

Pragmatics at the Margins: English Language Teacher Education and Curricular Tensions in Chile¹

La pragmática en los márgenes: formación de profesores de inglés y tensiones curriculares en Chile

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Abstract

This mixed-methods descriptive study investigates how pragmalinguistic competence is positioned within English Language Teacher Education (ELTE) programmes in Chile, with particular attention to the perspectives of English Teacher Educators (ETEs) and the representation of pragmatics in formal curricular documents. Survey data from 30 ETEs from across 26 programmes were combined with a qualitative content analysis of 12 undergraduate curricula. Results show that ETEs report high levels of metapragmatic awareness and strong support for integrating pragmatic instruction into teacher preparation. They emphasise contextual variation, register, and appropriacy as central to their pedagogical work. Nevertheless, the curricular analysis revealed that these dimensions are rarely made explicit in programme structures. This discrepancy points to a disconnect between teacher educators' pedagogical understandings and the ways in which curricula formally conceptualise communicative competence. The findings highlight the need for systematic and explicit integration of pragmatic competence in ELTE curricula, along with assessment practices that recognise appropriacy and contextual sensitivity as core components of communicative ability in EFL teacher education contexts.

Keywords: pragmatics, pragmalinguistics, metapragmatic awareness, teacher education, curriculum, teacher cognition.

Resumen

Este estudio descriptivo de métodos mixtos investiga cómo la competencia pragmalingüística se posiciona en los Programas de Formación de Profesores de Inglés (PFPI) en Chile, con especial atención a las perspectivas de los Formadores de Profesores de Inglés (FPI) y a la representación de la pragmática en documentos curriculares formales de los PFPI. Los datos de encuesta obtenidos de 30 FPI pertenecientes a 26 PFPI fueron complementados con un análisis cualitativo de contenido de 12 currículos de pregrado. Los resultados muestran altos niveles de conciencia metapragmática y un fuerte apoyo a la integración de la

¹ Este trabajo fue desarrollado mediante la beca de Doctorado Nacional 2022 ANID Folio N.º 72220001.

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Recibido: 14-01-2026

Aceptado: 04-05-2026

Publicado: 30-06-2026



Cómo citar: Matus-Alarcón, F. and Ferreira, A. (2026). Pragmatics at the Margins: English Language Teacher Education and Curricular Tensions in Chile. *Árboles y Rizomas*, 8(1), 14-34. <https://doi.org/10.35588/ayr.v8i1.7913>

instrucción pragmática en la formación docente. Asimismo, los FPI destacan la variación contextual, el registro y la adecuación como elementos centrales de su labor pedagógica. Sin embargo, el análisis curricular reveló que estas dimensiones rara vez se explicitan en las estructuras de los PFPI. Esta discrepancia evidencia una desconexión entre las perspectivas pedagógicas de los FPI y la manera en que los currículos conceptualizan la competencia comunicativa. Los hallazgos subrayan la necesidad de integrar explícita y sistemáticamente la competencia pragmática en los currículos de PFPI y en sus prácticas de evaluación.

Palabras clave: pragmática, pragmalingüística, conciencia metapragmática, formación de profesores, currículo, cognición docente.

Introduction

In contemporary English Language Teaching (ELT), communicative competence has become a central organising principle in curriculum design, language policy, and pedagogical discourse. Since the late twentieth century, national curricula in Chile and English Language teacher education programmes have increasingly adopted communicative orientations, foregrounding interaction, meaning making, and language use over purely structural knowledge (Borg, 2003; Johnson, 2009; Gómez & Walker, 2020; Arancibia & Asenjo, 2024; Gómez, 2025; Veliz, Barahona, & Darwin, 2025). Within this paradigm, however, not all dimensions of communicative competence have received equivalent attention.

Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately according to context, interlocutors, and communicative intentions (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Taguchi, 2015). Despite its recognised importance in communicative language use, pragmatics has often remained marginal, implicit, or unevenly integrated within language education and teacher preparation programmes (Bardovi-Harlig, 2003; Gómez, 2025; Johnson, 2009). Research in second language pragmatics has consistently shown that pragmatic development does not emerge automatically from grammatical proficiency alone, but frequently requires explicit instruction, guided reflection, and sustained exposure to contextualised language use (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996, 2003; Kasper, 1997; Rose, 2005; Taguchi, 2015, 2024).

This challenge is especially salient in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts such as Chile, where English language teacher education (ELTE) programmes have historically prioritised linguistic accuracy, structural knowledge, and decontextualised forms of language use over socially situated communication and pragmatic development (Barahona, 2015). Although access to English through the internet, digital media, and, more recently, AI-mediated interaction has expanded opportunities for exposure, increased contact alone does not necessarily foster communicative competence (Barahona, 2015; Gómez & Walker, 2020; Gómez, 2025). As a result, learners' contact with English often remains confined to institutional environments in which input tends to be controlled, standardised, and oriented towards formal correctness rather than contextual appropriacy, which may constrain pragmatic development, since exposure by itself does not guarantee noticing, interpretation, or the appropriate use of sociopragmatic norms without guided attention or instruction (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001, 2003; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Taguchi, 2015; Lee, 2020).

