

# Pragmatics Matters



**JALT Pragmatics Newsletter**  
**Issue 56, Fall 2020**



# Contents

## **Introduction:**

From the guest editor (Todd J. Allen) (p. 3)

## **Reports:**

Pragmatics Undercover: Book Launch review (Tim Knight) (p. 4)

Pragmatics Undercover Review: Part 2 (Carol Rinnert) (p. 7)

Pragmatics on my Mind - A report on Jim Ronald's Presentation (Donna Fujimoto) (p. 9)

## **Interview:**

Incorporating more pragmatics in textbooks: An interview between Jim Ronald and Simon Capper (Jim Ronald) (p. 10)

## **Articles:**

Raising awareness of the importance of pragmatics in EFL classes: Professional development for Vietnamese high school teachers (Anh Ton Nu) (p. 13)

When English as a lingua franca doesn't work: Analysis of the interaction between the spokesperson and the minister and its pedagogical implications (Benio Suzuki) (p. 19)

Teaching L2 English pragmatic listening skills online (Todd J. Allen) (p. 25)

## **Upcoming Events:**

JALT 2020 Conference Information (p. 29)



# From the guest editor

I would like to begin this newsletter by thanking Donna Fujimoto for the opportunity to take on the role as guest editor for this issue. Donna has taught me a lot over the last few months putting this newsletter together. I also wish to thank all that contributed to this issue. I understand that at this chaotic period in the year, doing these things takes important time out of your day. I also wish to thank Tim Knight for his wonderful pictures (on the back page) that he kindly let us use in this issue.

Before delving into the content of this issue, we are trialing a new format of the newsletter, making it more interactive and appealing for our readership. While the new version looks very sleek, there may be some teething issues while we experiment with the digital version. I apologise in advance if this is the case.

After a number of events over the last few months, in this issue we have three reports by our SIG members. Tim Knight reviews the recent launch of the new Pragmatics SIG book – “Pragmatics Undercover”. Carol Rinnert reviews the follow-up event on Pragmatics Undercover held in October. Donna Fujimoto also reports on a recent presentation by Jim Ronald – “Pragmatics on My Mind”.

In addition, in this issue, Jim Roland also provided us with a recent interview he had with Simon Capper, on incorporating more pragmatics into textbooks. Also, three short articles were included in this issue. Anh Ton Nu discusses the importance of raising awareness of pragmatics in the EFL classroom. Benio Suzuki reports on the pedagogical implications of interactional analysis. Lastly, Todd Allen reflects on his teaching during the COVID-19 crisis, focusing on an online listening and speaking class.

With JALT 2020 around the corner, this issue also lists all of our SIG members’ presentations. I look forward to seeing you all there!

While we have not decided on the next issue of Pragmatics Matters, I would like to encourage you to contribute, either by discussing your latest research, reporting on an interesting presentation you witnessed at JALT2020, or other pragmatics related topics/events. Short book reviews are always welcome too! Please pass the newsletter on and ask your colleagues to get involved in our SIG. If you do wish to contribute, please contact Donna Fujimoto via email - [fujimotodonna@gmail.com](mailto:fujimotodonna@gmail.com)

Stay safe and well.

Todd J. Allen.



# Pragmatics Undercover: Book Launch Review



By Tim Knight

An exciting first for the Pragmatics SIG took place on Sunday, July 26th, 2020 – no, not the publication or the launching of a new book (though that is cause for celebration in itself), but the new and exciting part was the way the new book was promoted. Pragmatics Undercover: The Search for Natural Talk in EFL Textbooks is the fifth in the SIG's excellent series of theoretical and practical publications aimed at effectively teaching, as well as analyzing, pragmatics. All four editors of this new book – Jerry Talandis, Jr., Jim Ronald, Donna Fujimoto, and Noriko Ishihara – were visibly and audibly present at the book launch on Zoom, along with nearly 20 other participants and presenters. Whereas previous volumes have been promoted at sessions during JALT conferences, this one was launched with brief introductions by the editors, and then online presentations by five of the book's contributors, all through the now familiar medium of a Zoom meeting.

	<b>Greetings, opening remarks</b>		
	Donna Fujimoto, Yosuke Ogawa, Jerry Talandis Jr, Jim Ronald	4:00-4:10	
	<b>Activity Presentation/Teaching</b>		
	Jo Williamson	4:10-4:25	
	John Campbell-Larsen	4:25-4:40	
	Ewen MacDonald	4:40-4:55	
	<b>Discussion</b>	4:55-5:10	
	<b>Activity Presentation/Teaching</b>		
	Terry MacLean & Jerry Talandis Jr	5:10-5:25	
	Ian Munby	5:25-5:40	
	<b>Discussion</b>	5:40-5:50	
	<b>Wrap up, closing remarks</b>	5:50-6:00	
			With thanks to Lily Sanger for the picture!
			And to Malcolm Swanson for the layout!
			And to the 25 authors & editors – for the contents!
			And to <b>Pragmatics SIG</b> , for trusting us to take on this book project!
			And to the many students who helped us try out & refine the 21 activities, thank you, all of you!



One thing that impressed me was host Jim Ronald's online organization so that the event, and the sections within the event, kept to its billed two hours in total. Praise must also therefore go to all the contributor-presenters for keeping to their allotted 15 minutes, which proved enough to get the main points of their activities across, but not long enough for observers to get restless.

First up was Jo Williamson, who introduced his Stop the Story activity. This teaches students how to interrupt each other – of course, in pragmatically appropriate ways. As many of our students have found when they study abroad, discussion groups or peers in informal situations are often less patient than their fellow students in Japan. Interlocutors often do not leave big gaps for them to ask follow-up questions or take a turn to express their own ideas, and they need training on how to interrupt, even for clarification. Jo's paper (pp.70-73) is concise and nicely designed for an inspiring and useful activity, and he explained it clearly on Zoom.

In the teaching environment we have been living through since April, some things need to be adapted, of course. This would include instructions in the procedure, such as Jo's "Print out a copy of your short stories worksheet for every student" (p. 71). In contrast, the second activity introduced, while certainly doable and useful also in a real classroom, was almost tailor-made for classes held on Zoom.

John Campbell-Larsen has demonstrated over the years at various conferences that he is a compelling presenter, and he explained with his usual verve the reasons for making his activity, Entering an Ongoing Conversation, as well as how to carry it out. No printing required here, although as he says, lower level groups might benefit from scaffolding materials. The idea, though, is simple – training someone in a group, or more than one, to use reported speech in order to tell a newcomer to that group what they have been talking about. Too often, students are stumped for anything to say when someone new joins a group, or they carry on without letting the newcomer know what's going on, leaving them a bit embarrassed and baffled. As John pointed out, doing this smoothly is extremely useful when a teacher, or another student, joins a breakout room in Zoom. In fact, it might be even easier to teach this in Zoom than in a classroom, as the newcomer really would not have been able to overhear anything beforehand.

One of the stated aims of this new volume is to incorporate the teaching of pragmatics in an ongoing way to supplement what is lacking in textbooks. Some activities are less easy to recycle through a course than others, but Entering an Ongoing Conversation (pp.58-63) is one of those all classes using breakout rooms in Zoom or any other similar platform would benefit from, and practicing it after the first week it is taught would require no force, nor shoe-horning in.

The third speaker was Ewen MacDonald, whose presentation – as I, perhaps, indelicately pointed out in the discussion section near the end of the two hours – left me with mixed feelings. That was because his spoken introduction and his excellent slides, shared on screen, were so clear and interesting, in contrast to the rather dense procedural listing in the book, especially for lazy, short-attention span people like me. I exaggerate a bit, and his paper is comprehensive and well done, no doubt. It's just that the procedure and worksheets, as presented in the book, are a bit forbidding, but came alive with his online live presentation. The lead editor, Jerry, rightly pointed out that the teaching materials, including worksheets, were also available as downloadable, adaptable files from the SIG website, and he even sent them to us in a zip file, using the file-share function in Zoom. That was welcome and it tempered my initial outburst. But it did make me think that I'd like to have access to the slides, along with Ewen's brief spoken introduction, in addition to the paper in the book. I believe that would make his paper more accessible to a greater number of people.

