

## **Pragmatic Content in EFL Textbooks: An Investigation into Vietnamese National Teaching Materials**

November 2020 – Volume 24, Number 3

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### **Abstract**

*Recent research studies in ESL/EFL contexts worldwide have shown a gap between the findings of pragmatics research and how the English language is actually taught and learnt in EFL classrooms, as well as a paucity of pragmatic information provided in ESL/EFL textbooks. Utilizing content analysis, this study explores the provision of pragmatic content in the current national EFL textbook series, which was first published in 2012 and has been used nationwide for Vietnamese upper-secondary school students since the school year 2018-2019. These materials include the aim of facilitating the development of students' communicative competence in English in their overall objectives, which, as we will argue in this paper, implies that pragmatic competence is also a goal. However, results from this study show that this series includes quite a low level of explicit information about pragmatics, which is present in only 5.5% of pages in the student books and does not appear at all in the teacher manuals. In addition, the explicit presentation of different elements potentially contributing to the learning of pragmatics was found to be quite infrequent. These findings suggest that there is a need for supplementing these EFL textbooks with additional materials and activities, for considering pragmatics as part of the textbook design process, and for enhancing teachers' ability to incorporate pragmatics in their classroom practices.*

**Keywords:** *Pragmatics; pragmatic content; Vietnamese EFL textbooks; textbook evaluation*

### **Introduction**

Despite the well-established recognition of the importance of pragmatic competence, which is defined as the ability to “choose appropriate linguistic forms to achieve communicative goals in context” (Taguchi & Roever, 2017, p. 7) in overall communicative competence (see Bachman, 2000; Bachman & Palmer, 2010 for examples) and the widespread calls by English

language teaching researchers for bringing a focus on pragmatics into the classroom (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996, Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Rose, 2005; Taguchi, 2015; Tatsuki & Houck, 2010; Vellenga, 2004; etc.), pragmatic knowledge still seems to be undervalued in the teaching and learning of English, especially in English-as-a-foreign-language (hereafter EFL) contexts. This occurs for a number of reasons, of which the two most noticeable ones are the great emphasis on other aspects of language proficiency (most commonly grammar and vocabulary) in the assessment system and teachers' own lack of knowledge of the subtleties of the way language is used to make meanings in real world contexts (see Taguchi, 2015 for a comprehensive discussion). The result of this lack of emphasis is the persistence of gaps in the communicative competence of learners especially in the area of awareness of contextual appropriateness.

One manifestation of the neglect of pragmatic knowledge in EFL contexts is the common paucity of pragmatic content in ESL/EFL textbooks. For instance, in studies of English-as-a-second-language (hereafter ESL) and EFL books used in North America and worldwide and of EFL oral textbooks used in China, conducted by Vellenga (2004) and Ren and Han (2016), respectively, it was reported that pragmatic content only accounted for a small portion of total text. Also, different aspects of pragmatics-related information presented in the textbooks, such as the presentation, distribution, and range of speech acts as well as the metalanguage used, were argued to be inadequate. Additionally, Vellenga (2004) found that neither the teacher manuals nor the teachers themselves supplemented the textbooks with pragmatic information. While it can be argued that some textbook writers have other priorities apart from pragmatics (e.g., the development of specific skills, or lexico-grammatical content for specific purposes), the textbooks considered in these studies are written with the purpose of developing learners' communicative competence. As theoretical models of second language (hereafter L2) communicative competence include a pragmatic component (e.g., Bachman & Palmer, 1996, 2010; Canale & Swain, 1980; Roever, 2009), this study commenced from the assumption that pragmatic content in EFL textbooks is important and should not be neglected.

The findings from Ren and Han's (2016) and Vellenga's (2004) studies suggest that ESL/EFL textbooks can be popular and widely used but still exhibit serious omissions or at times misinformation, which have the potential to hinder the development of communicative competence among learners. This is especially hazardous for EFL learners who acquire the target language mainly through textbooks in classroom settings. Vietnamese EFL learners have to face additional obstacles in learning English pragmatics. This is because, besides the common constraints of the EFL contexts, there also exist particularly sharp contrasts between the English and Vietnamese languages in terms of the social and cultural facets of communication. These include differences in the notions of politeness and appropriate degree of directness, the choice of speech acts, and communicative strategies (see Hoang, 2013; Pham, 2008 for differences between English and Vietnamese pragmatic features). For example, it is remarked in Nguyen and Basturkmen's (2013) study that unlike in English and some other languages, Vietnamese requests tend to have a high level of directness, which manifests itself in the frequent use of imperative requests by Vietnamese people. Likewise, the speech act of criticizing can be much more explicit in Vietnamese (Nguyen, 2008). As such, without proper pragmatic instruction, these Vietnamese pragmatic features may be transferred to their English use unconsciously (see Roever & Nguyen, 2013 for additional information regarding Vietnamese pragmatics). Therefore, it is significant that ESL/EFL textbooks in general and Vietnamese EFL textbooks in particular be evaluated in terms of pragmatic content so that

potential gaps between what the textbook provides and what students need for appropriate language use in real life communication can be identified. Accordingly, useful implications and suggestions for teachers and textbook writers could be made.

Regarding the evaluation of textbooks in terms of internal content oriented towards the facilitation of students' communicative competence development in the current EFL context of Vietnam, there have been two recent works by Dang and Seals (2018), and Nguyen, Marlina, and Cao (2020) which explore how sociolinguistic aspects of language and culture and knowledge of English for intercultural communication are presented in textbooks respectively. Neither of these deals directly with pragmatics, but both studies found that current textbook design succeeds quite well in adopting a communicative language teaching approach. However, Dang and Seals (2018) reported that English variations and cross-cultural knowledge are still limited, with the dominant norms of British English in the current English primary textbooks in Vietnam (Hoang, Phan, Do, Dao, Truong, Nguyen, & Wilson, 2016). Similarly, Nguyen, Marlina, and Cao (2020) found a prevalence of Anglophone/Western cultural contents and the underrepresentation of other Asian contexts in the current English secondary textbooks (Hoang, Hoang, Dang, Phan, Hoang, Kieu, Vu, Dao, & Kaye, 2016). Hence, it is concluded in both studies that the content of the textbooks does not equip students with necessary knowledge to use English in international communication due to their lack of knowledge of world Englishes and intercultural communication skills. Given the novelty of this English textbook series for Vietnamese students, these studies are timely and thus valuable as they facilitate the better adaption of the textbooks into the curriculum. Nevertheless, the fact remains that none of these studies have an L2 pragmatics perspective which would evaluate the information of form-context relationship to help learners "come to know how-to-say-what-to-whom-when" (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013, p. 68). Therefore, this study was conducted to address this gap.

## **Literature review: Research on Pragmatic Content in Textbooks in Vietnam**

As mentioned above, there have not been many comprehensive studies involving the examination of pragmatic content in ESL/EFL textbooks, except for the work of Vellenga (2004), and Ren and Han (2016), but there has been a great deal of research whose focus is on one particular aspect of pragmatics in textbooks. These include a broad range of speech acts (Aksoyalp & Toprak, 2015), or a specific type of speech act like apologizing (Limberg, 2016), as well as cultural content with sociopragmatic implications (see Khodadady & Shayesteh, 2016; Siddiqie, 2011; Vaezi, Tabatabaei, & Bakhtiarvand, 2014 for examples).

