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Raising EFL teachers' awareness of L2 pragmatic teaching via teacher professional development: the impact of an effective training workshop

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ABSTRACT

Second language (L2) pragmatics has been identified to be under-represented in EFL textbooks and generally neglected in English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching curriculums and teacher training programs despite its well-established status in L2 teaching research. Adopting the repeated measures design, this study examines the effectiveness of a professional development (PD) event in L2 pragmatics teaching for Vietnamese EFL high school teachers. Its effect was measured using pre-training and post-training questionnaires completed by 43 participating teachers. The findings showed that the training workshop exhibited positive effects in raising the teachers' awareness of L2 pragmatics and its teaching and enhancing their knowledge of these areas. Furthermore, the PD intervention resulted in a potential model for effective PD in the form of training workshops in low-resource contexts like Vietnam. The study thereby implies the need for more PD activities in L2 pragmatics teaching so that L2 pragmatics could be included in EFL classrooms in a principled and systematic way.

ABSTRACT (VIETNAMESE)

Ngữ dụng học trong ngôn ngữ thứ hai (L2) đã được xác định là ít được trình bày trong sách giáo khoa và thường bị bỏ quên trong chương trình giảng dạy tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ (EFL) và trong các chương trình đào tạo giáo viên mặc dù lĩnh vực này đã được quan tâm rất nhiều trong nghiên cứu giảng dạy L2. Áp dụng thiết kế lặp lại phương pháp đo lường, nghiên cứu này được tiến hành để xem xét hiệu quả của một chương trình phát triển chuyên môn (PD) trong giảng dạy ngữ dụng học L2 cho giáo viên trung học dạy Tiếng Anh ở Việt Nam. Hiệu quả của chương trình được đo lường bằng cách sử dụng bảng câu hỏi trước và sau buổi đào tạo, được hoàn thành bởi 43 giáo viên tham gia. Kết quả cho thấy hội thảo tập huấn đã thể hiện những tác động tích cực trong việc nâng cao nhận thức của giáo viên về giảng dạy ngữ dụng học L2, cũng như phát triển kiến thức của họ về lĩnh vực này. Hơn nữa, chương trình PD này đã đưa đến một mô hình tiềm năng cho việc tiến hành PD hiệu quả dưới hình thức các hội thảo đào tạo trong bối cảnh các nước có nguồn lực thấp như Việt Nam. Từ đó, nghiên cứu này khẳng định sự cần thiết phải có nhiều hoạt động PD hơn về giảng dạy ngữ dụng học L2 để các kiến thức này có thể được đưa vào các lớp học EFL một cách có nguyên tắc và hệ thống.

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PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY

Contextually appropriate second language (L2) use has been identified to be generally neglected in English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching curriculums and teacher training programs despite its well-established status in L2 teaching research. Using the research method of repeating the measure, this study examines the effectiveness of a professional development (PD) event in this issue for Vietnamese EFL high school teachers. Its effect was measured using pre-training and post-training questionnaires completed by 43 participating teachers. The findings showed that the training workshop exhibited positive effects in raising the teachers' awareness of contextually appropriate L2 use and enhancing their knowledge of this area. Furthermore, the PD event resulted in a potential model for effective PD in the form of training workshops in low-resource contexts like Vietnam. The study thereby implies the need for more PD activities in this topic so that contextually appropriate L2 use could be included in EFL classrooms in a principled and systematic way.

Introduction

Teacher training is considered the most important factor in the success of educational innovation and school improvement, given the crucial role of teacher quality in any education system. (Hamid & Erling, 2016; Le, 2019; Molle, 2013). Regarding second language (L2) pragmatics, the need of having teachers trained specifically in this domain is even greater. Defined as the ability to 'know how-to-say-what-to-whom-when' (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013, p. 68), L2 pragmatic competence has been well-recognized as crucial in L2 learners' communication abilities (Culpeper et al., 2018). To facilitate learners' communication competence development, L2 teachers need to have both content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge of L2 pragmatics (Ishihara, 2022).

However, there has been a long-standing neglect or exclusion of L2 pragmatics in ESL/EFL teacher education (Ton-Nu, 2024; Ton-Nu & Nguyen, 2023; Ishihara, 2011). Additionally, evaluations of ESL/EFL textbooks have shown that they contain insufficient L2 pragmatic input to help teachers facilitate the overall development of students' communicative competence (Ton-Nu & Murray, 2020; McConachy & Hata, 2013; Ren & Han, 2016). These significant gaps highlight the need for training ESL/EFL teachers in L2 pragmatics to enhance learners' intercultural communication competence in an increasingly globalized world (C. D. N & Author, 2023). Nevertheless, the line of research into pre-service teacher education and in-service teacher professional development (henceforth PD) in L2 pragmatics is still limited. A thorough search into the current literature on this topic only resulted in a few published works (see 'Literature review' section).

Regarding the Vietnamese EFL context, since English has become one of the strategic objectives of the national education, the quality of Vietnamese EFL teachers has particularly received special attention of both the Vietnamese government and society (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009; Nguyen & Trent, 2020). Therefore, many PD programs have been implemented through intensive summer courses with the goals of improving Vietnamese EFL teachers' English proficiency level and pedagogical knowledge (Hashimoto & Nguyen, 2018). Despite such training, there are still many concerns and even criticisms regarding Vietnamese

EFL teachers' competencies (Nguyen & Trent, 2020). This is the motivation for this study to investigate how Vietnamese EFL teachers' awareness of L2 pragmatics and its teaching could be enhanced through teacher PD activities.

