
The Role of Pragmatics in the Master's TESOL Curriculum: Findings From a Nationwide Survey

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Recent years have seen an increase in the number of publications about pragmatics and second language learning and teaching. Yet the extent to which English language teacher preparation programs incorporate explicit instruction about pragmatics into their curricula remains unknown. A nationwide survey of master's-level TESOL programs was conducted to determine where and how pragmatics is covered in the TESOL curriculum, what resources are used to teach graduate TESOL students about pragmatics, as well as to determine some of the prevalent attitudes, beliefs, and opinions about pragmatics held by TESOL graduate program directors and faculty. Individuals from 94 master's-level TESOL programs in the United States participated in the study. Participating programs represent a variety of geographic regions, institution types, and departments. The findings of the study indicate that pragmatics is covered in a wide range of courses across programs (Sociolinguistics, Discourse Analysis, Introduction to Linguistics, Teaching Methods, SLA, etc.), and that the time spent covering pragmatics varies from no time at all, to more than 8 weeks, depending on the program. A great deal of variation was also found in graduate program directors' and faculty members' beliefs about the role of pragmatics in the TESOL curriculum.

Recent years have seen a steady increase in the number of publications about pragmatics and second language (L2) learning and teaching. However, the extent to which master's degree programs in TESOL¹ in the United States incorporate instruction about pragmatics into their curricula remains unknown. And although there has been some speculation that most language teacher education programs do not adequately

¹ We use the acronym TESOL as an umbrella term. Some programs may use other, related acronyms (TESL, ESL, ESOL, TEFL, etc.).

prepare teachers for providing language learners with instruction on pragmatics (e.g., Cohen, 2005; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Ishihara, 2007), to date, no empirical evidence has been gathered to support such claims. Therefore, the study described in this article was undertaken in order to determine where, how, and to what extent pragmatics is covered in the master's-level TESOL curriculum, what resources are used to teach graduate TESOL students about pragmatics, as well as to determine some of the prevalent attitudes, beliefs, and opinions about pragmatics held by TESOL graduate program directors and faculty.

Knowledge about pragmatics is important for language teachers because pragmatic competence—that is, the ability to express appropriately a range of language functions—is a major component of those theoretical models of communicative competence (i.e., Canale & Swain, 1980; Bachman & Palmer, 1996) which have most influenced communicative approaches to English language teaching. Communicative language teaching stresses that in order to be effective language users, learners need to know about more than the formal system of the target language—they must also know how to use the language in socially appropriate ways.

In addition to the important role that pragmatic competence occupies in these influential models of communicative competence, a number of additional arguments have been advanced for why pragmatics should be taught in the second language classroom. We briefly summarize these arguments.

THE NEED FOR L2 PRAGMATICS INSTRUCTION

A commonly cited motivation, or rationale, for providing some focus on pragmatics in L2 instruction is the desire to empower learners and help guard against the potentially dramatic consequences of pragmatic failure, or making a pragmatic error in the target language. As several authors maintain (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Crandall & Basturkmen, 2004; Judd, 1999), unlike grammatical errors, pragmatic errors can easily lead to misconstruals of speaker intentions, which can in turn lead to negative judgments about a speaker's personality or moral character. Another argument which addresses the need for L2 pragmatics instruction is that pragmatic competence does not develop alongside grammatical competence and, in fact, is believed to take longer to develop (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). Furthermore, it has been claimed that exposure to the L2 alone may be insufficient for the acquisition of L2 pragmatic competence. Citing a number of studies, Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2003) explain that “left to their own devices with respect to contact with the target language in and out of the classroom, the majority of learners apparently do not acquire the pragmatics of the target language on their own” (¶ 6).

In terms of the language classroom more specifically, it is generally acknowledged that the classroom does not normally provide an adequate context for learners to pick up pragmatic information incidentally (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Swain, 1985). In other words, using the language appropriately depends on taking into account a number of contextual variables (such as the social identities of, and social relationships between, speakers), and, unfortunately, the L2 classroom—with its relatively stable institutional roles of teacher and student and the constrained range of discourse patterns that these institutional roles tend to produce—represents a very limited source of pragmatic input. In other words, the typical L2 classroom may not provide language learners with adequate opportunities to observe how things are done with words in the target language, in the wider variety of situations and settings that learners are likely to encounter outside of the classroom.

In addition to teachers, textbooks serve as another major source of input in many L2 classrooms. However, as a number of studies have demonstrated (e.g., Boxer & Pickering, 1995; Jiang, 2006; Vellenga, 2004), information about pragmatics in ESL and EFL textbooks tends to be based on the textbook writers' intuitions, rather than on actual patterns of language use. Therefore, the pragmatic information found in language textbooks is minimal, at best (Vellenga, 2004), or—still worse—may even be inaccurate (LoCastro, 1997).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INSTRUCTED L2 PRAGMATICS

Perhaps the most compelling argument for teaching L2 pragmatics is that it has been proven effective. The authorial consensus in two recent review articles (Cohen, 2005; Rose, 2005), and one meta-analytic study (Jeon & Kaya, 2006) investigating the effects of instruction on pragmatic development, is that instruction on pragmatics is clearly beneficial. Furthermore, as Rose concludes in his overview of the research on instructed pragmatics, there is no doubt that instruction is superior to exposure alone.

