From the Editors

Knowing how to say what one wants to say with the appropriate amount of directness is an important skill that language learners must master to achieve communicative competence. This pragmatic ability may include sentence- and morpheme-level accuracy such as correctly using modal verbs like *could*, but more importantly goes beyond these levels to the discourse level, where learners must figure out how to address their boss appropriately when making a request, acknowledge another's viewpoint in a discussion, or realize when someone is apologizing to them. In the articles in this year's volume, the authors tackle the acquisition of pragmatic ability from a variety of viewpoints.

In the first article, Eric Nelson explains the importance of *yes, but* arguing, a strategy that may help students be more persuasive and help them understand the structure of argumentation in their reading. His article discusses both the forms used to create this type of argumentation and how he goes about teaching it to advanced language learners.

In the second article, Andrew Cohen acknowledges the challenges L2 learners face as they attempt to comprehend pragmatic messages in the input and produce pragmatically comprehensible output in the target language. The author uses a series of examples to illustrate strategies learners can use to improve their pragmatic ability. The article includes advice for ESL/EFL learners and instructors alike.

Next, Rhonda Petree describes the results of teaching high-intermediate proficiency English language learners in an Adult Basic Education (ABE) program how to add softeners to requests that they may make in the workplace (*Please could you help me just a minute?)*. The learners indicated that after instruction they felt more knowledgeable about making requests, and the classroom results reflected their knowledge and willingness to use softeners.

In this volume, we also have a wealth of new materials that have been reviewed by several reviewers. In the first book review, Karen Carr, Martha Dornbush, and Kiley Waite take a look at the latest version of the *Contemporary Topics* series, which focuses on academic oral skills and now includes both CDs and DVDs.

In her review of *Every Teacher's Toolkit: Closing the Achievement Gap for English Learners*, Deirdre Kramer examines a new text of ideas for working with K-12 students and shares her views on how it fits into the changing environment in schools. Are textbooks keeping up with the changing needs of ELL teachers?

Our third review, by Anne Lazaraton, gives an overview of the entire *Touchstone Series*, which includes not only textbooks but also accompanying DVDs and *Whiteboard Software*. This series, targeted toward young adults, teaches authentic language based on the American English subsection of the one billion-word Cambridge International Corpus.

In his review of *The Hmong Language in Wisconsin: Language Shift and Pragmatic Change*, Gregor Mieder describes how the author, Dr. Susan Burt, bears witness to fascinating changes the Hmong language is currently undergoing in our region of the world.

Ly Nguyen reviews *Writers at Work: From Sentence to Paragraph*. This is the first book in a four book series, which is aimed at adult ESL learners studying in the United States. Nguyen recommends the book with its emphasis on the process approach to writing and its support for beginning level writers. Exciting, well developed and highly relevant are all descriptors Nima Salehi uses in her review of an excellent new resource for adult educators in the TESOL world, an eight-video teacher training series called *Teaching ESL to Adults: Classroom Approaches in Action*. Available online for free, this is a definite "gotta check it out" tool for professional development.

Caroline Vang describes the dramatic *National Geographic* visuals, the engaging topics, and the global focus of *World English Intro*. This four skills text is aimed at low-beginning level students and is the first book in a series of four.

The final review, authored by Dongming Yang, explores the highest-level volume in the series*Future 5: English for Results,* which is designed to teach real-life English to adult language learners.
We hope that you enjoy this issue of the *MinneWITESOL Journal* and invite you to consider submitting something for next year's volume. We are glad for your submissions, your comments as readers, and the support of our institutions as we put the journal together.

This volume of the journal marks our fifth year of publishing online. Moving to this new format has been a big change, but one that we hope has made the information in the journal more accessible to a wider audience. A new addition to our online format is access to all of the past printed issues of *MinneWITESOL Journal* and its precursor *MinneTESOL* journal. Look for the link on the sidebar of the journal website for access to the archived editions in the Digital Conservancy at the University of Minnesota. Special thanks to Kristen Mastel and her staff at the University of Minnesota Libraries for helping us make these past issues available online.

At the end of this year, we hand off the editorial leadership of the journal to new editors, who we are sure will bring new insight, perspectives, and energy to these electronic pages. We would like to thank all of the authors and editorial review board members over the past years for their work on the journal. Without their expertise and willingness to help, *MinneWITESOL Journal* would not be able to provide high-quality articles of value to all of us. We, the current editors, look forward to being avid readers of the next stage of the journal.

Mike Anderson, University of Minnesota

Gail Ibele, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Andrea Poulos, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Bonnie Swierzbin, Hamline University

YES, BUT ARGUING IN READING AND WRITING

Eric Nelson

ABSTRACT

One way of dealing with counterarguments is through *yes, but* arguing, a discourse strategy that involves a claim, a concession, and a return to the claim. If teachers understand *yes, but* arguing, they are better able to interpret student work and anticipate challenges in reading material. If students understand it, they can read with greater comprehension and write more persuasively. Examples of *yes, but* arguing from published writing and from student work show how it is marked and how it challenges students. If it is true that all academic writing is essentially argumentative, *yes, but* arguing becomes even more important.

INTRODUCTION

Textbooks that aim to teach argumentation typically advise students to anticipate counterarguments. A simple approach might advise "mentioning and responding to opposing views" (Leki, 1998, p. 239). A more complicated approach might include phrases like "anticipate objections," "counter opposing arguments," and "build common ground" (Hacker, 2007, pp. 72-73). In Raimes and Jerskey (2008, p. 53) students learn that a good argument "establishes common ground with listeners or readers and avoids confrontation" and that it "takes opposing views into account and either refutes them or shows why they may be unimportant or irrelevant." One way of taking an opposing view into account is to do what Kirszner and Mandell advise: "concede the strength of a compelling opposing argument" (2010, p. 555). That strategy—concession—is the focus of this paper.

WHAT IS *YES, BUT* ARGUING?

Yes, but arguing is not a conventional term in ESL reading and writing texts, but it transparently names a writing strategy that can help students understand what they read and make their writing more persuasive.[1] In *yes, but* arguing, you concede something to those who may disagree with you—for example, that they are well-intentioned or that their argument is at least worth considering. You may even concede that some of their arguments are sound. Then comes the *but*: You explain why you still think you are right. Troyka and Hesse, though they don't use the term *yes, but* arguing, explain it well in this advice to students:

> Concede an opposing point, but explain that doing so doesn't destroy your own argument. For example, you might decide to concede that governmental monitoring of emails could reduce terrorism. However, you might argue that the increase in saftey is not worth the threat to privacy and personal freedom. (2007, p. 163).

A *yes, but* argument is generally placed at a point after the writer's basic claim has been established. So we can understand *yes, but* arguing by recognizing three sequential parts: *claim, concession,* and *return.* A simple example highlights the parts:

[1] The concept of *yes, but* arguing, whether named or not, is a common feature of texts. I hope that giving it a simple name and summarizing my experience with it in advanced English for Academic Purposes classes may prepare teachers to incorporate it into their teaching. Since argument is an important part of spoken academic discourse as well as written, *yes but* arguing may be relevant to teachers who plan lessons involving discussion, debate, and presentations.

Ducks are the funniest birds. (claim) It's true that chickens are also funny. (concession) But no bird is really as funny as a duck. (return)

Below are some authentic examples with more developed content. Though the concession and the return appear in separate boxes, they originally appeared (in all cases) uninterrupted, except for a paragraph break in Example 7. To save space, I've expressed the claims as paraphrases.[2] The first example is from student writing (the final draft of an essay) and has been edited for grammar.

Example 1 (student writing)

Claim:	It's too difficult for international students to get a U.S. visa.
Concession:	"It is true that Germans have no problem getting a U.S. visa. I come from Germany and had a good visa experience. I made an appointment for an interview at the U.S. embassy, went for a short interview, and received my visa within a week. One classmate, from Japan, had nearly the same experience.
Return:	However, Japan and Germany seem to be exceptional cases. The visa application process in most countries is absolutely horrible…"

Example 2 (Kristof, 2002)

Claim:	The Chinese educational system has been phenomenally successful.
Concession:	"Of course Chinese education is still hobbled by rural mud-brick schools that are in a shambles, by peasants who pull their daughters out of school, by third-rate universities.
Return:	But China's great strength is that in the cities, it increasingly is not a Communist country or a socialist country, but simply an education country."

Example 3 (Ayres, 2001)

Claim:	The use of laptops by students in lecture classes should be discouraged, because laptops are a distraction.
Concession:	"Admittedly, students can mentally check out of class in other ways—for instance, by daydreaming or doodling.
Return:	But not all activities are equally addictive."

Example 4 (Stulman, 1999)

Claim:	Universities should be wary of overemphasizing technology, because students use computers more for goofing off than for academic purposes.
Concession:	"It is true, of course, that students have always procrastinated and wasted time.
Return:	But when students spend four, five, even ten hours a day on computers and the Internet, a more troubling picture emerges—a picture all the more disturbing because colleges themselves have helped create the problem."

[2] My use of paraphrasing allows me to express the claims in clear language that in some cases summarizes several sentences. I realize that this deprives readers of the chance to verify my interpretation.

Example 5 (Ho, 2007, p. 113)

Claim:	U.S. education is superior because it emphasizes creativity and self-expression.
Concession:	"There's no doubt that American education does not meet high standards in such basic skills as mathematics and language. And we realize that our youngsters are ignorant of Latin, put Mussolini in the same category as Dostoevsky, cannot recite the Periodic Table by heart.
Return:	Would we, however, prefer to stuff the developing little heads of our children with hundreds of geometry problems, the names of rivers in Brazil and 60 lines from The Canterbury Tales? Do we really want to retard their impulses, frustrate their opportunities for self-expression?"

Example 6 (Lohr, 2005)

Claim:	Google is a major threat to companies such as Wal-Mart and its competitors because it allows customers to search easily for the best prices.
Concession:	"Google, to be sure, is but one company at the forefront of the continuing spread of Internet technology. It has many competitors, and it could stumble. In the search market alone, Google faces formidable rivals like Microsoft and Yahoo. Microsoft, in particular, is pushing hard to catch Google in Internet search. 'This is hyper-competition, make no mistake,' said Bill Gates, Microsoft's chief executive. 'The magic moment will come when our search is demonstrably better than Google's,' he said, suggesting that this should happen in a year or so.
Return:	Still, apart from its front-runner status Google is also remarkable for its pace of innovation and for how broadly it seems to interpret its mission to 'organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful'."

As the examples show, a concession can be long and complex (even including a paragraph break)[3], and the return can take a variety of forms. In my example about ducks and chickens, the return is not much more subtle than "But I'm still right!" In the authentic examples, the more developed returns vary in how they relate to the claim, but all, in some way, support it.

HOW ARE *YES, BUT* ARGUMENTS FORMALLY MARKED?

Writers can mark both the concession and the return of a *yes, but* argument. Below are some concession markers, listed alphabetically, with punctuation they typically (not always!) exhibit.

[3] This example from van Creveld (2011) shows that there may even be multiple concessions before the return. (Emphasis is added.) "There are more differences than similarities [between the Libyan uprising of 2011 and events in other Arab states]. **True**, most Libyans are under 30 years old and youth unemployment is painfully high. **Granted**, many Libyans are justifiably frustrated by 42 years of a kleptocracy that squanders Libya's vast resource wealth and denies freedom of expression. **And yes**, increased access to the Internet and social networking sites has allowed the disenchanted youth to organize themselves in a way that can no longer be effectively monitored and repressed by the regime.

But this is where the key similarity between Libya and her neighbors end…"

Admittedly,
Granted,
It is true (that)
Of course
There is no doubt (that)
True,
To be sure,
Yes,

There are significant differences among these markers in terms of frequency, grammar, punctuation, and level of formality. They differ too in applicability to other contexts. That is, they may have uses unrelated to concession. Perhaps the expression that is most loosely tied to concession is *of course*, which serves to tell the reader "I know you know this." That message is not always tied to concession. Note, too, that *of course* can co-occur with another marker, as it does in Example 4.

As for the return, in most of the examples I have found, it is marked by *but*, less commonly by *however*. These two words, though different in terms of grammar and punctuation[4]) are both generally described as markers of contrast. Example 6 above uses *still*, which as a contrast marker is in the same grammatical category as *however* (a conjunctive adverb). There are differences among the contrast markers, but they are beyond the scope of this paper.

Other ways of marking the return are also possible:

Example 7 (Boyer, 1998, p. 150)

Claim:	Undergraduate classes "should be small enough for students to have lively intellectual interaction with teachers and fellow students."
Concession:	There are times, of course, when lecturing is necessary to convey essential issues and ideas and also to handle large numbers of students.
Return:	At other times, such a procedure seems inappropriate, especially when the class is small and much of the material being presented is available in the text.

Here the return is introduced by the phrase *At other times*, counterbalancing *There are times*. This return is less obvious than a return marked with *but* or *however* (both of which are likely to be familiar to students). It may deceptively lead the reader to think, "Both styles are fine, for different situations," when in fact the writing as a whole makes it very clear that the author strongly favors one style. I say this not to criticize the writing (it is, after all, an authentic example) but simply to point out that for an ESL reader, the argument might be easier to understand if the return began "But when the class is small…" or even "But most of the time, when the class is small..."

[4] As examples 2, 3, and 4 show, *but* often begins a sentence in the return of a *yes, but* argument. In book reviews, a reviewer may write a paragraph or two conceding that a book has some flaws (or strengths) and then to return to his or her general evaluation in a sentence, often a paragraph-initial sentence, beginning with *but*.

WHAT ARE THE PITFALLS OF *YES, BUT* ARGUING?

A student who doesn't recognize a concession marker may be confused about which side the writer is taking. Even students who do recognize concession markers may have difficulty following an argument in which a concession, as sometimes happens, is not overtly marked or is marked confusingly. (Example 7 might be a case in point.)

In writing, one pitfall is the failure to include the return. Making a claim followed by a concession, with no return, is indecisive at best and may confuse readers[5]. Examples of other pitfalls for student writers appear in the examples below, starting with an example from an essay test by a relatively low-level student (with spelling corrected). In this example, the problem is that *but* introduces both the concession and the return.

Example 8 (student writing)

Claim:	For a child, it's better to grow up in the country than in the city. [The writer gives some reasons.]
Concession:	"…but sometimes child needs higher education, or advanced environment, [implying that the city is better]
Return:	but, to child, young age, the things what I said are more important to child."

Because a concession is a kind of contrast, it's natural that the student introduces the concession with one of the usual contrast markers. But then the return is also marked with contrast marker—in fact, the same one. The reader's reaction might be to think, "Make up your mind!" Without going into the details of concession, I might advise the writer of example 8 simply to avoid *but…but*, perhaps adding an off-the-cuff oral example with multiple *but*s: *I want a new iPod, but I don't have the money, but I could ask my mom for it, but she might…* I might also suggest replacing the first *but* with *of course* (with an adjustment in punctuation).

A more sophisticated example shows the same problem. The student was reporting on her field research into the question of how much Americans care about their energy use. (All of the following examples are from drafts of student papers and have been edited for grammar. Again, the claims are my paraphrases.)

Example 9 (student writing)

Claim:	The results show that Americans don't care much about how much energy they use.
Concession:	"Nevertheless, one of the American respondents who is 'very serious' about energy consumption said that she tries to rely on her car less and is figuring out a route so she can bike or take the light rail to work. The same respondent said that she trieds to carpool as well. This is very understandable behavior,
Return:	but she only tries to do the things rather than actually doing them."

The *nevertheless…but* structure in this example is a more advanced version of the *but…but* problem.

[5] This is not to say that writers never fail to include a return. See, for example, footnote 2 in this paper, where a concession (marked with *I realize*) is final.

In published writing, concessions and returns are not always marked, as I have already suggested. But when a developing writer fails to mark a concession or a return, clarity can suffer. In example 10, neither the concession nor the return is marked:

Example 10 (student writing)

Claim:	The author [of a source essay] is wrong to claim that universities overemphasize computers and that students use them in inappropriate ways.
Concession:	"He has strong evidence that students use computers for 'activities that have little or nothing to do with traditional work,' based on observations he has made on his campus.
Return:	I believe that this evidence is too limited and does not represent the typical case on campuses around the country."