Research on this topic in the EFL context of Vietnam follows a similar pattern. While some research has been conducted which focusses on speech acts and on the teaching and learning of speech acts among Vietnamese EFL learners, and several on other sociopragmatic aspects such as politeness and directness in the case of Vietnamese EFL learners (Nguyen, 2007; Pham, 2008; Tran, 2004) the investigation into the teaching and learning of pragmatics in general, and into pragmatic input in textbooks in particular has received little attention. A comprehensive review of the literature revealed only two studies that deal directly with the evaluation of pragmatic information in Vietnamese EFL textbooks, by Nguyen (2011) and Vu (2017). These studies concern the evaluation of an earlier set of upper-secondary Vietnamese EFL textbooks, and pragmatic teaching at tertiary levels in Vietnam respectively.

Nguyen (2011) investigated the integration of intercultural and pragmatic competence into the English textbook series which was used for Vietnamese upper-secondary school students before the current one. She reported that the textbooks did not constitute an accurate and adequate source of pragmatic information and argued for the need to provide realistic pragmatic models that were accompanied by an adequate explanation of rules of use in order to facilitate learners' development of pragmatic competence in the target language. She also called for "immediate attention from textbook developers and teachers, particularly those working in the EFL context given that their learners have relatively limited access to authentic input and rely almost solely on textbooks for language learning". (Nguyen, 2011, p. 27)

Nguyen strongly advocated the integration of pragmatics into Vietnamese EFL textbooks. However, despite her recommendations, in the design of the subsequent set of teaching resources other objectives were given greater priority and the focus of the curriculum shifted further towards skills development. The amount of pragmatic information provided was actually reduced.

Seeking to know about teachers' perceptions of pragmatics, their pragmatics teaching, and pragmatic components presented in textbooks and the curriculum at the tertiary level in Vietnam, Vu (2017) conducted a study at a medium-sized public university in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. He collected data from 29 Vietnamese English lecturers who worked with non-English major students, and analysed the pragmatic components from the in-use textbook, the Face2face Pre-Intermediate Student's book (Redston & Cunningham, 2005) and its Workbook (Tims, Redston, & Cunningham, 2005), and from the curriculum set by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training and the university. As a result, he found that there was very little pragmatic information presented in the textbook and that teachers' understanding of pragmatic knowledge and its teaching varied amongst individual teachers according to their linguistic and instructional experience. He also found that teachers relied mostly on textbooks to teach pragmatics, and thus encountered difficulties, both because of the lack of information presented and because of their own lack of pragmatic knowledge and L2 pragmatics teaching methodologies.

To varying degrees, all of these studies (Nguyen, 2011; Ren & Han, 2016; Vellenga, 2004; Vu, 2017) have contributed to the understanding of the extent to which pragmatics is included in ESL/EFL textbooks and has resulted in the conclusion that pragmatic information in the investigated textbooks is inadequate to promote the development of communicative competence in a balanced way. These researchers also made a strong and convincing argument for the inclusion of pragmatics in the teaching curricula and in textbooks in ESL/EFL contexts generally and in the Vietnamese EFL context particularly. More importantly, regarding studies on textbook evaluation, there is still a research gap in current literature. Existing work in EFL contexts in general has tended to focus on single specific aspects of pragmatics, and thus there is a need for a more holistic view of how all kinds of pragmatic information are included in EFL textbooks. Likewise, similar studies on EFL textbooks in Vietnam have also looked at other aspects such as language and culture (Dang & Seals, 2018), intercultural knowledge (Nguyen, Marlina, & Cao, 2020) but without making specific links to pragmatics. Given that no previous study has evaluated how pragmatic information is included in the national textbook series published under the National Foreign Language Project 2020 (hereafter NFLP 2020) of the Vietnamese government, it was our intent in the current study to undertake such an evaluation of the textbooks for Vietnamese EFL students at upper secondary school level.

## **Background of the Study**

The rationale for our selection of the textbooks for upper-secondary school students is as follows. Firstly, the NFLP 2020, launched by the government to renew the teaching and learning of foreign languages, especially English in the national education system, has an ultimate goal that by 2020 most Vietnamese young people graduating from secondary vocational schools, colleges and universities will be able to use a foreign language confidently in their daily communication, their study and work in an integrated, multi-cultural and multi-lingual environment, making foreign languages a competitive advantage of the Vietnamese people. (Hoang, 2016, p. 12)

With this aim of cultivating high-skilled and highly qualified people who can communicate confidently in foreign languages, especially in English, to serve the cause of industrialization and modernization of the country, one of the most important activities of this project is improving the standard of teaching, learning, and use of English. Accordingly, the new textbook series was released for ten years of English training from grade 3 to grade 12 of general education level to facilitate the realization of this goal. Given the focus on communicative competence as set out in this aim, we were motivated to investigate what pragmatic information was incorporated in this textbook series because in order to be communicatively competent, learners need to have pragmatic knowledge alongside organisational knowledge (see Bachman, 1990, 2000; Bachman & Palmer, 1996, 2010). Our investigation was also limited to the set of textbooks at upper-secondary school level exclusively since we sought to see whether the English textbooks at the final stage of general education could provide students with adequate pragmatic input to be able to express themselves appropriately in everyday topics as set out in the goal of the NFLP 2020 (see Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV, 2008) and as described by the chief editor of this textbook series in the foreword of all teacher manuals for upper-secondary school level as follows:

The aim of this set of textbooks is to develop students' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills and improve their English language knowledge with a focus on communicative competence so that when they finish upper secondary school, their English will be at level three of the Foreign Language Proficiency Framework for Vietnam (equivalent to B1 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). (Hoang et al., 2016, p. iii)

Although pragmatic knowledge and pragmatic competence are not mentioned in this foreword by the chief editor, they are essential parts of both communicative competence and knowledge of the English language (see components of communicative competence in models of Bachman & Palmer, 1996, 2010; Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia, 2007). In addition, it has been well-established in an abundance of research that language users must possess both linguistic competence and pragmatic competence to communicate effectively via either spoken or written modes (e.g., Hoffman-Hicks, 1992; Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Barron & Wurga, 2007). The significant role of pragmatic knowledge and competence in learners' writing and speaking skills has been affirmed in a number of other research studies (e.g., Al-Ali, 2006; Latha & Rajan, 2012; Upton & Connor, 2001; Vergaro, 2004). This body of research provides strong evidence that the development of students' language skills cannot be achieved with a focus on linguistic aspects alone. The four skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, which do not occur in isolation in communicative texts or activities, require language users to possess the ability to comprehend and construct utterances accurately and appropriately in various social and cultural contexts.

Given the necessity of pragmatics in the realization of the goals of the NFLP 2020, and the fact that the series is soon to be reviewed for possible upgrading or replacement, it is an ideal time for this textbook series to be examined in terms of pragmatic content to see whether identified weaknesses regarding pragmatic information of the previous Vietnamese EFL set of textbooks under Nguyen's (2011) study have been eliminated in its successor (i.e., the textbook series under inquiry of this study). As EFL textbooks frequently constitute the curriculum of the school system, findings from this study have the potential to inform change not only for Vietnam but also other similar EFL contexts.