Chile presents a particularly illustrative case of these tensions. As a predominantly monolingual Spanish-speaking country, English occupies a paradoxical position within the educational system. It is the only compulsory foreign language in the Chilean national curriculum and is strongly associated with discourses of globalisation, economic competitiveness, and social

mobility (Chilean Ministry of Education, 2012, 2014). Despite sustained policy initiatives aimed at strengthening English education in Chile, such as the English Opens Doors Program and national curricular reforms promoting communicative language teaching, national and international assessments continue to report low levels of English proficiency. A significant proportion of students complete secondary education with English levels below policy expectations, often remaining at basic user levels according to the Common European Framework of Reference (Chilean Ministry of Education, 2004, 2011, 2017; Council of Europe, 2020; EF Education First, 2017, 2018, 2019).

Policy responses in Chile have largely focused on curriculum reform, the alignment of national assessment frameworks, and the expansion and restructuring of English language teacher education programmes through updated standards, accreditation processes, and curricular innovations (Chilean Ministry of Education, 2014, 2021; Gómez & Walker, 2020). However, comparatively less attention has been paid to the disciplinary foundations of English teacher preparation, particularly regarding how future teachers are prepared to understand language as a socially and culturally situated practice shaped by context, interaction, and the increasing linguistic, sociocultural diversity, and complexity of Chilean classrooms. While communicative competence is consistently foregrounded in Chilean English language education policies and curriculum frameworks, its pragmatic dimensions remain under-theorised and weakly operationalised within English language teacher education curricula (Barahona, 2015; Orrego Ramírez et al., 2022; Gómez, 2025). This situation raises critical questions about the forms of linguistic and communicative knowledge prioritised in the professional preparation of English teachers in Chile and about how communicative competence is interpreted, enacted, and assessed across teacher education programmes.

ELTE programmes in Chile play a key role in shaping these understandings. Beyond developing language proficiency and pedagogical skills, they contribute to constructing future teachers' conceptions of what language is, how it functions in social contexts, and what it means to teach it effectively (Johnson, 2009). At the centre of this process are English Teacher Educators (ETEs), who act as disciplinary and curricular mediators between applied linguistics, pedagogy, and institutional frameworks. Their beliefs, academic trajectories, and professional practices influence how linguistic knowledge is selected, framed, and legitimised within ELTE programmes (Borg, 2003; Villa Larenas & Brunfaut, 2022).

Despite this central role, pragmatics in teacher education has received limited empirical attention, and ETEs as a professional group remain under-researched. Existing studies have often focused on learners' pragmatic performance or on the effects of instructional interventions, with comparatively less attention to the curricular and institutional conditions under which pragmatic competence is conceptualised and taught (Bardovi-Harlig, 2012; Rose, 2005; Taguchi, 2011). In Latin American contexts—and in Chile in particular—empirical research studies addressing pragrammatic and metapragmatic development within ELTE programmes are still scarce. Available evidence suggests that pragmatics tends to occupy a peripheral position, frequently embedded implicitly within broader communicative or discourse-oriented courses rather than addressed as a core component of teacher education (Abrahams & Farías, 2010; Orrego Ramírez et al., 2022).

In the Chilean EFL context, the limited attention given to pragmatic competence is particularly significant because communicative difficulties often persist even when learners demonstrate knowledge of grammatical structures and vocabulary. This tension reflects a broader

orientation within English language education and teacher preparation in Chile, where accuracy, formal correctness, and decontextualised language knowledge have historically been prioritised over socially situated communication and interaction (Barahona, 2015; Gómez & Walker, 2020; Gómez, 2025). As a result, learners may develop linguistic knowledge without acquiring the ability to interpret meaning appropriately across contexts, manage interpersonal relations, or respond effectively to sociocultural variation in communication. These limitations are especially relevant in increasingly diverse and globalised educational settings, where successful communication depends not only on linguistic accuracy but also on contextual sensitivity and pragmatic appropriacy. In this sense, the persistent gap between policy aspirations for communicative competence and students' basic proficiency outcomes may be partly related to the limited and implicit treatment of pragmatics within English language teacher education programmes.

Against this background, the present study examines the role of pragmalinguistic and metapragmatic development in Chilean ELTE programmes from a dual perspective. First, it explores ETEs' perceptions, professional practices, and levels of metapragmatic awareness through a multidimensional survey. Second, it analyses official undergraduate curricula in Chile to determine how pragmatic competence is institutionally represented. By combining educator perspectives with curriculum analysis, the study seeks to identify potential misalignments between professional knowledge and curricular structures, and contribute empirical evidence to ongoing discussions about the place of pragmatics in language teacher education.

Literature Review

English Language Education and the Chilean EFL Context

English language education in Chile has been strongly shaped by neoliberal educational reforms that position English as a strategic resource linked to economic competitiveness, global participation, and individual social mobility. Since the early 2000s, English has been promoted through national policies and curricular reforms that frame proficiency in English as a form of human capital necessary for participation in globalised economies (Chilean Ministry of Education, 2003, 2012, 2014; Glas, 2008). Within this policy landscape, communicative competence has become a central objective of English language education, while English itself has been constructed as a symbol of modernisation, internationalisation, and opportunity. However, critical scholarship has questioned how these discourses reproduce linguistic hierarchies, monolingual ideologies, and technocratic approaches to language education that frequently overlook local sociocultural realities and educational inequalities (Veliz-Campos & Ehlers-Zavala, 2025; Veliz et al., 2025).

