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Developing a Scale for Assessing EFL Teachers' Intercultural Pragmatic Teaching

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ABSTRACT

Although prior research has excessively examined the inclusion of intercultural pragmatic content in English as a foreign language (EFL) context, there has been little focus on how teachers perceive and implement intercultural pragmatic competence within the classroom. To fill this gap, we tried to develop a theoretically informed instrument and administer it to a representative sample of 396 EFL teachers. Using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), we investigated the factor structure underlying the scale. The results indicate six distinct factors: sociocultural awareness, empathetic engagement, adaptive communication, inference, pragmatic motivation, and strategic competence. The Cronbach's alpha values demonstrated that each factor reflected conceptual coherence and internal consistency. The results indicated that intercultural pragmatic ability comprises several dimensions; correspondingly this highlights the significance of these characteristics within the framework of EFL instruction. The validated instrument offers researchers, teacher educators, and curriculum designers a significant resource for assessing and improving intercultural pragmatics in language education.

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Introduction

Within the field of applied linguistics, the globalization of communication has promoted the study of intercultural competence to a position of paramount importance in recent decades. Intercultural pragmatics (IP) is one of the most recently developed topics, evolving due to the complexity of international contact (Kecskes, 2014). This perspective transforms the focus of IP by shifting the emphasis from language as a merely symbolic system to language as a socially formed and culturally established behavior (McConachy, 2017).

Despite the increasing interest in how pragmatics supports language learning in academic contexts, only a few empirical studies have focused on IP. Most of these have concentrated on textbook content (Dahmardeh, 2009; Nguyen, 2011; Rahbarmah et al., 2024; Sersanawawi & Daulay, 2023). This research gap underscores the need for a reliable, validated, and context-sensitive instrument to determine the degree to which English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers understand and apply intercultural pragmatic competence (IPC) in their classrooms. In addition, such an instrument would offer practical benefits for policymakers and curriculum developers seeking to promote more experiential and applied language learning. Thus, the present study aims to develop and validate a scale that can capture the complexity of EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of intercultural pragmatic teaching. The scale is primarily based on Kecskes' (2014, 2023) theory of IP, which indicates that cultural awareness, empathy, sociocultural awareness, adaptability, negotiation, strategic competence, and motivation are the essential attributes for successful intercultural communication.

Literature Review

The current study is anchored in Kecskes' Intercultural Pragmatics Theory (2014, 2023), which adopts a sociocognitive perspective as its main framework. As stated by Kecskes, IP examines how people from diverse cultures utilize a language system during communication. In this framework, speakers from diverse cultures cooperate to develop communication norms and rules and construct a third culture that innovatively combines aspects of each speaker's first language (Kecskes, 2014). Kecskes (2023) depicts intercultural communication as an evolving, cognitively mediated, and socially co-constructed process, and language is a cultural activity that arises from and adapts to the interactional demands of interlocutors in unique settings.

The essential assumption underlying the Sociocognitive Theory is that the meaning-making process is affected not only by individual cognitive systems, such as previous knowledge, expectations, and goals, but also by the social-contextual factors that arise during the interaction. Hence, meaning is not communicated unidirectionally in an intercultural context but negotiated cooperatively through adaptation, inference, and collaboration (Kecskes, 2014). This study examines intercultural pragmatic competence in EFL instruction, grounded in the collective attributes that form its theoretical foundation. Kecskes' IP viewpoint is a key framework for comprehending the construct, influencing the scale's development, and interpreting its empirical structure. In addition, these dimensions are theoretically linked and relevant to teaching as they affect how EFL teachers manage intercultural meanings in their classrooms.

Dimensions of Intercultural Pragmatic Competence in EFL Teaching

IP provides a valuable framework for defining the process of successful intercultural communication (Taguchi & Yamaguchi, 2020). Based on Kecskes' intercultural pragmatic theory (2014, 2023) and the increasing research in this area, we have identified six key aspects for implementing English as a foreign language in education. These factors include sociocultural awareness and interactional appropriateness, empathetic engagement and perspective coordination, adaptive communication and interactional negotiability, inferencing, pragmatic motivation, and strategic competence, which will be discussed in the following subsections. Each of these aspects is essential for facilitating intercultural comprehension and mitigating pragmatic failure in educational settings. Table 1 represents the factors, definitions, and relevant references.

Table 1.
IP Dimensions

Dimension	Definition	Relevant References
Sociocultural Awareness and Interactional Appropriateness	Understanding and adapting to the social norms and cultural contexts that guide communication. This awareness includes recognizing sociocultural norms and cultural values, aiding in appropriate interaction across cultures.	Al-Sofi (2015); Buckley et al. (2006); Byram (1997); Guilherme (2000); Kasper and Rose (2002); Kecskes (2023); Tomalin and Stempleski (2013); Trees (2000).

Dimension	Definition	Relevant References
Empathetic Engagement and Perspective Coordination	The capacity for empathy and openness, allowing one to adopt others' viewpoints and understand cultural narratives, thereby reducing ethnocentric attitudes and fostering respect in intercultural communication.	Byram (1997); Goleman (1998); Huang (2023); Oliner and Oliner (1995); Ting-Toomey (2005); McConachy (2017).
Adaptive Communication and Interactional Negotiability	The ability to modify communication styles and employ strategies, like code-switching and speech accommodation, to bridge cultural differences, thus enhancing clarity and effectiveness in intercultural interactions.	Kecskes (2014); McKay (2018).
Inferencing	The cognitive process of interpreting meanings not explicitly stated, drawing on cultural and contextual knowledge to understand implicit meanings and intentions in intercultural communication.	Bach (2001); Haugh (2012); Horn (2004); Kecskes (2023); Taguchi (2009).
Pragmatic Motivation	The willingness to engage in communication despite potential barriers	Ellis (2015); Kecskes (2014); Tajeddin and Moghadam (2012); Takahashi (2001, 2005).
Strategic Competence	The capability to apply communication strategies to overcome cultural and linguistic barriers to persist in communication even when misunderstandings occur.	Bachman (1990); Canale and Swain (1980); Kecskes (2023); Musyahda (2005); Tajeddin et al. (2017).

