**Pragmatics: The Influence of Context**

(\[http://emedia.leeward.hawaii.edu/hurley/Ling102web/mod4-3_semantics/4mod4.3.5_speechacts.htm\])

**An Overview on the “Language” of Conversation**

According to The University of Minnesota Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, pragmatics is “the appropriate use of language in conducting speech acts”.

- It involves both social and cultural aspects of language
- Pragmatics instruction must be directly taught and modeled to student who are English language learners and students on the Autism spectrum

(\[http://www.carla.umn.edu/speechacts/\])

According the American Speech Language Hearing Association, pragmatics involves the following components:

- Using language for different purposes
- Following rules for conversations and storytelling
- Changing language according to the needs of a listener or situation

(\[http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/Pragmatics/\])
At the Crossroads: Cross-Cultural Pragmatics

• Pragmatics vary widely between sociocultural norms
• As a result, there can be many misunderstandings when speaking cross-culturally
• ELs must be aware of pragmatic expressions and interactions when learning a second language and its functions

(http://coerll.utexas.edu/methods/modules/pragmatics/02/index.php)
Important Terms to Know
Pragmatics: the way in which context contributes to meaning of words. It differs from semantics because it takes into account the context of the way that one utters the word, pre-existing knowledge about those involved, the inferred intent of the speaker, and other factors.

Language Functions: Michael Halliday is a linguist who believed "how people exchange meanings by 'languaging'." Emergence of grammar and the particular forms that grammar take should be explained “in terms of the functions that language evolved to serve.”

Appropriate Language: fits your audience and matches purpose.

Register: is a variety of a language used for a particular purpose or in a particular social setting. For example, when speaking in a formal setting, an English speaker may be more likely to use features of prescribed grammar—such as pronouncing words ending in -ing with a velar nasal instead of analveolar nasal (e.g. "walking", not "walkin"), choosing more formal words (e.g. father vs. dad, child vs. kid, etc.), and refraining from using contractions such as ain't—than when speaking in an informal setting.

Dialect: a particular form of a language that is peculiar to a specific region or social group.

Nonstandard Form: a nonstandard dialect does draw negative attention to itself; that is, educated people might judge the speaker of such a dialect as socially inferior, lacking education, and so on. A nonstandard dialect can thus be characterized as having socially marked forms, such as ain't. A socially marked form is one that causes the listener to form a negative social judgment of the speaker.

Conversational Rules: follow rules and maxims... When the rules are followed it is very easy for people to understand each other. What people say is explicit, direct, and to the point. People say what they mean and imply meaning.

Nonverbal Communication: is the process of communication through sending and receiving wordless (mostly visual) cues between people.

Communicative Distance: understood as an overall feeling of distance experienced by the conceptualiser in face-to-face conversation; it is a real-time mental construct which subsumes physical, social and psychological distance.

Communicative Competence: is a term in linguistics which refers to a language user's grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology, phonology and the like, as well as social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately.
Pragmatic competence: Intrinsic to this decision-making process in using language to communicate are several principles that concur to define the nature of pragmatic competence.

- variability: the property of communication that defines the range of communicative possibilities, among which is formulating communicative choices;
- negotiability: the possibility of making choices based on flexible strategies;
- adaptibility: the ability to modulate and regulate communicative choices in relation to the communicative context;
- salience: the degree of awareness reached by communicative choices;
- indeterminacy: the possibility to re-negotiate pragmatic choices as the interaction unfolds in order to fulfill communicative intentions;
- dynamicity: development of the communicative interaction in time.

Strategy Competence: refers to a speaker’s ability to adapt their use of verbal and nonverbal language to compensate for communication problems caused by the speaker’s lack of understanding of proper grammar use and/or insufficient knowledge of social behavioral and communication norms.

Discourse Markers: is a word or phrase that is relatively syntax-independent and does not change the truth conditional meaning of the sentence, and has a somewhat empty meaning. Examples of discourse markers include the particles "oh", "well", "now", "then", "you know", and "I mean", and the connectives "so", "because", "and", "but", and "or."

(http://grammar.about.com/od/mo/g/nonstandterm.htm)
Pragmatics in Relation to Halliday’s Seven Functions of Language with Examples from Children’s Literature

What does it mean to use language for different purposes?

#1 Instrumental: This is when we use language to express their needs

“'I don’t want to go to school,' he told his mother. 'I want to stay home with you. I want to play with my friends. And play with my toys.'"


#2 Regulatory: This is where language is used to tell others what to do

”'Go away,' said a voice from the corner of the room.”


#3 Interactional: Here language is used to make contact with others and form relationships

“I’ll love you forever, I'll like you for always.”

#4 Personal: This is the use of language to express feelings, opinions, and individual identity (e.g. 'Me good girl')

“'I can’t go back to sleep,' she says. 'I'm afraid I'll have the same dream.'"


#5 Heuristic: This is when language is used to gain knowledge about the environment

“I was born in a place humans call central Africa, in a dense rain forest so beautiful, no crayons could ever do it justice.”


#6 Imaginative: Here language is used to tell stories and jokes, and to create an imaginary environment

“'Once upon a time,' Stella begins, 'there was a human boy. He was visiting a gorilla family at a place called a zoo.'"


#7 Representational: The use of language to convey facts and information

"A silverback must eat forty-five pounds of food a day if he wants to stay a silverback. Forty-five pounds of fruit and leaves and seeds and stems and bark and vines and rotten wood."

Ways to Teach

Strategies:

Communicative Competence: in a six-boxed worksheet, students will have the opportunity to write the appropriate greeting to a person based on the picture. They must make one statement and ask one question, then explain their reasoning if necessary.

Communicative Distance: Give a sentence with something like “I didn’t say that you had a problem with her,” go into more detail if necessary. Then, give several different written variations with points of emphasis, then say each of the sentences as such using different body language and gestures.

• Example: “I didn’t say that you had a problem with her.” Then ask the students to identify how each of the three sets of sentences have a different meaning.

Nonstandard Form: Give a set of incorrect sentences with poor grammar, and say each aloud. Ask the students to give a correct form of the sentence.

Role Play: Model and role play rules for conversations and authentic language experiences
Nonverbal Communication: Mixed-pair-share where students get up, mingle around the classroom until the music stops, and pair up. Students will then be given a scenario of “who they are with and what they are talking about.” From there they know whether or not they can greet with kisses on the cheek, a handshake, or another way. They know how close or far to stand away from the person.

• Example: “You are meeting up with your cousin after not seeing her for a few months.” “You are meeting an employer for a job interview.” What is the appropriate form of non-verbal communication?

**Instructional Videos**

• Non-Verbal Communication: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihuGFUrzD30](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihuGFUrzD30)

• Non-Verbal Communication: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WHUHTmtBJWU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WHUHTmtBJWU)

• Different examples of register and dialect: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9EsyYw5d40](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9EsyYw5d40)

• Teaching conversational rules to children: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=42TpxP5wFBg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=42TpxP5wFBg)

• Sample lesson on teaching communication: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmWfOrz45UA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmWfOrz45UA)

• An overview of discourse markers: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DPVGEVrBb5M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DPVGEVrBb5M)

• Pragmatic competence, an overview: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KWQsfQoxqc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KWQsfQoxqc)

• Communicative competence: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAPqEHpctbg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAPqEHpctbg)

**Additional Resources**

