

Integrating Pragmatics into English Language Teaching: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

Pragmatic competence has become an essential component of communicative competence in English language teaching (ELT), yet its integration into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms remains limited. This study investigates how English teachers integrate pragmatics into classroom instruction, the challenges they encounter, and the opportunities that support pragmatic instruction in Indonesian EFL contexts. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the study involved eight English teachers from two public senior high schools in Panyabungan, North Sumatra, Indonesia, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and supporting teaching documents and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. The findings revealed three major themes. First, teachers integrated pragmatics through explicit instruction of speech acts, contextual role-play, *authentic audiovisual* materials, and discussions of pragmatic failure. Second, teachers encountered several pedagogical and contextual challenges, including limited pragmatic content in textbooks, difficulties in assessing *pragmatic competence*, insufficient confidence in teaching culturally embedded meanings, first-language interference, limited exposure to authentic English communication, and examination-oriented learning. Third, several opportunities facilitated pragmatic instruction, including digital technology, the flexibility of the Merdeka Curriculum, the integration of *Mandailing* cultural values, and collaboration through the English Teachers' Working Group (MGMP). The study concludes that although pragmatic instruction remains constrained by various structural factors, Indonesian EFL teachers demonstrate considerable pedagogical creativity in promoting communicative competence. The findings highlight the importance of strengthening teacher professional development, improving instructional materials, and incorporating *pragmatic competence* more systematically into English language curricula and assessment.

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INTRODUCTION

English has become the dominant language of international communication in education, science, technology, and cross-cultural interaction, and this position has reshaped what it means to know the language. As global mobility and digital connectivity link speakers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, communicative effectiveness matters more than grammatical accuracy alone. The focus of English language teaching (ELT) has therefore shifted from linguistic form toward communicative competence, the ability to use English appropriately in authentic social situations. Canale and Swain established the foundation for this shift by describing communicative competence as a set of interrelated grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic components (Canale & Swain, 1980). Subsequent work in second language acquisition foregrounded *pragmatic competence*, defined as the ability to use and interpret language according to the contextual, interpersonal, and sociocultural factors that govern communication (Taguchi,

2015). *Pragmatic competence* operates through pragmalinguistic knowledge, the linguistic resources for expressing intentions, and sociopragmatic knowledge, the social and cultural expectations underlying language use.

The consequence of neglecting this competence is not trivial. A learner with strong grammatical control but weak pragmatic ability may produce correct utterances that sound impolite, abrupt, or unnatural, and such pragmatic failure damages communication even when no linguistic error is present (Thomas, 1983). This concern has grown sharper in the twenty-first century, where online platforms, social media, and video conferencing expose learners to authentic language shaped by indirectness, politeness strategies, humor, and culturally embedded meaning. Participating successfully in these interactions requires learners to interpret contextual meaning and respond in socially appropriate ways, a demand that grammatical instruction alone cannot meet. Instructed pragmatics has consequently emerged as an important strand of second language acquisition, built on the finding that *pragmatic competence* is not absorbed automatically through grammar instruction but develops through deliberate pedagogical intervention. Taguchi's review confirmed that learners who receive explicit pragmatic instruction consistently outperform those relying on implicit exposure alone (Taguchi, 2015), and activities such as role-play, discourse analysis, and reflective discussion strengthen learners' awareness of why particular expressions suit particular situations (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Digital resources extend these gains by giving learners access to naturally occurring conversation that textbooks rarely capture (Sykes, 2018).

Yet the classroom reality lags behind this evidence. Across many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, *pragmatic competence* remains among the least emphasized components of instruction, crowded out by grammar, vocabulary, reading, and examination preparation. Several factors account for this gap. Pragmatic knowledge is context-dependent and culturally variable, which makes it harder to teach and assess than explicit grammatical rules. Teachers' own pedagogical knowledge and beliefs shape whether pragmatics enters classroom practice at all, and those with limited preparation often retreat to grammar because it is more familiar and easier to test (Pojprasat & Watcharapunyawong, 2022). Instructional materials compound the problem, since commercially available textbooks tend to present conversational dialogues without explaining the sociocultural norms that govern them, leaving learners able to imitate expressions without knowing when or why to use them (Ren & Han, 2016). These constraints are especially visible in examination-oriented Asian systems, where learners often display solid grammatical competence while struggling to perform speech acts appropriately in real interaction (Taguchi, 2007).

