

TEACHING PRAGMATICS TO YOUNG LEARNERS

A THESIS IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

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## TEACHING PRAGMATICS TO YOUNG LEARNERS

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American University of Sharjah, 2008

### ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to investigate to what extent pragmatic competence can be taught to young learners in L2 classrooms. It also focuses on looking at the students' attitudes towards the activities presented to them during the direct teaching phase of pragmatics. In this study I will focus on teaching pragmatic knowledge because only little work has been done on the explicit teaching of pragmatic knowledge.

Unfortunately, teaching in L2 classes in the UAE focuses more on teaching vocabulary and grammatical competence than on teaching pragmatic or socio-cultural competence. Thus, I want to bring this issue into focus and I want to show teachers, researchers, and educators how it is relatively easy to teach pragmatic competence as well as grammatical competence. If L2 speakers make grammatical mistakes, usually their message can be understood and they will still be able to communicate with others in the target language. However, if they make pragmatic mistakes, the situation is usually problematic and they will not be understandable. Therefore, they will face problems in communicating with different people in the target language community.

To achieve my research goal I went through four stages. First of all, I assessed the students in the pre-instruction phase on eight different situations (See appendix B) to see what available pragmatic knowledge they have. Then, a five-week teaching program of pragmatics was offered to those 48 students to help them acquire and learn more about pragmatics to develop their skills. In the post- instruction phase I reassessed the same students based on the same eight situations I gave them before the teaching program in order to have some comparative data. In the post-post instruction

phase I reassessed the students after the students had a two weeks break to see if they still remember what they learnt in the teaching course. A descriptive observational journal was also used throughout the semester as an extra supportive qualitative tool of research. Results of this research emphasize that students in our UAE governmental schools are very weak in their pragmatic knowledge and they often tend to transfer their L1's pragmatic knowledge into the target language's pragmatics. However, this can be overcome if teachers focus on teaching this aspect of knowledge implicitly besides the other aspects of language which are grammar and writing. The most important point that this research reveals is that culture and language should be integrated and without teaching the students some aspects of the target language cultural pragmatic norms, they will keep transferring their L1's pragmatic knowledge into their L2's without being aware of it.

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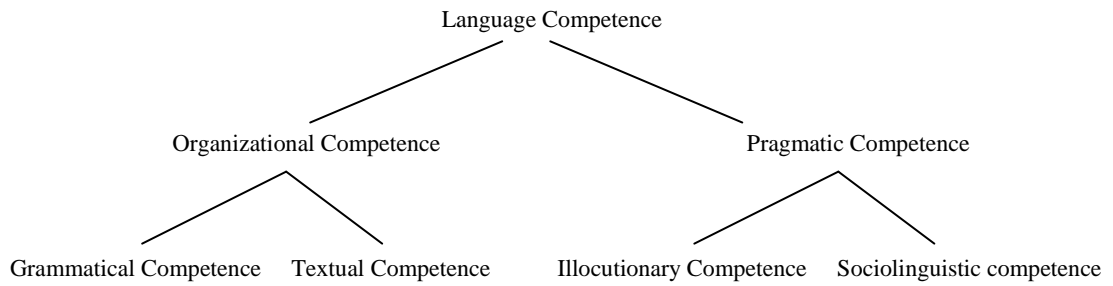


Figure1. Components of language competence (Bachman, 1990, p. 84)



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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to Abdullah Ibraheem, my beloved husband, for his very big support. Thank you for everything.

## Chapter 1

### Overview of the Study

I believe that language and culture are two integrated components that cannot be separated from each other. A teacher can achieve teaching both language and culture successfully when using effective cultural and contextual activities that are fun and meaningful at the same time. What is more, authenticity plays a vital role in teaching both language and culture, so making the activities as authentic as possible would help to make the activities more meaningful and attractive for the students. In addition, I believe that ESL/EFL curricula should represent aspects of the target language's culture and that an integrated curriculum is an effective one.

According to Huth and Nikazm (2006), "It has been noted that dialogues in [ESL] textbooks do not follow patterns of naturally occurring talk and are mainly designed to introduce new grammar and/or vocabulary" (p. 73). Consequently, these dialogues and textbooks fail to represent sociopragmatic norms and cultural differences of the target language. This problem can be seen in the textbooks used in Government schools in the UAE. When I was a student in school eight years ago, I studied English using a textbook called, *English for the Emirates*. This textbook series was created by professors and English supervisors in the UAE's educational zone. The focus of the book was on using English to describe UAE culture and behavior, including greetings, popular food like dates and *harees*, a special traditional food made mainly from wheat and chicken or meat. The book also included popular traditional drinks like Arabian coffee, places that are only in the UAE, and the local currency, which is the Dirham.

The *English for the Emirates* curriculum was empty of any other cultures' behaviors, places, or even pictures, and actually separated language and culture. In other words, students using this book studied another culture's language and applied it to their own culture only. This proved to be a problem for many students in the UAE, and I believe this problem can be overcome if the teachers expose students to different situations that help students to put the different English vocabulary and phrases into practice. However, many teachers focus more on teaching grammatical competence and they neglect pragmatic competence. With English becoming more and more wide spread, it is important that Emarati students be given more opportunities to learn how

to use the language in a variety of situations and opportunities to develop pragmatic competence.

This neglect of teaching pragmatics has an effect on the second language learners' language use; they show significant differences from native speakers in language use. Edwards and Csizer (2004) also note that speakers who do not use pragmatically appropriate language "run the risk of appearing uncooperative at the least, or, more seriously, rude or insulting" (p. 1). This issue calls for teaching pragmatics in language classrooms to help the students develop their skills to lead to better communication with people. The Gulf countries need this especially because they have gone through remarkable development in a relatively short time. The speed of this development, as Syed (2003) mentions, has had a serious impact on the "overall planning, implementation, and management of language programs" (p. 338). So, all students in all levels have to learn the language in the schools to be able to survive in this multicultural and multilingual region. According to Syed (2003), this very fast development and change of policies has made the students feel lost and they "see no concrete links between English language ability and communicative requirements" (p. 338). They see that there is a gap in their language learning and curriculum which does not make a connection between the language they learn and how to use it in their culture and community.

Although many studies have been done on pragmatic competence (for example, Achiba, 2002; Huth & Nikazm, 2006; Kasper, 1997, Zha, Kelly & Park, 2006; & Zohreh, 2005), this study is one of the few studies that have been done on young learners, especially in the UAE educational context.

### Context

The context of this study is one of Ras Al Khaimah's female public schools where all the subjects are taught in Arabic, while English is only taught once a day for only 45 minutes. Most of the language of instruction in the school, used for more than half of the curriculum time, is in Arabic, which is the students' native language. The students in the classrooms also come from the same background, which is the UAE, and there are no more other Arab nationalities in the school. While walking around the school, a visitor can only see one poster of English in one of the corridors, while Arabic posters can be found everywhere in the school.

The students in this school used to study the *English for the Emirates* curriculum which was full of UAE's cultural lessons since 1995. This curriculum was exchanged in 2002 with the *New Parade* curriculum which is based on an American curriculum. Although the curriculum was changed, the teachers are still using some of the old teaching techniques that are based on teaching grammar and vocabulary rather than teaching the students how to communicate using suitable pragmatics.

### Research Questions

My students are lacking the ability to communicate effectively in English with each other and with other people in the community using the appropriate pragmatics skills. One reason for this could be that they have never been taught English pragmatics in their English classes. The students are young but I believe it is better for them to be taught pragmatics at an early stage in their English education. This has not been the case in UAE government schools, as such; this study is an attempt to investigate the issue of teaching pragmatics explicitly to young learners in one of the UAE's schools. Specifically, this study attempted to answer the following questions:

- What is the students' current level in pragmatics?
- To what extent can pragmatic competence be taught to young learners in L2 classrooms to improve their pragmatic skills?
- What are the students' attitudes towards the pragmatic activities presented to them during the pragmatic lessons?

By reading my study, I assume that other teachers will acquire more information about teaching pragmatic competence, how it can be implemented in young learners' classrooms, and what effects it will have on them. I will thus then be in a better position to help educate my colleagues on this important aspect of teaching.

### Overview of Chapters and Appendices

Chapter one provides readers with an introduction of the study. It gives them an overview of some issues concerning the way English is taught in UAE governmental schools and the curriculum used. It also presents this research's questions.

Chapter two supplies readers with a review of the literature regarding teaching pragmatics in the classrooms. It talks about the teacher as researcher and discusses

children's second language acquisition. It explains previous teaching methods that used to be implemented in UAE schools and suggests a more suitable method that should be used with the new curriculum nowadays. It also informs teachers and educators of the importance of teaching pragmatics in our classrooms using the Communicative Approach and what suitable activities and teaching methods can be used to do that. Chapter two ends with a discussion of pragmatic transfer and the value of video taping in doing classroom based research.

Chapter three contains a detailed description of the participants and the development of the data collection instruments used for the study. Four data collection tools were used in the study. First of all, a pre-instruction assessment was used to assess the students' current level of pragmatics. Five weeks of direct instruction of target pragmatic phrases followed that assessment. Then, a post instruction assessment was done to see the students' levels after the five weeks of instruction. A final assessment followed the post assessment called the post-post instruction assessment that was done two weeks later to see if the students could still remember and use what they had studied in the five weeks of instruction or not. Chapter four analyzes the gathered data, and the findings are also listed and interpreted. Chapter five summarizes and discusses the findings, the pedagogical implications, and limitations of the study, and gives suggestions for further research.

Appendixes A1, A2, and A3 includes tables of vocabulary the students generated in the role-play in the pre-instruction assessment, the post-instruction assessment, and the post-post instruction assessment. Appendix B lists the eight role-play situations used in the pre-, post-, and post-post- instruction assessments. Appendix C illustrates an example of a greeting lesson that is taught to grade one students. Appendix D includes an example of the language objectives of unit one in grade one's *New Parade* book. Appendix E lists the students' interview questions I used to ask the students at the end of each class, while appendix F illustrates the groups' interview questions I used to ask for each group individually after performing each role play. The pictures I used to set up the role plays in the pre-instruction, post-instruction, and post-post instruction assessments are displayed in appendix G.

## Chapter 2

### Review of the Literature

This chapter reviews the existing literature about different topics related to this study. It begins with definitions of a teacher researcher and its importance and benefits for teachers. Next is a review of second language acquisition to show how some researchers have found that languages, either first or second, can be easily acquired by young children. This is followed by different English language teaching approaches that have been used in the UAE and focusing more on the Communicative Language Teaching Approach that found to be the most successful approach so far and that was used mostly in the pragmatic lessons used for data collection. Later on in this section, the literature discusses communicative competence focusing more on explaining pragmatic competence as one type of these competencies. It moves then to argue about the teachability of pragmatic competence and the role of authenticity in teaching pragmatics. It also reviews how pragmatics can be taught to young learners and how important it is to think about culture and pragmatic transfer when teaching pragmatics. This is followed by a discussion of the importance of building vocabulary in developing the students' pragmatic knowledge, and it explains how vocabulary can be acquired.

#### Teacher as Researcher

Teaching is a profession, and teachers, like all professional people need to be constantly reflecting on what they are doing to improve their practice. As Misson (2006) notes, teaching is not about performing classroom routines, but about using the skills developed through professional training to adapt to the needs of a particular class. For these reasons, teachers need to have the capacity for discovering and analyzing their students' needs and how they, as teachers, might best meet them. One way to do this is to engage in teacher research.

The concept of teacher-as-researcher is included in recent literature on educational change, which encourages teachers to keep developing and progressing to "sustain an on-going commitment" (Mitchell, 2000, p. 1). Mitchell also argues that "teacher-research can generate a great deal of practically sophisticated knowledge that fills a void in the current knowledge base of teaching" (p. 1). What is more, Freeman (2001) argues that because teachers are central mediators in how and what students

learn in their classrooms, teachers should engage in their own professional learning in order to improve the students' learning. This is one reason why more teachers are being encouraged to be researchers in their own classrooms. This is what is also happening in the UAE's Ministry of Education policies. Teachers today are not only asked to teach and correct exams. There is a change in the Ministry of Education's vision toward encouraging teachers to be more reflective and critical. The Ministry of Education is also now aiming to shift education in the UAE schools from teaching to learning, from the teacher to the learner, from memorization to creativity, reflection, and imagination and innovation (Clark, 2006). To achieve this goal, the Ministry of Education is intending to immerse teachers and supervisors into continuous training programs and workshops to change the traditional roles they play into more effective roles. Teachers are also asked to take on many responsibilities other than only teaching; one of them is doing research about any issue they face in their classrooms. Many workshops on teacher development have been done to train teachers and to help them to conduct and write up research.

#### Benefits of Teacher Research

Engaging teachers in doing research also, as Mann (2005) notes, "plays a huge part in putting the practitioner at the centre of efforts to understand and develop language teaching and learning practice" (p. 103). Campbell (2004) also argues that teacher research is important to "improve teaching and learning and to develop and refine the curriculum and teaching practice, and to innovate and evaluate their teaching" (p. 24). This shows that teacher research does not only have to do with exploring a problem in a classroom or a school and solving it. Teacher research plays a role in developing curriculums and practices to lead to better learning and it, as Nunan (1997) argues, does not only lead to more effective practice and solutions to practical problems in the classroom, but it also helps to generate insights into the teaching and learning of language in general.

Queenan (1988) further explains that there are many benefits of teacher research. He indicates that "teacher researchers believe that research changes their teaching, their attitude toward teaching, their process of learning, and their commitment to the teaching profession" (p. 42). What is more, Johnson (1993) states, "Teachers engaging in action research attend more carefully to their methods, their perceptions and understandings, and their whole approach to the teaching process" (p.



1). So, through research teachers learn how and what their students need to learn, model how to learn, and sometimes change their way of teaching from "deliver and test" to "study and help" (Queenan, 1988, p. 41). Engaging teachers in doing research will also have a great impact on teaching, learning, and schooling. Parsons (n.d) also argues that teachers do research for the purpose of "improving teaching, to test educational theory, or to evaluate and implement an educational plan" (para. 1). This show how beneficial doing research is; teachers conducting research are more likely to act on their research outcomes in the classrooms. They would think more about their own way of teaching and the methods they are using and they would adapt them based on their research outcomes.

Gunn (2005) argues that both teachers and students should work collaboratively in classroom research. She notes that "The students and the teacher learn together in the language classroom so it stands to reason that they should team up and work together when researching the classroom" (p. 101). This is very important, especially when the reason behind the research is to improve the "quality of life" (Allwright, 2003, p. 114). Allwright (2003) explains the classroom is for both teachers and students and instead of solving problems directly we should strive to understand the problem and its causes from the students' points of view as well.

