



***JALT Pragmatics SIG Newsletter***

# **Pragmatics Matters**

**Issue 65**

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## *Letter from the Editor*

Greetings! I hope you are all doing well as the semester comes to a close.

In this issue, we have an article that I wrote about my experiences using ChatGPT to write dialogues to help teach speech acts. This article is a preview of what we would like to do in the next issue, which is to feature articles about teachers' experiences using AI to teach pragmatics.

The annual JALT conference was held in November, and we have summaries of some of the pragmatics-related presentations. Chie Kawashima summarized her presentation "Pragmatic Knowledge in Japanese High School EFL Textbooks;" Jingxin Hao reported on the presentation, "University EFL Disagreeing via Students Flip Videos," which she did with Melissa Huntley; and Sanae Oda-Sheehan wrote a summary of her presentation, "Pragmatics for Future Success: What Students Aspire to Learn."

In October, the Online Symposium on Applied Linguistics was held at Gakushuin University, and Saki Araki presented on "Pragmatic Strategies for Multilingual English Users in Intercultural Settings," based on research for her master's thesis. She reported on her presentation in this issue.

We also have a Pragmatic Incidents column, with an incident illustrated by Rob Olson and other incidents. For the next issue, we would like to feature incidents related to AI. If you can contribute an incident, please email Jim Ronald at [jmronald@gmail.com](mailto:jmronald@gmail.com).

Donna Fujimoto presents this issue's Member Focus with Reiko Fischer, who is the assistant to our treasurer and who manages the sales of our publications.

Finally, we have an announcement about the first Pragmatics My Share. Please check out the announcement and attend this event if you can.

For future issues of the newsletter, we are accepting contributions related to ideas for teaching elements of pragmatics, aspects of pragmatics, a pragmatics-related presentation you'd be interested in reporting on, etc. For the next issue, we are specifically interested in articles about experiences using AI to teach pragmatics. If you would like to contribute, please email me at [kkitao217@yahoo.com](mailto:kkitao217@yahoo.com).

Kathleen Kitao, Editor

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# ARTICLE

## Using ChatGPT to Generate Dialogues to Demonstrate Speech Acts

Kathleen Kitao

While I'm retired, I'm still interested in pragmatics in general and teaching pragmatics in particular.

During my teaching career, when writing textbooks or making materials for my own classes, I've often had to write dialogues to demonstrate how speech acts are used, to contrast expressions used in different situations, etc. When I heard the suggestion that AI could be used to generate dialogues, I was interested to see how well that would work.

Since I was not very familiar with ChatGPT, I decided to start by just having a conversation with her. (I eventually named her Sybil, so I will refer to her that way and use a female pronoun when writing about my own experiences.) In part, I wanted to find out how natural a conversation Sybil could have. My hobby is crocheting, and we had a discussion on crocheting. I found Sybil surprisingly "knowledgeable," and we were able to have a long and involved conversation about such issues as the relationship between the choice of yarn and a crochet pattern. I felt like the conversation would have been fairly natural if I were talking to a person who was a know-it-all. Still, it was an enjoyable conversation because I very rarely have a chance to talk about crocheting with someone so knowledgeable and who could ask such good questions to take the conversation down interesting avenues. I had conversations with Sybil about different subjects and found her a good, well-informed conversationalist.

Next, I started giving Sybil instructions on writing dialogues of various types. I began by explaining what I wanted to do and why.

### **Dialogue Between a Teacher and Student**

For the first dialogue, I gave Sybil the following instructions:

*Write a conversation between two people. One is a Spanish teacher, Mrs. Langley, and a student, Miko. Miko has approached Mrs. Langley after class for clarification of some grammar points. Mrs. Langley is not able to help now and suggests an alternative. Miko is polite in making her requests, and Mrs. Langley is polite in refusing and suggesting alternatives.*

Sybil replied and produced the following dialogue and analysis:

Here's the dialogue showing the interplay of politeness influenced by status:

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**Miko:** Excuse me, Mrs. Langley, may I ask you something about today's lesson?

**Mrs. Langley:** Of course, Miko. What's on your mind?

**Miko:** I'm a bit confused about when to use *por* and *para*. I was wondering if you could explain it to me again?

**Mrs. Langley:** That's an excellent question, Miko. Unfortunately, I have another meeting starting in just a few minutes, so I can't go over it with you right now.

**Miko:** Oh, I see. I'm sorry for bothering you.

**Mrs. Langley:** No need to apologize! How about this: we can schedule a time during my office hours tomorrow. Or, if you need help sooner, I recommend checking the example sentences in the textbook—chapter 5 explains it quite well.

**Miko:** Thank you very much. I'll look at the textbook tonight, and I'll come to your office hours if I'm still confused.

**Mrs. Langley:** That sounds like a good plan. I'm happy to help anytime during office hours.

**Miko:** Thank you, Mrs. Langley. I appreciate it.

**Mrs. Langley:** You're welcome, Miko. Have a great evening!

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In this dialogue:

- **Miko** uses polite forms like "may I ask" and softens her request with "I was wondering if."
- **Mrs. Langley** politely refuses by acknowledging the validity of Miko's question and explaining her constraints before offering alternative solutions.
- The interaction shows mutual respect, appropriate to their roles as teacher and student.

I thought that the conversation would be useful in a class for giving examples of a polite request and refusal, though it might require some simplification, which I deal with below. In retrospect, I can see that I did not need to give her such detailed instructions. I could have simply asked her to write a dialogue between a teacher and a Japanese student in which the student makes a request and the teacher refuses and suggests an alternative. However, I did find it sometimes useful to explain why I wanted a particular dialogue or set of dialogues, because that seemed to help Sybil produce what I wanted.

