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Teaching L2 Pragmatics: Opportunities for Continuing Professional Development

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Abstract

Teaching L2 pragmatics is often not covered in teacher education programs, and is an excellent area for continuing professional development. As part of a larger project on instructed interlanguage pragmatics, volunteer instructor participants were asked to teach a series of lessons on pragmatics to university-aged (19-23) ESL learners in ESL and EFL contexts. Instructor responses to demographic questionnaires, comments on lesson checklists and responses to mid- and post-teaching interviews show that there is value to continuing professional development (CPD) on the topic of how to teach pragmatics for teachers with a range of previous experience in a variety of contexts. Although this was not a formal program in teaching pragmatics, lesson plans served as a mini-course in teaching pragmatics that teachers recommended for future teacher training programs and planned to incorporate pragmatics into future teaching contexts.

Introduction

Although pragmatic competence is viewed as an important part of overall linguistic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972), language teachers are rarely provided specific training on how to teach pragmatics effectively (Vasquez & Sharpless, 2009). Although many teacher education or MA TESOL programs offer pragmatics courses as electives or discuss elements of pragmatics throughout different courses offered in the curriculum, methods of teaching pragmatics directly are rarely dealt with in training programs (Vasquez & Sharpless, 2009). There are only a few studies that have dealt directly with teacher development using pragmatics as content (cf. Ishihara, this issue; Shawer, 2010a; Shawer, 2010b; Yates & Wigglesworth, 2005). This paper describes a possible alternative to formal pragmatics training as part of a certificate or degree program: post-graduation optional training in teaching pragmatics undertaken

by volunteer teachers participating in a larger study of instructed interlanguage pragmatics. Through triangulation of a variety of different sources, including responses to lesson checklists and teacher interviews, teacher participants exhibited increased awareness of the importance of teaching pragmatics and responded positively to introduction of basic concepts related to the teaching of pragmatics. This model of continuing professional development (CPD) using pragmatics as a content area for teacher development is shown to be moderately successful and rather easy to implement, given an interested and eager population of teachers.

The majority of practicing ELT professionals has received training from a variety of different sources including TESL Certificates or degree programs. Consistency among these different licensures is varied, and there is often great variation among the same kind of degree, for example, a M.A. (or M.Ed. or M.Sc.) in TESL or TESOL may involve different requirements and include vastly different types of coursework, ranging from heavily theoretically focused programs with courses in syntax, phonology and sociolinguistics to those which adopt a more practical approach with requirements including courses in pedagogical grammar, methods, and practicum. Some programs require students to learn how to perform research, write theses or complete comprehensive exams, whereas others focus on completion of coursework and ensure students have multiple opportunities for supervised teaching. Regardless of the quality or scope of the degree or certificate, ELT professionals agree that teacher development does not end at graduation; indeed, a measure of professionalism in the field involves participation in post-training continuing professional development (CPD). Continuing professional development (CPD) is a term used to describe all the activities in which teachers engage during the course of a career which are designed to enhance their work (Day & Sachs, 2004).

This paper discusses CPD of volunteer teacher participants in an instructed interlanguage pragmatics study. Evidence for CPD is provided through discussion and analysis of initial recruitment, responses to initial interview and post-delivery questionnaires, reactions to training materials and potential effects on their future teaching. Particularly because there is not much information provided within teacher training programs regarding teaching pragmatics, this sort of post-training exposure to teaching pragmatics can increase teachers' awareness of the importance of pragmatics, and provides them with tools to incorporate pragmatics instruction into a variety of future classes in diverse ELT contexts.

The notion that pragmatic competence can be taught has been advocated by many researchers (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Cohen, 2005; Kasper, 1997; Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2006). In a meta-analysis of instructed interlanguage pragmatics, Jeon and Kaya (1996) found that instruction was effective in the 13 studies reviewed. More recently, classroom-based empirical studies on instructed interlanguage pragmatic development have advocated a variety of different methodologies and investigated their efficacy on several different learner populations (cf. Ishihara, 2007; Jernigan, 2008; Koike & Pearson, 2005; Martínez-Flor & Fukuya, 2005, among others). Very few studies, however, focus on the teacher development issues associated with the instructional delivery. One notable exception, Yates & Wigglesworth (2005), investigates novice teachers' pragmatic knowledge as part of their continuing professional development, including both knowledge of pragmatics and knowledge of how to teach pragmatics as a marker of teacher competence. Other, more recent work has investigated pragmatics as an area for continuing professional development (cf. Ishihara, this issue). Oftentimes there is significant variation in the way teachers respond to professional development opportunities, particularly in relation to change in their own practices or change in the curriculum (Shawer, 2010a; 2010b). After a description of the procedure and the participants involved in this exploratory study, teacher responses to interview questions will be presented in order to present a model of how CPD can be accomplished through teacher participation in instructional research studies and how said participation affects teacher attitudes towards their own teaching, and towards teaching a specific subcomponent of language, in this case, pragmatics.

Procedure

Recruitment

As part of a larger study on instructed interlanguage pragmatics, instructor participants were recruited from ELT institutions worldwide including universities, private language schools and other institutions. To limit the learner population under investigation, adult (university-aged) learners were targeted. Over a period of four years, multiple attempts were made to recruit U.S. and overseas English teachers through professional networks such as local TESOL affiliates (e.g., MITESOL, KOTESOL), alumni networks, exchange school relationships and administrative organizations such as the American Association of Intensive English Programs (AAIEP). Announcements were distributed to email listservs, directly to program administrators and professors, and teachers who had shown previous interest in the topic. See Appendix A for a sample recruitment letter.

Teacher Reticence

During the recruitment attempts, which failed several times, adjustments were made to the proposed commitment based on prospective participants' rejection of invitations to participate. Rejections were based on time commitment, unfamiliarity with the materials, and the constraints of prescribed curricula at different institutions.

During a pilot study of the instructed interlanguage pragmatics materials, the classroom teacher, an intensive English program graduate assistant enrolled as a second-year MA TESL student assigned to teach an intermediate pronunciation intensive course, observed the lessons taught by the researcher. At the end of the lessons, she disregarded the importance of teaching pragmatics, "[teaching pragmatics] is a nice idea, but it's pretty impractical and students have to spend time focusing on other [more important language] issues" (PI1). This sentiment was echoed by many potential participants during the instructor participant recruitment process. Several possible participants wanted to see the materials before they agreed to participate in the study and worried that they might not be able to teach the lessons within the courses they would be assigned, or that they may have difficulty fulfilling their curricular goals in the programs in which they were employed if they decided to use class time to teach pragmatics. Many said they did not have time. Unfortunately, no formal data were collected at this stage in the development of the study, and reasons given may have been expression of polite disinterest in participation. It is impossible to know the real reasons instructors expressed reticence or refused to participate in such a study, but a lack of confidence in knowing a) what pragmatics is or b) how to teach pragmatics may have contributed to teachers' decisions not to participate in the study.