## **Research Questions, Terminology & Frameworks**

### **Research Questions**

With the above-mentioned aim of investigating the pragmatic content in the current set of textbooks, this study was not limited to the examination of the presentation of speech acts in the textbooks, but also cross-linguistic information, and the nature of tasks in which pragmatic knowledge could be put into effect in real time. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What kinds of general pragmatic information are included in the textbooks?
2. How many and which topicalized speech acts are included in the textbooks? How are these speech acts distributed and presented? What kind of contextual and meta-pragmatic information accompanies these speech acts?
3. What kinds of pragmatic tasks are included in the textbooks?
4. Do the textbooks address the problem of pragmatic transfer by providing students with information about English-Vietnamese pragmatic differences?

### **Definitions of Related Terms**

In this study, the word general pragmatic information was used to refer to any other information related to pragmatics apart from speech acts, including: politeness, appropriacy, formality, register, and cultural knowledge. Speech acts were separated from general pragmatic information to form a category per se since the treatment of speech acts were paid special attention to in the present study. This is because of the important role of speech acts as “an engaging area of pragmatics for materials development” (Ren & Han, 2016, p. 425), and as an essential area of knowledge for L2 learners to express their meanings and intentions. The three categories of general pragmatic information, speech acts, and pragmatic tasks were referred to as pragmatic content in this study.

As such, the components of pragmatic content in this study are different from those in Ren and Han's (2016) and Vellenga's (2004) studies (which we have referred to as *pragmatic information*) in that our category also includes pragmatic tasks. This decision was made because the current study also aimed to see whether students would have the chance to practice the presented pragmatic knowledge through available activities in the textbooks. More details of the frameworks of the evaluation of pragmatic information in textbooks in Ren and Han's (2016) and Vellenga's (2004) studies, as well as in other related studies are discussed in the following section.

In research question 4, we refer to pragmatic transfer, which is the influence of one set of pragmatic knowledge in one language upon another (see Bou Franch, 1998 for more discussion). We aimed to see whether the pragmatic differences between English and Vietnamese were addressed in the textbooks to raise students' awareness of the influence of L1 pragmatics on L2 pragmatics in order to help them limit potential pragmatic errors. According to Ishihara and Cohen (2010), the reasons for the pragmatic error in learners can be one or a combination of the following causes: 1) Negative transfer of pragmatic norms; 2) Limited L2 grammatical ability; 3) Overgeneralization of perceived L2 pragmatic norms; 4) Effect of instruction or instructional materials; and 5) Resistance to using perceived L2 pragmatic norms. Among these five causes, the first one is one manifestation of pragmatic transfer, which is avoidable if learners are made aware of major differences between L1 and L2 pragmatics.

### **Theoretical Frameworks Used in the Study**

In order to evaluate the pragmatic content in the textbooks under inquiry, several theoretical frameworks were considered for adoption in this study. The first area under consideration was the framework for the classification of pragmatic content in textbooks.

As mentioned above, both Ren and Han (2016) and Vellenga (2004) examined how pragmatic information was represented in ELT textbooks. In her qualitative and quantitative content analysis of pragmatic information in eight ESL/EFL textbooks, Vellenga divided pragmatic information into four main categories, namely, general pragmatic information (including politeness, appropriacy, formality, register, culture), metalanguage style (the use of different sentence types when introducing topical units, particular linguistic forms, usage information, or student instructions, and the use of the personal pronouns 'I' or 'We'), speech acts, and meta-pragmatic description of speech acts. The counts and descriptions of these different kinds of pragmatic information were obtained through performing a page-by-page analysis of the eight books. From this division of pragmatic information, it can be seen that Vellenga put an emphasis on speech acts, which accounted for half of the weight of the classification scale. Also, she looked at implicit input of pragmatics by examining the metalanguage style used in the textbooks. It can be said that Vellenga was successful in establishing a clear framework for her study and for other researchers with the same interest to follow. In fact, Ren and Han (2016) applied her approach in their study of ten Chinese oral EFL textbooks with the addition of the category of intralingual pragmatic variation found in different English varieties. These authors convincingly argued that the variation in pragmatic conventions in different English varieties could cause problems in intercultural communication, and thus teachers and learners need to be informed of this issue through its explicit mention in textbooks.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, Nguyen (2011) conducted a qualitative analysis and evaluation of the pragmatic information in the textbooks series for Vietnamese upper-secondary school students, which precedes the textbook series under inquiry of this study. In her study, she classified pragmatic information into three categories, namely, *the range and distribution of speech acts*, *the linguistic presentations of speech acts*, and *contextual and meta-pragmatic information* accompanying these presentations. Clearly, Nguyen's classification framework is narrower and even more speech-act focused than Vellenga's. Also in the EFL context of Vietnam, when Vu (2017) carried out a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the pragmatic components in the Face2face Pre-Intermediate Student's book, workbook and teacher's book, he adopted Vellenga's (2004) classification of pragmatic information and

Kachru's (1992) classification of English users (see Kachru, 1992 for more details). He divided pragmatic components into *pragmatic information* and *pragmatic tasks*. The aspect of pragmatic information followed Vellenga's (2004) classification with the replacement of meta-pragmatic description of speech acts by *cultural knowledge*, which was coded into two categories only, that is, cultures of speakers of English as a native language and cultures of speakers of ESL, EFL, ELF (English as a lingua franca). Vu (2017) remarked that cultural knowledge was under general pragmatic information according to Vellenga's (2004) model but was treated as a category in his analysis because one aim of his study was to highlight the role of culture in language learning and teaching. As for the category of *pragmatic tasks*, he divided it into *pragmatically oriented tasks* and *culture-oriented tasks*; however, he did not provide a definition for either of these two terms. Despite this omission, Vu developed a wider and more comprehensive framework to evaluate pragmatic components in ELT textbooks with the addition of the pragmatic tasks category. We believe this category is essential in the evaluation of pragmatic components in ELT textbooks because tasks provide classroom language learners with a source of pragmatic input and opportunities for pragmatic output as well as a means to reinforce their pragmatic knowledge. Unfortunately, Vu was not able to investigate further as the textbook under his inquiry contained limited numbers of pragmatic tasks, which failed to provide enough data for analysis. Actually, in his doctoral thesis, he merely reported that the number of pragmatic tasks found in the textbook was too small for analysis; therefore, only pragmatic information was analyzed.

Based on these well-established frameworks of classification of pragmatic information and pragmatic components in textbooks in these studies, a framework of pragmatic content in textbooks was developed to suit the purpose of this study. Its detail is presented in the following section of *Instrument* under the presentation of *Methods*.

For the examination of pragmatic tasks, Bloom's Revised Taxonomy by Anderson, Krathwohl, Airasian, Cruikshank, Mayer, Pintrich, Raths, and Wittrock (2001) and Ishihara and Cohen's (2010) examples of pragmatic tasks were used to analyse the quality and nature of the kind of tasks in this textbook series. Bloom's taxonomy, which was first published by Benjamin Bloom and his collaborators in 1956, is a framework for categorizing educational goals. It includes six major categories: *knowledge*, *comprehension*, *application*, *analysis*, *synthesis*, and *evaluation*, in which knowledge is considered as the prerequisite for all of the categories following it (Bloom, 1956). In the revised framework by Anderson et al. (2001), these categories were replaced by action words to describe the cognitive processes that learners deploy in order to work with knowledge, namely, *remember*, *understand*, *apply*, *analyze*, *evaluate*, *create*. Importantly, in Bloom's revised taxonomy, static notions of educational objectives in Bloom's original taxonomy were shifted into more dynamic conceptions of cognition to describe different levels of thinking. Therefore, in this study, Bloom's revised taxonomy was adopted in the analysis of pragmatic tasks identified from the textbooks to examine different levels of cognition required to complete these tasks. The rationale behind this adoption lies in the assumption that if students have to use more complex cognitive processes like analyzing, evaluating, and creating to complete the tasks, they are more likely to achieve mastery of the content (Anderson et al., 2001). As such, it is supposed that if students are required to use their analytical, evaluative, or creative abilities rather than simply recognizing, remembering, or applying the presented pragmatic information in the identified pragmatic tasks from the textbooks, they are more likely to acquire pragmatic, and hence communicative, competence.



