CHAPTER-V

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF SPEECH ACT AND PRAGMATICS

5.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we analyzed the data collected. The analysis was both experimental and experiential. We saw the imperative need for communicative and pragmatics competency at the workplace. We also felt that educational institutions can and should make a difference because professional institutions provide the training ground for building effective communicators required for the workplace. The urgent need to improve technical students’ communication skills has been emphasized by educationists as well as employers. After graduating, it is seen that most students still go for diploma courses in Spoken English and Finishing Schools and also opt for crash courses in the following areas:- Course on employability skills, the art of conversation, the corporate needs- do’s and don’ts, English for success, personal grooming and presentations, so on and so forth.

Mr. Narayanan, Vice Chairman of Cognizant Technology Solutions and Chairman of the NASSCOM, in an interview (Warrier 2007) answered a question regarding the talent demand and supply gap and the role of the NASSCOM to help the industry bridge the gap. The current situation is that, in terms of availability of talent, the numbers are good. The problem lies in the suitability of people. The industry has moved forward rapidly and technology also has changed but the educational institutions and the curriculum have not changed that rapidly. So, we have to bridge the gap by providing
additional training to the people who are coming out of colleges so that they are industry-
ready.

Stating the importance of setting up finishing schools, Narayanan suggested the specific areas where training has to be given to those who are admitted to finishing schools. According to him, communication and soft skills and ability to learn on their own and work in teams are very important for those who join the industry. These are the broad guidelines given to the finishing schools (Warrier, 2007). His statement implies that the teachers of English at professional colleges should undergo paradigm shift and cease to be mere teachers of grammar and structure; they are expected to play the role of communication and soft skills trainers, which is essentially the pragmatics of communication.

This perceived problem is the lack of specific language communication skills among engineering students and professional engineers and technologists. Therefore, does the course in English for Engineering reflect the needs of the learners from what is expected of him at the workplace? Why is it that the ‘talk-shops’ succeed? What factors determine their success? They do not have text-books. Are there any other factors that affect the successful imparting / learning of the skills required by the target group?

It is presumed that there are problems in the teaching of the course at colleges, resulting from inappropriate teaching materials and instructional techniques, lack of English Language Teaching (ELT) – trained professionals and poor teaching methodology. The curriculum framers believe that the English course prescribed by universities for professional colleges is competitive, as they cater to the needs of the target group.
As a researcher and teacher in a reputed engineering college, it is observed that the syllabus of English for engineering students at the undergraduate level prescribed by Osmania University is relevant and most certainly does meet the demands of the industry. It prepares the students for the workplace in writing tasks such as writing Statements of Purpose, writing Project Reports and making Oral Presentations. The English Laboratory also is given due importance it requires, as students need to be sensitive to listening and speaking strategies. Negotiation skills, persuasion skills, problem-solving skills and analytical skills are what employers seek as mentioned in chapter 1. The industry looks for students who can be effective team players.

There, however, needs to be an awareness among teachers about the pragmatic competencies that make communication skills more pronounced and infact complete.

Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei state that a good level of grammatical competence does not imply a good level of pragmatic competence for two main reasons: "The disparity between learners' and native speakers’ pragmatic competence may be attributed to two key factors related to input and the salience of relevant linguistic features in the input from the point of view of the learner (1998) ".

“For many years, the main objective of studies on the learning of English as a second language was to analyse linguistic competence. The main reason for this was the teaching methodology used, in which grammar was central to learning. But for some years now, the communicative approach to second-language learning has put grammar-centred classes to one side and fostered the use of pragmatics. This new vision of second-language learning has led many
researchers to define (or redefine) terms such as pragmatic competence, communicative competence or interlanguage. Many of these researchers have considered that pragmatic competence, as well as communicative competence, can be defined as the learner’s ability to put into practice the knowledge that s/he has of the target language in order to express intentions, feelings, etc and interpret those of the speakers.” (Lara 2001).

5.1 Background Study of ESP Courses

Ever since English for Specific / Special Purposes (ESP) became an important branch of English Language Teaching (ELT), researches in the field of English for Science and Technology (EST) have been carried out by academicians in different parts of the world. This section will look at some research works conducted in the field in different parts of the world and analyses how they can be used in the Indian context.