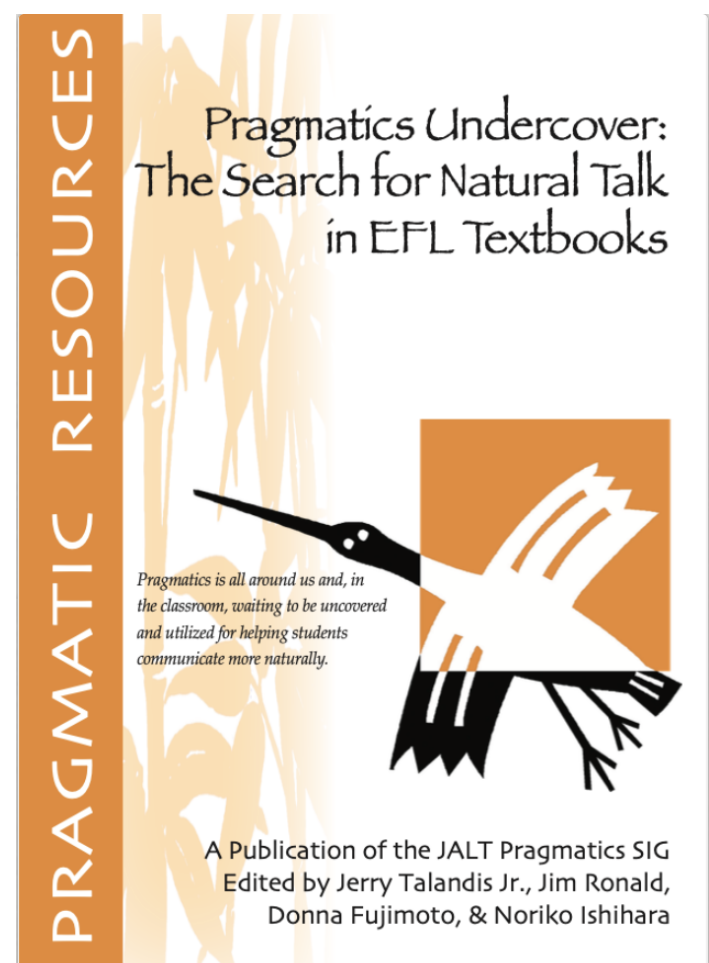
One of my concerns for a while – indeed, I'm sure it's one we all share -- has been that pragmatics doesn't reach as many teachers as we would like. Even though David Crystal argued that pragmatics is the most important concept in language (2014), many educational practitioners do not seem to recognize that it is on a par, at least, with grammar, vocabulary and phonology. I sometimes worry that we are always talking to the same people who somehow have found an interest in the field. Ewen's presentation, as opposed to his paper, would, I'm sure reach more parts. How to get it out there, though, is the question. Perhaps a SIG YouTube channel collecting short presentations such as the ones we were treated to on Zoom?



I found I was not alone in these feelings in the next part of the Zoom event – a discussion session in small groups, using the breakout rooms function. I was put in a group which included a contributor to the book, Amir Feroze, as well as enthusiastic, young researcher-teachers, members and non-members of the SIG. Among the group, I was surprised and delighted to renew an acquaintance with one dynamic and inspiring young pragmatics researcher who I had met at a pragmatics lecture by Naoko Taguchi at Temple University Japan. We were all able to share our own interests, backgrounds, and thoughts about the event we were in the middle of. Everyone was enjoying it. After about eight minutes, the breakout rooms were closed and we returned to the main session for two more presentations.

First, Jerry Talandis Jr., talked about the activity he had written about with Terry McLean, a research project for two class periods (pp. 79-84 + worksheets). This is an activity for which you would need to download the worksheets from the website rather than use photocopies from the book, and which would be more enjoyable to do when we get back to normal classrooms. The pragmatics focus, however, is something we can encounter online, too, that of long silences in conversation or when a teacher asks a student a question, and Jerry, being a knowledgeable and fluent speaker, introduced it clearly.

Finally, the organizer played the joker in the pack, Ian Munby, who presented his paper, the last in the book, Open-Fly Alert and Trump's Tissue (pp. 204-208). He seemed to be a bit of an outlier: his presentation materials were just his written paper, shown by share-screen, and he revealed that he was not a SIG member. However, Ian is an effervescent speaker and he was funny, sometimes deliberately. The title of his paper gives some indication of the content of his activity – whether we should alert people, and/or how to alert people, who are in potentially embarrassing public situations, such as President Trump with toilet tissue stuck to his shoe (YouTube evidence available), or a teacher wandering around the class with his trouser zipper (or zip; or fly, or flies) undone. Again, I would probably save this activity for an actual classroom, as I would feel more nervous demonstrating it on Zoom even with a wide-angle camera aimed at my crotch. Since April, it's been hard enough even to remember to put trousers or shorts on at all!



The last few minutes of the meeting were for open questions and comments, and general interaction. One person genuinely had had to leave a little early, but everyone else remained, attentive, until the end. A question that occurred to me was how the presenters were chosen. Even though I am not one of those who insist on complete diversity in representation, it did seem a shame that not even one of the female- and/or Japanese contributors to the book was taking part as a presenter. I asked the book launch organizer, and a co-editor, Jim Ronald, how he had chosen the presenters. He assured me he had asked 12 people, but seven had said “no.” Unfortunately, all those seven included the females or Japanese contributors. Therefore, well done even more to those five people who did present, despite no doubt being extremely busy towards the end of the first challenging semester of online teaching. From this attendee and reviewer's point of view, and, I think, from others too, the book launch was a great success and a worthwhile use of time. The book undoubtedly continues the fine series of SIG volumes (thank you, editors), but for a final plea, I think it would nice to arrange wider access to the speakers and their valuable ideas and materials for teaching pragmatics.

## References

Crystal, D. (2014, Nov. 11). Introduction to Pragmatics. Retrieved from

<https://youtu.be/0xc0KUD1umw>

Talandis, Jr., J., Ronald, J., Fujimoto, D., Ishihara, N. (2020). Pragmatics Undercover: The Search for Natural Talk in EFL Textbooks. JALT Pragmatics SIG. Available from <https://www.pragsig.org/pragmatics-undercover>



# Pragmatics Undercover

## Review: Part 2

I am grateful to Donna Fujimoto and Noriko Ishihara for inviting me to share my uptake from the “Pragmatics Undercover: Online & In Class” Zoom session on October 24, 2020. Like so many others, I did not manage to catch the Pragmatics Undercover book launching session in July, so I was delighted to have the chance to join this follow-up session. Without exception, the presentations were engaging and enlightening for everyone, newcomers and old hands at pragmatics alike. Besides introducing activities from the book, some presenters explored connections between pragmatics and the online communication we are all taking part in so often these days. It was evident that the session was greatly appreciated by all who attended (from as far away as Vietnam and Australia).

The first three presenters gave informative, easy-to-follow explanations of the activities they contributed to the book. First, Kayo Fujimura-Wilson showed us ways to help students learn how to soften their comments by using hedges appropriately, to avoid appearing rude. As she pointed out, students can be encouraged to take advantage of what they know about hedging in Japanese when they are working out ways of using hedges in English. Next, Sanae Oda-Sheehan presented ways of getting students to give longer answers to yes/no questions to make their conversations more successful. At the same time, her activities help them recognize the meaning of embedded questions like “Do you know where she lives?” Third, Chie Kawashima shared appropriate ways of giving advice, which is often expressed too directly in textbooks. Advice can be face-threatening both because it risks offending the hearer and because it places the speaker in a superior position. Besides giving many ways of softening the form of the advice with hedges and indirect forms, she also pointed out the value of using visual images to enhance understanding. Many of the participants expressed interest in using these activities – which are all clearly presented in the book – with their own students.



By Carol Rinnert

After a short break, the second half of the session took us beyond what is in the book to focus on how pragmatics can be effectively incorporated in online teaching. First, Jerry Talandis, Jr. talked about assessing pragmatic activities online. Basically, this was an extension of his book chapter, “Transforming pragmatics activities into assessment activities,” where he drew on a formula he borrowed from J.D. Brown: Speaking practice activity + Feedback loop = Assessment activity (p. 41).

In the book chapter, Jerry explains the criteria for assessment in clear, easy-to-follow terms; takes the reader through the pros and cons of various kinds of assessment; and provides instruments to use in the classroom. In the presentation, he took us step-by-step through practical ways of implementing this kind of assessment on-line, using the following tools:

- 1) Meeting software with breakout rooms
- 2) Free on-line recorder (he recommended and demonstrated one that is easy to use at [vocaroo.com](https://vocaroo.com))
- 3) Google form (for collecting recordings and linking them in one file)
- 4) Marking rubric (like the one on p. 51 of his chapter).



He offered an overview of the workflow, as follows: The teacher puts students in rooms of 2-3 people; students are given about 45 minutes to record a polished, 3-minute conversation; PCs (not wearing headphones) are best for making the recording (it's trickier on smartphones); a group leader fills out the Google form (with names, student numbers, email addresses); the teacher visits rooms to confirm receipt and quality of recording before allowing students to leave; the teacher does the marking later using the rubric. Jerry also mentioned some tips for success, such as the teacher practicing ahead of time, backing up everything, and downloading the recordings (as the links stay for only about a month).