Sociocultural Awareness and Interactional Appropriateness

Sociocultural awareness refers to the ability to assess and react appropriately to the social norms, values, and communicative practices that govern interactions within various cultural contexts. Such awareness promotes the formation and development of practical norms in intercultural relations, providing an understanding of how language functions within cultural systems (Kecskes, 2023). According to Byram (1997), individuals with sociocultural awareness view cultural interlocutors as dynamic agents shaped by deeply rooted values.

Cultural awareness goes beyond the pure acceptance of cultural differences; it involves adapting in communication, which requires acknowledging and accepting these differences (Kecskes, 2023). Moreover,

there is a direct connection among appropriateness, sociocultural awareness, cultural awareness, and interactional sensitivity in intercultural communication since they are critical for understanding the social conventions in different communications. Individuals should develop their sensitivity to the possible differences in the interlocutors' pragmatic norms (Nguyen, 2011; Taguchi & Ishihara, 2018) and should adjust their behavior depending on the expectations of their conversational partners and the setting (Kecskes, 2023) in order to communicate appropriately. For Yamada et al. (2017), educational resources should emphasize only authentic conditions instead of generalizations about national cultures.

Empathetic Engagement and Perspective Coordination

Empathy is defined by Goleman (1998) as the ability to notice and be sensitive to the feelings that other people are experiencing. Using knowledge of the cultural views that impact individuals' emotional experiences, Ting-Toomey (2005) has further built on this statement by incorporating empathetic engagement.

Empathy in an intercultural context consists of appropriately understanding the values and beliefs of the second culture while possessing one's cultural identity. In this situation, individuals consider a person's perspective to promote understanding across cultural boundaries (Zhu, 2011). Busse and Krause (2015) argue that empathic engagement and perspective coordination are significantly associated with intercultural competence. They serve as a basis for building common ground since individuals suspend judgment of good or bad; instead, they accept cultural differences as shared intercultural knowledge (Taguchi & Yamaguchi, 2020). As stated by Nguyen (2011) and Taguchi and Ishihara (2018), pragmatic instruction in English as a lingua franca demands consideration of empathy and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity.

Adaptive Communication and Interactional Negotiability

Adapting communication and negotiation skills is critical for understanding and coping with diverse opinions and attitudes in intercultural contexts. Such interaction contains a wide range of strategies that address communicative gaps in intercultural interactions, including code-switching, speech accommodation, and negotiating meaning (Nguyen & Basturkmen, 2020). Hence, adaptable and flexible interaction is vital for intercultural communication because of the increased probability of misunderstandings

and the absence of common ground. Kecskes (2014) argues that intercultural speakers are highly adaptable and flexible because they can handle confusion and adjust their speaking strategies accordingly. McKay (2018) points out the requirement of being pragmatically aware when adaptation, negotiation, and accommodation are shaped in effective communication. With an emphasis on these features in EFL classrooms, learners can effectively manage intercultural complexity and increase awareness of the various sociopragmatic norms applicable in different domains of social life.

Inferencing in Intercultural Contexts

In intercultural contexts where people are sensitive to local and societal factors, inferencing emerges as a critical feature for communication (Haugh, 2012). For effective intercultural exchange across cultures, individuals need to understand the underlying assumptions, contextual cues, and culturally entrenched meanings (Kecskes, 2023). Inferencing is not only a linguistic skill; it is also a culturally mediated cognitive process that incorporates prior knowledge, situational awareness, and sensitivity to pragmatic norms—understanding any language demands understanding spoken meanings, feelings, implicit meanings, and implied intentions (Barron, 2003). This cognitive process allows language users to comprehend the intended meaning that is overtly represented in the interaction (Haugh, 2012).

Pragmatic Motivation

Pragmatic Motivation illustrates learners' desire to communicate appropriately in a second language (L2), be familiar with the L2 culture, and know about the L2 social variables (Tajeddin & Moghadam, 2012). In intercultural contexts, such motivation is a driving force behind learners' pragmatic development, as it influences how they initiate, maintain, and repair communication when confronted with challenges (Kecskes, 2014). Hence, it presents a psychopragmatic dimension of motivation for L2 learners; it is considered an active motivation towards acquiring L2 and the appropriate and effective use of L2 linguistic resources (Tajeddin & Moghadam, 2012).

Motivation is crucial for language learners' success in L2, adapting pragmatic norms and interactional strategies (Ellis, 2015). Takahashi (2001, 2005) reported that learners possessing high pragmatic motivation levels could adopt sociopragmatic norms, think about them, and integrate feedback into the ways of improving communicative performance.

Strategic Competence

Strategic competence refers to verbal and nonverbal communicative strategies that individuals use to compensate for their communication breakdown (Canale & Swain, 1980). Kecskes (2023) maintains that when individuals possess such an ability, in intercultural settings where misunderstandings are likely to appear, they can employ communication strategies to overcome linguistic and cultural obstacles. Strategic competence is formulated as metacognitive strategies for implementing relevant knowledge, including pragmatic knowledge, to tackle issues in interpersonal exchanges (Bachman, 1990).