Despite sustained policy efforts and curricular reforms, English proficiency outcomes in Chile continue to remain limited. National and international assessments consistently show that many students complete secondary education with basic levels of English proficiency, often below expected communicative standards (Chilean Ministry of Education, 2017; Council of Europe, 2020; EF Education First, 2017, 2018, 2019). Research on English language teaching in Chile suggests that these outcomes are partly connected to persistent instructional orientations that prioritise grammatical accuracy, standardised assessment, and decontextualised forms of language knowledge over socially situated communication and interaction (Barahona, 2015; Abrahams & Silva-Ríos, 2017). Although communicative language teaching is officially promoted, classroom practices and teacher preparation programmes frequently continue to emphasise formal correctness, textbook-driven instruction, and measurable linguistic performance.

Recent Chilean scholarship has increasingly problematised these tensions within English language teacher education. Studies have highlighted the persistence of theory-practice divides, culturally disconnected curricula, and limited opportunities for critical, dialogic, and community-oriented pedagogies in teacher preparation programmes (Barger et al., 2024; Gómez, 2025; Gómez & Walker, 2020). Other researchers have examined how teachers and teacher educators negotiate tensions between institutional demands, communicative ideals, and the realities of diverse classroom contexts (Arancibia & Asenjo, 2024; Veliz, 2021; Veliz & Yazan, 2026). Collectively, this body of work suggests that English language teacher education in Chile continues to operate within institutional structures that privilege linguistic accuracy and standardisation while offering comparatively less attention to language as socially situated practice.

Within this context, the limited explicit attention given to pragmatic competence becomes particularly significant. Pragmatic competence involves the ability to interpret and use language appropriately according to context, interpersonal relations, sociocultural expectations, and communicative intentions. In EFL settings such as Chile, where exposure to naturally occurring interaction in English is limited, opportunities to develop these abilities often depend on formal educational experiences and teacher mediation. However, when teacher education programmes prioritise structural knowledge and formal accuracy over contextualised communication, future teachers may receive limited preparation to teach the pragmatic and interactional dimensions of language use. This tension raises important questions regarding how communicative competence is conceptualised within English language teacher education curricula in Chile and whether pragmatic competence is being sufficiently integrated into the professional preparation of future English teachers.

English Language Teacher Education and the Role of English Teacher Educators

ELTE programmes in Chile typically consist of five-year undergraduate degrees combining language development, applied linguistics, pedagogy, and practicum components. Graduates are expected to demonstrate advanced English proficiency and pedagogical competence aligned with national teacher standards (Chilean Ministry of Education, 2021). However, programme structures vary considerably across institutions, reflecting broader tensions between disciplinary depth, pedagogical breadth, and accreditation demands (Abrahams & Farías, 2010).

Scholars have documented concerns regarding the progressive dilution of linguistically grounded coursework within ELTE programmes, as curricula increasingly prioritise generic pedagogical competencies, standardised assessment demands, and policy-driven outcomes (Barahona, 2015; Abrahams & Silva-Ríos, 2017; Orrego Ramírez et al., 2022; Gómez, 2025). For example, Malba Barahona argues that English teacher education in Chile has frequently privileged technocratic and competency-based models over deeper understandings of language as socially situated practice, while Abrahams and Silva-Ríos (2017) highlight persistent tensions between policy expectations and the linguistic and pedagogical preparation offered in teacher education programmes. Similarly, Gómez (2025) identifies the limited cultural and contextual relevance of current programme structures, particularly regarding opportunities to engage critically with communication, diversity, and situated language use. While such shifts may respond to institutional and regulatory pressures, they risk weakening future teachers' understanding of language as a socially situated phenomenon, particularly in relation to pragmatics.

Amidst this landscape, ETEs occupy a central yet under-researched role in ELTE programmes. Acting as curricular and epistemic mediators, ETEs translate disciplinary knowledge from applied linguistics into pedagogical practice and institutional curricula, with their beliefs and professional trajectories shaping how linguistic knowledge is selected, framed, and legitimised (Borg, 2003; Johnson, 2009). However, despite this influence, the professional preparation and disciplinary orientations of ETEs—particularly in relation to pragmatic competence—have received limited empirical attention. Existing evidence suggests that institutional constraints may restrict the extent to which disciplinary knowledge is reflected in curricular design and assessment practices, contributing to the marginalisation of pragmatics in favour of areas more easily aligned with standardised evaluation frameworks (Villa Larenas & Brunfaut, 2022).

Pragmatic and Metapragmatic Competence in English Language Education

Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately in relation to context, interlocutors, and communicative intentions, encompassing both pragmalinguistic resources and sensitivity to sociocultural norms governing language use (Leech, 1983; Kasper, 1997; Bardovi-Harlig, 2003). In this framework, metapragmatic awareness involves speakers' capacity to reflect on, evaluate, and regulate their own language use across contexts, including awareness of register variation and contextual appropriacy (Bardovi-Harlig, 2012; Taguchi, 2015).

Importantly, limited pragmatic or metapragmatic competence may result in pragmatic failure, whereby grammatically accurate utterances are perceived as inappropriate or unsuccessful in interaction, underscoring the social and interpersonal consequences of inadequate pragmatic development (Thomas, 1983; Taguchi, 2015; Lee, 2020). Research in instructed pragmatics has consistently shown that neither pragmatic competence nor metapragmatic awareness develops automatically alongside grammatical proficiency, and that both often require explicit pedagogical and curricular attention, particularly in foreign language and input-scarce contexts (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Taguchi, 2015).

In EFL contexts such as Chile, these challenges are intensified by learners' limited opportunities to engage in sustained and contextually situated interaction in English. Because exposure to pragmatic variation and interpersonal meaning-making is often restricted, formal educational settings become one of the primary spaces where pragmatic awareness and communicative appropriacy can be developed (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Taguchi, 2011). However, research suggests that pragmatics is frequently addressed as abstract or theoretical knowledge rather than as an explicit pedagogical dimension of language teaching, thereby limiting its integration into classroom practice and communicative instruction (Bardovi-Harlig, 2012).