When I first read the draft from which this example is drawn, the lack of a concession marker made me pause for a moment to question whether I had understood the claim correctly.

Example 11, a bit more complex, might also give readers pause.

Example 11

Claim:	The author (of a source essay) is correct to claim that people in prison should be treated humanely.
Concession:	"At the same time, prisoners have given up their rights when they committed a crime. Before they committed a crime they knew that what they are going to do is against the law and if police find them they will go to jail. But still they did that action so now they need to bear the consequences.
Return:	But like I said physical brutality is not the answer."

At the same time does not work well to mark a concession. (It's a complex expression, sometimes indicating contrast and sometimes not; I haven't found an example in which it clearly marks a concession.) More confusingly, the concession itself (as I have analyzed it) also includes a contrast introduced by *but*. So again, there is a *but…but* problem. Another interesting feature of example 11 is *like I said* in the return. The student's use of this expression, though it may be too informal, is a worthy attempt to clarify that she is returning to her claim. With greater clarity in the other parts, however, she would not need any such phrase. My advice might be to mark the concession more clearly and to remove the first *but*.

A final pitfall, related to content, came up once when I introduced *yes, but* arguing a little too cursorily. The students got the basic point, but some wrote returns that were not well-connected with the concession and did not really show why the concession is irrelevant or unimportant. Like my ducks and chickens example, they were a little too simple for academic writing.

TEACHING *YES, BUT* ARGUING

I have taught *yes, but* arguing in both advanced grammar and advanced reading and composition classes. When I teach it in grammar classes, I usually teach it in connection

with a unit on connecting ideas. Advanced grammar texts typically present lists of expressions that mark meaning relationships, placed in groups that are synonymous (rarely) or similar. Yule (2006), for example, introduces categories of *adding*, *contrasting*, *result*, *time*, and *listing*. When I teach grammar with this text, I introduce *yes, but* arguing in relation to the *contrasting* group. I point out that contrast markers like *however* and *but* are sometimes used along with concession markers to form a larger unit, a *yes, but* argument. I encourage students to add the category of concession to Yule's list.

Like Yule, most grammar texts I have seen do not mention *yes, but* arguing, by that name or any other. I would like to see textbook writers recognize concession as a category of transition expression to include with the usual ones, along with examples to show how it is paired with a contrast marker. I know of one reference book—Swan (1995)—that does this.[6] Ackles (2004) lists *granted* as a transition expression but in a category identified as *contrast or concession*, along with *however*, *nevertheless*, *nonetheless*, and *even so*, with no differentiation among the expressions. At least one online resource, *Guide to writing and grammar*, includes concession as a category of transition expressions; it lists *granted*, *naturally*, and *of course*.

I sometimes find it helpful in a grammar class to discuss *although* along with *yes, but* arguing, pointing out that the concession markers I have identified serve the same function at the discourse level that *although* serves at the clause level. I may point out that a *yes, but* argument is like an expansion of a sentence with *although*, sometimes using one of my favorite nonserious topics:

> Although chickens are funny, no bird is funnier than a duck.
> Of course, chickens are also funny, but no bird is funnier than a duck.

These are not interchangeable (the second is much less likely to begin a discourse), but they may help students grasp how *yes, but* arguing works. At the same time, they provide an opportunity to focus on punctuation differences at the clause and discourse level. If the discourse-level nature of the example is not clear enough, the concession can be expanded:

> Of course, chickens are also funny. Try imitating a chicken and see how people laugh.
> But no bird is funnier than a duck.

The authentic examples I have seen remind us that multi-sentence concessions are typical.

Teaching *yes, but* arguing works best when it is approached through both reading and writing. In my advanced reading/composition classes, we get into the topic after a few clear examples have come up in readings. I introduce the term and begin using it to prompt students to include *yes, but* arguing in their writing and to solve problems that come up when they try. I point out that *yes, but* arguing can be part of many types of writing. Any time you say something that readers might take issue with, *yes, but* arguing is an option. As the title of one text (Lunsford, Ruszkiewicz, and Walters, 2004) puts it, *Everything's an argument.*

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[6] Swan (1995) has an admirably concise explanation. Under the topic *concession and counter-argument*, he points out the three-part structure (though not with the terms I have used). As concession markers, he includes *may* and stressed *do*—presumably as in *Chickens may be funny, too* or *Chickens **do** seem funny, too.* (In fact, other stressed operators could be included too: *There* **is** *some merit to this argument; however*…) For the counter-argument, he includes, among others, *even so*, *nonetheless*, and *all the same*.

When we concentrate exclusively on argumentative writing, we again look for *yes, but* arguing in readings. Looking for it forces a close reading that can help students with their overall comprehension. If they find it, we have another useful example. If they don't, we can discuss how it could be added. Identifying *yes, but* arguing continues to be a challenge for some students. Some latch onto just about any *but* or *however* and think they have found it, whether there is a concession or not. (Asking "What's the concession?" usually helps.) A concession marker (especially *granted*, *true*, and *to be sure*) is a more reliable indicator.

I sometimes encourage students to use *yes, but* arguing in the conclusion of an essay. (Example 4 above is the concluding paragraph of a published essay.) When students write conclusions that simply repeat what they have already said, I sometimes tell them that a conclusion should include something new but not something that demands more development. *Yes, but* arguing, done well, is a good way to introduce something new in a conclusion without opening up a new subtopic.

As I have pointed out, *yes, but* arguing can be situated in the larger context of dealing with counterarguments. It is helpful for students to consider this larger context as a way of sharpening their reading skills and expanding their repertoire as writers. Graff and Birkenstein (2006), though it is not targeted at ESL learners, has accessible discussions of counterarguments, including advice for dealing with them through concession, and even presents the phrase *yes, but* as part of a "template" for concession (p. 65). Like many texts, however, it is somewhat free in using a variety of terms—anticipating counterarguments, entertaining counterarguments, "planting a naysayer in your text"—that may confuse ESL readers. How and whether I devote time to clarifying terms depends on the material I am using, but I might point out that *seeking common ground* is a very general concept; it may be as sweeping as "We all want what is best." *Yes, but* arguing can be seen as one way of seeking common ground, but by definition, it involves a concession, which seeking common ground may not. As for *anticipating counterarguments*, *yes, but* arguing does show an awareness of counterarguments, but anticipating counterarguments is, like seeking common ground, a more general strategy. It doesn't necessarily involve a concession. A writer can systematically list all the arguments on the other side and refute them without ever conceding anything. Finally, there is the related strategy of *anticipating misinterpretation* (which I have not seen explicitly taught in textbooks), introduced by phrases like *I am not saying*, *That is not to say*, and *This does not mean*. This strategy may in fact overlap with *yes, but* arguing: *I am not saying that chickens are not funny. They are, but…* Overstreet and Yule (2001) discuss spoken-language "dislaimers" that are typically of this form.

AN EASY CONCEPT? YES, BUT…

When I introduce the term *yes, but* arguing—not just with colleagues but with students—heads usually nod. (Yes, some are dozing, but I like to think most are already beginning to grasp it.) Does that mean *yes, but* arguing is easy to understand? Yes and no. On the surface, represented by the simple name I give it, it's easy. And simple oral examples make it even easier. (*It is true that pop quizzes are annoying, but they motivate you to keep up, so take out your pencils!)* The idea of concession, however, is complex. When I *concede* that chickens are funny, I'm saying something that, to some extent, undermines my own position as a fan of Daffy and Donald. That's tricky. And *yes, but* arguing, like many language concepts in grammar at all levels, is a fuzzy concept. It may not be easy to agree on what constitutes a concession and on how a concession relates to the larger goal of acknowledging counterarguments.

The struggle to understand is worth it. In reading, students need to be able to track a writer's thinking, sometimes through a thicket of strategies that include *yes, but* arguing, seeking common ground, anticipating counterarguments, and more. In writing, students are often told to acknowledge both sides of an issue. In both reading and writing, understanding *yes, but* arguing can help.

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LEARNER STRATEGIES FOR PERFORMING INTERCULTURAL PRAGMATICS

Andrew D. Cohen

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the strategies that learners employ in an effort to ensure that the input that they process is pragmatically comprehensible to them. Likewise, attention is given to the strategies that learners can make use of so that their output is comprehensible pragmatically to their interlocutors. This entails taking a close look at specific examples of what comprehensibility of language at the level of intercultural pragmatics actually means in terms of intercultural pragmatics. In looking at both the comprehension and production of pragmatic material, the strategies that might be called on in order to avoid pragmatic failure are considered. Focus is first given to what it might take strategically in order to effectively comprehend input pragmatically, whether the input is through language, through gestures, or through silence. Then focus is given to strategies for diminishing threats to comprehensible output, such as negative transfer of norms from the L1 or another language, limited L2 grammar ability, overgeneralization of perceived L2 pragmatic norms, the effect of instruction or instructional materials, and resistance to perceived L2 norms. The ultimate concern is to identify strategies that might assist learners in their efforts to have their conversational partners correctly interpret the intended pragmatics in their communications, and on the role that ESL teachers can play in facilitating this process.

INTRODUCTION

This article relates issues of comprehensible input and comprehensible output to an increasingly prominent field: second/foreign-language (L2)[1] pragmatics, where the intended meanings often go beyond the literal ones. While the examples are taken from the learning and use of numerous languages, they are intended to be applied to the teaching and learning of English, either as a second or foreign language. The article is aimed both at learners of English who may well need to perform in a pragmatically appropriate way in high-stakes situations, and is also aimed at developing and practicing ESL teachers, whose role it can be to assist these learners in becoming better at L2 pragmatics. In fact, research findings to date has suggested that being more explicit about pragmatic behaviors – such as how speech acts[2] function in discourse – is a more effective instructional approach than leaving learners to figure pragmatic behavior out for themselves (see Kasper, 2006; Rose, 2005; Jeon & Kaya, 2006).

Having pragmatic ability implies that as listeners or readers, learners are able to interpret the intended meanings of what is said or written, the assumptions, purposes or goals, and the kinds of actions that are being performed (Yule, 1996: 3-4). As speakers, pragmatic ability means that learners know how to say what they want to say with the proper politeness, directness, and formality (for instance, in the role of boss, telling an employee that s/he is being laid off; or in the role of teacher, telling a student that his/her work is

[1] For the purposes of this paper, L2 will serve as a generic label, including both the context where the language is spoken widely and the context where it is not. In principle, pragmatic development in an L2 will be faster in the former context than in the latter, but it depends largely on how the learner makes use of the available resources.

[2] *Speech acts* are the specific social functions that people carry out in speaking and writing, such as apologizing, complaining, making requests, refusing things/invitations, complimenting, or thanking.

unacceptable). They also need to know what not to say at all and what to communicate non-verbally. As writers, pragmatic ability means knowing how to write a message intelligibly, again paying attention to level of politeness, directness, formality, and appropriateness of the rhetorical structure of the message (for instance, in the role of employee, composing an e-mail message to the boss requesting a promotion and a raise, or a paid vacation from the boss; or as neighbor, writing a note complaining about late-evening TV noise).

It can be a real challenge for learners to become fully versed at both the receptive and productive sides of pragmatics. For this reason, learners often need to compensate for what is lacking in their language proficiency by means of strategies – strategies for learning about L2 pragmatics expeditiously, strategies for performing pragmatics effectively, and strategies for simply coping with their lack of language proficiency. This article will be about some of the strategies that could be used to deal with the enormous demands put on learners in their efforts to avoid pragmatic failure, and about steps that teachers can take to assist learners in meeting the challenge.

COMPREHENDING THE PRAGMATIC MESSAGES IN THE INPUT

Input could be through language (e.g. through lexical items, syntax, or discourse), though gestures, or through silence. Whether input is pragmatically comprehensible to the learners depends on various factors, such as: (1) the functional proficiency of the learners in the target language and in other languages, (2) the age, gender, occupation, social status, and experience of the learners in the relevant communities of practice (e.g. talk on the shop floor), and (3) the learners' previous multilingual/multicultural experiences. Let us now relate these factors to a sampling of language and nonverbal behaviors in an effort to illustrate how such factors may contribute to the ease or difficulty which learners have in interpreting the pragmatics of an interaction in a given situation.

One major pitfall though seemingly innocuous is getting the greetings wrong. So, for example, underestimating the *illocutionary force* or pragmatic function of *bonjour* in a French-speaking community can be detrimental to getting some transaction to work (e.g., simply obtaining information about a train or a parking meter). The pragmatics of this apparently simple greeting may have a subtle function attached to it, namely, to establish contact politely, which the less savvy nonnative may miss. An American approaches a man on the street in Martinique, as the author did over a year ago, and launches directly into a request for help in interpreting a confusing parking slip issued by a machine and intended to be put on the dashboard of the car. Instead of responding to the man's question (asked in fluent French), he says, "*Bonjour*." So an L2 speaker of French needs to know what that *bonjour* means, most likely "I was put off by your focusing immediately and exclusively on the parking slip, without going through the courtesy of extending a morning greeting." A strategic approach to dealing with the pragmatics of greetings is to have a classroom teacher or other highly competent speakers of the language[3] provide guidance as to the function of such greetings in the given language. It is not enough just to memorize the various greetings for different times of day. It is crucial to know the when, how, and why of using them.

In the above example, the author was operating from a US-based pragmatics mode and simply transferring this approach to this parking slip situation, rather than asking himself

[3] An added strategy for ESL learners is to figure out how to find highly competent users of English who are also good sources of input as to how the language functions pragmatically.

how a speaker of French in Martinique would do it, observing how they do it, or asking how to do it. So being strategic would mean observing how locals do it – if time permits and if there is accessibility to observing the given behavior in action. If an effort is made to ask locals about the proper greeting behavior, then learners have to be careful to qualify the age, gender, and status issues related to the given situation. Otherwise they could be misled by the response that they get and inappropriately overgeneralize this particular greeting to a situation where it is not usually applied. Another factor here could be that the learner brings previous knowledge of the pragmatics of French as spoken in France to bear in another Francophone country, namely Martinique, where the pragmatics could diverge somewhat from those of France.[4]

While differences in greetings between two languages and cultures may be very pronounced, as in the case of *bonjour* in Martinique (where there were few Americans and little English is spoken), they may be more subtle and even blurred in L2 situations such as when French is spoken in a French-speaking community in the U.S. In this intercultural situation, perhaps the need for the greeting as a conversation opener is diminished given the influence of the mainstream language community where "we get down to business" right away.

Other comprehensible pragmatics problems can be attributed to negative transfer from the L1, overgeneralization of material in the L2, or limited proficiency in the L2 (three categories to be elaborated on in the section on pragmatically comprehensible output, below). So at the lexical level, the first time a non-local hears Kiwis say "Good on ya!" (accent on the "on") in New Zealand, she might be a bit startled, thinking perhaps that she spilled something on herself. So part of pragmatic comprehension includes collecting up those local expressions that are not completely opaque, but may give pause for thought.

At the grammatical level, the nonnative has to interpret correctly the role of grammar (e.g., verb tenses) in pragmatics. It has been seen, for example, that English-speaking study abroaders to Spanish-speaking countries misread their acquaintances' use of the conditional in requests (e.g., *podrias* 'could you…' instead of *puedes* 'can you') as being overly formal (Cohen & Shively, 2007). So a strategic approach would be to check with locals as to just what verb tenses are used for what. This can seem basic, but it can actually be rather subtle. Unfortunately textbooks tend to give more emphasis to the plethora of verb tenses, and perhaps not enough to just **when** to use them and **for what**. The problems is that without having the tense usage explicitly called to their attention, learners may not attend to nor acquire some or many of these usages.

Another language-related issue is that speech acts in real time may not show up in a neat, interpretable fashion, but rather be spread over a number of turns in a lengthy interaction, culminating in something like, "Well, then, I'm sorry for that" (see Félix-Brasdefer, 2006). It may be progressive enough and subtle enough that the nonnative does not even realize that an apology is taking place. So a strategy would be for the learners to ask the interlocutor what just happened if they are not sure. For example, a strategy would be to say, "I'm still learning the language, and I want to make sure I understood correctly. Was that an apology?" The same strategy could be used to determine whether the interlocutor just complained, made a request, gave a refusal, or performed some other speech act.