Literature review

Research has confirmed the necessity of L2 pragmatics teaching in ESL/EFL contexts and concluded that without explicit instruction on L2 pragmatics, learners would have difficulties developing their L2 pragmatic competence—an indispensable component of L2 communicative abilities (Kecskes, 2014; Taguchi, 2021). Therefore, there has been a persistent call for integrating L2 pragmatics into ESL/EFL classrooms to help learners communicate more effectively in the target language (Ishihara, 2022; Taguchi & Yamaguchi, 2021). In what follows, the existing literature on: (1) language teacher knowledge and teacher knowledge for teaching L2 pragmatics; (2) teacher PD on L2 pragmatics and its teaching, is reviewed to lay the foundation for the current study.

Language teacher knowledge and teacher knowledge required for L2 pragmatics teaching

Research on teacher cognition indicates that different dimensions of teacher knowledge play a crucial role in teachers' decision-making processes (Borg, 2003). This knowledge enables teachers to make the best choices for teaching effectively in their specific circumstances. To date, many models of language teacher knowledge with different definitions of various components have been devised to describe and delineate the knowledge base of language teaching. These models vary from a simple framework with only two components to more complex ones with four to seven components (Grossman, 1990; Ishihara, 2022; Shulman, 1986, 1987). Generally, it is agreed that the language teacher's body of knowledge consists of three main components: subject matter knowledge (knowledge of what), pedagogical knowledge (knowledge of how), and knowledge of learners and their contexts (knowledge of who and where).

According to Grossman (1990), subject matter knowledge refers to knowledge of the target language, which includes mastery of different aspects of the language—such as phonology, lexis, morphology, syntax, and pragmatics—as well as the ability to use it. The second dimension of knowledge that a language teacher needs is general pedagogical knowledge, which 'includes a body of general knowledge, beliefs, and skills related to teaching' (Grossman, 1990, p. 6). This encompasses knowledge about learning and learners, principles of instruction, classroom management, and more. In addition to general pedagogical knowledge, teachers also need knowledge that is specific to teaching particular subject matters. Shulman (1986) termed this body of knowledge as pedagogical content knowledge, defining it as 'ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others' (Shulman, 1986, p. 10). As Grossman (1990) noted, 'it is this pedagogical understanding of subject matter that distinguishes the subject matter expert from the experienced teacher' (p. 9). Teachers who have a strong grasp of both the content to be taught and effective teaching methods can facilitate easier learning of specific topics for their students. Finally, to apply these bodies of knowledge to specific contexts and individual students, teachers

need what Grossman (1990) called knowledge of context. This includes understanding learners and their characteristics, educational contexts, the curriculum, and educational goals (Ishihara, 2022). This knowledge helps teachers adapt their disciplinary knowledge and pedagogical skills to their specific students and school settings.

Acquiring a second language is more challenging than acquiring a first language because it requires learners to master the various dimensions of the second language—such as phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax, and pragmatics—that they have already internalized in their first language. Therefore, to facilitate learners' learning process, the language teacher needs to have specialized content knowledge, together with common content knowledge and horizon content knowledge (knowledge of how taught topics are related over the span of language contents included in the curriculum) within the body of subject matter knowledge (Freeman, 2016).

As in the teaching of other linguistic domains, to effectively teach L2 pragmatics, teachers need to have sufficient content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge of L2 pragmatics (Ishihara, 2022). Specifically, teachers need to have the following knowledge components to teach L2 pragmatics.

As Table 1 shows, to teach pragmatics, L2 teachers need to have knowledge of: (1) L2 pragmatics per se; (2) L2 pragmatics instruction and assessment; and (3) learners' characteristics and teaching contexts. As the third component is part of teachers' general knowledge, training activities for teachers to teach L2 pragmatics need to focus on the first two components. In this study, this framework of Ishihara (2022) was adopted in the design of all activities used in its PD scheme.

Teacher PD on L2 pragmatics and its instruction

Although there have been relatively few studies, research on teacher professional development (PD) in L2 pragmatics and its instruction has yielded valuable insights and demonstrated the effectiveness of PD programs in this field (Cohen et al., 2023; Glaser, 2023; Ishihara, 2011; Ngai & Janusch, 2018; Vellenga, 2011; Yates & Wigglesworth, 2005). Apart from Cohen et al. (2023) study, all other studies were conducted as part of government-sponsored PD programs and included teachers who initially had no awareness or knowledge of L2 pragmatics instruction. A summary of the key information from these studies is provided in Table 2.

In these studies, various forms of professional development (PD) have been used, ranging from formal structures like courses and workshops to more autonomous PD activities such

Table 1. Teacher knowledge for teaching L2 pragmatics (Ishihara, 2022, p. 21).

Teachers' knowledge for teaching L2 in general	Teachers' required knowledge for teaching L2 pragmatics
<i>Subject matter knowledge</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Knowledge of a range of pragmatic norms in the L2. – Knowledge of pragmatic variation. – Metapragmatic awareness.
<i>Pedagogical content knowledge</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Knowledge of how to teach L2 pragmatics. – Knowledge of how to assess pragmatic competence.
<i>Knowledge of the learners and of the local, curricula, and educational context</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Knowledge of learners' identities, cultures, proficiency, and other characteristics. – Knowledge of the (pragmatics-focused) curriculum. – Knowledge of the role of L2 pragmatics in educational contexts.

Table 2. Studies on teacher PD in L2 pragmatics and its instruction.