Musyahda (2005) highlights the essence of these skills in oral production, mentioning that learners who possess strong strategic competence can initiate and support interaction even with limited linguistic resources. Friedrich (2012) suggests that teachers should promote strategic competence in the L2 classroom because it prepares learners for diversity and variation. In this regard, classroom training should emphasize metacultural and strategic competence to develop learners' linguistic and communicative skills for operational intercultural communication (Tajeddin et al., 2017).

Synthesis of the Literature and Study Rationale

Language education is placing greater emphasis on pragmatic competence and intercultural competence. Waugh (2013) highlighted the importance of incorporating pragmatic instruction into English language curricula in the workplace. She also emphasized the importance of teaching sociocultural competence to avoid being perceived as rude in an intercultural context. Baker (2015) and Galloway (2018) both noticed that one of the significant aspects of intercultural communicative competence is the integration of communicative and pragmatic strategies. Their studies revealed a positive relationship between increased intercultural awareness and improved pragmatic skills in second language learning.

Liddicoat (2014) examined the role of pragmatics in language learning in intercultural contexts. He focused on pragmatic differences in contexts where language use reveals cultural variations in pragmatic cases such as speech acts, social deixis, and politeness. Learners demonstrate that intercultural mediation involves being aware of their cultural practices and expectations regarding aspects of language use, as well as their knowledge of the target culture. As a result, individuals can facilitate relationships, decrease

misunderstandings, and promote more meaningful interactions across cultural boundaries.

Jiang and Deng (2022) analyzed the treatment of speech acts in English textbooks used in China, and as a result, they found that understanding pragmatic principles is essential for effective communication; however, these principles were inadequately represented in the textbooks. In line with this, Nu and Murray (2020) in their evaluation of Vietnamese EFL textbooks confirmed that while language accuracy was prioritized, the insufficient incorporation of pragmatic aspects rendered students ill-equipped for real-world intercultural interactions. These studies reveal the existence of a notable contrast between the pedagogical requirements for intercultural pragmatic competence and the actual content of commonly employed instructional materials. Keles and Yazan (2020) also explored cultural manifestations in some of the global English Language Teaching (ELT) textbooks. They found that the New Headway Elementary series predominantly represents Inner Circle civilizations, especially those of Europe and North America, at the expense of broader cultural diversity. Their research revealed that the textbook predominantly emphasizes European cultures compared to other cultures, and due to this inequality, students do not get an accurate portrayal of global English-speaking communities.

Purpose of the Study

Relative manifestations of cultural exclusion and inequality have been noted in various studies in Iran. Rahbarmah et al. (2024) investigated the intercultural dimensions of both locally and internationally published EFL textbooks, concluding that resources such as the *American English File* series offered more comprehensive and diverse cultural information than their local equivalents. The examination of the *Vision* (locally developed English textbooks) and *Top Notch* series (internationally developed textbooks) by Morady Moghaddam and Tirnaz (2023) revealed that while the *Top Notch* series effectively incorporated intercultural elements, the *Vision* textbooks did not adequately represent the complexity and depth necessary for pragmatic and intercultural advancement. The research suggests that students only exposed to locally produced materials may lack the pragmatic abilities to facilitate effective intercultural communication. Different research studies (e.g., Gholami Pasand & Ghasemi, 2018; Hosseinzadeh et al., 2021; Jorfi et al., 2022; Maghsoudi, 2020; Mozaffarzadeh & Ajideh, 2019) confirm the argument that EFL materials presented within the Iranian education system at times lack sufficient intercultural content. These studies have enhanced our

understanding of the inadequacies of textbook-based education, particularly in terms of material content analysis, rather than classroom-level practice. Hence, there is limited understanding of how EFL teachers approach IP in their practice or how their instructional decisions align with, counteract, or surpass the limitations of curricular resources.

This discrepancy in the research points out the urgent need. Currently, no validated instrument is available to assess the extent to which EFL teachers cultivate intercultural pragmatic skills in the classroom. The progress of theoretical knowledge and pedagogical practice in EFL contexts relies on bridging this gap between theory and practice.

The present study addresses this deficiency by developing and validating a scale that evaluates the multidimensional concept of perceptions and practices related to intercultural pragmatic teaching strategies. To this end, the following research question was posed:

What is the underlying factor structure of the researcher-developed questionnaire on EFL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding intercultural pragmatic competence?

Method

Research Design

This study adopted an exploratory mixed-method design to develop and provide initial validation evidence for a scale assessing EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of intercultural pragmatic teaching. The study was positioned as an exploratory validation phase, in which the latent structure was examined through exploratory factor analytic procedures and reliability was examined through internal consistency coefficients. This design was selected because the main objective was to identify the dimensional structure of the construct and to evaluate whether the proposed factors were empirically interpretable in an authentic EFL teaching context.

Participants

The participants of this study were 396 in-service EFL teachers with different educational backgrounds. They were recruited through convenience sampling in two phases across Iran. The teachers were asked to participate in a survey to measure intercultural pragmatic teaching perceptions and practices. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection, and participation was voluntary. The participants were both male and female teachers with varying levels of professional experience and academic qualifications, thus

confirming representation from a wide range of teaching backgrounds. At the initial phase, twenty experienced teachers (11 females and nine males) participated in the item development through semi-structured interviews. They were separate from the 376 survey participants and were not included into the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) dataset.