[4] For a sampling of research on dialect differences in the pragmatics associated with different speech communities, see the treatment of Spanish in an edited volume by Márquez Reiter and Placencia (2004).

A rather obvious case of miscomprehension would be with a gesture such as the one for "wait" in Hebrew, which consists of extending the forearm with the fingers and thumb bunched and pointing upwards without moving the hand. It is used to mean, "Just a second and I'll be with you," or "Please wait and let me cut in" (when on a bike, in a car or another vehicle). Such a gesture does not exist in American English but does (with the hand moving) in European languages and has a different, sometimes obscene, meaning. All the more reason for ESL learners to deploy the strategy of asking about seemingly curious and perhaps a bit bewildering gestures that they see used in U.S. contexts early on, rather than assuming that the meaning is clear from context, when, in reality, it is not. ESL teachers could certainly play an instrumental role here in helping learners to understand the meaning of these gestures.

Finally, the use of silence itself can have a pragmatic function that is lost on a nonnative speaker who is unaware of the norms. So, for example, an American English speaker may interpret silence in a Japanese speaker as meaning that the person is relinquishing the floor when this may not be the case. As chair of a session at an academic meeting, the author once led a round of applause for a Japanese speaker of English when he interpreted an extended pause as meaning that the speaker had ended his remarks when he had not. So in this case, it was a matter of misinterpreting silence. In a second example, for the many years that hitchhiking was a common practice in Israel, a nonnative hitchhiker could easily interpret silence on the part of the driver as meaning the person was a bit shy, and so all the more reason to fill the silence with banter. In this case, it would be likely that the hitchhiker was unaware that it was appropriate to remain silent rather than to entertain the driver with conversation, which was more likely the norm in the U.S. at the time. The strategy called for here would be for learners to inquire about the role of silence in the target language, something that learners may not even have on their pragmatics agenda. The ESL teacher could comment on the various roles that silence plays (or does not play) in English.

With regard to demographic variables and communities of practice, nonnatives may misinterpret the role of curse words in the discourse. They may be shocked when they first hear them, without realizing that in the particular community of practice, these words may serve an important role, perhaps contributing to bonding between the employer and the employees, and among employees. So, for example, as part of a *Language in the Workplace* project at Victoria University of Wellington, Holmes and her colleagues collected over 2,000 interactions in English (mostly L1) in the workplace in New Zealand (Daly, Holmes, Newton, & Stubbe, 2004). Extensive analysis of their corpus yielded insights into what was necessary for fitting in and becoming an integrated member of the workplace, and one of the things was the ability to curse affectively, especially using the f-word with fellow employees and even with the boss, as a way to fit in and bond. Nonnatives apparently could find themselves ostracized for **not** cursing like the rest. On the comprehension side, the learner may hear these curse words and be put off or even shocked, and certainly not eager to learn when and how to use them. A strategy would be to pull over a working associate and ask to be briefed on how to curse effectively, something which language teachers are often reluctant to deal with. Perhaps if the topic is grounded properly in the research literature and situated respectably within the field of pragmatics, ESL teachers might be more willing to include cursing in the instructional material.

At times learners miscomprehend what is said because of their previous multicultural and multilingual experiences. Their expectations from previous pragmatic experiences in other speech communities set them up for a pragmatic breakdown. Such was the case when the author and his wife arrived at the InterRent shack a ways from the airport in Martinique two Decembers ago and the French-speaking clerk asked him when his license was issued. He

promptly told her "February of 2007," reading the date of issue right off his Minneapolis driver's license. The clerk then looked at him with great dismay and said, "*Je suis desolée*," and proceeded to inform him that she could not rent him a car since the driver must have at least a year's experience driving before being able to rent a car. What was intended within her community of practice in Martinique was when he was issued his **first** driver's license. What followed, once he determined the misunderstanding, was that she needed to calculate the year that he in fact first started driving, which was probably about 1960, but for safety's sake, he just arbitrarily said at age 18, which would mean 45 years ago. She was relieved and then proceeded with the rental agreement.

Perhaps there is no one strategy that can safeguard against this kind of pragmatic failure. Learners just have to be ready to deal with contextual difference in what ostensibly the very same language may mean when dealing with its supposed equivalent in the other language. It may take on a different, contextually mandated meaning. The Peace Corps motto when the author went off to the High Plains of Bolivia in 1965: "Expect the unexpected." That would apply here.

Table 1 provides a summary of the examples presented above of when comprehending the pragmatic message in the input may be problematic for learners. Having given a number

Table 1. Comprehending the Pragmatics of the Input

Nature of the Input:	**Proficiency in L2/FL & in other languages**	**Age, gender, occupation, social status, communities of practice**	**Former cross-cultural experiences**
Language: ➢ **Lexical items (words or phrases)**	*Bonjour* in Martinique Expression of acknowledgement "Good on ya!" (NZ)	The "in" words and how to use them – cool, sweet, bad, etc. Curse words in NZ	
➢ **Syntax (e.g., verb tenses)**	Formality of the conditional form of the verb in Spanish in a request to a friend		
➢ **Discourse**	An apology extending over numerous turns in a corpus		Renting a car: "When was your driver's license issued?" (Martinique)
Gestures	Negative transfer of a gesture from one L2 to another ("Wait" in Hebrew)		
Silence	Silence in the L2 (moments in Japanese; hitchhiking in Israel)		

of possible misunderstandings, the question remains as to the factors which will determine whether pragmatic failure is more likely to occur in the case of a given individual. Presumably it is more likely to occur among the less proficient and more inexperienced users of the L2, and those with more limited contact with members of certain communities of practice for starters. But let us assume that two speakers have the same amount of background knowledge and exposure to the language. What might contribute to one of them understanding the pragmatics of the situation better than the other one? Learning style preference may play a role, such as the relative introversion of the nonnative. Learners who are more extroverted may be more into their speaking than into careful observation of native-speaker pragmatic behavior. Keen powers of observation may assist learners in getting the pragmatics of a message despite the fact that most of the vocabulary and grammatical structures in the message are incomprehensible to them. They simply take the clues that they perceive (e.g., tone of voice, facial expression, body posture, elaborateness or curtness of the utterance) and intuit or infer the rest from there. The robustness of the learners' strategy repertoire could also play a role in that some learners select among their strategies that of being more consciously aware of how pragmatics works in the given speech community and specific situation, even to the extent of asking locals whether they have interpreted a speech act correctly or not.[5]

PRODUCING PRAGMATICALLY COMPREHENSIBLE OUTPUT

What do learners need to do strategically in order for their output to be *comprehensible* pragmatically to their interlocutors? It helps for the nonnatives to accommodate to the local speech community's norms for pragmatic performance, such as in, say, making a request. There are at least five factors that can stand in the way of acceptable accommodation (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010), possibly leading to pragmatically inappropriate output:

(1) negative transfer of pragmatic behavior from their L1 or some other language they know,
(2) limited L2 grammatical ability,
(3) overgeneralization of perceived L2 pragmatic norms,
(4) the effect of instruction or instructional materials, and
(5) resistance to using perceived L2 pragmatic norms.

Negative Transfer of Pragmatic Norms from the L1 or Another Language

In this instance, the nonnatives transfer the patterns for how they would conduct the interaction in the L1 or another language speech community, most likely unknowingly but sometimes knowing it is probably wrong but the only thing they know how to do. Let us suppose that a Korean learner of English responds to an American friend's compliment about how nice a piece of her clothing looks by saying "No, that's not true." Whereas this would be appropriately modest behavior in Korean culture, in U.S. culture this response to such a compliment may make it sound as if she were flatly rejecting or questioning the friend's judgment, and hence creates a somewhat awkward situation or even sounds insulting. The best strategy would probably be to check with local peers as to the most appropriate ways to respond to a compliment.

Another example would be when a Japanese student requests that a professor read a paper he wrote by saying, "Professor, read this paper please." Such a request may come across as

[5] For more on individual differences in strategy use, see Takeuchi, Giffiths, and Coyle (2007).

too direct, even though the student said "please" which would probably make the request polite enough in Japanese. In this case, a useful strategy could be to collect data on the pragmatics of how to make polite requests in such situations in that speech community, particularly if learners would like the request to be responded to favorably.

Limited L2 Grammatical Ability

Lack of knowledge of certain grammatical forms, or more likely lack of knowledge of how to use them functionally in a given target-language situation, may inadvertently lead to producing language that is pragmatically gauche. A beginning learner of English, for example, might request that a clerk in a repair shop fix an item, with "You must fix this." because the learner has not learned how to be more indirect and consequently sound more polite (e.g., "I was wondering how soon you might be able to repair this for me."). Such a request (interpreted as an order) may, in fact, annoy the clerk. Again, an effective strategy might be to obtain models for appropriate ways to phrase such a service-encounter request. The challenge here for teachers then is to determine how to prepare and cover the pragmatic aspects of communication (appropriacy) during the teaching of grammar (see Ishihara & Cohen, 2010).

Overgeneralization of Perceived L2 Pragmatic Norms

Some learners may generalize pragmatic norms acceptable in one situation to another situation where that behavior is not appropriate. So, for example, a Korean learner of American English perceives Americans as being very direct and frank about things, a perception that is reinforced when the American male passenger sitting next to him on a flight shares some intimacies. Consequently, the Korean is surprised when the fellow passenger is clearly reluctant to answer a question about how much he makes a month. While the Korean would not ask that question in his home culture, he just assumed that the American's frankness in discussing intimacies would carry over to other topics as well. So a pragmatics strategy here would be to gather information about delicate topics for conversation in a given speech community, especially with casual acquaintances or strangers. In addition, teachers could lead a discussion with students concerning more taboo topics in U.S. culture these days.

Another example would be that of the American who has heard that Italians talk with their hands so he makes an effort to use a lot of hand gestures to make his points in Italian while studying in Rome. An Italian friend takes him aside to tell him that he is gesturing too much, and also that some of his gestures mean something different from what he intends them to mean. A strategy for learning the proper amount of gesturing would be to do a lot of observing of what locals do. If the learners are acquiring the language as a foreign language, it might be more of a challenge to gather this information, but it could be through contacts with native speakers or through movies. As to what gestures mean, just as in the section on comprehension of pragmatics, it would be helpful if teachers could teach their learners the meaning of some of the non-transparent gestures and also information regarding the extent to which they are normally used. Again, it may also be beneficial to check with other, non-teacher acquaintances, especially since some gestures may be more common within certain age groups or subgroups within the community.

Yet another example would be of an American study-abroad student who has a sense that Spanish speakers are more formal in their commands. So if she wants a glass of water from her host-family mother, she asks for it in a most polite way, "Would you be able to give me

a glass of water, please." Her host mother finds her style overly formal since in their Barcelona home they just say the equivalent of "Water, please." or "Give me a glass of water, please." This kind of situation can be avoided by checking out the pragmatics of how to be pragmalinguistically appropriate. It is not enough just to learn the conditional forms of the verb in Spanish, for example. Rather, it would be helpful if teachers could provide guidance as to when it is advisable or even crucial to use them, and when it is equally important **not** to use them, as in this case.

Finally, there is the example of the English-speaking learner of Japanese whose close Japanese friend offers her more food at an informal dinner meal at her apartment. The learner knows an expression, *Iie, kekkoudesu* 'No thanks' in Japanese and uses it. However, she is unaware that this expression is primarily reserved for formal situations and sounds funny or awkward if used with a close friend. Especially when learning languages in which the level of formality plays an important role, a key strategy would be to ask about the formality of expressions, rather than to assume that one expression will work in all situations, as is often the case with English. Teachers may be able to assist here, but since there are so many potential interactive situations, there is a real need for learners to be strategic when they are on their own, outside the language classroom.

The Effect of Instruction or Instructional Materials

Learners might also be led to pragmatic failure as a result of somewhat misleading information that they receive either from the teacher or for from the course materials. So, for example, a learner of English may have read in an ESL textbook that Americans tend to give the precise reason why they cannot attend a party that they are invited to. Yet when the learners do the same, they find that in the particular instance (say, an important work-related party) it may be interpreted as an unacceptable excuse (e.g., "I can't come because I have a dinner date with a friend."). So strategizing would need to include checking out the possible exceptions to that pragmatics rule about being relatively honest and explicit in refusals.

As another example, an American learner of Japanese may be taught in class to fill a pause with *eeto* (more informal) or *ano* (more formal), and so does his best to fill as many pauses as he can that way. His native-speaking interlocutor is annoyed by this overuse of these pauses and depending on their relationship, may eventually tell the learner that he is filling his pauses too much – that natives prefer to use silence or non-verbal cues more. Whereas in part this could be considered a case of overgeneralization, it originates from instruction regarding the filling of pauses. What is misleading is that in Japanese silence is favored more than in English, and the teacher neglected to point this out. This filled-pauses example is a perfect case where some data gathering could play a strategic role in helping the learner to avoid speech behavior that annoys native speakers of the language. Teachers could, for example, structure activities in their lessons for learners to pay attention to hesitation phenomena in English during authentic listening or video material.

Resistance to Using Perceived L2 Pragmatic Norms

Another source of pragmatic failure may be an intentional desire not to abide by the L2 speech community's norms in the given instance despite having full knowledge of what is expected – which sets this category apart from the other four. So for example, an English-speaking learner of Indonesian hears natives use the equivalent of "Did you eat yet?" as a regular greeting but avoids using it herself because it does not really seem like a greeting to

her. Or an American learner of Japanese has learned the honorific verbs that are required when speaking to or about people of higher status even if they are not present at the time (e.g., asking if the higher-status person has eaten by using *meshiagarimashitika* instead of *tabemashitika,* the non-honorific verb), but resists using them, feeling they are excessive. While choosing to opt out of conforming to the pragmatic norms is every learner's prerogative, a strategic approach to the matter of conformity would be to find out what the repercussions for doing so are. An ESL teacher could lead a discussion on this issue in a language class. Learners could, for instance, be asked to bring their own examples of language material that they prefer to avoid, so that a discussion as to possible consequences could ensue.

Table 2 presents a summary of the examples of obstacles to pragmatically comprehensible output described above. Obviously whether or not a message leads to pragmatic failure

Table 2. Producing Pragmatically Comprehensible Output

Nature of the Output:	**Negative transfer of pragmatic norms from the L1 or other language**	**Overgeneral-ization of perceived L2 pragmatic norms**	**Limited L2 grammatical ability**	**Effect of instruction or textbook materials**	**Resistance to using perceived L2 pragmatic norms**
Language: ➢ **Phrases**	Rejecting a compliment with "No, that's not true."	Using a formal request or refusal when the given situation calls for greater informality			Avoiding "Did you eat yet?" as a greeting in Indonesian
➢ **Discourse**	Request to read a thesis: "Dr. X, please read this."	Being overly frank – asking for salary information	Making a request that sounds like an order	Giving the actual reason for a refusal in a situation where it is inappropriate	Avoiding using honorific verbs to speak to or about people of higher status
Gestures		Overusing hand gestures in Italian			
Silence				Using filled pauses too much rather than silence	

depends not just on the nonnative sender but on the recipient as well. It is possible and often the case that the native speakers of the L2 will go the extra distance to comprehend the nonnative-speaker, even if the nonnative's behavior misses the mark by a long shot in terms of pragmatic appropriateness. In fact, the native-speaking interlocutor often has the wherewithal either to cut the nonnative slack or to lower the boom, depending on factors that may have little to do with whether the intended message was understood. On the other

hand, a perceived breach of pragmatic etiquette may itself be enough to result in pragmatic failure for the nonnative. For example, several years ago while the author was a visiting professor in New Zealand, a Japanese student who had recently graduated from the department came to his office, put her MA thesis on his desk, and said, "Dr. Cohen, please read this," an example of negative transfer mentioned above. The author hesitated for a moment but then had a visceral reaction and responded, "No, I won't. I'm on sabbatical here and they don't pay me to do this. Sorry." He did take a glance at it but no more than that. Had she said, "Dr. Cohen – I was wondering if you might just take a look at my MA thesis and let me know what you think of …," he may very well have read through it.

