Factors Affecting Teachers' Pragmatic Knowledge Incorporation into Thai EFL Classrooms

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Abstract. In second language pragmatics, the student has long received much more attention than the teacher with the principal aim to examine the former's pragmatic competence and to innovate teaching in order to increase it. However, reports on students' poor pragmatic performance have identified the ineffectiveness of this predisposed interest. Therefore, the researchers argue for a closer investigation into the teachers who are crucial in contributing to the latter's ability. In the present study, a survey and a structured interview were used with a purposive sample of 38 Thai EFL university instructors to elicit in-depth information about their beliefs in the value of pragmatic knowledge, their self-reflection of incorporating pragmatic content in class, and factors that might complicate the relation between the beliefs and actual teaching. Findings show that while participants hold considerable positivity regarding the need for pragmatic content, their existent teaching is relatively less due to certain limitations. Among them, student background and type of course are the most influential factors in their pragmatic teaching knowledge. Moreover, participants' pragmatic knowledge background and language experience have a significant correlation with their existing teaching (r =.38, p = .01). The inadequate proportion of in-class pragmatic content presents itself as a direct cause for students' poor performance since they lack both the necessary knowledge and practice. The paper concludes with practical steps to systemize in-class teaching of pragmatic knowledge in Thai EFL contexts and perhaps elsewhere.

Keywords: L2 pragmatics; pragmatic competence; Thai EFL teachers; self-reflection

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1. Introduction

To begin with, L2 pragmatic competence is related to the accurate knowledge of language, and its appropriate use at the same time (Bardovi-Harlig, 2010). The phrase 'using it appropriately' is operative here since it constitutes the essence of pragmatic competence. This appropriate (natural, conventional, cultural or acceptable can be sometimes used interchangeably) use takes into consideration, for example, the speaker, listener, time of speaking and place of speaking. In simpler terms, L2 pragmatic competence concerns "how leaners come to know how-to-say-what-to-whom-when" (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013, p. 68). In contrast, any inability to combine the accurate use of the language with its appropriate use is deemed a failure in L2 pragmatic competence. Generally, according to studies to date, EFL students have demonstrated poor pragmatic ability (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig & Shin, 2014; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Hudson et al., 1995; Liu, 2007; Roeover, 2005; Roever et al., 2014; Xu & Wannaruk, 2016; Zhang et al., 2019). Common failures include students' inability to grasp the speaker's meaning in indirect speech acts (Chokwiwatkul, 2017), to make requests and apologies culturally appropriate to native English speakers (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Pinyo et. al., 2010), or to display acceptable politeness by means of speech to the native speakers (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Tajeddin & Pezeshki, 2014).

The aforementioned issues have paved the way for new pedagogical philosophy and methodology of teaching English pragmatics to EFL students, notably through an emergence of blended teaching between language and culture of the natives (Basturkmen & Nguyen, 2017; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2006), a meticulous exploration into interlanguage/intercultural language use in order to see how the mother tongue promotes or impedes acquisition of L2 (i.e. English) pragmatics (Celce-Murcia, 2007; Kasper, 1992; Kasper & Dahl, 1991), as well as various tests developed to measure and increase students' pragmatic performance (Hudson et al., 1995; Liu, 2007; Roever et al., 2014).

This area of study has traditionally been anchored in the student's side, inadvertently leaving the teacher's perspective much less explored, a worrying scenario pointed out by Ekin and Damar (2013). The consequence is that this imbalanced interest has resulted in more adverse than beneficial effects, even to the students, since despite all the efforts aforesaid, reports on EFL students' failure in pragmatic competence are continuously published. Further, the problem involves the teachers, their limited expertise (Vasquez & Sharpless, 2009), their beliefs about teaching English pragmatics (Savvidou & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2019), and the materials they use (Nu & Murray, 2020; Ren & Han, 2016). There is insufficient quantitative and qualitative investigation into this, and this lack of study is probably responsible for the long-unresolved problem. In fact, some scholars have made strong points and concerns about teachers in L2 pragmatics. For instance, Mei-Xiao (2008) argued for the crucial role of teachers as a major contributor to students' pragmatic competence alongside the differences between L1 and L2 culture and pragmatic transfer, and Glasgow (2008) recommended that an L2 teacher should be able to help their students gradually develop pragmatic awareness of the English language through in-class opportunities so that they can

explore a wide range of linguistic choices and choose the best option in various situations until they have become autonomous learners. Their voice seems not to have attracted much attention, however. Thus, the current study aimed to explore to what extent Thai EFL teachers believe pragmatic knowledge is important for their students and whether there are any factors affecting their incorporation of pragmatics into actual teaching.