In the second phase, 376 teachers from different language institutes answered the final draft of the questionnaire. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection, and participation was voluntary. The participants were both male and female (208 females and 168 males) teachers with varying levels of professional experience and academic backgrounds, ranging from one year to over three decades, with two to ten years being the most common teaching experience level. Academically, the majority of the participants had undergraduate degrees in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), English literature, or similar disciplines, and a sizeable percentage (about 42 percent) had graduate-level qualifications (master's degree and above) in applied linguistics, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), or English language teaching. The participants had experience working in different institutional contexts, including private language centers, schools, and university language programs, and taught English at different levels and age groups. In fact, including a variety of contexts and experiences enhanced the ecological validity of the research, which allowed the designed instrument to represent a broad spectrum of intercultural teaching practices in authentic EFL settings.

Instrument

The semi-structured interview in the initial phase was conducted with 20 experienced and educated EFL teachers to acquire a comprehensive understanding of IPC, to elicit experts' perspectives on components of IPC, and to provide data for the development of questionnaire items. Before conducting semi-structured interviews, two experts reviewed the items for clarity and relevance.

Later, a questionnaire in the main phase was used to measure EFL teachers' classroom perceptions and practices regarding intercultural pragmatic competence. An extensive literature review (Al-Sofi, 2015; Bach, 2001; Bachman, 1990; Buckley et al., 2006; Byram, 1997; Canale & Swain, 1980; Ellis, 2015; Goleman, 1998; Guilherme, 2000; Haugh, 2012; Horn, 2004; Huang, 2023; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Kecskes, 2014, 2023; McConachy, 2017; McKay, 2018; Musyahda, 2005; Oliner & Oliner, 1995; Taguchi, 2009; Tajeddin & Moghadam, 2012; Tajeddin et al., 2017; Takahashi, 2001, 2005;

Ting-Toomey, 2005; Tomalin & Stempleski, 2013; Trees, 2000) and in-depth interviews, utilizing mainly Kecskes' (2014, 2023) sociocognitive approach, initially created a large item pool to capture six core dimensions of intercultural pragmatic pedagogic practice: sociocultural awareness and interactional appropriateness, empathetic engagement and perspective coordination, adaptive communication and interactional negotiability, inferencing, pragmatic motivation, and strategic skills. Each dimension was measured using items that encompassed teachers' pedagogical practices (e.g., pedagogical style and classroom control) and perceptions (e.g., beliefs, attitudes, and consciousness), L2 pragmatics, and intercultural communication pedagogy (e.g., Byram, 1997; Kecskes, 2014, 2023; Taguchi, 2009). All items of the questionnaire were subjected to expert review to ensure content validity and conceptual clarity. The last instrument was piloted using a five-point Likert scale, with scores running from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items were divided into six dimensions, and each factor had both practice and perception indicators. The scale structure was then validated using EFA and internal consistency reliability testing.

Data Collection Procedure

The initial item pool was compiled to develop a questionnaire based on a literature review and semi-structured interviews. Later, to establish content validity, two experts in research methodology and teacher education reviewed all items from both instruments.

Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent. Later, the recordings were transcribed verbatim, and a copy of the transcription was sent to the interviewee to check the accuracy of their responses. The transcription was prepared for the thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), to identify key themes and patterns of teachers' perspectives on IPC.

The data from the questionnaire were collected using an online survey questionnaire distributed via a secure web-based survey tool and a paper-based survey questionnaire that was distributed through personal visits to various institutions. The questionnaire began with a brief introduction stating the reason for the study, followed by informed consent. The respondents were explicitly informed that participation was voluntary, answers would be confidential, and that respondents could withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. For individuals who were in direct face-to-face contact with the researcher, clear explanations were provided about all technical terms. However, the participants without direct contact were sent a lengthy voice

message that conveyed the same information so that all participants would have an opportunity to grasp the concepts associated with the study. The data collection lasted approximately six weeks. During this time, the survey link was distributed through professional teacher networks, EFL teaching forums and institutes, institutional mailing lists, and English language teaching social media groups in Iran. To encourage participation, an initial invitation was followed by two reminder messages at weekly intervals. The criteria for inclusion were that participants (a) were currently teaching EFL at schools or institutions in Iran, (b) had a minimum of one year of teaching experience, and (c) were able to complete the questionnaire independently.

Data Analysis

Initially, thematic analysis was performed on the recorded and transcribed data acquired from the semi-structured interviews, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) coding approach. Kecskes' (2014, 2023) theoretical framework, literature review and the data were employed to develop the themes, utilizing both top-down deductive and bottom-up inductive approaches.

In the second phase, the primary analytical procedure employed was EFA, which was used to analyze the underlying facet structure of the Intercultural Pragmatic Teaching Perceptions and Practices Scale. In this phase, the analysis was exploratory in nature, so the extracted factor structure should be interpreted as an initial measurement model. EFA was performed using promax rotation, an oblique rotation procedure that is appropriate for extracting correlated factors. Promax usage was theoretically justified and empirically warranted by the inter-component correlations identified in earlier phases of the analysis. Factors were retained in accordance with the Kaiser criterion (eigenvalues > 1) and by visually analyzing the scree plot. Items were considered to load significantly on a factor if they loaded 0.30 or more. Items that demonstrated significant cross-loadings were maintained in consideration of both statistical contribution and conceptual fit with the theoretical model of the scale. The EFA showed a six-component solution with a high percentage of variance explained and close correspondence to the theorized dimensions of IPC. The factors were sociocultural awareness and interactional appropriateness, empathetic engagement and perspective coordination, adaptive communication and interactional negotiability, inferencing, pragmatic motivation, and strategic competence. Each factor displayed conceptual clarity and internal coherence. Internal consistency reliability was also assessed using *Cronbach's alpha* for each factor. Each of

the six factors was at or above the commonly utilized cutoff value of 0.70 (α = 0.70), indicating sufficient internal reliability of the scale. This stage focused on exploratory validation, and confirmatory factor analysis was not conducted in this phase. Therefore, it is recommended for future validation work with an independent sample. The results of these analyses are presented in detail in the next section.