STRATEGIES FOR NEGOTIATING MEANING AND MAKING CONVERSATIONAL REPAIRS

Some learners are better at getting the L2 pragmatics right then are others. Part of it is due to their strategic ability as a language learner in general and especially in terms of their strategic ability with regard to pragmatics (Cohen, 2005). These individuals are strategic both in how they go about learning pragmatics and in their L2 performance so that both their comprehension and production of language are pragmatically appropriate for the given situation. They also have strategies for evaluating how well they understood the pragmatics of a given message and also how effective they were in producing a pragmatically appropriate message. Such strategies can make the difference between pragmatic failure and pragmatic success, since as illustrated in this article, learners can take strategic action to avoid pragmatic failure or to remediate the situation once pragmatic failure has occurred. For example, nonnatives can check to make sure that they interpreted a message (such as a key request from a co-worker) correctly, "So let me see if I understand your request, George. You want me to speak to the boss for you, correct?" Nonnatives could also include an alerter before a delicate speech act so that the addressee will be lenient in interpreting the intent of the message: "Hi, George. I want to make apology but not so sure it is OK. I try now…"

In Krashen's (1982) terms, some nonnatives are better monitor users than others when it comes to pragmatics. In Long's (1985) terms, some nonnatives are better at making sure there is rich interaction that serves to clarify the intended pragmatic meaning in both the input and the output. In part this can be a function of the personality-related style preferences of the learner, such as being more extroverted or more closure-oriented (i.e. less tolerance of ambiguity; see Cohen & Weaver, 2006). In Schmidt's (1990) terms, some nonnatives are better at noticing the pragmatic aspects of discourse, both in classroom settings and out in the real world. And there are some nonnatives who more actively create situations where they can check to see if they, in Swain's (1998) terms, are producing output that is comprehensible pragmatically. The point is that what works for one L2 learner in terms of strategically gaining pragmatic awareness and enhanced performance may not work for another. Some learners may, for example, benefit from extensive observation of what natives do without actually engaging in interaction with natives very much, while others start interacting extensively from the very start.

CONCLUSION

The purpose for this article has been to take a pragmatically-oriented look at both the input and output sides of what is comprehensible, and to suggest to learners strategies for making the input and output more comprehensible in terms of the pragmatics. The

companion purpose has been to provide ESL teachers ideas for supporting their learners' efforts to use English in pragmatically appropriate ways.

So what needs to happen for nonnatives to achieve success at comprehending and producing language pragmatically? It would appear that part of an L2 learner's pragmatics is acquired without explicit instruction. Nonetheless, there are pragmatic features that most likely would benefit from explicit instruction (whether from a teacher directly or through a website such as the three posted at http://www.carla.umn.edu/speechacts/) if the intention is to have the learners achieve relative control over them within a reasonable amount to time. An exploration of how to do so would be of great value. In addition, and especially in cases where fine tuning is advisable or crucial, learners may need to be proactive and seek out special coaching in order to comprehend and produce some of their target-language pragmatics appropriately.

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TEACHING ADULT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS TO MITIGATE REQUESTS: A PILOT STUDY

Rhonda Petree

ABSTRACT

This study examined the effectiveness of teaching adult English language learners (ELLs) how to mitigate requests in the workplace and elsewhere. The participants represented 12 different countries and 11 languages and were enrolled in a high-intermediate level ELL class in a large-urban Adult Basic Education (ABE) program. Participants' pragmatic ability with regard to making requests was assessed through a discourse completion test (DCT) administered as a pretest, followed by instruction in pragmatics (with a focus on requesting) and then by another DCT similar to the first one serving as a posttest. The pre- and posttest results were compared with the analysis focusing on the relative frequency of explicitly taught lexical phrases and forms. Participants' responses to a course evaluation questionnaire were also collected and analyzed.

Findings indicated that while participants were aware of the use of modal verbs to show politeness prior to instruction, there was a noticeable increase in forms virtually absent in the pretest data, namely, the past continuous tense and understaters such as *just (a minute)*, and *a little (bit)*. Additionally, findings showed high attendance contributed to an increased use of those phrases and forms. Participants responded favorably to the instructional techniques. The results of this instructional pragmatics study contribute to a relatively small body of literature involving the effectiveness of teaching second-language (L2) pragmatics to an ABE English language learner population.

INTRODUCTION

In 2008 Emily Suh conducted a study that evaluated metapragmatic instruction in an ABE ESL class. The study was unique in that it focused on the ABE English language learner population rather than university-level students. This current study sought to broaden Suh's findings by using instructional pragmatic techniques with a larger, more linguistically-diverse group of learners. Both studies focused on teaching ABE English language learners to mitigate requests.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pragmatics and Pragmatic Failure

Pragmatics, as defined by LoCastro (2003), is "the study of speaker and hearer meaning created in their joint actions that include both linguistic and non-linguistic signals in the context of socioculturally organized activities" (p. 15). According to Yule (1996), pragmatics is affected by a number of variables, including the words or phrases a speaker uses, the relationship between the speaker and hearer, the context in which the communication is occurring, and understanding one's intended meaning.

Other authors consider pragmatics in terms of how we maintain relationships with other people. Kasper and Rose (2002) regard pragmatics as "interpersonal rhetoric – the way speakers and writers accomplish goals as social actors who not just need to get things done but must attend to their interpersonal relationships with other participants at the same time" (p. 2). That is, the communication choices we make vary in accordance in different social situations, and affect how we interact with and are perceived by others.

When ELLs are unaware of certain lexical phrases or politeness markers that convey meaning, others may perceive them as rude or abrupt, in which case, pragmatic failure can occur. According to Garcia (2004), pragmatic failure occurs when one fails to understand a speaker's intended meaning behind an utterance. If a supervisor asks, "Is that report ready?" the implied meaning may be that the supervisor wants the report immediately, rather than an inquiry as to whether or not the report is complete. Additionally, speakers may produce grammatically correct sentences, such as "I need a day off," but the utterance may lack politeness markers so that it may seem rude in a given context. Conversely, one can also produce excessively polite sentences, as in, "Would you be so kind as to possibly grant me a day off from work?", which would most likely be pragmatically inappropriate in most contexts.

The impact of pragmatic failure can be realized in a highly personal manner. Researchers have found that linguistic errors are more socially acceptable or tolerable, but learners' pragmatic errors have higher consequences (Ishihara, 2010). Without pragmatics instruction it is likely that learners will be unaware of how they are perceived by others.

Requests

When making a request, one is always performing a face-threatening act, in that the one making the request wants someone else to do something that will benefit her or him. This can be something innocuous as closing the door to a noisy hallway, or more consequential, such as talking to a supervisor about changing positions within a company. Requests are *impositive speech acts* (Trosborg, 1994), in that there is always a degree of imposition put upon the requestee.

Throughout the request-development process one develops a repertoire of linguistic features, more complex syntax, an increased use of mitigation devices which are used to minimize the imposition of the requests, and an understanding of how to adjust the requestive force as it relates to participants, goals, and contexts (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Speakers at the far end of that developmental process use many syntactical and lexical mitigators to vary their level of directness and to soften their requests. The necessary features to learn in order to make a request in discourse are described by Ishihara and Cohen (2010, p. 248) as:

> - the grammatical structures and word choice used to formulate the request;
> - the pauses and hedging devices for mitigating the force of the request;
> - the pre- and post-request strategies (such as *giving a reason for the request* and *thanking*); and
> - adjusting the relative social status of the speaker/writer and the listener/reader, the level of distance/closeness, and the severity of the imposition of the request.

L2 Pragmatics Instruction

The goal of L2 pragmatics instruction, according to Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2003), is to increase learners' awareness of and ability to use socially appropriate language. Researchers agree that a combination of explicit instruction and awareness-raising tasks are necessary components of pragmatics instruction. Explicit instruction, as described by Frank (2011), includes a thorough explanation of concepts, a model of proficiency, sufficient

guided practice activities, and many opportunities for mastery and transfer. Awareness-raising activities help develop learners' ability to analyze language and culture and are grounded in Schmidt's noticing hypothesis (1993) that claims one must pay attention to input in order for learning to occur.

Ishihara and Cohen (2010) offer a number of awareness-raising tasks that have either a social and cultural (sociopragmatic) focus or a linguistic (pragmalinguistic) focus. Some sociopragmatic tasks include analyzing language and context to identify the goal and intention of the speaker, analyzing and practicing the use of directness/politeness/formality in an interaction, and identifying and using a range of cultural norms in the L2 community (p. 114). Examples of pragmalinguistic tasks include analyzing and practicing the use of vocabulary in the particular context, and identifying and practicing the use of relevant grammatical structures and strategies for a speech act (p. 113).

Instructional Techniques for Adult ELLs

The implementation of this study drew upon recommended techniques for teaching L2 pragmatics, as well as techniques for teaching adult English language learners. The literature recommends creating interactive, communicative classes with a focus on language-awareness in real-world contexts (Bailey, 2006; Moss, 2005; Parrish, 2004; Savignon, 2001).

Language-awareness components can be incorporated into lessons by focusing on language competencies and language functions (Parrish, 2004). She explains how to design integrated and contextualized lessons that focus on meaningful classroom communication, by incorporating interactive speaking activities, such as mingle tasks (learners move around the room and exchanging information), discussions, and role-plays. In her discussion on interactive classroom activities, Moss (2005) suggests ordering and sorting activities (ranking and sequencing), and working in pairs to do problem-solving activities.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

During my experience as a teacher to adult ELLs I observed that, in general, learners made very direct or unmitigated requests. Despite the fact that many learners worked, attended school, and frequently interacted with their speech communities – and therefore received a lot of authentic input – they still seemed unaware of many pragmatic norms. With the goal of increasing learners' pragmatic knowledge and ability in regards to request-making, the following two researched questions emerged:

1. How effective are awareness-raising tasks and explicit instruction at teaching high-intermediate ABE English language learners to make mitigated requests in the work-place and elsewhere?
2. How do ABE English language learners evaluate efforts to teach them L2 pragmatics?

METHOD

Participants

The participants were enrolled in level 4 ELL class in an ABE program in a large urban, K-12 school district for a five-week summer session. ELL 4 was considered a high-intermediate level class. There were 33 learners enrolled in the class, but only 20 were present for both

the pretest and posttest and therefore included in the study. The participants represented 12 different countries and had been living in the U.S. anywhere from seven months to ten years. There were six males and 14 females, whose ages ranged from 21 to 57. Many reported having studied English for at least a few years prior to coming to the U.S. Additionally, they reported using English at work, at school, while shopping, and at the library.

Instruction

The goal of the instruction was to teach learners how to produce mitigated requests in the workplace and in other comparable situations. The instruction was not presented as an absolute, but rather as a "range of pragmatic devices" with which learners could employ if they choose to do so (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003, p. 5). Individual lessons were organized around the unit theme "Work Readiness" and included explicit instruction, awareness-raising activities, and practical communicative activities. Each class session met for 2.5 hours on Monday and Wednesday evenings, with approximately 80% of the time spent on pragmatics instruction.

Awareness-raising activities included group discussions, comparing pragmatic norms of different cultures, and language analysis tasks. Discussion topics included degrees of formality and politeness, and the inappropriateness of being overly polite.

One class activity asked learners to compare in writing and orally how requests are made in their home languages and cultures with English in the U.S. This activity led to an awareness of the absence or presence of modal verbs in other languages. The class also discussed the overall level of informality in school and in some workplaces in the U.S. as compared with other cultures. In another activity, learners were given statements, such as "I was wondering if I could, um, have two weeks of vacation?" and then had to decide where it might have been spoken, who might have said it and to whom (see Appendix A).

Learners watched video clips from two movies, *The Devil Wears Prada* and *The Pursuit of Happyness,* in order to analyze native speaker language use in workplace environments. The learners were given a transcript of a scene to refer to while viewing the scene. This facilitated identifying the implicit meaning behind some requests. The class discussion following the clips involved the following topics:

- status in the workplace,
- degrees of formality when speaking to supervisors,
- rude and polite behavior, and
- formal and informal conversations.

Learners received explicit form and meaning-based instruction on modal verbs used to express politeness, the past continuous tense, and understaters - adverbial modifiers such as, *a little* or *a bit* (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989, p. 283). These forms were presented as features that make requests more polite and are used to vary politeness levels depending on the situation and interlocutor.

In one writing activity, learners were given direct requests and had to "soften" them. Learners prepared and performed role-plays for the class while other learners listened for specific features and then checked them off on a chart (see Appendix B). Learners were provided steps for making formal and informal requests and completed cloze tasks to review terms and concepts.

Table 1 provides the features, definitions, and examples which were presented to the learners and is based on Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) Cross-cultural Speech Act Research Project Coding Manual for request strategies.

Table 1. Presented Features, Definitions, and Examples

Features	Definitions	Example
Greeting		*Hello. Hi.*
Concern for the Hearer	Showing respect the listener's needs, wants, and time	*I know that you're busy, but …*
Grounders	Reasons and explanations for the request	*Do you have a pen?* ***I forgot mine.***
Understaters	Words that soften the request	*just, a little, a bit, a minute*
Polite words		*Please. Thank you.*
Request Head Act Internal Modification 1. Past + Continuous –ING 2. Modals marked for politeness	Core of the request sequence, the request proper Verb tense that can show politeness Auxiliary verbs that can show politeness	 *I was wondering if…* *I was hoping that you …* *Could you help me?* *Would you scoot over a bit?*
Goodbye	Used if the conversation has ended following the request	*Goodbye. Bye.*

Understaters, as defined by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), are "adverbial modifiers by means of which the speaker under-represents the state of affairs denoted in the proposition" (p. 283). Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) define a head act as "the minimal unit which can realize a request" (p. 275). In the example, "John get me a beer, please. I'm terribly thirsty" the minimal unit is *get me a beer* (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). Instruction on modal verbs focused on their use to perform various social functions, such as expressing politeness. The logical meaning of modal verbs - to make an inference or prediction - was juxtaposed with the social function of modals to illustrate the difference in meaning.

Data Collection

The pre- and posttests were written Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs). DCTs are used to elicit data by giving speakers scenarios that describe a situation and having speakers write down or role-play what they would say in that situation (Ishihara and Cohen, 2010). The DCTs used for this study consisted of six situations in which learners had to make a request of the interlocutor. The situations varied as to the relative power of the two people, their social distance, and as to the degree of imposition created by the request. The DCT was chosen as the data elicitation tool because it was the most expedient way to collect the relatively large amount of data. There were four weeks between the pre- and posttest.

The prompts for the pre- and posttest asked learners to respond to situations that they might encounter in school or in the workplace or while using public transportation. Table 2 lists the items and the prompts. Brown and Levinson's (1978) sociological factors that determine the level of politeness used by a speaker were considered when the prompts were designed. They include relative power of the hearer over the speaker, the social

distance between the speaker and hearer, and the ranking of the imposition caused by the request.

The DCT prompts were not directly used in the instructional material. While the theme of the unit was "work readiness," the instruction emphasized the general application of making requests in many common situations that learners encountered.

The course evaluation asked learners to respond to items about class activities, instructional techniques, and what they had learned about politeness and request-making. The Class Evaluation Questionnaire, adapted from Suh (2008), consisted of 16 items. The first ten items were ranking questions which asked learners to respond to the items by circling a number 1 through 5, where 1 meant, "I completely disagree," 3 meant, "I agree," and 5 meant, "I completely agree." An example is as follows:

2) It was helpful when the teacher explained how to use grammar (modal verbs, past continuous, etc.) to make requests more polite.

1 2 3 4 5
(I completely disagree) (I agree) (I completely agree)

Following the ranking of items there were six open-ended items, which asked participants to indicate the activities that they found the most/least helpful and the most/least enjoyable.

Six of the items asked learners about their knowledge of and ability at making polite requests, nine items referred to classroom activities, and one item was a general response where learners could express anything not covered in the previous 15 items. The evaluation was anonymous to encourage honest responses (see Appendix C).[1]

[1] The term "pragmatics" was not used during instruction. "Politeness," while not a synonym for pragmatics, was a level-appropriate term and was used to illustrate the differences in language use.