In addition, Ishihara and Cohen's (2010) example of pragmatic tasks, which is a hands-on activity "intended for enhancing teachers' (and their students') pragmatic awareness and reflective teaching" (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010, p. xi), was used as a model to compare the nature of the pragmatic tasks found in the textbooks. This example was specifically designed for L2 pragmatics-teaching purpose in the allotted time of 45 minutes. It included such activities as role-play, discussion with clearly-described social situations and specific requirements for students to enhance their awareness of pragmatic behaviour regarding crucial notions of pragmatics like formality, directness, politeness, and the factors informing pragmatic choices: status, level of acquaintance, and the level of imposition. Given its clear objectives, step-by-step instruction for each activity, and easy-to-understand language, it was considered as a useful illustration of the type of pragmatic tasks that could be helpful for learners at around B1 level (the target level for students of the investigated textbooks in this study).

## Methods

The present study adopted both quantitative and qualitative elements to the content analysis method to determine the quantity and quality of explicit pragmatic information included in the textbooks.

The decision to select explicit pragmatic information exclusively in this study is based on the recognised superiority of explicit pragmatic instruction over implicit, particularly in an EFL context where authentic communication contexts are limited. In the bulk of research findings from as early as 1994 in both ESL and EFL contexts it has been reported that learners who received explicit pragmatic instruction outperformed those relying on implicit learning in terms of both fluency and quality of target features such as request forms, criticisms, hedging, etc. (see Alcón-Soler & Guzman-Pitarch, 2013; Cohen & Tarone, 1994 for examples). Given that EFL students mainly rely on teacher's instruction to acquire knowledge in the target language and on the setting of classrooms to practice their knowledge, it is widely believed that explicit teaching can be "a facilitative tool to develop pragmatic competence in a foreign language" (Rueda, 2006, p. 169), in which all target features are made salient and presented directly to students (Taguchi, 2015).

## Instrument

A framework for evaluating pragmatic content in textbooks was created by adapting Vellenga's (2004) classification of pragmatic information and incorporating Vu's (2017) addition of pragmatic tasks. The rationale for this choice is the effectiveness of Vellenga's (2004) checklist, which became evident through replicated studies by Ren and Han (2016), and Vu (2017). The inclusion of tasks in the framework is considered to be particularly relevant in EFL contexts, where opportunities for out of class practice is limited. As a conceptual framework, it cannot be validated statistically in the way that can be applied to questionnaire or survey data, but the fact that it has been used before to generate meaningful research conclusions encouraged us to apply it, so that our results could be meaningfully compared with an existing body of knowledge.

As such, in this combined framework, *pragmatic content* consists of *pragmatic information* and *pragmatic tasks*. Pragmatic information is divided into two categories, namely *general pragmatic information*, and *speech acts*. The first category, i.e., general pragmatic information,

includes five sub-categories: *politeness*, *appropriacy*, *formality*, *register*, and *cultural knowledge* as stated previously. Politeness is considered to relate to any information from the textbooks which provides learners with knowledge of how to use levels of English politeness that are appropriate to the context in English. This could be some simple instructions of how to soften a command or how to use hedges to mitigate criticisms, etc. In the same vein, appropriacy relates to any knowledge from the textbooks which informs learners of whether or not a form is appropriate to be used in a certain context or genre. Formality includes knowledge about context and choices of ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ forms while register covers knowledge of stylistic variation such as different usage in written and spoken language. As for cultural knowledge, any information related to the knowledge of English and Vietnamese cultures in communication is classified into this sub-category. The five categories of general pragmatic information cover the key components of pragmatic knowledge with the exception of one element – implicature. We considered whether that could be subsumed in the category of cultural knowledge, or whether it was deserving of a separate category. However, this question remained open as in the analysis of the textbooks no examples were found.

The second category, speech acts, was investigated in terms of explicit mention (that is, the explicit naming of speech acts in terms of their functions, such as: agreement, disagreement, opinions, advice, etc.) and meta-pragmatic description (any commentary on usage or contextual references to speech acts from the textbooks is placed under this sub-category).

Regarding the issue of English-Vietnamese pragmatic differences addressed in research question 4, any presented information about these features in the textbooks could be placed under its related content, which could be politeness, appropriacy, formality, register, cultural knowledge, and speech acts.

As for pragmatic tasks, those activities or exercises from the textbooks that provide opportunities for pragmalinguistic practice are placed in the category of pragmatically-oriented tasks whereas those relating to the practice of English and Vietnamese cultural norms are listed under the category of culturally-oriented tasks.

This framework for the content analysis of the textbooks with the focus on pragmatic content is summed up in the table below.

**Table 1. Framework for Evaluation of Pragmatic Content in Textbooks (Adapted from Vellenga (2004) and Vu (2017)).**

<b>Pragmatic content</b>	
<b>Pragmatic information</b>	<b>Pragmatic tasks</b>
General pragmatic information: – Politeness – Appropriacy – Formality – Register – Cultural knowledge	Pragmatically-oriented tasks
<b>Speech acts</b> – Explicitly mentioned – Metapragmatic descriptions	<b>Culturally-oriented tasks</b>

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

### **Extraction of Explicit Pragmatic Content from Textbooks**

The primary source of data for this study was the student books, which are the main source of input for students in general and EFL students in particular. This is because textbooks do not only serve as “a map that lays out the general content of lessons and a sense of structure that gives coherence to individual lessons, as well as to an entire course” (Richards, 2014, p. 19), they also provide teachers and students with an outline and content of both linguistic and cultural elements to follow in the curriculum (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). Therefore, a page-by-page analysis was performed on the student books to investigate the quantity and quality of explicit pragmatic content included. In the table below, a general description of all student books is shown.

**Table 2. General Description of the Six Student Books.**

Student books	Number of units and book length	Title of each unit
English 10, Volume 1	5 units, 63 pages	1. Family life; 2. Your body and you; 3. Music; 4. For a better community; 5. Inventions
English 10, Volume 2	5 units, 63 pages	6. Gender equality; 7. Cultural diversity; 8. New ways to learn; 9. Preserving the environment; 10. Ecotourism
English 11, Volume 1	5 units, 79 pages	1. The generation gap; 2. Relationships; 3. Becoming independent; 4. Caring for those in need; 5. Being part of ASEAN
English 11, Volume 2	5 units, 79 pages	6. Global warming; 7. Further education; 8. Our world heritage sites; 9. Cities of the future; 10. Healthy lifestyle and longevity
English 12, Volume 1	5 units, 79 pages	1. Life stories; 2. Urbanisation; 3. The green movement; 4. The mass media; 5. Cultural identity
English 12, Volume 2	5 units, 79 pages	6. Endangered species; 7. Artificial intelligence; 8. The world of work; 9. Choosing a career; 10. Lifelong learning

**(Note:** After every three units, there is a review section in which there are exercises for students to practice both the aspects of language (including: vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation) and the four skills (i.e., listening, reading, writing, speaking) presented in each unit.)