Results

Assumption Checks for Exploratory Factor Analysis

Several preliminary tests were conducted prior to performing EFA to determine whether the data were appropriate for factor extraction or not. In trying to determine if the data were normal, the first step was to check the values of skewness and kurtosis. All retained items exhibited skewness within the acceptable range, which is from –2 to +2, indicating that there were no significant deviations from the assumptions of statistical normality. Taking all factors into account, it is evident that EFA is the proper course of action. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, along with the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy, was evaluated to determine whether the data were suitable for factor analysis. The KMO value for the entire sample was 0.932, which was higher than the acceptable threshold of 0.90 (Kaiser, 1970). This indicates that the sampling adequacy was extremely high. At the item level, the MSA values varied from 0.668 to 0.966, and the majority of the items had high individual sample adequacy. As a result, the decision to do an EFA served to reinforce the conclusion. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded a significance level of $p < 0.001$, indicating that the data were suitable for factor extraction. Moreover, the associated Chi-square result, $\chi^2(496) = 4546.00$, demonstrates that there were sufficient correlations between the items to render factor extraction both justified and feasible. All of the related diagnostic tests confirmed that the data were suitable for EFA, which is an investigation of statistical factors.

Table 2.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

Measure	Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.932
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	
– Approx. Chi-Square	4546.00
– Degrees of Freedom	496
– Significance Level	p < 0.001

Extraction of Factors

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed using promax rotation, an indirect approach that is especially well-suited for identifying correlated variables. The procedure was done to discover the underlying structure of the scale that measures the intercultural pragmatic teaching methods of EFL teachers. We selected Promax because we anticipated that latent dimensions would be correlated and subsequently confirmed, using inter-factor correlations, that the latent dimensions would not be orthogonal but rather connected. This was the foundation for our decision to exclude these studies. Both high KMO values and a significant Bartlett's test had previously provided evidence that the data were factorable (Table 2). The application of the Kaiser Criterion, which requires eigenvalues to be greater than one, resulted in the production of a solution consisting of six factors. A visual review of the scree plot provides additional evidence in favor of this judgment.

Table 3.

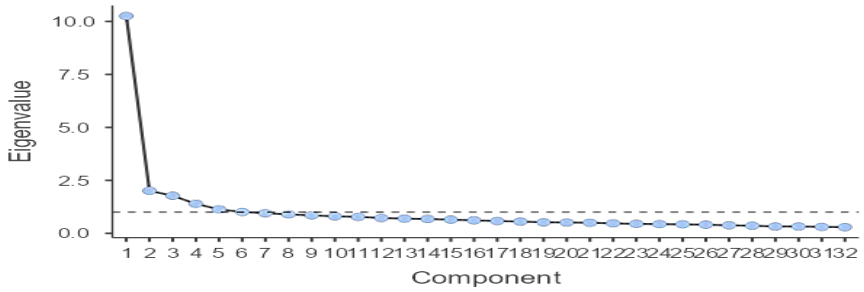
Total Variance Explained by the Six-Factor Solution

Factor	Initial Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	10.251	32.03	32.0
2	2.006	6.27	38.3
3	1.772	5.54	43.8
4	1.394	4.36	48.2
5	1.128	3.53	51.7
6	1.008	3.15	54.9

Figure 1 illustrates a graphical representation of the eigenvalues against the factor number according to the selected retention criteria. This illustration reveals a significant reduction in the slope after the sixth factor.

Figure 1.

Scree Plot



Based on the figure 1, a clear inflection point occurs after the sixth factor, indicating a substantial reduction in the slope of the curve. This pattern suggests that the first six factors account for the majority of the explained variance, thereby supporting the retention of a six-factor solution.

Factor Structure and Loadings

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed utilizing promax rotation to identify the essential elements of intercultural pragmatic teaching perceptions and practices among EFL instructors. In this regard, the generated pattern matrix revealed the factor loadings for each of the items in the developed scale across the six main extracted factors in the scale (Table 4). Items with loadings of 0.30 or above were considered to be important contributors to a factor. Furthermore, the selection of items with cross-loadings was based on the degree of theoretical framework compatibility as well as the statistical loading strength.

The first factor encompasses sociocultural awareness and interactional appropriateness. This factor includes items emphasizing the acknowledgement of context-appropriate communication norms and sociocultural sensitivity. It covers the level of formality in culturally different settings (Item 1); cultural appropriateness in selecting and using materials and examples (Items 2, 13, 15, 25, and 26); exposure to cross-cultural interactional samples through listening and classroom input (Item 14); as well as attention to nonverbal cues in intercultural interaction (Item 27). In this specific dimension, teachers with high scores demonstrate in-depth knowledge about the second cultural norms and features. Notably, several of these items exhibited minor loadings on additional factors (for instance, item 1 loaded on factor 3, and item 27 loaded on factors 3 and 5). This evidence underscores the conceptual intersections among sociocultural awareness and interactional appropriateness, strategic competence, and adaptive communication and interactional negotiability.