Table 2. Pretest and Posttest Prompts

Item	Prompt
Pretest	
Pre1: Groceries on bus	You are riding a bus home after shopping for groceries at Rainbow Foods. The person sitting next to you does not see your bags of food. **Ask** the person if he or she could move over so you have more room for your grocery bags.
Pre2: Day off	You need a day off from work to attend a meeting at your child's school. **Ask** your boss for a day off.
Pre3: Forgotten pen	You are in English class and forgot your pen. **Ask** the person who is sitting next to you for a pen.
Pre4: Shift change	You have been working the third shift (night shift) for the past two years. But now that all of your children are in school, you would like to work during the day so you can be home when your children get home from school. **Ask** your supervisor if you can change your work schedule from the night shift to the day shift.
Pre5: Change in class schedule	You are at school. You want to change your class schedule from morning classes to evening classes. **Ask** the counselor to change your schedule.
Pre6: Grammar question	You are in English class. The class has just finished. You have a question about grammar. **Ask** your teacher if she can help you.
Posttest	
Post1: Help from co-worker	You are at work. You need help moving some heavy boxes to a different room. **Ask** your co-worker to help you move the boxes.
Post2: Help from teacher	You are applying for a new job. You have filled out an application, but you have some questions about it. You have the application with you during your English class. After class you see that your teacher is very busy, but you want her to help you with the application. **Ask** your busy teacher for help with the application.
Post3: Forgotten papers	You are in English class. The teacher just asked you to take out your papers, but you forgot your papers at home. **Ask** the student next to you if you can look at his/her papers.
Post4: Higher position at work	You are at work. There is an open position in the same company, and that position pays $4 more an hour than you currently make. You want the new job. You see your supervisor. **Ask** your supervisor if you can talk to her/him about maybe getting the higher paying position.
Post5: Leaving work early	You are work. You don't feel well. **Ask** your manager if you can go home early.
Post6: Announcement at work	You are at work. There is an announcement in the employee workroom about changes in shift hours. You don't really understand the information. **Ask** your co-worker to explain the announcement to you.

DATA ANALYSIS

The first research question focused on the effectiveness of awareness-raising tasks and explicit instruction at teaching adult ELLs how to mitigate requests. In order to answer this question, participants' handwritten responses to the pre- and posttest DCTs were transcribed into a Microsoft Word document. Then I listed the features that emerged from their responses and counted each feature for each learner. Table 3 lists the codes, features, and examples from participants' responses (not edited). Not all of the features from the pre- and posttests were explicitly taught; neither the use of a title nor the use of an apology were included in the instructional material, yet were counted for analysis purposes. The shading indicates features explicitly taught during the instruction.

Table 3. Features Counted in Analysis

Number and code	Features	Examples of participants' responses (unedited)
1. WS	I want statements	*I want to change my schedule pleas to day shift.*
2. NS	I need statements	*I need change my schedule for of day*
3. AT 4. T	Greeting Attention getter Title	*Hi. Excuse me. Hey.* *boss, sir, ma'am, my friend, teacher*
5. TI	Concern for the hearer Reference to time	*Exuss me **I know you are biss** but could you help me jast a mint with the application.*
6. G	Grounder Reason for the request	*Sear pleas I need a day off **I want to take my son a shopping***
7. US	Understaters Minimizing the imposition	*Please could you help me **just a minute**?*
8. PW	Polite words	*Please. Thanks. Thank you.*
9. ING	Past continuous –ING	*I **was wonderin**g if you teacher can help me with this application. Please I **was hoping** I could talk to you about my paying position.*
10. HM	Hypothetical Modal	*I **would like to** change my schedule in the evening. I don't like in the morning*
11. O	Other	*You have pen?* *Are you want to change schedule from mornig classes to evening school*
12. PM	Modals marked for politeness	*Could I …, May I …,* *Might I …, Would you …*
13. AP	Apologies	***I'm sorry**, would you like show me your paper, because I forgot main at home, please?*

Each feature was only counted once in each response. For example, Eman's response to Pre4-Schedule Change was, *Plese I change my schedule because I take care from my children during the day please again.* I counted +1 for the grounder (reason) – *because I take care from my children during the day*, and +1 for the first *please*. A few responses were very simple, as in "You have pen?" or did not fit into another category because of the syntactical or grammatical errors, as in "Are you want to change schedule ...?" They were

counted as "other" which indicated that an attempt at a request had been made. There were six in the pretest and one in the posttest.

The second research question focused on participants' reaction to L2 pragmatic instruction. I tallied the number of responses to each ranking question and transcribed all responses to the open-ended questions into a Microsoft Word document.

FINDINGS

Research Question #1: How effective are awareness-raising tasks and explicit instruction at teaching high-intermediate ABE English language learners to make mitigated requests in the workplace and elsewhere?

The posttests showed that participants produced fewer *I want* and *I need* statements, and produced understaters and the past continuous –ING form which were virtually absent from the pretests. The results also indicated that participants were aware that modal verbs are used to show politeness before the treatment, but they also produced more of them in the posttests. A summary of the features is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. All Participants' Pretest and Posttest Results by Features

	WS	NS	AT	T	TI	G	US	PW	ING	HM	O	PM	AP
Pretest	8	18	36	27	1	27	2	57	--	1	6	78	2
Posttest	3	8	32	15	8	30	19	61	17	3	1	101	5

The *want statements* (WS) and *need statements* (NS), which were considered to be direct requests, decreased. The use of a title (T) also decreased. There was not a substantial difference in attention getters (AT), grounders (G), polite words (PW), hypothetical modals (HM), or apologies (AP). The responses that included a reference to time (TI), understaters (US), the past continuous form (ING), and polite modals (PM) all increased. The following are examples of unedited responses including features that decreased and increased[2].

Examples of a WS and a NS present in the pretest but not in the posttest:

(1) Gabra, Pre5-Change in Class Schedule:
*Excuse me mam **I want to change** a schedule morning class. So you have morning class.*

(2) Gabra, Pre2-Day Off:
*Excuse me my boss **I need permision** today. I want pick my child at school.*

(3) Gabra, Post5-Leaving Work Early:
***Could** I go early to home because I don't feel well.*

(4) Gabra, Post2-Help from Teacher:
***Can** you help me please if you have time for a new job information*

The increased use of understaters, the past continuous tense, and polite modal verbs are major findings in this study. These three features were explicitly taught during the treatment and are presented below.

[2] Names of participants have been changed for privacy.

First, the use of understaters, lexical phrases such as *just (a minute),* and *a little (bit),* increased from two in the pretest to 19 in the posttest. For example, Natia did not produce any understaters in the pretest, but produced three in the posttest.

(5) Natia, Post2-Help from Teacher:
*Excuse me teacher, I know you are very busy, could you help me **just a minut**, I have some questions about my job application?*

(6) Natia, Post4-Higher Position at Work:
*I was wondering, if you have **just a minut** to talk about maybe getting the higher paying position for me, please, I'm working here so long time?*

Like Natia, Hirut did not produce any understaters in the pretest, but produced two in the posttest.

(7) Hirut, Post1-Help from Co-worker:
*Exussme could you help me **jast for a mint*** [just for a minute].

(8) Hirut, Post2-Help from Teacher:
*Exuss me I know you are biss but could you help me **jast a mint** [just a minute] with the application.*

Second, the past continuous form was counted in 17 of the posttest responses, but not in any of the pretest responses. Examples:

(9) Hirut, Post4-Higher Position at Work:
***I was wondring** if I could gat a new position.*

(10) Girma, Post2-Help from Teacher:
***I am wondering** I forgot me paper at home Teacher can you give to me the other one.*

(11) Boureg, Post6-Announcement at Work:
***I was just wondering** if you would switch shifts with me?*

Third, while polite modals were counted in 78 pretest responses, that number increased to 101 in the posttest responses. Participants used a modal verb in nearly every posttest response. One learner, Abdi, increased from two polite modals in the pretest to five on the posttest. His responses are as follows:

(12) Abdi, Pre1-Groceries on Bus:
Scosme [Excuse] *me madam please **may can** set with you*

(13) Abdi, Pre6-Grammar Question:
*Teacher pleas **can** you tell me this words off grammar.*

(14) Abdi, Post1-Help from teacher:
***Can** you help me to move thes boxes to the different rom please*

(15) Abdi, Post2-Help from Teacher:
Hey taeju [man's name] ***can** I see your papers? I forgat main* [mine] *at Home.*

(16) Abdi, Post4-Higher Position at Work:
My [May] *I* ***can*** *talk to you a minet if you don't maen* [mind] *please*

(17) Abdi, Post5-Leaving Work Early:
Plese I am not OK ***May Can*** *go Home? Please*

(18) Abdi, Post6-Annoucement at Work:
Can *you sho me were I am workin today and what I am dawing* [doing] *please*

Eman also increased her use of polite modals from two to five.

(19) Eman, Pre1-Groceries on Bus:
Please ***can*** *you move over because I need more spases for the bags please?*

(20) Eman, Pre5-Change in Class Schedule:
please I need change my class schedule from morning to evening I ***can?***

(21) Eman, Post1-Help from Co-worker:
Could *you helpe me for cary the boxes please?*

(22) Eman, Post2-Help from Teacher:
I was hoping I ***could*** *talk to you for a minute pleae?*

(23) Eman, Post3-Forgotten Papers:
Can *you look at her papers please?*

(24) Eman, Post5-Leaving Work Early:
I was hoping I ***could*** *leave early today because I am sick please?*

(25) Eman, Post6-Announcement:
May *I ask my co-worker to explain the announcement to me please?*

This pretest and posttest comparison of features indicates that participants' produced more analyzed and complex requests after instruction. Pretest responses were very direct, while posttest responses showed an increased use of mitigating devices and contained more complex syntax.

Table 5 shows the number of features participants produced in the pretest (top) and in the posttest (bottom-shaded). The number of days each learner attended class (out of 8) is included in the right-hand column. The features are *want statements* (WS), *need statements* (NS), attention getters (AG), use of title (T), reference to time (TI), grounders or reasons (G), understaters (US), polite words (PW), past continuous (ING), hypothetical modal (HM), other request head act mitigation (O), polite modals (PM), and apologies (AP).

Table 5. Individual Participants' Pretest and Posttest Results by Features

	WS	NS	AT	T	TI	G	US	PW	ING	HM	O	PM	AP	Atten-dance
Hirut	--	--	2	--	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	6	--	7/8
	--	--	2	--	1	--	2	2	2	--	--	6	--	
Tsege	2	2	4	--	--	2	1	4	--	--	1	2	--	8/8
	--	4	5	1	--	4	2	6	--	--	--	5		
Demissie	--	3	6	3	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	3	--	8/8
	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	6	--	
Abebe	--	--	--	1	--	2	--	--	--	--	--	6	--	7/8
	--	--	--	--	--	1	3	3	--	--	--	6	--	
Gabra	1	1	4	4	--	1	--	1	--	--	1	3	--	7/8
	--	--	--	--	1	2	--	4	--	--	--	6	--	
Geteye	--	--	--	1	--	1	--	1	--	--	1	1	--	8/8
	--	--	1	--	1	2	--	2	--	--	1	4	--	
Ayan	1	--	1	1	--	3	--	1	--	--	1	3	1	8/8
	--	1	2	--	1	2	1	2	--	1	--	4	1	
Girma	--	--	1	--	--	2	--	1	--	1	--	3	--	6/8
	--	--	1	1	1	3	--	4	1	1	--	5	--	
Nadifa	--	--	1	--	--	4	--	5	--	--	--	6	--	8/8
	--	--	--	--	1	--	1	5	--	--	--	6	--	
Abdi	2	1	2	3	--	1	--	6	--	--	1	2	11	4/8
	--	1	1	2	1	1	1	4	--	--	--	5	1	
Eman	--	3	--	2	1	4	--	4	--	--	1	1	--	7/8
	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	6	3	--	--	5	--	
Leila	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	6	--	8/8
	--	--	1	--	--	--	1	2	1	--	--	5	--	
Larissa	--	1	1	4	--	2	--	3	--	--	--	6	--	8/8
	--	--	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	--	--	6	--	8/8
Natia	1	--	1	1	--	2	--	5	--	--	--	5	--	8/8
	--	--	2	1	1	4	2	4	2	--	--	4	2	
Boureg	2	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	3	--	4/8
	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	5	--	
Chu hua	1	1	1	2	--	1	--	3	--	--	--	3	--	3/8
	--	--	1	--	1	1	--	4	--	--	--	5	1	
Kyi	--	2	4	--	--	1	--	2	--	--	--	5	0	7/8
	1	--	4	3	2	3	2	--	3	1	--	6		
Sonia	--	1	4	1	--	1	--	4	--	--	--	5	--	8/8
	--	--	2	1	--	2	--	4	2	--	--	6		
Silvia	--	1	5	2	--	4	--	6	--	--	--	6	1	3/8
	1	1	6	2	--	3	--	3	--	--	--	4	--	
Juan	--	2	2	2	--	--	1	1	--	--	1	2	--	4/8
	--	1	3	2	--	--	1	1	--	--	--	2	--	

The information in Table 5 shows the relevance of attendance, and therefore the pragmatics instruction, in measuring participants' ability to produce mitigated requests in the posttest. The table indicates that the learners who were absent for four of the class days or more did not produce the explicitly taught features at the same level as participants present for five or more days. As previously mentioned, when taken as a whole, participants produced understaters (US) and the past continuous form (ING) in the posttest, but those features were virtually absent from

the pretest. Participants Abdi, Boureg, Chu hua, Silvia, and Juan were present for four days or less. From this group, only Abdi and Juan produced understaters, as in the following:

(26) Abdi, Post4-Higher Position at Work:
My [May] *I can talk to you* ***a minet*** [minute] *if you don't maen* [mind] *please*

(27) Juan, Post2-Help from Teacher:
Excuseme teacher can you help me ***1 min*** *please*

In contrast, the six learners who were present for all eight days of the instruction produced eight understaters (out of 19 total) and four past continuous forms (out of 17) total. Those learners were Tsege, Ayan, Nadifa, Leila, Larissa, and Natia. Some examples are provided below:

(28) Larrisa, Post2-Help from Teacher:
Excuse me teacher, I know you are very busy, but I would you help me with the application, ***just a little bit****.*

(29) Natia, Post4-Higher Position at Work:
I was wondering, if you have ***just a minut*** *to talk about maybe getting the higher paying position for me, please, I'm working here so long time?*

The findings indicate that the L2 pragmatics instruction had some impact on the ABE learners' ability to soften their requests by using specific lexical phrases and forms. While these results in no way show that learners mastered the use of explicitly taught forms, they are an indication that their awareness of them and willingness to use them increased. The findings also showed that learners who were present for more of the pragmatics instruction used more of the explicitly taught forms.

Research Question #2: How do ABE English language learners evaluate efforts to teach them L2 pragmatics?

Learners were very positive about the L2 pragmatics instruction, giving positive ratings to both the instructional techniques and to the instructor. Their responses indicated that they felt more knowledgeable about how to form polite requests in English and that they perceived the instructional techniques as being effective. Nineteen learners (out of 21) completely agreed with the statement, "I learned new information about how to make polite requests in English." In response to the statement, "Now I understand better how to make requests to different people in different situations," 17 completely agreed. Sixteen participants completely agreed with the statements, "It was helpful when I practiced speaking with other students," "It was helpful to use the computer for practice using modal verbs to make polite requests," and "I learned new vocabulary."

In their written responses to the open-ended questions many learners used the same meta-talk that was used during class. Learners used the words *polite, appreciate*, and *request* and referred to *modal verbs*. In responding to the question, "What activities helped you learn the most? Why?" learners wrote:

The grammar helped mostly because the modal verbs tell us how to resquest somethings.

> *I am helpful to learn different situation on this time because I am understanding to used more polite Einglish grammar.*

In comments regarding activities that were not very helpful or enjoyable, learners responded with:

> *Mayby [Maybe] speaking with other students because I did'n always understand their [them].*
>
> *The movie clips. It's a little fast for me.*

In the open-ended question that asked, "Anything else?" learners wrote:

> *She teached us how to commecated [communicate] the job.*

In conclusion, the results indicated that the L2 pragmatic instructional techniques were effective at teaching high-intermediate level ABE ELLs how to soften requests using a limited number of lexical phrases and syntactic mitigating devices. The participants also responded favorably when they evaluated instructional techniques, classroom activities, and the instructor.