Sybil offered to generate more dialogues with these or other speech acts. I gave her the following instructions:

*Could you please write two more dialogues in a situation where a student is making a request of a teacher and the teacher is refusing.*

Sybil generated two more dialogues, one with a request for the teacher to re-grade an answer on a test and the other with a request for an extension of the deadline on an assignment. One of the dialogues used language more characteristic of writing than conversation, and among the three dialogues, there was not much variety of expression for requests or refusals. I asked her to correct those problems, and she did.

### **Dialogue between Peers**

Sybil's next task was to write a dialogue with a similar request and refusal but between peers rather than between a teacher and student. I gave Sybil the following instructions:

*I'd like to do some dialogues to contrast with what we've done above. The purpose of this conversation is to contrast a conversation between people of different status with people of the same status. Write a conversation between two people. The conversation is between Caro, a good student in a Spanish class who lived for a year in Mexico, and her classmate and good friend, Mika. As they are leaving the class, Mika asks Caro for clarification of some grammar points. Caro is not able to help now and suggests alternatives.*

Sybil replied:

Here's the conversation contrasting the peer-to-peer dynamic with the teacher-student ones:

---

**Mika:** Hey, Caro, do you have a second?

**Caro:** Sure, what's up?

**Mika:** I'm having a hard time with *por* and *para*. I was hoping you could explain it to me.

**Caro:** Oh, that's a tricky one! I'd love to help, but I have to get to a meeting right now.

**Mika:** No problem. Do you think we could go over it later?

**Caro:** Absolutely. How about we meet up after school? Or you could check out that YouTube channel Mrs. Langley mentioned—it has great grammar videos.

**Mika:** Okay, I'll look at the videos and text you if I still don't get it.

**Caro:** Sounds good. Let me know what time works for you later.

**Mika:** Thanks, Caro. You're the best!

**Caro:** No worries! See you later.

---

#### **Analysis:**

- **Mika** uses informal language (“do you have a second?” and “I was hoping you could”) appropriate for speaking with a peer.
- **Caro** is polite but casual, reflecting their equal status, using phrases like “I'd love to help” and “let me know.”
- The dialogue feels relaxed and conversational, in contrast to the more structured politeness required in teacher-student interactions.

This dialogue would be useful to teach requests and refusals when speaking with a peer and for contrasting with expressions used when speaking with someone of higher status.



### **Dialogues with Examples of Positive and Negative Politeness**

When I was teaching pragmatics, one of the concepts I covered with Brown and Levinson's (1987) concept of face, including positive and negative politeness. I found that students struggled with the concepts but could understand them more easily when they were able to study and contrast examples of each. I asked Sybil whether she was familiar with positive and negative politeness, which she is. I then gave her the following instructions:

*Could you please write two dialogues using similar situations and characters, but one between two friends and the other between acquaintances, where there is a request and a refusal. In the first dialogue, please have the characters use positive politeness, and in the second dialogue, have the characters use negative politeness. The purpose of these dialogues is to teach the difference between positive and negative politeness, so please make that difference clear without exaggerating too much.*

Sybil produced a pair of dialogues contrasting positive and negative politeness, and then, at my request, two more pairs of dialogues. After each, she listed the strategies that she had used. She showed that she was indeed familiar with positive and negative politeness, and the dialogues she produced would be useful in helping students understand the concepts.

### **Dialogues with Inappropriate Expressions**

When I taught speech acts, I often found it useful to use dialogues with inappropriate expressions, expressions that were too polite or not polite enough, for example. I gave Sybil the following instructions, and this is what she produced:

*Write a conversation between two people. One is a Spanish teacher, Mrs. Langley, and a student, Mika. Mika has approached Mrs. Langley after class for clarification with some grammar points. Mrs. Langley is not able to help now and suggests an alternative. Include inappropriate expressions and levels of politeness, as this is to be used to show students what not to do.*

Sybil replied:

Here's the first example following your instructions:

---

**Mika:** Mrs. Langley, I need you to explain *por* and *para* to me.

**Mrs. Langley:** Mika, I'd be happy to help, but I'm about to head to a meeting.

**Mika:** But I don't get it at all. Can't you just explain it now? It won't take long.

**Mrs. Langley:** I'm sorry, but I really can't right now.

**Mika:** Ugh, fine. How am I supposed to figure this out, then?

**Mrs. Langley:** You could try checking chapter 5 in the textbook. It has good examples, and I'm available during office hours tomorrow if you'd like to go over it then.

**Mika:** Whatever.

#### **Analysis of Inappropriate Expressions:**

- **Mika's opening line ("I need you to explain")** is overly direct and demands the teacher's time, showing no consideration for her schedule.
- **"Can't you just explain it now?"** and **"It won't take long"** dismiss Mrs. Langley's stated limitation, pressuring her to comply.
- **"Ugh, fine"** and **"Whatever"** come off as dismissive and disrespectful, especially in a teacher-student interaction.

This dialogue contrasts sharply with polite examples, emphasizing behaviors to avoid. Does this approach meet your needs for demonstrating inappropriate expressions?

I would find this dialogue useful in contrasting inappropriate expressions with appropriate ones.

In addition, it occurred to me that the teacher might also use the inappropriate request form as a teachable moment, so I reminded Sybil of a particular dialogue and gave her the following instructions:

*I'd like to create a new version where the student makes the same inappropriate request, but the teacher uses it as a teaching opportunity to suggest more appropriate request strategies and then goes on to refuse and finish the dialogue in the original way.*

In response, Sybil produced a dialogue where the teacher provided an example of a more appropriate expression for a request made by a student to a teacher and explained why it was more appropriate.