However, less conclusive results have been found in response to questions about the efficacy of explicit versus implicit instruction in L2 pragmatics. Although explicit instruction has been shown to have more of an impact than implicit instruction in many studies, it is true that there are also a number of studies with inconclusive or contradictory results. And, as both Rose (2005) and Jeon and Kaya (2006) point out, there are several methodological flaws and limitations found in the existing research that will need to be overcome in future research on instructed pragmatics, before firmer conclusions can be drawn about the relative advantages of an explicit or an implicit approach to teaching L2 pragmatics. Nevertheless, at this point, there is general agreement among L2

pragmatics researchers that at least some pragmatic features of language can be taught; that instruction in this area is clearly superior to exposure alone; and that metapragmatic information about the target feature tends to be beneficial for classroom language learners.

RECENT SCHOLARSHIP

In terms of scholarship, there is no doubt that L2 pragmatics is receiving more attention than ever before. Over the past three decades, applied linguists have become increasingly aware that pragmatics should be an important component in L2 instruction—for the various reasons discussed earlier. Whereas the 1980s and 1990s saw only a handful of monographs (e.g., Gass & Houck, 1999; Wolfson, 1989) and edited volumes (e.g., Gass & Neu, 1996; Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993) on pragmatics and language learning, the 2000s have seen a far greater number of publications on this topic. Cohen (2008), for example, describes the flurry of research activity in this area during the present decade as a “veritable upsurge” (p. 215), citing seven book-length publications on pragmatics and language learning from the last few years (i.e., Barron, 2003; Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 2005; Kasper & Rose, 2003; LoCastro, 2003; Martínez-Flor, Usó-Juan, & Fernández Guerra, 2003; Márquez Reiter & Placencia, 2004, 2005; Rose & Kasper, 2001; Tatsuki, 2005). Additionally, special guest-edited issues on pragmatics and language learning have recently been published in applied linguistics journals (e.g., Alcón Soler & Martínez-Flor, 2005; Eslami-Rasekh, 2004), and several articles on this topic have also appeared in recent issues of second language acquisition research journals (e.g., Félix-Brasdefer, 2004; Schauer, 2006), as well as journals geared more toward English language teacher practitioners (e.g., Crandall & Basturkmen, 2004; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2006).

In light of the accretion of evidence suggesting that the teaching of L2 pragmatics is both necessary and effective, as well as this burgeoning interest in pragmatics and language learning at the level of scholarly publications, should we assume that this information is reaching most graduate students enrolled in master’s-level TESOL programs in the United States? How much instruction do prospective ESL and EFL teachers actually receive about pragmatics in their graduate programs?

The current study addresses the following related research questions:

1. Is pragmatics addressed in the master’s-level TESOL curriculum, and—if so—where does pragmatics fit?
2. To what extent is pragmatics covered in the master’s-level TESOL curriculum?

3. What resources are used to teach master's-level TESOL students about pragmatics?
4. What are some attitudes, beliefs, and opinions about pragmatics held by TESOL graduate program directors and faculty?

METHOD

Prior surveys have investigated other curricular aspects of master's-level TESOL programs in the United States. These surveys have focused on phonology (Murphy, 1997), teaching methodology (Grosse, 1991, 1993), and intercultural communication (Nelson, 1998) course offerings. Adding to our understanding about the curricula of U.S. master's degree programs in TESOL, this nationwide survey is the first of its kind to focus on pragmatics. The survey was conducted via telephone—and, in some cases, by e-mail—with individuals from 94 participating institutions in the United States. The following section describes how participating programs were identified, explains how the survey was conducted, and provides descriptive information about the sample.

Selection Criteria

In order to identify master's degree programs in TESOL in the United States, a standard online directory of universities was consulted. This directory, *Peterson's* (Nelnet, 2006), lists universities offering particular types of graduate programs according to discipline. A preliminary search for "English as a Second Language" programs at the master's level in the United States yielded a list of 227 programs.² On closer examination of the list, approximately half of those programs were excluded from our sample for the following reasons: They were duplicate entries, the programs were offered in countries outside of the United States, or the programs listed did not actually offer a master's degree program specifically in TESOL. Thus, our final sample included 104 graduate programs in the United States offering a master's degree in TESOL or a closely related discipline. (By "closely related discipline," we refer to programs in second language studies, applied linguistics, English as a second language [ESL], English as an international language [EIL], etc., which we did

² TESOL's Web site (2007) also offers a directory of master's-level programs in TESOL; however, this site includes a disclaimer which states the list may not be "comprehensive, complete, or otherwise reliable." The TESOL Web site list includes 177 programs, about 40% of which overlap with the *Peterson's* list. In addition, the TESOL list also was found to include programs outside of the United States, as well as programs which do not offer a master's degree in TESOL specifically.

include in our sample. We did not, however, include programs such as those which offer a master's degree in, for example, curriculum and instruction, with a concentration in TESOL. We felt that programs such as these were broader in focus than those which specifically include TESOL—or some closely related acronym—in the actual name of the degree.) We believe that this sample represents approximately 40%–50% of the total population of master's programs in TESOL currently found in the United States.³

Instrument

In developing the survey, we followed Cresswell's (2002) guidelines for designing telephone surveys to be carried out in educational settings. Primary considerations in designing our instrument were brevity and parallel forms. We wanted to create a survey instrument that would not impose excessively on our respondents in terms of completion time—that is, one that would take no more than 5–15 minutes (depending on the length of participants' responses) to complete over the telephone. And although our preferred mode of data collection was by telephone, we were also aware that some participants would find it more convenient to respond to the survey via e-mail; thus, we needed an instrument that would be similar enough to allow for data collection in both modalities. After several rounds of drafting, we piloted our questions with a few colleagues at other institutions. Piloting resulted in some minor modifications in terms of wording and item sequencing. The final instrument consists of 11 closed-question items and one open question; the survey instrument is included in the appendix.