Overall, practitioner research is not limited to projects carried out by teachers in an educational setting. It is appropriate in any context when, as Bell (1999) states, "specific knowledge is required for a specific problem in a specific situation, or when a new approach is to be grafted on to an existing system" (p. 10). What is more, the key distinction, as Nunan (1997) notes, should be not whether an activity is a practitioner research or regular research, but whether it is good research or poor research. Finally, Burton (1998) claims that formal teacher education courses have been the major, reliable link to theory and practice.

### Children's Second Language Acquisition

According to Lightbown and Spada (1999), "All second language learners, regardless of age, have acquired at least one language. This prior knowledge may be an advantage in the sense that the learner has an idea of how languages work" (p. 214). So, children like adults have a major advantage in acquiring a second language. When they start to learn their second language they do not have to develop the basic concepts and understandings about the world that are necessary in first language

learning (Emmitt & Pollock, 1991, p. 187) because they have a system already in place. They already have experience in using cognitive processes that they can use for learning languages. They know about language and how it works which often makes their second language learning easier by transferring all this knowledge to it positively. However, if the learners make some incorrect guesses about how the second language works, they will be transferring their L1 knowledge into their L2 negatively causing errors and mistakes.

Adult learners are more cognitively mature and they have already developed their metalinguistic awareness. However, young learners start learning a second language without the benefit of some of the skills and knowledge which adult learners have. This makes it difficult for them to think about the language they are learning and reflect on it. What is more, adult learners have a more external knowledge about the world which is bound to help in learning L2, while a child lacks this knowledge. Lightbown and Spada (1999) state that young learners tend to have "low affective filters" (p. 39) because most of them are not nervous about making mistakes. It is said that "a watched pot never boils" and this applies to learning a language, as Brown (2000) explains. He claims that if a language learner is "too consciously aware of what he or she is doing" (p. 61), he/she will have difficulty learning the second language. Child learners are not aware that they are acquiring a language; thus, they often acquire the second language easily. Some of them also do not feel nervous about attempting to use the language and they chatter away happily in their new language; others prefer to "listen and participate silently in social interaction with their peers" (p. 33), as Lightbown and Spada (1999) explain. On the other hand, adults often find it stressful when they are unable to express themselves clearly, and they are nervous about making mistakes and sounding silly when speaking the language.

The learning conditions also play a role in second language acquisition. Lightbown and Spada (1999) argue that young learners are allowed to be silent until they are ready to speak, while older learners are forced to speak in an informal second language environment. Furthermore, young learners are exposed to second language for many hours daily, but older learners receive only limited exposure to the second language in language classrooms. Motivation also affects acquiring a second language. According to Brown (2000), "A learner will be successful with the proper motivation" (p. 160). He also claims that "motivation is a key to learning" (p. 160). There are many different kinds of motivation; these are often divided into types such

as integrative or instrumental, intrinsic or extrinsic. Those who learn for an internal reward and for their self-perceived needs and goals are intrinsically motivated, and those who learn to get an external reward like high grades, money, prizes, or praise are extrinsically motivated. Integrative and instrumental orientations refer to the degree that a language is learned for its own sake (integratively) or for instrumental purposes (Brown, 2000). The instrumental motivation describes the second language learner who acquires a language for attaining instrumental goal such as furthering a career. The integrative side describes learners whose purpose is to understand and become always integrated with the culture and people of the target language.

Extroversion and introversion are also potentially important factors in the acquisition of a second language. Studies have shown that extroverted people who are unreserved and outgoing acquire a second language better than introverted, quiet, and shy people. Naiman et al. (1978) did a study on 72 Canadian high school students from grades 8, 10, and 12 who were studying French as a second language. Naiman gave them all questionnaires to determine their psychological profiles, as well as French listening test and imitation test. He found that 70% of the students with higher grades (B or higher) considered themselves extroverts. According to Brown (2000), the extroverted person is “willing to take conversational risks” (p. 159). They do not avoid interaction with native speakers and take the opportunity to speak the language.

Another factor that makes second language acquisition easier and successful is the way this language is learned or taught. There are many theories of second language acquisition that explain how a second language can be acquired. One of the most important models for second language acquisition is Long's (1983) Interaction Hypothesis (1983). Long developed an interaction hypothesis that is reception-based. He views interaction and input as two major players in the processes of acquisition. He also agrees with Krashen (1982) that comprehensible input is necessary for language acquisition. He sees modified interaction as the necessary mechanism for this to take place. In his view, Long stresses the importance of comprehensible input but places more emphasis on the interaction that takes place in two-way communication, in ways which lead learners to adapt what they are saying until they show signs of understanding. This shows how important interaction is for second language acquisition. Teachers should interact with students using real life situations and different effective strategies like role playing that "provides access to pragmatic knowledge and skills in the target language" (Kim & Hall, 2002, p. 4).

The innatist theory which has had the most influence on second language teaching is Stephen Krashen's (1982) Monitor Model. Krashen has five central hypotheses in his model: (1) The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis; (2) The Monitor Hypothesis; (3) The Natural Order Hypothesis; (4) The Input Hypothesis; and (5) The Affective Filter Hypothesis.

According to Krashen (1982), adult second language learners develop knowledge of second language by two ways, which are "learning" and "acquisition" (p. 152). In his view, people can acquire a language easily subconsciously and without paying attention to the language's form the same way that a child picks up his or her first language. However, he argues that people learn a language through a conscious process of study and by paying attention to form and language rules. Overall, Krashen asserts that acquisition is more important than learning and that "Learning cannot turn into acquisition" (p. 157). This explains the first hypothesis of Krashen's Monitor Model. However, in McLaughlin's (1987) point of view, it is impossible to distinguish between subconscious (acquisition) and conscious (learning) processes. He believes that these terms are "too laden with surplus meaning and too difficult to define empirically to be successful theoretically" (p. 627). He further argues that the distinction between conscious/subconscious is greatly weakened by our inability to identify what that distinction is.

The Monitor Hypothesis explains that the acquired system plays a role in initiating the speaker's utterances and is responsible for fluency and making judgments about correctness. On the other hand, the learned system acts as a monitor, editing and changing what the acquired system has produced. As knowing the rules in the learned system only help to enhance what has been acquired, Krashen (1982) maintains that teachers should create conditions for acquisition rather than learning.

The Natural Order Hypothesis is mainly based on Krashen's observation that second language learners acquire the features of the target language going through the same stages as they did with their first language. The fourth hypothesis is the Input Hypothesis which explains that learners can acquire a language by being them exposed to comprehensible input that should include forms and structures that are just above the learners' current level of proficiency ( $i+1$ ). The difficulty in this hypothesis is found in Krashen's claim that second language learners can not succeed without input. While, Input is not the only factor in success; we learn a lot out of the classroom through self-study, and other techniques. The Affective Filter Hypothesis is

the last hypothesis in Krashen's Monitor Model. This hypothesis suggests that the "affective filter" can be described as an imaginary barrier which prevents learners from acquiring a language. The word "affect" refers to a learner who is in anger, tense, bored and tired or maybe happy, excited and relaxed. Krashen claims that if the filter is up the input will be blocked and the learners will not acquire the language, while if the filter is down and the learners are relaxed and motivated, they will acquire the language easily.

Despite the various criticisms, Krashen's Monitor Model of second language acquisition had a great impact on the way second language learning was viewed, and initiated research towards the discovery of order of acquisition. Both Krashen's (1982) and Long's (1983) findings are as relevant now to this study as they were when they were first introduced more than 20 years ago. I chose to discuss Long's Interaction Hypothesis because interaction is the core for my study. Krashen's Input Hypothesis was also relevant in that I was not teaching grammar, but I was implementing more inductive and comprehensive lessons and activities. The Affective Filter Hypothesis in Krashen's Monitor Model also supported me in designing lessons that are stress less and motivating to make learning the language easier.

#### UAE English Language Teaching Approaches

According to Harold, McNally, and McAskill (2002), the United Arab Emirates is embarking on a wide-ranging reform of their education system that aims to move classroom practice from a mainly teacher-directed and exam-driven system to a more student-centered one based on varied methodologies and integrated with modern technology.

The most common approach that the UAE schools used to use is the Grammar/Translation method. Although this approach has dominated language teaching in the UAE for many years, the Grammar/Translation method is "an old-fashion teaching technique that involves learning of verbs and vocabulary, together with translation of sentences from L1 to L2 and vice versa" (Krantz, Hird, & Tennant, 2002, p. 1). Thornbury (2005) states that Grammar/Translation is a method of second language teaching which uses translation and grammar study as the main teaching and learning activities. This method gives more attention to writing and reading skills and ignores the importance of speaking and communication skills in developing students' language skills. What is more, according to Cook (2003), success should be measured

in terms of the accurate use of grammar and vocabulary, rather than "effective communication" (p. 32).

The UAE changed their curriculums in 2002. These new curricula focus on the students' work and engagement in the classroom, and they move the classes from teacher-centered to student-centered. These curricula apply a more communicative approach which is also called Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Unlike the Grammar/Translation method, Lightbown and Spada (1999) state that CLT is an approach which explicates that "successful language learning involves not only knowledge of the structures and forms, but also the functions and purposes that a language serves in different communicative settings" (p. 172). Bailey (2005) agrees with Lightbown and Spada in that learners acquire the second language and learn the main factors of the language through "interaction with other people" (p. 18). What is more, Hatch (1992), Pica (1994), and Long (1983) also indicate that much second language acquisition takes place through conversational interaction in which young learners have to engage in some type of conversations that give them the chance to use and practice the available language they have. So, it is clear that the focus of CLT, as Cook (2003) proposes, is "primarily and necessarily social, concerned as it was with the goal of successful communication" (p. 36). He also adds that CLT shifted the attention of educators from an emphasis on form to emphasis on communication and from teaching and practice of grammar and pronunciation rules and the learning of vocabulary lists, to communicative activities.

Many studies have shown that CLT is a more valid approach compared to the Grammar/Translation Method (GTM). Some researches like Zhenhui (2003) suggest that the traditional teaching approaches have not been used much because "Language structure practice should be used in contexts that involve some basic principles of appropriateness" (p. 57). He further explains that GTM failed to help learners to communicate effectively using the appropriate social language and expressions. However, CLT provides opportunities for learners to use the language authentically to communicate in real communicative circumstances outside the classroom. Additionally, CLT plays an essential role in developing the students' speaking skills, since it provides the students with "more opportunities to express their own individuality in the classroom" (Littlewood, 1981, p. 94) freely and without any hesitation.

Teachers from Zayed University did a project with their student teachers who were twenty women entering the final two years of their degree in the College of Education. The project aimed to document experiences of these students in their school-based practicum courses and to analyze the extent to which they are able to introduce new practices to government schools during their teaching practice. The study lasted for two semesters in which the team did surveys before and after practicum, wrote some reflections, did interviews with student teachers, and developed some individual case studies. They found that student teachers were successful in achieving their practicum goals. They were given the opportunity to try their new ideas and experiments that are CLT based, on the students like applying some grouping strategies. They concluded that “the UAE espouses a strong desire to introduce modern teaching methods [that are based on CLT] and to make their education system compatible with international best practice” (Harold, McNally & McAskill, 2002, para. 30), but the infrastructure to support this is still evolving.

Ahmed (2004) did another study on grade three students in one of the UAE’s government schools. Her study tackled the issue of collaborative learning and social interaction in young learners’ classrooms. She used observations, photographs and interviews to collect her data. Her study lasted for 14 weeks. She found that the students showed great growth in their academic level through collaborative learning, which is one technique supported by CLT. The students also showed growth in their social and emotional skills in which they started to be more confident and cooperative.

### Communicative Competence

Dell Hymes (1972 a) introduced the idea of communicative competence as a result of his dissatisfaction with the Chomskian distinction between competence and performance. Chomsky (1965) limited the meaning of competence to a "speaker's knowledge of grammar" (Hymes, 1972a, p. xxxv), and he defined performance as the ability to speak appropriately. As Hymes (1972b) observed, people who have only linguistic competence probably won't be able to communicate. They may be producing sentences that are grammatically correct, but possibly unconnected to the situations in which they occur. What is needed for successful communication, Hymes (1972a) advocated, is four types of knowledge: possibility (whether an instance conforms to the rules of grammar and pronunciation), feasibility (whether a given

piece of language can be successfully processed by the mind), appropriateness (whether verbal or non-verbal behavior is appropriate to a particular situation, relationship or culture), and attestedness (whether a particular combination of words actually occurs).

Baker (2001) mentions that the language theories of the 1960s tended to focus more on "language skills and components" (p. 36). They did not reveal and show how skills and knowledge are integrated, and they also ignored the sociocultural and sociolinguistic context of language. However, earlier studies and models, like Canale and Swain's (1980) model and Bachman's (1990) model, show that language competence does not only include linguistic competence like vocabulary and grammar, but also other competencies. Building upon Hymes' original model, Canale and Swain (1980) developed an alternative model of communicative competence which, while keeping Hymes' main idea, suggests a different set of components that include the following: a linguistic component (e.g., syntax and vocabulary); a sociolinguistic component (e.g., use of appropriate language in different situations), and a strategic component (e.g., capacity to overcome problems in communicating in the target language).

Barron (2003) argues, "Although pragmatic competence is essentially included in [Canale and Swain's model] under sociolinguistic competence, it was not until Bachman (1990) that pragmatic competence came into its own" (p. 9). Bachman's model is valuable because it considers both language competence and language performance. Gunn (2003) mentions that "Bachman does not use the term "communicative competence", but rather talks of Communicative Language Ability (CLA)" (p. 17). Bachman (1990) states that CLA can be described as "consisting of both knowledge, or competence, and the capacity for implementing, or executing that competence in appropriate, contextualized communicative language use" (p. 84). He summarized his model in the following figure:

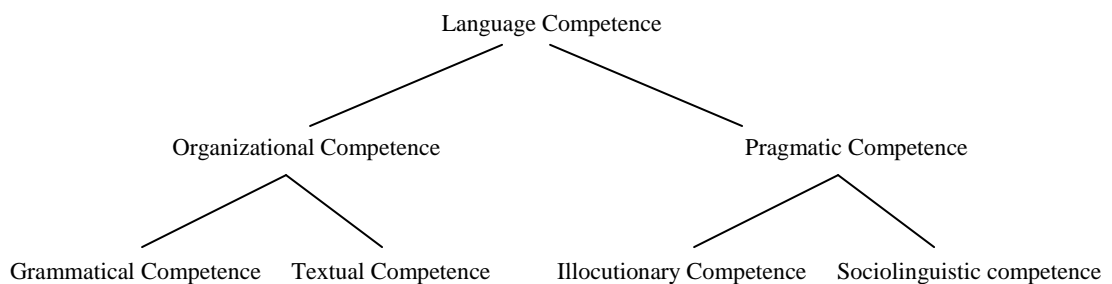


Figure1. Components of language competence (Bachman, 1990, p. 84)



To explain more, Bachman argues that this CLA consists of "organizational" and "pragmatic" competence, respectively, subdivided into "grammatical and textual components" which have to do more with language skills like listening, reading, writing, and speaking, and into "illocutionary and sociolinguistic components" which have to do with using the language in different contexts with different people (Bachman, 1990, p. 86). Bachman notes that the previously mentioned components interact with each other. He therefore adds to the model the notion of strategic competence which performs assessment, planning, and execution.