The problem is acute in Indonesia, where English functions as a foreign language and opportunities for authentic communication outside school are scarce. Under these conditions, the classroom becomes the primary site of pragmatic input, and the teacher becomes the primary agent responsible for modeling contextually appropriate language and cultivating pragmatic awareness. This dependence on the teacher makes the teacher's own practice the decisive variable, yet it is precisely this variable that existing research has left underexamined.

Three gaps in the literature follow from this. First, most empirical studies concentrate on learners' pragmatic development, comparing explicit and implicit interventions or measuring performance on specific speech acts such as requests, apologies, and refusals, while offering little insight into how teachers actually design, adapt, and evaluate pragmatic instruction day to day. Second, *pragmatic competence* is frequently investigated as an isolated linguistic feature rather than as part of classroom pedagogy, even though teaching it requires continuous decisions about lesson planning, material selection, interaction, and assessment. Third, studies tend to examine either the challenges or the opportunities surrounding pragmatic instruction, rarely both together, although teachers in practice negotiate constraints and resources at the same time. These gaps are particularly consequential in the Indonesian context, where empirical accounts of how teachers integrate pragmatics remain scarce and most local research still centers on learner achievement rather than teachers' classroom experience.

This study addresses those gaps by adopting a teacher-centered perspective on the integration of pragmatics into English language teaching in Indonesian EFL classrooms. Rather than measuring learners' pragmatic performance, it examines teachers' lived experience in planning, implementing, and evaluating pragmatic instruction, and it treats their instructional practices, the challenges they face, and the opportunities they draw on as a single connected picture. Examining these dimensions together explains not only how pragmatics enters classroom practice but also why particular practices emerge under specific conditions of curriculum, resources, and culture. The study contributes empirical evidence from a setting whose curriculum policies, institutional support, and sociocultural values differ from the contexts that dominate the international literature, and it draws on the concepts of communicative competence, instructed pragmatics, and teacher cognition to interpret what teachers do. Its findings are intended to inform English teachers, curriculum developers, teacher education institutions, and policymakers who seek to embed *pragmatic competence* more systematically into English language education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore how English teachers integrate pragmatics into English language teaching (ELT) in Indonesian EFL classrooms. A qualitative approach suited the study because it sought to understand teachers' instructional practices, pedagogical beliefs, classroom experiences, and contextual considerations rather than to measure the effectiveness of any intervention. A qualitative descriptive design was appropriate for capturing participants' perspectives within their natural teaching contexts while remaining close to the data and their own interpretations (Kasper & Dahl, 1991), which is particularly valuable when multiple contextual factors shape instructional decisions. The study took place in two public senior high schools in Panyabungan, North Sumatra, Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language. Eight English teachers were selected through purposive sampling based on four criteria: at least three years of teaching experience, active English teaching during the data collection period, prior experience integrating aspects of *pragmatic competence* into instruction, and willingness to participate voluntarily. Four teachers came from each school, a number considered sufficient to yield rich information and to reach thematic saturation for this qualitative inquiry.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, supported by relevant teaching documents. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to describe their teaching experiences in depth while giving the researcher room to pursue issues connected to the research questions. The interview protocol was developed from the literature on instructed pragmatics, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), and teacher cognition, and it addressed three areas: teachers' classroom practices in integrating pragmatics, the pedagogical and contextual challenges they encountered, and the opportunities that facilitated pragmatic instruction. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was conducted face to face at the participants' respective schools. With participants' permission, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. To enrich the interview data and strengthen triangulation, teaching documents such as lesson plans, teaching materials, and records of classroom activities were collected whenever available.

The data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, a widely used approach for identifying and interpreting recurring patterns in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis proceeded through six stages: familiarizing with the transcripts, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final account. Coding was conducted inductively while remaining informed by the concepts of instructed pragmatics, communicative competence, and teacher cognition, and similar codes were grouped into broader themes representing teachers' practices, challenges, and opportunities. To ensure trustworthiness, the study drew on Lincoln and Guba's criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was established through member checking, dependability through a detailed audit trail of procedures and analytical

decisions, and confirmability through reflective field notes and interpretations grounded in participants' actual statements, while rich contextual description was provided to support transferability. Ethical approval was obtained before data collection, written informed consent was secured from every participant, pseudonyms protected participants' identities, and participation remained voluntary with the right to withdraw at any stage.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study involved eight English teachers from two public senior high schools in Panyabungan, North Sumatra, Indonesia. To ensure confidentiality, the schools are referred to as Senior High School A and Senior High School B. Four teachers were recruited from each school through purposive sampling. Their teaching experience ranged from five to fifteen years. Six participants held bachelor's degrees in English Education, while two had completed master's degrees in the same field. All participants were actively teaching English in Grades X, XI, and XII during the data collection period. Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1. Participants' Profile