Procedures

Over a 2-month period, directors of the 104 master's-level TESOL programs included in the sample were contacted, and the majority of surveys were completed over the telephone. In the remaining cases in which no contact was made after multiple phone attempts, e-mail messages were sent with an electronic version of the survey attached. The majority of our participants were directors of TESOL master's programs. However, in a few cases, we were referred to a graduate advisor, another faculty

³ According to Murphy (1997), in 1995 there were 195 master's degree programs in TESOL. Most likely, this number has increased to some extent. It is difficult to arrive at a precise number of TESOL master's programs in the United States, for reasons that are discussed in note 2.

member, or some other individual, who then completed the survey either by telephone or by e-mail.

Participating Programs

Of the 104 programs that made up our sample, 94 programs participated in the survey, yielding a response rate of 90%. In other words, after multiple attempts, we received no response from only 10 of the 104 programs we contacted. Both public and private colleges and universities are represented in the 94 participating programs. Approximately 75% of the programs in our sample are found in public institutions, and 25% are in private institutions; the majority of the latter have some type of denominational affiliation. All geographical regions in the United States are represented in the 94 participating programs.

Table 1 shows the various departments in which the participating master's programs in TESOL are housed. As can be seen in Table 1, over half of the master's programs in TESOL included in this study are found in education (36) and English (24) departments. Fewer master's programs in TESOL are found in (theoretical) linguistics departments (12); TESOL or related departments including ESL, EIL, applied linguistics, and second language studies (10); modern, foreign, or world languages departments (6); and other types of departments including intercultural studies, international studies, and so on (6).

Of the programs surveyed, 44/94 reported that the majority of their graduates intend to teach adult learners; 27/94 reported that they serve prospective teachers who intend to teach child language learners; and 23/94 reported an even divide (i.e., approximately half of their graduates eventually teach adults language learners, and the other half of their graduates go on to teach ESL in K-12 settings).

With respect to program size, as can be seen in Table 2, regardless of the type of department in which a master's-level TESOL program is housed, exactly half of these programs (47/94, or 50%) award 10–25 degrees per year. When respondents offered even more specific responses

TABLE 1
Departments in Which Master's TESOL Programs Are Housed

Department	Number of programs	Percentage of total
Education	36	38%
English	24	26%
Linguistics	12	13%
TESOL/related	10	11%
Modern languages	6	6%
Other	6	6%
Total	94	100%

TABLE 2
Number of Master's TESOL Graduates per Year, by Department Type

	<10	10–25	25–40	40–60	60–100	Total
Education	7	16	6	3	4	36
English	9	14	0	0	1	24
Linguistics	4	4	4	0	0	12
TESOL	2	4	4	0	0	10
Modern languages	0	6	0	0	0	6
Other	1	3	1	0	1	6
Total	23	47	15	3	6	94

(in addition to the ranges provided), the majority indicated they awarded 15–20 graduate TESOL degrees per year. Programs with the largest numbers of students (60–100 graduates per year) tend to be located in large, urban universities.

The survey's results are organized into five subsections. The first section presents the courses that cover pragmatics. The next section offers a brief description of the types of programs which offer dedicated courses on pragmatics. The following two sections discuss pragmatics topics covered and textbooks and materials used to teach master's-level students about pragmatics, respectively. The remaining section provides a discussion of some of the prevalent beliefs that program directors and faculty members expressed about the role of pragmatics in the graduate TESOL curriculum.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: Is Pragmatics Being Taught, and If So, in Which Course(s)?

In order to address Research Question 1, participants were first asked the question: As part of your master's-level TESOL curriculum, do you have any courses that offer your students an opportunity to learn about pragmatics? Of the 94 participating programs, only 2 responded "no" to this question. In one of these cases, the program director responded: "This [i.e., pragmatics] is not one of the areas addressed by the state standards, and we have no time or space in the curriculum to dedicate to it." (Although this particular program was housed in an English department, its main population was local K-12 ESL teachers.)⁴ In the other case, the

⁴ It is important to point out that teacher certification requirements, which specify the curricular content of many graduate programs through sets of teacher competencies or adopted performance standards, are determined at the state level rather than at the program level. Interestingly, although a sizeable proportion of programs represented in this study prepare students for teaching in K-12 contexts, this was the only individual who mentioned state standards in his response to our survey.

program director completed the survey via e-mail, answered “no” to this question, and offered no further explanation. This trend suggests that nearly all of the programs surveyed (i.e., 92/94) cover pragmatics to some degree in their curriculum. However, as will be discussed, where in the curriculum pragmatics is addressed and the amount of time that is dedicated to covering pragmatics is highly variable across programs.

Over one half of the programs surveyed that include some type of instruction on pragmatics reported that they cover pragmatics in only one course in their curriculum (i.e., 47/92, or 51%). The remaining 45 programs (49%) reported that they treat the topic of pragmatics in more than one course. Table 3 shows the primary course covering pragmatics. In the majority of programs, pragmatics is covered either in a sociolinguistics, introduction to linguistics, or discourse analysis course. Eighteen programs (20%) reported having some type of dedicated pragmatics course; this phenomenon is discussed in more detail in the following section. To a lesser extent, pragmatics is covered primarily in a culture course (e.g., “Culture and Language Teaching,” “Intercultural Communication,” “Cross-Cultural Issues in ESL”), teaching methods, grammar, second language acquisition, other courses, or some combination thereof.