Study	PD activities	Participants	Findings
Yates and Wigglesworth (2005)	Phase 1:	5 Australian ESL teachers	The teachers 'made enormous gains' (Yates & Wigglesworth, 2005, p. 276) in all dimensions of knowledge related to the researched pragmatic feature and its teaching.
	Teachers' engagement in the empirical investigation of native and non-native English request task performance data to develop and trial teaching materials		The gains by participants in phase 2 were far less considerable. However, most participants were reported to acknowledge their increased awareness of request mitigators and willingness to try out the newly obtained knowledge and materials with their students.
	Phase 2: The researchers used the developed materials obtained from phase 1 to conduct workshops designed to raise the participants' awareness of mitigation and to offer them teaching strategies that could be used in the classroom.		
		100 Australian ESL teachers	
Ishihara (2011)	A five-hour seminar on instructional pragmatics built on interaction among participants and as the researcher	1 Japanese EFL teacher was selected to report the findings	This teacher's pragmatic awareness was negotiated and re-constructed towards the right evaluation of pragmatic content inclusion in English textbook materials in Japan
Vellenga (2011)	Participants carried out four 1.5-h lessons with provided lesson plans and lesson checklist for L2 pragmatics teaching	6 ESL/EFL teachers from various contexts	All participants responded positively to the pragmatics teaching materials and acknowledged their increased knowledge of pragmatics
Ngai and Janusch (2018)	A four-week course in transcultural pragmatics at an American university	25 Korean EFL elementary school teachers	The participants successfully gained pragmatics awareness that is not limited to specific cultures or places although the course materials were mostly demonstrated with examples situated in the U.S in contrast to South Korea, and developed the abilities to connect intercultural communication and English language teaching.
Glaser (2023)	A day-long workshop online to develop teachers' awareness and knowledge of L2 pragmatics	12 in-service primary German EFL teachers	The workshop was successful in: (1) making the teachers aware of the importance of L2 pragmatics learning from the very early stages, (2) instilling their positive attitude towards L2 pragmatics teaching, (3) equipping them with factual L2 pragmatics knowledge, and (4) providing them with hands-on L2 pragmatics teaching ideas.
Cohen et al. (2023)	An asynchronous teacher education online module to heighten their awareness of L2 pragmatics and its important role in language instruction	3 Spanish teachers	The asynchronous PD materials provided the teachers with resources to gain insights into lesson sequencing, identification of key content and development of strategies for L2 pragmatics teaching.

as involvement in creating teaching materials and online self-study. Among these, traditional training workshops have been shown to effectively raise participants' awareness of the taught content, as demonstrated in the studies by Ishihara (2011) and Glaser (2023), and are also efficient in terms of time and cost, as noted by Yates and Wigglesworth (2005). However, none of these studies analysed the features that contribute to the effectiveness of their PD workshops. The present study aims to fill these gaps by shedding light on the characteristics of effective PD workshops and contributing to the current, limited research on teacher PD in L2 pragmatics and its instruction. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following research question:

What impact did the training workshop, designed with effective PD features, have on participating teachers' awareness and knowledge of L2 pragmatics and its teaching?

The study

Content of the PD event

Considering PD as a backbone for the success of educational language reform (MOET, 2016), the Vietnamese government has assigned responsibilities to its relevant parties to deliver PD programs to Vietnamese EFL teachers (Nguyen & Mai, 2018). The content of these PD programs is based on three core principles, namely, knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of instruction, and knowledge of students, and is delivered following the top-down approach, cascade model and face-to-face in form (Ho, 2015). Under these PD programs, teachers are engaged in such activities as attending conferences and courses, having discussions with peers, and observing peers' teaching (Nguyen & Mai, 2018). To date, the implementation of these PD programs is still going on despite its mixed results (Ngo, 2018; Nguyen & Mai, 2018).

Regarding the literature of language teacher PD in Vietnam, there has been a cluster of studies exploring teachers' experiences of various language teacher PD activities other than the traditional form of workshops, such as:

- (1) Online teacher PD (e.g. Mai & Ocriciano, 2017; Truong & Murray, 2019, 2020),
- (2) Mentoring (e.g. Nguyen, 2017),
- (3) Professional learning communities (e.g. Mai, 2018; Phan, 2017),
- (4) Teacher professional learning (e.g. Nguyen et al., 2020), and
- (5) Teachers' action research (e.g. Le, 2018).

However, the realms of L2 pragmatics teaching and the effectiveness of training workshops have not been investigated in neither the PD programs hosted by the government nor research on teacher PD in Vietnam. The current gap in both research and reality in Vietnam is another reason among those mentioned in 'Literature review' section for this study to be conducted.

In this study, the workshop was organized to initially provide participating teachers with knowledge required to teach L2 pragmatics as described in Ishihara's (2022) framework (see Table 1). Specifically, the workshop included the following content (Table 3):

The workshop's training content was based on the author's investigation into pragmatic input in the national English textbook series for Vietnamese EFL high school students

Table 3. Content on L2 pragmatics training during the one-day workshop.

Knowledge required to teach L2 pragmatics	Training content
Subject matter knowledge of L2 pragmatics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. L2 pragmatics and L2 pragmatics in English Language Teaching: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The importance of L2 pragmatics knowledge in both spoken and written communication – Definitions of L2 pragmatics and L2 pragmatic competence – Areas of pragmatics (speech acts, routine formulae, implicature, and extended discourse) – Differences between English and Vietnamese pragmatics regarding politeness, (in)directness, and communication style 2. Major shortcomings of the K12 textbook series for Vietnamese high school students in terms of L2 pragmatic input: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Low percentage of pragmatic input and its random distribution – Insufficient inclusion of politeness, appropriacy, formality, register, and cultural knowledge – Inadequate speech act treatment – Ineffective pragmatic tasks
Pedagogical content knowledge of L2 pragmatics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The importance of teaching L2 pragmatics in EFL contexts 2. L2 pragmatics teaching approaches: explicit and implicit teaching of pragmatics 3. Some supplementary activities to incorporate L2 pragmatics into some teaching units of the textbooks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Model activity 1: reflection on giving advice – Model activity 2: teaching sociopragmatic knowledge in communication: dos and don'ts in intercultural communication – Model activity 3: teaching the concepts of 'formal' and 'informal' 4. Teachers' self-designed L2 pragmatic activities