2. Review Literature
This section specifically outlines five factors that have been generally reported to affect EFL teachers' practice, with a focus on teaching pragmatics. These include teachers' knowledge, students' background, course characteristics, textbooks and tests. Each factor will be discussed individually in greater detail.

2.1 Teacher's Background
In an EFL classroom setting, especially in an Asian context, pedagogy is primarily teacher-centered, an approach in which teachers play a principal role in providing students with a set of knowledge and learning activities involved, due to the fact that students are culturally less active and that they, as a foreign language learner, rely on their teachers' knowledge and experience. As far as teaching pragmatics is concerned, this kind of pedagogy is problematic since teachers' cognition on this area of linguistic knowledge is reported to be somewhat limited (Cohen, 2016; Suprijadi, 2013), so they feel uncomfortable to discuss it in fear of relaying incorrect information (Cohen, 2016; Ishihara, 2011). Research has indicated two main problems involved. First, as Savvidou and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2019, p. 42) reported, "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." Second, the fact that EFL teachers share the same linguistic background with students and, in some cases, lack an opportunity to immerse themselves in the native English-speaking environments makes them even less confident in incorporating English pragmatics in class (Basturkmen et al., 2004; Farashaiyan et al., 2014; Kasper, 2001; Suh, 2012).

Adverse effects of teachers' limited pragmatics include the lack of adequate pragmatic knowledge in class, resulting in a higher concentration placed on other language areas with which teachers are familiar, such as grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary (Ishihara, 2011), as well as reading and writing (Al-Sha'r, 2017; Chi, 2017; Yue et al., 2020). Even though one may argue that resources for this kind of content may be available outside class and the lack of in-class pragmatic knowledge matters little, students find it difficult to learn if not well advised on the nuances of the language by instructors. For instance, the ubiquitous use of modal verbs, e.g. *might* vs *can* vs *could,* as a politeness marker, often escapes their careful attention. As a consequence, the researchers argue that teaching pragmatics in class is still a requisite.

2.2 Student's Background
Undoubtedly, a critical factor that affects a teacher's decision on their teaching content (including what and how to teach and how much) lies in the students'

background, including proficiency level, learning style, preference and attitude. Given pragmatics in particular, Asian students, especially Thai students, seem to lack an effective way to learn, and there are at least three important underlying causes. First, their proficiency level seems to be a strong determinant. The fact that the less competent English students outnumber their more competent counterparts in a heterogeneous class leads the teachers not to introduce pragmatic knowledge at an adequate level, for fear that the majority of students will have difficulty understanding this given that it is, by nature, more advanced than other language areas such as grammar and pronunciation. Second, since students have very limited linguistic awareness, they fail to grasp pragmatic meanings, assuming that both languages are similar in terms of usage and meaning (Krishnamurthy et al., 2009; McLean, 2004), especially when teachers offer these in an implicit manner. Last, students' language exposure in communicative situations is limited. Despite some studies showing that in-class communicative activities can help enhance learners' pragmatic competence (e.g. Kasper & Schmidt, 1996; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Soboleva & Obdalova, 2014), a set of activities provided is still far less effective than those in genuine situations where students interact with native English speakers and can observe the differences in using the language of the two cultures (Chi, 2017; Qiao, 2014; Thijittang, 2010).

Having discussed the above, the researchers consider that students' background leads to a smaller proportion of pragmatic knowledge taught in class by EFL teachers, even to those students with a solid foundation of English pragmatics.

2.3 Courses
Due to certain limitations, EFL courses seem to present a challenge for pragmatic knowledge to be taught to students. This can include, for example, substantial amounts of subject-specific content, teaching time, and aims and objectives which are set parallel to the content. The most concrete evidence of this is in the course syllabi which reflect the instructor's belief and practice with regard to pragmatics. Most English course syllabi prescribe the knowledge of basic formal structures and meanings rather than the contextual use of language (Al-Sha'r, 2017; Mirzaei & Rezaei, 2012). This is perhaps because its proper place in English courses or even in the whole curriculum is somewhat vague, as claimed by Vasquez and Sharpless (2009). For whatever reason, pragmatics does not receive enough attention from teachers, and is rarely taught in a classroom setting. To solve this problem, most studies recommended the integration of instructional pragmatics into syllabi (Ekin & Damar, 2013; Povolna, 2012) and, if possible, its inclusion in all relevant courses so as to increase students' pragmatic awareness more extensively (Barron, 2003; Koike & Pearson, 2005; Ishihara, 2007; Vasquez & Sharpless, 2009; Yuan et al., 2015).