What Types of Programs Offer Pragmatics Courses?

The previous section pointed out that 20% (18/92) of those programs that provide their students an opportunity to learn about pragmatics

TABLE 3
Courses in Master’s TESOL Programs that Concentrate the Most on Pragmatics

Course most focused on pragmatics	Number of programs	Percentage of programs
Sociolinguistics	22	24%
Introduction to Linguistics	14	15%
Discourse Analysis	12	13%
Pragmatics: Theoretical	10	11%
Pragmatics: Applied	8	9%
Culture	8	9%
Teaching Methods	5	5%
Grammar	4	4%
Various*	3	3.3%
SLA	3	3.3%
Other*	3	3.3%
Total	92	100%

* The “Various” category comprises programs which reported that pragmatics was not covered in any one particular course more than in others, whereas the “Other” category comprises specialized courses that are not typically found in most TESOL programs (e.g., Sociocultural Theory).

TABLE 4
Pragmatics Courses: Required versus Elective and Applied versus Theoretical in Primary Orientation

	Applied	Theoretical	Total
Required	3	1	4
Elective	5	9	14
Total	8	10	18

reported that they have some type of dedicated pragmatics course in their curriculum. This subset of TESOL programs was examined more closely to determine if these 18 programs shared any common characteristics.

As Table 4 shows, the clear majority of these pragmatics courses are electives (14/18) rather than required courses (4/18). Also, as shown in Table 4, slightly more than half of these pragmatics courses (10/18) have a more theoretical rather than an applied (i.e., L2 teaching and learning) orientation. Those courses with a more theoretical linguistic orientation tend to have course titles such as “Pragmatics,” or “Pragmatics and Semantics.” In contrast, the more applied courses, which focus more explicitly on the intersection between L2 pragmatics research and language teaching applications, have course titles such as “Pragmatics and Language Learning,” “Pragmatics and Materials Design,” or “Conversational Pragmatics.” In response to questions about enrollments, it was found that the more theoretically focused pragmatics electives, when offered, typically enrolled 50% or fewer of the program’s total student population in the program, whereas the more applied pragmatics electives were reported as generally having higher enrollments (i.e., more than 50%, or nearly all, of the students in the master’s program).

Furthermore, the majority of pragmatics courses are offered by programs whose students intend to teach adults (14/18) or programs comprised of prospective teachers of both adult and children language learners (4/18). In other words, none of the programs that primarily, or exclusively, serve graduate students wishing to teach child language learners offer a dedicated pragmatics course. Also, of the 18 programs offering pragmatics courses, more are found in TESOL-type departments than in the other department types. The breakdown, by department type, for the 18 programs which offer a pragmatics course, is as follows: TESOL (6), English (4), linguistics (4), education (2), modern languages (1), and intercultural studies (1).

In contrast, no clear trends appeared between a program having a dedicated pragmatics course and the size of the program itself: Five of these 18 programs reported program enrollments of fewer than 10 students, six were in the 10–25 student range, five were in the 25–40 student

range, and the remaining two programs were in the 40–60 and the 60–100 ranges. However, we did note that of these 18 programs, 5 have faculty who are experts (i.e., have published extensively) on the topic of L2 pragmatics. A graduate coordinator from one of these programs observed: “I think that having [*name of faculty member*] in the program makes pragmatics a central part of the curriculum.”

Research Question 2: To What Extent Is Pragmatics Covered in the Curriculum?

In order to address Research Question 2, respondents were asked how many weeks are spent covering pragmatics in those courses that are the most focused on pragmatics in their particular program. In many cases, respondents also indicated how many weeks were spent covering pragmatics in the “most focused on pragmatics course,” as well as in other courses in their curriculum which addressed pragmatics—in these cases, we added those weeks together, to report the total number of weeks dedicated to pragmatics. A breakdown of these numbers by all programs which cover pragmatics is given in Table 5.

Table 5 shows that 47% of programs which cover pragmatics do so for a total of 4 weeks or less. At the other end of the spectrum, about one-quarter of the programs responded that they devote 8 or more weeks in their curriculum to pragmatics topics; these include all of the aforementioned programs which offer a dedicated pragmatics course. About 10% of respondents reported that their programs cover pragmatics for 4–8 weeks. Sixteen individuals responded that they knew their program covered pragmatics—and most knew in which course(s) pragmatics was covered—but they were not sure for how long. (For programs on a quarter system, conversions were made so that proportions corresponded with the numbers given in the survey.)

TABLE 5
Number of Weeks Spent on Pragmatics, Including Both Required and Elective Courses

Number of weeks spent covering pragmatics	Number of programs	Percentage of programs
< 1 week	8	9%
1–2 weeks	24	26%
3–4 weeks	11	12%
4–8 weeks	9	10%
8+ weeks	24	26%
Don't know	16	17%
Total	92	100%

TABLE 6
Number of Weeks Spent on Pragmatics, Including Only Required Courses

Number of weeks spent covering pragmatics	Number of programs	Percentage of programs
< 1 week	6	7%
1–2 weeks	19	21%
3–4 weeks	11	12%
4–8 weeks	8	9%
8+ weeks	8	9%
Don't know/not required	40	43%
Total	92	101%

Table 5 seems to indicate that pragmatics is being addressed to a considerable extent by nearly one-third of the programs surveyed. However, once we removed from these calculations all elective courses, a somewhat different picture emerged: Table 6 shows the amount of time spent on pragmatics in only those courses that are program requirements.