Within teacher education, pragmatic and metapragmatic competence acquire additional significance. Teachers must not only use language appropriately themselves but also possess the awareness and pedagogical skills necessary to make pragmatic norms visible to learners (Kasper, 1997; Bardovi-Harlig, 2003). Research studies indicate that teachers' beliefs and metapragmatic awareness strongly influence whether and how pragmatic instruction is implemented (Glaser, 2023; Tajeddin & Khodaparast, 2020). Educators with higher levels of awareness are more likely to design tasks that highlight contextual variation and to address pragmatic issues explicitly.

Despite this, the integration of pragmatics into ELTE curricula remains uneven. Pragmatic content is unequally distributed across linguistics, discourse, or methodology courses without clear curricular alignment or progression (Rose, 2005; Taguchi, 2015). In many programmes, pragmatic

development is assumed rather than planned, reinforcing narrow interpretations of communicative competence that prioritise grammatical accuracy over contextual appropriacy.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives underscore the need to examine pragmatic competence not only as an individual linguistic ability but as a curricular and institutional construct. By focusing on ETEs and official curricula, the present study situates pragmatics within the broader dynamics of teacher education, highlighting how disciplinary knowledge, institutional constraints, and professional awareness interact to shape what counts as legitimate language knowledge in ELTE programmes.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive mixed methods design to examine the role of pragmalinguistic and metapragmatic development in Chilean ELTE programmes. By combining quantitative survey data with qualitative curriculum analysis, the design enables an integrated examination of educator perspectives and institutional curricular representations.

A descriptive orientation was deliberately adopted. Rather than testing causal relationships or evaluating instructional interventions, the research sought to establish an empirical baseline regarding the current status of pragmatics in Chilean ELTE programmes. In under-researched contexts, descriptive research has been shown to play a crucial role in making visible disciplinary blind spots and institutional patterns that often remain implicit or taken for granted (Bardovi-Harlig, 2003; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this sense, the study contributes foundational evidence to inform future explanatory, comparative, or intervention-based research, particularly within a national context in which recent reports have highlighted increasing pressure on teacher education programmes to ensure coherence and quality in initial teacher preparation in strategic subject areas such as English (Elige Educar, 2021).

Research Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives: (1) to examine ETEs' perceptions of the relevance of applied linguistics within current ELTE curricula, (2) to explore ETEs' views on the role of pragmalinguistic development in the preparation of pre-service English teachers, (3) to identify the range and frequency of opportunities ETEs report for using English in varied sociopragmatic contexts, (4) to measure ETEs' levels of metapragmatic awareness in relation to English language use, and (5) to analyse formal English language teacher education curricula in order to determine how pragmalinguistic and metapragmatic content is institutionally represented.

Taken together, these objectives allow for an integrated analysis of pragmatic competence as both a professional stance and a curricular construct.

Instruments

Data were collected through two primary instruments: (a) a multidimensional survey administered to ETEs, and (b) a qualitative content analysis of undergraduate ELTE curricula.

Survey Instrument

The survey was designed to document ETEs’ perceptions, practices, and awareness across four analytical dimensions derived from the literature on teacher cognition, pragmatics, and communicative competence (Borg, 2003; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Taguchi, 2015). The survey focused on the following four dimensions (Figure 1): relevance of applied linguistics in ELTE programmes, 2) role of pragmlinguistic development in ELTE, 3) opportunities for English language use in EFL contexts, and 4) metapragmatic awareness. Dimensions 1, 2, and 4 consisted of six Likert-scale items each, rated on a three-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Neutral; 3 = Strongly agree).

This scale was selected to encourage clear attitudinal positioning while reducing ambiguity often associated with broader Likert ranges, particularly in studies exploring professional beliefs and awareness (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Dimension 3 focused on English language use and included items addressing frequency and context of use within and beyond institutional settings, reflecting research linking pragmatic development to exposure and interaction (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Taguchi, 2015). To provide an overview of the instrument structure and item design, a sample of the questionnaire administered to ETEs is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Sample Questionnaire for English Teacher Educators (ETEs)

Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree						
1. Relevance of applied linguistics in ELTE programmes						
1.	Applied linguistics is essential in the preparation of pre-service English language teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The content of applied linguistics courses is well integrated across the ELTE curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Applied linguistics provides EFL teachers with practical tools for addressing classroom needs.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Role of pragmlinguistic development in ELTE						
4.	Promoting pragmlinguistic competence should be a key goal in ELTE programmes.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Pre-service teachers are adequately prepared to teach pragmlinguistic features.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Pragmatic instruction is explicitly addressed in the courses you teach.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Opportunities for English language use in EFL contexts						
7.	Pre-service teachers have enough opportunities to use English meaningfully.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Institutional contexts provide sufficient exposure to authentic English communication.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Lack of opportunities to use English outside the classroom affects learning outcomes.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Metapragmatic awareness						
10.	Developing metapragmatic awareness is important for reflective teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Pre-service teachers are encouraged to reflect on pragmatic norms and appropriateness.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Activities that promote metapragmatic awareness are included in the curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 1. Dimensions and scoring of the survey instrument

Dimensions	ITEMS	Maximum score
Relevance of applied linguistics in ELTE programmes	6	18
Role of pragmatic development in ELTE programmes	6	18
English language exposure in EFL contexts	6	18
Metapragmatic awareness	6	18

Source: Own elaboration.