The initial time commitment required from teachers for participation in the study involved 9 hours of instruction plus additional time spent for student data collection was untenable for most prospective teachers. As a result, the study was reduced in scope and reduction to four 1.5 hour lessons (6 hours total) and online student demographic and proficiency data collection resulted in six participating instructors at four sites: two ESL (English as a Second Language) and two EFL(English as a Foreign Language) contexts. This paper analyzes interview responses from the six participating instructors: two at the Midwestern Intensive English Program (IEP), two at the southwestern IEP, one at a Japanese university, and the other at a Lithuanian university site.

Instructor Profile

Once instructors had agreed to participate in the research study, they completed a background information questionnaire online which included demographic information, questions about training, teaching experience and previous L2 Learning as well as attitudes towards/experience with pragmatics. See Appendix B for the Instructor Demographic Survey items. In addition, instructor participants completed two interviews during and following instructional intervention related to materials effectiveness (timing, pacing, activities, student reaction), teaching pragmatics, training future teachers and the extent to which they planned to incorporate pragmatics in future classes. See Appendix C for Interview 1 questions. Instructors participating in the study represented a wide range of training, experience and language learning opportunities. Instructor participants represented a wide range of teaching experience based on responses to the demographic questionnaire. Specific responses about previous pragmatics teacher training activities show a wide range of familiarity with pragmatic concepts and awareness of pragmatics. Education (specifically teacher training), previous language teaching and learning experience, as well as responses about previous "teaching pragmatics" instruction are presented to give an overview of the types of participants.

Education

Educational backgrounds of the eight instructor participants ranged from bachelor's degrees in a variety of fields to one participant who had a PhD in Foreign Language Education. In the control classes at the Midwest IEP, both instructor participants had MA-TESL degrees. Of the treatment classes' instructor participants, there was one with a bachelor's degree in English plus an undergraduate TESL certificate, two were in the process of obtaining graduate degrees in TESL, one had a MA-TESL degree and two had completed MA-TESL degrees and doctoral work.

Table 1. Educational backgrounds of instructor participants

Sites	BA + TESL Certificate	MA- TESL (in progress)	MA-TESL	Some doctoral work	PhD
Midwest	1		1		
Southwest		2			
Lithuania					1
Japan				1	
All Sites	1	2	1	1	1

The instructor participants showed a good distribution among novice and career ESL teachers, with some variation, and are representative of most ELT workplaces.

Language Teaching Experience

The instructor participants had a wide range of ESL teaching experience at the time of the study, from 1-2 semesters through more than 20 years.

Table 2. Teaching experience of teacher participants

Sites	1-2 semesters	2 + years	10+ years	20+ years	N
Midwest		1		1	2
Southwest	2				2
Lithuania			1		1
Japan			1		1
All Sites	2	1	2	1	6

The two instructors with the least experience were currently enrolled in the MA-TESL program at the institution associated with the Southwest IEP. The teacher comfort level with the lesson plans and overview varied in accordance with experience. Teachers who were less experienced wanted to know more about the lessons content before they agreed to participate: exactly what they would have to do, exactly how much time each lesson would take, exactly which topics would be covered. For the majority of teacher participants, it seemed as if the classroom experience actually brought the importance of pragmatics to the forefront:

> "I really only became aware of the need to teach students about pragmatics after I began teaching. As I noticed my students' mistakes and areas of confusion, I began to see the need to discuss concepts like indirectness" (T4)

The broad range in experience also contributed to different attitudes towards the importance of pragmatics, the training materials and the planned incorporation of pragmatics information into future teaching.

Language Learning Experience

Instructors were asked about their own language learning and time spent in other countries. All but one reported speaking another language or living in another country, and all were native speakers of English, except for the instructor in Japan, who was an L1 Japanese speaker. Other languages studied/spoken by instructor participants were Spanish, Lithuanian, German, Japanese and some French, Polish, and Czech. Time overseas ranged from one semester (study abroad) to 10 years.

Most ELT workplaces require instructors to have overseas experience, and the experience of learning a foreign language is commonly seen to be an asset to being a foreign or second language teacher. To raise awareness of the importance of pragmatics before the study began, teacher participants were also asked to tie their own language learning experiences to their own teaching and were asked a more global question meant to increase reflectivity on pragmatics teaching:

- How have your studies, your language learning experience(s), including living in another country affect the way you teach, in general, and specifically, pragmatics/usage?

Teacher responses could be grouped into three major categories: culture connection, classroom experience and personal language learning issues. For purposes of this analysis, terms other than pragmatics supplied by teachers were considered to be relevant to the teaching of pragmatics, such that it was hoped that teacher participants would include more information about pragmatics if they were encouraged to use terms like culture, politeness in describing core elements of teaching pragmatics.

Some teachers felt that teaching students from other cultures led them to see more ways pragmatics was relevant to teaching a second language: "I'm simply more aware of cultural difference and ways of talking to non native speakers" (T1). Although researchers have posited that learners do not "acquire the pragmatics of the target language on their own" (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003), teachers seemed to question the necessity of explicit teaching of pragmatics, although some did indicate that perhaps teaching pragmatics was helpful:

> “I feel like students would ultimately pick up a lot of pragmatics outside of the classroom as they are practicing their English, but it’s helpful to teach it in the classroom to prepare them for academic life. I think sometimes native speakers don’t think about how much pragmatics plays a role in communication.” (T3)

Several teacher participants were able to draw on their own language learning experiences to incorporate aspects of pragmatics in their own teaching:

> “I think every experience influences us as we see what interactions are successful and which are not. When I am a student I reflect on what works best for me and try to incorporate those strategies in my own classroom.” (T6)

This more general comment can be applied to the teaching of pragmatics in terms of the use of semantic frames or pragmatic strategies, concepts that were introduced in the materials that teacher participants used in the lessons.

Teachers also drew on their own experiences as learners to recognize the importance of pragmatics in terms of politeness and intentionality: “while native speakers often forgive the phonological, syntactic and lexical errors made by L2 speakers, they are less likely to forgive pragmatic errors” (Nelson, Carson, Al Batal & El Bakary, 2002, p.164). Reflection about one’s own pragmatic competence in a second language, evidenced through expressing politeness and being a competent language user through using specific language forms in the proper contexts, can positively influence teacher practices in terms of teaching pragmatics:

> “[I]t wasn’t until I committed my own social gaff pragmatically by appearing too abrupt for lack of the proper words that I realized I was teaching more than culture . . . teaching appropriate forms for the context has become more focused [in my teaching] in the last 5 years.” (T2)

Based on their own language learning experience combined with their time in the classroom, most teachers felt that teaching aspects of pragmatics, such as culture, politeness, and usage, was valuable, but did not specifically discuss strategies for teaching pragmatics.