DISCUSSION

The original hypothesis behind conducting this study was that if ABE ELLs were explicitly taught how to use specific lexical phrases, they would be able to make more pragmatically-appropriate requests. It was also assumed that noticing forms and meanings, based on Schmidt's (1993) Noticing Hypothesis, was an important condition for learning.

The findings presented here showed that participants did broaden their repertoire of request-making abilities in very controlled environments, and could discuss and write about requests with some ease. After instruction, participants produced fewer direct requests, and more requests that included the explicitly taught features. Participants' responses to the posttest DCT items did not deviate very much from the explicitly taught features. This may indicate that the instruction might have been too narrow and too repetitious.

The findings and anecdotal evidence also suggest that the learners were enthusiastic about the instructional techniques and the instructor. This may speak to the intensity in lesson planning and material development, and the relatively narrow focus of the class instruction. This may also speak to the issue of position, in that the researcher was also the instructor. The learners may have responded in the way they did, in order to be pleasing to the instructor. Likewise, as the instructor, I wanted learners to acquire the material taught.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations to this study. First, the DCT was an imperfect data elicitation measure. It contained different pre- and posttest prompts, which made analyzing the data less straightforward than had the same prompts been used. At the time of design, it seemed that different prompts would have resulted in more naturalistic data given the short amount of time between the pre- and the posttest. However, different prompts made analyzing the data more difficult.

While the results of this study showed an increase of explicitly taught features after four weeks, it cannot make any claims about the learners' long-term retention of those features. A longer study or assessing learners after longer periods of time would provide more valuable information about learners' awareness of and ability to mitigate requests.

The DCT was limited to a single-turn response, rather than an interactive, multiple-rejoinder format. A multiple-rejoiner DCT "most likely prompts speakers to engage in more extended dialogue" (Ishihara and Cohen, 2010, p. 40). The single-turn response was thought to be the least-complicated way to elicit data. The multiple-rejoinder format provides more data and may be appropriate with more advanced learners.

Additionally, the DCT prompts were limited to requests. This limitation may have resulted in participants overusing certain explicitly taught phrases and mitigating devices. In fact, Cohen and Olshtain (1993) recommend including other, distractor speech act situations on DCTs to help avoid this problem. DCTs can include prompts eliciting responses other than the target speech act, so participants are not overwhelmingly focused on one particular form.

Finally, data from the DCT were only based on written responses, where participants were asked to write what they thought they would say in each situation. While some class activities asked learners to respond in writing, written requests were not part of the instructional goals. The data can only be considered an indirect measure of speech, not equivalent to a naturally-occurring oral response.

Suggestions for Further Research

Future studies would benefit from oral data collection procedures that would gather more naturally-occurring speech samples. It would also be helpful to know to what degree pragmatics is already being taught in the ABE ELL field. This would require an analysis of materials and curriculum and interviews with instructors.

It would be interesting to design a series of lessons that worked toward a culminating activity that simulated a real-life speaking situation, such as a job interview or disputing a traffic violation. Learners' pragmatic abilities could be assessed through role-plays or their ability to negotiate successfully for themselves or to gather necessary information. A culminating activity would be one way to gather data on speech acts, but it also provides an option for classroom instruction.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study suggest that explicit instruction and awareness-raising activities to be effective L2 pragmatic instructional techniques in ABE ELL classes. L2 pragmatics instruction could be incorporated into core ABE ELL classes, or perhaps more efficiently, in conversation classes. If pragmatics was the focus of a conversation class, speech acts could be systematically and routinely taught in theme-based units. Additionally, pragmatic norms and behaviors could be analyzed and compared with learners' first languages and home cultures.

Conclusion

Linda Yates (2004) and others have described pragmatics as the "secret rules of language", the 'rules' that help us know how formal or informal to be, how long to wait before you ask or answer a question, how to apologize to someone for bumping into them or how to give a

compliment. So many adult English language learners are working, studying, shopping, and interacting with their speech communities, it seems unfair to them and the field of pragmatics that they be absent from the research. Learners and ABE ELL instructors alike would benefit from more instruction in L2 pragmatics.

AUTHOR

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APPENDIX A

Awareness-raising activity
Explicit instruction

Question (request)	Place it was spoken	Who said it (speaker)	Who heard it (hearer)

"I was wondering if I could have, um, 2 weeks of vacation?"

"Would it be OK if I give you my homework tomorrow? "

"Could you please scoot over? I need room for my groceries."

"Do you wanna move over?"

"Want to do something for Heather? Her baby is probably due soon!"

Phrases that "soften" a request (make a question more polite):

"I was wondering if …."

"Would it be OK if …."

"Could you please … ?"

Homework: Pay attention to how people ask questions – people you work with, your friends, people on TV, your teachers, etc. Write down what they say.

APPENDIX B

Role-playing
Identifying parts of a request

A) Role-play situations: Work with a partner. Choose one situation and write a short dialog.

(1) Stranger to stranger – possible job

Person A: You are calling a hotel about a housekeeping position. Ask if the job is still available.
Person B: Tell the person the job is not available. The hotel has already hired someone for it.

(2) Friend to friend

Person A: Ask your friend if there are any job openings at the restaurant where she/he works.
Person B: Tell your friend there is a cook position open. Your friend should go to the restaurant and fill out an application.

(3) Worker to supervisor

Person A: Ask your boss if you could change your work schedule from evenings to days. Tell your boss you'd like to go to English classes in the evening.
Person B: Tell the worker you think that would be okay.

(4) Student to teacher

Person A: You see your teacher is busy, but you need help filling out an important form. Ask her if she could help you.
Person B: You are very busy, but because your student is so polite, you want to help him/her.

A) Listen to each group. Put a check ✔ when you hear the parts of the request.

Group	Greetings	Modal verbs	Past continuous	Reason	Thanks	Goodbye

APPENDIX C

Course Evaluation Questionnaire

I hoped that you learned a lot about how to make polite requests during summer school. Now I would like you to **evaluate** my lessons. Please think back to all of our lessons and answer the questions below. Please be honest – tell me what helped you learn and what did not. I will use this information to improve this unit and my teaching.

Directions: Circle the number below the statement. If you were not in class the day we did an activity please write **not here** next to the number.

1. I learned new information about how to make polite requests in English.

1	2	3	4	5
(I completely disagree)		(I agree)		(I completely agree)

2. It was helpful when the teacher explained how to use grammar (modal verbs, past continuous, etc.) to make requests more polite.

1	2	3	4	5
(I completely disagree)		(I agree)		(I completely agree)

3. It was helpful when I practiced **speaking** with other students.

1	2	3	4	5
(I completely disagree)		(I agree)		(I completely agree)

4. It was helpful when we **listened** to the conversation about getting a job.

1	2	3	4	5
(I completely disagree)		(I agree)		(I completely agree)

5. It was helpful to **read** the conversations and dialogs.

1	2	3	4	5
(I completely disagree)		(I agree)		(I completely agree)

6. It was helpful to watch the **movies clips** about making requests.

1	2	3	4	5
(I completely disagree)		(I agree)		(I completely agree)

7. It was helpful to use the **computer** for practice using modal verbs to make polite requests.

1	2	3	4	5
(I completely disagree)		(I agree)		(I completely agree)

6. I learned **new vocabulary**.

1 2 3 4 5
(I completely disagree) (I agree) (I completely agree)

7. The **spelling quizzes** were helpful.

1 2 3 4 5
(I completely disagree) (I agree) (I completely agree)

7. Now I understand better how to make requests to **different people** in **different situations**.

1 2 3 4 5
(I completely disagree) (I agree) (I completely agree)

B) Please write your answers to the questions. Don't worry about spelling or grammar – just do your best. I am interested in your opinions.

1. What activities helped you learn the most? Why?
2. What activities were not very helpful in your learning? Why?
3. What parts of the class did you enjoy the most? Why?
4. What parts of the class did you **not** enjoy? Why?
5. What could the teacher do differently to help you learn more?
6. Anything else?

CONTEMPORARY TOPICS EDITED BY M. ROST

Clement, J. & Lennox, C. (2009.). *Contemporary Topics Intro: Academic Listening and Note-Taking Skills (High Beginner)*. Rost, M, (Ed.). White Plains, NY: Pearson Longman. List price: $42.40

Frazier, L. & Solorzano, H. (2009). *Contemporary Topics 1: Academic Listening and Note-Taking Skills (Intermediate) Third Edition*. Rost, M, (Ed.). White Plains, NY: Pearson Longman. List price: $42.40

Kisslinger, E. (2009). *Contemporary Topics 2: Academic Listening and Note-Taking Skills (High Intermediate) Third Edition*. Rost, M, (Ed.). White Plains, NY: Pearson Longman. List price: $42.40

Beglar, D. & Murray, N. (2009). *Contemporary Topics 3: Academic Listening and Note-Taking Skills (Advanced) Third Edition*. Rost, M, (Ed.). White Plains, NY: Pearson Longman. List price: $42.40

Reviewed by
Karen Carr, Martha Dornbush, and Kiley Waite

Contemporary Topics is a series of four textbooks, ranging from high-beginning to advanced, which utilize content-based instruction to teach academic listening, note-taking, and discussion skills. Pearson Longman published the third edition of books 1, 2, 3 in 2009 and added the introductory book with this release. Each unit in the series is centered on an academic lecture covering a variety of content areas such as sociology, biology, business, public health, and linguistics.

For each level, there is a student book, Teacher's Pack, audio CD and DVD available. Across the series, the student books are consistently and thoughtfully organized. In the student book, each unit leads students through eight steps, beginning with activities to connect to the topic, build vocabulary and introduce and/or review note-taking strategies. After watching the lecture, students complete comprehension and discussion activities; moreover, each book contains suggestions for extension activities. The activities in the student book are valuable and facilitate student learning; however, instructors and students might find the vocabulary activities repetitious in form throughout the units. Nevertheless, supplemental ideas for class activities can be added to provide some variety for each unit. Ideas for such activities can be found in the Teacher's Pack, which offers numerous helpful features for planning and instruction: transcripts of all items on the DVD and CDs as well as unit objectives and teaching tips which include bonus activities, estimated time for each section, answer key and unit tests.

The DVD is perhaps one of the most useful and beneficial components of the *Contemporary Topics* series; each lecture takes place in a lecture hall and has a live student audience. Additional features on the DVD provide important scaffolding for students and can be turned on and off at the instructor's discretion: subtitles, Coaching Tips which pop up during the lecture containing note-taking and critical thinking strategies, and Presentation Points which model note-taking through a split-screen view. Another important element of the DVD is the model student conversations about the lecture intended to teach small group discussion strategies such as agreeing or disagreeing, offering an opinion, asking for clarification, and reaching a consensus. These student discussion activities and the additional Extend the Topic activities at the end of each unit provide a variety of options for students to explore the content more deeply and to apply new skills and strategies.

In addition to containing audio of the lecture and student discussion, the CDs also feature additional activities and oral questions for the unit assessment test. Each unit test consists of ten audio questions with a test paper including only multiple choice answers for students to select. The audio testing feature is a unique asset, but the tests fail to assess vocabulary and note-taking strategies as all ten questions are focused on the lecture content. Additionally, while the series offers substantial note-taking practice within each unit, it lacks additional lectures for use to assess the students' abilities to apply the listening and note-taking strategies to new lectures.

One of the most valuable aspects of the series is the accessibility of the lectures for second language learners. In an attempt to provide scaffolding for note-taking, the "Try It Out" note-taking section of each unit offers students the opportunity to practice the particular note-taking and listening strategy, such as using symbols and abbreviations and using sequence markers to organize. In addition, the producers strived to make each lecture not only visually appealing but also interesting to students; each takes place in an authentic-looking setting and features current topics such as multiple intelligences, video games, space exploration, food addiction, and microcredit. The emphasis of visual cues, prominent use of discourse markers, and adjusted rate of speech offer students valuable opportunities to practice comprehension and note-taking skills. While the series is successful in making the lectures accessible, it lacks substantial gradation of difficulty between the lectures in the four levels. The lack of increased length and rate of speech in the higher level of the series results in the introductory level being too challenging for high beginner learners and Level 3 not being adequately challenging for advanced students.

Even with the repetitive nature of some unit activities and lack of certain assessment tools, this series would be a useful adoption for a program focused on academic English skills for students preparing for secondary or post-secondary courses which would require lecture note-taking and discussions. Each level of the series could be completed effectively in a 10-12 week term. However, if a program were using this series for a program over several terms using multiple levels, the repetitive nature of the activities and structure of the units may detract from the student motivation and engagement. Programs or instructors considering adopting this series may view a sample lecture and student discussion from the level 2 book at http://www.pearsonlongman.com/ae/skills/contemptopics.

REVIEWERS

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EVERY TEACHER'S TOOLKIT BY K. KAWAGUCHI

Kawaguchi, K. (2010). *Every Teacher's Toolkit: Closing the Achievement Gap for English Learners*. White Plains, N.Y.: Pearson Education, Inc. List price: $56.00.

Reviewed by
Deirdre Bird Kramer

Mainstream and ESL teachers will find this grade 6–12 resource useful which is chock-full of lists and lessons and advice and pictures and addresses language arts, math, science and social studies teaching. Designed to be used alongside regular classroom materials, there are mini-lessons throughout the book that address the key content areas. Lists of learning strategies, 33 of them, and a list of academic vocabulary according to Averil Coxhead are provided. English learner language proficiencies are described. Six pages of the book address teaching English language learners (ELLs) in class.

It is clear that a teacher designed this book, too. The spiral binding makes it easy to use and the back cover is a stiff as a board, so the book that is 8 inches by 11 inches will stay open at the page you want to refer to, and it will stay on your lap. Amazingly, every master that is in the book is on the CD-ROM! And, a section of the book describes challenges an ELL may have with any of the ten content areas addressed and possible solutions that a teacher can implement.

The organization of the resource is in seven sections beginning with newcomers followed by linguistic elements, vocabulary, and grammar/spelling. The next two sections are organized by modality: listening/speaking, reading and writing. The last section is labeled critical thinking skills with subheadings that include interpret, summarize, opinions, implicit information, reasoning, conclusions, hypotheses, analyzing, and evaluating. Finally, there is a reference section that includes a grammar handbook, writing process, writing a research report and a technology handbook.

Mini-lessons are written for the seven sections of the book and each lesson contains a language objective, a content objective, a learning strategy, an explanation of the lesson, suggestions for differentiation, and a means to check for understanding. In addition, the lessons are sprinkled with ELL insights in the form of quick thoughts on a graphic post-it note. Each lesson, presented on 2 pages, includes the lesson plan on the left and a black line master on the right.

The marketing material for the text states that the mini-lessons include a clear explanation of English language proficiency goals. An example of this is a critical thinking skill lesson on 'reason deductively' which includes the language objective 'reason inductively and deductively'. The graphic organizer, three boxes, includes text that demonstrates deductions: 'Bright orange vegetables are a good source of Vitamin A.' 'Both carrots and sweet potatoes are bright orange.' The conclusion box is blank, but we can conclude that it is, carrots and sweet potatoes are a good source of vitamin A. This is typical of the lessons in this Toolkit. All the key elements of effective instruction are included. The suggestions for differentiation are helpful, and the activities offered under the heading of mini-lesson are fine. But this Toolkit does not address the most important goal when working with English language learners of intentional language development. The language objectives are not ones that an ESL teacher would recognize as contributing to the language proficiency of their students. Some of the language objectives include: 'interpret what something means', 'communicate effectively through writing', 'speak English clearly and effectively', 'analyze words to figure out what they mean', and 'learn English words to survive in school'.

This book does a significant disservice to our field by suggesting that these are language objectives for ELLs.

The ELL insights offered throughout the text range from nicely stated plums to supremely unhelpful statements such as 'spelling challenges ELLs'. The BICS and CALP insight lacks the simple addition that all teachers in the U.S. know what BICS looks like. At some time they have all had the student with an L1 that is not English who sounds like a native speaker but cannot read the text or write a paragraph. And, some of the insights seem to be a carryover from a mainstream version of this *Toolkit*, create a positive learning environment.