Teacher Code	School	Teaching Experience	Educational Background	Grade Taught
T1	Senior High School A	12 years	M.Ed. in English Education	XI & XII
T2	Senior High School A	8 years	B.Ed. in English Education	X & XI
T3	Senior High School A	15 years	B.Ed. in English Education	XII
T4	Senior High School A	5 years	B.Ed. in English Education	X
T5	Senior High School B	10 years	M.Ed. in English Education	X & XII
T6	Senior High School B	14 years	B.Ed. in English Education	XI
T7	Senior High School B	6 years	B.Ed. in English Education	X & XI
T8	Senior High School B	9 years	B.Ed. in English Education	XII

Teachers' Classroom Practices in Integrating Pragmatics

The first research question explored how English teachers integrated pragmatics into classroom instruction. Four instructional practices emerged consistently across participants, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Teachers' Classroom Practices

Theme	Subtheme	Participants	Representative Findings
Classroom Practices	Explicit instruction of speech acts	T1, T3, T5	Teachers explicitly taught requests, apologies, and refusals by comparing direct and indirect expressions.
	Contextual role-play	T2, T4, T7	Students practiced communication in various social situations, such as interacting with classmates, teachers, and principals.
	Authentic media	T1, T5, T8	Teachers used films, YouTube videos, and authentic conversations to discuss politeness, sarcasm, and nonverbal communication.
	Pragmatic failure analysis	T6	Students analyzed inappropriate English expressions resulting from literal translation from Indonesian or <i>Mandailing</i> .

As shown in Table 2, explicit instruction of speech acts was one of the most frequently reported practices. Teachers T1 and T5 explained that they explicitly compared direct requests such as "Open the door!" with indirect forms such as "Could you please open the door?" to help students recognize different levels of politeness. Likewise, T3 reported teaching expressions of apology and refusal so that students could decline invitations or disagree politely in English. Another commonly reported practice was contextual role-play. Teachers T2, T4, and T7 designed

communicative scenarios in which students interacted with interlocutors of different social status, including classmates, teachers, and school principals. Through these activities, students practiced selecting language appropriate to various social relationships. *Authentic audiovisual* materials also played an important role in pragmatic instruction. Teachers T1, T5, and T8 frequently incorporated movie clips and YouTube videos into their lessons to expose students to authentic English interactions. These materials were used to discuss politeness strategies, sarcasm, conversational meaning, and nonverbal communication.

Finally, T6 emphasized the discussion of pragmatic failure by presenting examples of inappropriate English expressions resulting from literal translation from Indonesian or *Mandailing* into English. These discussions encouraged students to recognize that grammatical accuracy alone does not guarantee appropriate communication.

Pedagogical and Contextual Challenges

The second research question investigated the challenges teachers encountered when implementing pragmatic instruction. The interview data revealed two broad categories of challenges: pedagogical challenges and contextual challenges. These findings are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Pedagogical and Contextual Challenges

Category	Challenge	Participants	Evidence
Pedagogical	Limited pragmatic content in textbooks	T2, T3, T6	Textbooks primarily emphasize grammar and vocabulary.
	Difficulty assessing <i>pragmatic competence</i>	T1, T4, T7	Existing assessments mainly focus on grammatical accuracy.
	Limited teacher confidence	T4, T8	Teachers experienced difficulty explaining cultural nuances, irony, and implied meanings.
Contextual	L1 and local language interference	T2, T5, T6, T7	Students transferred Indonesian and <i>Mandailing politeness</i> norms into English.
	Limited authentic English exposure	T3, T8	Students rarely encountered authentic English communication outside school.
	Examination-oriented learning	T1, T5	Students prioritized grammar because examinations emphasized grammatical knowledge.