Over the past decade, the importance of soft skills such as communication, presentation and negotiation for engineering students has been emphasized by engineering departments in developed countries and organizations such as IEEE host special events to equip students with basic professional skills. For example, the IEEE Student Branch at the University of Maribor, Slovenia hosts the annual Extra Skills for Young Engineers Symposium which shows students some of the situations awaiting them in the real world.

Vonderheid (undated) in the article -Soft Skills Help Engineers Succeed quotes Sasa Jevtic, the Chair of Maribor University’s IEEE Student Branch Chair, as saying that one can be an excellent scientist, but if that person does not know how to communicate to other scientists, then that person, in our opinion, cannot become very successful in his or
her professional life. One has to know how to negotiate, how to demand things and how to be a good leader. Good communication makes a difference. Any successful scientist or engineer will have multiple communication tasks connected with any project. Paradis, J.G. & Zimmerman, M. (1997), drawing on their considerable experience teaching both college students and science professionals, treat four kinds of literacy – written, oral, graphic, electronic as crucial and inseparable to science and engineering communication. According to the authors, the most effective engineers and scientists are skilled writers.

In the first chapter of their study, there is a quote by John Reinert, engineering manager at Aeroflex UTMC Microelectronics in Colorado Springs, Colorado, “Engineers take a hard look at soft skills”, which clearly affirms that soft skills are just as important as engineering skills. Kalani Jones, engineering vice president at Tachyon Inc. (San Diego) states that employers look for engineers who can lead a team and get a small team of four to six people motivated. He says that it's hard enough to find a good engineer; finding one who can lead a team and speak well in front of customers is really hard to find.

According to Vern R. Johnson, associate dean at the University of Arizona’s College of Engineering (Tucson), —many employers choose to hire skills rather than people and the growing trend in engineering today is for recruiters to look for skilled/global engineers who possess excellent English communication and presentation skills. (Costlow, 2000).

Highlighting the importance of non-technical skills for engineers, Joseph Lillie, area manager at Bellsouth in Lafayette, Lousianna, says that engineers have to stay polished these days, because they can become obsolete, not because they lose their
technical skills, but because their company does something that eliminates their job, a merger or something. The key non-technical skills he prefers to see people polish are public speaking, written communications and ethics. (Costlow, 2000)

Winsor, Curtis, and Stephens (1997) surveyed 1,000 human resource managers to determine the most valued contemporary job-entry skills. Their findings included communication skills, specifically listening, public speaking, interpersonal communication, written communication, and the trait of enthusiasm. Employers found that engineering graduates in particular were poor in many skills particularly at problem solving and oral business communications which they consider important. Beder (2000), states that skills such as problem solving, communications, interpersonal skills and critical and independent thinking should be fostered in engineering education. In this rapidly changing globalized world, engineers do not belong to any particular nation. They should have the skills globalized engineers should have.

Globalized engineers are those who possess multi-skills including communication skills, critical thinking skills, group skills and interpersonal skills.

In the Executive Summary of the report “In Search of Global Engineering Excellence”, globalization is defined implicitly through the following introductory statement:

"The world is rapidly transitioning from one of nationally differentiated organizations and cultural identities to one increasingly characterized by transnational institutions and multicultural communities accelerated by dramatic technological advancements. This transformation is having a profound effect on national and international systems of commerce, education, and governance. This new world will require an even more sophisticated workforce to address a
growing list of complex and interdependent global challenges, such as sustainability, security, and economic development. Engineers, whether working abroad or at home, play a critical role in addressing these and other global challenges."

Globalization has an effect on engineering education. The Global Engineering Excellence report gives insights into the effects of globalization on institutions and students. The Global Engineering Excellence Initiative which began in October 2005 resulted in defining global competence of engineers. The short version of the report lists the following as the qualities of a global engineer:

- technically adept
- broadly knowledgeable
- innovative and entrepreneurial
- commercially savvy
- multilingual
- culturally aware
- knowledgeable about world markets
- professionally flexible and mobile

According to David et al (2006), most engineers felt well prepared for core engineering jobs. However, there was general acceptance among most engineers that graduates will "really" learn how to be an engineer during the first year or two on the job. Rarely did practising engineers recommend more engineering in the engineering curricula. Rather, most of the engineers emphasized more instruction on client
interaction, collaboration, making oral presentations, and writing, as well as the ability to deal with ambiguity and complexity.

Globally, engineers recommend more communication skills in the engineering curricula to prepare for the workplace. For example, Aviv (2007) in her article “Don’t be shy” emphasizes that because speaking well is often crucial to getting a job — and to sounding educated — nearly half of American colleges and universities require a public speaking or communications course, according to the National Communication Association.

