

JALT PRAGMATICS SIG NEWSLETTER 8 (2), [serial 25], Summer 2007

Message from the Newsletter Editor

Welcome to our first newsletter on the Web!

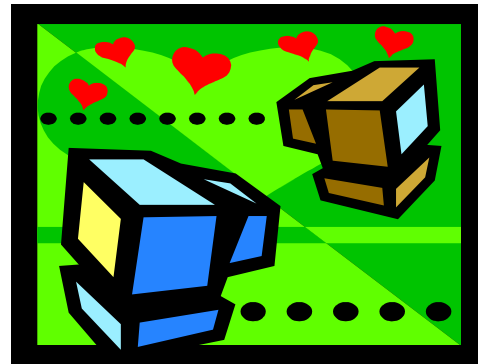
I spend a lot of time on Web discussion boards, and I'm particularly interested in the rules for posters. Some boards make a point of having no rules at all, but most boards have some variation of "Keep in mind that that the other person can't see your face and won't understand if you are being sarcastic/friendly/etc." Judging from the number of arguments that arise on discussion boards, these guidelines don't work very well.

Recently I was looking at the forums at Television Without Pity, a site for young purposeless individuals who like to talk about American TV, and I noticed that the moderators have banned the words "uh" or "um" from the discussion boards. The reason is that the words seem to be only used for their pragmatic purpose (which makes sense, since you don't need a pause-filler when you are typing). Although "uh" and "um" can be used in speech as a hedge, on discussion boards they seem to be only used as a signal that the poster is about to say something unpleasant ("to be snotty" in the TWoP moderators' words).

The rule is quite interesting in that young purposeless individuals would pick up on this, although futile in its intent of making sarcasm-free boards. Any discussion board you look at is full of threads whose content can be summarized as: "That was

rude!" "No, it wasn't!" More than before, people are paying attention to what exactly constitutes polite speech. The rule our mothers taught us, that we are polite as long as we have good intentions, no longer applies when judging whether or not to ban someone from a board. As a result, everyone might be becoming aware of pragmatic features more. I'm not holding out hope for flawlessly thoughtful and polite discussion boards any time soon, though.

Anne McLellan Howard



IN THIS ISSUE

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Message from the Newsletter Editor | 1 |
| SIG News and Business | 2 |
| People Watch | 3 |
| Interview with Janet Shibamoto Smith | |
| Journal Watch | 7 |
| Feature Article by Kathi Emori | 8 |

Pragmatic Matters

Subscriptions

JALT Members: 1500 yen
(subscription includes SIG membership)
Non JALT members: 2500 yen
(subscription only)