Factor two corresponds to empathic engagement and perspective coordination. Items in this category encompass understanding the values and beliefs of the second culture while maintaining one's cultural identity (Items 3 and 17), promoting perspective-taking (Item 16), and understanding cultural differences and similarities to foster effective engagement (Item 4). In this domain, instructors aim to facilitate and promote students' understanding of intercultural issues while highlighting the emotional and interpersonal dimensions of intercultural competence.

The third factor represents adaptive communication and interactional negotiability. Some of the items, especially 5, 6, 18, and 19, emphasize the necessity of managing misunderstandings between people from different cultures. These items focus on specific key issues, such as teaching students how to adapt their behavior to communicate more effectively with people from other cultures, understanding how negotiation works in these situations, and utilizing accommodation strategies. For example, Item 5 showed moderate loadings on factor 1, which supports the link between sociocultural awareness and the ability to adjust one's communication in real time.

The fourth factor pertains to inferencing. This dimension involves both perceptual and behavioral levels in the creation of meaning across cultural contexts. Educators who excel in this aspect provide direction to students on interpreting cultural signals (Item 7), acknowledge individual variances in inferential accuracy (Item 8), and integrate practical situations that challenge students' inferential skills (Item 20). Concerning this factor, item 8 showed some small cross-loading with other factors, and this observation might suggest that inference should be regarded as a range of related skills for negotiation and adaptation. In addition, item 28—a statement reflecting teacher awareness of the challenges involved in making inferences across diverse cultural contexts—supports the concept that inferencing in IP is not only performance-based but also awareness-based and highly context-sensitive.

The fifth factor signifies the pragmatic motivation element. It addresses the motivational conditions essential for intercultural communication. The conditions encompass the influence of student encouragement (Item 21), motivational activities (Item 9), and teachers' beliefs about the importance of feedback and learner engagement (Items 10, 22). Distinctively, Item 22 demonstrated cross-loading with Factor 3. Therefore, it reveals an interactive relationship between pragmatic motivation and adaptive educational behaviors.

Finally, factor six encompasses strategic competence, a term denoting the deliberate instruction of communication strategies in intercultural contexts. All the items were loaded strongly onto this factor. Accordingly, Item 23 focuses on providing feedback on communication strategies; Item 11 prioritizes delivering activities that imitate real-life scenarios; and Items 12 and 24 devote attention to providing beliefs and attitudes about the importance of strategic competence. This pattern demonstrates a task-oriented and skill-based methodology aimed at enhancing learners' pragmatic competencies in multicultural contexts.

Table 4.

Pattern Matrix for Principal Factor Analysis with Promax Rotation

Item	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	Uniqueness
1. In teaching speaking, I take care of the level of formality appropriate for different cultural settings.	0.702		-0.341				0.440
2. I consider cultural appropriateness when selecting teaching materials.	0.731						0.496
13. I incorporate examples of sociocultural norms from various cultures in my teaching.	0.639						0.470
14. I engage students in listening to cross-cultural interactions.	0.527			0.396			0.508
15. I recognize the importance of cultural awareness in intercultural pragmatic communication.	0.472	0.315					0.406
25. I provide resources for students to explore cultural topics relevant to their language learning.	0.642						0.479
26. I know that people from different cultures may interpret indirect communication differently.	0.498						0.527
27. I think nonverbal cues are important in intercultural pragmatic interactions.	0.408		0.329		-0.317		0.425
3. I create a supportive classroom environment that encourages empathy toward cultural differences.		0.576					0.537
4. I am aware of the benefits of considering different viewpoints in cross-cultural communication.		0.718					0.449
16. I incorporate activities encouraging students to take on different cultural perspectives.		0.640					0.433
17. I believe respecting and appreciating others' perspectives and feelings is essential.		0.393	-0.315				0.478
5. I teach my students to employ accommodation strategies when they may meet people from different cultures.	0.383		0.590				0.427

Item	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	Uniqueness
6. I understand the importance of negotiating meaning in intercultural pragmatic communication.			0.357				0.455
18. I believe in the importance of negotiating meaning in intercultural pragmatic communication.			0.330	0.319			0.457
19. I am open to modifying my teaching methods and communication approach based on cultural cues and feedback.			0.868				0.341
7. I guide students on how to infer meaning from cultural cues in communication.				0.642			0.449
8. I recognize the influence of cultural background on individuals' ability to make accurate inferences.			0.320	0.402			0.450
20. I incorporate real-life scenarios to challenge students' inferencing skills.				0.498			0.527
28. I am aware of the challenges involved in making inferences across cultural contexts.				0.337			0.519
9. I incorporate motivational activities to enhance students' engagement with intercultural pragmatics.					0.513		0.452
10. I believe motivation plays a crucial role in successful intercultural pragmatic communication.					0.970		0.365
21. I encourage students to set goals for improving intercultural competence.					0.715		0.386
22. I believe receiving feedback is important to improve my students' intercultural pragmatic skills.			0.451		0.505		0.381
11. I assign activities to help students apply communication strategies.						0.640	0.433
12. I understand that communication strategies vary by cultural background.						0.389	0.501

Item	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	Uniqueness
23. I provide feedback on students' communication strategy use.						0.500	0.509
24. I believe strategic competence is essential for cross-cultural interactions.						0.414	0.497

According to the table 4, the pattern matrix indicates that most items loaded strongly on their intended factors, with only limited cross-loadings. Consequently, the loading structure of the items demonstrates a clear and interpretable six-factor solution that is broadly consistent with the theoretical framework of intercultural pragmatic competence.