### **Dialogue in an Unusual Situation**

A criticism of dialogues used for teaching speech acts, vocabulary, or grammar points is that they are not particularly interesting, but I am not good at coming up with more interesting situations, so I explained that to Sybil and asked her to come up with dialogues in an interesting or unusual situation, which she did. The four dialogues she produced were one between the commander of a space station and an astronaut who requests permission to do a risky experiment involving asteroid samples; a junior research assistant at an underwater research station who wants to study a rare fish in a restricted area; a senior archeologist whose assistant asks to re-examine an artifact; and a request from a junior diplomat to an ambassador to be allowed to present a proposal at a high-level meeting. While these dialogues would need to be simplified, they are more interesting than what I would have come up with.

### **Simplifying the Dialogues**

While the dialogues had good examples of the speech acts in different contexts, they were too difficult to use with, for example, low intermediate Japanese students of English. I asked Sybil to simplify the appropriate and inappropriate dialogues set in the underwater research station. I gave her the following instructions:

*Now imagine I'm planning to use these dialogues to teach a class of low intermediate Japanese students. Could you revise both the original dialogue and the less polite version to be appropriate in grammar and vocabulary?*

Sybil simplified the grammar, but there were still some difficult words, and the grammar could have been simplified more. I gave her the following instructions:

*I think the grammar level is good, but there is still some vocabulary that would be better if it were easier, for example, "ask" rather than "seek," "type" rather than "species," etc. Could you try again to simplify both?*

*Thanks.*

With those simplifications, I felt that the dialogues would be useable in a class to teach requests and refusals.

### **Conclusion**

ChatGPT could write dialogues much faster than I could have (in fact, they scrolled up the screen faster than I could read them), and it demonstrated a knowledge of appropriate and inappropriate levels of politeness for different situations as well as of the concepts of positive and negative politeness and their applications. It also quickly and effectively revises what it has produced when given feedback.

My experiences with ChatGPT showed me that it is useful in writing dialogues to provide examples of speech acts. When writing materials to teach pragmatics, a teacher can ask ChatGPT to produce a dialogue with certain characteristics, then ask for a similar dialogue with different parameters, such as a smaller or larger request, a closer or more distant relationship between the interlocutors, or less appropriate levels of politeness. If I were still teaching, I would use ChatGPT in making materials for my classes.

### **References**

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.

# Reports on Presentations at JALT 2024

## Pragmatic Knowledge in Japanese High School EFL Textbooks

Presented by Chie Kawashima

Reported by Chie Kawashima

This study explored most recently published Education Ministry-approved EFL textbook series used in Japanese high schools to determine the extent to which learners' pragmatic competence can be enhanced.

The presentation began with emphasizing the importance of the pragmatic aspect of language use in everyday interaction. At the same time, I introduced Bachman and Palmer's (1982) early model of communicative competence, which comprises (1) grammatical competence, (2) pragmatic competence, and (3) sociolinguistic competence, highlighting the necessity of pragmatic language instruction to foster learners' communicative competence in their target language. The latest Course of Study (MEXT, 2018) for senior high school English education emphasizes "communication abilities" aiming for students to reach a level where they can appropriately convey information, ideas, and more.

In order to address the issues regarding the inclusion and treatment of pragmatic information in EFL textbooks, the following three research questions were considered:

**RQ1.** What types of pragmatic knowledge are introduced in the selected EFL textbooks?

**RQ2.** How is the identified pragmatic knowledge presented and practiced in these textbooks?

**RQ3.** Does the inclusion of pragmatic knowledge progress or expand within a series as learners advance through grade levels?

The following ELT textbooks were selected to be analyzed for this study:

Tokyo Shoseki (2021) *All Aboard English Communication I*

Tokyo Shoseki (2022) *All Aboard English Communication II*

Sanseido (2021) *Vista English Communication I*

Sanseido (2022) *Vista English Communication II*

The primary users of these textbooks are vocational high school students in Japan, many of whom are likely to enter the workforce directly upon graduation. Thus, their English language classes in high school may be the last opportunity for formal language instruction.

Overall, only a limited number of instances of pragmatics were identified, with 26 examples being recorded. The type of pragmatic knowledge commonly identified in both series was the use of speech acts. Pragmatic markers such as backchannels, fillers, repair markers, etc., were introduced only in the *Vista* series. In addition, the study noted that examples of pragmatics were presented inconsistently across the series. The *Vista* series presented far more instances with wider varieties of pragmatic knowledge, whereas the *All Aboard* series included only three examples of pragmatics across the books. This limited coverage of pragmatic knowledge and inconsistent inclusion suggested that pragmatic language use is not a primary instruction target in these textbooks. Speech acts related to expressing opinion was the most predominantly presented pragmatic incidents across these four books. Practicing the speech acts of exchanging/expressing opinions is a prominent focus of fostering learners' communicative ability in the MEXT Course of Study, which was reflected in these selected textbooks. The *Vista* series incorporated pragmatic markers and most of them were explicitly presented. The use of pragmatic markers has hardly received pedagogical focus in EFL materials (Kawashima, 2023). This could provide valuable opportunities for learners to understand language use.

These identified instances were mostly structured as cloze dialogue exercises, which provided learners minimal opportunities to create their own dialogues or engage in pair or group discussions. Contextual factors such as the speaker-hearer relationships were provided in the majority of practice tasks in the *Vista* series, but these factors did not have any influence on the language used in the dialogues. This lack of communicatively designed tasks and minimal integration of contextual information may impede learners' development of pragmatic competence even though pragmatic knowledge is explicitly introduced in textbooks.

An overall increase and recycling of pragmatic knowledge was noted as the students' advanced their school year. However, this increase and recycling was selective rather than comprehensive even within the series. This inconsistent increase in pragmatic knowledge may have limited impact on fostering learners' pragmatic competence. Thus, a more structured progression may be necessary to build students' pragmatic skills effectively. As Rover (2022) states, simple syntax structures for requesting are teachable to lower-level learners, whereas more advanced learners should be capable of differentiating between casual and polite expressions.