2.4 Textbooks
Generally speaking, textbooks have considerable impacts on EFL teachers who require concrete assistance from the ready-to-use materials they can afford (Kim & Hall, 2002). Texts serve as both the most important, if not only, source of linguistic input teachers select to teach in class, as well as the pedagogical

guidelines they follow for teaching. As far as pragmatics is concerned, most studies have identified a surprisingly smaller proportion of this sort of linguistic content than the other domains of language knowledge, such as grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation (e.g. Berry, 2000; Cane, 1998; Grant & Stark, 2001; Vellenga, 2004). What's more, even within a limited space devoted to providing pragmatic input, most EFL textbooks choose to offer a repetitive and narrow coverage of pragmatic topics, with instruction on speech act and politeness under which requests and refusals are the most popular (Meihami & Khanlarzadeh, 2015; Ren & Han, 2016). To illustrate this point more tangibly, the work of Vellenga (2004), whose clear objective was "to determine the amount and quality of pragmatic information" (p. 2), covered in eight popular EFL (integrated skills-oriented) and ESL (grammar-oriented) textbooks showed us two interesting corresponding facts. First, the level of pragmatic input was very low in both EFL and ESL texts, in, on average, 26.5 pages out of 131.5 pages for the first, and 24.5 pages out of 469 pages for the latter. Second, types of pragmatic information are very limited, centering primarily on different kinds of speech act. In the conclusion of her study, Vellenga cautioned that "there is a dearth of metalinguistic and metapragmatic information related to ways of speaking in textbooks" (p. 15).

Without doubt, criticisms on these shortcomings in EFL textbooks have been immense and numerous, particularly the frequent complaints about the lack of authentic language use applicable in real life situations (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001), the lack of tools that should be provided to students so they are able to recognize language in contexts by themselves (Grant & Starks, 2001), and the problems about the aforesaid amounts of pragmatic knowledge. Unfortunately, no substantial changes have been seen: the most recent study by Nu and Murray (2020) reported only a 5.5 percent coverage of pragmatic input in EFL textbooks. On the one hand, this dearth implies a lack of effort in dealing with this important factor that contributes to EFL students' pragmatic performance, and on the other it reflects the value placed on sociolinguistic knowledge by EFL textbook writers or developers, as well as its place in teaching materials. Text writers may not be aware of any adverse consequences, but for the majority of EFL teachers, including Thais, who place a high value on textbooks and so faithfully follow them, the effects can be disastrous.

2.5 Tests
The very fact that tests have direct, immense and concrete impacts on both how teachers teach and how students learn is undeniable. With Thailand as an example for an EFL context, the well-known expert in assessment and linguist Kanchana Prapphal maintained that "the relationship between language testing and teaching is reflected throughout the history of English teaching in the Thai context" (2008: 127). Given pragmatic knowledge in particular, English tests in all levels of Thai education measure learners' ability to use correct vocabulary and sentence structures rather than their ability to communicate in English properly and naturally (Chaisuriya & Shin, 2004; Sinwongsuwat, 2012). Even the most high-stakes national English proficiency test for university admission is composed of a much larger number of grammar and vocabulary items than those

involved in the cultural use of the language (Imsa-ard, 2020). Similar to the textbook scenario, this mode of tests reflects the status and position that EFL instructors place on pragmatic knowledge.