Finally, in the last part of the session, Jim Ronald and Gretchen Clark led us in exploring pragmatic challenges of online situations. The guiding questions were: How can we develop and maintain relationships online? And how can we enhance learner agency and classroom community? Challenges we identified together included, among others, technical problems of all sorts, not being able to hear clearly, difficulty of reading facial expressions, loneliness, Othering, and embarrassment. Jim also pointed out the difficulty of determining the meaning of such signals from the students as the camera being off, silence, and absence. Some ways of coping with the challenges include regularly using end-of-class feedback (e.g., Google Doc); teaching students how to write formal versus more friendly emails to the teacher (a useful skill throughout their lives); making sure channels are private enough; and finding ways to build students' confidence. To introduce one kind of activity, Jim divided us into breakrooms of three or four people. We then spun the wheel at the following (freely available) link to start a conversation on a topic starting with "Could you tell us...?":

Besides demonstrating the activity, it provided some of us an eye-opening experience of what it feels like to be a student who did not quite catch the instructions before going into the breakroom and being subjected to an abrupt ending (less than 10 seconds) to our conversation. As I finally understood after we came back from the breakrooms, the activity was supposed to involve two of the students having a conversation about the selected topic, and the other one or two observing the conversation and pointing out pragmatic challenges and successes. It was observed that some of the topics were easier to develop into a smooth conversation than others. One of the participants suggested that it would save time and frustration if superlatives were avoided; that is rather than asking “about the best trip you’ve had” it would be better to suggest changing it to “one of the best trips.” The last activity introduced by Gretchen provided one way of engaging students emotionally, to make up (at least partially) for the lack of time to interact with each other before and after class and the inability to read non-verbal signals online. This activity, called “Happy Song,” calls for students, outside of class, to post a song (or it can be done with a movie title or video clip) on social media and give a personal reaction, which other students are encouraged to respond to in a continuing dialog with the original poster. This activity proved to be the most popular of the semester among students, who were able to express gratitude, indicate inspiration, and use engagement devices like tag questions, while interacting with each other online.

The whole session was a great success. I am sure that many others feel as inspired as I do to apply what I learned in my own classes. Thank you very much to Jim, Donna, Jerry, and Noriko for producing this valuable book and event.

<https://wordwall.net/resource/5252684/pragmatics/could-you-tell-us>



# Pragmatics on my Mind: A Report on Jim Ronald's Presentation

By Donna Fujimoto

Jim Ronald should be awarded the 'Pragmatics-always-on-my-mind' award. He teaches pragmatics in the classroom, but also outside the classroom. He has been known to follow up on students who have already graduated and asked them what they recall of the pragmatics lessons. He often shares his thoughts about pragmatics on Facebook. And, he has been the co-editor and contributor to several of the Pragmatic Resources series published by our SIG through JALT (these are still on sale, btw).

On October 10, 2020, Jim gave a presentation for JALT Kitakyushu titled, "Pragmatics in the English Classroom – A Workshop." I happened to see the announcement on the JALT calendar, so I attended online. When I asked Jim afterward why he didn't alert our SIG about this, he said it didn't occur to him...the presentation was targeted to people who don't know much about pragmatics. So, there again, more evidence of "pragmatics-always-on-his-mind," in this case in order to promote to others and not just to add to his resume.

At the beginning of his presentation, Jim gave some examples that have happened in the classroom and from study abroad instances. A good example is when the student returns to the host family home and is asked, "Hi there, would you like a cup of tea?" The student answers, "No, thank you" (perhaps being polite in not wanting be an imposition). However, this can cause some consternation on the family host side because their actual intent was: "Let's spend some time together, getting to know each other." If students have some pragmatics lessons beforehand, they can understand better how to respond appropriately. Later Jim put us in breakout rooms and we played an English game. We were able to spin a wheel with prompts such as, you need to compliment someone, or interrupt someone, or approach someone who looks sad. It was a fun exercise, and as teachers we wanted the link so we could use it in our classrooms.



Here is the link for the wheel: pragmatic opportunities and incidents in the language classroom <https://wordwall.net/resource/5143804/classroom-communication>

Jim then shared his efforts with peer feedback and how students made progress without explicit teaching in class. His point: peer feedback can be highly useful.

One thing that really struck me was that Jim brought up the lyrics of Leonard Cohen:

Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in.

It seems he was trying to guide our attention to "the language at the frayed edges, in the cracks", i.e., knowledge of pragmatic use and intent can help us see through these cracks.

It is quite interesting that after Jim's presentation I have seen two more presentations where these very same Cohen lyrics were brought up. The latest session was by George F. Simons, a well known consultant of intercultural communication and global negotiation. I began to really wonder why this image of cracks and light shining through has been speaking to so many people at this point in time. I leave it to you, the readers, to search for the answer.

Here Cohen's song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wRYjtvIYK0>

Though Jim targeted the session to people who are not familiar with pragmatics, I certainly learned new ideas, so I will ask Jim to definitely let us know the next time he gives a presentation on pragmatics so we can tell everyone. Thank you, Jim.





Simon Capper



Jim Ronald

# **Incorporating more pragmatics in textbooks: An interview between Jim Ronald and Simon Capper**

By Jim Ronald

A few months ago, Jim Ronald was invited by friend and textbook writer Simon Capper to bring more of a pragmatic focus to one of his course books, *Any Questions*. Now, as the new edition is being readied for publication, they got together to talk about the book and the changes that they made to it.

**Jim:** Hello, Simon. First, could I ask where your book Any Questions came from, how it started?

**Simon:** Well, in a way it started when I was really young. I've always liked lateral thinking puzzles, and I came to realise that in lots of ways they would work well for group work in an English class; they are a puzzle, a mystery that is solved through teamwork, and it's by asking and answering questions that the groups work towards the solution. In other words, it's a genuine information gap activity that brings its own motivation.

**Jim:** I've never used the book myself, but I have had a good look at it, and what struck me was how it seems to meet the students where they are, fresh out of high school, with plenty of English in their heads but often not much experience of talking in English.

**Simon:** Yes, that's how I see the role of the book and its users: meeting them where they are and offering opportunities to gain fluency and confidence in using the language. More than that, though, the book works as a platform for interaction, for these students to work together and get to know each other. Anyway, back to how the book developed. Those lateral thinking activities tend to involve a lot of yes/no questions, but that is clearly not enough. The next piece of the puzzle, as it were, was crossword puzzles, with some kind of bite-size similarity to the lateral thinking activities, but with the focus on who, what, which, when, and where questions.

**Jim:** I can see these steps as the book developed, to make it more rounded in terms of question types. But, at this stage, the questions still mostly had an "other" focus – not concerned with the students and their lives but with puzzles.

**Simon:** That's right. And this is where the Speed Questions – asking and responding to questions about themselves – came in. I had noticed that many students would take a lot of time, unnecessarily, in answering simple questions about them and their lives. This part was followed, in each unit, by Communication Tips, in which students were shown how to improve their communication skills, such as by giving longer answers or asking follow-up questions. Each unit finished up with an unstructured talking activity.

**Jim:** It sounds like a fairly complete package. Have you been happy with the book over the past few years?

**Simon:** Overall, yes. It's really rewarding to see how involved the students get in the puzzles, often to the point that they seem to forget they're in an English class, speaking English! You see them growing more confident and speaking more easily, and as students interact in groups, which change regularly, it gives them a chance to socialize and make friends.

**Jim:** I sense a "but"!

**Simon:** Hahaha. You're right – otherwise I wouldn't have invited you to work together on the new edition.

**Jim:** And I must have felt that, too – otherwise I wouldn't have felt I might be able to contribute something worthwhile!

**Simon:** What it comes down to is that while the communication tips are there, there isn't much focus on conversation, on actually having meaningful personal conversations.

**Jim:** You mean it doesn't all come together somehow?

**Simon:** As a book, I think it does all work as a whole, and it certainly does work in the classroom. But the communication-related elements tend to be atomised, isolated. So it's like, "Here's some advice." But no follow through, or not systematically. It hasn't been a unifying strand through the book in the way that the other parts have been.



**Jim:** What did you hope that I or, more accurately, the two of us working together, could add to Any Questions?

**Simon:** I knew I wanted to revise Any Questions? to emphasise a more pragmatics-based approach, and to do that I needed to have fresh eyes from informed sources. Who better than you?! I thought it would be a great chance to collaborate. Actually I've been hoping to do this for years, and I'm glad it's finally come to fruition. Anyway, enough from me. I'd like to ask you a question. Why pragmatics? I mean, how do you see an increased focus on pragmatics helping students' communication?

**Jim:** I can give you an example from a first conversation with a student today. I simply asked, “Do you live in Hiroshima?” and he replied, “Yes, I do.” then went on to say, “I live in Nagatsuka.” I responded that I have a friend in Nagatsuka, then we talked about ways of getting to university from there. In fact, we enjoyed talking together, our first conversation! To me, his “Yes, I do.” was grammar, and the “I live in Nagatsuka.” (in response to my unspoken “Where do you live?” was the pragmatics that made our conversation work.

**Simon:** I often feel that when I ask people where they live, and they give a minimal response like "Hiroshima" (where they know I've lived for many, many years) their lack of specificity is designed to deliberately prevent a conversation like you had! What other areas of pragmatics do you think learners can benefit from?

**Jim:** There are so many! The areas of speech acts and politeness, such as how to say yes or no, how to apologise or thank; backchannelling, facial expressions, and gestures; clarifying or dealing with misunderstandings. More fundamentally, it’s about how we talk together, developing and sustaining relationships.