Previous “teaching pragmatics” instruction

To determine the familiarity of instructor participants with instructed interlanguage pragmatics as a concept, they were asked specific questions related to their training. Initial survey questionnaire items included:

- Have you taken ESL Methodology courses?
- If yes, please list anything (course activities, lectures, readings, etc.) that you can remember related to teaching pragmatic competence.

All but one instructor participant reported having taken courses in teaching methodology. Of those instructor participants, three reported remembering some information in their courses related to teaching pragmatic competence. Those respondents mentioned specific examples including the effect of pragmatics on learner comprehension (in a methods course), comprehension of pragmatic implicature (in a discourse analysis class), and discussion of language functions (particularly in terms of curriculum design). Other responses included, "I cannot think of anything specific that pertained to teaching pragmatic competence (T4)" and "I have never learned pragmatics in any of the Methodology course (T5)" and simply, "It's been a long time. I don't remember" (T6). Some participants expressed a desire to learn not necessarily how to teach pragmatics, but more general information about pragmatics: "My training did not include much information about pragmatics, and I really wish that I had learned more about it before teaching" (T3). One instructor participant indicated she had developed her own repertoire for teaching pragmatics based on information received from a colleague, ostensibly post-training:

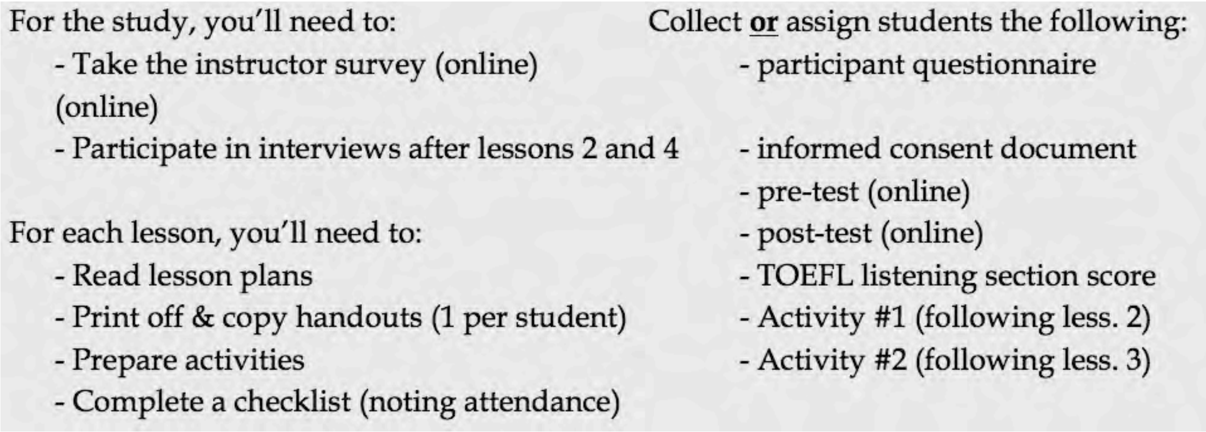
> "I don't remember anything specific to courses, but I do have materials that were developed by a colleague . . . that I have used for years dealing with cultural situations, what to say and how to say it. I have added to the original for both social situations and classroom status." (T2)

These questionnaire responses indicate, similar to the findings of Vasquez and Sharpless (2009), a general lack of focus on teaching pragmatics in teacher training programs.

Guidelines

Given that the participating teachers were serving dual duty, both as data collection facilitators in the study of their students' interlanguage pragmatic development and also responding to questions about their own level of awareness about teaching pragmatics, instructors were given specific guidelines before beginning the study. It was assumed that instructors did not share a common framework for teaching pragmatics, and they were provided with specially designed materials including lesson plans and lesson checklists, primarily to ensure fidelity of instruction. As responses were analyzed, however, it became evident that the materials served an additional CPD function as a mini-course in teaching pragmatics.

Teacher participants were provided with specific guidelines related to their responsibilities, which included providing information about themselves and their reactions to the lessons, tasks related to the delivery of the instructional treatment sessions (four lessons), and coordination of collection of the instructional treatment experiment-related data required from the student participants (Vellenga, 2008).



For the study, you'll need to:
  - Take the instructor survey (online) (online)
  - Participate in interviews after lessons 2 and 4

For each lesson, you'll need to:
  - Read lesson plans
  - Print off & copy handouts (1 per student)
  - Prepare activities
  - Complete a checklist (noting attendance)

Collect **or** assign students the following:
  - participant questionnaire
  - informed consent document
  - pre-test (online)
  - post-test (online)
  - TOEFL listening section score
  - Activity #1 (following less. 2)
  - Activity #2 (following less. 3)

Figure 1. Teacher participant guidelines

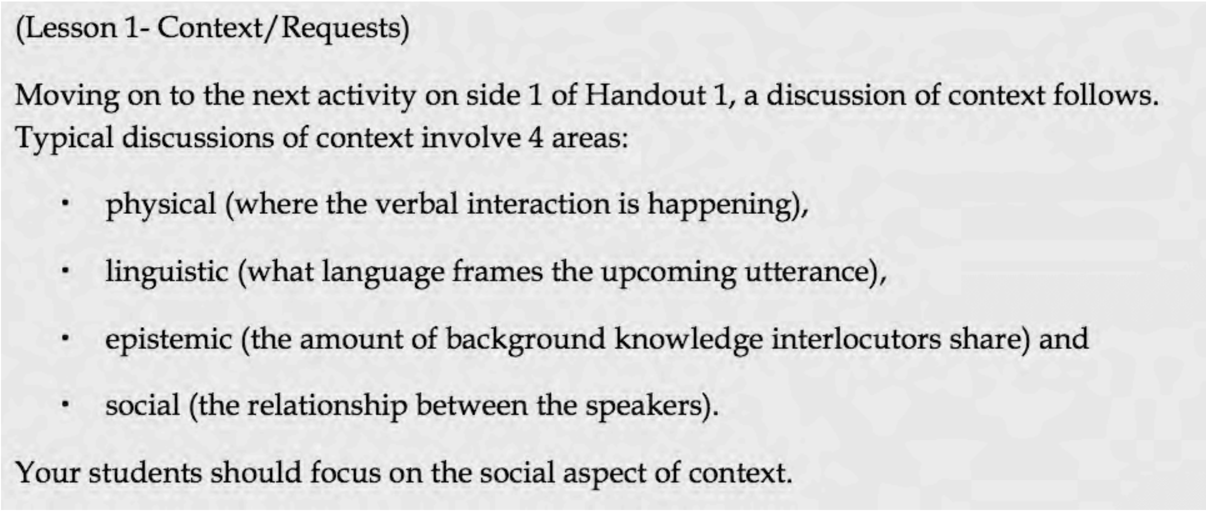
Once instructor participants had agreed to teach the materials as well as facilitate the data collection from/about their students, they received training materials for each lesson plan, which essentially became a mini-course in teaching pragmatics.