Content validity was ensured through expert review conducted by two specialists in Second Language Teacher Education—one based in Chile and one in the United States—within the framework of the Teaching and International Research Foundation (TIRF) Doctoral Dissertation Grants Program (<https://www.tirfonline.org/>)

The reviewers evaluated the survey in terms of clarity, coherence with research objectives, feasibility of implementation, and redundancy, following established validation procedures in applied linguistics research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Agreement levels exceeded 80% across all dimensions, and minor revisions were incorporated prior to final administration.

As shown in Table 2, reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha via JASP statistical software (Version 0.19.0). The overall reliability coefficient of the instrument was satisfactory ($\alpha = .80$), with individual dimensions yielding coefficients ranging from .70 to .80 across dimensions, indicating acceptable to good internal consistency according to commonly accepted thresholds in educational research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; JASP Team, 2024).

Table 2. Reliability coefficients for each survey dimension

Dimensions	Cronbach's α
Relevance of applied linguistics in ELTE programmes	.80
Role of pragmatic development in ELTE programmes	.70
English language exposure in EFL contexts	.80
Metapragmatic awareness	.80
Overall instrument	.80

Source: Own elaboration.

Curriculum Analysis

In parallel, a qualitative content analysis was conducted on 12 undergraduate curricula from Chilean universities offering degrees in ELTE. Curricula were selected to reflect institutional diversity (public and private universities) and geographical distribution across the country, following recommendations for qualitative sampling in curriculum research (Abrahams & Fariás, 2010; Orrego Ramírez et al., 2022).

The analysis focused on identifying explicit and implicit references to the following categories derived from pragmatics and teacher education literature: 1) pragmlinguistic competence, 2) metapragmatic (metalinguistic) awareness, 3) authentic language use, and 4) real communicative opportunities.

Curricular documents were coded using ATLAS.ti software, allowing for systematic identification of patterns, absences, and discursive tendencies across programmes. Rather than relying solely on frequency counts, the analysis examined how pragmatic constructs were framed, operationalised, or marginalised within official curricular discourse, in line with qualitative approaches to curriculum analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)

Participants

Participants consisted of 30 ETEs affiliated with 26 out of 30 ELTE programmes operating nationwide, whose demographic and professional characteristics are presented in Table 3. representing approximately 96% of active programmes in Chile.

Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data collection, in accordance with ethical standards for educational research.

The sample included 12 female and 18 male participants, with ages ranging from 30 to 70 years. All participants held undergraduate degrees obtained in Chile and possessed postgraduate qualifications (master's or doctoral degrees) in TESOL, applied linguistics, second language acquisition, or closely related fields, ensuring disciplinary alignment with the focus of the study (Villa Larenas & Brunfaut, 2022). ETEs whose postgraduate training was exclusively in general education or unrelated disciplines were excluded to ensure relevance to pragmatic competence and language education.

Participants were affiliated with public universities (n = 17), private universities (n = 12), or both (n = 1), allowing for comparative insights across institutional contexts. Teaching experience within ELTE programmes ranged from a minimum of three years to over three decades, providing a broad spectrum of professional perspectives (Borg, 2003).

Table 3. Demographic and professional characteristics of participants (N = 30)

Category	N
Gender (female)	12
Gender (male)	18
Undergraduate degree location (Chile)	29

Undergraduate degree location (international)	1
Postgraduate degree location (Chile)	15
Postgraduate degree location (international)	15
Type of institution: public university	17
Type of institution: private university	12
Type of institution: both	1

Note. Percentages were calculated based on the total number of participants (N = 30).

Procedure

The survey was administered digitally through a secure online platform. Potential participants received an invitation email outlining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and a link to the questionnaire. Prior to accessing the instrument, participants were required to review an informed consent statement and indicate their agreement to participate.

Curricular documents were collected from publicly available institutional sources. When necessary, additional materials were obtained directly from programme coordinators to ensure completeness and accuracy of the data. All procedures adhered to ethical standards for research involving human participants as outlined by the American Psychological Association.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics in JASP, including frequencies, mean scores, and distribution patterns across survey dimensions. Descriptive analysis was deemed appropriate given the exploratory and baseline-oriented nature of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Qualitative curriculum data were analysed through thematic content analysis, focusing on the presence, absence, and framing of pragmalinguistic and metapragmatic constructs, following established procedures in qualitative curriculum research. Findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses were integrated during interpretation to identify convergences and tensions between educator beliefs and curricular frameworks.

By combining these analytical procedures, the study offers a comprehensive account of pragmatic competence in Chilean ELTE programmes, capturing both individual-level awareness and institutional-level representations.

Results

This section presents the findings of the study in two stages. First, results derived from the survey administered to ETEs are reported, organised according to the four analytical dimensions of the instrument. Second, findings from the qualitative content analysis of ELTE curricula are presented. Results are reported descriptively, while interpretation and theoretical integration are reserved for the Discussion section.

Survey Results

Survey data were analysed using descriptive statistics to examine ETEs' perceptions, professional practices, and levels of awareness regarding pragmalinguistic and metapragmatic competence.

Relevance of Applied Linguistics in ELTE Programmes

As shown in Table 4, ETEs generally perceive applied linguistics as a relevant and valuable component of language teacher education. A clear majority of participants expressed strong agreement that applied linguistics is meaningfully connected to language courses (83%) and contributes positively to their professional development (70%). At an individual level, these responses indicate that applied linguistics is widely recognised as foundational for understanding language beyond purely structural dimensions.