As presented in Table 3, limited pragmatic content in English textbooks emerged as one of the primary pedagogical challenges. Teachers T2, T3, and T6 explained that the textbooks used in their schools mainly emphasized grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing while providing relatively little explanation of contextual language use. Teachers also reported considerable difficulty assessing students' *pragmatic competence*. Participants T1, T4, and T7 stated that most school examinations focused on grammatical correctness through objective test formats, making it difficult to evaluate learners' ability to use English appropriately in different communicative situations.

Another pedagogical issue involved teachers' own confidence in explaining culturally complex pragmatic concepts. T4 and T8 admitted that they sometimes found it challenging to explain sarcasm, irony, implied meaning, and other culturally embedded expressions. Regarding contextual factors, participants consistently reported the influence of students' first language and local culture. Teachers T2, T5, T6, and T7 observed that students often transferred Indonesian and *Mandailing politeness* norms into English, resulting in expressions that sounded either excessively formal or overly direct. Participants also highlighted students' limited exposure to authentic English outside the classroom. Teachers T3 and T8 explained that opportunities to interact with English speakers or observe authentic English communication were very limited in the local context. In addition, teachers T1 and T5 noted that students tended to prioritize grammar because success in examinations remained their primary learning objective.

Opportunities Supporting Pragmatic Instruction

The third research question examined factors that facilitate the integration of pragmatics into English language teaching. Four supporting factors emerged from the interview data, as summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Opportunities Supporting Pragmatic Instruction

Opportunity	Participants	Representative Findings
Technology and Internet Access	T1, T4, T5, T8	Teachers used YouTube, podcasts, social media, and TV programs as authentic learning resources.
Merdeka Curriculum	T1, T2, T5	The curriculum provides flexibility to integrate communicative competence and cultural awareness.
Local Cultural Values	T3, T6, T7	<i>Mandailing</i> cultural values were used to compare English and local politeness norms.
English Teachers' Working Group (MGMP)	T2, T5, T8	English Teachers' Working Group (MGMP) meetings facilitated sharing teaching materials and classroom activities related to pragmatics.

Table 4 shows that digital technology has become one of the most significant opportunities for integrating pragmatics into English language teaching. Teachers T1, T4, T5, and T8 explained that smartphones and internet access enabled them to obtain authentic learning materials from YouTube, podcasts, television programs, and social media interactions. Participants also viewed the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum as supportive of pragmatic instruction. Teachers T1, T2, and T5 stated that the curriculum's emphasis on communicative competence and text-based learning provides greater flexibility for incorporating sociocultural and pragmatic aspects into classroom activities. Another opportunity involved the use of local cultural values as instructional resources. Teachers T3, T6, and T7 explained that *Mandailing* cultural principles, particularly those emphasizing respectful communication with older people, were frequently used to help students compare local politeness norms with English-speaking cultures.

Finally, teachers highlighted the contribution of the local English Teachers' Working Group (MGMP). Participants T2, T5, and T8 explained that MGMP meetings provided opportunities to exchange teaching materials, discuss instructional challenges, and collaboratively develop communicative learning activities focusing on *pragmatic competence*. Overall, the findings demonstrate that although teachers encountered several pedagogical and contextual constraints, they continued to integrate pragmatics into English language teaching by utilizing communicative instructional practices and taking advantage of available technological, curricular, cultural, and professional resources.

Discussion

Teachers' Classroom Practices in Integrating Pragmatics into English Teaching

The findings demonstrate that English teachers integrated pragmatics into classroom instruction primarily through communicative and context-based learning activities rather than teaching *pragmatic competence* as an independent component of the curriculum. The use of explicit instruction, contextual role-play, *authentic audiovisual* materials, and discussions of pragmatic failure indicates that participants viewed pragmatics as an integral part of communicative language teaching. Instead of focusing solely on grammatical forms, teachers attempted to help students understand how language functions within particular social and cultural contexts.

The explicit teaching of requests, apologies, and refusals reflects the growing recognition that learners require direct guidance to understand the relationship between linguistic forms and contextual appropriateness. This finding supports Taguchi (2015), who argued that explicit pragmatic instruction enables learners to recognize how communicative intentions, social relationships, and contextual variables influence language choice. The findings also reinforce the conclusion of Kasper and Rose (2002) that *pragmatic competence* develops more effectively when learners receive systematic instructional support rather than relying solely on language exposure.