(Ton-Nu & Murray, 2020). Drawing from these findings, the workshop aimed to equip participating teachers with foundational knowledge of L2 pragmatics, enabling them to understand its components, the key differences between L1 and L2 pragmatics (specifically English and Vietnamese), and the implications for their teaching. Participants were also made aware of the limitations of their current textbooks regarding pragmatic input. The second part of the workshop focused on teaching L2 pragmatics, introducing participants to the two most popular approaches: explicit and implicit instruction (Taguchi, 2015). These approaches were demonstrated through three model activities, showing how L2 pragmatics can be effectively integrated into textbook activities to enhance learners' communicative competence. Following this hands-on experience, participants practiced applying what they had learned by modifying textbook activities and designing their own L2 pragmatic activities.

Design of the PD event

The design and implementation of the workshop were guided by Desimone's (2011) framework of core features of effective PD, as well as effective PD characteristics identified in previous studies that have demonstrated positive impacts on teachers' knowledge and classroom practices (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Ekanayake & Wishart, 2015; Ha & Murray, 2021; Nguyen & Newton, 2021; Glaser, 2023). Desimone's framework was chosen for its comprehensive nature and its successful application in earlier studies (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Ekanayake & Wishart, 2015; Ha & Murray, 2021). The following table (Table 4) outlines how the workshop was designed in alignment with Desimone's (2011) framework and the key features of effective PD.

Table 4. The adoption of Desimone's (2011) core features of effective PD and other characteristics in the workshop.

Desimone's (2011) core features of effective PD	The adoption of these features in the design of the workshop
(1) Content focus	The workshop focused on the subject matter knowledge of L2 pragmatics and instructional pragmatics.
(2) Active learning	After the lectures and presentations of the researcher, teachers worked in group discussion and conducted presentations of their self-designed L2 pragmatic activities.
(3) Coherence	As the Vietnamese government PD activities have been focusing on improving teachers' English proficiency levels and their pedagogical skills, the training content in this workshop is consistent with other PD.
(4) Duration	Training is recommended to take place over as extended as possible a period of time, which was not possible to implement in this study. Logistical constraint limited the length and timing of the PD input.
(5) Collective participation	As the participants of the workshop already knew each other through previous PD programs, it was quite easy for them to form an interactive learning community.
Other effective PD characteristics included in the workshop	Previous studies showing their efficacy with the inclusion of these characteristics
(1) Grounded in inquiry and research: This workshop was based on the identified gaps regarding pragmatic content in in-use English textbooks in Vietnam (see Ton-Nu & Murray, 2020)	Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012), Nguyen and Newton (2021)
(2) Attentive towards teachers' actual needs and their goals: As the goal of the English teaching curriculum at high school level in Vietnam is to develop students' communicative competence, it was considered that the training of teachers about pragmatics and its teaching would help them in meeting this goal.	Nguyen and Newton (2021)
(3) Intensive: The workshop was conducted intensively during one day.	Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012), Ishihara (2011), Vellenga (2011), Yates and Wigglesworth (2005),
(4) Hands-on experience: The workshop consisted of one section in which participants were showed how L2 pragmatics could be integrated in some teaching units in their in-use textbooks.	Ekanayake and Wishart (2015)

The participants

This study involved the participation of 43 Vietnamese EFL teachers coming from all high schools located in a province in the central of Vietnam and having various teaching experience. The decision of this number of participants was based on the budget sponsored by a small grants fund awarded to the researcher to organise the workshop. During data analysis and findings report, all teachers' names were replaced with numbers from 1–43 initiated by letter T (T for teacher) to maintain confidentiality.

In this cohort, there was only one male teacher, reflecting the predominance of females in the English language teaching sector in Vietnam. Among 43 participants, there were five teachers who chose not to provide the information about where they were teaching. For the remaining 38 teachers, there were 24 participants teaching at urban areas, and 14 participants teaching at rural areas.

Regarding qualifications, 70% of the teachers had a bachelor's degree, and 30% had a master's degree. There were only 30% of teachers (ten teachers with a master's degree and

three with a bachelor's degree) being already trained about L2 pragmatics. However, all acknowledged their need to learn about L2 pragmatics and its teaching.

All teachers completed their degrees at Vietnamese teacher education universities, except for one teacher who did her master's degree in the UK for one year. Also, almost all teachers had never been abroad. Besides the one who studied in the UK, there were two teachers reporting having visited Singapore for 1–6 months for travelling purposes.

Data collection

The workshop in this study incorporated a type of experiment that fits within a case study framework, known as the 'repeated measures design.' This approach allows researchers to 'experimentally observe change within a single situation' (Thomas, 2011, p. 132). Unlike traditional experiments that require a control group, the repeated measures design does not involve a second group. Instead, 'the control comes from the group itself, with the 'change' being introduced by varying one of the variables' (Thomas, 2011, p. 132). In this study, the cohort of 43 workshop participants was assessed based on their increased awareness and knowledge of L2 pragmatics and its teaching following the training.

As such, the workshop was preceded and followed by a pre-workshop and a post-workshop questionnaire completion task (see Appendices A and B). These questionnaires contained self-designed open-ended questions that were reviewed for clarity by the researcher and three voluntary colleagues. Both questionnaires were written in English to ensure terminological accuracy and were explained to participants in Vietnamese to minimize misunderstandings. **The questions focused on teachers' perceptions of L2 pragmatics and its teaching, as well as their evaluation of the workshop in terms of any changes in their awareness and knowledge of L2 pragmatics after the training.** Participants were encouraged to respond in either Vietnamese or English to avoid any difficulties in expressing themselves in their second language.