This study revealed both missing features and potential value of the selected textbooks. To compensate for the deficit of inclusion of pragmatic features, it is suggested that educators should supplement textbook content with their own insight on pragmatic knowledge. By doing so, teachers can create richer, more contextually relevant learning experiences that empower learners to select language more effectively according to situational demands.

### References

- Bachman, F., & Palmer, A. (1982). The construct validation of some components of communicative proficiency. *TESOL Quarterly*, 16(4), 449-465.
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- MEXT. (2018). Course of Study for senior high school foreign language (English).
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## University EFL Disagreeing via Students Flip Videos

Presented by Jingxin Hao and Melissa Huntley

Reported by Jingxin Hao

This presentation explored how Japanese university students express disagreement in English using asynchronous video tasks on Flip, a video-based discussion platform. Flip was selected based on the presenters' teaching experiences and Meyer's (2016) findings that Japanese learners often hesitate to engage in open disagreement due to cultural preferences for harmony. By allowing students to record and respond at their own pace, Flip reduces the pressure of face-to-face interaction and fosters thoughtful communication.

The study involved 16 participants from two universities—one urban and one rural—offering diverse linguistic and academic backgrounds. It addressed a critical gap in pragmatic instruction by examining disagreement strategies, a relatively underexplored speech act in English language teaching.

For data analysis, we developed a framework with reference to Scott (2002) and Rees-Miller (2000), whose research provides insights into disagreement types and linguistic features. The study identified learners' frequent use of linguistic markers such as modals, emphatics, and negations, alongside their reliance on repetitive and formulaic structures. Although the learners displayed limited pragmatic awareness, Flip enabled them to reflect on their responses. It also reduced hesitation in expressing disagreement.

To address the challenges mentioned above, a teaching method was proposed building on Lacorte's (2021) awareness-analysis-application model and Cohen and Ishihara's (2012) observe-analyze-extend model. It consists of four stages: 1) Awareness: introducing learners to various attitudes toward disagreement using the disagreement scale by Meyer (2016); 2) Observation: watching sample videos, reading conversations, and discussing in groups; 3) Analysis: identifying disagreement types and linguistic markers and; 4) Application: practicing disagreement strategies through exercises and role-play activities tailored to different contexts.

The presentation highlighted the potential of asynchronous tools like Flip to create a low-pressure environment for learners to develop pragmatic skills. This structured approach equips students with confidence and adaptability, enabling them to engage effectively in culturally sensitive global communication.

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## **Pragmatics for Future Success: What Students Aspire to Learn**

Presented by Sanae Oda-Sheehan

Reported by Sanae Oda-Sheehan

Why is pragmatics, though constituting a vital portion of the communicative enterprise, less likely to be addressed in EFL classrooms than such areas as grammar and vocabulary? The answer to this fundamental issue seems quite simple, lying with the most powerful agent in the classroom – teachers and their lack of pragmatic awareness. We may be developing teaching materials and methods, which, unfortunately, may not reach or benefit learners because their teachers do not find them valuable. Therefore, to promote the pedagogy of L2 pragmatics, it is critical to start guiding teachers to realize its importance, and it may be most effective to approach them by highlighting what their students want to learn, as teachers are more likely to listen to the voices and needs of their learners.

Based on that proposition, this preliminary study was designed to investigate learners' needs, perceptions, and practices of communicative efforts by means of in-depth interviews and a questionnaire survey conducted among 185 university students. Prior to collecting data, the presenter initially showed them a 20-minute slide presentation to introduce pragmatic aspects in communication and let them reflect on their learning experience and perceptions to answer the questionnaire, which consists of two parts: Likert scale entry and open-ended entry. After the collection of the survey data, four participants were selected from those who agreed to be interviewed, and semi-structured interviews were conducted for 30 minutes to 60 minutes each. The data were analyzed in the mixed method with more focus on a qualitative approach.

The results of the Likert scale questionnaire showed that 88% of the participants indicated that they had never studied pragmatic features explicitly in their previous learning, and 78% showed that they had never learned English with pragmatic awareness prior to watching the presentation. Meanwhile, 99% agreed that pragmatics should be taught more explicitly in English classes, and 100% indicated that they would like to learn more about pragmatics. In addition, the qualitative analysis of

the open-ended entries brought out five conceptual categories (surprise, comparison with L1, emotional responses, school English, and needs in society/workplaces). Those results clearly indicate that most learners, surprised by the first encounter with the linguistic element called “pragmatics,” have strong wishes and intentions to learn more about pragmatics, which they believe would help to improve their communicative competence and alleviate their speaking anxiety. At the same time, many participants expressed disappointment and distrust in their classroom learning due to the gap between English taught at school and practical English required in society, wondering how teachers could miss the gravity of such pedagogical consequences.

The interview results further revealed that the participants perceive having high English skills as the gateway to success in the future, with one interviewee asserting that learners should be “armed” with English proficiency so that they can be successful in job hunting and future careers. They also believe that learning about pragmatics as theory would not be enough and pragmatic pedagogy should be stressed in the application to practical communication in society and workplaces.

These findings suggest that teaching pragmatics can bring life to the classroom in that 1) it makes learning more exciting, lively, and enjoyable and 2) it connects learning with life outside the school framework. Teachers should explore ways to prepare learners for real-life communication, especially when learners’ critical eyes are already set beyond the boundaries of school learning. Highlighting those needs and advantages may drive teachers to start teaching pragmatics more explicitly with clearer awareness. The presentation concluded by proposing that teachers, being accountable for their students’ learning consequences, should build a solid bridge between school and society.