Inter-Factor Correlations

Taking advantage of promax rotation, which allows for the inclusion of oblique factors, an inter-factor correlation matrix was generated to analyze the relationships between the six retrieved factors. Table 5 indicates positive correlations, with values ranging from 0.175 to 0.571. Additionally, several associations exhibited moderate negative correlations. Although the factors reflect different aspects of worldwide intercultural pragmatic teaching techniques, the data suggest that they are conceptually connected. As a result, the implementation of an oblique rotation strategy is justified.

Factor one (sociocultural awareness and interactional appropriateness) displayed a moderate link with factor three (adaptive communication and interactional negotiability), as indicated by a correlation coefficient of r = 0.571. This finding suggests that higher levels of sociocultural awareness and interactional appropriateness are generally associated with increased levels of adaptive communication and interactional negotiability. The moderate correlation implies a relationship between these factors, although additional factors may independently influence each. Factor five, which represents pragmatic motivation, exhibited a small negative correlation with factors one through four. The fifth factor, which is responsible for pragmatic motivation, reveals a small negative correlation with the first, second, third, and fourth factors. This suggests that it might represent an alternative or contrasting dimension.

Table 5.
Inter-Factor Correlation Matrix

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
C1	—	0.501	0.571	0.453	-0.256	0.383
C2		—	0.526	0.464	-0.298	0.335
C3			—	0.565	-0.256	0.343
C4				—	-0.320	0.175
C5					—	-0.158
C6						—

Note: Promax rotation was used. Values are Pearson correlations among rotated factors.

Reliability Analysis

The *Cronbach's alpha* coefficients for each of the six parts demonstrate that the developed scale has strong internal consistency reliability.

Table 6.
Cronbach's Alpha Values for the Six Extracted Factors

Factor	Factor	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
C1	Sociocultural Awareness and Interactional Appropriateness	7	.84
C2	Empathic Engagement and Perspective Coordination	4	.81
C3	Adaptive Communication and Interactional Negotiability	5	.88
C4	Inferencing	4	.73
C5	Pragmatic Motivation	4	.76
C6	Strategic Competence	4	.79

Note. Values represent Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the items loading on each factor after promax rotation.

The alpha values for most factors range from 0.73 to 0.88, which means that the factors are reliable from acceptable to great. The "adaptive communication and interactional negotiability" (C3) factor has the best reliability, with an alpha of 0.88. This means that the items in this factor are very cohesive and consistently measure the underlying construct. In the same way, "sociocultural awareness and interactional appropriateness" (C1) and "empathic engagement and perspective coordination" (C2) have substantial alpha values of 0.84 and 0.81, respectively. This indicates that the items are measuring the intended constructs accurately.

The other factors, such as "inferencing skills" (C4), "Pragmatic Motivation" (C5), and "strategic competence" (C6), have *Cronbach's alpha* coefficients of 0.73, 0.76, and 0.79, which are still acceptable but slightly lower. These numbers reveal that there may be a few variations between

items, but the internal consistency is strong enough for most research and practical uses. Overall, the scale indicates that it is very reliable across all of its factors. This means that the items in each factor are well correlated and together measure the constructs they are intended to measure. This level of internal consistency demonstrates that the scale is a reliable and appropriate instrument for measuring the identified areas.

Discussion

Using Kecskes' (2014, 2023) Sociocognitive Theory of IP, this study designed and validated an instrument to evaluate EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of intercultural pragmatic teaching. The main factor analysis generated a six-factor structure showing many related characteristics of the intercultural pragmatic capacity in classroom instruction. The sociocognitive perspective proposes that effective communication across cultures requires certain factors, such as awareness, empathy, adaptability, inference, motivation, and strategic behavior. In this sense, the factor structure reinforces this conceptual framework by providing evidence for the multidimensionality of IP in education. At the same time, the six factors should be interpreted as interrelated dimensions of one broader instructional construct, rather than fully independent domains.

The first factor, sociocultural awareness and interactional appropriateness, demonstrated how teachers focus on and are aware of sociocultural norms and appropriateness, as well as cultural norms and interactional sensitivity, when planning their lessons. The significance of this factor aligns with prior research that has recognized a deficiency in culturally responsive instruction within EFL materials (e.g., Keles & Yazan, 2020; McConachy & Liddicoat, 2021). It also emphasizes the necessity of incorporating context-sensitive content into language education to avoid pragmatic failure (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Teachers who score highly on this factor are likely to help students understand how to communicate with people from different cultures. They frequently adjust their speech and use materials that accommodate different cultural norms of formality, nonverbal behavior, and interactional structures.

Empathy and perspective coordination, as the second factor, underlie teachers' emotional and cognitive capacity to consider the viewpoints of other cultures consciously. This factor reinforces the findings by Busse and Krause (2015) and Taguchi and Yamaguchi (2020), who found that such factors facilitate intercultural communication and are significantly associated with intercultural competence. Understanding an interlocutor's cultural background, communication style, and feelings is crucial for demonstrating

empathy in multicultural settings (Goleman, 1998; Ting-Toomey, 2005). This outcome also demonstrates that intercultural pragmatic teaching is not only knowledge-oriented but also relationship-oriented in classroom practice.

Regarding the third factor, adaptive communication and interactional negotiability, in light of global variation, educators and teachers may implement and encourage flexible discourse practices to accommodate diverse perspectives in their classrooms. Kecskes (2014) argues that speech adaptation and code-switching in interactional synchronization and negotiation serve as vital strategies in communication. This factor highlights the dynamic nature of IP and the need for it to adapt to the changing context of interaction. Focusing on this factor in EFL classrooms helps students understand intercultural complexity and raises awareness of sociopragmatic norms in various social contexts (McKay, 2018). In this regard, adaptive communication can be considered a practical bridge between sociocultural knowledge and real-time pedagogical action.