The competencies discussed so far pertain to the relationship among signs and their referents. In communicative language use, the relationship between these signs and their referents on one hand and the language users and the context of communication on the other hand is equally important. The latter relationship represents the domain of pragmatics that I will talk about in the next section.

### Pragmatic Competence

Kasper and Rose (2001) define pragmatic competence as "the study of communicative action in its cultural context" (p. 2) by engaging and participating in different speech events and discourse. Saville-Troike (1996) and Cutting (2002) also note that it involves knowing not only the language code but also what to say to whom, and how to say it appropriately in any given situation.

According to Kasper and Rose (2001, 2002), pragmatics is divided into two components, "pragmalinguistics" and "sociopragmatics" (2001, p. 2). Pragmalinguistics refers to "the resource for conveying communication acts" (Kasper & Rose, 2001, p. 2). It also focuses, as Oatey and Zegarac (2002) note, on the linguistic strategies used to "operationalize" the act like some of the pragmatic strategies such as directness and indirectness (p. 80). The sociopragmatics perspective focuses on "the socially based assessment, beliefs and interactional principles that underlie people's choice of strategy" (p. 80). To illustrate this, for example, compare the two following request sentences: "Can you help me with my homework, please?" and "I would be very grateful if you could help me with my homework". In the two sentences the speaker uses two different pragmalinguistic resources which are available that convey request. However, the speaker indicates a very different attitude and social relationship (whether the person is a friend, a teacher, or a parent) in each of the requests, which is where sociopragmatics comes into the picture.

Canale and Swain's (1980) model claims that grammatical ability and sociocultural ability are independent; however, Kasper and Rose (2002) argue that "grammar proceeds pragmatics" (p. 174) and that the relation between them is complex in that this relation "moves from pragmatics to grammar and from grammar to pragmatics" (p. 185) in three different situations. In the very beginning stages learners use the available pragmatic knowledge they have with whatever L2 grammar they know and at the same time "[acquire] the grammar needed to accomplish actions in L2" (p. 188). The second situation is when learners have good grammatical ability, but are not able to put it into good target-like pragmalinguistic use. The third situation is when learners know a grammatical structure and its pragmalinguistic functions, but they lack the ability to use it sociopragmatically in a target-like way.

#### The Teachability of Pragmatic Competence

Kasper (1997), in her article, "Can Pragmatic Competence Be Taught?", concludes that pragmatics can be taught and developed through some sort of instruction. Because every learner has already acquired a language and they have some universal knowledge about it, she argues that "there is a need for pedagogic intervention, not with the purpose of providing learners with new information but to make them aware of what they know already and encourage them to use their universal or transferable L1 pragmatic knowledge in L2 contexts" (para. 11). Thus, without some form of instruction, many aspects of pragmatic competence may not develop (Takimoto, 2006). O'Connell (2001) agrees with Takimoto (2006) and Kasper (1997) in that "learners can and should be taught to be more effective and successful with their communication in the L2 classroom" (para. 29). This suggests that it is essential to teach appropriate L2 pragmatics realization patterns of a speech act explicitly, especially requests, refusals and apologies. Kasper also notes that it is not true that "pragmatics can only be taught after students have developed a solid foundation in L2 grammar and vocabulary" (para. 24). However, students can start learning about pragmatics right from the beginning, as Tateyama, Kasper, Mui, Tay, and Thananarat (1997) note, because "the need to understand and express messages propels the learning of linguistic form" (p. 21). So, learners can start out by learning about pragmatic routines which they will not be able to analyze right from the beginning, but will help them cope with the recurrent communicative events that they will face during their day.

Teaching pragmatics aims to develop the students' skills to find socially appropriate language for the situations they face during their real life interaction with people. Pragmatics includes areas of language that are not usually addressed in language teaching curricula. Badrovi-Harling and Mahan-Taylor (2003) explain that these areas include speech acts, conversational structure, conversational management, discourse organization, and sociolinguistic aspects of language use, such as choice of address forms. They also argue that "pragmatic rules for language uses are often subconscious, and even native speakers are often unaware of pragmatic rules until they are broken" (para.1).

### Teaching Pragmatics

Badrovi-Harling and Mahan-Taylor (2003) further explain that pragmatics even does not receive the attention in language teacher education programs that other areas of language do. Pragmatic rules are not usually taught directly. Students are expected to pick them up by listening to and observing the conversations around them. Unfortunately, children with learning differences or language difficulties typically do not appear to pick them up very easily and they often experience problems negotiating social language.

To teach pragmatics in the classroom, Edwards and Csizer (2004) call for enriching classroom input with real-world materials, such as recordings of native speaker conversations, radio programs, and even television soap operas, or even bringing in a classroom guest. Tape recording messages on answering machines, using internationally broadcast English language talk shows, and showing educational films can also help in this case. They also believe that it is also important to "supplement textbooks with additional books that focus on pragmatics" (p. 39) to build the students' skills in that part and not only in grammar and vocabulary. Awareness-raising activities are very effective at low levels, and it can be fun as well. Through these kinds of activities, students acquire sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic information, such as "what function complimenting has in mainstream American culture, what appropriate topics for complimenting are, and by what linguistic formulae compliments are given and received" (Kasper, 1997, para. 64).

Observation tasks can also play a vital role in developing the students' pragmatics in the classroom. Students can be given a variety of observation

assignments outside the classroom. Such observation tasks can focus on sociopragmatic or pragmalinguistic features. A sociopragmatic task, as Kasper (1997) explains, could be to “observe under what conditions native speakers of American English express gratitude – when, for what kinds of goods or services, and to whom” (para. 66). While the pragmalinguistic task focuses on the “strategies and linguistic means by which thanking is accomplished – what formulae are used, and what additional means of expressing appreciation are employed” (para. 67). The observation can be then reported back to the classroom, compared with the others’ observations, and explained more by the teacher.

### Authenticity in Teaching Pragmatics

Authenticity plays a vital role in teaching pragmatics and communicative skills. Advocators of the communicative approach emphasize that effective learning outcomes can be achieved by involving learners in authentic and real-life tasks. Hall (2001) points out that "the need to communicate is at the heart of learning a language. If we want our students to learn English, we must put them in situations where they need to communicate in English" (p. 230). What is more, Rayagopalan (2004) proposes that "to learn a second language successfully is to be able to perform real-life activities with and through it and not simply to internalize a set of grammatical rules" (p. 405). Widdowson (1998) also adds that teachers should "localize the language, create contextual conditions that make the language a reality for particular communities of learners so that they can authenticate it" (p. 715). So, teachers should dedicate some time in their classrooms to teach pragmatics by providing the students with opportunities to use the language in situations similar to those they will encounter in real life.

There are different aspects of authenticity such as authentic teaching, authentic tasks, and authentic materials. Thus, defining authenticity has always been debatable. However, Mishan (2004) argues that "from any concordance for the words 'authentic' and 'authenticity', it will quickly emerge that authenticity is a positive attribute, collocating with desirable qualities such as purity, originality and quality" (p. 219).

Swaffar (1985) defines an authentic text as "one whose primary intent is to communicate meaning" (p. 17). Jordan (1997) refers to authentic texts as "materials which are designed for native speakers" (p. 113). According to Gebhard (2000), "authentic materials include anything that is used as a part of communication" (p.

100). Hall (2001) defines authentic materials as "originally written for some other purpose than language teaching" (p. 231). Hedge (2000) also refers to authentic materials as "those which have not been designed specially for language learners and which therefore do not have contrived or simplified language" (p. 67). Martinez (2002) states, "Authentic would be material designed for native speakers of English used in the classroom in a way similar to the one it was designed for" (para. 4). For example, a news article about pollution can be brought to the classroom and students can discuss pollution in the city where these learners live. Thus, authentic material refers to any spoken or written texts that present the language as it is used in its original community and enable the learner to hear, read, and produce language as it is used in the target culture.

Teachers should collect as many appropriate authentic materials as they can to base their lessons on because, as Kelly, Kelly, Offner and Vorland (2002) point out, authentic materials help bring the real world into the classroom and significantly "enliven the ESL class" (p. 13). They should also be careful with the texts and dialogues they have in the students' textbooks and should decide whether to teach them or not. Swaffar (1985) proposes that "dialogues and carefully edited short readings lack the essential features of authentic messages: repetition, redundancy, and discourse markers which confirm and elaborate on a particular authentic style or cultural pattern" (p. 17). What is more, Burns (2001) points out that such material do not reflect real life interactions that take place in the real world.

Authentic materials that can be used to teach a language can include mass media. Quinlisk (2003) argues that incorporating mass media, which offers a large amount of linguistic information, provides language learners with the opportunity to improve both their linguistic and pragmatic competence by introducing them to a variety of language features. When teachers use films, cartoons, or any video material in the classroom, they help learners learn better, especially when the learners are fully engaged and interested in the material. This goes hand in hand with Thabit's (2006) findings which show that when high school students in the UAE were introduced to authentic materials, they showed a great deal of interest and motivation in their responses to the questionnaires that were distributed for them to do. Thabit's study also showed that the students had a very positive attitude toward using authentic materials in the English classroom. Other examples of authentic materials that can be used in the classroom can be real newspaper reports, real magazine articles, real

advertisements, and cooking recipes. Gebhard (2000) also lists some examples of authentic visual materials that include slides, photographs, paintings, sketches, drawings by children, and wordless street signs. Examples of authentic listening materials include silent films, TV commercials, quiz shows, cartoons, news, comedy shows, dramas, movies, radio news, dramas, folk and children's songs, home video, professionally videotaped travel logs, and documentaries.

Authentic materials have advantages and disadvantages. The main advantages of using authentic materials are the following (Chen, 2004; Kilickaya, 2004; Martinez, 2002):

- They reinforce relation of class activities to the real world.
- They keep the students up to date and informed about what is happening in the world.
- They expose the students to real language.
- They provide authentic cultural information.
- They increase the students' motivation.
- They include some incidental and improper English that textbooks do not include.
- They provide a context for language learning.
- They contain a wide variety of text types and language styles not easily found in conventional teaching materials.

Thus, can help student extend their vocabulary and help memorize them in a number of meaningful ways.

Although authentic material have advantages which make us feel motivated to use them in our classrooms, while using them we might face some problems. The main disadvantages that Kilickaya (2004), Martinez (2002), and Chen (2004) mention are the following:

- They take time and effort to prepare.
- They contain some difficult language and complex language structures which makes it difficult for the students to decode the texts.
- They may be too culturally biased or too difficult to understand outside the language community.
- With listening, there are many different accents that are hard for language learners to understand.

- They can become outdated easily, such as news in newspapers or magazines.

Currently, in many countries throughout the world, there is big pressure to learn English. Along with this pressure come concerns about how English should be taught and what role culture should play in the teaching of English. The topic of culture in English language teaching materials has been discussed for many years. Teachers in many schools rely on choosing boring textbooks that focus the students' attention on grammatical structures, and on practice in isolation. Also, the activities chosen are based on “teacher-talk” and “student-listen routines”, as suggested by Kilickaya (2004, para. 19). He also believes that “cultural content is a key to effective teaching” (para. 13) and it provides exposure to living language that a foreign language student lacks.

According to McKay (2004), there are many benefits of including cultural content in language teaching programs. She claims that “it can promote international understanding, deepen an understanding of one’s own culture, facilitate learners’ visits to foreign countries, and motivate learners” (p.10). It also gives the learners a chance to compare their own culture with the English speaking culture and helps them form their own perspectives on them. Furthermore, Kilickaya (2004) suggests that culture is not something consisting of facts to be learnt, but a helpful tool to make learners feel the need to speak and use the target language.

### Teaching Pragmatics to Young Learners

According to Badrovi-Harling and Mahan-Taylor (2003), "Pragmatics can be integrated into the English language curriculums at the earliest levels" (para.2) because young children are eager language learners. They acquire the language easily and unconsciously, especially when they are immersed in "an anxiety-reduced, if not anxiety-free, environment", as Shaaban (2001, p. 43) explains. This type of environment can help to motivate the students more and makes them eager to learn to help students feel secure. What is more, if effective learning is to take place, the classroom environment needs to be "supportive, unthreatening, encouraging and sensitive to individuals" (Dean, 1999, p. 38). Children need to feel confident so that they can risk getting something wrong.

Pragmatics can be taught to young learners using "performance based activities" (Shaaban, 2001, p. 44), requiring the students to perform authentic tasks using oral communication skills. These techniques can include traditional classroom activities like giving oral reports and role plays. It can also include nontraditional tasks, such as cooperative group work, storytelling, and problem solving.

Interactive book reading programs, also called shared reading, have also been found fruitful for teaching pragmatics to young learners. The idea of these reading programs is that teachers read a story for the students and ask questions about it to engage the students and to go beyond the text. Finally, the participating students usually have opportunities to engage in play activity centered on the reading and the story they read together as a class. Kim and Hall (2002) found that "in the context of interactive book readings children acquire new vocabulary and new meanings for familiar words and new information about their world" (p. 334). They believe that such an interactive reading program is particularly beneficial for nonnative English language teachers, because "such book-based programs should be particularly useful in the teaching of pragmatic competence specific to those contexts with which they may have little experience" (p. 345). By using books and role plays to help to create these contexts in the classroom, teachers can provide young learners access to pragmatic knowledge and skills in the target language without being aware of it.

### Culture and Teaching Pragmatic Competence

According to Kachru and Nelson (1996), "it is easily understood that what is appropriate for a situation in one culture may not be so in another" (p. 90). Culture in language teaching is a very broad area and has been viewed from many perspectives. Many researchers agree that language and culture should be integrated and taught together. For example, Crawford-Lange and Lange (1987) found that language and culture are essentially "inseparable" (p. 258). Moran (2001) also believes that "language and culture are two sides of the same coin" (p. 47). They cannot be separated from each other and each one of them reflects the other. Members of a culture cannot express themselves and carry out their way of life without language. Teaching culture should begin as soon as the students start learning a foreign language and should not be left behind until the end. It should "begin on the first day of the study of foreign language and continue every day thereafter as long as the student is in contact with the language" (Griffin, 1987, p. 402). However, Lazaraton



(2003) notes that teachers do not put teaching culture on their high priority lists for many reasons. Their reasons include "the lack of time in a crowded curriculum and a general avoidance of dealing with student attitudes [towards language learning]" (p. 213). She also points out that a limited personal experience with the target culture can also restrict teachers' ability to teach culture. Lazaraton (2003) believes that teachers should take the role of "cultural educators" (p. 214) to help the students and guide them into learning the target culture and use the language to communicate in it very well. To do this, Sparrow (2000) believes that teachers should tackle three cultural domains for L2 teaching: "the cultural assumptions about language and learning in the curriculum of instruction, the students' needs and goals (which are culturally based), and teachers' own assumptions and values (which arise from previous intercultural and teaching experiences)" (p. 748).