5.1.1 Study of the premier trade body – NASSCOM

There are over 350 engineering colleges, affiliated to Jawarharlal Nehru Technological University, in Andhra Pradesh. In addition to these self-financed (private) and government-funded engineering colleges, there are about a dozen private universities (deemed universities) that offer engineering degrees. Students of engineering and technology studying at these institutes are offered the Technical English (Engineering English) course for two semesters during their first year programme.

NASSCOM is India’s National Association of Software and Service Companies, and the chamber of commerce of the IT software and services industry in India. NASSCOM is a global trade body with over 1100 members, of which over 250 are global companies from the United States, United Kingdom, Europe, Japan and China. NAASCOM has come out with a study which states that some of the world’s most admired and respected companies like Accenture, Convergys, Dell, Google, HP, IBM, ICICI, ITC, UTI Bank, Microsoft, Tesco, Verizon to name a few across industry verticals are in need of the industry-ready candidates.
They say that we have to exploit this opportunity to get our students placed in any one of these companies by equipping the students to meet the expectation of the industry. We have to bring in necessary changes in the curriculum and teaching methodology. The industries are looking for young and talented professionals, to strengthen their presence in the highly competitive corporate world.

Apart from imparting technological knowledge input, the engineering colleges will have to focus on nurturing the employability skills so that they can empower the talent pools. The real challenge before the teaching community is positioning ourselves as neutral ambassadors in providing necessary inputs on the employability of the students through scientifically designed curriculum and assessments to meet the demands of the multinational companies in today’s scenario.

The technological institutions are expected as well as forced to work as placements sourcing or training firms. Naturally, the teaching community will have to do the role of a trainer’s job apart from teaching. The syllabus has to be designed to enhance the employability skills of the individual candidates and help them get placed in Multi National Companies.

Engineers handle an ever-growing body of engineering knowledge; many programs are crammed with technical information and leave little room for students to develop professional practices that enable them to become skillful communicators, ethical decision makers, team leaders, creative thinkers, and problem solvers. However, professional practices are essential, even critical, since engineers regularly interact with people in local, national, and international communities and create technical solutions that address complex social and environmental issues. The undergraduate programs
challenge us to redefine high-quality engineering education. The time crunch is complicated in four additional ways: a pedagogy that often emphasizes recall rather than contextualized learning with higher-order thinking and problem solving, a faculty that is unsure of effective ways to teach and assess professional practices, assessment that is overly dependent on indirect measures, and a lack of sufficiently detailed and sophisticated assessment research that informs curriculum revision.

5.1.2 Creating a balanced program

In the Indian context, engineering students’ success in the on-campus recruitment is mainly based on their demonstration of communication skills. According to Karnik, former president of NASSCOM (National Association of Software and Services Company), only 25 percent of technical graduates are suitable for employment in the outsourcing industry because of their lack of abilities to speak or write well in English. (Karnik, 2007-2008). Most students are not industry ready ‘because they lack communication skills’ (Infosys, 2008).

Complete professional communication pedagogy requires an appreciation of the goals and assumptions of management and workplace trainers as well as academic educators. Students in an educational institution must form a broad understanding of concepts and a range of skills that might be used across a still indeterminate future. The employee in the workplace is well served by a theoretical and strategic understanding of how and why a specific behavior might be selected, but is also held responsible for fluent, unstudied responsiveness to the context. Meanwhile, managerial processes place a premium on the outcome of those behaviors, regardless of the employee’s self-reflection about the process or objective skill levels with respect to the task at hand. None of these
goals is presumptively superior, and future research on professional communication competence in the academic curriculum, training processes, or the management of organizational communication processes should take all three into account.