However, this positive valuation contrasts with educators' reported uncertainty regarding the curricular articulation of applied linguistics within ELTE programmes. Responses indicate lower levels of agreement concerning educators' awareness of how applied linguistics is explicitly linked to language development courses in official curricula. Moreover, a substantial number of participants reported that applied linguistics courses have been reduced or replaced by other disciplinary areas.

Taken together, these results reveal a tension between conceptual recognition and institutional visibility. While applied linguistics is valued as a source of professional knowledge, its curricular positioning appears to lack clarity and stability across programmes.

Table 4. English teacher educators' perceptions of applied linguistics in ELTE programmes

ITEM	SD	N	SA
AL is connected to language courses	0	5	25
Awareness of the AL-language connection	18	7	5
AL courses are useful for development	2	7	21
Connection is clearly articulated	5	14	11
AL reduces relevance of language courses	5	13	12
AL courses have been replaced	2	4	24

Note. AL= Applied Linguistics; SD = Strongly disagree; N = Neutral; SA = Strongly agree.

Role of Pragmalinguistic Development in ELTE

As depicted in Table 5, ETEs report largely positive perceptions regarding the role of pragmalinguistic development in ELTE programmes. A substantial majority indicated familiarity with the distinction between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics (70% strongly agree), and an even higher proportion endorsed the need to develop pragmatic competence during pre-service teacher education (93% strongly agree). Similarly, most participants acknowledged that teaching English involves challenges related to pragmatic language use (83% strongly agree) and reported addressing differences between formal and informal language use in their teaching practices, underscoring the perceived pedagogical relevance of pragmatics at the individual level.

However, perceptions were notably less consistent with respect to curricular implementation. Only 17% of participants strongly agreed that pragmatics is explicitly included in official ELTE curricula, while the majority either expressed neutrality (60%) or disagreement (23%). A similar pattern emerged regarding whether current programmes adequately prepare future teachers to teach pragmatics, with fewer than half of participants expressing strong agreement (43%), and the remainder reporting neutrality (47%) or disagreement (10%). Likewise, perceptions of pre-service teachers' ability to distinguish language register were divided, with 30% strongly agreeing, 47% remaining neutral, and 23% disagreeing. Taken together, these results point to a clear gap between strong professional endorsement of pragmlinguistic development and uncertainty about its systematic curricular articulation and pedagogical preparation.

Table 5. English teacher educators' perceptions of pragmatic development in ELTE programmes

ITEM	SD	N	SA
Knowledge of pragmlinguistics versus sociopragmatics	4	5	21
Pre-service teachers distinguish register	7	14	9
Teaching challenges pragmatic language	1	4	25
Pragmatics included in curriculum	7	18	5
Training prepares pragmatic teaching	3	14	13
Pragmatic competence should be developed	0	2	28

Note. SD = Strongly disagree; N = Neutral; SA = Strongly agree.

Opportunities for English Language Use

Reported opportunities for English language use are summarised in Table 6. Most participants indicated frequent use of English within their teaching communities, particularly in classroom instruction, academic interaction, and professional communication. This finding reflects the centrality of English as a working language within ELTE programmes and confirms that ETes regularly engage with English in formal institutional contexts.

In contrast, reported use of English outside teaching and academic settings was significantly lower. Fewer participants indicated frequent engagement with English in informal, social, or non-institutional environments. A substantial proportion reported only limited or occasional use of English beyond professional contexts.

This imbalance highlights a structural constraint affecting pragmatic development. Although ETes operate extensively in English within institutional settings, their opportunities to engage with pragmatically diverse, informal, and spontaneous language practices appear restricted. This finding is particularly relevant in what Kathleen Graves (2008) describes as a “target language removed context,” where exposure to authentic sociopragmatic norms and naturally occurring interaction in English remains limited. Such conditions may constrain opportunities for pragmatic enrichment beyond formal instructional environments.

Table 6 summarises the frequency of English language use reported by ETes in teaching-related and non-teaching contexts. While 70% of respondents report using English frequently within academic and instructional settings, only 27% indicate comparable levels of use outside teaching contexts, with nearly half of the participants (47%) reporting only moderate use and 27% reporting low use beyond institutional environments.

Table 6. Frequency of English language use reported by English teacher educators

Frequency Level	Teaching Community	Outside Teaching
A lot	21 (70 %)	8 (27 %)
Somewhat	8 (27 %)	14 (47 %)
Little	1 (3 %)	8 (27 %)

Source: Own elaboration.

These findings are particularly meaningful within what Kathleen Graves (2008) describes as a “target language removed context,” where opportunities for naturally occurring interaction in English are inherently limited. The results suggest that even highly proficient ETEs rely predominantly on institutional and pedagogical uses of English, with comparatively limited engagement in socially situated or spontaneous communicative practices outside academic environments. This may reduce exposure to varied sociopragmatic norms and authentic discourse practices, both of which are central to pragmalinguistic development.

Metapragmatic Awareness

Results related to metapragmatic awareness are presented in Table 7. Overall, this dimension yielded the highest mean scores among all survey dimensions, indicating strong levels of awareness across the participant group. Most ETEs strongly agreed that English language use varies according to context, interlocutors, and communicative purpose, and reported placing pedagogical emphasis on register variation and contextual appropriacy.

