British fish and chips… yes, I know, it's like a stereotype.

Finally, in relation to talking about their teaching materials and methods, NNSTs tended to seek ideas and support from video, the internet, and even from their native-speaking colleagues. This too is supported in the research (Cohen, 2016, 2018a). As Zoe explained:

I try to look for some dialogues on the internet, and I print them. I make some notes, maybe I ask my colleagues their opinion…I try to download for example a more formal dialogue and another one more informal and show the difference between being more polite and not…the difference between "can" and "could" for example.

Findings also show that NNSTs used a range of teaching methods including explanation, modelling, role-play, listening and watching audio and video material and classroom discussion. For Alexia, asking students to compare their own culture with the culture described in the textbook was important: *when I come across a lesson that contains some cultural ideas or information about cultures I try to adapt it and ask students questions to compare their own culture with the culture in the textbook*, while Stella tried to model the desired behaviour : *so if I want them to be polite and thank me and so on, I thank them first; I show them… I'm telling them you have to apologize, now we say sorry.* For Zoe, games and roleplaying were important methods: *we play games for example, umm we pretend that one person is a salesperson and the other is a customer and they ask for things, things like that*. While Sophie preferred to use video ("*I add some videos so they can understand how English people are doing in their everyday life, they will have an idea of what they are reading*"), Christiana made use of social media in her teaching because as she explained:

Kids nowadays are on social media, sometimes we do the applications online… on Instagram with photos and hashtags. I know when they post a picture on social media they tend to write something, those kind of situations are good in the class room especially if they are using target language.

Teachers' reported practices suggest that they felt constrained by contextual factors such as the national curriculum, exam preparation, and lack of teaching materials. As such, when the teaching of L2 pragmatics and culture did occur, it was often based on spontaneous teachable moments. Teachers reported practices also suggested that pragmatic instruction tended to focus on more visible aspects of culture (e.g., food, festivals, habits, etc.). While teachers may have felt constrained by contextual factors, they did report using a range of sources and a variety of instructional strategies. The above findings are in line with Ishihara (2011) and Hagiwara's (2010) previous research which suggests that when teachers have no or little pedagogical training in pragmatic instruction, they tend to devise their own instructional strategies.

While many of these findings confirm existing research, this study highlights several new insights regarding NNSTs professional knowledge, beliefs and reported practices in relation to the teaching of L2 pragmatics and culture. The first insight to emerge from this study is the mismatch between NNSTs' tenuous knowledge of how teaching L2 pragmatics and culture is best taught in contrast to their acute awareness of its value for L2 learners. Secondly, this study highlights a (mis)perception by NNSTs that pragmatic instruction is somehow separate and different to teaching "the real language" i.e. the linguistic and grammatical knowledge, required by learners to communicate. They therefore did not

regard it as one of the foundations of language teaching and/or a necessary part of their teaching syllabus. A final insight emerging from this study relates to the role of beliefs held by NNSTs about the nature of pragmatic instruction and themselves as teachers of L2 pragmatics and culture. While external factors (e.g. inadequate teacher education, lack of access to instructional materials, lack of time, non-inclusion in the syllabus etc.) contribute to the lack of effective teaching, teachers' beliefs also play a pivotal role in what they teach and how they teach it. This study suggests that NNSTs believe that, albeit important, pragmatic instruction is associated with changing and/or adopting behaviours different to their own culture is not only difficult, but for some teachers, may be problematic. Moreover, in relation to NNST' beliefs, the study suggests that these teachers strongly self-identified as "nonnative-speakers." Their identification of belonging to an out-group indicates a view of professional identity as potentially fixed and oppositional and such a view, left unchallenged, may have implications for ongoing professional development.

Conclusions

The present study aimed to gain qualitative insights into how teachers' professional knowledge and reported practices are mediated by their cognitions. The present investigation therefore examined how ten, Greek-speaking NNSTs handle the teaching of target language pragmatics and culture by investigating their cognition, views and reported practices in relation to the teaching of pragmatics and culture in their EFL classroom.

On the whole, our study highlighted three main findings. Firstly, in relation to teachers' knowledge of pragmatics, the qualitative data revealed a noticeable gap between teachers' understanding of the theoretical notion of "pragmatics" and their more intuitive understanding of pragmatic phenomena. Teachers' professional knowledge and understanding of the subject-matter appeared tenuous, demonstrating a superficial and limited understanding of the terminology, therefore suggesting that teachers' professional knowledge of pragmatics gained through teacher education courses is not very well developed. However, whilst teachers did not necessarily report strong theoretical knowledge of pragmatics, they clearly showed that they derive intuitive and personalised knowledge of pragmatic issues in communication based on their own experiences. They are therefore able to gain insights about the implications of pragmatic choices within communication and appreciate the important role of intercultural awareness.

Secondly, as regards teachers' beliefs about teaching pragmatics and the L2 culture, findings indicated that NNSTs recognized the intrinsic value of such teaching, not just for L2 learners but for native speakers as well. However, they also acknowledged challenges in its implementation. These challenges related to both the specific teaching context (e.g. age of learners, lack of time and instructional materials), perceptions of their own identity as non-native speaker EFL teachers, and their limited exposure to the target culture and their subsequent lack of confidence. Thirdly, these findings also indicated how knowledge and beliefs directly fed into NNSTs self-reported practices, which were also found to be constrained by contextual factors such as the national curriculum, exam preparation, and lack of teaching materials. Our findings further revealed that when NNSTs venture into teaching pragmatics and L2 culture, there is a tendency to focus on the visible layers of culture (e.g. food, festivals, habits etc.) rather than on some of the hidden layers of culture such as values, politeness, beliefs, attitudes, which are seen as too alien or sensitive issues for NNSTs teachers to touch on.

Despite the present study being a small-scale qualitative investigation, these findings still have clear pedagogical implications for the role of pragmatics in teacher education programmes and in published materials. The findings clearly emphasize the need for the inclusion of pragmatics in teacher development and training courses, and the integration of language and culture in the foreign language

learning curriculum, as repeatedly argued in the relevant literature (e.g. Ishihara 2011, 2014, Basturkmen & Nguyen, 2017; Ekin & Damar, 2013; Byram, 2014; McConachy, 2018). The need for teacher education programmes that help teachers explore their beliefs about pragmatics and pragmatic instruction and their own developing identities as L2 teachers is additionally highlighted in the findings of the present study. Finally, the need for more pragmatics-focused published materials is evident throughout, being a key reason for the language teachers' lack of confidence when it comes to teaching pragmatics. As Cohen (2016, p. 583) argues, "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."

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[i] A number of different definitions of a "native speaker" have been proposed in the literature (e.g. Bloomfield, 1993; Davies, 1991, 1996, 2003; Kramsch, 1997; Stern, 1983). Bloomfield (1993) offers a developmental definition where a native speaker is someone who speaks the first language he/she learns to speak as his/her native language. This definition incorporates developmental characteristics and implies that individuals do not have a choice in their first language (L1) and cannot change it (Davies, 1996, p. 156). For the purposes of the present study, the criterion used for defining a native speaker is "childhood exposure" (i.e. native speaker by birth), rather than long residence in the adopted country, education in the target language medium, being native speaker-like by being an exceptional learner (Davies, 2003), or having "social behavior and cultural knowledge" (Kramsch, 1997, p. 362). This definition of a NS is in line with how a NS has been defined in other pragmatic studies (e.g. Cohen & Shively, 2007; Geluykens, 2008; Schauer, 2007).