Instantly, there emerge two points of note. First, it is a paradox that despite numerous efforts in having developed and scrutinized measures for assessing EFL students' pragmatic performance, among which are the most popular six measures of pragmatic assessments introduced by Hudson, Detmer and Brown (1992, 1995), which consist of oral, written, and multiple-choice DCTs (discourse completion tasks, roleplays and two types of self-assessment), using them in tests at the course or above-course level is very limited both in terms of quality and quantity. Studies by Hudson (2001), Liu (2015), Liu (2007) and Xu and Wannaruk (2016), for instance, reported an impartial selection of pragmatic topics with speech acts being the most popular area in EFL tests. Second, in extension from the first point, *why is it so?* constitutes a critical question. It is not easy to respond to this doubt, for there are, to the best of the authors' knowledge, no empirical studies devoting to this investigation. Thus, the present study seeks to examine Thai EFL teachers' decisions regarding the inclusion of pragmatic knowledge in their tests to help better clarify the existing scenario and at the same time fill in the gap in the existing literature.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The current study was carried out in a qualitative manner through a survey followed by a structured interview with a purposive sample of participants, each of whom was carefully selected to represent more or less the overall population relevant to the topic under investigation. The sample consisted of 38 Thai university English instructors from 13 different public universities across Thailand, each of whom was carefully chosen due to their high teaching performance assessed by students. In the sample, there were 10 males and 28 females aged between 25 and 56 years old. Six universities were prestigious, and the rest local. Participants had obtained a master's degree or higher in English or any other related field such as teaching English as a foreign language, linguistics and translation. They had at between two years and 24 years of teaching English at university level. Fifteen reported a pragmatic knowledge background obtained from their formative years of study, either by a proper course on pragmatics or as a key component in other courses, and the rest reported no pragmatic background at all.

3.2 Research Tools

The researchers developed a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire based on the literature review that indicated five main factors that contributed to EFL instructors' teaching of pragmatics in class, namely their own background, students' background, courses taught, textbooks and test. In parallel to this information, the questionnaire was divided into six parts, the first of which asked participants about their attitude towards the importance of instructional pragmatics as well as their actual teaching, and the rest corresponded to each of the factors aforesaid. Participants were asked to specify their level of agreement

with the statement in respect to the given factor, with 1 being the least and 5 being the most, through statements such as the following: *the content of the course that you teach affects the amount of pragmatics you teach in class.* The questionnaire was first piloted with 30 instructors who were not included in the final sample, and then revised to ensure its validity and clarity prior to actual use.

In the interview, five questions aimed to elicit detailed and free attitudes with respect to each of the factors in the questionnaire, plus the culminating question in the end. These questions asked the participants to explain the relationships between their background and their incorporation of pragmatic knowledge in class; those between their students' background and their incorporation of pragmatic knowledge in class; those between the nature of the courses they teach and their incorporation of pragmatic knowledge in class; those between the textbooks they use and their incorporation of pragmatic knowledge in class; and those between the test and their incorporation of pragmatic knowledge in class.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure and Analysis
First, individual participants were contacted to indicate their availability for the data collection process. On the appointed day, they were given a questionnaire to complete via an online meeting platform with the researchers present, in case any incomprehensible question items required clarification. After participants finished the questionnaire, they were individually informed the details of the interview, including its structure and guidelines in order to facilitate an accurate provision of information. Following this, they began to respond to five questions regarding the factors affecting their incorporation of pragmatics in class.

The questionnaire data provided a percentage, mean and standard deviation to quantitatively identify each participant's attitude towards the importance of instructional pragmatics and the factors that affect their actual teaching. Pearson correlation coefficient scores were used to establish the relationship between participants' existing incorporation of pragmatics in class and the effects of the five factors. The data from the interview were recorded with notes taken, transcribed verbatim and analyzed through content analysis in order to substantiate the data from the questionnaire and to offer deeper insights into each of the factors being explored.

4. Results and Discussion
The following section presents quantitative and qualitative results obtained from the questionnaires and interviews of participants with specific regard to their beliefs about the importance of instructional pragmatics, their incorporation of this sociolinguistic knowledge into EFL classrooms as well as the five factors that affected their respective teaching.

4.1 Quantitative Data

Table 1: Teacher's beliefs and practice about English pragmatics

Statements	N	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	SD
Importance of pragmatics in enhancing students' communicative competence in English	38	44.73%	47.36%	7.89%	0.00%	0.00%	4.368	.633
Importance of pragmatic knowledge in enhancing students to use the language more naturally and more appropriately	38	78.94%	18.42%	2.63%	0.00%	0.00%	4.763	.489
Self-reported incorporation of pragmatic knowledge in EFL classrooms	38	2.63%	31.57%	44.73%	18.42%	2.63%	3.144	.845

As shown in the above table, data reveals a noticeable gap between participants' beliefs towards the importance of pragmatics for their students' English ability in language competence and language use versus their actual teaching of this knowledge in class. To be more precise, while teachers expressed considerable positivity towards the value of pragmatics ($\bar{x}$ = 4.763, SD .489 and $\bar{x}$ = 4.368, SD .633), the amounts of their respective teaching ($\bar{x}$ = 3.144, SD .845) did not appear to be concomitant due to certain factors that affect their instructional decisions, particularly their own pragmatic knowledge and experience, as well as external influences, such as students' background, courses they cover, and textbooks used, as will be shown in more detail in the next table.