As a result, the data collected for this study included 86 completed questionnaires (43 pre-workshop and 43 post-workshop) and six posters showcasing self-designed L2 pragmatic activities created by the 43 participating teachers. The teachers worked in six groups to design 10- to 20-minute activities that integrated L2 pragmatic knowledge into the lessons in their textbooks.

Data analysis

The qualitative analysis of all collected data was conducted using NVivo 12 software. The 86 completed pre-workshop and post-workshop questionnaires were analysed in the following steps:

First, all participants' responses were organized into columns corresponding to each investigated category. Specifically, there were five columns: (1) teachers' understanding of L2 pragmatics before the workshop; (2) teachers' understanding of L2 pragmatics after the workshop; (3) teachers' evaluation of L2 pragmatics inclusion in their in-use textbooks before the workshop; (4) teachers' evaluation of L2 pragmatics inclusion in their in-use textbooks after the workshop; (5) teachers' statements of achievements after the workshop. This arrangement of data allowed the researcher to compare changes that occurred after the PD intervention.

Once identified, these changes were grouped into similar patterns and then compared against the participants' backgrounds to identify commonalities and differences among them. The number of changes was then counted to determine the percentage of teachers who gained a better understanding of L2 pragmatics and improved their evaluation of L2 pragmatics inclusion in their textbooks after the workshop. Finally, all patterns of change were examined to highlight the presented knowledge items of L2 pragmatics that teachers most frequently retained.

The posters were analysed to assess the L2 pragmatic content integrated by the teachers into the selected lesson from the textbooks. The results of this analysis could provide insight into the aspects of pragmatic content that the teachers prioritized.

Findings

The impact of the one-day training workshop on participating teachers' awareness and knowledge of L2 pragmatics teaching were investigated through the pre- and post-workshop questionnaires from the following main angles:

- (1) Participants' changes in their understanding of L2 pragmatics and their evaluation of L2 pragmatic content in their in-use textbooks. Evidence of change was based on teachers' re-articulation of the aspects presented under the definition of L2 pragmatics and their evaluation of the usefulness of the in-use textbooks regarding L2 pragmatic content. The quality of evaluation was based on its alignment with the findings from the researcher's investigation into L2 pragmatic content inclusion in the current Vietnamese EFL textbooks. The results from this study showed a general neglect of L2 pragmatics in these textbooks (Ton-Nu & Murray, 2020);
- (2) Their statements of achievements after the workshop regarding knowledge, teaching skills, and other accomplishment from the workshop;
- (3) And their self-designed pragmatic activities.

Teachers' changes in their understanding of L2 pragmatics and evaluation of L2 pragmatics inclusion in their in-use textbooks

The analysis of teachers' responses regarding their understanding of L2 pragmatics and its inclusion in textbooks showed that all participants were able to provide answers in the post-workshop survey. This represented a significant improvement in numerical terms, as even the ten teachers who had not answered these questions before the workshop were able to articulate their understanding of L2 pragmatics afterward. In terms of content, nearly all participants defined pragmatics as the study of language use in social contexts. The second most frequently mentioned aspect was the appropriateness of the interlocutor's language use, noted by over 80% of the teachers. The inclusion of sub-areas of L2 pragmatics in the definition was the third most mentioned, while components of L2 learners' pragmatic knowledge and cultural variations in pragmatics were the least frequently mentioned. This indicates that participants tended to focus more on certain attributes of L2 pragmatics and retained those better.

An examination of the participating teachers' backgrounds revealed that their qualifications, teaching experience, and prior training in L2 pragmatics significantly influenced their improved understanding of L2 pragmatics and their evaluation of L2 pragmatic content in textbooks. For instance, a group of teachers, as detailed in [Table 5](#) (including four with a master's degree, two with experience in L2 pragmatics, and two with at least ten years of teaching experience), demonstrated substantial changes in their assessments of the usefulness of their textbooks regarding pragmatic content after the workshop. This group showed nearly complete retention of the issues discussed in the definition of L2 pragmatics.

As shown in the table, three teachers were unable to provide evaluations or made incorrect comments before the workshop. Afterward, they recognized the existing neglect of pragmatic content in their current textbooks. The remaining teachers, who were already aware of the shortcomings in their textbooks regarding pragmatic content, were able to make informed evaluations of the resources and develop action plans for incorporating L2 pragmatics into their teaching practices.

Teachers' statements of achievements after the workshop

All teachers' responses on this issue were analysed, with each individual element in their answers being counted to identify areas of achievement. The results of this analysis are presented in [Table 6](#).

As shown in [Table 6](#), most participants (70%) mentioned instructional pragmatics and specific activities for incorporating pragmatics into English lessons. The second most frequently reported area was the definition of pragmatics, with 60% of participants stating that

Table 5. Examples of changes in teachers' evaluations of L2 pragmatics inclusion in their current textbooks.

Teachers	Responses in pre-workshop survey	Responses in post-workshop survey
T1	I pay no attention to this aspect. Normally, as a teacher, I in particular and other English teachers in general focus on designing activities to make classroom learning the most effective and interesting.	The textbook doesn't help much yet. The activities or tasks given in the textbook can be a hint for teachers to redesign them, and incorporate some pragmatic features into these activities.
T10	The textbooks and the available teaching materials have a lot of models, so it is easy for me to help my students use them.	Just a little
T19	Very well	Not well
T11	They are not designed with clear instructions in term of pragmatics. They just include structures and it's the teacher's duty to help students make use of these structure appropriately.	They are not well-designed in term of pragmatics.
T28	Just a little	Just a little
T29	The available teaching materials at my school help me in teaching pragmatics not really much. The teachers have to realize and teach students by their own methods. We need to know more how to teach students effectively by pragmatics.	I'll base on the used materials of my school to teach students how to use language properly by teaching pragmatics but not always.