Many researchers also maintain that teachers should teach culture using new teaching techniques rather than the traditional ones to have better results. First of all, teachers should create a meaningful cultural context when teaching vocabulary because "without a cultural context a word has no meaning" (Crawford-Lange & Lange, 1987, p. 258). Second, Webber (1987) mentions that activities in the classroom should not be focused on drilling. Rather, students in the class should "have the opportunity to engage as often as possible in genuine communication" (p. 253). That means that students should participate in real life situations where they communicate and use the language to achieve their linguistic goals. Students could also be asked to speak and share their own points of views because, as Parkyn (2005) found, "Asking the students to voice their own opinions [and findings] on [cultural] issues promotes real language use and real questions" (p. 45). What is more, a teacher should "think of the target culture as a conversation or a dialogue that takes place between people who live in today's world" (p. 44).

Overall, in order to make the knowledge about the target culture assimilated rather than learnt as a list of facts, it should be made to live in the hearts and minds of the students through using various activities in a classroom which is full of joy and pleasure.

#### Pragmatic Transfer

As Saito and Beecken (1997) discuss, "a growing body of research on pragmatic transfer has suggested that second language learners transfer their native

language norms and forms to their L2" (p. 363). One problem that might happen due to the lack of awareness of the socio-pragmatic differences between the native and target language cultures is "sociocultural transfer" (Chick, 1996, p. 332). This is when a second language speaker uses the rules of his or her own speech community when interacting with people from the target culture. What is more, Yamagashira (2001) believes that "intercultural miscommunication is often caused by learners' falling back on their L1 sociocultural norms and conventions in realizing speech acts in the target language" (p. 260). He also did a study on Japanese students using refusals and found out that the highest proficiency students were aware of the differences in appropriate American and Japanese refusal behaviors. However, the lowest proficiency students were more influenced by their L1 refusal style in which pragmatic transfer could be seen.

There are two types of pragmatic transfer, "positive pragmatic transfer" and "negative pragmatic transfer" (Huth & Nikazm, 2006, p. 60). Positive pragmatic transfer occurs when learners transfer similar pragmatic strategies, and this mostly goes unnoticed by participants. On the other hand, negative pragmatic transfer happens when learners transfer their native language knowledge of pragmatics into their L2 causing negative consequences for communication. This shows how important it is to teach L2 pragmatics in L2 classes to avoid this kind of interference, transfer, and miscommunication. Research in pragmatic transfer has shown that "despite an excellent command of L2 grammar and lexicon, learners may fail to convey pragmatically appropriate expressions" because they transfer L1 pragmatic rules in their L2 production (El Samaty, 2005, p. 346).

### Vocabulary Acquisition and Pragmatic Competence

Teachers can start teaching L2 pragmatics by building the students' vocabulary knowledge first. There are a number of conditions that researchers tell us are important for vocabulary acquisition. First of all, having a positive attitude toward the activity can motivate the students and encourage them to learn words. What is more, the more students are motivated to learn vocabulary, the more they may be engaged in doing it which will make the process of vocabulary acquisition easier and faster. Furthermore, noticing the vocabulary item several times and thoughtfully processing its meaning can also help in vocabulary acquisition. Teachers should encourage their students to notice words in the textual input they have and help them to process their

meanings by linking forms to meanings using different teaching techniques like translation, definition, matching, and synonyms.

There are also other psychological conditions that Nation (2002) thinks are very important for vocabulary acquisition. These are noticing, retrieval, and generative use. Noticing is considered the first step in vocabulary acquisition. Nation defines it as giving attention to an item. This can be best achieved by increasing the students' motivation and interest in the vocabulary learning tasks by making sure to choose texts or stories that are interesting and utilize humor. Decontextualisation can also help in this area in which learners give attention to a language item as a part of the language rather than as a part of a message. This can happen in different ways like students noticing a word that they have seen before while listening or reading a story. It can also happen by giving a definition, a synonym, or a translation of a word. Negotiating the meaning of a word with each other or with the teacher can also play a role in noticing. Noticing can also be increased by pre-teaching, highlighting the word in the text, and making a glossary.

The second psychological condition is retrieval which is a process that may lead to a word being remembered and recalled. The more the word is retrieved the more it strengthens the path linking form and meaning. This can be achieved by reading the same story several times for younger students. For older ones, serializing a long story can be effective, in which they read each chapter at different times. This will give the students the opportunity to see the words they learnt before again and again as they read the whole story, which will enhance retrieval and vocabulary acquisition.

The third condition is generative use which occurs when previously met words are subsequently met or used in ways that differ from the previous meeting with the word. It includes taking the word out of its original context and putting it in new contexts. To enhance generative use, teachers can use longer stories and read them chapter by chapter. This will give the students a chance to listen to the words read in different contexts throughout the story. What is more, students can be asked to retell the story using their own words rather than only repeating it. Negotiation can also help in generative use in which students would negotiate a word using it in different contexts.

Webb (2005) also discovered that teachers should be aware of the limits of new vocabulary and that they should not present a big number of new vocabulary

items in one class. This would make it very difficult for the student to learn them, and they will also be confused. Furthermore, teachers should not depend on incidental vocabulary learning. They should dedicate some time in their classes to teach some vocabulary to learners using different teaching techniques, because spending time on a task or on learning new vocabulary leads to better learning.

### Studies on Pragmatics

Many studies have been done on pragmatic competence, the teachability of pragmatics and ways of assessing pragmatics. Most researchers based their studies on classroom-based research on pragmatics. They differed in their teaching goals and the assessments used to assess the students' pragmatics. One of these studies is Billmyer's (1990) study of nine female Japanese ESL learners tutored in complimenting and responding to compliments and nine untutored Japanese ESL learners. Participants in both groups were asked to perform compliment-inducing tasks such as showing photos of home and family, reporting accomplishment, visiting each other's homes, teaching each other a proverb, and showing a new item of apparel. The tasks were tape-recorded and transcribed. Bouton (1994) carried out the same research procedure as Billmayer, but in his study two groups of international students at an American university who had been tested with regard to their ability to interpret implicatures when they first arrived on campus were tested again 18 and 54 months later, respectively. He used multiple choice questions as an assessment tool to collect his data. Both researchers found that tutored students performed better than the other group who did not receive any instruction in pragmatics.

Wildner-Bassett (1994) and Tateyama, Kasper, Mui, Tay, and Thananarat (1997) both addressed the question of whether pragmatics can be taught to beginners or whether they need to develop and have at least some basic knowledge about L2 linguistics first. To do this, Wildner-Bassett carried out a study on 19 beginner American students who were residing in Germany. The way data were collected was that each American student was video recorded having a conversation with a German student. The students were given situations to use as a springboard for conversation. After the recordings were made, the dialogues were transcribed and analyzed for the learners' use of pragmatic routines. Tateyama et. al's (1997) study was on beginning Japanese students who were divided into two groups. One of them was taught about pragmatic routines implicitly, and the other group was taught pragmatics explicitly.

The findings of both of the studies were important in that they dispel the myth that pragmatics can only be taught after students have developed some knowledge in L2 grammar and vocabulary. They also found that although beginning students cannot analyze some pragmatic routines, some aspects of pragmatics can be taught from early on and students can start out by learning about them to help them deal with recurrent, standardized communicative events right from the beginning.

Kasper (1997) tackled the general questions of whether pragmatics can or should be taught at all. She examined different studies that address the topic of pragmatic acquisition. In the conclusion of her article, she explains that students can start learning about pragmatics regardless of how proficient they are in the target language. To do so, she stressed the need for awareness-raising activities, saying that it is through awareness that students "acquire sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic information" (para. 49). She recommends that teachers carry out these awareness raising activities using authentic materials to observe particular pragmatic features in various sources of oral or written data, ranging from native speaker, who can be described as classroom guests, to videos of authentic interaction or fictional and non-fictional written sources. Kasper (1997) claims that authentic native speaker input is crucial for pragmatic learning. "This is not because students should imitate native speakers' action patterns but in order to build their own pragmatic knowledge on the right kind of input" (para. 52), she argues.

Kim and Hall (2002) investigated the connection between Korean children's participation in an interactive book reading program and their development of pragmatic competence in English. Their study lasted for four months, and the reading sessions were done two times a week over these four months. Kim and Hall read seven school-based stories over the four months, and they interacted with the students during the session by asking them some questions about the story, the illustrations, and their personal experience. They used role play sessions to assess the students' development in pragmatics. All sessions were audio and video recorded. In these sessions, the students had to create and act out interactional situations based on the scenes that are in the books they read during the interactive reading sessions. At the end of the study, Kim and Hall found that the students' participation led to significant changes over the four-month period in the mean number of "words, utterances, and talk management features as measured by the changes in children's use of these during role play sessions" (p. 332).

El Samaty (2005) tackled another issue of pragmatics. Her research purpose was to find out whether Egyptian learners of English produced target-like requests in English and whether pragmatic transfer could occur. She used questionnaires as interview recordings were not possible. She collected her data via a discourse completion task which contained three short descriptions of requesting situations. The same questionnaire was administered to three groups that were native speakers of English, native speakers of Arabic, and Egyptian learners of English. The data gathered from the three groups were analyzed in terms of pragmatic function and syntax, and they were compared to each other. After analyzing the data, El Samaty found that "the learners' data were deviant from the native-like norms" (p. 341). She also detected some pragmatic transfer which was attributed to classroom instruction that was not consistent with the native speakers' use of pragmatics.

### Conclusion

In summary, the literature suggests that if teachers employ real life situations in their classrooms and encourage the students to use suitable language in those situations, they give their students the opportunity to express themselves and what they know in the target culture. This also results in real communication, rather than memorizing dialogues. At the same time, language, culture, and the development of pragmatic competence will be learnt and acquired unconsciously and in an interesting and meaningful way. This can be done by role plays in the second language classroom. Through role plays, "teachers provide access to pragmatic knowledge and skills in the target language" (Kim & Hall, 2002, p. 336). What is more, role play does not cause any "threatening consequences" to children because, naturally, children are not likely to experience frustration in their interactions" (Kim & Hall, 2002, p. 339). In spite of the advantages of video taping, I used role plays as one of my data collection tools, but could not video tape because video taping the students was not allowed culturally in our school by some of the parents.

In addition, some pragmatic research contributed to the design of my research methodology like Wildner-Bassett's (1994) study that was on beginner learners. She designed some situations for the students to use as a springboard for the conversation and I did that too. I also benefited from Kim and Hall's (2002) study that included role plays as a tool to collect data. What is more, my review of literature about the importance of teacher research also inspired me to do this study about one of most

important issues of English language teaching, which is pragmatics, that has been neglected and never taught, hoping that I can find ways to encourage teaching it in the schools. The next chapter will explain more about other issues of methodology.

## Chapter 3 Methodology

### Design of the Study

My central research questions in this qualitative study were to determine to what extent direct teaching of pragmatic competence can help to develop my grade three students' pragmatic knowledge. In addition, this qualitative study included the students' voices by looking to what extent the students found the activities motivating and the students' level of enjoyment in the activities. However, before addressing the above questions, this study had to investigate the students' current levels of pragmatic competence to see if the adoption of direct teaching of pragmatics would bring any sort of changes in their level of pragmatic competence. According to Holliday (2002), qualitative data is about "what happens in a particular social setting in a particular place or amongst a particular group of people" (p. 69). Thus, to achieve my research goal, I chose to collect data that was extracted from multiple sources including: interviews, role-plays, designing a teaching course, and research journal. My measurement scale in this study was based on my own observations as a participant-observer and teacher-researcher, and on the students' language improvement in role plays throughout the four phases of my study that will be explained below.

The data for this study was collected in four phases: the pre-instruction phase, the direct instruction phases, the post-instruction phase, and the post-post instruction phase. First, before beginning the direct instruction phase, I assessed the students in the pre-instruction phase based on eight different situations (see appendix B), reassessed them in the post-instruction phase based on the same eight situations, and assessed them a third time in what that I called the post-post instruction phase again based on the same eight situations. The first data set (pre-instruction) was collected at the beginning of the semester in October 2006 prior to the explicit teaching of vocabulary, phrases and other aspects of pragmatics. The second set (post-instruction) was collected towards the end of the semester in December 2006. The students then had a two week break from 21 January 2007 to 4 February 2007, and after they came back to school, I assessed them for the third time on the same eight situations.

I spent five weeks teaching vocabulary phrases and other aspects of pragmatics explicitly and introducing activities focusing on teaching pragmatic competence between the pre-instruction phase and the post instruction phase. I also kept an observation journal as an alternative to video-taping the students. Although as



noted in the literature review there are numerous benefits to video-taping, some parents in the UAE consider video-taping their children, especially girls, as a culturally sensitive issue and they do not allow it. My previous request three years ago to video-tape the students was denied by the principal, saying that the parents would not allow it. I did not ask for permission for this study as culturally this would be inappropriate. I had been told no once before in the school in Ras Al Khaimah and I would run the risk of being rude if I asked again. Thus, I kept a research journal to keep track of the students' reactions towards the activities presented in each lesson of the ten lessons that I presented through the five weeks. I also used this observation journal to keep track of observations of things that happened in any of the three phases of my study.

### The Participants

The participants for this research were 48 grade three female students who spoke Arabic as their first language. The age range of these young girls was between 8 and 9 years old. They studied in the same school I am teaching in which is a governmental school for basic education. They did not have a great deal of knowledge of English, which is their L2, because they had been studying it for two years only in grade one and two, except for four students who had been studying in an English speaking school for four years. These four students' knowledge of English was slightly better than the rest of the students as can be seen in the next chapter. There were no boys in this practitioner-researcher study because I teach in an all-girls' school and it was not possible for me to visit and teach in other schools during my working hours.