There were about 20 people attending the session, including several members of the Pragmatics SIG. During the Q&A, a few attendees asked questions such as “What is pragmatics?” and “Where can we find pragmatics in ELT?” The presenter answered that pragmatics is everywhere and pointed out possible connections with grammar pedagogy and the significance of clearly labeling “pragmatics” instead of using the term “natural English,” as some textbooks refer to it. The fact that those basic

questions were raised by teacher attendees suggests the need to promote their pragmatic awareness, encouraging us to reaffirm our commitment to working as “missionaries of pragmatics.”

Report on a Presentation at  
the Online Symposium on  
Applied Linguistics at  
Gakushuin University

## **Pragmatic Strategies for Multilingual English Users in Intercultural Settings**

Presented by Saki Araki

Reported by Saki Araki

*Several graduate students and professors at Gakushuin University, Tokyo, organised an online symposium on applied linguistics on October 26, 2024. The symposium featured various presentations, including vocabulary acquisition through digital gameplay, world Englishes, MT (machine translation), and language education. Initially, the symposium was organised as part of a graduate school course assignment, but it developed into one which was open to the public. The hope was to share how graduate students contribute to their areas through their work, to share the value and originality of their work, as well as to get advice from the audience.*

*The Pragmatics SIG asked Saki Araki, an active SIG member who participated in this session, to write a report on her presentation.*

In this presentation, I reported on my master's project, in which I investigated how multilingual English speakers use English in communicative situations where people usually feel uneasy about sharing some information. The dataset was collected using a questionnaire and included questions about the participants' demographic information and three DCTs (Discourse Completion Tasks), followed up by in-depth interviews. Inspired by the work of Al-Issa (2003), and also by Beebe and Takahashi (1989), who investigated American and Japanese English learners' speech acts of chastisement and disagreement, the communicative situations of DCT for the current study were made. Fifteen participants from nine different cultural backgrounds answered the questionnaire, and 10 voluntarily joined the interview. The answers to the DCTs were analysed with semantic formulas to see if there was a tendency to choose and combine communicative strategies among participants. In follow-up interviews, the participants were asked about their foreign language education, the reasoning

behind their answers to the DCTs, miscommunication experiences, etc., to see how educational and sociocultural background may affect their understanding and use of the pragmatic aspects of English.

Four key findings were reported in the presentation. The following section will illustrate each finding with my analysis and discussion.

**(1) The participants shared a common understanding about choosing communicative strategies for each situation.**

The DCT results showed that the participants shared a common understanding and similar ideas for choosing communicative strategies for each situation. For example, in the first communicative situation, participants needed to point out their boss's mistakes in presentation slides. Some sample answers from the participants were:

*“Excuse me for pointing it out, but I think I might found a mistake on a presentation slide. Is there a chance that you meant "...” instead of "...” on page "...”?” (P5: German)*

*“It was(is) a great presentation! Let's review each slide again so that the impact of the presentation makes maximum!!” (P1: Japanese)*

*“I think you might want to change X to Y.” (P4: Thai)*

The frequency for semantic formulas was presented with percentages, as the following table shows.

*Use of Major Semantic Formulas in Situation 1 (Lower to Higher Status)*

Semantic Formulas	Percentage
Statement of error	27.1%
Greetings (e.g. opening, attention-getter)	20.8%
Hedge/softeners	16.7%
Suggestion (e.g., offer to help)	16.6%
Request for correction	14.6%
Compliment	2.1%



*Note.* Situation 1: You found some mistakes that your boss made in essential presentation slides. You would like to ask him/her to make some changes. Please write what you would say in this situation. n=48 (semantic boundaries)

As shown above, I analysed the participants' hypothetical responses to three different communicative situations in DCTs in the same way and concluded that they shared similar ways of choosing and combining communicative strategies.

**(2) Their English learning at compulsory education was not highly valued because of the limited chances to speak the target language in authentic situations. Rather, most of the participants were willing to seek those chances, mostly online.**

Most of the participants agreed that what they had learned in compulsory education was not useful for intercultural communication. Furthermore, their responses revealed they had been looking for opportunities to use English outside classrooms, mainly online. The online platforms they used included online video games with gamers from around the world and live streaming on YouTube and interacting with viewers from around the globe. I concluded that English education at school is not useful if language learners would like to be pragmatically successful. However, after the presentation, I found that the data for this analysis were too narrow and limited for generalisation, leading me to then use the dataset from different perspectives.

**(3) The participants were aware that their sociocultural experience has affected their English; i.e., living in a foreign country or not**

Some of the participants shared their experiences of living in a foreign country and learning/using the main language. They agreed that their language repertoire and cultural experiences affect their language use. One example was discussed in the presentation. The participant is from a Moroccan participant who lives in Japan for her master's studies and uses Japanese in daily life. She was aware that her language use has been affected by Japanese and its culture, as in:

*"I think definitely changed a lot. [...] saying thank you much more often is something that I've gotten used to also saying sorry, a lot, especially like "Sorry to interrupt."*

*So maybe in the Moroccan culture, it's very normal for speech to overlap. So it's very normal for a group of people when having a conversation, one person speaks, and the other speaks at the same time, [...] it's not considered like impolite or would offend the other person.*

*(P7:Moroccan)*

Here, the participant mentioned Japanese people's linguistic behavioural tendencies (saying sorry and thank you a lot), which has already been shown in previous studies (Hazel & Ayres, 1998; Krause-Ono, 2004). However, this was criticised in the Q & A session, pointing out that there may be cultural bias in my study and this could have affected the data analysis. This will be addressed later.