When assessment of professional communication is the goal, the first questions that must be asked involve the purpose of the assessment. Because their overall goals are different, educators, trainers, and managers are generally interested in assessing very different things. The student in a course on interpersonal communication might be expected to list and describe a range of non-defensive responses, giving reasons to choose one or the other in various situations. The trainer’s assessment of an employee who has completed training on customer responsiveness might observe his or her ability to articulate a non-defensive response to a (real or staged) customer complaint. Meanwhile, management will assess the employee on the effectiveness of his or her communication across a range of situations in meeting the goals of the organization, including some in which any non-defensive response might have been counterproductive. An unproductive client, for instance, might be one the company has been trying to lose, and the employee’s ability to strategically use a defensive response to force the client to withdraw business might be assessed positively as an appropriate means to accomplish the company’s business goals. Since, in most cases, the educator, trainer, and manager are not coordinating their assessments, there is little gained in terms of actually improving professional communication competence. The conflicting goals of each framework are inherent in the career stages at which education, training, or supervision is being delivered and assessed. Educators anticipate the range of situations students will face, offering generalized knowledge and a range of skills. As they seek validation for
their efforts, however, they must use caution in how they determine appropriate performance standards and outcome measures. It is true enough to say that communication skill is a necessary foundation for organizational success, but assessing that foundation can never be so simple.

Communication skill can be defined in multiple ways depending on the context and the organizational goals, and the competent use of a communication skill in context comes with experience and sensitivity to the nuanced complexities of the rhetorical situation.

The challenges seem enormous. We need to create a balanced program that:-

- Integrates technical skills and professional practices
- Provide professional development opportunities that enable faculty to teach effectively in an integrated curriculum
- Implement an integrated curriculum that meets diverse student populations/styles
- Develop a rigorous assessment program that balances indirect and direct measures
- Establish and maintain an active research community with a research agenda that completes a feedback loop to strengthen engineering curricula.

Learners show significant differences from native speakers in the area of language use, in the execution and comprehension of certain speech acts, in conversational functions such as greetings and leave takings, and in conversational management such as back channeling and short responses. (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996, 1999; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996; Kasper & Rose, 1999.) Without instruction, differences in pragmatics show up in the English of learners regardless of their first language background or language proficiency. That is to say, a learner of high grammatical proficiency will not necessarily
show equivalent pragmatic development. As a result, learners at the higher levels of grammatical proficiency often show a wide range of pragmatic competence.

We have seen that one important issue of pragmatics for second language learners is that they must be aware of the pragmatic expressions and interpretations (and reactions to the expressions) that differ between their own native language and the second language. These are referred to as cross-cultural and/or cross-linguistic difficulties. The most typical assumption by second language learners is that they can just transfer how they say and understand language functions from their native language to the target language. This assumption often causes difficulties in the communication in the L2. Although what the learner says may be grammatically correct, it may not be pragmatically acceptable.

Schmidt (1993) suggests that if an English language learner is to acquire pragmatics, he/she needs to take into account linguistic functions and the context. Kasper (1996) believes that students need to receive proper input and be aware of it. Trenchs (1997) states that the main aim of the various English language learning projects in colleges that use electronic mails is not to acquire grammatical knowledge. Through electronic mails (e-mails) students must "speak" with other students: therefore, they use not only their grammatical knowledge of the English language but also their pragmatic knowledge.

Pragmatic competence is an integrated personal system of knowledge of principles according to which messages are:
• organized, structured and arranged in coherent messages (thematically, logically, stylistically) – discursive competence;
• used in oral and written form to perform a certain communicative function – functional competence;
• sequenced according to interactional and transactional communicative design (question – answer; statement – agreement/disagreement; request/offer/apology acceptance/refusal; greeting – response) – design competence.

In the field of the English language teaching-learning there is an open question of intelligibility and linguistic competence. Achievement of understanding in many cases depends on pragmatic abilities. Sometimes, achievement of understanding occurs among people not only using various linguistic norms but also having absolutely different levels of linguistic competence. At the same time, pragmatic fiascos are suffered frequently by people possessing perfect linguistic competence. J. Moeschler, for example, argues that in some cases linguistic competence can make pragmatic understanding difficult.

In this chapter, we are going to clearly define the pedagogical implications of pragmatics and in particular speeches acts so as to see what else can be done apart from what already exists.

### 5.2 The next question of this study

The question that this chapter will attempt to answer, besides suggesting recommendations for further study and making the concluding statement is:-
Question: - Can pragmatics be taught in the classroom to enhance competencies and if so what are the activities we need to develop, that closely resemble the workplace requirements?

The development of the model for needs analysis is based on aspects by Hutchinson & Waters (1987) on the why, how, who, where questions in their target situation analysis (TSA) framework. These questions were adhered to in the formulation of the questionnaires. The questions were aimed at identifying workplace oral communication needs.