**Simon:** That makes me feel even happier with what Any Questions? is setting out to achieve. We want to unlock students' communicative potential, give them genuine reasons to communicate, and above all, see English as a tool for building relationships. Final thoughts ... if you could send a message to students about how to approach their English classes, what would it be?

**Jim:** I would ask the students, “What do you hope for from this class?” And challenge them to really make their classroom what they hope for: a place to use English, a place to make friends, a place to have fun, and a place where they will become better communicators, and more confident, competent users of English.

◆ Communication Activity

1. Read the scenes below. If you are not sure of the meaning, ask your partners or teacher.
2. When you are ready to start, ask one of your partners: “Are you ready? Do the face!”
3. Your partner should make a face that matches one of the scenes.
4. Try to guess your partner’s scene: “Is it mango?” “The kitten?”
5. Keep guessing until you get the correct answer—then it’s another student’s turn.

<b>Help!</b> Your friend suddenly starts to feel ill and faint.	<b>Poor friend</b> Your friend tells you some really sad news—her dog has just died.	<b>100%</b> There is an English test and you are the only one in your class to get 100%!
<b>Train</b> You’re rushing to get your train. You’re on the platform, but the doors close—you have missed it.	<b>Silly question</b> A friend or someone in your family asks you a question that is so simple that <i>everyone</i> knows the answer.	<b>Kitten</b> You’re checking your phone and a friend posts a video of the cutest kitten you have ever seen!
<b>New shoes</b> You got some new shoes. When you go out that evening, someone spills their drink on your shoes.	<b>Mango</b> You see some delicious ripe mangoes in the supermarket. As you reach for the last one, someone pushes in front and takes it.	<b>It's a mystery</b> You’re sure you put your credit card in your bag, but now it’s not there. Where did you leave it?
<b>New frappuccino</b> You love peaches. One day, you go into Starbucks and see a new item on the menu – Peach Frappuccino!	<b>Horror movie</b> <i>You’re watching a horror movie and feeling more and more scared, when suddenly ...!</i>	<b>Love at first sight</b> You’re in a café with a friend when an unbelievably beautiful woman / good-looking man enters.
<b>Homework</b> Your teacher gives you an extra assignment. You already have too much homework!	<b>Not so funny</b> Your classmate keeps making a joke but it isn’t funny anymore, and you’re getting tired of it.	<b>Your team</b> You’re watching your favourite sports team in the final game of the season, and—it’s over: they’ve lost.



# Raising awareness of the importance of pragmatics in EFL classes: Professional development for Vietnamese high school teachers

By Anh Ton Nu

FLASH: Anh will be presenting at JALT 2020 under the Graduate Student Showcase: Macquarie University, November 21, 12:50-14:50. Her topic: Pragmatics teaching in Vietnamese and Australian English teacher training curricula.

## Introduction

My recent investigation into the pragmatic input in a national EFL textbook series for Vietnamese high school students reveals a paucity of explicit information on pragmatics, together with inadequate presentations of different pragmatic aspects (see Ton Nu, 2018; Ton Nu & Murray, 2020 for more information). These shortcomings of the textbooks regarding pragmatic content require teachers to play a more active role in integrating pragmatics into their lessons to facilitate the development of students' communicative abilities in English. This has motivated me to organize a one-day training workshop for high school Vietnamese EFL teachers in order to raise their awareness of pragmatics and its teaching for their potential incorporation of pragmatics into their English lesson to help improving students' communicative competence in the target language in the EFL contexts.

## Summary of the workshop

This one-day training workshop sponsored by a small grants fund, which is a part of the Australian development project for Vietnam, was conducted by me and my supervisor in August 2019 with the participation of 51 high school Vietnamese EFL teachers. The content of this workshop consists of two main parts:

- 1) The researchers' presentations of basic concepts of pragmatics, major shortcomings of the textbooks in terms of pragmatic input, and some examples of supplementary activities to incorporate
  - 2) Teachers' self-designed pragmatic activities contest
- (see Appendix 1 for a detailed agenda of the workshop)

This professional development workshop was built on Schmidt's noticing hypothesis (Schmidt, 1993, 2001) and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning (Johnson, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). The assumption was two-fold. On one hand, teachers would acquire the basic knowledge of pragmatics and its teaching through the researchers' presentations of inputs which were designed and presented in an easy-to-notice way. On the other, teachers would interact with each other as they design pragmatic activities to present to the researchers, and thereby be able to form a community sharing their knowledge and experience.

The workshop was delivered in both English and Vietnamese. As my supervisor does not speak Vietnamese, I presented my parts, and summarised her presentation in Vietnamese to maximize teachers' understanding. All presentation slides and handouts were written in English so that teachers could enhance their abilities of reading comprehension in English as well as their metapragmatic knowledge in English.



## Outcomes of the workshop

Before and after the workshop, all participating teachers were asked to complete a pre-workshop and post-workshop survey so that the researchers could evaluate the effect of this training workshop (see Appendix 2 and 3 for the contents of these two surveys).

The analysis of all completed surveys<sup>2</sup> shows a significant change in teachers' understanding of pragmatics. Therefore, it can be said that the workshop was effective in raising the participating teachers' awareness of the importance of pragmatics and its teaching in EFL contexts in general and in Vietnam in particular. Before the workshop, there were around 40% of participating teachers who did not know what pragmatics is in general. Among 16 teachers whose answers showed that they did not know about pragmatics, half of them simply put down "N/A" to express that they did not have any ideas about pragmatics. Some of these teachers added that "this is the first time I have heard the term "pragmatics", or "I think it is very important but I don't know how."

The other half tried to explain that although they may not know what pragmatics is, they knew that it is important for students' communicative competence. For example, one teacher stated:

"I think it's necessary to study this aspect of learning a foreign language, especially in speaking skill. Maybe, while teaching students, I certainly use some structures or ways involving in pragmatics, but I don't know that I'm teaching students using pragmatics in communication."

Likewise, some teachers referred to pragmatics as a way "to improve students' communicative skills in EFL contexts", "to use practical language in student's life", or "to use English in communication although they still put "N/A" as their answers to describe what they knew about pragmatics. Some tended to understand the role of pragmatics in language teaching although they may not have the correct descriptions of pragmatics yet. For example, one teacher wrote:

"It's good for me and my students to communicate easily and effectively. ... I understand pragmatics more when I attend this workshop. It's difficult to say something in detail but I think pragmatics can help me a lot in teaching English to make students use English appropriately in different contexts."

60% of the participating teachers could articulate what they knew about pragmatics. In general, they referred to pragmatics as the study of language use in contexts, the study of speakers' meanings, the study of language in real life, or the study of communicative skills. A query into word frequency used in the teachers' answers to describe their understanding of pragmatics before attending the training workshop showed that the top most used words besides pragmatics included: use, language, different, students, and situations, occurring from 18-32 times in their answers. Their answers initially revealed their conceptions of pragmatics, noting as some of its crucial aspects, i.e., contexts, social settings, and language use.

After the workshop, all participating teachers could provide a brief definition of pragmatics and its components. Unlike in the pre-workshop questionnaire where various answers were obtained regarding the teachers' conceptions of pragmatics and its inclusion, in the post-workshop questionnaire, all participating teachers provided similar answers to this question. The below word frequency maps show the words that they used to answer this question.

## Before the workshop

## After the workshop



Figure 1. Words used to define pragmatics by participating teachers before and after the workshop

As can be seen in these two-word frequency maps, all participating teachers obtained more knowledge of the meta-language of pragmatics after the workshop. After the workshop, such words as speech acts, communicative acts, implicature, discourse, social interaction, effects, pragmalinguistic knowledge, sociopragmatic knowledge, etc., were used in their expressions of their understanding of pragmatics and its components.

The analysis of the pre-workshop surveys reveals that 60% of teachers participating in the workshop reported teaching pragmatic knowledge in their classrooms to a minimal extent. The remaining 40% reported that they did not teach pragmatics at all in their classrooms. For those who did include pragmatics in their lessons, it can be seen in their answers that the frequency of their pragmatics teaching in the class ranges from 'sometimes' to 'rarely' or on an impromptu basis, that is, whenever they have pragmatics-related content in their lessons. The pragmatic topics covered in their lessons include formality, language use in some specific contexts, language use in accordance with different interlocutors, speech acts, cultural differences between Vietnamese and English-speaking cultures, daily conversations, and language functions. It is notable that nearly all teachers who reported teaching pragmatics in their lessons mentioned speaking lessons only. There was only one teacher who mentioned that she also taught about pragmatics in her writing lessons when possible. In her words,

“I notify students of what to say / write in specific situations related to the lessons.”

Among the 40% of teachers who reported not including pragmatics in their teaching, there were some teachers who explained the reasons for this neglect. One teacher stated:

"I hardly teach pragmatics because:

- Need to follow syllabus / school curriculum
- In tests, pragmatics is not the main point
- Students' English level (some of them are not good enough)
- Time limitation"



Similarly, another teacher said: “I don’t always point out to students about the specific uses of certain expressions since the main points of the lesson are not about pragmatics.”

The reason listed could also be due to the students’ demands as one teacher said: “No. My students often concentrate on grammar.”