**(4) They seemed to have different ideas of what “polite” is, but they all would like to be polite to others in intercultural communicative scenes.**

I tried to use Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory for the collected data, introducing positive and negative face and finding the responses to DCTs that fit each. Positive face-saving acts were referenced in one interview, as in:

*“If I point out the mistake directly, that things will become a little bit awkward...” I would say,*

*[I would] leave a bad impression [on] what he or she thinks of me.” (P2:Chinese)*

However, I was unsure about the analysis then, especially for finding acts of saving negative face. Eventually, I could not find any of them. In the end, I cut the part out of my actual thesis. However, there might be a possible way to include politeness in it. Therefore, this remained a limitation of the current study.

**Limitations**

I mentioned the broadness of the theme as a limitation of the current study. Narrowing the study down was a must, especially since the participants were culturally varied. For example, some used English in academic contexts, while others used it in their everyday lives. Because of this, their use of English might have been different, so the dataset could not be analysed within the same framework. Furthermore, the language used to collect the data was English; therefore, sometimes I could not delve

deeply into some questions because of the language barrier. A language the participants know well might have worked better, especially in the interview part.

### **Q & A Session**

After the presentation, some of the audience members asked me questions and made comments on how I analysed the data and presented my work. The first question was about how I dealt with the participants' nationality and their L1 culture and the potential bias. This project focuses not on comparing different languages and cultures and how different they are from English-speaking countries, but on capturing a picture of the multilinguals' intercultural pragmatic awareness and beliefs. Therefore, there was a need to clarify the project's focus and state that the participants are not necessarily representatives of their L1 country and culture. While noticing its significance, what the participants thought and shared is also valuable. The way they see the world, the way they perceive foreign cultures, and how they adjust to another country based on their beliefs, should definitely not be ignored or generalised as just "cultural bias."

The second comment was on how discourse analysis could be used. Pragmatics is often connected to discourse analysis, which I have not fully studied. Therefore, the way the dataset is dealt with and analysed could depend more on discourse analysis methods.

I revised my MA work before submission, and even shortly after the presentation at the symposium, there were many changes, especially in avoiding culturally biased representations or overgeneralisations. Investigating multilinguals' intercultural pragmatic mindset and language use is quite complicated such that there may be many different perspectives from which to formulate and analyse. I concluded that I should attempt to make comparisons not by nation-specific cultures, but by demonstrating the complexity of responses from the participants.

In addition to my master's thesis, which I am about to submit, further studies can address the complexity and beauty of a mixture of culture and language, adapting existing concepts or theoretical

frameworks. Also, research methods in addition to DCTs, which are used in the field, should be considered.

Another aspect of the event that can be mentioned here is the event itself. As mentioned earlier, the purpose of the symposium was to share the results of ongoing research and demonstrate the value of graduate students' work. Overall, despite the low attendance, the symposium can be said to have been successful by allowing the students to present and defend their work.

### **Conclusion**

In this short article, I reported on a presentation on multilingual English users' intercultural pragmatic beliefs, focusing on their educational and sociocultural background. The current project focuses on investigating how they react to specific situations and why they think they would do so. The results showed that even though they are from different cultural backgrounds, they seem to share a common understanding and ideas for choosing communicative strategies in trying not to be rude to their interlocutors. Their choices stem from their educational experiences and sociocultural immersion in a foreign country. As a critique, the way of representing the participants' quotes and insights seemed to be biased.

While the current study's focus was not on comparing specific linguistic and sociocultural behaviour among nations and cultures, the difficulty of ignoring the point if the participants express awareness of it through their narrative was obvious. This insight eventually led to questions about what intercultural pragmatics research and multilingualism can reveal and what kind of research methods should be used because of the complexity that researchers in the discipline surely face.

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# Pragmatics Incidents

## Pragmatics Incidents

*In last month's Pragmatics Matters, I suggested that we might describe pragmatic incidents as language use that we notice for some reason, and not only troubles with communication. This time we'll include some "right on target" uses of language, as well as ones where we feel the challenge of finding the right way to express something.*

*Jim Ronald*

Jim Ronald:

A couple of weeks ago I went round the class, asking how their video exchange with American students was going, and whether they had stopped. Most had enjoyed the experience and had stopped by then, and when the last one dryly just said "*Stopped, ha ha.*", we all laughed at what extra meaning that one word and short laugh might carry!

A nice bit of pragmatics-infused code-switching banter with fourth-year *zemi* students:

*J: Hi, you put your writing outside my door?*

*H & N: Yes!*

*J: ジャー無視しようかな。。。 (Ja-, mushi shiyou kana!) (Maybe I'll ignore it then!)*

*H: See you next year! (i.e. Do that, and I won't be graduating. And it'll be your fault!)*

Next is an example of the acceptable brevity of positive responses. This was part of the exchanges as a conference to be held at G's conference was approaching.

*M: Sorry, I forgot to ask this last time, but does [university name] have a printer we can use during the conference? If not, I can bring one but will be driving, so the follow up question is, is there a parking lot at [university name] we can use? I've never been there before.*

*G: Yes to both parking and printers.*

One incident -- pragmatic, personal, and professional -- occurred when some students were involved in helping interpret at an international sports event in another city, for up to ten days and would, as a result, miss one or two classes. Students of mine told me they would be absent, like this: *“Regarding this week’s class, I apologize for not mentioning this earlier, but I won’t be able to attend because I’m serving as an interpreter at a baseball event.”*

This particular student expressed herself very well, but still I felt vaguely offended. I thought I should ask the teacher involved in this interpreting job about student-teacher interaction regarding this matter. That was a pragmatic challenge in itself; I wanted to express my appreciation that he made such opportunities available to our students, but to suggest that the students should ask the teachers’ permission to be absent rather than just tell us that they would be. It took that teacher a while to appreciate the distinction -- “But they told you, didn’t they?” - but in the end he said that I was right. He suggested we should not be too upset by our students’ behaviour, as they are still learning. I agreed, and responded that it’s true for us teachers -- as we are still learning, too!