Table 2: Factors affecting teachers' incorporation of pragmatic knowledge into EFL classroom

Factor	Sub-factor	N	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	SD
Teachers' Background	Teachers' pragmatic knowledge and experience	38	31.58%	31.58%	28.95%	7.89%	0.00%	3.881	.954
	Experience in English speaking countries	20	35.00%	50.00%	10.00%	5.00%	0.00%	4.150	.812
	Everyday contact with native speakers of English	38	21.05%	55.26%	15.79%	7.89%	0.00%	3.894	.831
	Average		28.15%	44.79%	19.76%	7.29%	0.00%	3.975	.866
Students' Background	Students' English language ability	38	55.26%	21.05%	10.53%	10.53%	2.63%	4.157	1.151
Course Characteristics	Types of English courses responsible for	38	50.00%	31.58%	18.42%	0.00%	0.00%	4.315	.774

Factor	Sub-factor	N	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	SD
	Course objectives	38	42.10%	23.68%	23.68%	10.53%	0.00%	3.973	1.052
	Amounts of course content	38	15.79%	31.58%	39.47%	7.89%	5.26%	3.447	1.031
	Average		35.96%	28.95%	27.19%	6.14%	1.75%	3.912	.952
Textbooks	Amounts of pragmatic knowledge in textbooks used	38	28.95%	36.84%	18.42%	5.26%	10.53%	3.684	1.254
	Difficulty level of pragmatic knowledge in textbooks used	37	16.22%	37.84%	27.03%	10.80%	8.11%	3.432	1.143
	Average		22.67%	37.33%	22.67%	8.00%	9.33%	3.558	1.198
Tests	Amounts of pragmatic knowledge in course tests	38	21.05%	31.57%	26.32%	10.53%	10.53%	3.421	1.244

Findings indicate both internal (i.e., teacher's background) and external factors (i.e., student's background, courses taken, textbooks and tests) that have certain effects on the extent of teachers' incorporation of pragmatic knowledge into their EFL classrooms. Among the 10 sub-factors, *teacher's pragmatic knowledge and experience* and *everyday contact with native speakers of English* are the only two factors that can be carried out with freedom and ease; the rest require harder work and active consent from the people involved.

Surprisingly, participants considered tests ($\bar{x}$ = 3.421, S.D. 1.244) and textbooks ($\bar{x}$ = 3.558, S.D. 1.198) in their course to have the least effect. This is a surprising finding especially for the case of the effects of tests, since these findings are somewhat inconsistent with most studies in Thailand that have argued for their tremendous impacts on what and how teachers teach in class (e.g., Chaisuriya & Shin, 2004; Prapphal, 2008; Sinwongsuwat, 2012).

Table 3: Correlation between incorporation of pragmatic knowledge into EFL classroom and factors

Factor	Sub-factor	N	Incorporation of pragmatic knowledge into EFL classroom	
			Correlation coefficient	P value
Teacher Belief	Importance of pragmatics in enhancing my students' communicative competence in English	38	-.027	.874
	Importance of pragmatic knowledge in enhancing my students to use the language in any given contexts more naturally and more appropriately	38	-.078	.641
Teacher Background	Teachers' pragmatic knowledge and experience	38	.382*	.018
	Experience in English speaking countries	20	.399	.081

Factor	Sub-factor	N	Incorporation of pragmatic knowledge into EFL classroom	
			Correlation coefficient	P value
	Everyday contact with native speakers of English	38	.138	.410
Student Background	Students' English language ability	38	.087	.604
Course Characteristics	Types of English courses	38	-.092	.582
	Course objectives	38	-.284	.084
	Amounts of course content	38	-.138	.408
Textbooks	Amounts of pragmatic knowledge in textbooks used	38	-.198	.234
	Difficulty level of pragmatic knowledge in textbooks used	37	.093	.585
Tests	Amounts of pragmatic knowledge in course tests	38	-.188	.258

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level.

Table 3 shows a low level of correlation between the factors and the incorporation of pragmatic knowledge into EFL classrooms in both positive and negative directions. There is only one sub-factor, i.e. teachers' pragmatic knowledge and experience, that shows a statistical significant relationship with the incorporation of instructional pragmatics ($r = .382$, $p = .018$). This strongly suggests that the amounts of pragmatic knowledge transferred to students rely heavily on teachers' experience.