Participants also indicated a clear distinction between language use in classroom settings and language use outside instructional contexts, suggesting sensitivity to situational variation. Slightly greater variability was observed in responses concerning colleagues’ context-dependent language use, although agreement levels remained high overall.

These findings suggest that ETEs possess a well-developed conceptual understanding of pragmatic variation and metapragmatic reflection. Importantly, this awareness appears to be embedded in their pedagogical self-conceptions, as many respondents reported actively addressing pragmatic differences in their teaching.

Table 7 indicates a strong tendency toward positive metapragmatic awareness among ETEs. Most respondents reported high levels of awareness regarding pragmatic variation, contextual appropriacy, and register use across instructional and non-instructional settings. To facilitate interpretation, the table presents the predominant response categories (Strongly Agree, Neutral, and Strongly Disagree), as intermediate categories showed minimal variation across items. Overall, the findings suggest that participants possess a well-developed understanding of the contextual and socially situated nature of language use.

Table 7. English teacher educators’ metapragmatic awareness (N = 30)

ITEM	SD	N	SA
Awareness of pragmatic differences	0	3	27
Colleagues’ context-based language use	3	6	21
Classroom vs. outside language use	0	1	29
Teaching formal and informal registers	0	1	29
Contextual appropriacy awareness	0	2	28
Pedagogical emphasis on register	0	2	28

Summary of Survey Dimensions

Mean scores across survey dimensions are presented in Table 8. Metapragmatic awareness obtained the highest mean score, followed by the role of pragmatic development and the relevance of applied linguistics. In contrast, reported English language exposure outside teaching contexts yielded the lowest mean score.

Table 8 summarises mean scores across the survey dimensions, showing high metapragmatic awareness ($M = 2.88$) and strong support for pragmatic development ($M = 2.57$), alongside lower levels of English use outside teaching contexts ($M = 1.99$).

This distribution reveals a nuanced professional profile. On the one hand, ETEs demonstrate strong conceptual awareness of pragmatics and recognise its pedagogical importance. On the other hand, structural constraints related to curricular design and language use opportunities appear to limit the systematic development and institutionalisation of pragmatic competence.

Table 8. Mean scores for each survey dimension

Dimension	Items	Mean Score
Relevance of applied linguistics in ELTE	6	2.47
Role of pragmatic development in ELTE	6	2.57
English exposure (teaching contexts)	—	2.40
English exposure (outside teaching)	—	1.99
Metapragmatic awareness	6	2.88

Source: Own elaboration.

Curriculum Analysis Results

The qualitative analysis of 12 ELTE curricula revealed substantial variability in the representation of pragmlinguistic and metapragmatic content. As summarised in Table 9, explicit references to pragmlinguistic competence were identified in only two programmes. A further five curricula included implicit references, typically embedded within general descriptions of communicative competence or discourse-oriented learning outcomes, while the remaining programmes contained no discernible reference to pragmatics.

Concretely, Table 9 shows that pragmatics-related content is largely underrepresented in ELTE curricula: pragmlinguistic competence is explicitly included in only 2 of 12 programmes and metapragmatic awareness in 3, while both are absent in 5 curricula. Authentic language use is explicitly addressed in just 1 programme, and real communicative opportunities in 4, indicating that pragmatic content is more often implicit or missing than systematically articulated.

A similar pattern emerged for metapragmatic awareness. Only a small number of curricula explicitly addressed reflective language awareness, usually within linguistics or grammar-focused courses. In many cases, metapragmatic elements were implied rather than articulated, limiting their pedagogical visibility and assessability.

References to authentic language use were also scarce. Only one curriculum explicitly mentioned real-life communication as a learning outcome, while several others included implicit references without specifying interactional contexts or pragmatic targets. Opportunities for real communicative engagement, such as early practicum experiences or community-based interaction, were explicitly included in fewer than half of the programmes analysed.

Table 9. Coding framework and distribution of pragmatics-related content in ELTE curricula (N = 12)

Code	Explicit	Implicit	No Reference
Pragmalinguistic competence	2 (17%)	5 (42%)	5 (42%)
Metapragmatic awareness	3 (25%)	4 (33%)	5 (42%)
Authentic language use	1 (8%)	6 (50%)	5 (42%)
Real communicative opportunities	4 (33%)	3 (25%)	5 (42%)

Source: Own elaboration.

Discursive Patterns in Curricular Representations

Beyond frequency counts, the analysis revealed recurring discursive patterns in how pragmatic competence is framed within ELTE curricula. When pragmatics-related content was present, it was often subsumed under broad formulations such as *effective communication*, *appropriate language use*, or *contextualised discourse*. These formulations, while aligned with communicative language teaching discourse, rarely specified pragmalinguistic mechanisms, instructional pathways, or assessment criteria.

This discursive vagueness suggests that pragmatic development is frequently assumed rather than planned. Without clearly articulated learning outcomes or progression pathways, pragmatics remains structurally invisible, rendering its inclusion dependent on individual educators' pedagogical priorities.

Synthesis of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Taken together, survey and curriculum data reveal a consistent pattern of misalignment. ETEs demonstrate high levels of metapragmatic awareness and strongly endorse the importance of pragmalinguistic competence. However, institutional curricula provide limited explicit support for the systematic development of these competences.

The results indicate that pragmatic competence occupies a recognised yet marginal position within Chilean ELTE programmes. While educators' professional awareness constitutes a significant asset, curricular structures have yet to fully capitalise on this resource through explicit design, alignment, and assessment.

