



How to Teach Pragmatics

By: Dr. Mehdi Khodaparast

Agenda

- pragmatics
Definition
- The importance of teaching pragmatics
- Technics for teaching pragmatics

Why should we teach pragmatics

- To make our students fluent. (To make the best choice)
- To avoid creating misunderstandings
- To teach learners the real use of the grammatical points and vocabulary that are learning.
- To teach them sociocultural and linguistic features of a conversation both.
- To enable our students develop their personal and professional relations.
 - **To become a different teacher**

Lets make an authentic greeting dialogue.



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Greeting and Leave-taking strategies

- Greet
- Introduction question
- Introduction
- Expressing pleasure
- Wellbeing Question
- Wellbeing Answer
- Leave-take
- Wish-Wells

Zeff, B.(2016). The pragmatics of greetings: teaching speech acts in the EFL classroom, English Teaching Forum, Volume 54, Number 1, pp. 2-11



Creating Authentic Greeting Dialogues

Greeting Speech Act Set Example:

- ▶ 1. Greet
 - (Hello, Sara)
- ▶ 2. Give Context/Show Concern
 - (My name is Diana, we met at Seneca last year/How have you been?)
- ▶ 3. Share Information/Ask Questions
 - (I was at Seneca last month/Did you go to Seneca last month?)

How to teach Pragmatics





Steps of teaching pragmatics

- ▶ Encourage Cultural Awareness by Using Contrastive Analysis
- ▶ Deliver Explicit Instructions
- ▶ Providing Choices
- ▶ Use of expected pragmatic norms

Ziogas, Sara G., "Practical Pragmatics: A Workshop to Learn Strategies for Teaching Pragmatic Awareness to Adult English Language Learners" (2017). Master's Projects and Capstones. 577.

Encourage Cultural Awareness by Using Contrastive Analysis

- ▶ How do you express politeness in English?
- ▶ Is it in the grammar? Vocabulary? Tone? Some other aspect of the language?
- ▶ When do you use formal or informal language in English?
- ▶ Who do you consider a friend in the U.S.?
- ▶ How do you identify differences in power?

Deliver explicit instruction

- Introduce the basic components of pragmatic awareness first
- Teach one specific speech set act at a time.
- Provide lots of opportunity for practice.
- Use authentic language examples
- Encourage your students to become language researchers



Providing choices

- ▶ Teaching students:
- ▶ The components of pragmatic awareness:
 - ▶ Context
 - ▶ Roles
 - ▶ Impact
 - ▶ Goals
- ▶ Cultural Awareness of the target language speech norms
- ▶ Specific norms or rules for speech acts
- ▶ A variety of phrases to use for different situations (in context)

Vellenga, H. (2011). Teaching L2 Pragmatics: Opportunities for Continuing Professional Development. *TESL-EJ*, 15(2).