4.2 Qualitative Data
4.2.1 Teacher's Background
The data from the interviews with respect to teachers yielded three main points, namely their (limited) pragmatic knowledge, their authentic use of the language, and their belief in the value of pragmatics. Twelve participants pointed out a lack of pragmatic cognition as the main reason for insufficient in-class teaching of this content. A participant stated:

> I normally include very little pragmatics in my lessons because I did not study pragmatics during my undergraduate studies. Furthermore, I was introduced inadequate pragmatics when I did a master's degree.

However, thirteen participants realized the value of this sociolinguistic content. Despite having limited cognition, they utilized first-hand experiences in using the language in an English-speaking country or from their daily contact with native speakers, and some of them used authentic materials, such as movies and music, to increase both their own knowledge and their students'. One instructor maintained:

> When teaching in either a university or a tutoring class, I always go beyond the usual lessons, for instance, in a grammar lesson, I often give my students some examples through multimodal materials, such as songs and movies, so as to make them more clearly comprehend the content.

Further, the other asserted:

> *Whenever we talk about a language or teaching a language, the word "pragmatics" is always immediately thought of without any sense of its place as it normally goes along with the language itself. The teacher with a high level of English proficiency unconsciously teaches it or knows when to appropriately include it in his/her class. No matter what skills are emphasized, they all are in relation to pragmatics, which is about the use of English.*

4.2.2 Student's Background

There were two main issues about students: their (low) English level and the heterogeneous English levels in one class. Nineteen participants considered grammar and vocabulary to be the major linguistic aspects focused on by most Thai teachers due to the fact that learners with low English proficiency could not understand the implicit meanings in context, similar to the bulk of studies stating that forms and structures are the areas that teachers firstly teach to EFL learners as they believe that only proficient language users can comprehend pragmatics (e.g. Choraih et al., 2016; Jalilifar, 2009; Rue et al., 2007; Rueda, 2006). One instructor mentioned:

> *Most students in Rajabhat universities (local institutions) are not somewhat good at English. I think pragmatics is hard for them to comprehend, so it had better not be taught in the class in order to avoid the students' confusion.*

Nonetheless, some participants argued for the place of pragmatic content since they thought that the content could be taught to learners at moderate to high English levels. In regard to the second point raised by seventeen participants, a number of Thai university classes consist of students with various English levels. So, to elevate the ability of the competent students to use English naturally and appropriately, pragmatics is considered essential (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003). One instructor stated:

> *Some students in my class have a personal interest in English, and their pragmatic background is higher than their friends'. Therefore, they easily understand the implicit meanings hidden in the sentences.*

4.2.3 English Courses

The courses that the instructors are responsible for have a substantial impact on instructional pragmatics. The interviews suggested three salient points: course types, course content and course objectives. For the first point, 29 participants considered that the amounts of pragmatics taught in classes relied on the nature of the courses. For them, pragmatic content is better incorporated in English courses for communication or for specific purposes, while it is somewhat difficult to be included in content-based courses, e.g. academic writing, syntax and phonetics. This is consistent with some studies reporting the underrepresentation of pragmatics in undergraduate courses (e.g. Basturkmen & Nguyen, 2017; Choraih et al., 2016; Hagiwara, 2010). One instructor stated:

> *The course that I am responsible for is English for Hotel Business, which is related to service provision, and the students of course have to give services to foreigners. So, pragmatics is reasonably required, for example,*

greetings, offering something, etc. Sometimes we want to be acquainted with the guests, but we do not know what appropriate words or sentences should be used.

However, a need to incorporate pragmatics in all English courses is still seen as crucial as it is believed to be the knowledge that develops learners' language competence to a better level. One participant urged:

Pragmatics is very important, so we should reconsider the course descriptions and objectives so that we can incorporate it in our lessons.

In a word, English courses, especially in regard to the types of courses, relatively affect the amounts of pragmatics incorporated in an EFL class. Teachers who have a practical pragmatic background may find it hard to introduce this knowledge as they have to follow the objectives and descriptions of a particular course. Even though a number of researchers recommend that pragmatics be included in English language teaching (e.g. Alsuhaibani, 2020; Vasquez & Sharpless, 2009; Soler & Flor, 2008; Rueda, 2006), practices of teaching pragmatics are rare and inadequate.