Discussion and Conclusion

A key contribution of this study lies in foregrounding ETEs as central mediators between disciplinary knowledge and curricular practice. The high levels of metapragmatic awareness reported by ETEs suggest that pragmatic competence is not absent due to a lack of professional understanding, but rather because institutional frameworks do not systematically support its development. This finding reinforces research in instructed pragmatics showing that awareness alone is insufficient in the absence of explicit curricular design, pedagogical sequencing, and assessment practices that legitimise pragmatics as a teachable and assessable domain (Kasper, 1997; Bardovi-Harlig, 2003; Taguchi, 2015).

From a curricular standpoint, the qualitative analysis indicates that pragmatics is predominantly treated as implicit knowledge, embedded within broad notions of effective or

appropriate communication without specification of pragmalinguistic mechanisms or learning outcomes. Such discursive vagueness contributes to a form of curricular dilution in which communicative competence risks being reduced to functional fluency or register awareness, detached from the sociopragmatic and interactional norms governing real-world language use (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Leech, 1983). This reductionist orientation is particularly problematic in EFL contexts, where opportunities for naturalistic pragmatic development are already constrained (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Taguchi, 2015).

Finally, the imbalance between English use in academic settings and engagement beyond institutional contexts underscores structural limitations affecting both educators and learners. In input-scarce environments such as Chile, ELTE programmes constitute one of the few institutional spaces capable of compensating for restricted access to pragmatically diverse language use, although recent research suggests that technology-mediated interaction may partially expand pragmatic exposure when naturalistic input is limited (Barahona, 2015; Lee, 2020). The findings, therefore, support calls to reconceptualise pragmatics as a foundational and longitudinal component of teacher education rather than as an optional or advanced skill (Taguchi, 2015, 2024), shifting responsibility from individual educators to curricular and policy frameworks that explicitly recognise pragmatic competence as central to communicative language teaching (Chilean Ministry of Education, 2021).

This study set out to examine the role of pragmalinguistic and metapragmatic development within Chilean ELTE programmes by foregrounding the perspectives of ETEs and analysing official curricular frameworks. The findings reveal a consistent and structurally embedded misalignment between educators' professional awareness of pragmatic competence and the extent to which such competence is explicitly institutionalised within ELTE curricula.

Across data sources, pragmatic competence emerges as a recognised yet marginal component of teacher education. ETEs demonstrate high levels of metapragmatic awareness and express strong support for the inclusion of pragmalinguistic instruction in pre-service teacher preparation. However, curricular documents rarely articulate pragmatic development as an explicit learning objective, relying instead on broad and underspecified notions of communicative competence. This gap suggests that pragmatics is often assumed to develop implicitly rather than planned, taught, and assessed as a pedagogical domain in its own right.

Importantly, the study shows that the marginalisation of pragmatics cannot be attributed to a lack of professional knowledge among teacher educators. On the contrary, ETEs' reported awareness and pedagogical sensitivity constitute a significant professional asset. The challenge lies in the absence of curricular structures that enable this awareness to be translated into systematic pedagogical practice. Pragmatic competence remains dependent on individual initiative rather than supported through coherent programme-level design, resulting in uneven and potentially inequitable learning experiences for pre-service teachers.

The findings also highlight structural constraints related to language use opportunities in EFL contexts. While ETEs frequently use English within institutional and academic settings, opportunities for engagement with pragmatically diverse language use beyond these contexts are limited. This imbalance further restricts exposure to informal registers, interpersonal interaction, and socially nuanced communication, reinforcing the need for ELTE programmes to assume a compensatory role in pragmatic development.

From a curricular perspective, the results point to the need for a reconceptualisation of communicative competence within teacher education. Treating pragmatics as an implicit by-

product of language proficiency risks reproducing form-focused models of instruction that prioritise grammatical accuracy over contextual appropriacy. In contrast, explicitly integrating pragmalinguistic and metapragmatic competence as longitudinal curricular objectives would allow ELTE programmes to align pedagogical practice with contemporary understandings of language as social action.

Several implications emerge from this study. First, ELTE curricula would benefit from the explicit articulation of pragmatic learning outcomes across language, linguistics, methodology, and practicum components. Such articulation would enhance curricular coherence, make pragmatic development visible and assessable, and reduce reliance on individual educators' discretionary practices. Second, assessment practices in teacher education should be expanded to include pragmatic dimensions of language use, recognising appropriacy, register control, and contextual sensitivity as legitimate indicators of communicative competence.

Third, professional development initiatives for ETEs should explicitly address pragmatics as a teachable domain, fostering dialogue between applied linguistics research and pedagogical practice. Given ETEs' demonstrated metapragmatic awareness, such initiatives should focus less on remediation and more on creating institutional conditions for pedagogical innovation and curricular alignment.

Finally, the findings entail implications for language education policy in peripheral EFL contexts. Policies that promote communicative competence without addressing its pragmatic foundations risk reinforcing superficial interpretations of communication. Recognising pragmatic competence as a core component of teacher education is not merely a pedagogical concern but an issue of educational equity. In contexts where access to authentic language use is limited, teacher education programmes play a critical role in ensuring that future teachers—and, by extension, their learners—are equipped with the pragmatic tools necessary for meaningful participation in academic, professional, and social interactions.

By foregrounding both educator perspectives and curricular structures, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of pragmatic development in teacher education. It argues for moving pragmatics from the margins to the centre of ELTE curricula, not as an optional or advanced skill, but as a foundational dimension of professional communicative competence. Addressing the gaps identified here represents a necessary step towards strengthening English teacher education in Chile and in other comparable EFL contexts.

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