Table 6. Participants' statements of important L2 pragmatics knowledge and teaching skills achieved from the workshop.

Number of teachers	Important knowledge learnt from the workshop	Number of teachers	Important teaching skills learnt from the workshop
30	L2 pragmatics teaching methods, techniques, and supplementary activities to integrate pragmatics into English lessons	12	Specific techniques to teach L2 pragmatics
25	Definition of L2 pragmatics	10	How to design a lesson incorporating L2 pragmatics
10	The importance of L2 pragmatics in L2 teaching and learning	2	How to adapt textbooks and teaching materials to integrate L2 pragmatics and facilitate learning effectively
9	Different areas of pragmatics (e.g. sociopragmatic knowledge, pragmalinguistic knowledge, interactional knowledge)	2	Pragmatics teaching methods: Explicit and implicit
5	Differences between English and Vietnamese pragmatics	2	Designing lessons oriented towards communicative language teaching approach
4	Sources of materials for pragmatics teaching	2	How to give comments/feedback to students constructively regarding their pragmatic performances and mastery of the taught knowledge
2	The shortcomings of the in-use textbooks in terms of pragmatic input	1	How to measure the effectiveness of the teaching and learning of pragmatics

Note: Some teachers mentioned more than one item of knowledge and teaching skill.

the workshop helped them understand what L2 pragmatics is. Additionally, nearly one-third reported that the workshop increased their knowledge of different L2 pragmatics areas and highlighted the importance of teaching L2 pragmatics. Less prominently, five teachers noted that they became aware of the distinctive differences between English and Vietnamese pragmatics through the workshop. Furthermore, four teachers mentioned that they learned about reference sources for L2 pragmatics teaching materials, while two recognized the weaknesses in their textbooks regarding pragmatic content. Other aspects of L2 pragmatics knowledge were mentioned by individual teachers, including:

- Polite ways of speaking in different contexts and cultures
- How to apply linguistic features in real-life contexts
- Classroom management: How to encourage learners to practice English and communicate with each other using English
- How to teach speaking lesson more effectively and realistically with pragmatics
- Useful examples of formal and informal expressions
- The misconception of native-speakerism in EFL context
- New ways to design a lesson
- The application of pragmatics in communication
- How to design supplementary activities of pragmatics
- How to use English properly
- How to teach students to use English in speaking
- What pragmatic aspects should be taught
- Ways to adapt textbooks

Regarding the teaching skills learned from the workshop, most teachers focused on specific techniques for teaching pragmatics rather than the broader L2 pragmatics teaching approaches presented. This suggests that these teachers were seeking practical techniques and tips they can directly apply in their classrooms. Additionally, some teachers highlighted the value of the information, knowledge, and experiences they gained from discussions with colleagues. This indicates an interest in establishing a community of practice where they can share and learn together.

Furthermore, the analysis of this category also showed a significant correlation between the teachers' statements of achievements and their understanding of L2 pragmatics, as well as their evaluations of pragmatic content in textbooks. In other words, teachers who demonstrated a better understanding of L2 pragmatics and more insightful textbook evaluations also provided more detailed accounts of their accomplishments from the workshop.

Teachers' self-designed L2 pragmatic activities

The analysis of the six posters revealed that the teachers' self-designed pragmatic activities predominantly focused on speaking skills, particularly on presenting pragmalinguistic resources. Of the six posters, only one aimed to teach sociopragmatic knowledge, specifically related to cultural diversity. The remaining five posters concentrated on pragmalinguistic aspects, covering a range of topics from simple issues like speech acts and formal versus informal expressions to more complex conversational skills, such as opening and closing conversations and conducting interviews with various people. A common feature across all activities was the emphasis on short transactional turns, with prompts provided by the teachers. Additionally, there was a notable focus on equipping students with the linguistic tools necessary to complete each task. These two features reflect both the general English proficiency of the students and the teachers' specific instructional goals within their teaching contexts. An example of these posters can be seen in [Figure 1](#).

Overall, the self-designed L2 pragmatic activities from all participants demonstrated how these teachers were able to integrate their newly acquired L2 pragmatic knowledge into their lesson plans shortly after the workshop. Given that L2 pragmatics teaching was new and unfamiliar to almost all participants at the time, these activities reflect the initial success of the workshop in providing practical experience with L2 pragmatics instruction. However, since these activities were created through group work, it is unclear whether each individual contributed equally or would be able to design similar activities independently to incorporate L2 pragmatics into their own lessons.