The fourth aspect, inferencing, involves the ability of teachers to assist learners in constructing contextually sensitive judgments based on implicit cultural signals. Research indicates that one of the important factors in intercultural understanding relies on inferencing, making this component essential (Barron, 2003; Haugh, 2012). Kecskes (2023) represents intercultural pragmatic communication as a highly contextual circumstance that transfers meaning implicitly, and individuals toned to understand the underlying assumptions, contextual cues, and culturally entrenched meanings. The conceptual clarity of this element supports the view that intercultural pragmatic competency requires both perceptual and interpretive skills. Therefore, inferencing appears to function as the cognitive core of intercultural meaning-making in classroom interaction.

Fifth, pragmatic motivation reflects learners' desire to understand L2 culture, social variables, and second-language communication (Ellis, 2015; Tajeddin & Moghadam, 2012). Takahashi (2001, 2005) found that highly motivated learners could adopt sociopragmatic norms, reflect on them, and use feedback to enhance their communicative performance. Hence, pragmatic motivation affects the consistency and engagement of second language learners. This result indicates that motivational conditions should be treated as a pedagogical resource, not only as a background learner variable. Although the factors were generally positively associated, the negative correlations involving pragmatic motivation are notable and should be interpreted cautiously, because this dimension may represent a somewhat different pedagogical orientation compared to the other factors. In this study, pragmatic motivation is mainly operationalized through items that emphasize

encouraging learners, setting goals, and creating motivational classroom conditions. Therefore, it is possible teachers who report stronger reliance on motivational support do so particularly when they perceive intercultural pragmatic engagement as challenging or unstable in their own contexts. Whereas, teachers who report higher routine enactment of sociocultural awareness, empathy, adaptation, and inferencing may report these practices more as established instructional habits and less as motivation-driven activities. In addition, since the data are self-reported and collected in one administration, the negative signs may also reflect a response pattern where motivational emphasis functions as a compensatory dimension rather than as a parallel practice dimension. As a result, future studies are encouraged to re-examine this relationship through confirmatory modelling and by revising item wording where necessary.

The sixth and final component, strategic competence, represents the teacher's ability to guide students to manage communication breakdowns and employ metapragmatic strategies in culturally diverse situations. This element corresponds to the communicative competency model proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) and recent conceptualizations of strategic application in intercultural pragmatic dialogue (Bachman, 1990; Tajeddin et al., 2017). Classroom communication strategy training helps students prepare for real-world encounters where negotiation is crucial and misunderstandings are widespread. Taken together, the six-factor structure provides a coherent pedagogical profile of intercultural pragmatic teaching in EFL classrooms, while also indicating the need for continued validation work in broader settings.

Conclusion and Implications

The objective of this study was to design and validate a tool driven by theoretical principles and supported by empirical data for measuring the intercultural pragmatic instructional techniques of EFL educators. The tool was formulated to assess six essential aspects of instructional proficiency: sociocultural awareness and interactional appropriateness, empathetic engagement and perspective coordination, adaptive communication and interactional negotiability, inferencing, pragmatic motivation, and strategic competence. The scale was adapted from the sociocognitive model of IP (Kecskes, 2014, 2023). The findings of this research call for contemporary EFL instructors to look beyond mere linguistic ability and adopt a broader perspective of communication. The validated scale offers opportunities for exploring new empirical avenues from a research perspective. At the same

time, the present evidence should be interpreted as strong initial support for the proposed structure, with further validation required in subsequent studies.

As with any research endeavor, the current study had some limitations. The findings of this study should be interpreted with attention to the context of the sample. All participants were in-service EFL teachers in Iran, so the results are mainly related to this educational and sociocultural setting. For this reason, the findings are context-specific to Iran. Differences in curriculum policies, teacher education systems, and classroom realities across contexts may influence how the scale operates. Therefore, the present findings should be considered as context-based evidence rather than universal evidence for all EFL settings. Future studies are recommended to validate the scale in other countries and institutions and to compare the factor structure across groups in order to provide stronger support for broader generalizability. The study also used a self-report questionnaire, and this methodological choice has an important limitation. Consequently, reported practices may appear different from what happens in the real classroom interaction. Although participation was voluntary and responses were collected confidentially to reduce this risk, these procedures cannot fully remove social desirability and common method bias. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted with caution. Future research can strengthen validity by combining self-report data with additional sources such as classroom observation, teaching artifacts, learner feedback, and interview data so that perceived practice and enacted practice can be examined together. Another limitation is related to structural validation, as the six-factor solution in this study was statistically interpretable and theoretically meaningful. It should be validated under different contexts and with different participants. In addition, confirmatory factor analysis was not conducted in this phase, so model fit should be tested in future studies using independent samples. Also, the reliability evidence in this study was based on internal consistency, while temporal stability was not examined through test-retest administration. Because this instrument is self-report in nature, inter-rater reliability was not applicable to the present design; however, it can be relevant in future observational adaptations**.** Future research can utilize the scale in longitudinal or intervention designs to examine how teachers' practices evolve over time or in response to professional development. Comparative research across educational settings or cultural contexts can also provide insight into variations in intercultural pragmatic training in different places or systems.

Data Availability Statement

The data may be provided upon request made to the corresponding author.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Ethics Approval

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