Training Materials

Teacher participants were provided with training materials consisting of lesson plans for each of four lessons, sent by email approximately one week before the instructional component began. A total of four lesson plans were sent. Each lesson plan began with a detailed discussion and theoretical overview of the pragmatics topics covered in the lessons. The lessons focused on raising pragmatic awareness of the students, particularly in recognizing the effects of context on the two speech acts used to teach pragmatics: requests and refusals.

After the background information, each lesson plan included step-by-step descriptions of activities, including estimated times and answer keys to ensure fidelity of instruction across sites. Handouts for each lesson were also sent as attachments and referred to throughout the lesson plan where appropriate. See Appendix D for excerpts of a lesson plan.

Each lesson plan focused on research-based pragmatics information to contribute to their knowledge base in pragmatics and CPD. When referring to the student handouts, teachers were given additional pragmatic information above what was provided to students in order both to expand their knowledge of pragmatics and, ideally, contribute to their understanding of the material they were teaching. Figure 2 shows the comments given to teachers about contextual features relevant to pragmatics in Handout 1. 1. Handout 1.1 appears in Appendix E.



(Lesson 1- Context/Requests)

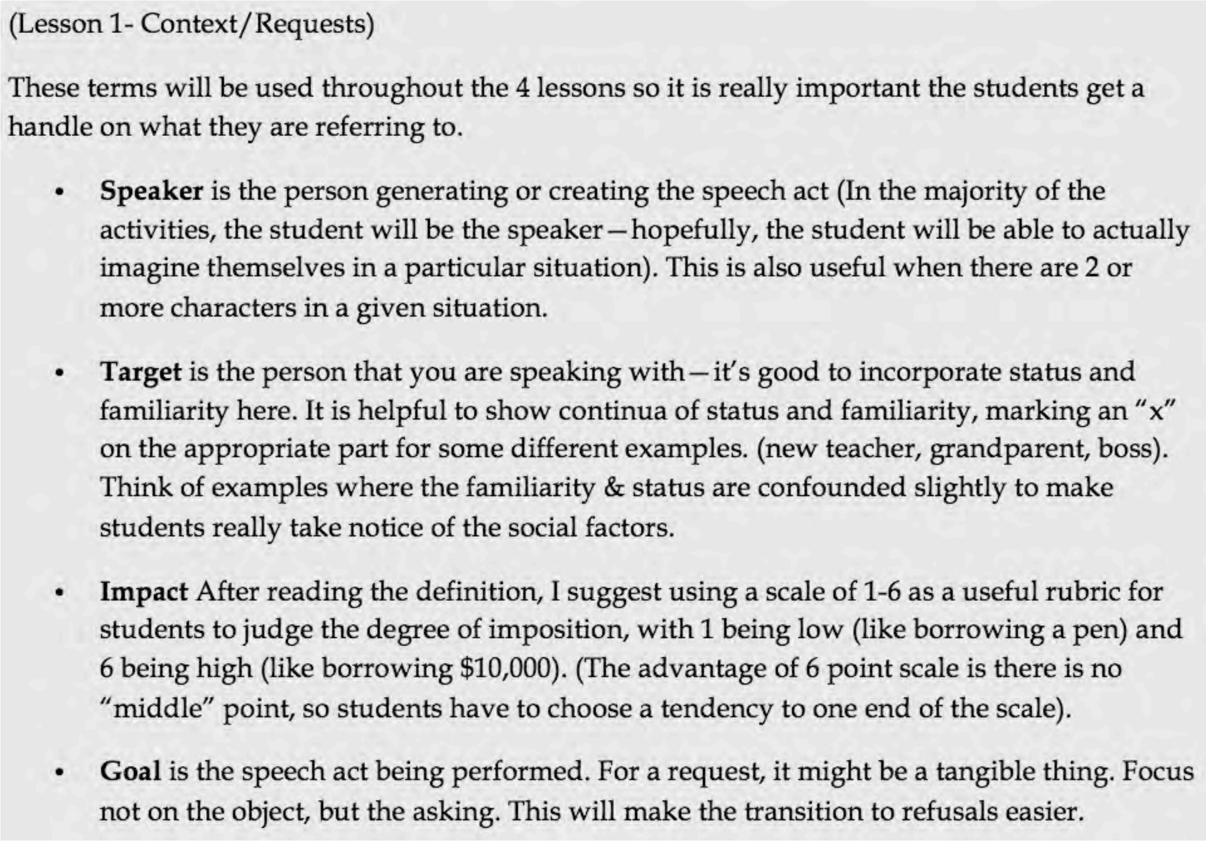
Moving on to the next activity on side 1 of Handout 1, a discussion of context follows. Typical discussions of context involve 4 areas:

- physical (where the verbal interaction is happening),
- linguistic (what language frames the upcoming utterance),
- epistemic (the amount of background knowledge interlocutors share) and
- social (the relationship between the speakers).

Your students should focus on the social aspect of context.

Figure 2. Excerpt from Lesson Plan 1: Context

Although the assumption is that teachers recognize the importance of context implicitly, the explicit discussion of the importance of context for pragmatic decisions, using linguistic terminology, represented CPD. Within the lesson plans, a mini-course in pragmatics teaching emerged, as teachers were introduced to terminology related to interlocutor roles, social status, familiarity and degree of imposition using metalanguage far too advanced to present directly to the students they were teaching. This mini-course included some references for future reading but introduced pragmatic concepts in an accessible manner. See Figure 3 for an example of terminology based on Gricean pragmatics.