In addition, the teacher books were examined to determine how textbook authors guided the use of the student books in the classroom, and to cross-reference with the student books for pragmatic content.

Below are some examples of what are counted as explicit instances of pragmatic content versus those that are considered to be implicit ones.

**Table 3. Illustration of Explicit versus Implicit Pragmatic Content from the Student Books.**

Explicit pragmatic content	Implicit pragmatic content
<p><b>Watch out!</b> Tone is very important in writing. You can write in a formal or informal tone. What kind of tone do you use in an email to a friend? What kind of tone do you use in a job application? (<i>English 10 – Volume 1</i>, p. 44)</p>	<p><b>Getting Started</b> <b>Household chores</b> 1. Listen and read. <b>Nam:</b> Hello? <b>Mr Long:</b> Hello, Nam? This is Uncle Long. Is your dad there? I'd like to ask him out for a game of tennis.</p>
<p><b>Do you know ...?</b> We use should and shouldn't to give our opinions about something or advice to someone. <b>Example:</b> I think parents should spend more time talking with their teenage children. ... (<i>English 11 – Volume 1</i>, p. 9)</p>	<p><b>Nam:</b> Well, I'm afraid he can't go out with you now. He's preparing dinner. <b>Mr Long:</b> Is he? Where's your mum? Doesn't she cook? <b>Nam:</b> Oh, yes. My mum usually does the cooking, but she's working late today. <b>Mr Long:</b> How about your sister and you? Do you help with the housework? <b>Nam:</b> Yes, we do. In my family, everybody shares the household duties. Today my sister can't help with the cooking. She's studying for exams.</p>
<p><b>Do you know ...?</b> We can use the to-infinitive in structures with It and certain adjectives to make a comment or judgment. <b>It + linking verb + adjective (for somebody) + to-infinitive</b> <b>Adjectives:</b> easy, difficult, hard, interesting, boring, nice, great, good, possible, impossible, likely, important, necessary, unreasonable. <b>Examples:</b> It is interesting to talk to him. It is important for me to have confidence in myself. (<i>English 11 – Volume 1</i>, p. 33)</p>	<p><b>Mr Long:</b> I see. So how do you divide household chores in your family? <b>Nam:</b> Well, both my parents work, so we split the chores equally – my mother cooks and shops for groceries, my father cleans the house and does the heavy lifting, my sister does all the laundry, and I do the washing-up and take out the rubbish. <b>Mr Long:</b> Really? It's different in my family. My wife handles most of the chores around the house and I'm responsible for the household finances. She's the homemaker and I'm the breadwinner. Anyway, I have to go now. Tell your dad I called. Bye. <b>Nam:</b> Oh yes, I will, Bye, Uncle Long. (<i>English 10 – Volume 1</i>, p. 6)</p>

As can be seen from this table, a piece of information from the textbooks is counted as explicit pragmatic information if it contains any instructions related to pragmatics such as formal or informal language, or how to make some certain speech acts, etc. Meanwhile, implicit examples of pragmatic information are those that can be found and highlighted by teachers through conversation models in the textbooks. For example, in the above conversation between Nam and Uncle Long, the teacher can help students identify the relationship between the two

conversation participants to see how they address each other, and how Nam used the hesitation pragmatic markers such as *well*, and *I'm afraid* to signal a refusal.

### **Extracted data classification**

The extracted data were placed into the framework for textbook analysis in the following manner.

Despite the confidence we had in the validity of the framework on the basis of prior studies, a pilot study of the first units of all of the student books was carried out to see whether it would be adequate to cover all pragmatic input found, that is; whether all the information related to pragmatics included in the books could be placed into the categories and their sub-categories of the framework. When it was concluded that this was the case, further categorisation of all pragmatic data from the whole textbook series into the framework was conducted.

After the pilot study, all of the textbooks were analyzed by the first author, with all instances of pragmatic information being first identified and coded. (An “instance” in this context refers to a single item of explicit information related to pragmatics found in the textbook. For example, the section with the heading “*Do you know...? We use “should” and “shouldn’t” to give our opinions about something or advice to someone.*” (English 11 – Volume 1, p. 9) was counted as one instance and put in the sub-category of Explicit mention of Speech acts. It was decided that if one instance could fit in two different sub-categories due to their related definitions such as Politeness and Formality, it could be counted twice. However, throughout the textbook series there was no such instance found.

The collected data were checked three times by the first author to establish intra-rater reliability, and in order to establish interrater reliability, the coding of the student books was checked twice by a colleague of the first author who is a PhD holder in Linguistics from the University of Queensland, Australia. This means the student books were scrutinized five times altogether in order to assure all pragmatic input in the textbooks were detected and classified appropriately, as well as to ensure the accuracy of the researcher’s detection and analysis. The rationale behind these activities was to enhance reliability of the present study. The intra-rater reliability in this study was 100%, and the percentage of interrater agreement was 95%. This small number of differences in the analysis were easily resolved by re-examining the situations.

The data collected from the textbooks were recorded and organized into categories and sub-categories set out in the framework on a Microsoft Excel workbook for qualitative and quantitative analysis.

### **Data analysis procedure**

The collected data were analysed through the following stages:

- Step 1: For quantitative analysis, all collected data were counted to yield the total number of individually identified instances which could be labelled as “pragmatic content” included in the textbook series. This number was compared to the number of pages in the student books that contain the identified instances to yield the percentage of pages containing pragmatic input in the textbooks.
- Step 2: For qualitative analysis, each collected instance from the textbooks classified as pragmatic information was subjected to analysis informed by the findings and discussions from similar previous studies of Nguyen (2011), Ren and Han (2016), Vellenga (2004), and Vu

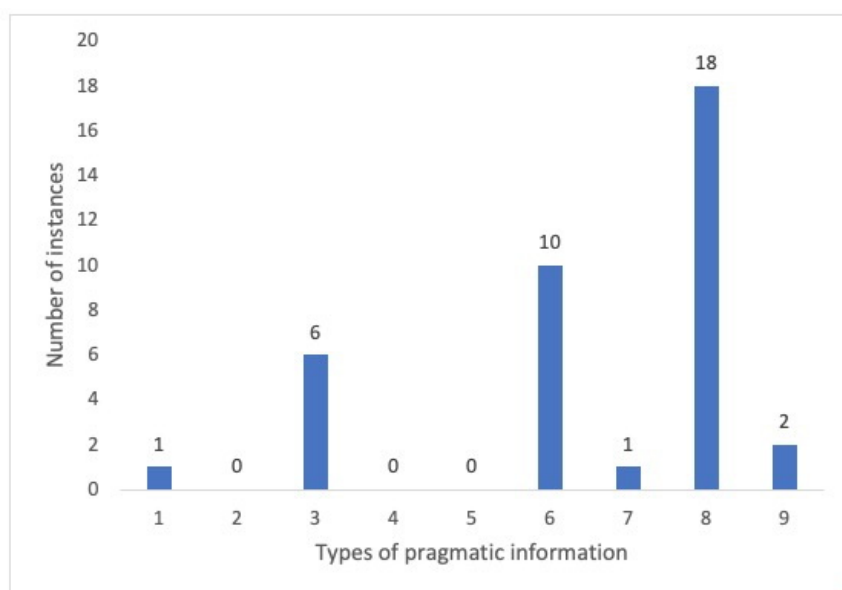
(2017). As for examining the pragmatic tasks, Bloom's revised taxonomy and Ishihara and Cohen's (2010) example of pragmatic tasks were used as frameworks for analysis as stated earlier.