Another notable finding concerns the extensive use of contextual role-play. Teachers designed simulated situations that reflected authentic social relationships, allowing students to practice selecting appropriate expressions when interacting with interlocutors of different social status. Such activities are consistent with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching proposed by Canale and Swain (1980), who emphasized that communicative competence extends beyond grammatical knowledge to include sociolinguistic and discourse competence. Through role-play, students were encouraged to negotiate meaning while considering power relations, social distance, and communicative purposes, these elements constitute essential dimensions of *pragmatic competence*.

The incorporation of authentic learning materials further illustrates teachers' efforts to bridge classroom instruction and real-world communication. The use of films, YouTube videos, and naturally occurring conversations exposed students to authentic examples of politeness strategies, conversational implicatures, sarcasm, and non-verbal communication that are often absent from conventional textbooks. This finding supports Sykes (2018), who emphasized that digital technologies provide valuable opportunities for learners to observe authentic pragmatic features within meaningful communicative contexts. The discussion of pragmatic failure reported by one participant also demonstrates an effective strategy for raising learners' awareness of cross-cultural differences by encouraging reflection on inappropriate language use resulting from literal translation.

Overall, these findings suggest that Indonesian EFL teachers have begun moving beyond grammar-oriented instruction by incorporating communicative activities that foster pragmatic awareness. Although pragmatic instruction was not always explicitly identified as a separate instructional objective, participants demonstrated considerable awareness of its importance for developing students' communicative competence.

Pedagogical and Contextual Challenges in Implementing Pragmatic Instruction

Despite teachers' positive attitudes toward pragmatic instruction, the findings reveal that its classroom implementation remains constrained by both pedagogical and contextual factors. One of the most significant pedagogical challenges identified in this study concerns the limited representation of *pragmatic competence* in nationally prescribed English textbooks. Participants consistently reported that instructional materials continue to prioritize grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing while providing relatively limited attention to contextual language use. Consequently, teachers often need to search for authentic supplementary materials independently. This finding is consistent with Ren and Han, who observed that commercially available English textbooks generally provide limited explanations of the sociocultural principles governing language use despite including conversational dialogues (Ren & Han, 2016). Without explicit guidance regarding contextual appropriateness, learners may acquire linguistic forms without understanding the conditions under which those forms should be used appropriately. The present findings therefore reinforce previous arguments that textbook development should incorporate greater attention to authentic pragmatic features.

Assessment emerged as another major pedagogical challenge. Participants explained that school examinations remain heavily oriented toward grammatical accuracy, making it difficult to evaluate students' *pragmatic competence* systematically. This finding reflects the broader examination-oriented nature of many EFL educational systems in Asia, where formal assessments continue to emphasize measurable linguistic knowledge rather than communicative performance. As a result, teachers often devote greater instructional attention to grammar because it aligns more closely with assessment requirements.

The findings also reveal that some teachers lacked confidence in explaining culturally complex pragmatic phenomena such as irony, implied meaning, and sarcasm. This issue supports the argument proposed by Pojprasat and Watcharapunyawong, who suggested that teachers' pedagogical knowledge strongly influences the implementation of pragmatic instruction (Pojprasat

& Watcharapunyawong, 2022). When teachers have limited professional preparation in pragmatics, they may avoid addressing culturally sensitive communicative features despite recognizing their importance.

In addition to pedagogical constraints, several contextual factors also influenced classroom implementation. The transfer of Indonesian and *Mandailing politeness* norms into English communication was consistently identified as a major source of pragmatic difficulty. Students tended to interpret English communication through the lens of local cultural conventions, producing expressions that were either excessively formal or unexpectedly direct in intercultural contexts. This finding reflects the sociopragmatic perspective proposed by Thomas, who distinguished pragmatic failure from grammatical error by emphasizing the influence of cultural expectations on language interpretation (Thomas, 1983).

Limited opportunities for authentic English communication outside school further restricted learners' pragmatic development. Because English functions primarily as a foreign language in Indonesia, classroom instruction remains the principal source of pragmatic input. This observation supports Taguchi, who reported that learners in many Asian EFL contexts often demonstrate relatively strong grammatical competence while experiencing difficulties performing speech acts appropriately due to insufficient exposure to authentic communication (Taguchi, 2007). The examination-oriented learning culture reported by participants further reinforces this challenge, as students naturally prioritize linguistic features most closely associated with academic success.