As Table 6 indicates, if we consider only those courses that are required by various programs, then only 57% of programs have a clear program requirement which covers pragmatics. The remaining programs (40/92 or 43%) either do not require those courses in their curriculum which are most focused on pragmatics, or the respondents were unsure about how much time was devoted to covering pragmatics in required courses. When considering only required courses, the largest number of programs (21%) covers pragmatics for only 1–2 weeks in a required course, slightly fewer do so for 3–4 weeks (12%), and even fewer for 4–8 weeks (9%) or more than 8 weeks (9%) or less than 1 week (7%).

Which Pragmatics Topics Are Covered?

In order to determine the range of topics associated with pragmatics covered in the programs surveyed, respondents were first provided a list of topics and asked if those topics are addressed by their program. Next, they were asked if their program covers any other topics—besides the ones on our list—when they address pragmatics in their curriculum.

As Table 7 shows, when most programs teach pragmatics, they focus largely on linguistic politeness (e.g., address forms, taking social distance and relative power of interlocutor into account) and speech acts (i.e., social functions of language, such as requests and apologies). Conversational implicature (i.e., Gricean maxims, the cooperative principle) tends to be addressed somewhat less frequently than politeness and speech acts. Fewer than half of the programs (38/92) reported that

TABLE 7
Pragmatics Topics Covered

Topic	Number of programs	Percentage of programs
Linguistic politeness	73	79%
Speech acts	72	78%
Implicature/Gricean maxims	51	55%
Interlanguage pragmatics	38	41%
L2 instructional pragmatics	38	41%

Note. Each program could have responded “yes” to multiple topics; therefore, the numbers in this table do not add up to 100%.

they address interlanguage pragmatics (i.e., issues related to how pragmatic competence develops during SLA). The same low proportion of programs (38/92) addresses instructional or instructed pragmatics (i.e., L2 teaching applications related to fostering pragmatic competence in language learners) in their courses. One faculty member who covers pragmatics in a sociolinguistics course summarized this trend, by commenting: “I give students the theory ... they can figure out the application once they are in the field.”

Several individuals responded with topics—besides the ones provided—which they address when pragmatics is covered. These topics include relevance theory, cognitive approaches, indexicality, definiteness, presupposition, information structure, pragmalinguistics (form–function relationships), contextualization cues, discourse markers, cross-cultural and intercultural issues (e.g., crosstalk, language socialization in teaching and learning), institutional talk, power, microsociolinguistics, ethnography of communication, ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, genre, speech community, and assessing L2 pragmatics. However, only one or two respondents mentioned each of these topics, and none of these topics was mentioned with a higher frequency than the others. Furthermore, we also noted that in response to a final, open-ended question (discussed in more detail at the end of this section), in a few cases, additional comments were made about what kinds of topics should be covered in any discussion of pragmatics. For example, code-switching and prosody were mentioned as topics that should be covered in a pragmatics course.

Research Question 3: What Textbooks or Other Resources Are Used to Teach TESOL Students About Pragmatics?

Mirroring the variability in responses to the question about where in the curriculum pragmatics is addressed, responses to our third research

question were also highly varied.⁵ Texts used more frequently than others in those pragmatics courses with a more applied orientation include Kasper and Rose's (2003) *Pragmatic Development in a Second Language* (i.e., 3/8) and LoCastro's (2003) *An Introduction to Pragmatics* (i.e., 2/8). Most respondents interviewed (5/8) indicated that they supplemented these texts with additional readings from relevant edited collections or journals. In those pragmatics courses with a more theoretical orientation, popular titles included Green's (1996) *Pragmatics and Natural Language Understanding* (i.e., 2/10) and Mey's (2001) *Pragmatics: An Introduction* (i.e., 2/10). Several instructors of these courses (4/10) also opted to use a coursepack or a collection of readings.

Because most programs cover pragmatics in a sociolinguistics course (i.e., 22/92, as shown above in Table 3), it is worth noting that the most popular titles of texts used include introductory sociolinguistics textbooks by Wardhaugh (2005), Holmes (2001), and Coulmas (1998). Most introductory sociolinguistics textbooks tend to treat pragmatics topics in one or two chapters, and these chapters most typically focus generally on linguistic politeness and speech acts. Consequently, in a few cases, faculty teaching sociolinguistics courses indicated that they supplemented these introductory textbooks with more specific articles or chapters about pragmatics.

Three respondents offered additional comments related specifically to pragmatics and textbook issues. One faculty member had the opinion that "unfortunately, a lot of the research findings in the area of pragmatics don't make it into the TESOL literature," adding that the definitive "what-language-teachers-need-to-know-about-pragmatics textbook" still remains to be written. Another faculty member mentioned that he felt that the textbook which he most recently used to teach a pragmatics elective was too simplistic for graduate students, and was currently seeking a more suitable alternative. One respondent (whose program addressed pragmatics the most in their Speaking and Listening Teaching Methods course) expressed her belief that pragmatics is not covered very well in the available TESOL methods textbooks, and further remarked that "pragmatics doesn't really seem to be as important [in these textbooks]—or maybe it's just not as easy to address as grammar, vocabulary, or other ways of building a lesson."