Discussion

The findings indicate that the workshop was successful in enhancing participants' understanding of L2 pragmatics and enabling them to make informed evaluations of the L2 pragmatic content in their textbooks. The workshop significantly raised the teachers' awareness of the importance of teaching L2 pragmatics, and they began to demonstrate a better understanding of how to incorporate it into their lessons. This highlights, firstly, the effectiveness of PD workshops in introducing new knowledge, as confirmed by previous studies (e.g. Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Ekanayake & Wishart, 2015; Ha & Murray, 2021; Nguyen & Newton, 2021). While training workshops have been criticized for positioning teachers as passive recipients

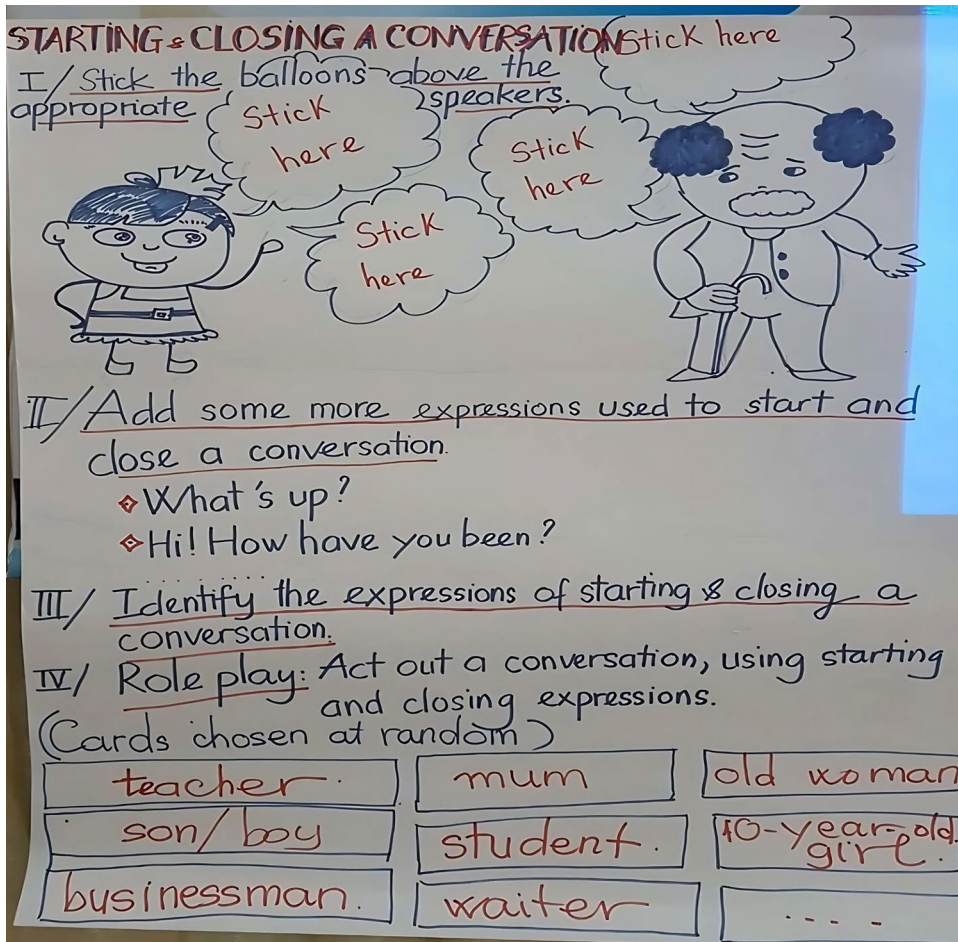


Figure 1. A poster of teachers' self-designed L2 pragmatics activities.

of knowledge (Hoban, 2002; Kennedy, 2014), the model used in this study suggests that carefully designed workshops with effective PD features can still be highly beneficial.

A novel aspect of this PD event is that it relies solely on a one-day training workshop, unlike previous studies which featured longer durations and follow-up activities (Ekanayake & Wishart, 2015; Ha & Murray, 2021; Nguyen & Newton, 2021). This design allows the researcher to examine the specific impact of a condensed PD workshop format, with the aim of developing an efficient model for effective PD in challenging, low-resource contexts like Vietnam. The success of this study supports the argument that the effectiveness of PD activities depends not only on their type (Garet et al., 2001), but also on how they are designed and organized to align with various factors in teachers' teaching contexts (Avalos, 2011). In the current Vietnamese context, where PD programs are still predominantly top-down, using the cascade model and face-to-face formats—such as conferences and courses (Ho, 2015; Nguyen & Mai, 2018)—the workshop model presented in this study may offer a more effective and adaptable approach.

Regarding the training content, as L2 pragmatics is still an excluded topic in EFL textbooks, teaching curriculums and teacher training programs in Vietnam and many other

investigated contexts (Ton-Nu, 2024; Ton-Nu & Nguyen, 2023), this study serves as an example of how in-service teachers could be initially introduced to L2 pragmatics teaching. Previous PD activities (e.g. Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Ekanayake & Wishart, 2015) have attributed their success to careful analysis of teachers' and organizations' needs. However, in this study, there was no analysis of teachers' needs due to the novelty of the training topic. Instead, the PD activity was based on the identified gaps between the current English teaching curriculum and materials in Vietnam, its teaching and learning goals, and the objectives of the government's PD programs under Project 2020 (see 'Introduction' section). This approach offers an alternative for future PD activities, particularly when potential topics are new and unfamiliar to participants, by focusing on contextual gaps rather than traditional needs analysis.

The findings from this study also highlight the influence of teachers' qualifications, teaching experience, and prior L2 pragmatics training on their ability to absorb the knowledge presented during the workshop. These insights can serve as practical guidance for future PD events in Vietnam and similar contexts, enabling the design of activities tailored to different participants' backgrounds.

Conclusion and implications

The participants' positive feedback on this initial PD event in L2 pragmatics suggests a need for additional PD opportunities in this area for in-service teachers. Research and previous empirical studies confirm that without specific training in L2 pragmatics and its teaching, teachers often lack both the knowledge and practical skills, and may even be unaware of these crucial issues to incorporate them into their classroom practices (Ton-Nu, 2024; Ishihara, 2022; Savvidou & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2019).

The PD intervention in this study was an initial step in exploring Vietnamese EFL teachers' awareness of L2 pragmatics and assessing the impact of this modest-scale event on their cognitions and practices. Future PD activities could incorporate other important content on L2 pragmatics and its teaching that was not covered in this PD event—such as alternative resources like the CARLA Project website, audio/video recordings of real-world interactions, corpora, and model expressions for teaching speech acts—to further enhance teachers' knowledge of L2 pragmatics instruction.