Components of Pragmatic awareness

Context

- Where & when
- Language
- Shared background knowledge
- Social relationship

Role

- Power dynamic or social distance

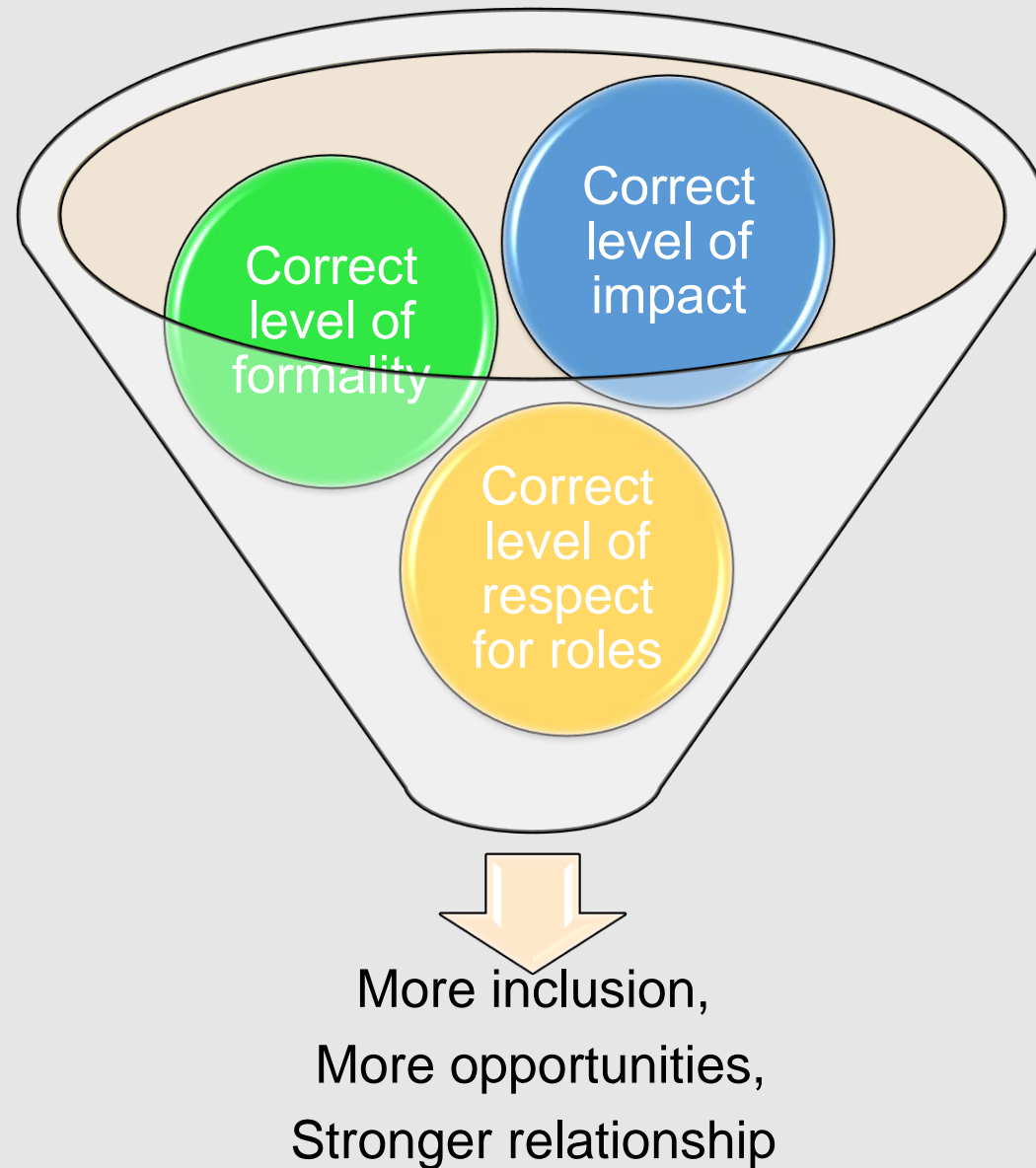
Impact

- The degree of imposition. What will this “cost” the target of the speaker?

Goals

- The speech act being used.

Use of expected pragmatic norms





Creating Authentic Greeting Dialogues

- ▶ 1. You will be creating 3 dialogues to cover different types of situations and relationships.
- ▶ 2. Analyze dialogues for context, roles, impact and goals.
- ▶ 3. Each dialogue should have a minimum of 4 lines
- ❖ Think of different places and situations where you might meet someone for the first time, or run into them, or greet them on a regular basis.
- ❖ at a family gathering
- ❖ on a museum tour
- ❖ first day of work
- ❖ first day of class
- ❖ at a concert

Teaching Refusing

- ▶ What is the goal of refusing?

To decline an invitation, offer, request or suggestion

- ▶ How do we refuse?

Either directly or indirectly (Within the context of directly or indirectly, we can be polite, or very curt or rude, depending on the response we chose.)

Teaching Refusing Direct

- ▶ Direct refusals are either performative (I refuse), or show unwillingness or nonability
- ▶ No.
- ▶ No, thank you.
- ▶ I refuse.
- ▶ I can't
- ▶ Softeners:
- ▶ Offer a positive feeling or opinion: I'd love to come!
- ▶ Show empathy: I realize you are in a difficult situation.
- ▶ Use fillers: um, well, ah
- ▶ Show gratitude: Thank you for the invitation

Teaching Refusals

Indirect

- **Indirect refusals are more complex, but offer more options.** You can:
- **Express regret:** I'm sorry I can't come/I wish I could come.
- **Provide an excuse:** I'm not feeling well.
- **Provide an alternative:** I can do _____ in place of _____
- **Promise future acceptance:** I'll be available to do _____ next time.
- **Attempt to dissuade:** You wouldn't want me to come with you.
- **Criticize the requester:** How can you ask such a thing?
- **Avoid responding non-verbally** with silence, hesitation, physically leaving
- **Avoid responding verbally:** change the topic, postpone, hedge

Teaching Apologies

Goals for Apologizing:

To express regret; explain why an offence happened; to make amends; to repair and maintain an important relationship

Speech Act Set for Apologizing:

1. Express the apology: I'm sorry; I apologize; Please forgive me
2. Take responsibility: It's my fault (or lower; I didn't see you, or I didn't mean to; or non-acceptance; It wasn't my fault)
3. Explain the situation: The traffic was bad; I got lost
4. Offer repair or compensation: How can I make this up to you?
5. Promise it won't happen again (specific to situation): I promise not to be late next time.