A useful section of the *Toolkit* is titled, 'Help by Content Area'. This section identifies challenges and solutions that will benefit ELLs in ten different content areas. Challenges in social studies include understanding that some words used in everyday English also have specialized meanings in social studies, such as *belief, bill, conflict, exercise* and *right;* in language arts, avoiding overdependence on bilingual dictionaries and using a monolingual dictionary; and in mathematics, realizing that mathematical operations in word problems may be suggested by many words, such as add, and combine, plus, sum, total. Some of the solutions are also helpful: Preteach the instructional and specific vocabulary needed for each task, bearing in mind that there may be a confusing crossover between words used in the social studies classroom and everyday English; allow students to use their native language to try to figure out new and complex concepts; and use think alouds to describe the process students need to go through to solve a problem as you model examples on the board.

The *Toolkit* is a good resource for the knowledgeable and experienced teacher. It will serve both ESL and mainstream teachers well by providing reminders about best practice in the other domain, ESL or mainstream. But, like many published materials, dare I say it, the language objectives are innocuous and in bad form. In addition, the advice about working with ELLs is trite and superficial. So, those of us who collect resources for the few good sections they contain should have this book on our shelves, but if your novice mainstream teacher picks this book up, you will be backpedalling and clarifying, modifying and explaining until the cows come home.

Reviewer

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THE TOUCHSTONE SERIES BY MICHAEL MCCARTHY, JEANNE MCCARTEN AND HELEN SANDIFORD

Reviewed by
Anne Lazaraton

With the ongoing emphasis on authenticity in L2 teaching and learning, it is a welcome development from the teacher's perspective when ESL materials writers consider actual facts about English language use to inform the creative process. In this way, textbook content is supported empirically by including information derived from large, searchable databases rather than textbook author intuitions. One such ESL textbook series has as its foundation facts derived from these language corpora: Cambridge University Press's *Touchstone* series, which is based on the American English subsection of the one billion-word Cambridge International Corpus. The *Touchstone* title reflects the idea that the corpus is a "touchstone" that ensures "each lesson teaches … authentic and useful language" (*Level 1 Student Book*, p. iv).

OVERVIEW

Touchstone is a four-level, integrated-skills series for (young) adult learners whose English proficiency level ranges from beginning to intermediate. The traditional four skills as well as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation are covered, with a heavy emphasis on oral skills, significant attention to grammar and vocabulary, and less focus on reading and writing. Each of the four student books contains 12 units (which must be taught in order, according to the authors), focusing on a broad range of content and topics that form the basis for acquiring these language skills. The units are further broken down into four lessons, each of which contains several subsections. The units are grouped in threes, with a 'Touchstone Checkpoint' at the end of every third unit to assess progress. For the teacher, the introductory Scope and Sequence table maps out the intersections of topics, skills, and learning objectives; students are directed to the introductory page of each unit, which lists unit objectives in clear, understandable language.

Topics included in *Touchstone Level 1 Student Book* should be familiar to teachers who have worked with beginning level, pre-academic L2 learners, including Favorite People, Everyday Life, Free Time, Neighborhoods, Shopping, and Fabulous Food.[1] Each unit has the same general format: Lesson A provides a context with a 'Getting Started' reading and/or listening snippet (found on the class audio CD set). A grammar point is then introduced and practiced; students 'Talk About It' with a partner. Lessons B and C include sections on 'Building Vocabulary', 'Building Language', one or more grammar points, and a focused speaking activity that targets a specific suprasegmental pronunciation feature. In Lesson D, 'Conversation Strategies' are emphasized, with attention to one particular strategy in the 'Strategy Plus' section. A final 'Listening and Speaking' practice and the last section, 'Free Talk', are followed by a concluding 'Vocabulary Notebook' page, which presents activities to consolidate and apply the new words presented in the unit.

[1] Potentially more challenging and less banal topics appear at other levels: Wonders of the World, Tech Savvy?, In the News (*Level 2 Student Book*); Health, Celebrations, Communication (*Level 3 Student Book*); and World Cultures, Socializing, Law and Order, Strange Events, Problem Solving, Behavior, and Fame (*Level 4 Student Book*).

KEY FEATURES

According to the authors, the series embraces "proven and familiar communicative methodologies" (*Level 1 Teacher's Edition,* p. vi) that are interaction-based. A number of *Touchstone* key features are listed on the back cover of each *Student Book,* four of which[2] are now explored with reference to Unit 3 in *Touchstone Level 1*, entitled Favorite People.

(1) Contextualized, authentic grammar practice
It is intriguing that this feature tops the list, given that *Touchstone* is not a grammar series. The targeted grammar points in each unit are introduced in a topical context in Lesson A, generally a short reading or conversation on the unit topic. This introductory material is followed by a short inductive activity (3-5 items), entitled 'Figure it Out', where students engage in controlled practice: for example, completing sentences by adding the correct possessive adjectives or writing yes-no questions and then giving true answers. This practice is followed by the first 'Grammar' section, which illustrates the target form in a shaded box containing example sentences in which the particular structure is bolded. Grammar explanations, if they appear at all, are quite brief, such as "Use the passive when the 'doer' of the action is not known or not important" (*Level 4 Student Book,* p. 23). A relevant 'In Conversation…' tip informs learners about a corpus finding related to the structure being studied; for example, in Unit 10 learners are told, "In conversation … people use the simple present and simple past more often than any other tense" (*Level 1 Student Book,* p. 99). A second grammar point is then introduced in Lesson B using the same format; a third or even fourth point may also be presented.

In this way, about 30 grammar structures are introduced and recycled in the *Level 1 Student Book* (as well within and across *Student Books Levels 2-4)*; the listening clips and assigned speaking activities in each unit target one or more of these forms. In this sense, the structures permeate the texts and activities in that unit, providing more input for 'noticing' to take place. However, many ESL/EFL learners will need or request more explicit grammatical information and more extensive grammar practice, so the teacher should be prepared to supplement the basic, inductive presentations in the *Student Book*.

(2) A focus on learning strategies for vocabulary and conversational management
This goal is met in a number of ways, a definite strength of the series. Every unit contains objectives for and practice with conversation strategies. In Unit 3 of *Level 1 Student Book*, learners are told how to show interest in what their interlocutor says, with a specific focus on *Really?* (which, the authors note, is "one of the top 50 words" in the corpus). Learners first read and listen to a dialog and are directed to notice how the speakers indicate interest. There is both controlled and more communicative practice using the strategy – fill in the blanks, guided talk with a partner, and then practice sample conversations, after which they are instructed to ask each other the questions again, giving true answers about themselves.

In terms of vocabulary learning strategies, each unit ends with a Vocabulary Notebook page, which includes Learning Tips, a Word Builder activity, and an On Your Own activity that suggests independent work on the unit topic. Unit 3 recommends making diagrams with new vocabulary, specifically, a family tree like the one used in the unit to teach relational vocabulary. Students are further advised to make a photo album of their family and friends and to write English sentences about them.

[2] Other listed features include inductive learning tasks, communicative pronunciation activities, listening strategies, reading that leads to realistic writing tasks, clear learning aims, self-assessment tools, self-study audio CD/CD-ROM.

(3) Empirical facts about spoken language
The most distinctive feature of the *Touchstone* series is the appearance of numerous corpus-based findings on the particular grammar forms, vocabulary words, and discourse structures covered in the text. These facts are presented in the 'In Conversation…' panels: for example, students are told "*I guess* is one of the top 20 expressions" (*Level 2 Student Book*, p. 71); "People say *movie* 15 times more frequently than *film*" *(Level 3 Student Book*, p. 106); "People often say *There's* before plural nouns, but it is not correct to write this" (*Level 1 Student Book*, p. 55). This information is not only useful for learners in acquiring English, but also for teachers (and teacher trainers) who are deciding what facts to include in courses that deal with the structure of English. It would perhaps have been helpful for the book to include a summary list of these findings to make them more accessible for this purpose.

(4) Personalized and communicative learning experiences
As the authors point out, the inclusion of current topics and events, such as popular music and celebrities, is meant to foster motivation in the group of learners the series targets. Many of the practice activities are personalized, indicated by an 'About You' arrow in the text, so that students talk about themselves and their classmates rather than people they may not know or care about. Almost all the practice tasks are communicative in the sense that partners or group members are involved in language production. There are a few activities that require solo work, such as sorting vocabulary words, but even these contain a communicative component by having learners use the words in subsequent discussions with their partners or group members.

Although not mentioned as a key feature, it is apparent that the series stresses the *consistent review and recycling of material* within and across units (and levels). Each student book contains two-page 'Touchstone Checkpoint' review sections that follow every third unit in the book. The Checkpoints provide additional practice with the forms, vocabulary, and conversation strategies introduced in the units; a self-check box requires students to indicate their comfort with these using a 20%, 40%, etc. rating scale. This is followed by a potential Study Plan, where students identify the particular lesson sections they want to review. Thus, students have the opportunity to engage in self-assessment at regular intervals.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

As should be obvious, a great deal of material is covered in each *Student Book*. The eleven pages of Unit 3 in *Level 1 Student Book* contain nearly 30 separate activities that introduce, practice, and review lesson material. This breadth somewhat limits the quality (or depth) of the practice activities; each contains no more than about five or six items per task. An optional *Student Workbook* is available to fill this gap; a workbook answer key appears in the *Teacher's Edition*. Additional avenues for self-study include an audio CD/CD-ROM as well as 'Touchstone Arcade', a student support website with self-scoring activities that provide extra practice with the language forms from the student book.

The extremely comprehensive *Touchstone Teacher's Edition* could be used to plan and deliver an entire course by following the very detailed instructions for each unit, lesson, and section in the *Student Book*. The 'interleaved pages' include lesson plans, additional homework ideas, and as well other information on unit content in the form of language summaries (for example, the nouns and verbs covered in the unit), speech functions (such as greetings), and basic vocabulary. The *Touchstone Testing Program*, included with the

Teacher's Edition, contains oral and written quizzes and tests, an administration and scoring guide, and the CD to accompany the assessments.

An additional component worth considering is the *Level Video*, which "exploits and reinforces the language" taught in each student book, while at the same time providing "natural conversations" that "expand students' cultural awareness" with "engaging and motivating entertainment" (*Video Resource Book*, back cover). The 'edudrama' revolves around six characters who live and work with each other; one is an exchange student from Italy, which affords the others many opportunities to present new vocabulary and explain American cultural norms. The college-age actors are quite adept at making their speech and nonverbal behavior appear 'real.' Although more experienced teachers may be able to create memorable and useful content to accompany the video, an information-packed *Video Resource Book* provides comprehensive Teaching Notes, photocopiable Worksheets, as well as Language and Culture Notes for less experienced (or more harried) ESL teachers to rely on.

I was initially skeptical about another supplemental product, *Whiteboard Software*. Although the cost may be prohibitive, the exciting learning environment it creates allows teachers to present complete lessons from a whiteboard screen, including book pages, audio and video components, and listening scripts. The software enables the user to highlight and annotate text, much like a word processing program. It is easy to install and use; it presents a non-cluttered screen with identifiable icons to scroll forward and back, annotate, write, check volume, etc. In other words, all the level components are incorporated in one piece of software. It's like a combined Powerpoint screen-word processor and once loaded resides on a local computer.

Finally, the *Touchstone* series has morphed into *Touchstone Blended Learning* in recent months. This "fully blended English course" allows teachers to customize instruction for online, face-to-face, or mixed course delivery. The online version uses the same syllabus and methodology as the print materials do, with the addition of numerous interactive and multimedia exercises that are available 24/7. The Cambridge Learning Management System, which provides the platform for the online course, is similar to course management systems like WebVista and Moodle, but with the added benefit of complete integration of Touchstone course content.

Since first impressions matter, a brief remark on the physical appearance of text. Each level of *Touchstone* is characterized with a bright color (reddish pink for Level 1) and a futuristic visual on the front cover. The attractively colored (if somewhat busy) pages contain, in addition the to text itself, inoffensive drawings and actual photographs of objects as well as people. A rainbow of characters includes some with multicultural-sounding names (Elizabeth Park, Mingwei, Yuki, Mary Ann Gomez). The sense one gets is that these people are attractive, upper middle class Americans with leisure time and money (and perfect white teeth). There are a surprising number of pictures of current American celebrities – this is one of the supposed selling points of the series – which, in our media-driven culture, is inherently interesting and motivating content for its particular audience.

SUMMARY

Despite my overall positive reaction to *Touchstone*, a few shortcomings merit a brief comment. For one, the text should not be chosen for its attention to reading and writing. The reading texts are short and adapted; their primary purpose seems to be serving as a template for the pro forma writing activities that end each unit. Secondly, the book presents and practices general rather than (pre-) academic English – this may limit its appeal for

courses or programs where even at lower levels a more academic focus is desired. Finally, my personal opinion is that *Touchstone* plays it too safe – there are no potentially controversial topics or activities; critical thinking (or thinking critically) is not stressed or required. Perhaps in trying to appeal to the broadest possible audience, a decision was made to homogenize the content so that it is almost context-free (besides being North America-centric).

In any case, the *Touchstone* series is far ahead of comparable, integrated-skills ESL/EFL materials that have been published more recently. Learners receive extensive conversational input rich with authentic vocabulary and discourse strategies, take up many opportunities to use these forms in real communication, and encounter a great deal of grammatical language just waiting to be noticed.

REVIEWER

Anne Lazaraton is an Associate Professor in and Director of the Second Language Studies Program at the University of Minnesota, where she teaches courses in ESL Methods, Language Analysis, and Discourse Analysis.

PRODUCT INFORMATION

Product website:
http://www.cambridge.org/us/esl/catalog/subject/project/item404931/Touchstone-Product-home/?site_locale=en_US&currentSubjectID=2489422

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McCarthy, M., McCarten, J., & Sandiford, H. (2005). *Touchstone level 1 teacher's edition with audio CD*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. $46.00.

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McCarthy, M., McCarten, J., & Sandiford, H. (2009). *Touchstone level 1 whiteboard software.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. $400.00.

THE HMONG LANGUAGE IN WISCONSIN BY S.M. BURT AND M. RATLIFF

Burt, S.M., & Ratliff, M. (2010). *The Hmong Language in Wisconsin: Language Shift and Pragmatic Change*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press. List price: $109.95

Reviewed by
Gregor Mieder

In her book *The Hmong Language in Wisconsin*, Dr. Susan Burt collects and analyzes linguistic evidence that demonstrates a shift in language behavior between the older and the younger generation of Hmong immigrants to Wisconsin. Using recorded interviews and production questionnaires, the author documents the various speech act strategies available to Hmong speakers to request help or food, express gratitude, and enact a refusal in male-female interaction, but the main aim of this text is the analysis of generational differences in language use and pragmatic choices. Dr. Burt focuses on how the younger generation, in contrast to elderly speakers within this language community, has adopted the use of specific native-language items to accomplish these tasks. Further, she shows how younger speakers have adopted new pragmatic strategies to perform relational tasks. Using the term "pragmalinguistic change" (p. 225), Dr. Burt employs Johanson's theoretical framework of "code-copying" (p. 28) to interpret these generations-based differences in language and pragmatic choices as being the result of the younger speakers' exposure to the English host language and its pragmatic strategies. The text also demonstrates how this English-driven influence on the speech and speech act choices of the younger generation is perceived, focusing specifically on how the reflections by the community are connected to notions of language purism.

In the first part of her book, the author presents statistical and interview-based evidence for the different choices made by older and younger Hmong speakers, demonstrating a visible shift both in regards to pragmatic as well as linguistic choices. She provides data that gives instances of how young Hmong speakers contrast with the elderly, for example by exhibiting a "dramatically increased […] frequency" (p. 104) of the use of the particle *thov*, a word chosen from a group of other alternatives due to its great semantic similarity to the English *please*. Similarly, the author's data and subsequent analyses show that young Hmong speakers differ from the elderly in regards to metapragmatic attitudes, as well as notions of obligations and norms of interactions between different age groups. The text provides data that indicate the extent to which "American English politeness teachings have affected […] understanding of usage conventions in Hmong" (p. 96) and shows that the younger generation has at its disposal a smaller range of language and language behavior choices. To demonstrate how both groups are keenly aware of this in-process cultural-linguistic shift in the use of the Hmong language, the text recounts metapragmatic commentary provided by the two generations about their perceptions and evaluations of this visible pragmatic change, connecting it to notions of language purism.