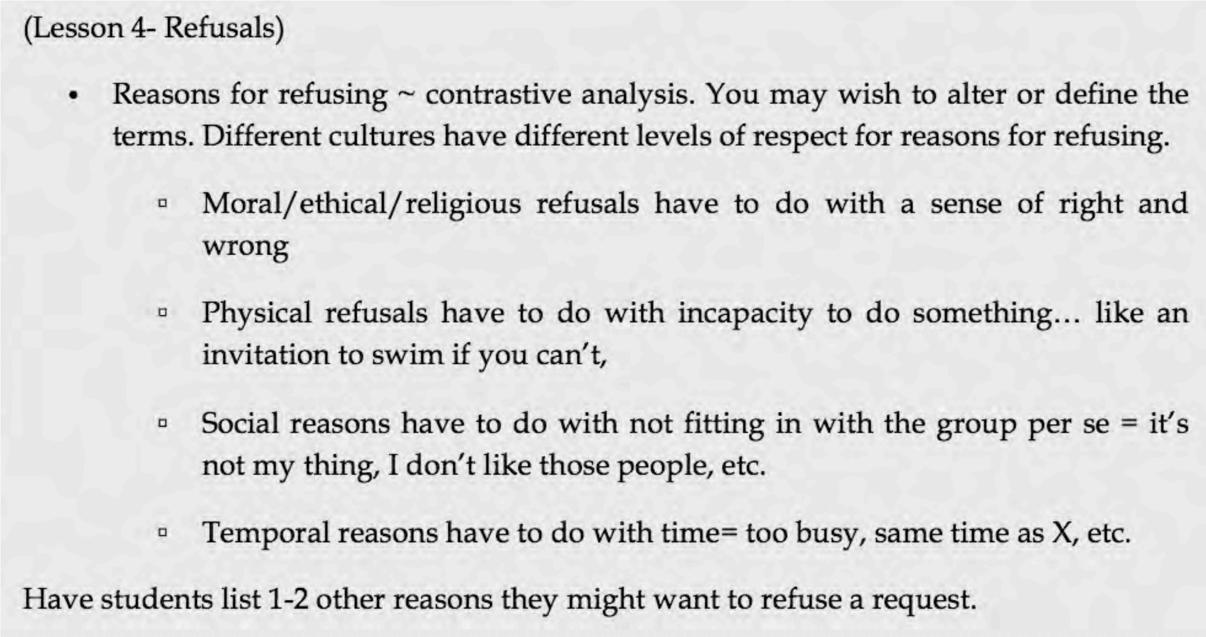
(Lesson 1- Context/Requests)

These terms will be used throughout the 4 lessons so it is really important the students get a handle on what they are referring to.

- **Speaker** is the person generating or creating the speech act (In the majority of the activities, the student will be the speaker—hopefully, the student will be able to actually imagine themselves in a particular situation). This is also useful when there are 2 or more characters in a given situation.
- **Target** is the person that you are speaking with—it's good to incorporate status and familiarity here. It is helpful to show continua of status and familiarity, marking an "x" on the appropriate part for some different examples. (new teacher, grandparent, boss). Think of examples where the familiarity & status are confounded slightly to make students really take notice of the social factors.
- **Impact** After reading the definition, I suggest using a scale of 1-6 as a useful rubric for students to judge the degree of imposition, with 1 being low (like borrowing a pen) and 6 being high (like borrowing $10,000). (The advantage of 6 point scale is there is no "middle" point, so students have to choose a tendency to one end of the scale).
- **Goal** is the speech act being performed. For a request, it might be a tangible thing. Focus not on the object, but the asking. This will make the transition to refusals easier.

Figure 3. Excerpt from Lesson Plan 1: Terminology

In addition to theoretical bases for some of the activities presented for teaching pragmatics, teacher participants were introduced to methodologies common in second language teaching, sometimes adapted to be applicable to pragmatics. The instructional component represented a blended instructional methodology, adapting strategies from awareness raising, input flood, contrastive analysis, and other common methodologies to represent the best instruction possible. The contrastive analysis activities served not to compare sounds or grammatical concepts, but to compare pragmatic strategy use and contextual features across languages. In the last lesson, as the class discussed refusals, teachers were presented with different attitudes towards reasons for refusing based on previous linguistic research (Nelson et. al, 2002).



(Lesson 4- Refusals)

- Reasons for refusing ~ contrastive analysis. You may wish to alter or define the terms. Different cultures have different levels of respect for reasons for refusing.
    - Moral/ethical/religious refusals have to do with a sense of right and wrong
    - Physical refusals have to do with incapacity to do something… like an invitation to swim if you can't,
    - Social reasons have to do with not fitting in with the group per se = it's not my thing, I don't like those people, etc.
    - Temporal reasons have to do with time= too busy, same time as X, etc.

Have students list 1-2 other reasons they might want to refuse a request.

Figure 4. Excerpt from Lesson 4: Reasons for refusals

This mini-course in pragmatics teaching involved a presentation of the theoretical background of teaching pragmatics as well as specific instructions and materials to assist students in exploring and practicing pragmatic concepts in relation to the study of requests and refusals. The lessons included background information and explanations to introduce pragmatics topics to teacher participants:

> "I felt comfortable teaching the lessons, but because all of the terminology was new to me, I had to read over each lesson plan many times before I felt ready to teach information that was also new to me." (T5)

As mentioned earlier, the intent of the larger study was pragmatic awareness raising in the student participants; however, as the study progressed, implications for teacher professional development in the area of pragmatics knowledge became apparent. The rigor of the lesson plans overwhelmed some of the more novice teachers: "The lessons were really detailed, which was great, but a bit overwhelming for someone who had never taught pragmatics before" (T2). Because of the range in experience and training of the teacher participants, some teachers were more comfortable than others with the amount of content information included in the lesson plans. In this sense, the mini-course exposed both novice and expert teachers to new ideas about teaching pragmatics and raised awareness of the importance of incorporating pragmatics into their classroom.

Lesson Feedback

Reactions to the pragmatics mini-course and the lessons served a dual function: both as evaluative of the lessons (from both teacher and student perspectives, attested by the teacher) and also a glimpse of teachers' development in the area of teaching pragmatics. Teacher participants were asked various questions in two interviews: one administered halfway through the instructional component (after Lesson 2) and another administered at the end of the lessons (after Lesson 4) to allow opportunities for reflection. Teachers were asked about the methodology, concepts, topics and relevance to their particular teaching context.

Methodologies

Teachers responded to questions about particular aspects of methodologies related to teaching pragmatics in response to Interview 1 question 7:

- What parts of the lessons represented new or surprising concepts or methodologies to you?