## Findings and Discussion

A calculation of pages with pragmatic content from all student books and teacher books revealed that text containing explicit pragmatic content only accounted for a very small proportion of the total text in this textbook series, occurring on 5.5 % of all pages of the student books, and being completely absent from the teacher books. Compared to previous textbooks investigated by Vellenga (2004), Ren and Han (2016), and Vu (2017), this textbook series includes the least amount of pragmatic content. All these three prior studies revealed that on average pragmatic information accounts for 20.4 %, 17.09 %, and 19.28 % respectively of the textbook pages, which were already considered as a low percentage of pragmatic input included in textbooks by these researchers.

Although there has not been any general measure of a certain percentage of pragmatic knowledge that should be included in textbooks for the development of EFL students' communicative competence, the low amount of pragmatic content included in ESL/EFL textbooks could pose problems. It would not be an overstatement to say that the limited pragmatic content in this textbook series shows a potential failure in its ultimate goal of promoting the development of communicative competence. Since pragmatic competence is an important component in the overall communicative competence, as discussed in the literature review section, it is to be expected that pragmatic knowledge is presented in textbooks to account for a more balanced proportion to other types of linguistic knowledge.

The number of instances of pragmatic information identified from all student books is displayed in the below figure.



**Figure 1. Number of Instances of Pragmatic Information from all Student Books.**

**(Note:** 1. Politeness; 2. Appropriacy; 3. Formality; 4. Register; 5 Cultural knowledge; 6. Explicitly mentioned speech acts; 7. Metapragmatic descriptions of speech acts; 8. Pragmatically oriented tasks; 9. Culture-oriented tasks)

As can be seen in this chart, pragmatically oriented tasks represented the highest number of sources of pragmatic information from the student books, followed by the instances of explicitly mentioned speech acts and then those of formality. Even though totally, there are 38 instances of pragmatic information collected from all student books, some of them occur in the same page of the textbooks. Hence, in terms of pages containing pragmatic information, this number goes down to 21 pages over the total number of 380 pages of the whole series.

Remarkably, even though in the introduction of each teacher book, it is stated that the teacher books also provide “additional language and cultural notes” (Hoang et al., 2016, p. iii), these do not include pragmatic content. In fact, the additional notes in the teachers’ books, while undeniably useful in their own right, refer to vocabulary and background information to some cultural topics in the students’ books such as: family life, gender equality, music, world heritage sites in Vietnam, etc.

Below is one example to illustrate the cultural notes in the teachers’ books:

*Dangdut: a genre of Indonesian popular music developed in the late 1960s and 1970s among working-class Muslim youths in Java, but beginning in the late 1990s reached a broader following in lower class Indonesians, Malay, and southern Filipinos. (English 10 –Volume 1, Teachers’ book, p. 34T)*

**(Note:** in the teacher books, the page number is followed by a “T” to illustrate that the page is a guide for the same page number in the student books.)

In what follows, the answers to each research question are presented.

### **Research question 1: What kind of general pragmatic information is included in the textbooks?**

As can be seen in Figure 1 above, no explicit information about appropriacy, register, or cultural knowledge was present. Even though there is a section called Communication and Culture in every unit of the student books, it does not contain information about the culture in communication. Instead, it discusses other aspects of culture such as family life, gender equality, music, world heritage sites in Vietnam, as noticed in the cultural notes in the teacher books as discussed above.

Likewise, there is extremely limited information about the other two sub-categories of general pragmatic information, in which there is only one instance referring to politeness, and four instances about formality. These specific items are presented in the following table.



**Table 4. General Pragmatic Information from the Student Books.**

Sub-category of General Pragmatic Information	Instances Detected from the Textbooks
<p><b>Politeness</b></p>	<p><b>Do you know ...?</b>            We use fall-rise intonation when we are uncertain or can't really answer a question, but try to be as helpful as possible. The fall-rise can also suggest that there is more to be said.  <b>Example:</b>            I'm not sure. I can give you some advice.</p> <p>We can use rising or fall-rise intonation with question, for example, to request information, make suggestions, or invite someone to do something or have something.  <b>The fall-rise intonation sounds friendlier and more polite.</b>  <i>(English 11 – Volume 2, p. 60)</i></p>
<p><b>Formality</b></p>	<p><b>Do you know ...?</b>            The perfect participle is a compound verb form consisting of the auxiliary 'having' and the past participle of the verb, e.g. <i>having collected, having treated</i>.            We can use the perfect participles in a clause of time to talk about an action that comes before another connected one.  <b>Example:</b>  <i>Having collected all necessary information, he started writing his report.</i>            We can also use the perfect participle clause to talk about the reason for the action in the main clause.  <b>Example:</b>  <i>Having treated the environment irresponsibly, we now have to suffer the effects of climate change.</i>  <b>Note: We tend not to use participle clauses so much in speech since they can be rather formal.</b>  <i>(English 11 – Volume 2, p. 9)</i></p> <hr/> <p><b>Watch out!</b>            Tone is very important in writing. <b>You can write in a formal or informal tone. What kind of tone do you use in an email to a friend? What kind of tone do you use in a job application?</b>  <i>(English 10 – Volume 1, p. 44)</i></p> <hr/> <p><b>Do you know ...?</b>            The subjunctive uses the base form of the verb in that-clauses. It is used to report advice, orders, requests, suggestions, etc. about things that need to be done. <b>It is used in formal contexts, especially in written English.</b>  <i>(English 12 – Volume 1, p. 22)</i></p> <hr/> <p><b>Do you know ...?</b>            Some phrasal verbs have three parts: a verb, an adverb, and a preposition. The adverb and the preposition cannot be separated. <b>Many of these phrasal verbs are often used in informal contexts,</b> and it is difficult to guess their meaning from their individual parts.  <i>(English 12 – Volume 2, p. 49)</i></p>

As can be seen in this table, all of the identified instances with general pragmatic information refer directly to the names of the sub-categories: ‘polite’, ‘formal’, or ‘informal’. These kinds of notes are really useful to students as they serve to inform them of the kinds of context in which they are going to apply the language forms. However, more examples and further explanations from the student books per se or from teachers via the teacher books are required to avoid vagueness, as can be noticed in the instance about politeness, and in the first, third, and fourth instance of formality. For instance, the statement that ‘The fall-rise intonation sounds friendlier and more polite.’ may be an over generalisation and could easily be incorrectly applied. In this case, teachers need to be informed through the teacher books more explanation about this kind of intonation and comparison with other kinds of intonation. Similarly, mentioning that ‘we tend not to use participle clauses so much in speech since they can be rather formal’ can be misleading. There are exceptions – for example, native speakers often use “Having said that ...” when introducing some contrary ideas to previous utterances, and this can be in an informal situation. Thus, the explanations place a large responsibility on the teachers to interpret and explain, and in EFL situations where the teachers have not had the opportunity to use English in natural settings, this may be beyond their capacity.