⁵ Once the survey was completed, a comprehensive list of the resources used to teach students about pragmatics, organized by course type and frequency of mention, was compiled. Due to space constraints, this list is not included here: Individuals interested in receiving a copy of this list should contact the first author.

Research Question 4: What Are Attitudes, Beliefs, and Opinions About Pragmatics?

When asked the final open-ended question in the survey (i.e., “Do you have anything you’d like to add about the role of pragmatics in the MA-TESOL curriculum?”), 61/94 respondents took this opportunity to share some of their thoughts, beliefs, and opinions about pragmatics and graduate TESOL programs. Thus, in order to address Research Question 4, we examined the various responses we received to the final open-ended survey question, classifying these comments according to their main idea. (In a few cases, individuals also provided unsolicited comments as they were taking the survey. We made immediate notes of these comments, and we consider them in this section.) It is important to note that we are unable to include a discussion of all of the comments we received. However, we have made an effort to discuss all of those topics or issues that were voiced by several individuals from different programs. The following themes emerged from these qualitative data.

An Increasing Awareness About the Importance of Pragmatics

Of the 61 individuals who responded to the survey and provided a response to the open-ended question, 12 mentioned growing awareness about the importance of pragmatics in recent years. For example, one program director commented that “It [pragmatics] has increased in importance over the years. We recognize that knowing about structure is only part of knowing how language works.” Another faculty member noted that “We’re not there yet, but it [pragmatics] is becoming more important.” Furthermore, two individuals mentioned that new pragmatics courses had recently been added to their master’s-level TESOL curricula. In one case, a respondent indicated that he taught a new required pragmatics course for the first time this year—his program’s curriculum had recently shifted away from a more traditional, theoretical orientation, and the new pragmatics course was added because of “its clear importance for language teachers.” Another program offered—for the first time this year—a new elective course on the use of pragmatics research in the development of language teaching materials. Four more respondents indicated that faculty in their programs were in the process of discussing how to give greater curricular emphasis to pragmatics topics. For instance, one faculty member stated, “We are currently considering a revision to our curriculum, and we are considering dedicating greater time, attention, and prominence to such topics.” Another program director commented, “We are trying to find a bigger role for pragmatics in our courses. We [faculty in the program] didn’t have training in it, and we don’t want to perpetuate that.”

Students' Attitudes Toward Pragmatics Courses

Seven respondents (i.e., 7/61) commented that their students appreciate and/or are interested in learning about pragmatics. For instance, one of these faculty members reported that “most students who take the Pragmatics elective are happy they did.” A few others indicated that students often select pragmatics topics for their individual projects. However, two comments revealed a very different perspective related to students' attitudes toward pragmatics in their programs. One of these respondents indicated that her program's Semantics and Pragmatics elective was not so appealing to students in her program, and that students instead preferred to take “more hands-on courses such as Technology and Language Teaching or Language Course Design.” It should be noted that the pragmatics elective in this particular program had a more theoretical than applied orientation. And another respondent whose program also offers a more theoretical rather than applied pragmatics elective said that not many students opt to take the pragmatics elective because it is viewed by students as one of the “tougher” courses in the program. These comments support the previous discussion about general enrollment trends in applied versus theoretical pragmatics electives.

International TESOL Students and Pragmatics

Eight respondents made reference to international students in their programs.⁶ One commented, “This is a very important field, especially for EFL teachers. The international MA students find this [pragmatics] course very helpful.” Another program director, who also described her graduate student population as mostly international, pointed out that pragmatics “comes up” very frequently in graduate classes due to some of the master's-level students' own limited pragmatic competence in English. Similarly, a respondent at another university reported that her program's international MATESOL students “run across pragmatics issues all the time!”

Two other program directors expressed views that indicated that international students in their programs are very eager to learn more about pragmatics, such as: “For sure there's a need among international students—they would like to have pragmatics covered more” and “Most of our international students have identified it as a need that they have as foreign language teachers.” Finally, one program director's comment

⁶ In retrospect, we realized that it would have been useful to ask about proportion of international to noninternational students enrolled in each master's-level TESOL program. Although some respondents volunteered this information, we unfortunately did not collect this information systematically.

suggested an underlying belief that graduate students who are native speakers of English may not need as much explicit instruction on pragmatics as nonnative speakers, in remarking that her particular program “may do less with pragmatics [than other programs], since our students are mostly native speakers.” (This perspective is addressed later in our discussion.)

Should Pragmatics Be Integrated or Should It Be Addressed in a Separate Course?

This study found a wide gap in beliefs about whether pragmatics should be integrated across a number of courses or whether it should be treated as its own subject. In fact, 11 individuals (11/61) expressed strong opinions supporting the idea that pragmatics should be integrated: “Pragmatics is best taught infused throughout the curriculum.” “It [pragmatics] shouldn’t be an add-on!” and “I’m not sure I would want a dedicated Pragmatics course in an MA-TESOL program.”

“Integrated” Versus “Touched on”

A few respondents who reported that their programs integrate pragmatics throughout several courses in their curricula expressed a clearly articulated vision of how this worked; as one program director explained, “A number of courses in our curriculum (Discourse Analysis, Grammar, Contrastive Analysis) are built around pragmatics in different ways. A pragmatic approach to language is fundamental to the linguistic aspects of our MATESOL curriculum.” Another program director expressed a similar programmatic position on pragmatics in the TESOL curriculum:

Pragmatics is clearly covered in many different courses in our curriculum, especially in Sociolinguistics and Discourse Analysis, but also indirectly in every course—in Curriculum, Methods, and even Assessment. We believe that language is more than just a structural entity.

