

SLA#2: Feedback on Pragmatics Group Presentation

SLA Pragmatics Presentation (Handouts & Professor's Feedback)

Feedback on the Handout:

- Indicate what the presentation was for so that people can cite you properly (SLA Pragmatics Presentation, September 2014).
- *Who coined it?* In the 1930s, the philosopher C.W. Morris established this field of linguistics that we know and love. – *This sounds a bit like a strange cut & paste, is it?*
- Nice and important observation about the role of gestures and their varying importance across different cultures. This is very much in line with the current discussions in embodied cognition.
- *Though there isn't a best way to teach pragmatics, the chief goal of instruction in pragmatics is to raise learners' pragmatic awareness and to give them choices about their interactions in the target language.* You have articulated this beautifully, creating space for both raising awareness around norms and allowing for conscious norm flouting.
- *The use of authentic language samples makes pragmatics an area of language instruction in which teachers and students can genuinely learn together in a safe environment.* – Another very important point!
- *Once teachers are familiar with the strategies and forms generally used by native speakers in a particular community, they need to be able to determine what to teach and what level or type of competence to target with their students. Most importantly, they need access to effective materials and support for implementing the materials.* – The verb “teach,” if taken literally, may imply that the teacher is the main input provider (which

may not be what you intended). Often, facilitating inquiry provides richer insights and deeper, more engaging explorations.

- Great teaching suggestions.
- Very rich, well-selected references. It would have been helpful for your peers if there were a one-line synopsis after each reference (e.g., “*A reader-friendly book offering a number of teaching ideas*” or “*A great source on speech acts and discourse interpretations*”).

Feedback on Group Presentation: Pragmatics Team One 2014 (Feedback)

Dear Mohamed, Beatriz, Karlene, and Jennifer:

You offered the group a wonderful package—presentation, PowerPoint, handout, and all! Everything was delivered with careful research and thought and, equally important, with joy, enthusiasm, and serenity that was contagious. Your audience reacted accordingly (including our two visitors that day!). Because of you, we now have two applicants instead of just Andrew, as was their original plan.

One more general observation before I go into some specific comments: you managed to strike an excellent balance between input and elicitation. It was a very smoothly delivered presentation—rich without feeling breathless—and you each had more or less equal airtime, with nice, fluid transitions between parts.

The skits at the beginning were a great way to lead to an elicited definition of the territory of pragmatics (P). If you are considering taking this presentation to a conference, keep in mind that the first part about the computer was a bit difficult for people to identify the exact issue.

Because of your lovely exploration of slang, I now have a new expression in my repertoire (“He is a Richter”), which I will always associate with your team!

It was a very good move when Mohamed asked the opposite team to guess what the others had in mind when they wrote their terms. That triggered useful clarification and elaboration.

I am so glad that so early in the academic year, you raised awareness that the responsibility for successful communication lies with both the listener and the speaker (native and non-native alike). For years, this had not been the case, with serious implications on many levels.

The speech act exploration was very well done. Bringing in data from people on campus was a very nice touch. You triggered rich small-group discussions, allowing participants to reflect on the multitude of factors that shape our language choices. An interesting question worth further exploration emerged: *Why did the NNSs say what they did—because they couldn’t say things in what is considered “an appropriate way,” or because they didn’t want to conform to native speaker norms?* In the follow-up session, we will talk about norms and deliberate norm flouting.

Another very important point you made at the end is that in a well-balanced class, both teacher and students contribute and offer experiences to reflect on (this was in response to Amy’s comment that it must be harder for NNS teachers to teach pragmatics). This is at the heart of plurilinguistic pedagogy, which advocates a much more egalitarian sharing of knowledge than simply promoting native speaker norms.

Once again, team—great job!

For a few comments on your handout, which was very well done, see the separate attachment.

Best,

Elka