However, in the post-workshop survey, when participating teachers were asked to rate the most enjoyable part among the three sections of the researchers’ presentations (i.e., 1. the presentation on pragmatics and pragmatics in English Language Teaching, 2. the report on the major shortcomings of the in-use textbooks in terms of pragmatic input, and 3. the presentation and demonstration of supplementary activities to incorporate pragmatics into some teaching units of the textbooks), the third section of the workshop was rated as the most enjoyable part of all by most participating teachers. They also commented that this section helped them know how to integrate pragmatics into their English lessons, and showed their eagerness to apply similar activities in their classes. Below are some examples of the teachers’ comments.

1. “The third section provided teachers interesting and useful activities to teach pragmatics in class.”
2. “The third section helps us to have some useful ways of teaching pragmatics in classroom.”
3. “I think I can apply them in teaching English flexibly.”
4. “It helps me know how to incorporate pragmatics into some teaching units of the textbooks.”
5. “We know the use of pragmatics in real lessons.”
6. “It is useful and I can apply it in my teaching.”
7. “I can see different ways that people incorporate pragmatics in teaching.”
8. “The presentation and demonstration of supplement activities to incorporate pragmatic into some teaching units of the books help me have a lot of knowledge of using pragmatics in teaching our student.”

## Conclusion

The findings from this workshop has shown some good signals of the positive effects of this teacher professional development activity. After the workshop, the participating teachers began to know more about pragmatics and how to integrate it into their own English lessons. However, this is only a starting point in a long process of making pragmatics teaching an integral part of English language teaching in Vietnam. For this process to be successful, I believe that Vietnamese teacher education universities need to include instructional pragmatics in their current teacher training programs so that preservice teachers are well-trained in this area. In addition, in-service teachers need to be retrained about pragmatics and its teaching so that they could do their jobs well and benefit their students in their efforts of communicating appropriately in the target language.

## Footnotes:

1. In these surveys, teachers were also asked other questions for the research purposes of my PhD study. In the scope of this paper, I only report on the development of their awareness of the importance of pragmatics and its teaching.
2. There were 51 participating teachers, but there were totally 43 completed surveys as there were some teachers who did not complete either the pre-workshop or the post-workshop survey.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. WORKSHOP AGENDA



Workshop Agenda

Registration and Morning Tea	8:30 – 8:55 am
<b>Morning Session</b> 1) Welcome remarks 2) Research Information Session 3) Pre-workshop Survey 4) Pragmatics and Pragmatics in English Language Teaching 5) Major Shortcoming of the Textbooks in terms of Pragmatic Input 6) Some Supplementary Activities to Incorporate Pragmatics into some Teaching Units of the Textbooks	9:00 am – 12:00 pm
<b>Lunch Break</b>	12:05 – 13:25 pm
<b>Afternoon Session</b> 1) Q&A 2) Teachers’ self-designed pragmatic activities contest: preparation and presentation	13:30 – 15:55 pm
<b>Afternoon Tea</b>	16:00 – 16:30 pm
Post-workshop Survey	16:35 – 16:55 pm
Best self-designed pragmatic activities announcement	16:55 – 17:05 pm
Awarding and Closing Remarks	17:05 – 17:30 pm

APPENDIX 2. PRE-WORKSHOP SURVEY

PRE-WORKSHOP SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE REGARDING THE  
INCORPORATING OF PRAGMATICS INTO ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING



Instructions: Before participating in the workshop, we would like to know your view on the following issues. Please take your time to complete this survey questionnaire, which can take you around 10-15 minutes to complete. Please be informed that this is not a test and there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. We are interested in your personal opinion. Your sincere answers will be of great value to us as they can ensure the accuracy of the data. The information provided by you will be confidentially secured and used only for the purposes of the workshop and (if you agree to let us use it) for the intended research. Thank you very much in advance for your co-operation and assistance.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Your name: ..... Your high school: .....

(Notes: The name and the school are for administration purposes so that the participation of you and your school is recognized. The name is also for research purpose; therefore, if you agree to allow us to use your answers, please write the same name on all surveys that are given to you in this workshop. However, you can still use a pseudonym if you like, and please remember to use the same pseudonym in all of your completed surveys in this workshop.)

Please check the (✓) the relevant box and provide your answers to the asked questions:

- What is your gender?  
☐ Male ☐ Female
- How long have you been teaching English to high school students?  
☐ Less than 5 years ☐ 5-10 years  
☐ More than 10-15 years ☐ More than 15 years
- What is the highest degree you have?  
☐ Bachelor ☐ Master  
☐ Master of Research/Master of Philosophy ☐ Ph.D.
- Did you study for your degree(s) overseas or have you had any overseas English learning experience?  
☐ Yes. Which country / countries? And how long?

- ☐ No.  
5. Did you study pragmatics as part of your degree(s)?  
☐ No.  
☐ Yes.  
If yes, what aspects of pragmatics did you study?

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6. Do you feel the need to learn about pragmatics? If yes, why? If no, why not?

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THE QUESTIONNAIRE

These questions ask about your teaching of English to develop students’ pragmatic competence in the English language. By “pragmatic competence”, we are referring to students’ ability to comprehend and use English appropriately as a listener/reader and as a speaker/writer with regard to context, people, and level of formality and politeness. Please read the questions carefully and answer in as much detail as possible. You can write in either English or Vietnamese. For questions that you cannot answer at the moment, please write down N/A.

1. What do you understand by *pragmatics*, the subject that focuses on the use of language in social settings? What does it mean? What does it include?

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2. Do you teach English pragmatic knowledge to your students? (In other words, do you teach your students how to use English appropriately to different people in different communicative

situations?) If yes, what kinds of pragmatic knowledge do you teach? If no, please state the reasons for your answer.

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3. How well do the textbooks and the available teaching materials at your school help you in teaching pragmatics?

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4. What kinds of pragmatic knowledge do you think will be important in EFL contexts? In other words, what areas of pragmatic knowledge seem most important for EFL learners?

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-THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION-



## SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE REGARDING THE WORKSHOP ON

**INCORPORATING PRAGMATIC KNOWLEDGE IN TEACHING ENGLISH – A KEY TO  
IMPROVE VIETNAMESE STUDENTS’ ENGLISH COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE**



*Instructions:* As part of this workshop project, we would like to know your view on the following issues. Please take your time to complete this survey questionnaire about what you have achieved from this workshop and your current needs and future expectation. (It can take you around 15-20 minutes to complete this questionnaire.) Please be informed that this is not a test and there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. We are interested in your personal opinion. Your sincere answers will be of great value to us as they can ensure the accuracy of the data. The information provided by you will be confidentially secured and used only for the purposes of the workshop and (if you agree to allow us to use it) for the intended research. Thank you very much in advance for your co-operation and assistance.

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

Your name: ..... Your high school: .....

(Notes: The name and the school are for administration purposes so that the participation of you and your school is recognized. The name is also for research purpose; therefore, if you agree to allow us to use your answers, please write the same name on all surveys that are given to you in this workshop. However, you can still use a pseudonym if you like, and please remember to use the same pseudonym in all of your completed surveys in this workshop.)

## THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please read the questions carefully and answer in as much detail as possible. You can write in either English or Vietnamese.

1. After this workshop, what do you now understand by *pragmatics*? What does it mean? What does it include?

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6. What are the 3 most important pieces of knowledge that you think you gained from the workshop?

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7. What are the 3 most important things in terms of teaching skills that you think you gained from the workshop?

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8. Is there anything else you gained from the workshop?

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2. In this sense, how well do the textbooks and the available teaching materials at your school help you in teaching pragmatics?

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3. Currently, what would you need in order to successfully incorporate pragmatic knowledge into your English lessons to help develop your students’ communicative abilities in English?

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4. What do you expect to have or to change in order for you to teach English and English pragmatic knowledge more effectively?

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5. What part(s) of the workshop did you enjoy the most? (If you would like to tick all, please put them in the order of your most preference from 1 to 3 - 1 is the most enjoyable.)

- ☐ The presentation on pragmatics and pragmatics in English Language Teaching
- ☐ The report on the major shortcomings of the in-use textbooks in terms of pragmatic input
- ☐ The presentation and demonstration of supplementary activities to incorporate pragmatics into some teaching units of the textbooks

Please state the reasons for your first most preference.

.....

.....

-THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION-

# When English as a lingua franca doesn't work: Analysis of the interaction between the spokesperson and the minister and its pedagogical implications



By Benio Suzuki

## When English as a lingua franca doesn't work

As a nonnative speaker of English, I sometimes encounter some difficulties in speaking my second language. Luckily, most of my native-speaking interlocutors often help me co-construct the meaning to identify what I want to say when I get stuck in my speech. Unlike monologue, the nature of talk-in-interaction is its power of co-construction. Participants in a talk make use of their interactional competence. It is the ability to interact, interpret what the interlocutor is saying, answer relevantly and promptly, and deal with trouble sources in a talk (Greer, Ishida & Tateyama, 2017). When one participant finds trouble in a talk, he or she usually repair it to make the meaning clear. If participants in a Japanese conversation make use of repair practice appropriately and properly when a trouble-source emerges, there would be no need to use English to co-construct the meaning.