**Research question 2: How many topicalized speech acts are included in the textbooks? How are these speech acts distributed and presented? What kind of contextual and meta-pragmatic information accompanies these speech acts?**

The design principle on which the syllabus is structured appears to be that of a skilled, rather than a structural or functional focus. The analysis of all student books shows that the number of explicitly topicalised speech acts was quite limited. In total, the six student books presented 14 topicalized speech acts, with an average of 2.3 speech acts per book, reflecting a limited range of speech acts among these textbooks. The table below shows the range and distribution of speech acts in the six student books, namely English 10, Volume 1, English 10, Volume 2, English 11, Volume 1, English 11, Volume 2, English 12, Volume 1, English 12, Volume 2, which are referred to as 10.1, 10.2, 11.1, 11.2, 12.1, 12.2 respectively.

As can be seen from Table 5, the distribution of speech acts per volume is uneven across the series. While topicalized speech acts could be found sporadically distributed in volumes 1 and 2 of English 10 and English 11, none of these could be seen in either volume of English 12. This non-patterned distribution of speech acts makes it hard to discern any guiding principle, such as usefulness or increasing complexity, regarding the allocation of speech acts to each level of English teaching in this textbook series. Also, teachers are not provided with any additional information about the nature of these speech acts and their meta-pragmatic information via the teacher books. It would have been useful and meaningful for both teachers and students if they had been informed of the contextual and meta-pragmatic information regarding these speech acts, as well as the differences between English and Vietnamese pragmatics in selecting and performing these speech acts. This will be further discussed below.

**Table 5. Range and Distribution of Speech Acts Presented in the Student Books.**

Type of speech act	10.1	10.2	11.1	11.2	12.1	12.2
(Dis-)agreement	–	x	–	–	–	–
Opinion	–	–	x x	–	–	–
Advice	–	–	x x	–	–	–
Obligation	–	–	x	–	–	–
Complaint	–	–	x	–	–	–
Surprise or Doubt	–	–	–	x	–	–
Promise	x	–	–	–	–	–
Offer	x	–	–	–	–	–
Request	x	–	–	–	–	–
Refusal	x	–	–	–	–	–
Prediction	x	–	–	–	–	–
Plan and intention	x	–	–	–	–	–
Comment or judgement	–	–	x	–	–	–
Suggestion	–	–	–	x	–	–
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

(Note: The cross (x) indicates one topicalized speech act identified from the textbook and the dash (-) for none)

**Research question 3: Do the textbooks provide students with information about English-Vietnamese pragmatic differences in selecting and performing these speech acts?**

Another way in which the presentation of speech acts in this textbook series is limited is that information about the differences between English and Vietnamese pragmatics in selecting and performing these speech acts is also absent. These kinds of information can be helpful in raising students’ awareness of the gap between L1 and L2 pragmatics, and limiting the effect of pragmatic transfer.

In the six student books analyzed, speech acts were explicitly mentioned in the following ways:

- 1) in a summary box entitled *Do you know ...?* which is for summarizing the grammar points and providing examples,
- 2) in the boxes entitled *Helpful expressions* and *Useful language for* (e.g. making suggestions) which are for providing students with relevant words and/or structures to carry a practice task of speaking, and
- 3) in the grammar section. No matter which section covers the knowledge of speech acts, it mentions or models speech acts without any commentary on usage or contextual references.

The following example illustrates the practice.

2. **Work in groups. Imagine that you have one day to explore Hue. Which attractions would you visit? Discuss and decide on two places you all want to see. Use the phrases below.**

**Useful language for making suggestions**

- I suggest + V-ing
- I'd like to suggest + V-ing
- Why don't we + V (infinitive without to)?
- Let's + V (infinitive without to)
- What about + V-ing?
- How about + V-ing?
- ... would be useful as it's / because it's / since it's ...
- What do you think about + V-ing?
- Wouldn't it be better to V (infinitive)?

**Example:**

**Student A:** Well, there are a lot of things to see in Hue, but we'll only have a day there. Which attractions do you think we should visit?

**Student B:** Why don't we visit the royal tombs? It would be useful because we can get more information for our History assignment.

(English 11 – Volume 2, p. 36)

As can be seen from this extract, the speech act of suggestion is taught to students in a speaking activity, in which students are provided with different linguistic forms to make a suggestion. However, there are no usage notes for each provided expression regarding the different meanings of each expression and its level of politeness. Obviously, these expressions are not interchangeable in different situations when students make suggestions to their peers and friends or to those of higher social status and more power. Providing 'useful expressions' to students in this way may create the impression that these expressions of making suggestions are all the same regardless of to whom and in what situation this speech act is made. It must be remembered that this is not only an issue in the set of textbooks under consideration, but a far more widespread problem. In fact, it was noted by Vellenga (2004) in her broad study of ESL/EFL textbooks used in North America and worldwide:

Because each speech act could be performed using a variety of different linguistic forms that vary greatly in terms of illocutionary force, this lack of information puts learners, particularly EFL learners with little target language exposure, at a disadvantage in terms of acquiring pragmatic competence (p. 9).

In summary, all of the above analysis and discussion in this section including limited range and unsystematic distribution of speech acts, lack of accompanying contextual and metapragmatic information, as well as problematic presentations of speech acts tended to indicate that the speech acts have not been given a high priority in this textbook series. This could be addressed

by the production of a supplementary volume for teachers explaining the nuances of use and providing practice and assessment tasks.

#### **Research question 4: What kinds of pragmatic tasks are included in the textbooks?**

The examination of all student books resulted in the identification of 18 tasks which had some relationship to pragmatics: (2 culturally-oriented tasks and 16 pragmatically-oriented tasks with potential to develop pragmatic fluency), accounting for a low 1.6% of the total number of tasks included in all student books. In terms of the cognitive processes involved in doing these tasks according to Bloom's Revised Taxonomy, it was found that these pragmatics-related tasks focus on one of the first three categories of cognitive processes, namely Remember, Understand, and Apply, and there are no tasks approaching the higher categories of cognitive process, Analyzing, Evaluating, or Creating. This could be considered a limitation of this textbook series since at this level, students are expected to be able to complete tasks which require higher level of thinking.

This is in sharp contrast to the pragmatics-focussed tasks advocated by Ishihara and Cohen: ("Listen to a dialogue and guess who is speaking. What is their relationship? What is the level of formality of the situation? Why do you think so?"; "Look at your classmate's work and give feedback using the given rubric. How would the listener most likely understand your classmate's intention?" (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010, p. 260). Doing such tasks does not only enable students to obtain deeper understanding of the taught knowledge but also help them to better their thinking skills (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 2005).

Table 6 displays some extracts of pragmatic tasks from the student books. Generally speaking, these tasks are well-designed and well-structured, displaying clear and easy-to-follow instructions, and examples or suggesting ideas in more complex tasks. Also, the tasks are designed in a scaffolded way, in which difficult tasks are preceded by previous similar activities, given information and ideas, or useful expressions. These preparations are of great importance, given students' low English proficiency at this level. However, in terms of pragmatics, many opportunities have been lost.