However, these two responses, which expressed a coherent, program-level position on the role of pragmatics in the curriculum, stood out as exceptional. In contrast, in the vast majority of those programs which claimed to have an integrated approach to pragmatics, responses from participants tended to be much more vague, for example: “Pragmatics is peppered throughout a number of courses.” Or “It [pragmatics] is a piece in many of our courses.” Most often, when respondents whose program did not offer a dedicated pragmatics course were asked about if and where specific pragmatics topics were covered, there was a tendency to

use imprecise or uncertain language: “I can’t imagine that it [L2 instructional pragmatics] is not addressed in our Methods course.” “I would think that that [interlanguage pragmatics] is covered in the SLA course.” And “I imagine we touch on it [pragmatics] in some other courses as well.” Perhaps this tendency is best summarized by a comment made by one program director who reported: “It’s something we try to weave in as best we can. Pragmatics is addressed as it comes up.”

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The survey’s main findings have shown that pragmatics does receive some type of coverage—though in widely varying degrees, and instantiated in different places throughout the curriculum—in most master’s-level programs in TESOL offered by U.S. colleges and universities. Previous surveys of graduate TESOL programs in the United States, which have examined other types of courses (e.g., phonology courses, Murphy, 1997; intercultural communication courses, Nelson, 1998), found that programs exhibit considerable variability in what they emphasize in their curricula. The current study finds possibly even greater variability where pragmatics is concerned: variability in faculty members’ beliefs about whether pragmatics should be addressed in a stand-alone course versus whether pragmatics is best integrated throughout the curriculum; variability across programs in the types of courses in which pragmatics receives the most emphasis; and variability in the general orientation to pragmatics (i.e., theoretical or applied), which, in turn, results in variability in the kinds of topics covered and the types of textbooks and materials used in different courses.

We are, of course, aware that the usual limitations associated with self-report data apply to this study. Most obviously, we recognize that there is not always an exact correspondence between what individuals report doing and what they actually do. Furthermore, in this study, respondents were asked to answer questions about what happens in their programs—in some cases, these individuals taught the classes they discussed, but in other cases, individuals other than the respondents taught those courses. As a result, participants had differing levels of familiarity with the program that they represent and with the focal course(s). Thus, the degree of certainty expressed varied considerably across respondents. Nevertheless, we believe that this study provides an important first glimpse into the current state of instruction on pragmatics in U.S. master’s degree programs in TESOL. We also believe that the results of this survey provide an empirical basis on which any future claims can be made about the degree to which pragmatics is addressed in language teacher preparation programs, specifically, in master’s-level TESOL programs in the United States.

Although we advocate caution in interpreting the results from those programs claiming some type of coverage of pragmatics as a topic or unit within a larger course, we can say with considerably more certainty that less than one quarter of the programs surveyed currently offer a dedicated pragmatics course in their curriculum. Furthermore, very few of those courses were found to be program requirements, which means that although some content about pragmatics has been built into the curricula of those programs, that content may not necessarily reach all of their master's-level students.

For programs where pragmatics receives primary coverage in courses such as Sociolinguistics, Introduction to Linguistics, or Second Language Acquisition, it is important to note that most textbooks used in such courses dedicate very little attention to pragmatics, and it is likely to be treated on a more general or theoretical level, rather than addressing actual teaching applications. Indeed, only a handful of programs surveyed mentioned that they cover pragmatics topics in their Teaching Methods courses. This fact, coupled with the comments made by some faculty about the lack of pragmatic information in TESOL methods textbooks, suggests that more could be done in terms of translating findings from L2 pragmatics research into methods materials written for an audience of prospective language teachers. Thus, although the knowledge base on interlanguage pragmatics and instructed pragmatics is growing at unprecedented rates, it is clear that specific recommendations for L2 pragmatics instruction based on results from empirical studies is an area that will need further attention in the future.

Next, we also believe that where pragmatics courses are concerned, the theoretical or applied distinction is a very important one. The finding that more students opt to take a pragmatics elective when it has an applied focus than when it has a predominantly theoretical orientation—supported by faculty members' comments about students' attitudes toward both types of courses—is an interesting one. Pragmatics courses that are theoretical in nature, are less likely to deal with teaching applications and are therefore likely to be perceived as less immediately relevant by TESOL graduate students. In this respect, we believe that language teacher educators in master's-level TESOL programs should be responsive to their students' needs and interests, and that they should provide an appropriate balance of theoretical background and practical application when providing graduate-level instruction about pragmatics.

Furthermore, for those programs not offering a dedicated pragmatics course, only a few individuals articulated a clear perspective on how pragmatics is integrated into their programs' curricula in a way which implied some systematicity, as well as prior discussion and decision-making. In contrast, the majority of programs which did not have a clear place for pragmatics, there was a tendency for respondents to speak of "touching

on” pragmatics in several courses, or “sprinkling it throughout” the curriculum, which certainly raises questions about whether pragmatics is even addressed at all. For those programs which claimed to address pragmatics incidentally or “as it comes up” in their programs, we share the concerns of one faculty member who explained: “I wish pragmatics could be more of a topic onto itself. Because it’s spread out over time, and across the curriculum, I don’t know if students really get the ‘big picture,’ or a comprehensive understanding of pragmatics.”