In the second part of the book, the text examines the relationship between changing gender roles in the Hmong community and the adoption of new verbal practices by young female and male Hmong speakers. The text employs Pavlenko's model of gender and language change, which holds that the desirability of gender ideologies in a target culture can motivate or discourage the adoption of new language practices. In combination with Grice's Cooperative Principle, the author uses this theoretical approach to analyze the ways in which the younger generation of Hmong speakers uses their native language in a different manner to both reflect and take advantage of the different gender roles offered by the host culture they encounter in Wisconsin. Chapter 4 specifically focuses on how different groups within the Hmong immigrant community take different approaches to refusing a man's

courting advances; through theory and interview-based data, the text reveals how the younger Hmong women, having grown up or at least having been acculturated in Wisconsin, face a social reality that, in comparison to traditional Hmong society, affords them greater control over the dating process and choice of partner. In the same chapter, the text refers to culture and gender studies to draw out the connection between the changing sociocultural reality within the Hmong immigrant society in Wisconsin and the resulting changes in language use patterns and pragmatic choices.

In the final chapters of the text, the author closely examines examples of Hmong-American expressive literature (Va-Megn Thoj's play "Hmoob Boy meets Hmong Girl" and Ka Vang's short story "The Good Hmong Girl") to depict a young generation of Hmong-American writers that is astutely aware and consciously processing the changing language strategies available to and used by young Hmong-Americans. Dr. Burt uses the creative product of Hmong writers to demonstrate an ongoing associative shift within the Hmong community, a process in which "a value or practice is assigned an association with one or two cultures in contact," (p. 213). Specifically focusing on how refusal in male-female courting situations is portrayed and to what effect the Romanized Popular Alphabet is used in Hmong writing, the author concisely reveals how the young Hmong-American immigrants exist in and create an identity out of the space they occupy between "traditional" Hmong and "modern" American societal structures, in the process showing a shift in what it means to speak, write and be Hmong. Dr. Burt's analysis of pragmatic and linguistic behaviors in Va-Megn Thoj's play demonstrates the tensions that arise out of a bi-cultural situation in which, "with spelling conventions as links, Hmong language and practices are indexed with maleness," while the "English language and American practices are indexed with femaleness." (p. 210) By doing this, the text shows that the choices available to young Hmong immigrants in Wisconsin create a conflict that finds an outlet in the associative shift experienced by young Hmong-Americans; as Hmong and American notions of gender and tradition are re-negotiated by the younger generation, the Hmong and American language codes and speech acts associated with either cultural spectrum gain a new indexical framework and are re-interpreted. Thus, the text uses both theory and collected data to demonstrate how the younger generation of Hmong immigrants, by shifting indexical relations and re-shaping the use of their native language, overtly use pragmatic strategies, language items and even writing systems to enact an immigrant identity that is comprised of indexed notions of gender, "Hmong-ness," Western identity and age.

REVIEWER

Gregor Mieder is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin in Madison with an M.A. in Applied English Linguistics, and currently works as an instructor at UW Madison's English-as-a-second-language program.

WRITERS AT WORK: FROM SENTENCE TO PARAGRAPH
BY L. BLASS & D. GORDON

Blass, L., & Gordon, D. (2010). *Writers at work: From sentence to paragraph*. New York: Cambridge University Press. List price: $29.00.

Reviewed by
Ly Nguyen

Writers at Work: From Sentence to Paragraph is part of a four-book series aiming to develop students' writing skills through a process approach. In keeping with the title, the focus of the book is on sentence and paragraph level writing. As the first book in the series, it has the difficult balancing job of providing beginning-level students with the necessary language while guiding them through the writing process.

The book is divided thematically into ten chapters, whose organization reflects the process approach. Each chapter opens with two prewriting sections, "Getting Started" and "Preparing Your Writing," which consist of vocabulary and grammar activities to provide students with language and ideas for writing. After writing their first draft, students can go to "Revising Your Writing" for additional vocabulary, connecting words, and peer feedback. In the next stage "Editing Your Writing," students learn to correct common grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors with the help of an editing checklist. Lastly in "Following Up," students share their final draft with a partner and complete a self-assessment checklist. The first seven chapters focus on developing sentences while the last three introduce the basics of paragraph writing.

The content is appropriate for the intended audience of adult ESL learners in the US. Each chapter covers one familiar and high-interest theme such as oneself, families, and work. Some activities about language and culture assume that students come from heterogeneous backgrounds. There are numerous references to American culture in the texts, reflecting the book's American setting. Nonetheless, it is possible to adapt the content for younger learners or learners in an EFL setting.

The activities are generally interesting, interactive, and varied while closely following the unit's theme. This is especially true with the "Getting Started" section, which contains various discussion and communicative activities and makes good use of pictures, lists, and graphic organizers. In contrast, grammar activities, while useful and relevant to the writing task, tend to be less interactive and more repetitive, consisting mostly of form-focused exercises such as filling in blanks and rewriting sentences.

Throughout the book there is an emphasis on student collaboration and autonomy. Students can help each other write better while reflecting on their own writing through many discussion and peer feedback activities. Writing stages are broken down into manageable steps with clear, simple explanations, which facilitates comprehension and independent learning. Helpful checklists are included in each chapter to encourage students to monitor their own progress.

The texts used in the book are mostly short descriptive sentences and paragraphs, which is justified given the focus on sentence and paragraph writing. However, they appear to be

inauthentic, having been constructed for the purposes of the activities and simplified to match the students' proficiency level. While inauthentic texts may fit the tasks better and be more manageable for beginning level students, they are not necessarily an accurate reflection of real life writing. This is, however, just a minor complaint in an otherwise excellent textbook.

Overall I would recommend *Writers at Work: From Sentence to Paragraph* to anyone looking for a good introductory level writing textbook with an emphasis on process and scaffolding.

Reviewer

Ly Nguyen has worked as an ESL instructor and tutor in Vietnam. She holds a B.A. in linguistics and is currently a student in the M.A. ESL Program at the University of Minnesota.

TEACHING ESL TO ADULTS: CLASSROOM APPROACHES IN ACTION (VIDEO SERIES) BY MARY ANN FLOREZ AND BETSY PARRISH

Florez, M.A., & Parrish, B. (2011). *Teaching ESL to Adults: Classroom Approaches in Action* (video series). Newtonville, M.A.: New American Horizons Foundation. List price: Free online at: http://www.newamericanhorizons.org.

Reviewed by
Nima Salehi

Teacher trainers and educators in adult ESL programs will be excited to see the new teacher training videos available free online or at a low cost in DVD format from the New American Horizons Foundation. This series provides adult educators with a visual understanding of what it means to teach language skills to US immigrants and examples of best practices in learner centered ESL instruction.

Educators new to the field of adult ESL instruction can see the realities of multi-level classes and what a beginning adult ESL student can absorb in one language lesson, both difficult concepts to understand without firsthand experience. They can observe the effectiveness of repetition within scaffolded or easy to complex learning activities, and watch how instructors elicit learner language to assess comprehension and reinforce acquisition.

The series includes a total of eight video segments, which can be viewed online or purchased in DVD format as volumes 1-3, with several lessons in each volume. Video segments are about 30 minutes long and each one shows how an instructor implements a particular type of lesson. The video is narrated alternately by the teacher and one of the project team leaders who explain the structure, purpose, skill or content focus for each class. Scenes follow teacher facilitation and instruction while exhibiting student responses to activities.

Volume 1 includes two videos on how to teach life skills to beginning learners within the contextual framework of personal experiences. Examples include a lesson built around a class trip to the hardware store, where the instructor uses structured to open ended activities and pictures taken with students at the store to reinforce language learning. Another lesson on simulated phone calls models the whole-part-whole approach to language instruction and how repetition can enhance oral and written language acquisition.

Volume 2 includes three video segments on how to teach beginning, multi-level and intermediate learners, a common range of learners served in adult education centers. Skill areas highlighted are vocabulary development using total physical response activities, how to teach multi-level classrooms and how to use pre, post and extension activities to enhance listening skills.

Volume 3 includes three videos that highlight techniques on the instruction of grammar, reading and writing skills to intermediate learners. A variety of strategies and approaches are illustrated which emphasize student centered contextual learning (such as developing individual life timelines and incorporating graphic organizers to develop job interview skills). Examples are provided for pre and post lesson activities, and group and individual language learning activities.

This series of eight video lessons provides a rich understanding of the array of teaching strategies implemented by instructors within one lesson framework. Videos could be used by ESL teacher training programs to supplement and enhance curriculum, or by individual educators who may wish to refresh their understanding of adult teaching theory and practice.

An additional series of six theme-based videos is currently under production, and will include topics such as giving feedback and assessing learning, developing critical thinking skills, and teacher-student interactions, all drawn from the raw footage of the original eight classes.

Betsy Parrish and Mary Ann Florez, long time contributors to the field of adult ESL teacher training, team up with Barbara Allaire, director of the New American Horizons Foundation, and video producer Federico Muchnik to produce this excellent video series. ESL instructors and the adult education programs in Minnesota, Washington D.C., and Virginia where videos were taped are listed on the website.

The result is a professional, well developed series of teacher training videos that is highly relevant to the field, yet accessible and affordable for learning centers and teacher training programs for adult ESL educators nationwide.

REVIEWER

Nima Salehi holds an M.A. in ESL from the University of Minnesota. She has taught ESL/EFL since 1980 at the K-12, adult, and university level. She co-teaches a course for ESL educators on Technology Enhanced Language Learning at Hamline University, as well as ESL courses on Business English and Academic Speaking for the Minnesota English Language Program (MELP) at the University of Minnesota.

WORLD ENGLISH: INTRO BY MARTIN MILNER

Milner,M. (2010). *World English: Intro.* Boston, MA: Heinle. List price: $37.95.

Reviewed by
Caroline Vang

World English-Intro is the first book in a series of four and is aimed at low-beginning level students. It is a full-colored textbook whose cover features a picturesque *National Geographic* photograph of a pagoda villa against the backdrop of blue mountains. The subtitle reads: "Real People, Real Places, Real Language." The back cover of the textbook promises that it will "connect English language learners to the world" through "motivating themes and topics." Even before opening the book, one can anticipate being able to learn English from a broader international perspective than your average America-centric ESL textbook.

The table of contents includes a chart that displays goals and summarizes the language features that are covered in each unit: grammar, vocabulary, listening, speaking and pronunciation, and reading and writing. At first glance, the content for the lessons of this textbook is rather standard, catering to pre-academic English learners. It begins with proper American introductions and moves through units on careers, housing, daily routines, directions, and shopping. However, one soon realizes that each unit features a vast array of places from across the globe, gender roles (women as engineers), and local practices in featured international cities and villages.

The CD-ROM is a valuable feature of this textbook. Not only does it contain the *National Geographic* videos, it also provides additional short quizzes and correct answers, which are revealed after the "submit" button is clicked. In addition, the pronunciation practice gives the sound bite for American English pronunciation, as well as a Wimba feature that records and replays the learner's voice for comparison. The level of difficulty and complexity steadily increases for these CD-ROM exercises with each chapter.

The strength of this textbook is that it covers almost every aspect of the English language within the twelve units. The CD-ROM has authentic media that have the potential to increase motivation for reading and writing. The content is diverse in its exercises and it strives to highlight global cultures and people.

However, because the textbook attempts to cover so many aspects of ESL learning, the grammar explanations are sometimes incomplete. For example, in Unit 12, the grammar point is using "*do*" to produce the simple past tense through negative statements, wh-questions, and yes/no questions. Although it has a section on irregular verbs right beneath these examples, it does not mention how the "*do*" carries the tense instead of the verb. There is also an exercise in Unit 8 on the usage of the modals "*can"* and "*could."* The book does not explain the degree of formality and politeness between "*can*" and "*could.*" Many of the grammar points are inferred through the examples, and ESL teachers would need to notice these inferences to teach grammar points that are not made explicit.

From its photographs to its language lessons, *World English: Intro* successfully introduces diversity. English is no longer a language that is taught exclusively in American contexts. From the towers of Vanuatu villages to the seaports of Iceland, English is spoken and can be used everywhere. Despite some minor drawbacks, *World English: Intro* places English in authentic contexts with a contemporary twist and practical learning goals.

REVIEWER

Caroline Vang is a graduate student in the M.A. ESL Program at the University of Minnesota.

FUTURE: ENGLISH FOR RESULTS (LEVEL 5) BY B. DIAZ, R. MAGY, AND F. SALAS-ISNARDI

Diaz, B., Magy, R., & Salas-Isnardi, F. (2010). Future: English for Results (Level 5). New York: Pearson Education, Inc. List price: $19.50.

Reviewed by
Dongming Yang

For any English learner, particularly an adult learner, every minute counts. A glimpse at the cover of Future: English for Results (Level 5), and one can readily capture this message as if he can hear the ticking of the clock. As the last volume in a six-level, four-skill series with a targeted user range from literacy-level beginners to low-advanced learners, Future prepares adults with low-advanced English proficiency for transition to further education or career advancement.

Revolving around an everyday scenario, such as goal setting, job hunting and trip planning, each unit starts with a full-page photo and a list of goals, and then continues with nine lessons, including grammar, listening and speaking, reading, writing as well as life skills. It ends with a summary lesson divided into four parts: grammar review, act-it-out activities, problem-solving tasks and community-building assignments. All units correlate to major standards related to adult ESL education, including CASAS Listening and Reading Basic Skill Content Standards, CASAS Competencies, Los Angeles Unified School District ESL Standards, and Florida Adult ESOL Standards.

Reading lessons occupy the largest chunk of Future with the purpose of elucidating civics and American culture from authentic materials, such as the beginnings of the United States, the importance of paying fines, worker's rights to a safe workplace and so forth. Students first reflect on the topic and then deal with comprehension questions. They also practice reading skills step by step from previewing content and summarizing ideas to identifying purposes and making inferences. An innovative activity is Word Work, where students prioritize and record new words in their own vocabulary logs. Finally, they discuss pertinent real-life issues in a Make-It-Personal section. For example, in a unit about safety, a prompt is given, "What are some reasons people might not want to complain about unsafe working conditions? What advice would you give them?"

Another key skill of the book is targeted in the process-based writing lessons. A Before-You-Write section introduces a genre (personal narratives, autobiographical essays, cover letters, etc.) and its relevant tips each time; for example, imperatives are commonly used in giving instructions. Prior to writing, students brainstorm ideas on the topic and analyze a model. They then practice strategies in the Think-on-Paper section, where graphic organizers are employed to clarify key points and supporting details. A checklist is available for self-editing at the end.

As Future aims at catering to adult learners' functional needs in today's world, it not only addresses language skills but also learning strategies. Throughout the units, a Persistence Curriculum encourages students' consistent efforts independently and collaboratively. Several themes important to life-long learning, such as exploring expectations, identifying strengths and countering challenges, are first examined by individuals and then discussed in groups, through which the awareness of being a responsible and strategic learner is nurtured and reinforced in students.

An added bonus to Future 5 is the rich resources available to students. The Practice Plus CD-ROM, attached to every student book, covers the entire class audio program and supplementary listening exercises. In addition, the well-organized appendices, including writing models, grammar references, audio scripts, a functional résumé and a glossary, are highly conducive to those who want to extend their learning beyond classroom or make up what they miss in class.

Though each unit is richly layered with original content, various skill areas are randomly ordered. On the one hand, this lends some autonomy and flexibility to teachers when planning the lesson sequence; on the other hand, it may be difficult for students to switch from one skill to another without a routine to follow as they browse through various units. Thus, teachers have to seek a balance while prioritizing certain skills. One of my biggest impressions of the book is its bewildering array of colors within every unit and lesson. Perhaps if each skill area were assigned a theme color, for instance, green stands for "grammar" while yellow signals "reading", students would find more predictability in the contents.

Overall, Future: English for Results (Level 5) is an integrated, effective textbook with a strong focus on practical skills and learning strategies. Furthermore, the appealing articles, diverse activities and handy appendices all render it a good choice for adult learners to acquire real-life English in pursuit of a better future, as is promised by the title.

REVIEWER

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