**Table 6. Examples of Instances of Tasks Potentially Classifiable as Pragmatic Tasks.**

<i>Instances of pragmatically-oriented tasks</i>	<i>Instances of culturally-oriented tasks</i>								
<p><b>1. Read the following phrases and sentences. Write A if it expresses an agreement and write D if it expresses a disagreement. Add two more expressions/sentences.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. _____ <i>I don't think that ...</i></li> <li>2. _____ <i>I agree (that ...).</i></li> <li>3. _____ <i>Yes, but ...</i></li> <li>4. _____ <i>That's true.</i></li> <li>5. _____ <i>I guess so.</i></li> <li>6. _____ <i>Actually, I think ...</i></li> <li>7. _____</li> <li>8. _____</li> </ol> <p><i>A recognizing task</i> (English 10 – Volume 2, p. 10)</p>	<p><b><u>Speaking</u></b></p> <p><b>3. Work in groups. Read about different customs in four countries. Then discuss the questions below.</b></p> <p>Different Customs in ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thailand: Never touch anyone except a child on the head.</li> <li>• Indonesia: Never point to anything with your foot.</li> <li>• Korea: Don't pass anything to an older person or a superior with only one hand.</li> <li>• The USA and Canada: Don't arrive early if you are invited to someone's home.</li> </ul>								
<p><b>3. Work in pairs. Tell your partner what you or your brothers / sisters and your parents complain about. Give advice on how to solve the problem.</b></p> <p><u>Helpful expressions:</u> <b>Complaints</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I don't like the way my parents keep + V-ing ...</li> <li>• My parents are always + V-ing ...</li> <li>• My parents believe that ...</li> <li>• <b>Giving opinions and advice</b></li> <li>• I think you should / ought to ...</li> <li>• I don't think you should / ought to ...</li> <li>• In my opinion, you should / shouldn't ....</li> <li>• If I were you, I would / wouldn't ....</li> <li>• You'd better ...</li> <li>• You shouldn't / ought not to ...</li> <li>• Why don't you ...</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples:</b> <b>Student A:</b> What kind of conflicts do you get into with your parents? <b>Student B:</b> Well, I don't like the way my mum keeps telling me what to do all the time. What should I do? <b>Student A:</b> I think you should talk to her and explain how you feel. You should also show her that you are responsible and mature. ... <i>An applying task</i> (English 11 – Volume 1, p. 12)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does Vietnamese culture follow any of these customs?</li> <li>2. Why do you think people have these customs?</li> <li>3. What other interesting customs of Viet Nam of other countries do you know?</li> </ol> <p><i>An applying task</i> (English 10 – Volume 2, p. 37)</p>								
	<p><b><u>Writing</u></b></p> <p><b>5. Write about what customs a visitor to Viet Nam should know. Use the following points or your own ideas.</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="842 1236 1402 1547"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="842 1236 1123 1268"><b>Dos</b></th> <th data-bbox="1123 1236 1402 1268"><b>Don'ts</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="842 1268 1123 1360">Call first when planning to visit someone at home</td> <td data-bbox="1123 1268 1402 1360">Take photographs in pagodas or temples</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="842 1360 1123 1453">Arriving on time when invited to someone's home</td> <td data-bbox="1123 1360 1402 1453">Open a gift in front of the giver</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="842 1453 1123 1547">Bargain when buying things in open-air markets</td> <td data-bbox="1123 1453 1402 1547">Kiss friends on the cheeks when meeting them.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><b>Examples:</b> When you visit Viet Nam, there are some important things you should know. For example, if you are visiting a pagoda or temple, it's not acceptable to take photographs... <i>An applying task</i> (English 10 – Volume 2, p. 37)</p>	<b>Dos</b>	<b>Don'ts</b>	Call first when planning to visit someone at home	Take photographs in pagodas or temples	Arriving on time when invited to someone's home	Open a gift in front of the giver	Bargain when buying things in open-air markets	Kiss friends on the cheeks when meeting them.
<b>Dos</b>	<b>Don'ts</b>								
Call first when planning to visit someone at home	Take photographs in pagodas or temples								
Arriving on time when invited to someone's home	Open a gift in front of the giver								
Bargain when buying things in open-air markets	Kiss friends on the cheeks when meeting them.								

In contrast with Ishihara and Cohen's (2010) example of pragmatic tasks, it can be seen that none of the ones identified from this textbook series are comparable in structure or goal with the example of a 'model' pragmatic task. This is because the pragmatic task in Ishihara and Cohen (2010) is specially designed to enhance pragmatic knowledge while the cited tasks from the textbooks are designed for students to practice some language functions and speaking skill only. Given the focus on developing students' communicative competence of this textbook series, it would be helpful if similar pragmatic tasks to Ishihara and Cohen's (2010) example could be included, or if current pragmatic tasks in the books could be adapted to provide helpful input and practice.

## **Conclusion and Implications**

The findings of this study have identified a potential mismatch between the ultimate goal of both this textbook series and the NFLP 2020 of developing students' communicative competence and the amount of explicit information about pragmatics in this textbook series. The development of pragmatic competence in an EFL situation is very different from the socialisation through which it is developed in L1 and bilingual heritage language contexts (Kecskes, 2015). It requires explicit input. This research is important at a time when there is a continual process of curriculum review and change. As stated previously, communicative competence requires both organizational and pragmatic competence (Bachman & Palmer, 1996) and the importance of all stakeholders (including teachers, textbooks writers, and policy makers) finding ways to provide students with input and tasks that can increase pragmatic knowledge cannot be overestimated.

With regard to teachers, the findings from this study further emphasise the importance of their playing an active role in incorporating pragmatic knowledge into their daily teaching practices. One feasible way for teachers using this particular set of materials is to look at the implicit pragmatic information in each conversation in the *Getting Started* section which initiates each unit, and make it explicit to students. As this section only contains a conversation followed by three to four short activities to check students' comprehension without any metapragmatic information about the conversation, it would be both interesting and helpful to include pragmatic information into the lesson plans for it.

All *Getting Started* conversations from this textbook series could be analysed in terms of the context of the conversation, participants and their relationships, the purpose of the interaction, and pragmatic information that could be highlighted from each conversation. Teachers can do this kind of analysis with students so that they are aware and informed of pragmatic issues when carrying out real-life conversations.

As for textbook writers and policy makers in Vietnam, it is valuable for them to be aware of the limitations of this textbook series in terms of pragmatics so that they could have plans for supplementing it. One possible solution is to design a supplementary guide to the teacher books, which provides teachers with pragmatic information and how to incorporate it into each section of the student books. The above-mentioned analysis could be one example of this kind of supplementary activity in which teachers are shown in detail how to incorporate pragmatics into the teaching of the *Getting Started* section. Alternatively, if the series is to be replaced or upgraded in the near future, these factors could be taken into account in the design of the subsequent series.

Finally, the findings of this study have implications for EFL textbook writers in general, independently of the organising principle of the curriculum for which the materials are designed. The current analysis of different aspects of pragmatics including pragmatic information and pragmatic tasks identifies some of the pitfalls and helps provide some preliminary guidelines for identifying and making use of opportunities for incorporating explicit information and skills-development activities to enhance the pragmatic competence of learners. There are many avenues for further research. Deeper insights into the inclusion of pragmatic content in this textbook series could be obtained with addition of other sources of information from relevant stakeholders such as teachers, textbook writers via questionnaire, interviews, or a focus group of teachers' opinions on this issue.

## Acknowledgements

This study was sponsored by a scholarship to the first author from Macquarie University, Australia.

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