In addition to incorporation of culture into their answers, teachers mentioned having students discuss L2 pragmatics using L1 examples as innovative, though they didn't seem to fully adopt the notion of contrastive analysis for pragmatics. In the lessons, contrastive analysis was used to allow students to compare speech acts (such as greetings) for register and pragmatic variation in their own languages to raise awareness of variation in a speech acts in the second language. The use of native language pragmatics to understand target language pragmatic norms seemed to contradict what some novice teachers felt about using English only in the classroom:

> "Not yet having studied pragmatics, I thought the cultural aspects were very interesting to discuss with the students. It was the first time I had used contrastive analysis methodology in my classroom and I think the students didn't know what to think at first. We are always telling them to speak English! speak English! and then suddenly I was asking them to think about how they would say something in their native language" (T3)

This instructor participant's comment indicates a certain level of reflectivity about teaching and the purpose of different activities (including L1 use) in the ELT classroom, which is a valuable result of CPD (Day & Sachs, 2004). Because the lesson plans included theoretical bases for using native language(s) to raise pragmatic awareness, teachers who may not have previously considered native language knowledge as a source for developing pragmatic knowledge had the opportunity to reflect on when and how to use L1 in the L2 classroom. Teachers were encouraged to consider student responses to the pragmatics materials by responding to questions about student reactions, as well as what seemed to work well in the classroom during the mid- and post- instructional delivery interviews (see Appendix C):

- What were some parts of the lessons that seemed to work well? What part(s) did students seem to like the best?

Teachers were positive about many of the materials, even commenting on different aspects of the lessons, and commenting specifically on the awareness raising segment of the lessons. One instructor participant discussed the continued interest in native language pragmatics among her students, which promoted awareness even after the lesson had finished:

> "The indirect speech activity seemed fun for the students. Most of them haven't thought much about indirect speech in their native language, and they had fun coming up with many examples. The activity seemed to be "fresh" causing some awareness, because they still talk to me about the new examples they came up with." (T5)

Curricular Fit

Teacher responses to interviews showed careful consideration of the teaching pragmatics materials as beneficial to the students as well as something that could be incorporated into current classes. As a preface to questions about future use of pragmatics materials or methodologies in teaching, a question about the relationship between the pragmatics materials and curriculum in teachers' local contexts was asked in Interview 1 (see Appendix C):

- Were the concepts and topics covered in Lessons 1 and 2 consistent with the curriculum at your institution? If possible, describe how these lessons met curricular goals specifically.

The majority of respondents (5/6) did not indicate there was a curricular element to teaching pragmatics in their current contexts, although one teacher mentioned a specific curricular requirement (in an intermediate listening/speaking class) for teaching speech acts:

> "These lessons helped me to fulfill the requirement of covering speech acts. Although I do not normally focus on requests and refusals, this was very helpful for the students when we discussed how to function in groups. They were able to apply the concepts of American politeness to the classroom setting, including their interactions with fellow students." (T4)

This instructor participant mentions a direct connection to the lessons in terms of academic spoken English for classroom interactions, including teacher-student and student-student interactions.

Training Implications

Because of the lack of formal training in pragmatics provided to ELT practitioners in general (Vasquez & Sharpless, 2009), and based on the initial instructor survey responses, a question about teacher training in pragmatics was included in the final interview.

- What do you think teachers in training (consider all types including ESL endorsement, EFL teachers, nonnative English speaking teachers, MA TESOL students) should learn about pragmatics (theory, background, research)? How

> about in terms of teaching pragmatics (at the very minimum)? What would their ideal training materials consist of, in your opinion?

All of the instructor participants responded that pragmatics was important, and that teachers should be given some training in how to teach pragmatics. Teachers gave a range of reasons for incorporating pragmatics into their classrooms. At the most basic level, focusing on student knowledge, teachers recognized the importance of pragmatics for their students' future social and linguistic development, and how class sessions should be spent dealing with issues of pragmatics:

> "[I]t is important to teach the pragmatic concepts of advice giving, polite speech and refusal. In class practice of producing pragmatic speech is essential for students to retain this information." (T2)

Other teachers tied student goals to high-stakes standardized testing, reinforcing the concept of backwash (Hughes, 1989) while at the same time, stressing its importance for teachers in training:

> "Teaching pragmatics is really important . . . [because] pragmatics is now also incorporated in TOEFL iBT and has becoming increasingly important, and should consist a part of both teacher training and teachers should teach it." (T5)

Other respondents recommended following the lesson plans of the study (Vellenga, 2008) as part of a teacher training curriculum:

> "I think if I were doing teacher training I would have a series of similar or these exact same lessons for the teacher wannabes so they could see for themselves all the aspects that go into a speech act. " (T4)

Another teacher participant acknowledged that some instruction in pragmatic concepts (preferably empirically based claims) is necessary for teachers to deliver adequate instruction in pragmatics, even claiming that with the proper amount of knowledge about pragmatics, they may be able to develop their own materials:

> "[A]t a minimum new teachers should be given some background in the pragmatics of American culture. As native speakers, we do not regularly reflect on how we perform everyday speech acts, nor are we always able to step back and describe the rules that govern our choices. It would be very helpful for teachers in training to be given some information about those rules and hidden customs. While instruction in teaching pragmatics would certainly be the ideal, I believe most teachers can devise teaching methods on their own if they are given the background information." (T6)

Although the ability to transform "substantive knowledge into pedagogical strategies" necessitates training (Yates & Wigglesworth, 2005, p. 262), this respondent acknowledges that the substantive knowledge, or knowledge about pragmatics in English in this case, is a perquisite. Based on teacher responses to interview questions specifically targeting the perceived utility of the mini-lessons and lesson plans for teacher development, the experience seemed to be one that was positive for teachers and that they would recommend incorporating in teacher training programs, or at least including in future continuing professional development activities for practicing teachers.

Incorporation of pragmatics in future classes

All of the instructor participants responded positively when asked whether they would use these or similar pragmatics materials in future teaching. Some instructors specified particular uses:

> "I do intend to use the materials again as part of a unit I do on maintaining classroom status and participating appropriately in the American classroom." (T4)

Others were more general in stating how they planned to implement pragmatics in future teaching:

> "I have enjoyed using these materials in my class, and look forward to using some of them again in other classes." (T3)

Part of the criteria for effectiveness of continuing professional development activities (CPD) requires teachers to 1) experience increased reflectivity about their own teaching and 2) incorporate new knowledge into classroom practice (Day & Sachs, 2004). From these responses, it can be assumed that there is a good chance that the teachers who participated in this pragmatics study will continue to incorporate pragmatics into their future teaching practices.

Conclusion

The six teacher participants, all with varying levels of education, training and experience, all responded positively to the pragmatics materials and acknowledged that their own knowledge of pragmatics increased as a result of teaching the lessons. As participants in part of the larger study, they contributed to demonstrating effective direct instruction of pragmatics (Vellenga, 2008). Responses from instructor participants, particularly after initial reticence during the recruitment period, further support the fact that teachers have not received previous training in teaching pragmatics (Vasquez & Sharpless, 2009). This study has several limitations, including a small number of participants and incomplete responses to some of the data sources. In their study of professional development in pragmatics, Yates & Wigglesworth (2005) echo the difficulty in receiving survey responses from practicing teachers with busy lives (p. 277).

The majority of respondents not only acknowledged the need for more background (substantive knowledge) information in order to know how to teach pragmatics in ELT contexts, but also exhibited interest and enthusiasm for this aspect of language teaching.

For one instructor participant, learning about teaching pragmatics became very important:

> "For pragmatics, before I saw the lessons, I only had a vague idea of how to communicate. It all became clear after the lessons why we have to make a big deal about it, and how we should go about teaching it." (T5)

Although this study used a small sample of teachers (n=6) who were not being evaluated on their CPD, the tangential analysis of teacher responses to pragmatics lessons can serve as an exploratory study of teacher attitudes towards the teaching of pragmatics. Using the framework of pragmatics, future research may build upon pragmatics as content for incorporation of CPD into discussion related to curricular changes or reaction to implementation of a new pragmatics curriculum (Shawer, 2010a; 2010b). Framing the lessons as part of a mini-course on teaching pragmatics, incorporating an in-service approach, where students and teachers together discover pragmatics and practice pragmatic strategies may be a successful addition to practicing teachers' repertoires.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Letter

Seeking Instructors for a Pragmatics Study

Dear Colleague:

I am currently seeking instructors to participate in my dissertation study. This study will examine the instructional effectiveness of a blended methodology (combination of various implicit & explicit methods) on the acquisition of interlanguage pragmatic competence.

I am looking for instructors who work with university-level ESL learners who would be able to integrate my lessons about politeness, indirectness, and appropriate social language use into their existing courses. As you know, the relation of pragmatic competence and instruction greatly affect the ESL classroom and students' abilities to use language outside the classroom, as well. The study is designed to examine this relationship. Your participation would require you to teach the lessons I provide, give me feedback, and collect some data from your students. The lessons are designed to use different methodological frameworks which in turn, contribute to materials and activities to increase learner knowledge and competence in using four speech act types: requests, refusals, apologies and complaints. I would be happy to share the results of the study with you upon completion and discuss their implications upon a classroom.

If you are interested in participating in my study, please contact me by email at

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Heidi Vellenga

Appendix B: Instructor Demographic Questionnaire

Participant Questionnaire

1. First Name/Last Name
2. Institution (for this study)
3. Birth Year
4. Nationality
5. Native Language
6. Personal email address
7. School email address
8. Class taught (for this study)
9. Sex: (circle one) male female

10. Undergraduate Degree, Institution and Major (ex. BA, Calvin College, French & English)

11. Graduate Degree(s), Institution(s) and Major(s)

12. How long have you taught ESL? (circle one)

    1. 1-2 semesters
    2. 2-5 semesters
    3. more than 2 years
    4. more than 5 years
    5. more than 10 years
    6. more than 20 years

13. Do you speak any other languages? yes no

14. If yes, which one(s)?

15. Have you taken ESL Methodology courses? yes no

16. If yes, please list anything (course activities, lectures, readings, etc.) that you can remember related to teaching pragmatic competence

17. Have you ever lived in a foreign country? yes no

18. If yes, which one(s)?

19. For how long?

20. How have your studies, your language learning experience(s), including living in another country affect the way you teach, in general, and specifically, pragmatics/usage?

21. Please write any additional comments about your education, training, teaching background or experience you would like to share

22. Do you prefer email or phone interviews following lessons 2 and 4? (Questions will be provided in advance).

email phone no preference

Appendix C: Instructor Survey Materials

Interview #1

1. When did you teach Lesson 1? When did you teach Lesson 2?
2. Were the allotted times appropriate for your students? If not, what area(s) were difficult to cover in the allotted time?
3. Were the concepts and topics covered in Lessons 1 and 2 consistent with the curriculum at your institution? If possible, describe how these lessons met curricular goals specifically.
4. What were some parts of Lessons 1 and 2 that seemed to work well?
5. What part(s) did students seem to like the best?
6. What part did you feel most confident about during the delivery/administration of the lesson(s)?
7. What were some advantages (and disadvantages) to using the video for Lesson 2?
8. What parts of the lessons represented new or surprising concepts or methodologies to you?
9. Do you think other teachers would find these lessons easy to teach?
10. If you were to teach these lessons again, what adjustments would you make?
11. Has any part of your prior training or experience been relevant to the materials or activities in these two lessons? If yes, which parts? Please describe in as much detail as possible.

Please list any difficulties you or the students had with any of the materials or activities in lesson 1 or 2. Be as specific as possible.

Appendix D: Sample Lesson Plan: Lesson 1 Excerpt

Goals: In this lesson, students are asked to compare their languages with English. Many languages are marked morphologically for politeness. English, however, is not. This makes many ESL learners think that they don't have to worry about politeness in English. However, they do. English is marked in different ways and actually requires a certain amount of politeness or politic behavior in order to accomplish certain things.

Outcomes: Students will become familiar with metapragmatic discussion and contextual features affecting language use. Students will begin to examine contextual features and consider pragmalinguistic options in different scenarios (speech acts).

Materials:	**Handout 1.1**	World Communication (2-sided)
	Handout 1.2	Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) Situations
	Handout 1.3	Communication Strategies (2-sided)

Activities: **Activity Handout 1** (may be assigned as homework)

Overview

- Warmup (5 minutes)
- Handout 1.1 (30 minutes)
- Handout 1.2 (15 minutes)
- Handout 1.3 (20 minutes)
- Wrapup /Activity Handout 1 (5 minutes)

1) **Introduce the Lessons as a series**

No matter what your content area focus is, you can integrate a pragmatics lesson pretty easily. This was first used in a pronunciation course. I explained that "Pronunciation is important, but so is **WHAT** you say and **HOW** you say it." Substitute your course concentration for pronunciation.

2) Introduce the Handout

You'll need to know the students (esp. native language backgrounds and features of those languages) a bit before beginning this difficult metalinguistic exercise. You want to explain these terms in ways students can understand, perhaps prompting students for examples of how English and other languages differ. At this point, they may make broad generalizations, but that's ok. The following topics are dealt with in Handout #1:

a. **Cross linguistic comparison**

b. **Expressing politeness**

c. **Familiarity**

d. **Indirectness**

e. **Contextual features**

3) Cross-linguistic comparison (Contrastive Analysis)

Warmup: Elicit responses from a variety of students.