In late August 2020, an exchange between Mr. Toshimitsu Motegi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Ms. Magdalena Osumi, the spokesperson from Japan Times at a press conference has gone viral. In short, his conduct to the spokesperson was seen as discriminatory by people. In this report, using the exchange between Mr. Motegi and Ms. Osumi, I will discuss language choice in a multicultural society and provide one pedagogical idea.

## The press conference on August 28, 2020

The press conference was held on August 28, 2020 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020a). After the conference, Motegi's conduct was condemned as discriminatory towards a non-Japanese spokesperson (Hatachi, 2020; The Mainichi, 2020; Mochizuki, 2020). At this press conference, one of the spokespersons, Ms. Osumi from Japan Times raised the issue about the re-entry policy towards foreign people with the status of residence in Japan.

The conference was video-recorded and uploaded on the internet (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020b). It is available along with its transcription in Japanese and the English translation. I will look at problematic sequences between these two participants.



When the microphone was handed to Ms. Osumi, she asked questions about the re-entry policy for the foreign residents of Japan in her fluent Japanese. Excerpt 1 shows how Mr. Motegi reacted to Ms. Osumi’s question.

Excerpt 1. “What do you mean by scientific?”

60	*OSUMI:	suimasen tada kagakuteki na konkyo↗ “Excuse me, but scientific evidence.”
61		(.)
62 →	*MOTEGI:	what do you mean by scientific↘
63		(1.0)
64	*OSUMI:	mn↗
65	*MOTEGI:	what do you mean by scientific↘
66	*OSUMI:	ano:: nihongo de iidesu↘ (.) ano:: “Well, Japanese is fine. Well,”
67 →		sonna ni baka ni shinakutemo
68		daijoubu desu= “You don’t have to look down on me.”
69	*MOTEGI:	=baka ni shite naidesu↘ “No, I don’t look down on you.”
70	*OSUMI:	=ano:: “Well,”
71	*MOTEGI:	iya bakani shitenai desu (.) “No, I don’t look down on you.”
72		mattaku bakani shitenai “No, I don’t look down on you.”
73	*OSUMI:	[nihongo nihongo de] hanashiteru
74		no nara::↗ (.) nihongo de okotae
75		kudasai↘ “I am talking to you in Japanese, so please answer me in Japanese.”

At line 60, Ms. Osumi asked whether there was a scientific basis to foreign residents’ re-entry policy. Prior to this excerpt, she has already asked the same question, but she did not receive a proper response from the minister. In fact, it seemed that Mr. Motegi did not understand what “scientific” meant. His uncertainty made him initiate a clarification request, “what do you mean by scientific↘” in English (line 62). Ms. Osumi took his conduct, changing the language to English, as something that looks down on her regarding her Japanese proficiency. This courageous spokesperson did not stay silent. Instead, she argued back to him that he did not have to look down on her by saying “sonna ni baka ni shinakutemo daijoubu desu (You don’t have to look down on me)” (lines 67 – 68). She further commented on the language choice as she said “nihongo nihongo de hanashiteru no nara::↗ (.) nihongo de okotae kudasai↘ (Since I am speaking to you in Japanese, please answer me in Japanese)” (lines 73 – 75). She continued to explain what she meant by “scientific” and explained some problems foreign residents of Japan have because of the restriction of re-entry. Then her explanation leads to Mr. Motegi’s request and understanding-checks (Waring, 2013). Excerpt 2 begins with Mr. Motegi’s request by Ms. Osumi.

## Excerpt 2. Did you understand my Japanese?

101	*MOTEGI:	ano:: shutsu nyuukoku kanri no
102		mondai desukara::\ (.)
103		shutsunyuukoku kanricho ni
104		otazune kudasai\ “Well, this is a matter that the Immigration Services Agency (ISA) needs to deal with, so please ask the head of ISA.”
105		(2.0)
106	*MC:	tsugi no goshitsumon douzo\ “Next question, please.”
107	*MOTEGI:	owakari itadakemashitaka? (1.0) “Did you understand me?”
108		nihongo wakatte itadakemashita ka? “Did you understand my Japanese?”
109	*OSUMI:	hai? “Yes.”
110	*MOTEGI:	nihongo wakatte itadake mashita? “Did you understand my Japanese?”

Mr. Motegi began with “ano:: shutsu nyuukoku kanri no mondai desukara::\ (.) shutsunyuukoku kanricho ni otazune kudasai\ (Well, this is a matter that needs to be dealt in the Immigration Services Agency (ISA), so please ask the head of the ISA” (lines 101 – 104). It is impossible for us to speculate much to understand whether he avoided answering the question because he does not know the answer. After Mr. Motegi did not answer the question, we can observe his understanding-check (Waring, 2012) at the end of the conference. His understanding-check is repeated three times at lines 107, 108, and 110. It is perhaps important to discuss if his repeated understanding-check was necessary.

Concerning the methodological concern, deictics (e.g., my) in translation needs to be further discussed. In this report, I used “my Japanese” instead of “Japanese” (lines 108 and 110). In these sequences, a line “owakari itadakemashitaka? (did you understand me)” that infers whether Ms. Osumi understood what the minister was saying. Even though he mentioned “nihongo (Japanese)” at lines 108 and 110, it is still ambiguous whether this “nihongo (Japanese)” meant “his Japanese” or “Japanese (as an additional language) per se.” It is crucial since non-Japanese readers may need to rely on the translation. This methodological concern will be left open to future research.

## Implications for foreign language education in multicultural Japan

So far, I documented the sequential organization deployed by two participants at a press conference. As argued everywhere in the online articles, repair initiation in English, which is not the local language, to a nonnative but the very fluent speaker of Japanese triggered the discussion whether Mr. Motegi’s conduct was appropriate or not. Thanks to Ms. Osumi’s courageous reaction to the minister, this exchange drew attention around Japan. Perhaps, this exchange can be used as teaching material for students to reflect on using English and rethink the importance of discursive co-construction in multicultural Japan’s society. I will provide some ideas to use this interaction in a language classroom.



## **Pedagogical Idea: Developing interactional repertoires as multicultural interactional resources**

Here, I would like to provide one pedagogical idea. If necessary, any readers of this paper can use it fully or partially depending on your class needs. This lesson plan aims to develop learners' interactional repertoires as they reflect on multiple perspectives on language use, such as language and power, the risks of English as a lingua franca, and multicultural society in Japan. This lesson idea is rather discussion-based.

### **Step 1: Discussion.**

- Have students discuss based on an imaginary situation in which the interlocutor code switches to Japanese because the speaker cannot speak smoothly.
- Based on the given situation, make students discuss the topic (experience, emotion, and the importance of codeswitching).

### **Step 2: Presentation.**

- Have one of the students in each group present what they have discussed in the group.

### **Step 3: Viewing the press conference.**

- Students view the press conference between Mr. Motegi and Ms. Osumi.
- After viewing, with group members, students clarify the problems which emerged in the interaction and exchange their opinions from the interaction, especially focus on the codeswitching behavior, Ms. Osumi's reaction, and the risks of using English as a lingua franca.

### **Step 4: Repair practices.**

- The teacher briefly explains the concept of repair practice.
- Have students read a short explanation about repair practice and a part of one chapter from Wong and Waring (2010, pp.232-238).

### **Step 5: Alternative scenario.**

- Make students identify repairs and trouble-sources in the press conference script.
- Think of some suggestions for Mr. Motegi, especially what should he have done or have not done.

## **Conclusion**

In this short paper, I discussed the risk of codeswitching to English without co-constructing in the local language. Switching to English is sometimes risky, which can be seen as a lack of consideration of the interlocutors, even though English is said to be functioning as a global lingua franca. It is quite important to have learners realize that the use of English is not always the best solution for intercultural interaction. Returning to the main topic in this short report, Ms. Osumi's courageous conduct towards the minister has an important message to all of us in a multicultural society. As argued by her, foreign residents in Japan have trouble re-entering Japan after the pandemic situation. I am wishing that this matter will be solved soon, but please do not ask me how to solve it; ask the head of the ISA for more information instead.

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## Appendix: Worksheet

### Step 1: Discussion (10 minutes)

Read the following (imagined) situation, and make sure you understand the situation with your group members.

Imagine you are speaking English, which is **not** your first language. You start to talk about something complicated, and you feel you get stuck in the middle of the conversation. It seems like the person you are talking to (the interlocutor) does not understand you well, so he or she needs to clarify what you meant. The interlocutor suddenly starts to speak your first language (e.g., Japanese) and says “You can say it in Japanese.”

Based on the situation, discuss the following questions in your group.

- 1) *Have you ever experienced this (someone changing the language suddenly)? If so, how did you feel?*  
*\*If you have never experienced it, have you ever seen such a situation? Or, you can imagine the situation. What would the speaker feel about it?*
- 2) Do you think it is necessary to change the language? Why or why not?