### The Setting

My research was conducted in Naseebah School for Basic Education in Ras Al Khaimah. It is a single-sex school of around 350 Emirati female students. They speak Arabic as their first language. The school's language of instruction is Arabic. The majority of the students have started studying English from the kindergarten level in which they learnt about the ABC's, numbers, and colors only. There is no focus on communication. When they started grade one, they began to learn about simple greetings and requests, but in a limited way. Appendix C includes a lesson from the pupil's book that my students had studied in grade one. What is more, Appendix D

includes an example of unit one objectives and key vocabulary that the teachers have to follow and teach for grade one. It is noticeable that the only two vocabularies that the teachers have to teach are “hello” and “good-bye”.

The students study English using a book called *New Parade*. This is a new book based on an American curriculum that has been used in the government schools for four years only and has replaced the *English for the Emirates* book that was designed by the Ministry of Education. However, this new curriculum was adapted by the curriculum supervisors in the Ministry of Education to make it suit the culture that the students are living in. For example, some pictures and some food items that Muslims are not allowed to eat were changed.

### The Instruments

I taught two classes of grade three, and collected my data from eight groups, four in each class. I divided them according to their level in English, for example, I formed each group of six students: two excellent students, one very good student, two good students and one weak student based on their last English marks. My goal was to make the higher level students help the lower level students in the group activities, and to help them learn from each other. The groups stayed the same in each class and in each phase to help me collect consistent data.

### Interviews

Informal interviews were conducted after each lesson in two different ways. I spent five minutes at the end of each lesson to have an informal discussion (see appendix E) with the whole class about what they liked and disliked about the activities and the lesson in general. I also asked them about what new things they learnt in each lesson and how would they use what they learned in their life. I also conducted informal interviews (see appendix F) with each of the eight groups at the end of each role play in the pre-instruction phase, the post-instruction phase, and the post-post instruction phase. I asked them about their choice of vocabulary and why they chose it. I also asked them about the way they role played each situation and why they chose particular voice tones and expressions when communicating with the other person in the role play.

In these informal interviews, I spoke in Arabic because the students were very young, their English speaking skills were not well developed yet, and they had very little knowledge of English vocabulary. I also thought that they might find difficulties

expressing their points of view clearly when they spoke in English, while in Arabic they would do it more freely without feeling anxious about vocabulary and ways of expressing their points of view.

### Role plays

In this study, I chose to use role plays to observe and assess the children's initial level and development of L2 pragmatic competence. I did so for several reasons. First of all, I believe with Shaaban (2001) that children of all ages when taught through this technique feel comfortable and motivated, especially when the activity lends itself to cooperative learning and is seen as a fun way of learning. Moreover, because role playing does not pose any threatening consequences to children, they are not likely to experience frustration in their interactions or in their language usage. They make them more imaginative and creative. Stocker and Stocker (2007) also argue that role plays are "interesting, memorable and engaging, and students retain the material they have learned" (para. 6) and provide students an opportunity to apply concepts they have learned in a rich and realistic environment.

In the pre-instruction phase, I assessed my 48 grade three female students orally to see their current pragmatic competence level. I did that by forming groups of six students, so I had eight different groups in my two grade three classes that I teach. I exposed them to the situations in appendix B in two different days; four situations a day. I introduced one situation at a time for the whole class. For example, after introducing situation one and explaining it, I asked the students to work in groups to prepare for the role play. After role playing situation one, I introduced situation two and so on. Because each group had six students, which was a big number for a simple role play situation, I asked the students to prepare as a whole group, and assign or choose two students for each situation to role play. The students had five minutes to prepare for the role-play. When the five minutes were up, I stopped the students and I asked one group to stay in the class to present their role play, while the other groups had to move to the next classroom with my colleague who offered help to accompany them, so that they can not be influenced by other groups' performances. Each role play lasted for two minutes. After the four groups in each class finished their role plays for situation 1, I introduced situation 2 and followed the same procedure as situation 1.

I set up the role plays by showing the class a picture of two people talking to each other according to the situations in appendix B; I introduced one picture at a time. I asked the students to describe the picture and the people. I asked them the following questions: What can you see? Who do you think the people in the picture are? What do they want from each other? Then, I told the students that they have to role play the situation for real (see pictures in appendix G). The goal was for students to use their available vocabulary knowledge to generate role plays for the eight different situations. The reason behind using conversations and role plays to test my students' pragmatic knowledge is because they were young students and they were not competent yet in their writing. I audio-taped the conversations and analyzed them, and I saw what kind of vocabulary and phrases they used to communicate with each other in the target language. I focused more in this study on the vocabulary students were using to request as well as appropriateness in the main request sentence more than the errors or the mistakes in them. I measured appropriateness by looking at the reaction and mood of the person who fulfilled the request, and whether or not the person's request was fulfilled. I also focused on the students' body language and voice tones when acting out the role plays by writing down what body language they used in my journal. I decided to record everything in this phase and then analyze the observations at a later date. I did not use any kind of form or checklist because I did not want to limit myself to only look for a few set areas. I wanted to observe as much as possible to add to the thick, rich description of the study.

After spending five weeks in teaching pragmatics explicitly, as will be explained later, and towards the end of the semester, I collected the second set of data five weeks after the explicit and direct teaching phase. I reassessed the same groups' level through the same eight role plays I used in the pre-instruction phase. Given the length of time between the two phases, five weeks, it is reasonable to assume that the students, being young learners, would not have memorized the conversations, but they would use the available vocabulary that they gained from the direct teaching phase and adapt them to the situations they are asked to role play. I also tape-recorded those conversations and role plays and analyzed them.

The students had a two week break at the end of the semester, and when they came back to school, I did a third assessment based on the same eight role plays that I did for the first two assessments. I called this assessment the post-post instruction assessment. My goal of this assessment was to check if the students could still

remember and use the previously taught pragmatic expressions, markers, and body language after the two week break or not.

Finally, I compared the second set of data to the first set of data I collected before the direct teaching of pragmatics and vocabulary to see if there was any development in the students' pragmatic knowledge or not. Then, I compared the third set of data to both the first and the second one to see if the students went back to the vocabulary and the expressions they used to use before the direct teaching phase or if they were still using the correct pragmatic expressions and markers I taught them during my study.

### Designing a Teaching Course

Following the first assessment that was done at the beginning of the semester, I designed a five-week teaching program focusing on the teaching of and exposure to pragmatic competence. I met the students twice a week and focused on teaching them different aspects in pragmatics like greetings, and requests because these are two important components that young students use in school and in their daily life. I also made use of some story books that teach students polite requests like *Eat Your Peas, Louise* written by Pegeen Snow (1985) and *I Want My Dinner* written by Tony Ross (1996). In addition, I used some of the lessons that are in the curriculum and incorporated some pragmatic components into them, because I had to follow the curriculum and finish it on time. My aim of the lessons was to teach them that politeness cannot be conveyed by simply translating polite phrases into another language. Details of these lessons are in the next chapter.

### The Value of Video Taping in Research Studies

Although video taping was very important for the study, I could not video tape because of some cultural issues. It is noticeable that some of the studies explained in the literature review section used video recordings to collect data. According to Roschelle (2000), "Video is becoming the medium of choice for collecting data for educational and social science research projects" (p. 1). It gives the researcher a chance to collect more valid data compared to audiorecording or direct observation.

As the classroom is a complex environment with many interactions occurring at the same time, a teacher cannot possibly pay equal attention to all that is happening. Thus, Roschelle (2000) argues that videotape can capture more aspects of interaction

and nonverbal cues, including “talking, gesture, eye gaze, manipulatives, and computer displays” (p.1). Van and Elizabeth (2005) further explain that video provides teachers with a kind of access to classroom interaction that is not possible during the act of teaching itself. Thus, teachers do not have to rely only on their memory of what occurred. Instead they can view a video, multiple times if they wish; examining what took place from different perspectives. They add that video recording gives the teachers the opportunity to reflect rather than act by removing themselves from the demands of the classroom and reflect on and learn more about teaching. Video also helps teachers “capture the non-verbal, as well as the verbal messages that are being sent” (McNiff, 1996, p. 104). Ulewicz (2001) add one more benefit of video recording in doing research. She claims that “a researcher conducting research based on live classroom observations is limited by time” (p. 17), since he or she has only one opportunity to notice all the events and details of a given lesson without the possibility of immediate replay. She further explains that “a live observer is also limited by human capabilities: one set of eyes and ears can only focus on a few things at any given moment” (p. 17). However, a video camera records whatever happens within its frame and it might capture several viewings for an individual observer to understand it and take it all in.

Rosenstein (2002) states that the advantage of videotaped observation is that the lens of the camera does not select what to record at the time of recording; rather, it records all that is within its view. On the other hand, traditional observation techniques are “selective” (p. 16). Traditional observers usually select what to observe, leaving some important information out of the record and therefore losing it. She argues that “the videotaped record, although selective in the positioning of the camera and the breadth of the lens, still records all that is within its view” (p. 17). Such a comprehensive record can then be analyzed by multiple viewers. Thus, the data collected through video observation is not “static” (p. 16). Rather, the viewing and reviewing of the videotext is “dynamic” (p. 16) and provides further information which enhance the original data.

#### Research Journal

Another qualitative source of data were also drawn from the research journal I kept as an alternative to video taping the students. I took journal notes in two ways, one during the lesson while the students were engaged in the activities and one after

the lesson. During the lesson, I used the journal to write down what body language, facial expressions, and voice tones the students used when communicating with each other in the activities and role plays (see appendix H). I also kept some journal notes when walking around the class and listening to the students while they were practicing some activities. I listened to comments made by the students to one another without them being aware that I was listening to them. I also jotted down what comments they had about the activity and whether they seemed to be enjoying it or not. Furthermore, I wrote some journals just after the lesson, to reflect upon the lessons I taught and write down what went well and what went wrong and how did the student engaged and reacted to the lesson. The categorization and analysis of the existing data are presented in the next chapter.

## Chapter 4

### Findings

Three sources of data were used in order to investigate to what extent teaching pragmatic competence could help to improve my students' pragmatic skills and to what extent did the activities used in the lesson help to motivate the students. The findings were classified into the following categories: (1) students' pragmatic levels in the pre-instruction phase; (2) students' reactions and interests in the pragmatic activities introduced to them; (3) students' pragmatic levels in the post- instruction phase; and (4) students' pragmatic levels in the post-post-instruction phase.

#### Students' Pragmatic Levels in the Pre-Instruction Phase

What is the students' current level in pragmatics? To answer this question I exposed the 48 grade three female students who were divided into eight different groups (eight groups of six) to eight situations (see appendix B) to role play to assess their current pragmatic levels. I listened to each role play and audio-taped them. After that, I re-listened to the taped role plays to analyze them (see appendix A1). In addition, an informal interview followed each role play to ask the students about their choice of vocabulary and the way they role played each situation.

After assessing the students in the pre-instruction phase, the data indicated that the students were having more trouble with requesting than the other aspects of pragmatics like refusals. Therefore, the focus in the direct instruction phase was mainly on teaching the students how to request, while giving some attention to greetings as well. Given the age of the students and the length of time, five weeks, these two aspects of pragmatics were deemed doable and appropriate.

The data in appendix A1 suggests that the students were transferring their L1 vocabulary and pragmatic knowledge into their L2, which is English in this case, for most of the situations. They translated exactly the same Arabic words they use to ask for something into English, for example "Call Fatima," "Where is Fatima?" and "Is Fatima here?" when asking for somebody on the phone. There was also a frequent use of "I want" and "I need" when asking the teacher or anybody else to do something. In addition, the students did not distinguish between teachers, who are high stakeholders, and friends, who are lower stakeholders. They used the same words or phrases for both of them. The only way that they used to make a request more polite was to change their voice tone. When the students asked a friend for a pen, they



did it with a louder and a more confident voice, and they went ahead to take the pencil before the friend asked her to take it, because she knew that she would not mind, as one of the students claimed. Some of them, even, took the pencil in their hand and then asked for permission to take it. When asking a teacher for a pen, however, they would do it in a lower and a more hesitant voice while using the same request phrase as in the first situation, and they would wait until the teacher gave it to them, which is similar to what they would do in Arabic. When role playing situation 1 in which the speaker in the group asks for a pen, one of the groups agreed on using the phrase, "Excuse me, give me a pencil." It appeared that the speaker in this sentence tried to be polite by using "Excuse me," but at the same time she said "give me" which is considered a command. What is more, some of the groups transferred their L1's indirect requests like, "I don't have a pencil" and "I don't know this question," and they waited for the other person to offer them what they needed. Overall, the groups of students used a very limited number of request phrases and vocabulary. As shown in appendix A1, they used the expressions "Can I," "May I," and "I want" repeatedly.

The students in the different eight groups rarely used the word "please" in their requests. They seemed very rude when requesting while they did not mean to be rude as shown by their voice tone and body language. They had just been using the available English vocabulary they had and transferring the pragmatic patterns from Arabic to English. After each role play, I conducted a mini informal interview with the groups asking them about why they used certain words and phrases in their role plays. When asking them about the reason behind neglecting the use of "please" in their requests, one student replied, "We are not used to saying please when requesting in Arabic."<sup>1</sup> This is because it has another meaning in Arabic which is 'arjook.' Another student said, "If we said it in Arabic, we would sound like we were begging somebody, and we will kill ourselves to do for us that thing that we want."<sup>2</sup> A third student said, "I would use the phrase 'excuse me' instead of 'please' because it sounds more polite in Arabic."<sup>1</sup>

The students kept comparing what should be said in English to Arabic. Most of the students agreed that they used those unsuitable request vocabulary and phrases because they did not know others that they could use instead. As one student said in

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<sup>1</sup> Translated students' words

<sup>2</sup> Student's exact words

English, "I know how to say this phrase in Arabic, but I don't know it in English." Other notes that I got from the overall groups, which I wrote in my journal, were that they were not taught anything about pragmatics, and they did not have a chance to interact with any English native speakers to learn from them. The only thing they did was learn names of buildings, items, places, objects, workers, etc. and memorize them to be ready for the exam.

There were three different groups that were able to use requests successfully. For example, for situation 1 in which the eight groups were asked to request a pen from a friend all the students in five different groups agreed to use "I want a pen", "Give me a pen," and "I want a pencil," except for three groups. Two different groups used, "Can I have a pencil, please?" and the third group used, "May I have a pencil, please?" These three groups only seemed to know these two phrases, and they kept using them in all the request situations. The only problem they had was that they said that they would use the same request for both high stakeholders and low stakeholders.

Having a talk with those three groups individually and interviewing them informally led me to realize that there were some students in the three groups who had their education from KG1 to grade one in an English speaking school. They had a chance of interacting with English speaking people for three years, which helped them unconsciously acquire something important about pragmatics from them. Those students played a very important role in their groups in convincing them about their points of view about the suitable request sentence. Although they only used those two phrases, they still sounded better than the other groups who had their education in a governmental school where Arabic is the medium of instruction, while English is spoken only for 45 minutes a day.