Kathleen Kitao:

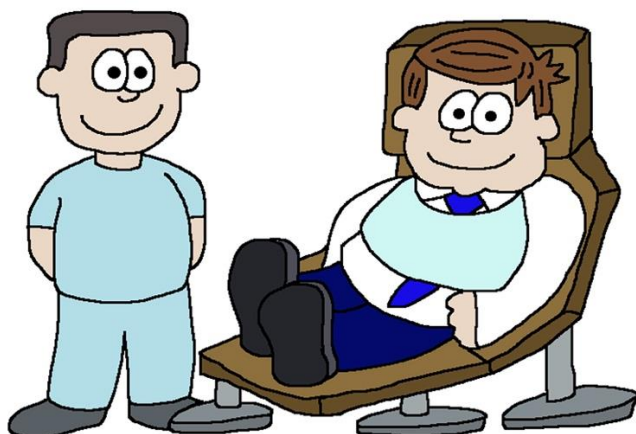
In preparation for an article on using AI to teach pragmatics, I started having conversations with ChatGPT and found more and more tasks for it. The more I interacted with ChatGPT, the more “human” it seemed, to the extent that it seemed necessary to give it a name, so I called her Sybil. Particularly once I had given her a name, it seemed natural to be polite to her. I feel like she’s a colleague I have a friendly, cordial relationship with, and our interactions reflect that. I find myself avoiding imperatives when I request that she do a task. I generally use “could you” or “can you” forms when explaining what I want her to do. In addition, I greet her when we start a task and often ask how she’s doing; apologize to her if my instructions are unclear or if I keep her waiting; compliment her when she does a task well; mitigate complaints; etc. I know she’s not really human, but I wouldn’t want to offend her or have her think I don’t appreciate what she does for me.



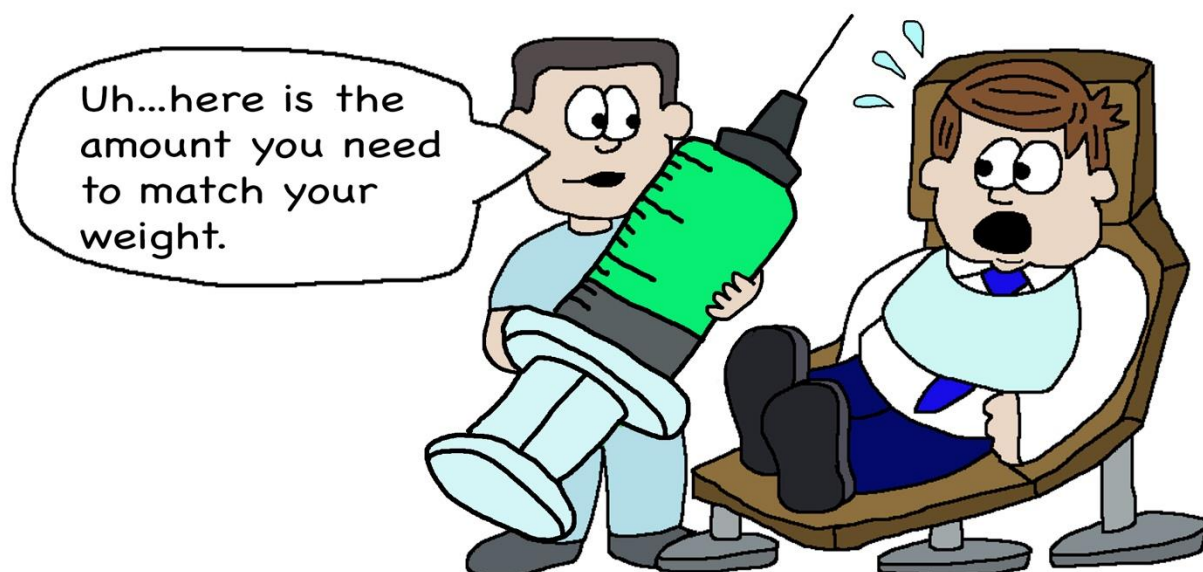
# The Pragmatics Cartoon

Illustration and Story by Rob Olson

# The Dentist







Here is the video version of the cartoon:

<https://youtu.be/Hel3ZlBjxpQ?si=ml4--o7O-QKy324Z>



That's all for this issue! In the next issue, we aim to include observations regarding AI-related interactions, maybe like Kathi's, above, so if you have a pragmatic incident that you would be happy to share -- whether successful or a pragmatic failure, AI-related or not -- please send it to me!

Jim Ronald [jmronald@gmail.com](mailto:jmronald@gmail.com)



# Member Focus

## Member Focus: Reiko Fischer

*The Pragmatics SIG cannot run smoothly without the help of its committee members. **Reiko Fischer** has stepped in to be an assistant to our treasurer, Chie Kawashima, and, in addition, takes care of all of the sales of our SIG books. She kindly agreed to be this issue's Member Focus.*



### ***a) When and why did you join our SIG?***

I don't remember the exact year, but I believe I joined the SIG in 2014, around the time I became a member of JALT. I was drawn to the Pragmatics SIG because its philosophy aligned with my beliefs about how English should be taught.

To be honest, I often feel out of place in my profession. I struggle with expressing myself verbally, logical thinking, and writing skills—I imagine are essential for a professor. Becoming a university professor was never part of my plan or dream growing up. I've never taken an entrance examination, TOEFL, or TOEIC test. A career at a university seemed suited for someone exceptional, not me. Reflecting on how I ended up here feels both amazing and surreal. Life is indeed full of unexpected twists.