### Step 2: Presentation (5-minute preparation time; 3-minute presentation)

- 1) Decide one speaker for a 3-minute presentation. In the presentation, please tell us what you discussed.
- 2) 5 minutes will be given for the preparation. During the preparation time, discuss which ideas to be presented with your group members. You may create a small note for the presentation.

### Step 3: Press conference by Minister Motegi

- 1) On your computer, please open the following links.
  - ① 茂木外務大臣会見記録  
[https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/kaiken/kaiken4\\_000997.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/kaiken/kaiken4_000997.html)
  - ② YouTube video 茂木外務大臣会見（令和2年8月28日）2:17-  
<https://youtu.be/zdlT9n5FDUU?t=137>
- 2) Watch the interaction between Mr. Motegi and Ms. Osumi (start at 2:17).
- 3) After you watch it, please answer the following points:
  - ① What happened at the conference?
  - ② What problems did you observe?
  - ③ What did you think about the problem?
    - a. Think about how did Ms. Osumi feel when she says “日本語でいいです。そんなに馬鹿にしなくても大丈夫です。”, “日本語で話しているなら、日本語で教えてください。”
    - b. Think about the reason(s) why Mr. Motegi shifted the language.
    - c. Do you think English is a global language all the time? If not what kind of situations can you think of where English is not the global language?

- ④ Have you ever heard or seen any of similar interactions? Would you shift the language? Discuss the issue presented.

### Step 4: Repair practices in English and Japanese

- 1) Read the following explanation about the repair practice. You can discuss it with your group members if you do not understand the meaning of the text.

When you listen to the speaker and find some difficulty in understanding what is being said, what would you do? Probably you would ask some questions, such as “What does it mean?” “What?” or “huh?”. This kind of language practice is called repair practice. Repair practice academically means “ways of addressing problems in speaking, hearing, or understanding of the talk” (Wong & Waring, 2010, p.212). Regardless of the language, both native speakers and nonnative speakers of any language often do this language practice when there is a trouble-source. Trouble-source means “a word, phrase, or utterance treated as problematic by the participant” (Wong & Waring, 2010, p.213).

Wong, J., & Waring, H. Z. (2010). *Conversation analysis and second language pedagogy: A guide for ESL/EFL teachers*. Routledge.

- 2) After reading the short passage, identify repairs, the reaction to the repair, and the trouble-source in the interaction between Mr. Motegi and Ms. Osumi. Note that you may not find them all, if that is a case, you can guess from the interaction.
- 3) Discuss some repair strategies you know in both Japanese and English and write them down.
- 4) Read part of a chapter from Wong and Waring (2010) on repair practice (pp.232-238). When reading, it is great if you could take note of what you did not know or what you learned from the reading.

### Step 5: Alternative scenario

- 1) Take a look at the script for the press conference again. Identify some problematic parts in the script.
- 2) In the group, what kind of suggestion can you make from the script? What should Mr. Motegi have done or have not done?

# Teaching L2 English pragmatic listening skills online

By Todd J. Allen



Broadly defined, listening is the ability to accurately receive and interpret messages during the communication process (Rost, 2013). However, when we engage during interaction, the act of listening goes beyond just comprehending what your interlocutor says. Listening involves chiming in at the right moment, displaying acknowledgement, engagement or misunderstanding, and aid in the flow and fluidity of the conversation. Listening has often been viewed as one of the most difficult second language skills to develop (Siegel, 2014), as you typically develop your first language listening skills without noticeable effort or attention.

Listening behaviours involve a number of actions that include verbalisations (e.g., ‘uh-huh’), gestures (e.g., head nods) and a co-occurrence of both, and students need to develop these behaviours in order to be pragmatically appropriate during discourse. In this short article, I discuss some of the activities that I use in my listening and speaking classes, which focus on students’ pragmatic skills in English, that go beyond comprehension. As the current ‘new normal’ involves emergency remote teaching (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020), I also focus this short article on those activities that I have used in an online environment.

Listening behaviour has been well-researched in both L1 (e.g., Gardner, 2001; Fujimoto, 2007; Allen, 2015, 2019) and L2 contexts (e.g., Vandergrift, 2006; Chang & Millet, 2014; Kennett & Nagata, 2018) from various perspectives. In an L2 context, applied linguists have investigated listening in terms of:

- Comprehension (e.g., Vandergrift, 2007);
- Testing and assessment (e.g., Wagner, 2010);
- Implicit and explicit instruction (e.g., Siegel, 2014);
- Perception of speech (e.g., Elvin et al., 2016);
- Metacognition and awareness (e.g., Cross, 2010).

For teaching listening in the classroom, most instructors rely on the “listen, answer, check” method (Siegel, 2014), which does not holistically develop students’ listening skills. However, researchers have shown that there are a number of teaching approaches available for instructors. These include the “comprehension approach”, “bottom-up activities”, “prediction”, “metacognitive listening strategies”, “transfer to other listening situations and teacher modelling” (Siegel, 2014, p. 24). While I adopt a range of these approaches in my listening and speaking class at various times, in this article, I focus on the meta-pragmatic and consciousness-raising activities.



The listening and speaking classes in my faculty are designed around 15 weeks of study for one 90-minute class per week. Students are in their first year of study and are English language majors. They participate in a number of speaking and listening activities such as designing and performing presentations on various topics, watching and analysing modelled speeches, developing their vocabulary and comprehension skills, and analysing various discussion strategies. For example, the following outlines a discussion strategy from unit 1 (Kisslinger, 2017, p. 9):

**Discussion Strategy:** To clarify means to make clearer. To confirm is to remove doubt. You can clarify or confirm by restating what you understood: *You mean...* or *Do you mean...?* Or you can ask opened-ended questions like *What do you mean?* and *Could you clarify..?*

These discussion strategy notes in the textbook aim to develop students' meta-pragmatic awareness of listening behaviours in English.

Furthermore, the textbook has a number of activities where students identify and analyse the listening behaviours from model dialogues. Specifically, students watch interactions between four students and determine which character performs a particular listening behaviour (e.g., seeking clarification). This again raises students' awareness and models how an interlocutor can perform them during interaction.

To further develop and foster these behaviours, a number of activities were assigned to students to complete for homework. As classes were online, activities were uploaded to the university's learning management system or through Google Forms. In the first activity, students were asked to consider the listening behaviour of seeking clarification and confirmation during interaction. Students were asked these three questions:

1. Why do we need to seek clarification and/or confirmation during interaction based on today's lecture?
2. What are some words or phrases you can use to clarify and/or confirm what the speaker has said in English?
3. What are some words or phrases you can use to clarify and/or confirm what the speaker has said in Japanese?

These three questions check students' understanding of the meaning and form of particular listening responses in English and Japanese. For example, in question one, students were expected to differentiate two functions of listening responses in English (which were already studied in class). In question two, students were asked to give particular forms of listening responses which function as clarification and confirmation. Likewise, in question three, students provided equivalent responses in Japanese. As Japanese is a listener-oriented language (Cook, 1999), question three was asked to bring students' attention to the similarities and differences of these responses across English and Japanese. This takes students beyond the meaning of words and asks them to consider more carefully the function of particular responses in English and Japanese.

Another activity assigned to the students halfway through the semester, asked them to identify appropriate listening responses based upon a dialogue (shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2). Students had to consider the immediate context (i.e., dialogue before and after the listening response), and the meaning and function of the response (e.g., continuation, acknowledgement, etc).

Academic Listening & Speaking A 2020  
(Appropriate Listening Responses)

\* Required

Appropriate Listening Responses

Directions: complete the following questions by selecting the most appropriate listening response based on the context:

Question 1 \*
1 point

**Q1) Continuation – the listener continues the conversation:**

Speaker: I went to the shops yesterday and found a dress I really liked. |

Listener: \_\_\_\_\_

Speaker: It was cheap too, and had my size.

☐ What did you buy?
☐ Uh-huh
☐ Where was the shop?
☐ Yep

Figure 1 Example of awareness-raising activity (continuation)

Question 5 \*

**Q5) Brief Question – the listener asks a question without changing the topic:**

Speaker: Oh, it's my son's birthday this weekend.

Listener: \_\_\_\_\_

Speaker: I think we'll be having a small party.

☐ Oh wow, happy birthday. How old is he?
☐ Oh wow, that's great! Big party?
☐ Oh wonderful, lots of presents?
☐ Oh excellent. He must be pretty excited?

Figure 2 Example of awareness-raising activity (brief question)

While the activity was not in audio and video format, students developed their meta-pragmatic awareness about listening through the exercise. This awareness relates to appropriate vocabulary (single words and statements), the notion of turn-taking, and differentiating between the various types of responses informed by the immediate context. Based on the students' scores, most were able to correctly identify appropriate listening responses in each question. However, some students struggled to distinguish between similar types of listening responses (e.g., uh-huh and yep). These questions were established to purposely challenge the students in this way. Although students did not answer the question correctly, the response they did choose was of the same functional category (e.g., continuer), which demonstrates their accurate awareness of these types of utterances.