Supporting the Integration of Pragmatics into English Language Teaching

Although participants encountered numerous challenges, the findings also demonstrate that several contextual factors create favorable conditions for strengthening pragmatic instruction in Indonesian EFL classrooms. Among these, digital technology emerged as the most significant opportunity. Teachers reported extensive use of online videos, podcasts, social media interactions, and other internet-based resources to provide authentic examples of English communication.

These findings strongly support Sykes, who argued that technology-mediated learning environments facilitate pragmatic development by exposing learners to naturally occurring language use across diverse communicative settings (Sykes, 2018). *Unlike conventional* textbooks, authentic digital resources enable learners to observe how speech acts, politeness strategies, humor, conversational implicatures, and non-verbal behaviors operate in real communication. The increasing accessibility of smartphones and internet services therefore provides teachers with practical opportunities to enrich pragmatic instruction despite limited textbook support.

Another important opportunity identified in this study concerns the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Participants perceived the curriculum as providing greater flexibility for integrating communicative competence, cultural awareness, and meaningful interaction into classroom practice. This finding indicates that curriculum reform has created instructional space for teachers to incorporate pragmatic objectives within broader communicative learning outcomes rather than treating grammar as the sole instructional priority.

Perhaps the most distinctive finding of the present study is the use of local *Mandailing* cultural values as pedagogical resources for teaching English pragmatics. Rather than viewing local culture as an obstacle, participants utilized concepts such as *Dalihan Na Tolu* and norms of respectful communication toward elders to facilitate students' understanding of English politeness strategies. By comparing similarities and differences between local and English-speaking cultural norms, teachers helped learners recognize that appropriate language use is culturally situated rather than universally determined. This finding extends previous research on instructed pragmatics by demonstrating how indigenous cultural knowledge can function as a pedagogical bridge for developing intercultural *pragmatic competence* in EFL classrooms.

Finally, the findings highlight the important contribution of professional learning communities, particularly the English Teachers' Working Group (MGMP). Participants described

MGMP as a valuable forum for exchanging instructional materials, discussing classroom challenges, and collaboratively designing communicative learning activities. This collaborative environment supports the perspective of Johnson, who emphasized that teacher cognition develops through professional interaction and reflective practice (Johnson, 2009). Regular collaboration among teachers therefore not only enhances pedagogical knowledge but also encourages innovation in implementing pragmatic instruction.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the successful integration of pragmatics into English language teaching depends not only on teachers' individual competence but also on the interaction between curriculum flexibility, technological resources, local cultural knowledge, and professional collaboration. While several structural challenges remain, the opportunities identified in this study demonstrate that Indonesian EFL teachers possess substantial potential to strengthen learners' *pragmatic competence* through contextually responsive and culturally meaningful instructional practices.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how English teachers integrate pragmatics into English language teaching in Indonesian EFL classrooms, the challenges they face, and the opportunities that support their practice. The findings show that teachers have begun shifting from grammar-oriented teaching toward more communicative and context-sensitive instruction, integrating *pragmatic competence* through explicit instruction of speech acts, contextual role-play, *authentic audiovisual* materials, and discussions of pragmatic failure. This shift remains constrained by limited pragmatic content in textbooks, difficulties in assessing *pragmatic competence*, teachers' limited confidence in explaining culturally embedded meanings, learners' transfer of local cultural norms, restricted exposure to authentic English, and examination-oriented learning. Against these constraints, teachers already draw on real openings, namely digital technologies that supply authentic input, the flexibility of the Merdeka Curriculum, local *Mandailing* cultural values that bridge intercultural awareness, and professional collaboration through the English Teachers' Working Group (*MGMP*). Taken together, these findings indicate that meaningful pragmatic instruction is achievable when teachers' pedagogical creativity is matched by adequate resources, supportive curriculum policies, and active professional learning communities. The study is limited by its reliance on self-reported interview data from eight teachers in two schools within a single district, which reflects teachers' accounts rather than observed classroom behavior and restricts the transferability of the findings. Future research should therefore incorporate classroom observation to capture pragmatic instruction as it unfolds, examine students' pragmatic development alongside teachers' practices, and test specific instructional interventions across larger samples and more varied educational contexts.

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