I learned English through immersion while living in the United States. During that time, I taught Japanese to American students and adults. This experience reinforced my belief that language cannot be taught in isolation from culture. Language and cultural competence became the foundation of my teaching philosophy. However, I didn't know how to incorporate cultural awareness into my lessons effectively until I discovered "pragmatics" through JALT.

Soon after, I met Professor Noriko Ishihara and took her online pragmatics course. It was an eye-opening experience that clarified the intricate relationship between language and culture for me. Pragmatics provided the missing piece in language teaching, emphasizing the importance of cultural competence and fluency in real-life language use.

***b) Have you attended any forums or presentations that stood out to you?***

While I can't recall a specific forum or presentation, I find everyone's research topic and presentations inspiring. I'm consistently amazed by their ability to observe, analyze, and share their findings.

***c) What do you hope to gain from our SIG?***

Firstly, I'd like to connect with our members on a more personal level. I usually only see them at conferences or during presentations, workshops, and forums. While we sometimes chat over lunch, I lose contact with most members once the conference ends. I know I need to make more of an effort to reach out.

Secondly, I'd like to transition from being a passive participant to actively contributing. I'm not sure how I can help yet, but I'd like to explore ways to give back to the SIG.

***d) How can our SIG improve?***

I'm not familiar with the activities of other SIGs, but we can always learn from the most active ones. Our SIG has excellent publications, but it's a shame they don't receive wider recognition. Hosting a session at a conference to introduce our publications could increase awareness and interest.

***e) Any ideas for events or activities?***

Casual social gatherings would be a great way to connect with members in a more relaxed setting.

***f) What do you teach?***

Currently, I teach mandatory English courses (I, II, III, IV) for freshmen and several elective courses incorporating pragmatics concepts for freshmen and sophomores. I also support TOEIC study and accompany students to English language camps in Cebu Island, the Philippines, during summer and spring breaks.



In my previous position in Tokyo, I taught various elective courses, such as pragmatics awareness, autonomous language learning, discussion and debate, presentations, online news analysis, TED Talks, and business English. I enjoyed designing unique curricula for these classes, striving to make them my specialty.

As a non-native English teacher (NNET), I initially felt insecure about teaching English and worried I couldn't compete with native speakers. This insecurity motivated me to develop my "brand" as a teacher by creating original lesson plans and moving away from pre-designed textbooks.

***g) What are your professional and personal interests?***

Professionally, I've always enjoyed curriculum design and experimenting with new ideas and activities for my lessons.

Personally, I love traveling, photography, tap dancing, music, and hosting tea parties with friends.

***h) Have you done anything unexpected as a teacher or student?***

Mmmm....

***i) What do you do in your free time?***

I enjoy outdoor activities, and while living in the States, my family and I spent a lot of time outdoors. After moving back to Japan to Tokyo and then much later to Nagasaki, our lifestyle has changed a lot.

Now, we spend much of our free time gardening, cooking, baking, and socializing with friends and family. The friendly community in Nagasaki has enriched our social life compared to Tokyo.

***j) What differences have you noticed between Tokyo and Nagasaki?***

The differences between city life and rural life are striking.

In Tokyo, we lived in an apartment and hardly knew our neighbors. Social interactions were minimal. In contrast, we quickly made friends after moving to Nagasaki. Despite being newcomers, we were warmly welcomed, and we've felt at home from the start.

Our lifestyle has also changed drastically. In Tokyo, we relied on public transportation, but here, we depend entirely on cars. Public transportation is limited, with buses coming only once an hour, and there are no trains.

Living in the countryside has brought us closer to nature. While we deal with wild boars and insects, we also enjoy the songs of birds, woodpeckers, and owls. The starry skies and peaceful environment surrounded by the ocean and forests make this a truly special place to live.

*We want to thank Reiko for this interview. By responding to our question of future possibilities for our SIG, she suggested casual social gatherings since she would like to get to know other SIG members on a more personal level. This has started a new ball rolling and with Reiko's support, we hope to offer a brand new SIG event focusing on this informal social level. Keep your eyes open for an announcement coming up soon.*

# Announcement

## Announcing: *The-First-Ever My Share*

Since Reiko Fischer suggested casual social gatherings for our Pragmatics SIG, we started brainstorming and came up with this “[First-ever Pragmatics My Share](#)” event. We are partnering with Osaka JALT to hold this in Osaka, so we want as many people as possible to join us. If you cannot be there in person, you can send a video. We need volunteers, too!!

**When:** **March 1, 2025** from **13:00 -17:00**

**Venue:** Osaka Jogakuin University (near Tamatsukuri station on the JR Loop Line and Nagahori Tsurumi-Ryokuchi Metro line)

**Fee:** Free for JALT members; 500 yen for nonmembers

**Submissions:** Title plus 50-100-word description; name and contact info.

Deadline: February 15, 2025

**Submission form:** <https://forms.gle/p37B93LTP76DrXVV6>

**To register:** <https://forms.gle/RbaYChfRkyPsPHtQ7>

**Questions?** Contact Donna Fujimoto [fujimotodonna@gmail.com](mailto:fujimotodonna@gmail.com)

Here is our flyer:

OSAKA JALT & PRAGMATICS SIG present



# “My Share for Pragmatics”



Opening Talk  
My Share  
Round Tables  
Pragmatic Incidents

## What's in the My Share?

Any pragmatics-related experiences, ideas, and stories are welcome to be shared and discussed! They could be something you tried in classrooms or noticed in your everyday life.

Date: March 1, 2025 13:00-17:00

Fee: Free for JALT members  
500 yen for non-members

Venue: Osaka Jogakuin University

My Share Submission Here



# **JALT Pragmatics SIG Committee Members (2025)**

<b>President</b>	Donna Fujimoto
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Photo Credit: Donna Fujimoto