After analyzing the audio taped role plays, the collected data indicated that the students had more difficulties requesting than with other aspects of pragmatics. I also did not want to make it very complicated for the students to learn many pragmatic aspects in a short period of time, so I decided to focus in my teaching unit on requesting and on teaching the students the difference between requesting from high stakeholders and low stakeholders. I also taught them two greeting lessons.

#### Students' Reactions and Interests in the Pragmatic Activities Introduced to Them

I taught two lessons a week for a total of 10 lessons in five weeks. For my lessons I planned as many meaningful activities as I could to make it easier for the

students to learn pragmatics. Some of my lessons focused on building the students' vocabulary knowledge, and others attempted to teach the students how to use those vocabulary and phrases in context to enhance their pragmatic competence.

### Lesson One

For the first lesson, I introduced the students to the word "request," and I gave them a situation. I asked them to work in groups to try to come up with as much request vocabulary and as many request phrases as they could for that situation. Then, we wrote them on the board, and I compared their phrases with my own phrases. I also introduced them to other request vocabulary and phrases like "Would you give me...", "Can you give me...?" "Could you give me...?" and "I would be grateful if you could..." So, the first lesson focused mainly on introducing the students to request phrases and vocabulary. The students were interacting with me and participating actively, calling out the vocabulary they already used when requesting. Before introducing the new vocabulary, I exposed them to a situation and asked them to give me a suitable request expression for it. I wanted to activate the students' thinking skills. At the last stage of the lesson when I asked the students to put what we had learnt into practice by using the vocabulary in sentences, the students were using the vocabulary confidently, but with still some hesitation because it was very new for them. Some of them still transferred their L1 request expressions to their L2 in the lesson. However, when I stopped them and asked their friends about what was wrong in their requests and reminded them to think again about what we had learnt, one of them said, "Oh, yes, yes, I remembered now," and reconstructed the sentence or the request again correctly this time.

### Lesson Two

In the second lesson, I taught the students how to differentiate between requesting from a high stakeholder and a low stakeholder. I did that by asking one volunteer to stand next to me, and I asked the students to ask for a marker once from me and once from her. The students did very well in requesting in Arabic, and they used the suitable words and way of requesting in the two situations. Then, I asked the students to do the same in English. The students used the same dialogue for both of us. The only difference between the two dialogues was the voice tone of requesting. When requesting from me the students used a very low and hesitant voice tone, while

when they requested a marker from the student standing next to me they did it in a high and a more confident voice tone. What is more, when asking their friend for a marker they were moving their hands towards the other student while asking for the marker. When asking me for one, however, they were putting their hands down next to their body and some of them were rubbing their hands and moving them around each other as if they were very shy or nervous. The students were using their voice tones and their body language to express something that they can not say because, whether they don't have enough vocabulary, or because of the power relationship between them.

In the lesson I taught them how to do both actions correctly, and I modeled the vocabulary they should use, the standing position, and the body language. Then, I gave each of the four groups in one of the classes that I teach an activity to do outside the classroom; the first two groups had to go to the secretary to ask for some A4 paper, and the second two groups had to go to another classroom and ask the students there for some crayons. When each group finished their activity, they exchanged their activities and did the activity that the other groups had done. We practiced that first in the classroom, and then the students headed to do their activities in an authentic context. I sought one of my colleague's help. She accompanied the first two groups, and I went with the other two groups. I asked my colleague to report to me what her groups did and what language they used.

After class discussion revealed that the students loved the lesson very much because, as one of the students said, "What I liked is that we had to use the language in a real situation and not only memorize it though pictures or sentences." Another student said, "I will never forget how to make a difference between requesting from a teacher and a friend because I did it with real people in real situations."

### Lesson Three

This was followed with watching a video tape of the Cinderella story in the second lesson. Students had to listen to requests and identify them while watching. The students had to clap their hands whenever they heard a request phrase, and I wrote it on the board for everybody to see. In the lesson, when we came across any request situation, I stopped the movie and talked about that segment, including what phrases they used, who they were talking about, how they made requests given the distance between the two speakers, and the body language and voice tones used. I also

asked them to role play the same segment to practice. The students enjoyed the lesson very much. That could be read from the students' eyes and interest level. They were very motivated during the lesson and they were watching for what would come next in the lesson.

Interviewing the students informally after class showed that the students liked the Cinderella cartoon, as I guessed. One student said, "I liked when I role played the story, especially when we wore the clothes for the role play." Another student said, "I always watch cartoons, but I never looked at how people in the cartoon deal with each other and what language they use to request something from each other, but now I will always look for what we learnt today in every cartoon I see." A different student said, "Before, I was watching cartoons for leisure, but now I will also use them to learn English."

For homework I asked the students to watch any English cartoon on TV and try to listen very carefully to any request sentence, how they did it, who requested from whom, what body language and eye contact they used. I sought the mothers' help in that, and I sent them a letter explaining the activity and how to do it in Arabic.

#### Lesson Four

In this lesson, we reviewed what we learnt so far about pragmatics. I also asked some of the students to present their homework that they were asked to do in the previous lesson. The results I got showed how much the students learnt from the previous lessons. The students were fighting to talk about the movie they saw and the things they found out, and I solved that by choosing numbers from a hat. That showed how motivated the students were about the lesson and the activity. Their vocabulary choice indicated that they had internalized information from the previous few lessons. Although the students did not figure out every single thing about pragmatics in the movie they saw, they still could see some very simple elements of pragmatics like the different phrases used, the way something was asked for, and the relationship between the speakers in the request situation. When the students were presenting the information they got from the movie, the brighter students gave very detailed information about the movie they saw and they did it very well. Although the weaker students could not figure out as much information as the brighter students, they still could say one or two things about it. When I asked the brighter students about the

presentation, most of them said that they got help from someone in the family, while the weaker students did not because nobody knew English in their families.

#### Lesson Five

This lesson was one of the most interesting lessons the students studied in this teaching program. It was a story which called "I Want My Dinner" written by Tony Ross (1996). This story was about a naughty boy who always asks older people in his family for things impolitely. They keep telling him throughout the story to say please, and when he does so he gets what he wants. The students enjoyed the story. They role played the story using some realia like a real teddy bear and a real potty. The students also role played the story using other items that are not in the story like a book, a pencil, and a bag to create a new story in which they did not have what they asked their friends for until they say please.

Interviewing the students after class revealed that they liked the story a lot and they found it very funny. One of the students said, "We always study boring stories that are in the books at the end of each unit and we don't benefit from them, but this one was a real benefit for us." Another student said, "I will never forget to say please when I request anything." One more student showed her interest in the story by saying, "Teacher, can I take the story home to read it for my sister and brother?"

#### Lesson Six

In this lesson my focus was on raising the students' awareness of communicating more than the language used. I started the lesson by writing the following letters on the board: "Mm...", "No, no," and "Oh..." I asked the students to talk about what different meanings those words might have. As expected, all the students said "Mm" means delicious, "Oh..." was interpreted as pleasure, and "No, no" as disagreement. I pronounced the different letters in different ways to help the students identify the other meanings that those letters might have. Then, I asked the students what makes the different meanings of the same word; all of them figured out that intonation is the answer. Then, I put on the board four different pictures of facial expressions including anger, happiness, excitement, and boredom. I asked the students to say simple words or phrases as the people in the pictures would, and the other students had to match one of the faces to them. After that, the students got a simple dialog from their course-book. Two students acted out the dialog as they normally

would. Then I asked two different students to choose a mood and act out the dialog again. Following each scene students attempted to identify the mood of each speaker.

When interviewing the students informally after class, the students told me that they enjoyed the lesson and they found it fun. All the students agreed that they acquired new information about pragmatics. One of the students said, "I learnt that learning English language does not only mean learning words or phrases, but it also includes other things like facial expressions and voice tones." Another student said, "We learnt in our course book vocabulary like happy, sad, like, and dislike. We did not benefit a lot from it because we only learnt what they meant, but we didn't learn what words could be used to express each of them." Other student said, "I feel happier now because I learnt some new things about English that other students in the school might not have an idea about. I am the best in our school."

## Lesson Seven

In this lesson students had a chance to explore and demonstrate their understanding of pragmatics using a very common interaction: greetings. Some English language teachers introduce the topic of greetings at the beginning of each year, and the first unit of some textbooks, especially grade one and three, usually has a lesson about that topic. In these classes the students often practice greetings with their classmates and with their teacher in a polite or friendly manner. The way we greet someone shows so much about status, authority, and emotion. In fact, greetings are very complicated and convey so much more under the surface. In this exercise, students used their imaginations to expand the situation beyond polite greetings and move on to other kinds of situations. For example, two friends might greet each other, but one of them does not like the other and wants to get away as soon as possible. Another possibility might involve an interaction between a student and a teacher, where the student skipped class that day then bumps into the teacher on the street. In these kinds of situations, the students have to think about how to show their discomfort or embarrassment by using their voice tone and body language to indicate such feelings.

I began the class by asking students how they can show feelings of discomfort, embarrassment, anger, jealousy, and dislike by using their voices and body language. For example, you could tell them that using a loud, deep voice can show someone's anger, and looking down at the ground during a conversation can indicate

nervousness, fear, or embarrassment. Then, I asked the students to practice showing different emotions, like those discussed previously, using the voice and body by walking around the room and saying "Hello" to each other. Then, I divided the students into pairs and I gave each pair a slip of paper containing the following dialogue:

A: Hello.

B: Hello.

A: How are you?

B: Fine.

A: Can I borrow your pencil for a moment?

B: Oh, sure.

A: Thank you.

I told the students that they should decide, in their pairs, who the two people in the dialogue are, where they are, and how they feel about each other. I also told them to think about how to show their feelings towards each other using tone of voice, speed of interaction, facial expressions, body language, and gestures. For example, what can we tell about someone's emotions if a person's voice is shaky or very calm, or if a person is standing up straight or bent over? Each pair practiced the dialogue on its own and they acted out the dialogue for the whole class without telling anyone who the characters were. After each pair's presentation, I asked the whole class the following questions: Who are the two people? Where are they? How do they feel about each other? How do they show their feelings? I told them to think about body language and the way the actors used their voices.

The class was very noisy during practice time and it showed how motivated the students were to do the activity. The students' role plays were also funny, but the students learnt a lot from them. One student told me, "I know that in Arabic we do this, but it is the first time for me to know how to do it in English." Another student noted, "I didn't want the class to finish and I wanted to go on listening to the different role plays which were interesting." Another student said, "I had never paid attention to the very simple elements of pragmatics like eye contact, body language, and voice tone, and I did not know that they are important in learning a language, but now I do."



## Lesson Eight

The data in the pre-instruction phase suggested that the students had problems with telephone conversations, so I decided to prepare an activity that could help the students develop an understanding of the nature of telephone conversations, especially when they request to speak to another person.

I started the lesson by eliciting from the students what they might say when they request to speak to somebody. Students called out different answers; some of them said "I want to speak to...." Another group said "Excuse me, give me....," while others said "Give me...." The students' answers showed that they lacked the ability to ask for a person during a telephone call using appropriate request expressions. Some of their answers seemed rude. They tried to be polite, but at the same time they used a command verb in the sentence which made it awkward like "Excuse me. Give me a pencil."

After listening to the students' answers, I played an audio tape which had a native speaker of English speaking on the phone and requesting a person. I asked the students to identify how the speaker asked for her friend on the phone and what questions she used? After playing the tape two times, I elicited the answer from the students and wrote it on the board. I presented them with two appropriate ways of requesting a person on the phone by role playing it using a real phone that I brought with me. The examples I used were "Hello. Is Maria there?" and "Hello. May I speak to Ahmed?" The students enjoyed the activity, especially when using the phone, because as one of them said, "I learn more when I use and do things with my hands and practice it as if it is real." I asked the students to work in groups of four and try to come with other suitable expressions. The students came up with different answers like the following:

A: Hello.

B: Yes.

A: Can I speak to Mariam, please?

Another example is:

A: Hello.

B: Hello.

A: Would you call Fatima, please?

The second request expression clearly showed that the speaker tried to be as polite as possible by using the modal "would you...." and "please." However, the

speaker sounded as if she was sure that she could talk to her friend because of her verb choice, “call,” that was too direct. At the end of the lesson I compared their answers that they gave me at the beginning of the lesson and their new answers, and I asked them to tell me about what they thought and what the different between them was. One student said, "I now realize that I was very rude when I asked for my friend on the phone." Another student said, "Our new sentences sound more polite." Overall, the students enjoyed the lesson and they agreed that they learnt a lot from it.

#### Lesson Nine

I taught another story which was "Eat Your Peas, Louise" written by Pegeen Snow (1985). The story is about Louise's brother who tries anything to get her to eat her peas. She refuses to eat the peas on her plate until she is asked properly. This story was fun for the students and they enjoyed it a lot. The students' eyes showed a great deal of interest and motivation while reading the story. When I finished reading the story, the students did not want me to stop reading the story, and they asked me to repeat it. They were also trying their best to predict what would come next in the story and tried to tell the story with me following the rhyme of it. When I asked the students about what they learnt from the story, most of them agreed that they learnt that they should ask for things properly using appropriate polite request expressions.

#### Lesson Ten

The teaching program was concluded with a learning-centered class in which I assigned each group in the class something different to do with requests. When the allocated time was finished the groups had to rotate and change their activity. The first activity was a role playing activity in which the students had slips of paper with simple situations written on them to role play. The second activity was a matching activity, in which the students had two sets of papers. The first set had some polite request sentences and the other set had the people's positions like teacher, father, sister, and friend. The students had to work in groups to match each situation with the person that it should be used with. The third activity was a listening activity in which the students had to watch some segments of a movie and complete a worksheet. In this assignment, the students had to watch each part of the movie and decide the actor's moods in that segment, whether they were happy, sad, excited, or angry. The fourth group had a phone on their table, and they had to role play any situation they liked

using the appropriate polite request or greeting. They also were asked to practice the different moods like being happy, sad, and annoyed when using any of their request expressions.

A discussion followed the class, and one student told me, "I liked that we had different interesting activities in one lesson." Another student said, "This class refreshed my mind about what we learnt so far about requests." Three other students agreed that they wanted the class to continue because they liked the activities. Another student noted, "I see from this lesson how did I developed in the English language."

I also spent one whole class the next day discussing with the students how they saw themselves after that five-week program in Arabic. The students' different points of views indicated that they learnt a lot, and one student reported on behalf of the whole class, "Now, we know how to use the proper language with the proper people. I mean that we know now that we should be more polite and we should use a different expression when talking to our teacher than we use with our friend."<sup>3</sup> Another student said excitedly, "Why don't we have activities about requests in our textbooks like the ones that we practiced in the previous lessons." Another interesting comment was "I feel that I was very rude when talking to people by using the same expressions to all of them, but now I am not." Another student maintained, "My family at home is very happy with me because they see how much I have developed in English and especially with requests." Another comment was "I always use what I learnt and practice it with the salesman who works in the grocery that is next to our house when I go to buy sweets." Another student added happily, "I also use what I learnt about requests with our housemaid who can speak English."

#### Students' Pragmatic Levels in the Post-Instruction Phase

After teaching requests for five weeks, I exposed the students to the same eight situations that I used in the pre-instruction phase to role play to assess their pragmatic development after five weeks of instruction. I listened to each role play and I audio taped them. After that, I re-listened to the taped role plays to analyze them and see how far the students had developed in their pragmatics. In addition, an informal

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<sup>3</sup> All the sentences in this section were translated from Arabic.

interview followed each role play to ask the students about their choice of vocabulary and the way they role played each situation. The results are shown in appendix A2.

Compared to the data collected in the pre-instruction phase, this set of data showed evidence of more politeness in the requests as they had learnt in the five weeks of instruction. The students showed an understanding of difference usage when they asked for things from a teacher or a friend. Unlike in the pre-instruction phase when the students used the same expressions for both situation 1 and 2, and for both situation 3 and 4, and they did not use different vocabulary and expressions when talking to a teacher and a friend, the data in appendix A2 indicate that the students started to generate some request expressions that show the difference in the power distance between the two parts. Looking closely at the first situation shows that the students used some head phrases that sound more polite and showed great respect to the teacher. The head phrases that the students used are "Could I...", "Would you...", "I would be grateful if ...," and "Could you lend me...." In situation 2, in appendix A2, the collected data show that the students were less polite and sounded rude. Those students used verbs that sound like commands like "Give me," "I want," and "I will take your pencil, O.K?" which can be considered to be appropriate between friends depending on the situation. What is more, the students used the word "please" in most of their request sentences, while in appendix A1, they rarely used it.

Other aspects of non-verbal pragmatic behavior, for example, body language, voice tone, facial expressions, distance between the speakers, and eye contact, were also noticeable in the role plays. When the students were role playing in the post-instruction test, their body language did not change and they kept transferring what they used and did when requesting in Arabic into English which can be considered positive transfer. For the situation of request from the teacher, the students requested pencils and homework help by using a more polite, low and hesitant voice tone, while when asking for a pencil from a friend, they were doing it with a louder voice and looking straight in the other person's eyes. Regarding the space between the speakers in the role plays, in situations 1, 3, and 5 most of the students were keeping a distance between them and the teacher while talking and they were also standing up straight. They also kept their hands together in the area between their chest and their tummy. For example, when they asked for a pencil, they kept their hands at their chest level and pointed to the pencil with some hesitation, while if they were asking the teacher to use the toilet, they would do the same while pointing toward the door.

The students also used the same body language as in the pre-instruction phase when requesting a pencil and homework help from a friend in situations 2 and 4. They used a stronger and a more confident voice tone as if they were sure that their friend wouldn't mind giving them a pencil. For instance, in situation 2 one of the students' request expressions was "I will take your pencil for a moment, O.K.?" and the student in that situation took the pencil without waiting for her friend's reply. This is the least polite expression, but it can be o.k. between friends. It also has no "permission" and it puts the other student in "no-choice" situation. When asking that group about why they did it that way, one of them said, "Because she is my friend and I know that she wouldn't mind if I took anything from her." What is more, one of the groups role played situation 4 in a more direct way. They said, "I need your help to answer this question." Another group said, "Do you know how to answer this question?" and "How did you answer this question?" They role played them standing close to their friend, with some of them putting the notebook on the table and bending their body down and pointing to the question that they needed help with. There is no choice in the previous two request expression sentences and no polite form of expression, but it is still appropriate to be said between friends.

In situation 6, the students role played making phone calls and asking for their friends. The data collected in appendix A2 indicated that the students made progress in using more appropriate language to ask for their friends compared to the pre-instruction phase. Most of the groups said "Can/May I speak to ..., please?" and two other groups said "Is...there?" The last two groups tried to be polite and tried to use an appropriate expression like "Could/Would you..., please?", but at the same time they used some verbs that they usually use when asking for their friends in Arabic like "call" and "give." So, these two groups tried to implement what they learnt about using appropriate head phrases, and they also tried to be polite by using the word "please." However, it seems that they still had problems with language transfer which is not unusual after five weeks of instruction.

#### Students' Pragmatic Levels in the Post-Post-Instruction Phase

The students had a two-week break at the end of the semester, and when they came back to school, I did a third assessment based on the same eight role plays that I did for the first two assessments. The results are shown in appendix A3.

Compared to the data collected in the post-instruction phase, the post-post-instruction results were nearly the same. The students were applying the same pragmatics roles and vocabulary that they learnt about in the instruction phase to the same eight situations. One student in one of the groups was trying her best to remember the head act that she should use to request. She said to me, "Teacher, I know that I should say something here, but I can't remember how to say it." It is normal for these young learners to forget, but it was encouraging that the group that that girl was in was trying to remember the vocabulary that should be used in that situation. The other finding from this part of my investigation is that some groups transferred some of their L1 pragmatics into their L2. For example, one of the groups requested a pencil from a teacher by saying, "Teacher, I will take a pencil, please." The students in this sentence tried to be polite by saying "please" and they also used appropriate body language and voice tone, but they failed to use verbs that are appropriate to the situation and the people that they were talking to. They also borrowed verbs from their L1's pragmatics like "I will take." Analyzing situation 1 and situation 2 sentences revealed that most of the groups (5 groups) said, "Can/May I have a pencil, please?" and two of these groups used the same sentence in situation 2 but changed the verb "have" to "take." When I asked the students about that they told me they did that because they felt the word "have" sounds more polite than the word "take." What is more, in situation 1, one of the groups used the following expression: "Could I take a pencil, please?" and in situation 2 they used the same sentence but changed the head phrase "could" into "can." I asked the students about the reason behind that, and one of the students replied, "We think that the word 'could' sounds more polite than the word 'can.'"

Analyzing situation 4 indicates that one of the groups requested help from a friend by saying "Can you please help me with this question?" They did that while stressing the word "please" and raising the intonation of the request, as if they were trying to make the other person feel sorry for them and help them. In the same situation, the students used the word "please" in the middle of the sentence, while all the other groups used it at the end. In the post assessment informal interview, I asked the students about their sentence and why they used it in that way. One of the students in the group replied excitedly, "I was watching a cartoon on TV and one of the characters used this sentence, and it stuck in my mind and I kept saying it again and again because I liked it a lot."

In conclusion, to answer the research question of to what extent teaching pragmatics to young learners can help to improve the students' pragmatic skills, the data collected in the three phases of the study suggested that there was improvement in the post-instruction test compared to the pre-instruction test. However, the data collected in the post-post-instruction phase revealed that there was a relapse, perhaps due to transfer or the two-week break, or maybe because the students are young and they tend to forget, especially after the two-week break that they had. They most probably had not been exposed to one word in the break that would remind them of what they studied about pragmatics. The more the new information is reviewed the more it sticks in the mind, especially for young learners, so they need something that reminds them with what they studied from time to time until it is internalized in their minds and never forgotten. Although some students said they spoke English at home, it is not unreasonable to assume that most of the students spoke Arabic to their family and friends during the two week break.

Overall, analyzing the data collected in the three phases of the study shows that the students gained pragmatic knowledge in four areas: (1) transference, (2) use of head phrases and politeness markers, (3) status differences, and (4) other non-verbal elements like voice tone, body language, standing positions and facial expressions. The next chapter will explain more about those four areas of improvement.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion and Implications

#### Summary

This study was carried out to, first, assess my little grade three students' current level in pragmatics, second, to see to what extent direct teaching of pragmatic competence helps to improve the students' level of pragmatics and enjoyment, and third, to see the students' attitudes towards the activities presented to them during the direct teaching phase. The results of three phases of the study revealed that the students gained pragmatic knowledge in four different areas that are: (1) transference, (2) use of head phrases and politeness markers, (3) status differences, and (3) other non-verbal elements like voice tone, body language, standing positions, and facial expressions.

In the pre-instruction phase, most of the students tended to transfer most of their L1 pragmatics into their L2 which affected their way of communication in the target language and caused some misunderstandings. They transferred the words that they would use to request in Arabic into English, like "Excuse me, give me a pencil" when asking for a pencil and "Where is Fatima?" when asking for their friend on the phone. This finding goes hand in hand with the findings of Saito and Beecken (1997) who note that "a growing body of research on pragmatic transfer has suggested that second language learners transfer their native language norms and forms of performing a speech act to their L2" (p. 363). After the five weeks of instruction, the students developed slightly and they had less L1 pragmatic transfer, which was obvious from the results in the post-instruction assessment. However, the students went back to transference in the post-post-instruction assessment that was done after the two-week break that the students had which was not unusual. This might be due to the two-week-break that was long enough for the students to forget as they are young learners. They were also not exposed to such an important aspect of language during these two weeks, in which they could use to help them remember and recall what they had studied previously. This is because the more the word is retrieved the more it strengthens the path linking form and meaning (Nation, 2002). However, it is an important finding to support the on-going teaching of pragmatics and not teaching it in one class and forget about it in the next lessons. Pragmatics like other aspects of



language should be used and recalled again and again during the academic year so that it can be internalized in the students' minds and never be forgotten.

The knowledge gained in the use of head phrases and politeness markers was also noticeable. In the pre-instruction phase, the students used some inappropriate head phrases like "I want" and "Give me" which were obvious transfers of their L1 head phrases into their L2. In the five weeks of instruction, I taught the students some new head phrases and politeness markers like "will you," "would you," "can you," "could you," and "I would be grateful if you could." The students made very good progress in using these head phrases in their request sentences in both the post-instruction and post-post-instruction assessment results. The majority of the students replaced the head phrases that they used to use in the pre-instruction phase with the ones they learnt in the five weeks of instruction phase. The students also rarely used the word "please" in their request sentences in the pre-instruction phase which was because, as one of the students said, they would prefer using "Excuse me" instead as "please" is not used in Arabic in the same way as it is in English. That was normal because it was quite difficult for those children to understand the use of the word yet. The ten lessons the students had in the instruction phase helped to make a big change in the students' idea about the word "please" in English. It was noticeable from the post-instruction phase and the post-post instruction assessment results that the students kept using the word "please" repeatedly in each request sentence.

The students in the pre-instruction phase did not differentiate their requests based on status. They kept using the same request expression regardless of the status of the people they were speaking to. The only way they differentiated between status was to change their voice tone as explained in chapter 4. In the post-instruction assessment the students' sentences changed, and they started to show that they could differentiate between requesting from a teacher and a close friend. They used sentences like "Could I have a pencil, please?" when asking a teacher for a pencil and "Give me a pencil, please" when asking for one from a close friend. In the post-post instruction phase, the students still could make a status difference in request sentences, but there were some groups who forgot about that and made some direct request sentences like "I want to go to the toilet, please."

The fourth area that the students showed development in is the non-verbal elements like voice tone, eye contact, facial expressions, and body language. In the pre-instruction phase, the students used the same request sentences for both teachers

and friends, but they used their non-verbal elements to show the status difference of both of them. When requesting a pencil from a teacher, they said “I want a pencil” and they did it in a low and hesitant voice. They also stood straight in their place with their hands at chest level. However, when they asked their friend for one they used the same sentence, but they said it with a stronger and a more confident voice. They also did not wait for their friend to give them the pencil but took it by themselves. This shows that although the students’ sentences sounded rude, the way they said the sentence and their body language indicated that they did not intend to be. In the post-instruction phase and the post-post-instruction phase a small number of the students used the same non-verbal elements as in the pre-instruction phase which shows that the students were making a positive transfer of their L1’s non-verbal requesting elements into their L2’s. While another group of students still transferred some of their L1’s non-verbal elements, they also started to apply what I had taught them about non-verbal elements of pragmatics for example, how to look at the other person’s eyes when asking for something and how to stand straight and not bend down on something to show more respect.

#### Pedagogical Implications

I believe that the significance of this study lies in its pedagogical implications for all those who are concerned about improving young learners’ pragmatic levels. As a teacher of young learners, I could see that my students lack the ability to communicate using correct and appropriate pragmatics. Some of them also hate the language because they see it as difficult to learn and not useful. One reason that might be behind that is the neglect of teaching pragmatics in the classrooms and focusing more on teaching vocabulary and grammar in a not meaningful way, which can make learning the language a bad experience for young learners.

For the majority of students in the UAE’s EFL context, English language largely remains an academic exercise with little motivation to learn more than what is required to pass a test. The majority of younger students have no idea why they are studying English. Younger students’ motivation is nearly all “extrinsic or classroom-related,” which is a common challenge in any EFL situation (Kang, 2000, p. 2). Class size and contact hours can be treated as another challenge which also make it difficult for teachers involved in general education to create effective and meaningful speaking and writing opportunities. Large class sizes of 25-30 students can be the most

troubling aspect in trying to develop students' basic communicative skills. The main purpose of teaching in an EFL context is to develop the students' four skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. After analyzing the results from the study, it has become apparent to me that regardless of teaching methods or curriculum expectations, a language must be experienced. This does not mean that grammar, reading, writing, and speaking do not all need to be taught, but it means that along with these skills the language must be experienced. In order for a person to be truly skilled in a language it must become a part of his or her being, or in other words, a person must live the language. So, it is a great challenge, as language teachers, to try to give students various kinds of opportunities to live the language, but it is also very rewarding to be able to see a student make English become a part of his or her being.

Teachers can achieve that by implementing some authentic activities in the classroom that are fun and motivating for the students. Teachers should also give the students the opportunity to use the language with people working in the school with people who can speak the language like principals, teachers, and secretaries and should observe them and help them overcome their weaknesses. Teachers should also encourage the students to use the language outside the school and watch some English cartoons or movies and report back to the class about what they saw in the next class. Immersing the students in such meaningful and communicative contexts might help to develop the students' pragmatic skills.

The result of this study can also provide clearer insight for curriculum designers to tailor and develop a more communicative curriculum which has a section focusing on teaching pragmatics, which is as important as grammar and vocabulary. The students' attitudes, interests, and motivations toward the activities implemented in this study also show that such interesting and communicative lessons, activities, and stories should be incorporated in the textbooks. Curriculum developers should also be aware of the importance of the native language culture in teaching and learning about the language. Teaching the students about the culture of the language helps to introduce the students to the pragmatics of that language and helps to present the language as it is used in real life.

Supervisors can also benefit from the results of this study. I believe that they should not put teachers under pressure to finish teaching the entire curriculum. This makes the teachers hurry to finish the expected material on time and not give each topic the effort and the time it deserves. Putting teachers under pressure to finish the

textbook makes the teachers focus on teaching and building the students' knowledge only about the materials that are in the textbook, which mainly attempt to develop the students' reading, writing, and listening skills rather than developing the students' other important skills like speaking and pragmatics. So Supervisors should encourage teachers to focus on teaching grammar and vocabulary besides pragmatics, because they are all equally important.

#### Limitations of the Study

I faced some difficulties in conducting my research. One of these limitations is that I could not video tape the students because culturally it was not allowed, especially for girls. The observation journal was an adequate substitute, but limited in nature and allowed for some subjectivity on my part.

Time limitation and curriculum requirements were other elements which put me under pressure because I had to follow the curriculum and finish it on time. Besides that, I had to plan some more extra activities about pragmatics that are not in the curriculum which were an add-on to the existing curriculum. However, with my students' help and enthusiasm I could finish the curriculum requirements on time with all the new extra activities I created for this study.

The students' age was a third limitation. The students in my study were only eight or nine years old, and they did not have any previous idea or instruction about pragmatics and what it meant, so I had to start with them from the beginning explaining to them what pragmatics meant. What is more, I could not do any surveys or questionnaires with them to help me collect some quantitative data because it would be difficult for them to do so. Besides that, they had never been exposed to or asked to complete such questionnaires and surveys. However, the qualitative data I got from them was valuable.

The final and the most critical limitation was the time factor which prevented the positive results of the teaching of pragmatic competence to flourish. It is likely that if this type of instruction that I carried out in the five weeks of the study went on for a whole year, the students would have developed more and would have gained more knowledge about pragmatics.

### Directions for Further Research

Given the fact that the duration of my study was only six weeks, I feel a more extended study should be carried out to enhance a better understanding of the effects of teaching pragmatics on young learners. In other words, I believe that further study is needed to identify the impact of teaching the other aspects of pragmatics like apologies and refusals on young learners. Furthermore, I think that conducting such research in UAE preparatory and secondary schools could be valuable. What is more, since my study was in a girls' school, doing the same research in a boy's schools might also reveal other interesting findings.

The data collection method for this research could also be improved by using video taping if the school and the parents allow it. Simple surveys could also be used besides the interviews with such young students. These surveys can include pictures of happy faces or sad faces that the students can circle to determine their enjoyment in the lessons or the activities taught to them during the teaching course to have some quantitative data.

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## Appendix A1: The results of the pre- instruction role plays

Role-play Situation	Vocabulary generated by groups
"Borrowing a pen from a teacher"	Can I May I ... I want... I need... Teacher, I don't have a pencil. Teacher, I forgot my pencil. Do you have one? Excuse me, give me a pencil.
"Borrowing a pen from a friend"	Can I... May I ... I want... I need... I don't have a pencil. I forgot my pencil. Do you have one? Excuse me, give me a pencil.
"Asking the teacher a question about the homework"	I don't know this question. I want you to help me. I don't understand the homework. Can you help me? I don't understand the question. Explain it to me again.
"Asking a friend a question about the homework"	I don't know this question. I want you to help me. I don't understand the homework. Can you help me? I don't understand the question. Explain it to me again.
"Asking the teacher for permission to use the toilet"	Teacher, I want to..... I need to..... Please, I want to... Excuse me, I want to..... May I / Can I .....? Is it O.K to go to the toilet?
"(On the phone) asking your friend's mother if you can speak to your friend"	I want to talk with my friend. Can I talk to.....? Call Amna... Where is Amna? Is Fatima here? May I speak to...? Give me Maryam.
"Greeting one of your classmates"	Hi. How are you? Hello. How are you?
"Greeting your teacher"	Hello, teacher. Good morning/ evening, teacher. Hello. How are you? I am glad to see you here.

## Appendix A2: The results of the post- instruction role plays

Role-play Situation	Vocabulary generated by groups
"Borrowing a pen from a teacher"	Can I/ may I ....., please? Could I have a pencil, please? I forgot my pencil. Would you give me one, please? I would be grateful if you could give me a pencil, please? Could you lend me a pencil, please?
"Borrowing a pen from a friend"	Give me a pencil, please. Can I have a pencil, please? I want a pencil, please. I will take your pencil for a moment. O.K? Can you give me a pencil, please?
"Asking the teacher a question about the homework"	Could you help me with my homework, please? I would be grateful if you could help me with my homework ....., please? Would you help me to answer this question, please?
"Asking a friend a question about the homework"	I need your help to answer this question. Can you help me with this question, please? Do you know how to answer this question? How did you answer this question?
"Asking the teacher for permission to use the toilet"	Could I go to the toilet, please? Would you let me go to the toilet, please? Can I go to the toilet, please?
"(On the phone) asking your friend's mother if you can speak to your friend"	Can / may I speak to ....., please? Could you call....., please? Would you give ....., please? Is ..... there?
"Greeting one of your classmates"	Hello Hi
"Greeting your teacher"	Good morning teacher Hello teacher



### Appendix A3: The results of the post-post instruction role plays

Role-play Situation	Vocabulary generated by groups
"Borrowing a pen from a teacher"	Can I/ may I have a pencil, please? Could I take a pencil, please? I would be grateful if you could give me a pencil, please? Teacher, I will take a pencil, please.
"Borrowing a pen from a friend"	Give me a pencil, please. Can I take your pencil, please? I want a pencil, please. Can you give me a pencil, please?
"Asking the teacher a question about the homework"	Could you help me to answer this question, please? Teacher, I don't know how to answer this question. Can you help me, please? Would you help me to answer this question, please?
"Asking a friend a question about the homework"	Can you please help me with this question? Do you know how to answer this question? How did you answer this question? Help me with this question, please?
"Asking the teacher for permission to use the toilet"	Could I go to the toilet, please? Can I go to the toilet, please? I want to go to the toilet, please.
"(On the phone) asking your friend's mother if you can speak to your friend"	Can / may I speak to ....., please? Could you call....., please? I want to speak to....., please. Is ..... there?
"Greeting one of your classmates"	Hello Hi
"Greeting your teacher"	Good morning teacher. Good morning teacher. I am very happy to see you here. Hello teacher

## Appendix B: The eight role-play situations

Situation 1: borrowing a pen from a teacher.

Situation 2: borrowing a pen from a friend.

Situation 3: asking the teacher a question about the homework.

Situation 4: asking a friend a question about the homework.

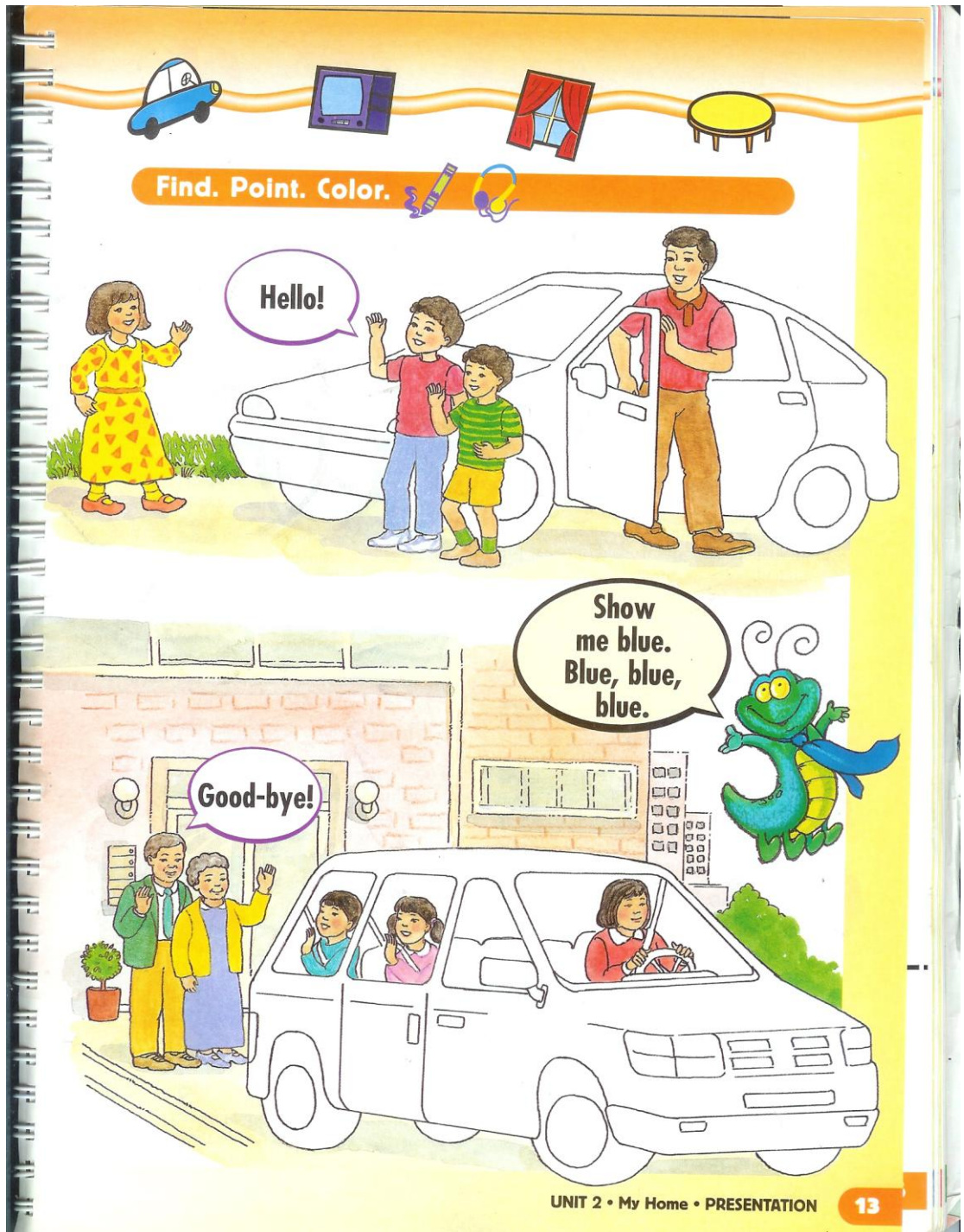
Situation 5: asking the teacher for permission to use the toilet.

Situation 6: (on the phone) asking your friend's mother if you can speak to your friend.

Situation 7: greeting one of your classmates.

Situation 8: greeting your teacher.

Appendix C: Examples of greetings taught to students in grade one



Herrera, M., & Zanatta, T. (2001). *New parade*. New York: Longman.

Appendix D: An example of the language objectives of unit one in grade one's *New Parade*.

**UNIT 1 • My Class**

# 1 My Class

**Communication Objectives**

- to introduce oneself
- to greet and take leave
- to identify classroom objects
- to identify people in a classroom
- to identify the numbers 1, 2, 3
- to identify the colors red and yellow
- to identify circles
- to answer questions with yes or no

**Language Objectives**

- to understand questions with is
- to understand commands
- to understand the prepositions in and on

**Learning Strategies and Thinking Skills**

- to classify
- to follow directions
- to listen to language models
- to manipulate objects
- to use chants and songs to learn sentence structures or conversations
- to use mime and gestures
- to use visual cues

**Content Connections**

*Art:* to draw and color; to cut and glue

*Literature/Language Arts:* to use puppets; to listen to and say rhymes and chants

*Math:* to recognize and identify numbers and shapes; to write numerals; to count; to count objects, people, or sounds

*Music:* to sing songs

**Materials**

*New Parade Starter Student Book,* pages 2–11

*New Parade Starter Workbook,* pages 1–8; 81

*New Parade Starter Audio:* Tape/CD

*New Parade Starter Video and Video Guide*

*New Parade Starter Posters*

Boxes, circle cutouts, classroom objects, crayons, glue, number flashcards, paper, puppets, scissors

*Optional Materials:* balloons, bottle caps, construction paper, foods with circular shapes, paper reinforcements, pictures of classroom objects, stick-on dots, string, yarn; *Little Celebrations—At the Library* by Angela Shelf Medearis and *Humpity-Bump!* by Joëlle Murphy

**Key Vocabulary**

- boy, girl, teacher
- school
- book, chair, crayons, door, glue, paper, pencil, scissors, shelf, table
- circle
- one, two, three
- red, yellow, good-bye, hello
- no, yes
- TPR:  
Clap.; Count.; Give.; Jump.; Listen.; Look.; March.; Point.; Put.; Say.; Show me \_\_\_\_.; Sit down.; Stand up.; Start.; Stop.; Tiptoe.; Walk.

**Picture Dictionary**

crayon one glue scissors paintbrush  
book two apple three box flower

T1A

Herrera, M., & Zanatta, T. (2001). *New parade*. New York: Longman.

Appendix E: The students' interview questions I asked at the end of each class.

1. What did you learn from today's lesson?
2. What did you like or dislike about the activities in the lesson?
3. How would you use what you learnt in your life?

## Appendix F: The groups' interview questions

1. What vocabulary and head phrases did you use in your role play?
2. Why did you decide to use them?
3. Why did you role play your situation the way you did it? In other words why did you use a particular voice tone, expressions, and body language when communicating with each other?

Appendix G: The pictures I used to set up the role plays



Situation1. Borrowing a pen from a teacher



Situation2. Borrowing a pen from a friend



Situation3. Asking the teacher a question about the homework



Situation4. Asking a friend a question about the homework



Situation5. Asking the teacher for permission to use the toilet



Situation6. (On the phone) asking your friend's mother if you can speak to your friend.



Situation7. Greeting one of your classmates



Situation8. Greeting your teacher



Appendix H: An example of a journal I wrote during the role plays.

Subject: Post-instruction Role Play

13/12/2006

Grad3 (1)

\* Role playing situation ①

Body language used	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Eye contact	Good	Good	Good	Good
Hesitation	No hesitation	No hesitation	Little	No.
Voice tone	Suitable	Suitable	very low	Suitable
facial expressions	Serious facial expression.	little smile face	shy	confident look.

⇒ This class did ~~not~~ well in role playing situation one in this phase than the pre-instruction phase.

⇒ The students started <sup>to</sup> use a more suitable body language and vocabulary when speaking to the teacher than the pre-instruction phase.

⇒ Overall, this class are developing.

## VITA

Shayma Abdul Rahim Naqi is a primary school teacher in a government school in the UAE. She has been teaching for four years. She obtained her bachelor's degree in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) from the Higher Colleges of Technology in Ras Al Khaimah in 2004. She is a member in TESOL Arabia. She presented a workshop entitled "Teacher Refresher" in 2006 and attended several workshops and seminars in English language teaching such as "Bringing Stories to Life through Story Sacks." She has been a school supervisor for student teachers from the HCT and from AL Ittihad University in RAK. She participated in the CTELT annual conference in Dubai's Men's College (HCT) in 2005.