Additionally, more PD events could be conducted using the effective PD model proposed in this study, with contextually appropriate adjustments. The PD event in this study was characterised by the low quality of English teaching and learning in Vietnam compared to international standards (Le, 2019). Therefore, PD events in other contexts could provide deeper insights into how PD can effectively influence teachers' L2 pragmatics cognitions and practices and improve students' learning outcomes. Such findings would be valuable both practically and theoretically and would contribute to the limited body of literature on PD in L2 pragmatics more broadly.

One limitation of this study was its inability to examine how participating teachers applied their newly acquired knowledge and skills in actual teaching practices due to time and logistical constraints. Future research could address this limitation by investigating the sustainability of teachers' PD over time. Such a study could investigate whether teachers are able to transfer what they learned from the PD courses to their daily classroom practices and how these changes might affect students' learning.

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Appendix A. Pre-workshop questionnaire

Instructions: Before participating in the workshop, we would like to know your view on the following issues. Please take your time to complete this survey questionnaire, which can take you around 10–15 min to complete. Please be informed that this is not a test and there are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers. We are interested in your personal opinion. Your sincere answers will be of great value to us as they can ensure the accuracy of the data. The information provided by you will be confidentially secured and used only for the purposes of the workshop and (if you agree to let us use it) for the intended research. Thank you very much in advance for your co-operation and assistance.

Personal information

Your name: Your high school:

(Notes: The name and the school are for administration purposes so that the participation of you and your school is recognized. The name is also for research purpose; therefore, if you agree to allow us to use your answers, please write the same name on all surveys that are given to you in this workshop. However, you can still use a pseudonym if you like, and please remember to use the same pseudonym in all of your completed surveys in this workshop).

Please check the (✓) the relevant box and provide your answers to the asked questions:

1. What is your gender?
 Male Female
2. How long have you been teaching English to high school students?
 Less than 5 years 5–10 years
 More than 10–15 years More than 15 years
3. What is the highest degree you have?
 Bachelor Master
 Master of Research/Master of Philosophy Ph.D.
4. Did you study for your degree(s) overseas or have you had any overseas English learning experience?
 Yes. Which country/countries? And how long?
 No.
5. Did you study pragmatics as part of your degree(s)?
 No.
 Yes.
 If yes, what aspects of pragmatics did you study?
6. Do you feel the need to learn about pragmatics? If yes, why? If no, why not?

The questionnaire

These questions ask about your teaching of English to develop students’ pragmatic competence in the English language. By ‘pragmatic competence’, we are referring to students’ ability to comprehend and use English appropriately as a listener/reader and as a speaker/writer with regard to context, people, and level of formality and politeness. Please read the questions carefully and answer in as much detail as possible. You can write in either English or Vietnamese. For questions that you cannot answer at the moment, please write down *N/A*.

1. What do you understand by *pragmatics*, the subject that focuses on the use of language in social settings? What does it mean? What does it include?
2. Do you teach English pragmatic knowledge to your students? (In other words, do you teach your students how to use English appropriately to different people in different communicative situations?) If yes, what kinds of pragmatic knowledge do you teach? If no, please state the reasons for your answer.

3. How well do the textbooks and the available teaching materials at your school help you in teaching pragmatics?
4. What kinds of pragmatic knowledge do you think will be important in EFL contexts? In other words, what areas of pragmatic knowledge seem most important for EFL learners?

-THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION-

Appendix B. Post-workshop questionnaire

Instructions: As part of this workshop project, we would like to know your view on the following issues. Please take your time to complete this survey questionnaire about what you have achieved from this workshop and your current needs and future expectation. (It can take you around 15–20 min to complete this questionnaire.) Please be informed that this is not a test and there are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers. We are interested in your personal opinion. Your sincere answers will be of great value to us as they can ensure the accuracy of the data. The information provided by you will be confidentially secured and used only for the purposes of the workshop and (if you agree to allow us to use it) for the intended research. Thank you very much in advance for your co-operation and assistance.

Personal information

Your name:Your high school:

(Notes: The name and the school are for administration purposes so that the participation of you and your school is recognized. The name is also for research purpose; therefore, if you agree to allow us to use your answers, please write the same name on all surveys that are given to you in this workshop. However, you can still use a pseudonym if you like, and please remember to use the same pseudonym in all of your completed surveys in this workshop).

The questionnaire

Please read the questions carefully and answer in as much detail as possible. You can write in either English or Vietnamese.

1. After this workshop, what do you now understand by *pragmatics*? What does it mean? What does it include?
2. In this sense, how well do the textbooks and the available teaching materials at your school help you in teaching pragmatics?
3. Currently, what would you need in order to successfully incorporate pragmatic knowledge into your English lessons to help develop your students’ communicative abilities in English?
4. What do you expect to have or to change in order for you to teach English and English pragmatic knowledge more effectively?
5. What part(s) of the workshop did you enjoy the most? (If you would like to tick all, please put them in the order of your most preference from 1 to 3 – 1 is the most enjoyable.)
 - The presentation on pragmatics and pragmatics in English Language Teaching
 - The report on the major shortcomings of the in-use textbooks in terms of pragmatic input
 - The presentation and demonstration of supplementary activities to incorporate pragmatics into some teaching units of the textbooks
 Please state the reasons for your first most preference.
6. What are the 3 most important pieces of knowledge that you think you gained from the workshop?
7. What are the 3 most important things in terms of teaching skills that you think you gained from the workshop?

-THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION-