1-1-2009

The Role of Pragmatics in Second Language Teaching

Roberto Eduardo Echeverria Castillo
SIT Graduate Institute, Roberto.EcheverriaCastillo@mail.sit.edu

The Role of Pragmatics in Second Language Teaching

Roberto Eduardo Echeverria Castillo

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Teaching degree at the SIT Graduate Institute, Brattleboro, Vermont.

November 2009

IPP Advisor: Patrick Moran

This project by Roberto Eduardo Echeverria Castillo is accepted in its present form.

Date: ________________________

Project Advisor: ______________________________

Project Reader: _______________________________

Acknowledgments

To God, Pat, Alex, Mary, and all the crew who showed me the treasure of the experiential learning process. My words will never be sufficient to express my gratitude to all of them.

ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the application of pragmatics in second language teaching. It presents pragmatics as a discipline that may be taught and learned utilizing the experiential learning cycle. The paper explores challenging pragmatic experiences and how the cycle was used to overcome them. Additionally, it proposes a model to teach pragmatics, illustrated by a lesson based on an episode of a television show. Finally, the paper ends with my personal view of this project, and its applications on my learning of English and to my language teaching.

ERIC Descriptors

Discourse analysis
Language patterns
Language usage
Semantics
Sociolinguistics
Speech acts

Table of Contents

Chapter One

Introduction

Eduardo came to the United States as an international student from a Latin American country. He was a fluent second language speaker of English, with well-developed basic interpersonal skills. He always felt confident to use his second language in a variety of settings due to his training and experience interacting with native speakers of English in his home country. Once settled in Santa Cruz, California, Eduardo went to his first university orientation session. He was introduced to a woman from the United Sates and the first thing he did was to perform a greeting that is common in his country: to pat her arm and shake hands while kissing her cheek through a very well-synchronized and fast-paced set of actions.

As he greeted her using English words and Latino gestures she blushed, her eyes squinted and her facial muscles tightened. Eduardo felt like something was wrong. Eduardo was informed by his advisor later that some women do not see cheek kissing as appropriate in the United States. Coming from a Latin American country where this greeting is considered very polite, friendly and respectful, Eduardo could not quite understand the reason for the misunderstanding.

The story of Eduardo shows that cross-cultural communication varies depending on the cultures. Even with a high level of proficiency, second language learners still encounter difficulty in being understood due to cross-cultural differences that show up while speaking their second language. This concern requires learners to spend long hours working to sound like a native speaker thinking that pronunciation might be the reason for the misunderstanding. Although, elements such as fluency and accuracy are important for effective performance, learners of English as a second language may encounter themselves in a difficult position when they have to interact with native speakers of English, because they have received extensive training in areas such as grammar, listening and speaking, reading and writing, but not in the pragmatic elements that are a significant part of the language.

Actually, during this interaction learners encounter pragmatic differences that may challenge the understanding of the language. Teachers of foreign language often do not include this area of English because of a lack of time, knowledge or awareness of the importance of its use in daily life.

This element of appropriateness and my personal experiences in the United States will be used in this research paper to prove how important it is for second language teachers and learners of English to include these elements in the language education process.

Focus of the Paper

The research in pragmatics is relatively new in our field. Even so, this topic has evolved drastically in recent years. In fact, this particular discipline is especially important nowadays due to the use of English in a globalised context. This use of English requires pragmatic competence that will lead the student to what Thomas has defined as metapragmatic ability "the ability to analyze language in a conscious manner" (as cited in Holmes & Brown, 2007, p. 524). This concept will guide this research and with that in mind the focus of the paper is as follows:

- To identify the challenges that a person can find while learning pragmatics
- To review current theories and methods of teaching pragmatics
- To present and describe my personal view of pragmatics and its applications

Background of the Paper

The philosopher J. L. Austin in Asiado (2009) claims that “many utterances (things people say) are equivalent to actions” (p. 16). In my case these actions were concomitant with my desires of learning and improving my English. As a result, these desires of learning motivated me to do research about the way I said things and the way these were understood in my second culture (United States). I realized that it was important to write about the two extremes of the pendulum/course between what is said and what is actually understood in cross-cultural communication.

In addition, my motivation for writing this paper is based on the fact that while I was learning English I did not have formation in the area of pragmatics, and therefore, I could not identify the importance of this element until I needed it in my experience in an English speaking country. As a consequence, I have been able to develop an understanding of how to teach English with the addition of pragmatics in order to benefit my future students with it.

Key questions

This paper addresses these key questions:

- Is pragmatics a relevant element to be taught in our language class?
- What are some effective ways to learn pragmatics?
- What are effective ways of teaching pragmatics?

Rationale

According to Crystal (2008), English is currently spoken by “over a third of the world’s population” (p. 3). This number of speakers has made English one of the very few languages that is spoken in five continents and by more non-native speakers than native speakers of the language. As a matter of fact, this dynamic of growth makes of English a means of international communication that can help to connect peoples from all over the world.

As the use of English expands in number of speakers, it becomes a common link of second language learners who do not share a language or a culture. This makes English a language that will also be used in a variety of settings where learners will be required to interact not only for basic interpersonal communication, but also in academic and business settings. As a consequence, many pragmatic elements might need to be known by the speakers in order to avoid inaccuracies or misunderstandings.

Currently, some learners of English learn the language in foreign environments, where English is not the language of the surrounding culture. For example, a person may learn English as a foreign language in Madrid, Spain, challenged by a lack of comprehensible input that needs to be supplied artificially by the teacher. This dynamic may lead to a pragmatic competence that it is limited to what can be taught in the classroom.

On the other hand, some learners can study English as a second language, in countries where English is the most widely spoken, such as the BANA countries (Britain, America, New Zealand and Australia). These learners not only study from textbooks, but also receive instructions from native or non-native speakers teachers of English who have different backgrounds and experiences and have a more interactive contact with the culture. These learners may notice the use of correct pragmatic elements in speech acts such as greetings, apologies and refusals, because they have had more exposure to the language in a native speaker setting.

As a result of these two diverse learning experiences, the English speaker of our times could be a foreign language learner, speaking English as a second language with a British accent and African politeness, or a Czech citizen who learned English with Indian accent, but has eastern European behaviors.

This assortment makes English a rich and diverse language that needs to be adapted and developed by the learners according to the context where they will use it. Yet this learners' language development involves a new way of thinking acting and feeling, something that D. Brown (2007) called "language ego" (p. 72). This paper addresses a series of pragmatic issues that arise during the language learning process, suggesting a way this discipline may be taught and learned.

A variety of definitions for the term pragmatics are presented in order to determine the most suitable concept for the purpose of this research. Along with these definitions the concept of pragmatic components is mentioned.

The third chapter of the paper presents the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984), and explains how pragmatic competence can be achieved following the stages of this model. In the remainder of the chapter, I present some examples of my personal experience in learning pragmatics illustrating how the experiential learning cycle was applied with successful learning results.

In the fourth chapter, a framework to organize a language class on pragmatics is presented and illustrated with a lesson based on a television show.

Finally, the last chapter of the paper summarizes the different applications of pragmatics to my language learning and teaching.

Audience

The audience of the paper is members of the teaching community: ESL/EFL teachers, native or non-native speakers of English, TESOL students, and professors of the SIT Graduate Institute.

It is my hope that these teachers and learners will be motivated to include pragmatics in their language lessons, and that they will unlock the keys to culturally appropriate communication.

Chapter Two

Definition of Pragmatics

This chapter provides a definition of pragmatics. It also lists components of pragmatics that are used to convey meaning. From this list, I identify and explain some components that I consider essential to learning and teaching the pragmatic dimension of second languages. The chapter goes on to discuss challenges of addressing pragmatics in second language classrooms.

Definitions of Pragmatics

In researching pragmatics, I discovered that there are many definitions for the concept of pragmatics in the field.

According to Liu (2007), Charles Morris introduced the first modern definition of pragmatics, and since then many other specialists have continued to conceptualize this branch of linguistics. Morris originally defined pragmatics as “the discipline that studies the relations of signs to interpreters, while semantics studies the relations of signs to the objects to which the signs are applicable” (as cited in Liu, 2007, para. 6).

More recently, Kasper (1993) defined the term as “the study of people's comprehension and production of linguistic action in context” (p. 3). This brief definition states the elements of context and production as relevant elements of pragmatics that are fundamentals of any speech act in a language. Context, as Kasper viewed it, consists of the social and cultural circumstances in which communication occurs. These circumstances play a critical role in how messages are constructed, conveyed, and how they are received. Kasper also uses a broad term, “linguistic action,” (p. 3) which is a somewhat general term used to describe the capacity of producing utterance that a learner has. Also noteworthy is the emphasis on comprehension as well as production, a distinction that is particularly relevant for second language learners' daily lives.

Even more recently, Crystal defined pragmatics as:

> … the study of language from the point of view of the users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on the other participants in an **act of communication**. (Original emphasis)" (as cited in Barron 2003, p. 276)

This definition analyzes pragmatics from the perspective of the users. It takes into account the different choices that speakers are able to make when using the target language, depending on the social interaction of their communication. The notion of choice brings another aspect into consideration useful to language learners, namely, developing the ability to make the right choices among a variety of pragmatic elements.

On this same topic, the focus on the user, research by Sharples, Hogg, Hutchinson, Torrance and Young (2009) provided a definition based on the concepts of context and identity. They define pragmatics as "Those aspects of the study of language that pertain to the identity and intentions of the speaker and hearer, and the context in which speech takes place." (Pragmatics) Regarding context, they said that "it is sometimes most narrowly regarded as the body of world knowledge to which speakers and hearers have access in generating and interpreting speech" (Sharples et al., 1996, Pragmatics). They also consider context and identity as factors that may influence pragmatic competence, which means that the style or manners of the speakers change according to these factors.

A simpler definition of pragmatics, one intended for second language learners, is proposed by The Center of Advanced Research in Language Acquisition at the University of Minnesota:

> [Pragmatics] is the way we convey meaning through communication. This meaning includes verbal and non-verbal elements and varies depending on the context, the relationship between people taking, and many other social factors. (2006)

This definition puts the emphasis on communication and names social factors that will influence the ways in which meaning is expressed and conveyed.

To summarize at this point, even though many definitions of the term pragmatics have been seen so far, the use of a definition that widely reflects the focus of this investigation is essential. For this purpose, pragmatics can be defined as the subfield of linguistics intended to study the use of the individuals' language with the most accurate level of appropriateness and correctness possible on their performance according to the context or situation where the language is used, and the pragmatic elements that it involves, such as proxemics, chronemics, haptics, and register.

Pragmatic Competence

Given these definitions of pragmatics, another important aspect must be addressed: pragmatic competence. Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to comprehend, construct, and convey meanings that are both accurate and appropriate for the social and cultural circumstances in which communication occurs. This is the goal for second language learners, and as I describe in other parts of this paper, it is a challenging task.

Blackman (cited in Barron, 2003, p. 173) identified pragmatic competence as one element of communicative competence, placing pragmatic competence as part of illocutionary competence, which is a combination of speech acts and speech functions along with the appropriate use of language in context.

Elements of Pragmatics

Pragmatics, as the above discussion shows, is all about communicating appropriately in context. Communication involves language, verbal or written, but it involves many other aspects that go beyond the words in specific speech acts. I refer to all aspects of appropriate communication as "pragmatic elements." Second language learners need to acquire knowledge of and fluency in these pragmatic elements in order to acquire pragmatic competence.

Many sociolinguists have addressed these elements. Hymes (1974) proposed a model using the mnemonic device S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G to illustrate the key elements. S represents "setting" and "scene," the social and physical situation where the communication occurs, including time of day. P stands for "participants," the people involved in the communication and their roles and relationships. E describes "ends," the purpose or intended outcome of the communication. A represents "act sequence," the order of exchanges or pieces of the overall communication. K stands for 'key," the tone or manner of the exchange. It describes "instrumentalities," forms and styles of speech, including register. N represents "norms," the social expectations or rules that underlie or inform the communication, namely, what is acceptable. G stands for "genre," the kind of speech act or communication involved.

This model provides a broad picture of relevant aspects in analyzing and understanding how they are part of appropriate communication. For example, what would be the appropriate communication for a male supervisor reprimanding a female employee in a private meeting in his office at the end of the workday about an important appointment she missed? He wants to set a firm but gentle tone since she is a long-time, valued employee and he wants to keep her in the company. She, in turn, senses that there is a problem and wants to maintain her composure, even though she often disagrees with this supervisor. Using the SPEAKING model would help us explore and identify appropriate language for this situation.

This model, however, does not explore or identify the many explicit behaviors that comprise communication. For this, I look to sources from cultural studies and intercultural communication, such as Teaching Culture (Moran, 2001), which lists these behaviors as "features of practice" (p. 65). Practices are all the actions and interactions, including language, that members of a culture use to carry out their way of life. I find this list particularly useful, since it presents very concrete actions or behaviors that affect the appropriateness of communication. This specificity makes the pragmatic elements more visible.

Moran organizes these features into two broad categories: linguistic and extralinguistic. Linguistic features are those that deal with language, verbal or written, including paralanguage, the vocal effects that accompany oral language. Extralinguistic features are those that are commonly referred to as non-verbal communication. Below I list these features and provide brief definitions and examples.

Linguistic:

The linguistic components refer to all the written language, oral language and the paralanguage. The written language includes all the elements of written pragmatics such as: syntax and vocabulary. On the other hand, the pronunciation, tone, and accent belongs to the phonology of the oral language, as are the use of one's voice and other elements that accompany the speech such as interjections, onomatopoeia, coughing, and whistling.

Written Language

Syntax: This is defined by Van Valin Jr. (2001) as "how sentences are constructed, and users of human languages employ a striking variety of possible arrangements of the elements in sentences." (p. 19) Syntax can be altered to convey different messages, such as "I have got to go" versus "Gotta go."

Vocabulary: This is the use of words in relation to how we see the world, context, and participants in a speech act. The selection of words that a person uses might very according to the cultural background or register of the speaker or the receiver of the message. An example would be the use of the words "automobile" and "wheels."

Oral Language

Pronunciation: This is the way a language is spoken or a word is uttered. Each language follows a different pattern for pronunciation, and even there might be different patterns in within a language. For a word to be pronounced correctly it must have the pronunciation of the specific dialect that is used in a specific context.

Tone of voice: This is the use of pitch in a language to distinguish a lexical item.

Accent: This is related to the pronunciation of a language. It is the way the words are uttered with a characteristic pitch, stress and rhythm, representative of a specific speech community.

Register: This is the specific variety of language that is used in a specific social setting. For instance, the use of certain words might be considered more appropriate in a specific situation than in others. For example, the use of the lexical item "ain't" would be more suitable in some situations than in others.

Paralanguage:

Onomatopoeia: This is a word that imitates sounds that it describes. It is commonly used in poetry and literature. In pragmatics it is used in the utterance of certain sounds that add intensity to the meaning of the phrase. Some examples in English include: bang, splash, boom.

Interjections and other vocalizations: Interjections are words that express an emotion in the sentence. They are regularly linked to the sentence as a grammatical part of it. There are other elements that can be classified as vocalizations. They usually carry meaning and a specific degree of intensity addition to the uttered phrase: coughing, laughing, groaning, etc. As an example, in some cultures laughing might carry an unenthusiastic meaning while in other cultures it might not.

Extralinguistic:

The extralinguistic category of components refers to important elements such as: kinesics, proxemics, oculesics, chronemics, and haptics, and context.

Oculesics: This consists of eye movements used to convey meaning. These movements include maintaining or avoiding direct eye contact, blinking, winking, staring, squinting, rolling the eyes, crossing the eyes, closing the eyes, and other eye behaviors. These movements convey meanings. For example, avoiding direct eye contact conveys meanings of respect and deference in some cultures, but in others, messages of guilt or embarrassment.

Context: Edward T. Hall (in Moran, 2001) proposed two different categories of context to categorize the differences in communication style: Low context is where the message is direct, explicit, as in the utterance (“Oh I forgot my cell phone… Would you mind if I use yours to make a phone call?”), and high context where the speech is indirect, subtle, and understood basically because of social situation signs. For example, a person is looking desperately for something in her purse. He is trying to find a payphone. Another person who offers her phone.

Chronemics: This element of communication can be defined as the use of time in non-verbal communication. In fact, most cultures follow a particular time pattern or even certain human groups in within that culture use a different time pattern. The time perceptions include punctuality, willingness to wait, and interactions in conversations.

Chronemics has identified two different patterns of behavior in cultures: polychronic and monochronic. The United States is considered a monochronic culture which means that things are generally done separately, as in "one thing at a time." People value their own time and therefore, they value the times of others. These factors of punctuality and respect for the time are rooted in the industrial revolution where according to Guerrero, DeVito & Hecht (2009) "factory life required the labor force to be on hand and in place at an appointed hour" (p. 236).

On the other hand, Latin America and the Arabic world are polychronic cultures, where people do many things at once, and are highly distracted and subject to interruptions when a conversation takes place. This pragmatic component of chronemics is important for learners of English since it also includes interesting elements that vary according to the culture such as the pace of the conversation, also known as register, and even how long the people are willing to wait in a conversation.

Haptics: This is how touching conveys messages in nonverbal communication. Even though touching is part of all cultures, in some of them it can carry positive and negative denotations. A touching gesture can be perceived as positive in certain situations, but in others a person may get the opposite feeling when it is interpreted as insincere or suggesting ulterior motives.

For some cultures touching is highly determined by the age, sexual orientation, gender and rank of the individuals who intervene in the conversation. As a result, what is impolite for one culture is considered polite for the other.

Kinesics: This is the term used to describe body language. Kinesics includes movement of the hands, arms, head and other parts of the body.

Proxemics: This is the use of space between objects and between persons to convey meanings. For example, the distance between two people standing face to face conveys meaning. The closer the distance, generally speaking, the more intimate the message.

The above list, as mentioned, presents concrete behaviors that second language learners need to recognize and to employ effectively and appropriately. These behaviors are set within particular situations and social circumstances that also need to be understood, and Hymes' model helps analyze and explain these. To show how these pragmatic elements play out, let us examine the case of Eduardo once again and my own case, this time providing more details.

Eduardo Revisited

Eduardo, comes from a rural area of his home country in Latin America, where his cultural background required him to use basically two kinds of <u>register</u>, a very informal one, characterized by the use of *tu* and a more polite *usted* for older people and people in a higher rank in his context, since both are used as you in his L2. This <u>choice of words</u> is a clear example of how the context, the register and the participants influence Eduardo's utterance. His level of politeness in his L1 was affecting his conversation in the second language. As a matter of fact, when he arrived in the United States, he was not aware of the use of this <u>register</u> until he talked to a senior professor in his school, and he found it remarkably uncomfortable to call her by her first name and not with a more polite use of pronouns. Like Eduardo, many Spanish speakers encounter this informality of the language as something remarkably unusual and even arrogant. On the other hand, some English speakers consider these discourse markers of politeness unnecessary and even practically the same as flattering. This illustrates one pragmatic difference in the use of language that may hinder the communication of second language learners.

As we saw in the introduction, Eduardo most likely did use a correct and appropriate language (register) for his greeting "Hi, how are you?" We can assume that other linguistic elements were appropriate, such as volume (he did not speak too loudly or softly), pitch (his voice was not too high or too low). We can also assume that he did use paralinguistic elements appropriately, and avoided behaviors such as inappropriate laughter, whistling, throat clearing, and the like. We can also assume that his use of oculesic elements was appropriate, namely, that he maintained eye contact without staring, and that he avoided winking, or squinting. However, he used a type of body language (kinesics), a kiss on the cheek (haptics) that was very likely inappropriate for this context, creating a misunderstanding. This situation also shows the role of proxemics in that the distance between the two persons may have been too close. It also points to the nature of the relationship between the two, in this case one of professionals in a public setting. As this example illustrates, there are many behavioral elements that come into play if accurate and appropriate communication is to occur.

In regards to body language, the social and cultural differences between English and Spanish are as diverse as the social context where speakers of the language will interact. Again, the components of proxemics and register are also determiners for the appropriate use of the language. A Spanish speaker who comes from a polychronic environment will use a socio-pragmatic language determined on age and social status in order to determine the appropriate register.

On the other hand, English speakers who mostly come from a monochronic background determine the use of their language based on the level of intimacy and the context where they perform the utterance. In contrast, Spanish speakers determine this based on the rapport that the speaker establishes with the receiver of the utterance. These concepts of language use are in my opinion, the main factors of <u>context</u> that will determine the use of body language.

My Case

My own experiences also illustrate pragmatic elements. One example is my use of body language. This has changed in my use of English since I arrived in the United States. As with Eduardo, some of my inappropriate uses of body language made me feel awkward and out of place. As an example I noticed that men do not shake hands in the same way as they do in my native culture, where men shake hands and greet each other as many times as they see each other during the day. Unconsciously, I did the same ritual here until one of my colleagues let me know that it was not necessary to say "Hi" and greet people with a handshake whenever we met.

Kubo (2001) explained this phenomenon as something that commonly happens in ordinary dialogues: "In ordinary dialogues, we usually find types of regulatory actions performed by the participants" (p. 209). In this case, hand shaking is used as a regulatory action that may help the speaker to be sure that he has the attention of the receiver. Furthermore, Kubo stated that this body language also "specifies the relation between participants in a dialogue that reflects the success and the satisfaction of the dialogue" (p. 192) since the greeting in this case will determine the receiver's refusal or acceptance of communication.

In addition to these specific pragmatic elements, second language learners need to understand the cultural and intercultural dimensions.

Intercultural Communication and Culture

Pragmatics, in simple terms, is about culture, communication, and in the case of second languages, about intercultural communication. In order for second language learners to acquire pragmatic competence, they need to acquire cultural understanding and communication skills.

According to Watzlawick, on Novinger (2001) “We cannot not communicate. All behavior is communication, and we cannot not behave.” (p. 19) Every behavior or action can be considered communication, and each of our actions reflect our cultural background including our opinions towards gender, religion, sexual orientation, lifestyle, politics and even personal space.

Consider the following situation. Ruben is an international student from a Latin American country. He and his American friend Albert went grocery shopping at a local grocery store in the Midwest in the United States. Initially, he found the place remarkably similar to the ones in his hometown, so he felt confident in his language performance there. He and his friend were walking in one of the aisles and there were two people ahead who suddenly stopped and started reading the very complete labels in the bread section. Albert also stopped and made signs asking Ruben to do the same. Albert stared at the bread readers and silently they moved one step back so Albert and Ruben could move. They moved ahead while Albert apologized for the “inconvenience.” What happened here? Why was Ruben surprised? Why did they need to apologize? And how did the bread label readers understand the message without any words?

In this bread label-reading example, it is clear that the concept of personal space of Ruben and Albert are totally different. For Ruben, a public space is public because is intended to be used by everyone; therefore language in this type of environment should be intended to claim the use of the space in a collectivistic way. Ruben’s first reaction included a request for permission, expressed in an even intonation (that can be considered a transfer from his L1, Spanish), accompanied by a fast-paced walk between the couple and the bread shelves. In contrast, Albert's reaction included a complete ritual that had a gamut of body language items. He first stopped, stared at the couple, waited for a few seconds, then he walked past, and at the end he offered an apology.

Albert, Ruben and the bread-label-reading couple participated in a communication act that is common in Anglo-American culture, where the perception of personal space and how to interact in it is different from what Ruben was accustomed to. This is a clear example of the role of proxemics and context and how the paralinguistic element of interjection appears in active communication. The reaction of the couple of stepping back allowing Ruben and Albert to pass was an unconscious process that was done with automaticity, and therefore accepted with an apology. In my opinion, this apology offered by Albert denoted a confirmation and an act of appreciativeness towards the people who were respecting his space.

The actions of Albert and Ruben provide examples of the use of pragmatics and intercultural communication. This relationship is based on the fact that in order to reach a point of communication between cultures the existence of a common language and proper behavioral actions become paramount.

With reference to language, Langacker in Sharifian (2007) described language as "an essential instrument and component of culture, whose reflection in linguistic structure is pervasive and quite significant" (p. 15). Language is a cultural element that allows its users to reflect different elements that define their identity, such as educational background, tradition, beliefs and even emotional states. As a matter of fact, the discourse or language that a person uses is shaped by the innate potentials and sociocultural experiences that the individuals may encounter throughout their lives. In other words, every person develops an idiosyncratic way of using language in the culture. Paul Friedrich (1989) referred to "this nexus of language and culture as linguaculture" (p. 295).

As mentioned, the global spread of English makes it a language that allows different cultures to communicate and interact in a variety of settings. This interaction requires a well-developed concept of correctness and politeness amongst the speakers.

Cultural characteristics and features are common in every language. These features shape the way the language is spoken and determine the denotation and connotation of words, phrases, and even body language. Therefore, pragmatics becomes a very useful discipline that allows language educators to do ~~a~~ more specific error analysis regarding cultural differences in language.

To summarize, in this chapter I have defined pragmatics and described its many behavioral elements. These elements are essential to appropriate and accurate communication in a second language. It is important to remember that our culture teaches us our behavioral actions or habits since we were born, and therefore, most of our behavior is unconscious. As a result, human beings speak more than with just words; we also use body language and gestures to communicate ideas. As a language teacher I believe that it is essential to present the elements of the second language in general including the meaning of body language and the different components of pragmatics. The next chapter addresses how pragmatics can be learned.

Chapter Three

Learning Pragmatics

"We don't learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience." (Dewey, 1938, p. 13) Here, Dewey makes a simple but powerful point: experience is not the source of learning, but rather it is reflection on this experience. Dewey's emphasis on reflecting on one's experience is critical to my study of pragmatics, in the form of the Experiential Learning Cycle, a model that David Kolb (1984) derived from Dewey's concepts. In this chapter I begin by presenting Kolb's experiential learning cycle as a framework. I describe three examples of my own experience learning the pragmatics of a second language and culture, English in the U.S. and I show the stages of the cycle: description, analysis and an action plan to learn the target pragmatic components.

My approach to learning pragmatics draws upon theories of experiential learning. In my study of pragmatics as a discipline, my personal experiences as a learner and user of English in the U.S. have been essential. Almost on a daily basis during my recent stay in this country, I have been interacting and communicating in English with native and non-native speakers. Needless to say, I have been part of many communication breakdowns and misunderstandings. These experiences pushed me to look more closely at the causes of these breakdowns in order to understand and to remedy them. In short, I set out to develop my pragmatic competence.

One of the theories that helped me the most is the Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC) developed by David Kolb. This model was a key component of the MAT Program at SIT, reflected in the design and implementation of the curriculum as a whole, as well as of individual courses. As the academic year progressed, I became more familiar with this model as used in courses, and I began to apply it on my own outside the courses. In particular, I came to realize that my strategies for acquiring pragmatic competence mirrored the stages of the ELC. Moreover, when I researched and wrote this paper, I also realized that this model supported my notions of learning and teaching pragmatics. Let me explain how the ELC functions.

Kolb developed this model based on the work of other practitioners and theorists who viewed experience at the core of learning. Actually, this model receives its name because it emphasizes the important role that experience play in learning. Bearing this in mind, Kolb (1984) divided the learning process into four different stages: 1) concrete experience, which is where learners encounter and engage an immediate personal experience in different levels. Here, learners need to show willingness to be involved in the experience; 2) reflective observation, where learners reflect on the new experience; 3) abstract conceptualization, where learners make concepts of the experience (Kolb emphasizes that in this stage, learners need to use analytical skills to make concepts of the experience); and 4) active experimentation, where learners use the new ideas gained from learning. During this stage learners need to become decision makers in order to use the new ideas with an action plan.

The ELC presents a coherent view of the learning process. However, there are challenges in it that may lead learners to what Dewey (1938) identified as "mis-educative experiences" (p. 13) where learning does not occur. An example of this could be a student who attends an ESL grammar class where the content is "modals" but the experiential learning is "I hate grammar." The learner should be more likely to have a different result like "Modals are complicated." In the previous example, generalizations and meanings might be misapplied and therefore, cause a mis-educative experience.

The participation of an individual in the learning process involves many different aspects of his or her life: the whole person, thoughts, physical activity, and personalities. When teaching pragmatics to ESL/EFL students, it is necessary to achieve the recognition of this "whole person." By recognition I mean a complete identification, both internal and external.

This holistic approach towards learning is well explained in the experiential learning process, a model used effectively at the SIT Graduate Institute, giving freedom to the spirit of learning. The experiential learning process is defined by Beard (2006) as "the sense-making process of active engagement between the inner world of the person and the outer world of the environment" (p. 8).

To me, experiential learning is best seen as a process where action and thought must be linked. This link helps me anticipate the relationship that might exist between a learner's actions and that learner's actual thoughts. What I mean by this connection is that there must be a relationship between practice and theory, and that learners do possess both theories and practices.

To take full advantage of experiential learning, learners need to know how to reflect on their experiences. I believe that to develop this reflection skill, it is important to make students aware of the importance of <u>describing their experiences and their learning opportunities</u>. After this is done, it is significant for the learners to recognize the different elements of pragmatics so they will be able to take advantage of the learning opportunity.

Reflection on Experiences of Miscommunication

Let me now describe how I went through the stages of the experiential learning process in order to achieve pragmatic competence. During my academic time in the United States, journaling about my language experiences became my primary learning strategy. I focused on my own behavior and feelings and most importantly on my colleagues and teachers behavior towards language. In this stage I described and identified my challenges in the appropriate use of pragmatic elements. Then, I analyzed this description coming up with interpretations and theories to explain what happened. After that, I used these explanations to create action plans that guided me as I entered future experiences. I aligned my beliefs with my practice, creating my performance. And finally I went back to the beginning of the cycle to address new challenges.

In addition to this overall application of the ELC, I pointedly included these strategies: knowledge of pragmatics and pragmatic elements, and comparison and contrast between U.S. culture and my culture of origin.

The comparison and contrast between cultures was in fact the principal source of the miscommunications I experienced. Almost always, I either misunderstood a communication or used inappropriate pragmatic elements based on expectations and norms from my own culture. Once I recognized that cultural differences were such an important factor, I was able to not only recognize these differences but also to explain them in cultural terms. This increased my ability to anticipate possible miscommunications and to predict situations where I would probably need to employ different pragmatic elements.

My knowledge of pragmatics and pragmatic elements helped me interpret the difficulties in communication that I experienced. I learned the terminology that sociolinguists and others use to label the components of communication acts and situations, and I began to apply these concepts to my own experiences. These concepts helped me become more precise in my observations and interpretations, because I was aware of what happens in communication situations.

To illustrate this process of using the experiential learning cycle to learn pragmatics, I recount three instances from my personal experience.

Learning Appropriate Forms of Address

Description: In my classes I noticed that most of my colleagues called our professors by their first names. In contrast, I was still calling them with their last names and a more polite salutation (Dr., Mr., and Mrs.). I noticed that some professors asked me to call them by their first names, not using a title or last name.

I encountered this address experience when I attended a group dynamics class in graduate school. I called the professor "Mr. Jerald." He replied, clarifying that he and the rest of the professors in the program omit the use of that specific word choice in salutation (title-last name) and they use the first name instead. I reacted with feelings of astonishment and discomfort, because I thought that I was not using the correct level of politeness for that specific academic environment.

Analysis: This use of language is considerably different from my native language where professors are called with their last names and the last degree they have gotten:

"Professor Tannenbaum" vs. "Elisabeth"

It is clear that the pragmatic components of the type of register and word choices (vocabulary) were challenging my performance here. With that in mind I decided that was important to develop a strategy in order to address the issues with the right selection of register according to the context, in this case the SIT community.

Plan of Action: I decided that I needed to gather more information about forms of address. So when I returned to my classes, I took notes on what my teachers and my colleagues said. In my notes, I described the forms of address that were used, and I also wrote down tentative explanations or interpretations as to why certain forms were or were not used.

I began interpreting how my teacher talked and how my colleagues talked seeing the differences and how that affects my communication. For example, one of my colleagues addressed the teachers with her first name but with a respectful tone of voice (not too loud nor not too low). Another colleague used the professor's name but was careful to make eye contact and also to use a modulated tone of voice. I noticed that the academic context in which classes took place was very relaxed and informal, resulting in an omission of titles in order to keep the students' affective filters low. This interpretation was conducive to a new learning that helped me to understand the system of greetings in my new setting. From this experience I could say that I went through description, analysis, action plan, and then I went back to the experience stage to start the ELC again.

Every day after class, I wrote all the details about the differences between using titles in my first culture and the culture in the classroom. After that, I analyzed why the new ways of addressing were accepted as part of the mainstream. For example, I noticed that the elements of age and educational level did not change the way people addressed professors, something that is different from a Spanish speaking culture, where the word choice and register might determine the way people address others.

Plan of Action: I made a list of concrete steps that would help me to achieve competence in the correct pragmatic use. I decided to work on my register issues and word choice issues. To do so, I proposed for myself a series of strategies and deadlines to fulfill them. Here is what I wrote to myself:

Write down the situations when I felt uncomfortable (arriving to the classroom in the mornings, good morning “Mrs. Tannenbaum…” vs. “Hi Elisabeth”).

Try to imagine that the teachers were friends and not teachers.

Start addressing teachers as if they were friends and not teachers by using their first names.

Learning to Use Commands Appropriately

Description: When I participated in conversations in English with teachers and other colleagues in graduate school, I noticed that the use of commanding modals in my utterance made me sound more authoritative during class versus the most acceptable and polite form used by most of my colleagues and teachers:

“You have to…”	vs.	“It is a good idea to…”
“You must…”	vs.	“I would like you to…”

As an example, during a Language Analysis and Lesson Planning class, I asked the teacher for some clarification in the directions for an assignment. In response, he stated his answer using “It is a good idea to…” This made me feel insecure about his explanation, so I questioned him again “Are you sure?” I realized that he was certain and that I was not receiving the message properly because I did not feel that the use of the modal phrase carried the degree of certainty that I needed.

Analysis: In my native language the use of direct commands makes a receiver of the action feel more secure of what he or she is doing and not that is been commanded in an authoritative way. On the other hand, using phrasal modals instead of commands makes the receiver of the message feel more insecure of what is commanded. This is an example of how vocabulary and tone were challenging my pragmatic performance, since I felt insecure in the directions given by the teacher.

Action Plan: I began interpreting how my teacher and colleagues stated their requests and gave instructions. For example, my colleagues posed questions using "I was wondering if…" in order to really make his points of view clear and teachers asked us to do things with "I would like you to…" because they wanted to respect our individuality as learners. I decided to make changes in my speaking, to sound more polite and academically appropriate. This interpretation was conducive to a new learning of how commands might be used appropriately in English. From this experience I could say that I went through description, analysis, action plan, and then back to the experience stage.

In order to achieve pragmatic competence in this specific area, I proposed myself a series of strategies:

Write down the most common expressions and when they were used:

- During class time: "I would like you to…, what I want you to do…"
- In a conversation with colleagues: "I was wondering if you could…"

Write when I did not use them and what I was saying instead:

- During class time: "You have to…" instead of "I would like you to…"
- In a conversation with colleagues: "you must…" instead of "you might need to…"

Remind myself that instead of my expressions I should use the teachers' words. I achieved pragmatic competence using a mnemonic device. I remembered the face of a person that means a symbol of respect in my first culture (my mother), and the way I should be treating her. The result was successful and helped me to test the concepts in a real situation.

Learning to Take Turns Appropriately in Conversation

Description: When I interacted in conversations with some colleagues and teachers, I noticed that I interrupted while they were talking. For instance, I encountered this experience when I was doing group work with some colleagues and we intended to prepare a presentation. Initially, I talked and I notice that they were silent listening attentively to my opinion until I finished. When it was my colleagues turn I interrupted them with phrases like: "Aha," "Yeah," "That is correct." I noticed that they looked at me and they stopped talking every time I jumped in the conversation. Afterward, I felt uncomfortable because I was perceived as rude.

Analysis: Conversation in a Spanish speaking setting is generally based in a <u>polychronic</u> pattern. By polychronic I mean that participants in the conversation generally speak at the same time, overlapping each other's speech and not taking turns in an obvious way. On the contrary, in a formal academic setting in the U.S. most of the conversation is performed with a <u>monochronic</u> pattern, that is to say, one person at a time. In the example above, I was using the verbal fillers: "Aha," "Yeah," "That is correct." not with the purpose of interrupting speakers, but to demonstrate acceptance of the message and as a demonstration of empathy, since this is culturally appropriate in my first culture. With this new experience in mind, I decided to develop strategies to address the issues of chronemic patterns used in my conversation.

Plan of Action: As a first strategy, I paid attention to the dialogues between my teachers and my colleagues. I noticed that the pace and the rhythm of the conversation in English chronemics worked with a specific pattern, which is basically one person at a time. Then, I asked a colleague what difference he saw between my chronemics and his. He suggested that I needed to wait until the person would be done with his or her comments in order to start with mine, because I jumped in the conversation before other speaker was finished.

After I collected this piece of information, I decided to take these measures in order to work on adapting my performance to a monochronic chronemics pattern:

I wrote every day about my observations with all the details of how teachers and colleagues take turns to talk (A stops and then B begins). I saw the way they stopped and listened to the speaker attentively. This helped me to develop more awareness of my listening skills.

I waited 10 seconds after each person finished talking in order to start my utterance. This also helped me to prepare a more coherent utterance in my mind.

I pinched my thumb and forefinger~~s~~ to remind me that I needed to wait in order to start producing my utterance. This strategy represents a successful tool to remind me about my experience, because it makes me stop before I interrupt.

I apologized for interrupting people.

This experience was beneficial to my new learning, because I was able to go through the four stages of the ELC, eventually mastering the system of taking turns in a monochronic conversational setting.

To summarize, in order to achieve pragmatic competence it is important to be able to identify real learning opportunities, where learners describe what happens and analyze why in order to propose action plans with strategies leading to pragmatic competence. It is also essential that these action plans lead to achievable goals. In each of the cases described in this chapter, the pragmatic challenge was addressed with short steps that allowed seeing fast and effective results.

Working on adapting pragmatic elements such as chronemics, word choice and register to my new culture helped me to understand that learning pragmatics does not stop, since learning never stops. However, the learning process in this specific area and many others can be taken to a point, but it must continue until the learners' goals are achieved. The next chapter addresses teaching pragmatics.

Chapter Four

Teaching Pragmatics

This chapter addresses the teaching of pragmatics. First, I present a model for a coherent lesson plan, the NAPKIN model, conceived during my internship at the International Institute of Boston. Second, I explain how pragmatic elements can be included in this model. The chapter continues with the application of this model to a lesson based on a U.S. television show. Finally, I mention considerations, explanations and comments regarding the use of NAPKIN model in this lesson.

Teaching Pragmatics

The previous chapter explored a series of examples of how to address a pragmatic challenge from the learner's perspective in order to gain pragmatic competence in a specific area. In each of the examples the experiential learning cycle was used with positive results.

In these examples there were two elements that made the learning of pragmatics successful. First, the learner was aware of the need to learn the right behavior (comparing a pragmatic component in her second culture with one in her native culture); and second, the learner reflected and created a strategy to address the issue.

In my personal approach to teaching pragmatics, I integrate these elements of awareness and reflection in the lesson design model. It is my hope that this framework provides teachers with a coherent way to integrate pragmatic elements in a lesson.

According to Eslami-Rasekh, "The responsibility of teaching the pragmatic aspect of the language use falls on teachers" (p. 301). This is indeed the case, however, many teachers struggle finding an effective way to create or raise awareness of pragmatic competence in their learners. To help teachers, Bardovi-Harlig (as cited in Shemanski, 2000) proposes four basic steps to incorporate pragmatics into the curriculum. These steps are: 1) identification of the speech act 2) data collection and description (journals, prediction charts, etc.), 3) evaluation of texts and materials (critiquing dialogues, and group discussions), and 4) development of new materials. The teacher presents the theory and asks students to make predictions based on this theory with the help of a handout or a graphic organizer. After that the results of the students' observations are evaluated and discussed and finally there is a time for active practice and use of the language with the appropriate pragmatic elements.

These procedures are similar to those in the NAPKIN model in that students need to reflect on their experiences or on speech acts and identify the central pragmatic elements, but does not place the same degree of emphasis on practicing these elements.

The NAPKIN Model

As an English language learner who teaches English, I am interested in the integration of pragmatic components in the use of the language. This combination makes the learners active seekers of the treasure of learning. In order to create a scenario where learning may take place, I have come up with a model that allows learners to identify the situations and determine the most suitable way to present and process the subject matter. I call this model "NAPKIN," named after the first piece of paper at a coffee shop where this framework was originally conceived.

Need

Accurate introduction of subject matter

Practice of the presented subject matter

Knowledge review

Internalization

Natural application

Figure 1: The NAPKIN model. Echeverria 2009

It is my hope that this framework provides teachers with a coherent way to integrate pragmatic elements in a lesson.

Each of the steps in the NAPKIN model develops one stage in the learning process. In order to explain the model, let us go back to our friend from the introduction, Eduardo. Remember that Eduardo performed a speech act with correct word choice but without certain pragmatic elements necessary to make it appropriate in the target culture.

Need: The lesson begins with a definition of a need. This need must be based on the students, namely, the description of a situation where students use the language but with a lack of pragmatic competence. In other words, students experience a communication breakdown or a misunderstanding when interacting in a second language with persons of another culture. In the case of Eduardo, for example, the need is based on the lack of pragmatic competence in the use of proxemics, haptics, and kinesics that he encountered in a new setting. To identify these pragmatic elements, the teacher needs to present the misunderstanding to the students and ask them to analyze what happened. The teacher has to raise or create awareness so the students will be able to make comparisons and reflect on the pragmatic elements, identify a specific pragmatic element, by comparing their culture and the target culture. This comparison is essential, since the source of inappropriate use of pragmatic elements comes from students applying norms and behaviors appropriate for their own cultures. Because the pragmatic dimension is not always obvious, it can be helpful for students to keep a language and culture learning journal where they record their communication difficulties and also attempt to explain why these took place.

Accurate Introduction of Subject Matter: This stage features accurate introduction of the subject matter. This consists of a clear presentation of the speech act along with an analysis of the pragmatic dimensions. As a general rule, this presentation should be done using simple, straightforward terms, avoiding jargon. To do so, I propose to present needs (communicative and pragmatic) utilizing a supportive language known by the learner. The goal is for students to see that successful and appropriate communication depends on the appropriate use of pragmatic elements.

To help with this presentation, it is important to present the speech act with a piece of realia that represents the situation. In her work on pragmatics Shemanski (2000), portrays the importance of authentic data in this realia "not only in the sense of authentic context, but also in terms of authentic language usage" (p. 47). Some examples of valid realia would be a podcast or a video showing greetings in a U.S. context. In simple terms, the speech act needs to be grounded in a communicative situation so that the relevance of the pragmatic elements is made clear.

In addition, this presentation should be done with a theme familiar to the participants. By theme, I mean an idea or topic that involves a scene or scenario where the target language is presented. The choice of this theme is crucial to the success of the lesson since it has to catch the attention of the students. Factors such as age, cultural background, and language proficiency will be taken as references in order to make this decision. An example of a theme that could be used for Eduardo's situation is "Getting to know Shakira and Jennifer Anniston." This theme is familiar, common to the student's background, age and culture. It also helps the teacher to establish the difference in greetings between both cultures and the pragmatic elements that are involved.

This is also the stage where teachers need to make sure that students understand the pragmatic elements in question. For example, in Eduardo's case, these elements include <u>proxemics</u>, <u>haptics</u>, <u>context</u>, and <u>kinesics</u>. It is critical to contrast the target pragmatic behaviors with those that students might use in their own cultures for similar situations. Such comparisons will inevitably bring up culture, which should be discussed and explored.

At the end of this second stage, the teacher will have identified the communicative/pragmatic needs of students and accurately introduced the subject matter with an attractive theme. At this point in the process, students understand the pragmatic dimensions of the miscommunication and they have seen it portrayed through a theme.

Practice: At this stage, the focus turns to practice. Students engage in a variety of activities with the goal of incorporating the target pragmatic elements and building fluency in their use. Some activities in this stage would include pair work in short dialogues or conversations. Conversations in pairs are especially effective since they represent specific cultural situations. All activities include the pragmatic components.

During this practice time, I recommend not correcting students' errors. Students need a chance to make mistakes without the distraction of corrections. Instead, the teacher takes notes on errors and presents them in a later session. Students then take these errors into account in the next stage. In Eduardo's case, students would be practicing appropriate touching behaviors, gestures, and maintaining appropriate distance.

Knowledge Review: In the third stage students review what they practiced in the previous stage. This is a good time for correction and also for highlighting the pragmatic items in the speech act. Role plays and skits in pairs including the pragmatic components are suggested activities in this stage. When working with only one student, the teacher may help with the skit performance as well.

The only difference between this stage and the previous stage is that students actively and precisely restate or clarify their understanding of the pragmatic dimension and also demonstrate appropriate use of the pragmatic elements.

Internalization: In this stage, the students are already aware of the pragmatic and communicative difference. They know the meaning and the form with accuracy; therefore it is time for them to participate in free use of the communicative element and the pragmatic element, and in so doing, demonstrate their performance. The difference between this stage and the previous is that in this the students interact with the rest of the group, while the teacher takes notes of the language development of the students.

Natural Application: In the last stage of the model, students use the pragmatic elements and apply them appropriately in a specific setting. This is a task that students carry out in the culture itself or in a relevant situation outside the classroom, and they write about it in their journals. Ideally, they do this task and report back afterwards, describing the situation, the required pragmatic elements, and what happened.

They should be able to do this because the lesson was based on their needs, the teacher used class time to blend both competences communicative and pragmatic, and finally because they are now aware. As a consequence, students are able to recognize the different language elements that surround this specific speech act, giving them an intrinsic motivation for successful communication. In Eduardo's case he could go back to some female friends and greet them in a more appropriate way.

The NAPKIN model thus provides an effective means of presenting, analyzing, and practicing the pragmatic elements needed for appropriate communication in the target language. Let us now turn to another example of teaching pragmatics using scenes from a television program.

Teaching Pragmatics through Television Programs

In the following section, I illustrate how pragmatic elements and pragmatic competence can be addressed in a language lesson. The lesson is adapted from a plan developed by a colleague, Kevin Cross (2009). I first present the essential steps in the lesson, and then I go into detail to show how the NAPKIN framework can be applied and how other activities can be included to help second language learners learn pragmatics.

The lesson is based on the U.S. television comedy series, The Office.

Plot summary of the show

The show takes place in a paper supply company in Scranton, Pennsylvania. The protagonist is the supervisor Michael Scott, an impolite and insensitive boss who tries to push his own opinions as company policy. He is married to Jan, a very jealous, and opinionated entrepreneur who works from home. The story revolves around the lives of workers at the company. They include a bored but talented salesman, Jim, who is dating the self-righteous receptionist Pam; Jim's sociopathic, sycophantic enemy Dwight; Andy another sycophantic salesman, who boasts about his education in a very prestigious U.S. university, and finally, Andy's wife Angela.

The lesson is based on the episode called "Dinner Party" from season four of the show (hulu.com). In this episode, Michael and Jan (the boss and his wife) have invited Jim and Pam (the salesman and the receptionist) for dinner. Things get complicated because Jim and Pam do not want to go to dinner with the other couple, but they cannot refuse the invitation due to hierarchical issues in the company (Michael is their boss). Everything gets even more complex when Michael invites Andy and Angela (the second salesman and his wife) to come to the same dinner. In another twist, Dwight becomes jealous and goes to the dinner party even though he was not invited.

This program shows a number of strategies that characters employ to attempt to refuse the dinner invitation. Because this program is a comedy show, there are many examples of inappropriate use of pragmatic elements, which makes it particularly useful for a lesson on pragmatics. In the pages below, I give a synopsis of the steps in Kevin's lesson and follow this with my own commentary with the intention of showing how this lesson incorporates aspects of the NAPKIN model, or can be supplemented with these aspects. For the sake of clarity, I number the steps in Kevin's lesson, and I use the same numbers to signal my corresponding commentary.

Figure 2 The Office

The Office Lesson

Synopsis: Students view an episode of the American television comedy series “The Office” and analyze the communication between characters, particularly the pragmatic elements. This episode deals with interactions between workers and supervisors, specifically accepting or declining invitations, and expressing criticism. Inappropriate behaviors are portrayed. Students describe and interpret the communication acts that are portrayed in the episode, and they isolate the pragmatic elements related to appropriateness. They then follow this with role plays of workplace situations, and compare these to situations in their own cultures.

Procedure

1. Schema Building: Have the students share what they already know about the office workplace in the U.S. In addition, ask questions that focus especially on roles and relationships, particularly between employees and the supervisor. Ask about formality and informality, hierarchy. Students are asked about the levels of formality and hierarchy in their native cultures.

2. ***“The Office” Show and Its Characters:*** Present the show to the students so that they have a general idea of what it is about. Introduce the cast of characters by showing a picture of each one and summarizing key aspects about their roles and relationships with one another.

3. Worksheet with Situations: Give students a worksheet that lists a few situations/scenes from the episode they are to see. Each situation is presented as an event that is about to occur. Students work together to predict what might happen and what the characters might say to one another. They write their predictions on the worksheet.

4. The Episode: Show the video of the episode. After viewing, ask students questions to verify overall comprehension.

5. Comparison of Predictions: Have students make comparisons between their predictions for the situations and what was portrayed in the video. If necessary, show the video again so that students can identify what happened and what was said in each situation. Or, hand out a transcript of the scenes so that students can compare.

6. ***Appropriateness: Introduction:*** Ask students these questions for each situation: Do you think the characters were behaving appropriately? What determines appropriateness?

7. ***The Episode: Appropriateness:*** Hand out a worksheet that lists each situation again and asks students to identify aspects that are inappropriate, to explain why, and to rate the seriousness of the inappropriateness on a scale of 1 to 10. Students watch the video again and write their answers on the worksheets.

8. Group Presentations: Have students work in groups to discuss their answers. Each group then presents their analysis of a situation, according to appropriateness.

9. Role Plays: In small groups or pairs, students act out scenes from the episode, but doing so in an appropriate manner.

10. Analysis of Role Plays: After each role play, have students compare the differences between the two situations—the inappropriate one in the video and the appropriate one done by students. Students compare the differences in language use for each situation and role play.

11. Cultural Comparisons: Have students work together in small groups to describe how such situations would be done in their home cultures. Have them identify similarities and differences and then explain the reasons for differences. Students then share the results of their discussions.

12. Personal Comparisons: Ask students to share stories where they have encountered similar situations or other situations where they were not sure of cultural appropriateness and how to behave. Have them discuss their feelings and strategies they could follow to find solutions.

Explanation and Commentary

Generally speaking, Kevin's lesson is quite strong. There is a sharp focus on pragmatic elements. Learning objectives are clear and achievable. Activities engage students in reflecting, analyzing, comparing and contrasting, making presentations, doing role plays, and making connections to their own cultures. In my commentary, I will point out the links to NAPKIN and also offer views on how this lesson can be modified.

1. Schema Building: The lesson starts with a schema activator. The students use pictures of the characters and some short descriptions of their roles and relationships to identify previous and new knowledge of the context information of the show. The facilitator also brainstorms different elements related to pragmatics: hierarchy and relationships so they will be able to make comparisons between the pragmatic elements of both cultures. This is the stage where the subject matter and background information are presented.

After offered the background information, the teacher made a transition towards the new material. At this point the speech acts that students are going to process are chosen. Basically, three speech acts will be part of the lesson: The invitation from a boss to its employees (Michael invites Pam and Jim), giving excuses (conversation between Dwight and Michael), and the use of greetings when they are arriving to Michael's house, (greetings among Michael, Pam, Jim and Jan).

Asking students to share what they know about a lesson topic is consistent with the Needs stage of NAPKIN. Students will reveal their understanding of the nature of hierarchy in the U.S. workplace and also in their own cultures. This reflection is a key component.

2. *"The Office" Show and Its Characters:* This is an important step and also reflects the NEED stage. By providing details about the company, the characters that work there, and their relationships with one another, the teacher is providing students with the situational information that leads to the choice of pragmatic behaviors.

3. Worksheet with Situations: To focus the students' attention, the teacher prepares a worksheet where the students see the name of each of the speech acts in the video. The students have time for sharing their ideas about their guesses. The purpose of the worksheet is to provide a time to work in predicting the information. It is also a time to check understanding and to foresee some pragmatic elements in the speech act to be seen. In this specific point it is important to emphasize specific situations that he is using in order to address the pragmatic components that might the facilitator would have determined as challenging for the students.

These situations are part of the Accurate Introduction to Subject Matter stage of NAPKIN. Here, information is provided that adds important considerations in pragmatic choices. The predictions that students make about how characters will act and interact are forms of <u>reflection</u> and reveal their level of knowledge.

4. The Episode: After that, the video with the speech acts is played. The entire episode is an example of Accurate Introduction to Subject Matter. All the speech acts are presented in specific social circumstances through the interaction of the characters and their varied intentions, personalities, and relationships. Students see and hear the pragmatic elements.

Let us examine in more detail three of the speech acts from Kevin's lesson. As you can see from Kevin's lesson, students are expected to identify the pragmatic elements on their own. In case that they do not, the teacher can provide this input.

4a. Speech Act 1: In the first speech act, students will see a conversation between Michael (boss) and Jim (employee). The conversation can be divided into two parts:

Part one: Michael protests because everybody is staying late to work on a corporate project. Meanwhile, he approaches Jim asking if he has any plan for tonight. Jim avoids eye contact with Michael while this replies that he has not made plans because he (Michael) told them not to do any since they will be working. Michael goes back to his office complaining and pretending that he will be calling his bosses to let them know that they will not work late (he is shouting on the phone pretending that he is talking to the corporate division).

Part two: Michael announces that everybody was free to go home because of his talk with their supervisors. He approaches Jim again to invite him for dinner. Jim's intended to say something (excuse) but Michael said that there is no excuse because he said that he had not made any plans for that evening.

Different pragmatic elements arise from this conversation. In the first part of the conversation, we see oculesics (eye contact and movement in mainstream U.S. culture), chronemics (use of time in a speech act) and paralinguistic (use of pitch). For example, Jim initially does not make eye contact with his boss (Michael) and neither shows interest while replying with a very apathetic tone of voice. On the other hand, in the second part of the conversation, when Jim is giving an excuse he makes eye contact with Michael and also raises his intonation or tone of voice but is abruptly interrupted by Michael's reply.

It is also significant to mention the element of high context where the conversation takes place. This kind of context makes the speech act indirect.

4b. Speech Act 2: The second speech act is telling a person that he or she is not invited to dinner by giving excuses. In the episode, this occurs in a conversation where Dwight (the office's sycophantic employee) is asking Michael to specify the time to go to dinner. In this conversation there is an interesting element of register that is included. Specifically, the way Michael talks to Dwight has a different mood and choice of words than the conversation that he had with Jim before. Dwight assumes that because of the work relationship with his boss (Michael), he is invited to the dinner. Therefore, he asks Michael for the arrival time with an effusive tone. Michael replies to this request by making eye contact and replying with excuses ("The dinner is for couples only," and he only has "six wine glasses that will be all used").

4c. Speech Act 3: In the third speech act, there is a conversation between 2 couples (Michael & Jan, Jim & Pam). Pam and Jim arrive at Michael and Jan's house for dinner. Jan greets Jim with a greeting and a hug, while she avoids any contact or word exchange with Pam. Soon afterwards, Michael greets Pam with a hug that she does not refuse but does demonstrate her discomfort with her eyes. It is clear that some elements such as word choice, eye contact, register, and haptics are present in this speech act.

4d. Comprehension Questions: After the first projection of the episode, there are questions for clarification. These questions are intended to review and keep the students engaged with the class. However, these questions also allow the students to activate their critical thinking and use it in order to process the pragmatic elements that they see in the situation. After this moment of clarification, the teacher asks questions.

This is also an opportunity for the students to make comparisons between their cultures and the situation they see in the video.

The video should be played for the second time in sections. To guide students' analysis, the following questions and answers can be elicited or provided:

Speech Act	Question	Pragmatic element
Inviting Jim and Pam to dinner	First Part Why is Jim **not** making eye contact with Michael? Why is he asking if he has made any plans for tonight? Second Part Why does Jim make eye contact with Michael?	Oculesics Register Oculesics, Tone, Register
Refusing Dwight to come to dinner	Why does Dwight think he is invited? Why is Michael making eye contact when giving excuses?	Hierarchical relationship Oculesics
Greeting people who comes for dinner	Why doesn't Jan greet Pam? How does Pam feel about Michaels' greeting?	Register, body language (kinesics) Haptics, body language (kinesics), oculesics

The role plays work as a fluent use activity that will allow students to internalize the use of subject matter. This technique has a unique advantage, because students are able to work with new and previous vocabulary, while they develop basic interpersonal communicative skills. This is a moment where students are going to work in the awareness of what is appropriate in the U.S. standard culture (not what they see in the video), noticing differences between their cultures and the U.S. culture.

8. Role Plays: Role plays are an essential learning activity, and they reflect the Knowledge Review and Internalization stages of NAPKIN. During these stages the learners will apply what they have learned from the inside to the outside. First, students will prepare a role play in pairs with another classmate during the knowledge review. Afterwards, role plays situation may be performed in extended groups or to the whole class. This activity is helpful for the students to achieve pragmatic competence.

To recapitulate, in this chapter I have presented a model-based framework called NAPKIN. The model is an alternative structure where students are able to raise their awareness and use reflection at the same time. I also presented a lesson prepared by Kevin Cross in which some pragmatic components are addressed. The fundamentals of the NAPKIN model are used to analyze this lesson.

Chapter Five

Synthesis

This paper presented the different challenges that may be found while learning pragmatics in an ESL environment, discussed some alternatives to teach this material, and described my personal experiences.

In order to bring together these matters into a coherent conclusion, I decided to present my personal view of this project and its applications to my learning of English and to my language teaching.

The challenges that I encountered during my first language learning experience in an English speaking country, are the most meaningful of my whole life. I not only learned aspects related to language but also related to my teaching performance. As a matter of fact, I do not picture any of my learning opportunities here as negatives because even the difficult challenges contained moments of learning that developed awareness in my language production.

One example of these remarkable moments occurred when I visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Being an aficionado of art, I assumed that my visit would be a great moment of peace and solitude for the new Roberto who began this paper wandering between politeness and meaning. I not only found what I was expecting but I also discovered one painting in particular that helped me to understand how language teaching works and therefore how and why all the experiences narrated in this paper support the spirit of this project.

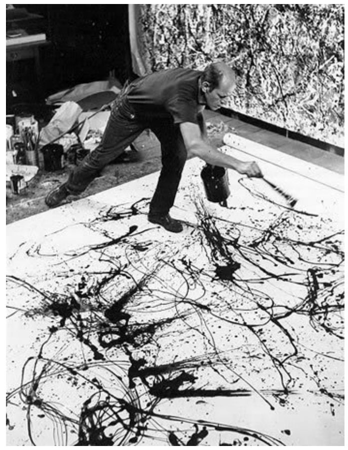

Figure 3 Teaching pragmatics is like painting a Pollock

Jackson Pollock's painting, Autumn Rhythm (number 30), was the most remarkable expression of what teaching pragmatics means to a teacher of English like me. At first sight, observers only see an intricate group of lines painted without any specific shape or reason, but if we go deeper we will be able to see that every line has a beginning and it does not break until it comes to an end. In the convoluted canvas, the line sometimes shrinks, or sometimes gets thicker. In some other cases the same line stops to allow another on continue, this line becomes successful when finally it arrives to a point where a blissful drop of paint announces the end of its journey.

This is the spirit of teaching pragmatics. Teachers are like the artist, and students are like a line. Teachers can facilitate learning or students can become their own teachers, but the most remarkable thing is that students will encounter times where their learning will be challenged because of the different situations that pragmatics involve, or on the other hand, students can be very successful and keep on deepening their understanding of pragmatics, which represents the time when the line gets thicker. There will be always a person or teacher like Pollock to help learners to gain the courage to arrive to the end of their way without vanishing in the incomprehension of the misunderstanding.

In the first chapter of this paper we saw Eduardo, who came to this country as a line of Pollock's paint looking for its destiny. Like Eduardo, many ESL learners looking to improve their language are bursting with courage and bliss, eager to learn and conquer a new culture and all that it involves. They may encounter problems that may undermine their motivation, but we as teachers should be their Pollock to take them through their path to an end. This end is nothing other than reasonable, achievable and meaningful use of the appropriate pragmatic elements of a language that will allow every Eduardo who lives inside our students to become more secure, more active and more self sufficient to operate in English.

It should be borne in mind that every chapter of this paper presents a particular overview of what the learning of English means for a person who feels his proficiency challenged for improvement and not perfection. I had the opportunity to develop my understanding of myself and others through knowing how to use ~~of~~ language and how it can be internalized according to different situations.

These ideas helped to create a definition of pragmatics discussed in the second chapter of the paper. A range of different concepts about pragmatics helped me identify the fundamentals for the creation of my own definition. All this research helped me to understand all of the adventurous process of learning that I started years ago and that will never come to an end.

My language teaching now has been triggered by the discipline of pragmatics, and I now have the exciting challenge of teaching it. This paper has been an opportunity to analyze the diversity of a language that astonished me when I was a child and that later on I decided to teach.

This language amazes people all over the world, just like our friend Eduardo, who now is more aware of what he does or says. This amazement helped me to understand differences and create my personal approach towards teaching this subject matter.

The NAPKIN model introduces a framework that is not new but is innovative. By this I mean that it offers a meaningful framework to present the subject matter that has been used before, but it is innovative because integrates pragmatics with the four skills.

To conclude, it is important to raise the awareness of students in order for them to construct their own learning upon a piece of information about pragmatics. To do so, teachers need to include the pragmatics component in their lesson. I believe that meaningful material will capture the students' attention and is crucial for the achievement of this goal.

References

Architects in Action. (2007). Jackson Pollock, [Online Image]. Retrieved August 15^{th} , 2009. from http://www.artinthepicture.com/blog/?p=120

Asiado, T. (2009). *J.L. Austin How to Do Things with Words: English Philosopher of Language, Linguistic Philosophy.* Retrieved from: http://great-philosophers.suite101.com/article.cfm/jl_austin_how_to_do_things_with_words#ixzz0U0e0OIHr

Barron, Anne. (2003). *Acquisition in Interlanguage Pragmatics. Learning how to do things with words in a study abroad context.* Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. http://site.ebrary.com.reference.sit.edu:2048/lib/worldlearningsit/Doc?id=10032036&ppg=1

Beard, Colin. (2006). *Experiential Learning : A Handbook of Best Practice for Educators and Trainers.* London: Kogan Page, Limited. http://site.ebrary.com.reference.sit.edu:2048/lib/worldlearningsit/Doc?id=10137816&ppg=1

Brown, H. Douglas. (2007). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy.* New York: Pearson Education.

Cross, Kevin. (2009). *Speaking Fluency Through Culture*. Unpublished paper. SIT Graduate Institute. Brattleboro, VT.

Crystal, D. (March, 2008). *Two Thousand Million? English Today, Volume No .24* (Issue 1). Retrieved from http://ill.sit.edu/illiad/illiad.dll?SessionID=D141939695E&Action=10&Form=69&Value=9969

Dewey, J. (1998). *Experience and Education*. The 60th Aniversary Edition. Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society in Education. USA.

Friedrich, P. (1989) *Language, ideology and political economy*. American Anthropologist 91 (2). p.295– 312.

Guerrero, Devito & Hetch. (1999). *The nonverbal communication reader: classical and contemporary perspectives*. 2nd edition. M.L. Prospect Heights, IL

Hall, E. (1982). *The hidden dimension.* Garden City, NY: Anchor Books Editions.

Hulu.com. (2009). The office [Online Image]. Retrieved August 18, 2009. From http://assets.hulu.com/shows/key_art_the_office.jpg

Hymes, D. (1974). *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach.* The University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc. Cinnaminson, NJ. Retrieved from http://www1.appstate.edu/~mcgowant/hymes.htm

Jaszczolt, K.M. (Editor). (2002). *Meaning Through Language Contrast, Volume 2.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co.

Kasper, Gabriele (Editor). (1993). *Interlanguage Pragmatics.* Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, Incorporated. http://site.ebrary.com.reference.sit.edu:2048/lib/worldlearningsit/Doc?id=10086827&ppg=10

Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential learning. Experience as the source of learning and development.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Liu, Shaozhong. (August 8, 2007) *What is pragmatics?* Retrieved from: http://www.gxnu.edu.cn/Personal/szliu/definition.html

Novinger, Tracy. (2001). *Intercultural Communication : A Practical Guide.* Austin, TX: University of Texas Press. http://site.ebrary.com.reference.sit.edu:2048/lib/worldlearningsit/Doc?id=10245742&ppg=19

Moran, Patrick. (2001) *Teaching Culture. Perspectives in Practice.* Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Sharifian, Farzad (Editor). (2007). *Applied Cultural Linguistics : Implications for Second Language Learning and Intercultural Communication.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company. http://site.ebrary.com.reference.sit.edu:2048/lib/worldlearningsit/Doc?id=10172331&ppg=47

Sharples, H. H. (1996). *Computers and Thought: A Practical Introduction to Artificial Intelligence*. Retrieved from http://www.cs.bham.ac.uk/research/projects/poplog/computers-and-thought/gloss/node1.html

Shemanski, Lori Ann. *Implementing English: Pragmatics and EFL Curricula.* SIT Graduate Institute. 2000.

Skyes, J.M., & Cohen, A. D. (2006). *Introduction to Pragmatics. What does pragmatics mean?* Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition. University of Minnesota. Retrieved from: http://www.carla.umn.edu/speechacts/sp_pragmatics/Introduction_to_pragmatics/introduction_to_pragmatics.html

Van Valin, Robert D., Jr. *Introduction to Syntax. Cambridge University Press, 2001.* West Nyack, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2001. p1. http://site.ebrary.com.reference.sit.edu:2048/lib/worldlearningsit/Doc?id=10063480&ppg=19