It is our position that to be able to consciously and accurately address L2 pragmatics in the classroom, English language teachers must also receive some explicit instruction about pragmatics themselves, so that they can develop awareness and a well-informed professional knowledge base about pragmatics. Contrary to the notion expressed by one participant (i.e., that master’s-level TESOL students who are native speakers of English may not require as much instruction about pragmatics as nonnative speakers of English), we would like to assert our own position, which is that systematic, explicit instruction about pragmatics is important for, and can benefit, all prospective English language teachers: both nonnative- and native-English-speaking students in graduate TESOL programs. Indeed, as was demonstrated over two decades ago by linguistic anthropologist Michael Silverstein (1981), simply being a member of a particular speech community does not necessarily entail metapragmatic awareness or an understanding of the pragmatic norms (and the ways they are conventionally expressed) of one’s own linguaculture. Moreover, being pragmatically competent in one’s L1 in no way ensures that a teacher will automatically know how to provide instruction on pragmatics in the L2 classroom. Thus, we believe that even just raising awareness about pragmatics, in some principled fashion, to all future English language teachers, is taking a big step in the right direction.

In response to those who have speculated that pragmatics is an area which “has traditionally been underrepresented in [language] teacher development programs” (Cohen, 2005, p. 285), that pragmatics remains “largely neglected in ... L2 teacher education” (Ishihara, 2007, p. 21), and that, more specifically, there is a “lack of emphasis on pragmatic issues in ESL teaching methodology courses” (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005, p. 199), the results of this study lend support to such claims. Certainly, the results of this survey indicate that pragmatics does not yet occupy a clearly defined, unambiguous place in the master’s-level TESOL curriculum. The results also suggest that the majority of TESOL programs—in the words of one respondent—“could be doing more with pragmatics,” especially if graduates of these programs are ultimately expected to have adequate awareness and knowledge, as well as appropriate instructional strategies for addressing issues related to the development of L2 pragmatic competence in their English language classrooms.

On a more optimistic note, a number of individuals commented on their faculty's—and even, in some cases, their students'—growing awareness about the importance of pragmatics in L2 instruction: an awareness which may indicate familiarity with some of the recent publications in this area that were mentioned earlier. A number of participants also reported on recent curricular revisions and current discussions taking place about how to most effectively incorporate treatment of pragmatics into their graduate programs, in order to best ensure that future ESL and EFL teachers are able to meet the pragmatics-related needs of the populations of language learners they will eventually encounter. It is our hope that this article serves to stimulate further discussion and reflection on this important topic.

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APPENDIX

Phone Survey Instrument

- 1) On average, what is the approximate number of students who graduate from your MA-TESOL (or M.Ed.-TESL, etc.) program each year?
 less than 10 students 10–25 students 25–40 students
 40–60 students 60–100 students
- 2) Do most of the graduates of your program intend to teach children or adult language learners?
 adults children 50/50
- 3) Do most of your MA-TESL graduates end up teaching ESL here in the United States, or do most of them end up teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in another country?
 ESL EFL 50/50

The next few questions ask about any instruction on pragmatics that is offered by your program. By “pragmatics,” we are referring to “meaning in context” or “discourse-level meaning,” which might include topics such as linguistic politeness, conversational implicature, or speech acts (for example: requests, apologies, compliments, etc.).

- 4) As part of your MA-TESL curriculum, do you have any courses that offer your students an opportunity to learn about pragmatics? Yes No
→ If Question 4’s answer is “yes” to, skip down to Question 5.
→ If Question 4’s answer is “no”, go to Question 4b.
- 4b) Have you and your colleagues ever discussed adding or incorporating any pragmatics topics into your MA-TESL curriculum? Yes No
→ If Question 4b’s answer is “yes” to, go to Question 4c.
→ If Question 4b’s answer is “no”, skip to Question 12.
- 4c) Could you summarize briefly what was discussed about including pragmatics topics into your program’s curriculum? [*Write in verbatim response, then skip to Question 12.*] _____

- 5) In which of your MA-TESL courses is Pragmatics covered? [*Check all that apply*]
 Discourse Analysis Sociolinguistics Introduction to Linguistics
 TESOL Methods Speaking & Listening SLA
 Other course(s): _____
- 6) Of those courses which cover pragmatics in your program, which one is the MOST focused on pragmatics? _____
Please answer the following questions with that course in mind.
- 7) Which textbooks—or other materials—are used to teach students about pragmatics in this course? _____
- 8) How much of the semester in this course would you say is dedicated to covering the topic of pragmatics? Would you say ...
 Less than 1 week 1–2 weeks 3–4 weeks
 More than 4 weeks but less than 8 weeks 8 or more weeks
- 9) Does this course include any discussion of ... [*Check all that apply.*]
 ... developmental or interlanguage pragmatics?
 ... instructional pragmatics, or how to teach pragmatics to language learners?
 ... or does it have a mostly theoretical (rather than applied) approach to pragmatics?
- 10) Does this course include any discussion of ... [*Check all that apply.*]
 ... speech acts?
 ... linguistic politeness?
 ... conversational implicature?
 ... any other topics related to pragmatics? [*List all.*] _____
- 11) Is this course an MA-TESL requirement or is it an elective?
→ If Question 11’s answer is “requirement” to, go to Question 12.
→ If Question 11’s answer is “elective” to, continue to Questions 11b and 11c.
- 11b) How often is this elective offered? _____
- 11c) How many students typically enroll in this elective when it is offered? _____
- 12) Do you have anything you would like to add about the role of pragmatics in the MA-TESOL curriculum? _____