4.2.4 Textbooks

The interviews identified two important points regarding the textbooks used by instructors. First, they noted the amount of pragmatic knowledge in the materials. Second, comparisons between textbooks written by native English speakers and Thai speakers were explicitly made. As far as the first point is concerned, findings reveal the teachers consider textbooks to contain insufficient amounts of pragmatic knowledge, and even less when compared to other areas in the book, such as grammar, vocabulary, conversation and other pieces of information regardless of what subject or topic under which the textbooks fall. In other words, the proportion of pragmatic knowledge in textbooks on communication and on subject-specific courses, e.g. linguistics and writing, do not differ significantly, and are present in similarly small amounts. This insufficiency has a direct impact on the instructors' limited teaching of instructional pragmatics in class. One instructor in a course taught by a number of instructors admitted that

Since there are very sparing amounts of pragmatic knowledge in the textbook we use, incorporation of instructional pragmatics is limited, difficult to do, and depends largely on the individual instructors.

Besides, the level of taught pragmatics is affected by the way pragmatic knowledge is presented in textbooks. One instructor identified that

Mostly I see pragmatic content only in the conversation part that teaches how to listen and speak appropriately. And, the variety of pragmatic topics is limited.

Indeed, the insufficiency in textbook pragmatic knowledge found by Thai instructors has been similarly reported by studies investigating the amounts of pragmatic content (e.g. Nu & Murray, 2020; Vellenga, 2004) and pragmatic topics in EFL textbooks (e.g. Meihami & Khanlarzadeh, 2015; Ren & Han, 2016).

As for the second point, all relevant instructors pointed out the noticeable gap between the amounts of pragmatic knowledge in textbooks by English and Thai speakers. The latter have much smaller proportions of this sociolinguistic knowledge than the former even though they primarily teach language for communication in specific contexts. A female instructor of English for Hotel Business commented:

> *My main textbook for the course was written by a Thai writer. It has no information about pragmatic use of the English language in the field.*

Having said this, this instructor implied that the consequence of following her book would result in a low level of her students' cultural awareness when it comes to their real usage of English. Most of the instructors cited more or less the same reasons for this insufficiency in Thai texts. Another emphasized:

> *Thai English textbooks prefer to present the central theories on the topic being discussed than to include pragmatic contents that they find rather peripheral, fearing that readers of the books might not be well equipped with the important knowledge in the field.*

4.2.5 Tests

Following those found in the course objectives and textbooks, the number of tests on pragmatic English knowledge are very small and are determined by the subjects or topics covered in class. Most courses do not include pragmatic content, and so there is no assessment of this knowledge. On the other hand, courses that naturally require pragmatic awareness, such as translation, conversational English, and drama, do include pragmatic awareness, albeit at a low level. Among the participants, an instructor who teaches both translation and foundational English noted:

> *While my translation course assesses the students' pragmatic knowledge [related to translation], most other general English courses almost have no tests on this knowledge.*

Again, this is largely due to the fact that English pragmatic knowledge receives too little attention from the course instructor and/or coordinator, so it is not translated into the course contents or course objectives. During the course, instructors had to follow that which was explicitly stated in the course syllabus, which automatically means the core contents that will appear in the course tests. Unfortunately, emphasis is placed on forms of the language and direct meaning. However, not all Thai instructors fell in this trap. Some, although much fewer in number, reported no effects of tests on their instruction of pragmatics in the classroom. One instructor said briefly:

> *My incorporation of pragmatic knowledge is independent of the test [which does not often include it].*

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The current study has exhibited a significant mismatch between Thai EFL teachers' belief in the value of pragmatic knowledge and their actual teaching and the factors that have huge impacts on their pedagogical decisions. As the correlation analysis shows, *teachers' backgrounds* determine the extent to which pragmatic content is taught in class. Data from the interview also confirmed this

point: since most of the participants had limited pragmatic knowledge, the participants lacked confidence to deliver it to students.

The findings of this study align with previous research reporting EFL teachers' limited pragmatic expertise (Cohen, 2016; Ishihara, 2011; Savvidou & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2019; Suprijadi, 2013). Thus, the researchers recommend a better holistic solution by which English pragmatics will have a secure place in Thai EFL classrooms. Above all, Thai teachers of English must be well versed in pragmatics and understand the importance of it being taught from both a cognitive and affective perspective. This can be achieved by the establishment of this subject as a compulsory individual course where practice teachers are fully immersed in the relevant theory and application as well as pedagogical training in this specific area to ensure they systematically deliver content, deal with students of different backgrounds, be it language proficiency, interest and learning styles, and to assess their incremental pragmatic competence. Then, during their profession, they should make efforts in incorporating pragmatic knowledge into English classes at a policy level with an aim to ensure EFL students are not only able to use the language correctly, but that they also use it appropriately and naturally. These practices will in turn help the teachers in Thailand and perhaps beyond with regard to the inclusion of pragmatics in their teaching practice, including the course objectives, course content, textbooks, and tests.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire

Factors Affecting Teachers' Pragmatic Knowledge Incorporation
into Thai EFL Classrooms

Instructions: As part of a research project on *Teacher Factors Affecting Incorporation of Pragmatic Knowledge into Thai EFL Classrooms*, we would like to know your view on this issue. Please complete this questionnaire based on your experience. The information provided by you will be confidentially secured and used only for the purposes of the intended research.

The questionnaire is divided into two sections.
Section 1: Demographic information
Section 2: Factors affecting incorporation of English pragmatics into an EFL class

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Pragmatics in this research refers to the ability to interpret meanings represented in real situations according to various contexts, for example, age, gender, culture, time, place, level of formality and politeness.

　　　Examples:
　　　"Is it pretty hot in here?" can be interpreted that the speaker wants the listener to turn on the air conditioner.
　　　"I'd love to, but my mom won't be happy" can be used when the speaker wants to refuse an invitation to a party.

Section 1: Demographic information (Please tick your choice or write your answer in the provided space.)

1. Your present workplace: …………………………………………

2. What is your highest degree?
　　　☐ Bachelor　　　　　　☐ Master　　　　　　☐ Doctorate
3. What are your majors/fields of study? (List all): ……………………………

4. How long have you been teaching English?
　　　☐ Less than 5 years　　　　　　☐ 5-10 years
　　　☐ 11-15 years　　　　　　☐ More than 15 years
5. What course(s) are you responsible for?: …………………………………………
6. Have you ever stayed in an English-speaking country? (If yes, what countries and how long?)
　　　☐ No
　　　☐ Yes　What country/ies?: …………………………………. How long?:…………

7. Have you studied a pragmatic course or participated in pragmatic training?
   ☐ No
   ☐ Yes, as part of a course
   ☐ Yes, as a full course
   ☐ Yes, as a training/workshop

8. Please rate your level of pragmatic competence from 1 – 5 (1 means the least, and 5 means the most).
   ☐ 1   ☐ 2   ☐ 3   ☐ 4   ☐ 5

Section 2: Factors affecting incorporation of English pragmatics into an EFL class

Please tick only one choice out of five options which best matches your agreement with the statements.

   1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree
   NA = Non-applicable

Item	Statement	NA	1	2	3	4	5
1	I believe that pragmatics is important to my students' English learning.						
2	I believe that pragmatics will help my students use the language in any given context more appropriately.						
3	I include sufficient pragmatic knowledge in my class.						
4	My pragmatic competence influences the incorporation of pragmatic knowledge in my class.						
5	My overseas experience (no less than 1 month) in an English-speaking country influences the incorporation of pragmatic knowledge in my class.						
6	My contact with native speakers of English influences the incorporation of pragmatic knowledge in my class.						
7	My students' English ability influences the incorporation of pragmatic knowledge in my class.						
8	The nature of courses that I am responsible for influences the incorporation of pragmatic knowledge in my class.						
9	The objectives of the course that I am responsible for influences the incorporation of pragmatic knowledge in my class.						
10	The amounts of content of the course I am responsible for influences the incorporation of pragmatic knowledge in my class.						
11	The amounts of pragmatic content in the coursebook I use influences the incorporation of pragmatic knowledge in my class.						

Item	Statement	NA	1	2	3	4	5
12	The level of difficulty of pragmatics in the coursebook I use influences the incorporation of pragmatic knowledge in my class.						
13	The amount of pragmatic content in the course tests influence the incorporation of pragmatic knowledge in my class.						

Appendix 2

Interview Questions
Factors Affecting Teachers' Pragmatic Knowledge Incorporation into Thai EFL Classrooms

1. What are your opinions about your pragmatic background that might affect the incorporation of pragmatic knowledge in your class?
2. What are your opinions about your students' English ability that might affect the incorporation of pragmatic knowledge in your class?
3. What are your opinions about the type of English courses that might affect the incorporation of pragmatic knowledge in your class?
4. What are your opinions about the English coursebook that you use that might affect the incorporation of pragmatic knowledge in your class?
5. What are your opinions about the course tests that might affect the incorporation of pragmatic knowledge in your class?