Ishihara, N., & Cohen, A. D. (2014). *Teaching and Learning Pragmatics: Where Language and Culture Meet*. Routledge., p. 63-64
Siegel, J. (2016). Pragmatics Activities for the Speaking Classroom, *English Teaching Forum* Volume 54, Number 1 . p. 14

Teaching Apologies

Contexts

Exercise: (adapted from Siegel, 2016) Create apology scenarios based on the following prompts, then analyze each scenario for the elements of pragmatic awareness (context, roles, impact, goal):

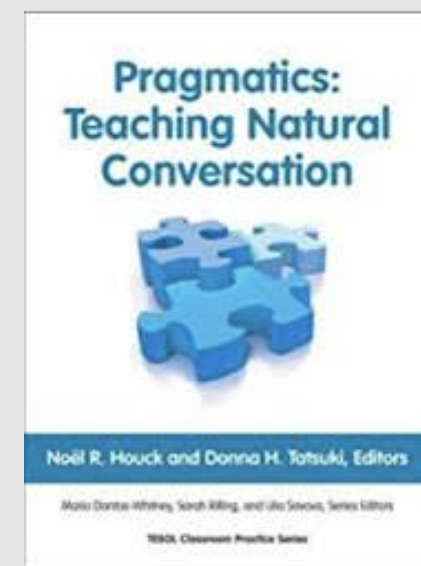
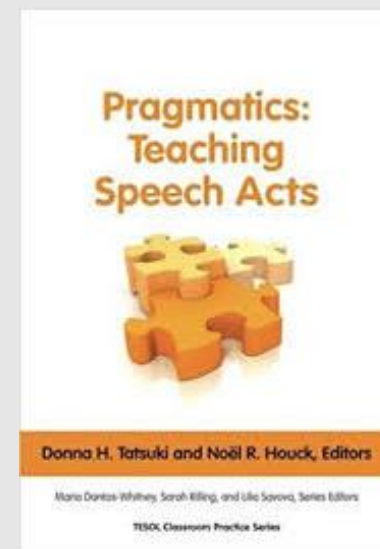
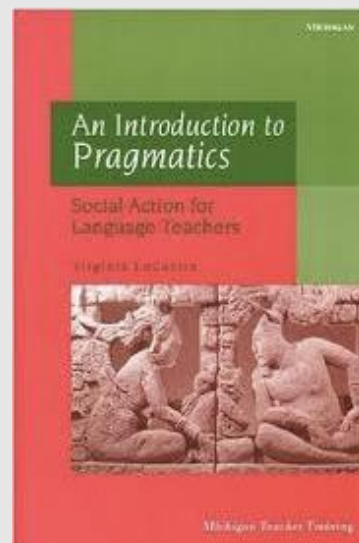
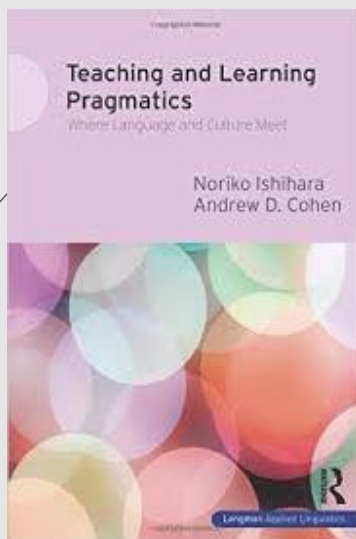
- A. You were walking down the hallway at your school, reading a text message on your phone and you accidentally bumped into a colleague and caused them to drop all the papers they were carrying.
- B. You realized too late that you forgot to complete an important project for your boss who is expecting you to give her that information for a presentation she must deliver the next day, and now you have to explain why you didn't do it.
- C. You were backing your car out of a parking space at the mall and didn't see the car that had backed out of their space before you and you hit their car, causing minor damage.



Online resources for more ideas

- ▶ <https://www.americanenglish.state.gov/resources/teaching-pragmatics>
- ▶ <https://www.americanenglish.state.gov>
- ▶ <https://coerll.utexas.edu/methods/modules/pragmatics/>
- ▶ <http://carla.umn.edu/speechacts/descriptions>
- ▶ <http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/Pragmatics/>

Book resources for more ideas



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