- What's difficult about learning English?
- How is English different from your language?
  (try and guide this towards politeness)
- Are Americans (Canadians, Australians, English speakers) polite?
- How do people show they're being polite and respectful in English? (please, thank you, modals, etc.)

4) Expressing politeness (Handout 1.1 #1)

a. Initiate a metapragmatic discussion with the first activity on the first page.

b. Use examples from different languages (but not every possible answer from a particular students' L1) to illustrate what kinds of answers you're looking for. – "Japanese and Korean use different forms of words for talking to different people (verbs esp.)". Ask Ss: "What are some ways you change the language depending on who you're talking to?" After students understand what you're asking for (you may mention the t/v pronominal distinction here, as well), encourage them individually, in pairs or in groups to fill out some ways, including examples. These examples can (and probably should!) be in a language other than English.

c. Elicit examples and write these categories (and/or others) on the board.

- Verb endings (honorifics)
- Titles (sir, ma'am, professor, doctor, etc.)

  - Pronoun reference (t/v in French, German, Spanish, Russian, etc.)
  - Different vocabulary: grub/chow vs. meal/lunch/dinner
  - Special polite words: please, thank you, excuse me

d. It's important at this stage to get at least 1 example from each language group represented in the class, esp. when there are lower learners for whom a metapragmatic/metapragmatic discussion like this in English may be quite difficult.

5) Contextual Features (Handout 1.1 #2)

a. Moving on to the next activity on side 1 of Handout 1, a discussion of context follows. Typical discussions of context involve 4 areas: physical (where the verbal interaction is happening), linguistic (what language frames the upcoming utterance), epistemic (the amount of background knowledge interlocutors share) and social (the relationship between the speakers). Your students, however, should focus on the social aspect of context.

b. Ask Ss how many different levels there are of politeness in their languages. Some are dichotomous (t/v), others are more variable (Korean has up to 7 levels of honorifics).

c. The question on side 1 of Handout 1 asks "Different people have different ways of deciding ***when*** to use different forms. How do people in your culture decide?" (**BASED ON THE PERSON YOU'RE TALKING TO~!!)** If students are unclear, get them to focus on their examples and imagine their interlocutor. Then, ask for a description of the interlocutor.

d. Elicit Ss responses. One possible activity would be to have Ss work in groups and come up with one example to share with the class.

e. Write categories on the board (and others you think relevant)

  - Gender
  - Status
  - Age
  - Number of people
  - Relationship
  - Familiarity (KEEP these on the board for Handout 2)

f. What contextual features are most important? For your language? For English? In English, things like gender or occupational status are not as important as your familiarity with that person (so the line between boss/employee could be status, or simply familiarity—it will depend on the boss and the employee). Americans, in particular, frequently deny status differences exist. Familiarity, or how well you know someone is important in English. Focus on status/relationship and familiarity by giving some examples as you segue to the next activity.

ex. a female professor, a young supervisor, a student whose family is wealthy, etc.

6) Familiarity (Handout 1.1 #3)

a. The concept of friendship is semantically wider in English than in many other languages. In some languages, you may only meet 1 or 2 people in a lifetime that you consider “a friend.” In English, however, the notion of a “friend” is quite broad, often encompassing acquaintances, classmates, and neighbors.

b. Get students to focus on familiarity by explaining that there are different levels of familiarity. It is a continuum, just like status would be a continuum.

c. The first activity on page 2 of the handout lists 5 examples of social relationships that would fall under the category of “friends” for most Americans. Ask Ss to discuss in groups which ones are “friends”. If students ask for more information, use this as an opportunity to stress the importance of context.

d. You can distinguish between good friend, best friend, etc. at this point. The friend connection in these comes from shared activities and interests, as well as contact, regardless of age or formal introductions.

e. Discuss friendship in American culture using sentences like:

    - Because US culture values independence, it is important not to be overly familiar too early on.
    - In America, friends can be older or younger than you.
    - In America, people that you do not know well can be considered friends.

Encourage Ss who have been in the US a while to share experiences. (someone that they thought was a friend and wasn’t, someone that surprised them by being informal, etc.) Try and get at status and length of relationship issues, both of which contribute to determining familiarity.

7) Indirect Speech (Handout 1.1 #4)

a. English is often more indirect than many ESL learners think.

b. Often, indirect speech is more formal and more polite. Compare the following utterances (all commands for hearer to open the window).

    i. Open the window.
    ii. Can you open the window? (yes, I can→ no action necessary)
    iii. Would you mind opening the window? (I don’t mind→ no action)

iv. Do you think you could open the window? (I think I could→ no action)
v. Isn't it stuffy in here? (yes, it is→ no action)
vi. Boy, it's hot in here. (statement of fact → no action)

Note that (i) is the only direct utterance, where the meaning is non-negotiable. All of the others are negotiable, that is, as seen in the parenthetical remarks, it would be possible for the Hearer not to do what the Speaker wants done. It is crucial for students to be able to understand requests of all types—and understand that often, polite requests are indirect and give the hearer an opportunity to get out of fulfilling the request (issues of face as discussed in requests lesson).

Appendix E: Sample Student Lesson Materials (Handout 1.1)

🌎 World Communication

Your Language vs. English

ⓘDifferent languages have different ways of making communication work. Some languages require speakers to use different words and phrases when talking to different kinds of people in different situations. What are some ways your language changes depending on the person who you are talking to?

🗒 write some ways here: ________________________

ⓘ Different cultures have different ways of deciding *when* to use different forms. How do people in your culture decide?

🗒 write some characteristics here: ______________________

ⓘ Different cultures have different ways of defining different relationships. How would people in your country think of these people? Would they be considered a friend?

1) A classmate of yours from high school who graduated the same year, and who was in a club that you were in.
2) A student who lives in the dormitory that you see every day, but who has never been formally introduced to you.
3) A classmate in a university class that is the same major and same year you are, but whom you have never spoken to directly.
4) A student in your major who is younger than you but is taking many of the same classes you are.
5) A student from a different major than you who is involved in the same extracurricular activities (clubs, sports, etc.).

Consider this: What are some of the ways that you might change your (native) language to the people in the scenes above?

ⓘ Different languages sometimes express the same idea using different forms. Indirect communication is important in many languages. Consider the following examples:

vii.Open the window.
viii.Can you open the window?
ix.Would you mind opening the window?
x.Do you think you could open the window?
xi.Isn’t it hot in here?
xii.Boy, it’s hot in here.

What is one example of an indirect way of communication in your language? Write an example here and then explain it to your classmate(s).

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