To conclude, the above-mentioned activities aimed to draw students' attention and awareness to the pragmatic functions of listening responses in English (and some in Japanese). However, there is other content that should be explored with students in order to increase their knowledge and awareness of appropriate listening behaviours in English. For example, politeness factors such as formal and informal forms of responses, dialectal variations across English speaking communities, and further cross-cultural analysis of their L1 and L2 (e.g., cross-cultural differences in listening behaviours). In addition to the exploration of such content, students should also analyse authentic audio and video for participants' pragmatic listening behaviours. This would further raise students' awareness of listening behaviours during interaction.



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# **JALT 2020: Communities of Teachers & Learners**



46th Annual International Conference on  
Language Teaching and Learning & Educational  
Materials Exhibition  
Monday, November 16 to Monday, November 23,  
2020

<https://jalt.org/conference/jalt2020>



# **JALT 2020: Communities of Teachers & Learners**



**Pragmatics SIG Annual General Meeting**

**Thursday, November 19, 17:15 to 18:00**

**If you have time, please attend.**

**This meeting is open to all, members or  
nonmembers.**

# PRAG SIG @ JALT2020

## **Pragmatics: Three Research Perspectives**

Ogawa, Yosuke (Kobe University), Allen, Todd James (Kansai University), & Zeff, B. Bricklin (Hokkai-Gakuen University)

Research on pragmatics generally is from only one research perspective. However, this forum will bring together three researchers each with their separate research agendas: conversation analysis, discourse analysis and sociolinguistics. These analysts will explain their overall approach and demonstrate the key steps in their analysis of the shared transcripts. This session will raise awareness of the differences and commonalities of the research perspectives, and, in addition, provide further insight into the pragmatics of real-life interaction. **Friday, November 20th 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM**

## **Pragmatics Teaching in Vietnamese and Australian English Teacher Training Curricula** Anh TON NU (Macquarie University)

This paper compares the pragmatics teaching for prospective English teachers in Vietnam and Australia to provide insights into the professional development journey of teachers from English as a foreign language contexts like Vietnam to the international English-speaking context of Australia. **Saturday, November 21st 12:50PM - 2:50pm**

## **College Graduates Desire 'Making Suggestions' Tips**

Koseki, Kimiko (Seijo University)

A questionnaire was given to 26 Japanese working women and 25 Japanese female college seniors to investigate what speech acts they wanted to have learned in college English courses. The results showed that 84.6% of the working women wished they had learned making suggestions. Then, eight business English course books were investigated. Four of them included making suggestions but none of them gave instruction of sociocultural information necessary to use this speech act appropriately. **Saturday, November 21st 10:45 AM - 11:10 AM**

## **Negotiation of face/politeness in Aviation English**

Ishihara, Noriko & Lee, Han Eul (Hosei University)

This study explores the pragmatics of Aviation English (AE) used between pilots and air traffic controllers in radiotelephony communications. AE is composed of a combination of highly prescribed aviation phraseology and plain English for non-routine situations. Although politeness is often considered superfluous in AE, negotiation of face and (im)politeness emerges especially in the use of plain English. Based on the findings, we offer suggestions for interactional training and testing for native and nonnative English-speaking aviators. **Saturday, November 21st 2:00 PM - 2:25 PM**



# PRAG SIG @ JALT2020

## **Pragmatic roles of visuals in ELT textbooks**

Kawashima, Chie (Tochigi Technical High School)

Many of the speech acts in pedagogical materials are introduced out of context. Beginner-level ELT textbooks are full of visuals which may facilitate learners to comprehend the texts. This study explores the role of these visuals associated with speech acts and how they can provide learners with contextual information to choose appropriate language use. In the end, some practical suggestions are made as to how teachers might compensate for the insufficiencies of these materials. **Saturday, November 21st 4:45 PM - 6:15 PM**

## **Microanalysis of team-teaching with TA in EAP**

Okada, Yusuke (Osaka University)

This study examines how a team-teaching with teaching assistant (TA) can construct an interactional where a student's learning takes place in English for academic purposes (EAP) classroom. Microanalysis of video-recorded 294 EAP classroom interactions in Japanese universities revealed that the "team-feedback sequence" about the student's task performance constructs a learning-rich moment. Through the two-step guiding of the students for understanding the point within the sequence makes the students socialized into academic discourse. **Saturday, November 21st 6:30 PM - 6:55 PM**

## **A Conversation analysis of courtroom interaction**

Yibifu, Tilabi (Akita International University)

This conversation analysis study aims to explore the politeness and impoliteness strategies applied by participants in a reality TV the courtroom. The results show that positive impoliteness and positive politeness strategies are used more frequently than other strategies, indicating that the participants are likely to attack or save another's positive face. Findings indicate that power dynamics among participants influences how and when they apply impoliteness strategies. **Saturday, November 21st 4:45 PM - 6:15 PM**

## **Code-switching in an ELF context**

**Tsai, Mei-Hsing & Chiang, Ya-ting**

(National Taiwan University of Science and Technology)

By adopting conversation analysis, this study examines how ELF speakers manage their intercultural communication through code-switching in a task-based language activity at a university. The analysis shows that ELF speakers employed code-switching as an interactional resource to enhance their communication, build social relationships, and preserve the face of the participants. **Sunday, November 22nd 2:00 PM - 2:25 PM**

# PRAG SIG @ JALT2020

## **Expressing Disagreement in Different Communities**

Lawson, Andrew (NIC International College in Japan)

This presentation examines results of a study into Japanese college students' expressions of disagreement in informal English-language contexts, and how they compare with those of native English speakers. It goes on to consider ways in which ESL teachers can help students develop their pragmatic discussion skills, and build the confidence which will allow them to share their opinions honestly, but in a manner appropriate for the situation. **Sunday, November 22nd 2:35 PM - 3:00 PM**

## **Attitude toward Culture as Predictor of Pragmatics**

Rafieyan, Vahid (Yamanashi Gakuin University)

Since pragmatic features of every language stem in the culture of that language, willingness to learn the cultural aspects of target language might have a significant effect on the development of target language pragmatic competence. To this end, the current study was conducted to investigate the effect of instructing target language cultural features as well as the effect of attitude toward target language culture on the development of comprehension and production aspects of pragmatic competence. **Sunday, November 22nd 5:20 PM - 5:45 PM**

## **What do you say when you have nothing to say?**

Olson, Rob (Sapporo Gakuin University)

TESOL classrooms appear to lack instruction on how to avoid conversations the learner would rather not have. Furthermore, many learners believe that they must answer any questions asked in an English conversation classroom. This combination may inhibit learning acquisition as well as pose other problems. This presentation will share classroom techniques on ending or changing topics and techniques on politely dealing with invasions of privacy. The presentation concludes with a question and answer session. **Sunday, November 22nd 4:45 PM - 5:10 PM**

## **Teaching of EFL online nonverbal communication**

Tu, Stachus Peter (Hiroshima Shudo University)

This presentation reports the findings from an English online discussion forum that employs the LINE smartphone application to investigate the effect of instruction on Japanese university students' use of nonverbal markers (emoji and punctuation) to strengthen an opinion's implied meaning in online discussion. The findings report on participants' nonverbal marker use, pre-instruction and post-instruction, for two levels of EFL language proficiency. **Sunday, November 22nd 5:55 PM - 6:20 PM**



# PRAG SIG @ JALT2020

## **Reflection on journal entries in autoethnography**

Oda-Sheehan, Sanae (Ochanomizu University)

Autoethnography is an intriguing method in qualitative research utilizing data about self to understand the connectivity between self and others. Reflecting on the presenter's journal entries, this study explores critical factors to bridge some problematic gaps that may have hindered effective TESOL endeavors in the Japanese context. Through the connectivity in the autoethnographic approach, open dialogue with the audience can be created to collaboratively explore approaches to bridge those gaps. **Sunday, November 22nd 6:30 PM - 6:55 PM**

## **Using Community to Strengthen Qualitative Research**

Muller, Theron (University of Toyama) &  
Skeates, Colin (Keio University)

In this workshop, participants will be led through the qualitative research process of a recently completed project using critical discourse analysis to analyze higher education job advertisements (Muller and Skeates, 2020). Discussion topics will include how the project was conceived, decisions regarding methodology, the coding process, and how collaboration strengthened the research. We will conclude with a practical discussion of how workshop participants can plan and execute their own qualitative research projects. **Monday, November 23rd 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM**

# PRAG SIG @ JALT2020

## Pragmatics: Three Research Perspectives

Research on pragmatics generally is from only one research perspective. However, this forum will bring together three researchers each with their separate research agendas: conversation analysis, discourse analysis and sociolinguistics. These analysts will explain their overall approach and demonstrate the key steps in their analysis of the shared transcripts. This session will raise awareness of the differences and commonalities of the research perspectives, and, in addition, provide further insight into the pragmatics of real-life interaction.

**Presenters: Yosuke Ogawa, Todd James Allen & B. Bricklin Zeff**

**Friday, November 20<sup>th</sup> (6:30 PM - 8:00 PM)**





# JALT Pragmatics SIG



This year's autumn leaves courtesy of Tim Knight

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