In the second chapter, the theoretical foundations have clearly defined the pragmatics and speech acts which spell behaviour required for the professional sphere. Comprehension of speech acts and conversational implicatures involves the integration of information from a wide range of linguistic sources (i.e., phonetic, syntactic, and semantic) to comprehend a contextually appropriate utterance that reveals a speaker’s intentions and attitude. In the comprehension of speech acts, the hearer recognizes what the speaker is doing with an utterance; in other words, the hearer must be able to understand the illocutionary force and respond to it. In everyday language use, people use speech acts to do things such as make requests, give advice, and extend offers and invitations. In much of the research on L2 pragmatic competence, linguists have studied how L2 learners produce speech acts (e.g., Cohen & Olshtain, 1993; Takahashi, 1996); and, there is a smaller, but growing body of research on how L2 learners comprehend these utterances (e.g., Cook & Liddicoat, 2002; Kasper, 1984; Koike, 1996; Takahashi & Roitblat, 1994).
In speech acts, the speaker is trying to do something or trying to get the hearer to do something (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). In conversational implicatures, the speaker expresses attitudes and feelings using indirect utterances that must be inferred by the hearer (Grice, 1975; Sperber & Wilson, 1995). The comprehension of pragmatic meaning can be differentiated from linguistic comprehension because it requires the listener to understand not only linguistic information, such as vocabulary and syntax, but also contextual information, such as the role and status of the interlocutor, the physical setting of the conversation, and the types of communicative acts that would likely occur in that context (Rost, 2002; Van Dijk, 1977).

5.2.1 The teaching of pragmatics and speech act behaviour

The teaching of pragmatics aims to facilitate the learners' ability to find socially appropriate language for the situations they encounter. Within second language studies and teaching, pragmatics encompasses speech acts, conversational structure, conversational implicature, conversational management, discourse organization, and sociolinguistic aspects of language use, such as choice of address forms, reiterating what has been said in chapters 1&2. These areas of language and language use have not traditionally been addressed in language teaching curricula, leading to questions like what more is there to English. We know our grammar, we do well in the examinations but we still lack that something and we don’t seem to fit. What are the secret rules of English? Gallow(1995) points out that maintaining a conversation in English requires underlying knowledge of responses that prompt a speaker to continue, show understanding, give support, indicate agreement, show strong emotional response, add or correct a speaker's
information, or ask for more information. Berry (1995) discusses the importance of learning, how to take turns and demonstrates that certain behaviors that are polite in one language may not be polite or recognizable in another. Unintentional insult to interlocutors (Mach & Ridder (1995) and denial of requests (Weasenforth (1995) have been identified as other potential pragmatic hazards.

The chief goal of instruction in pragmatics is to raise learners' pragmatic awareness and give them choices about their interactions in the target language. The goal of instruction in pragmatics is not to insist on conformity to a particular target-language norm, but rather to help learners become familiar with the range of pragmatic devices and practices in the target language. With such instruction, learners can maintain their own cultural identities (Kondo 1996), participate more fully in target language communication, and gain control of the force and outcome of their contributions. Kondo notes that "successful communication is a result of optimal rather than total convergence" (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991). Expanding this view, it is imperative to point out that exposing learners to pragmatics in their second or foreign language helps them to expand their perception of the target language and those who speak it.

The classroom provides a safe place within which learners can try out new forms and patterns of communication in an accepting environment. They can experiment with unfamiliar forms of address, attempt shorter conversational openings or closings than they are used to, or try longer openings or closings that initially might feel too drawn out-just to get the feel of it. The instructor and other student participants can provide feedback. Instruction should allow students to choose how much of the pragmatic norms of the culture they would like to include in their own repertoire. They will also enjoy
greater insights into the target culture. Equally important is the fact that students
genuinely enjoy learning about pragmatics because it is like being let into a secret!

Speech acts have been claimed to operate by universal pragmatic principles (Austin
(1962), Searle (1969, 1975), Brown & Levinson (1978)). Others have shown them to
vary in conceptualization and verbalization across cultures and languages (Wong 1994,
1985). Although this debate has generated over three decades of research, only the last 15
years marked a shift from an intuitively based approach to an empirically based one,
which “has focused on the perception and production of speech acts by learners of a
second or foreign language i.e., ESL and EFL learners, at varying stages of language
proficiency and in different social interactions” (Cohen, 1996). Blum Kulka et. al.,
(1989) argue that there is a strong need to complement theoretical studies of speech acts
with empirical studies, based on speech acts produced by native speakers of individual
languages in strictly defined contexts. The illocutionary choices embraced by individual
languages reflect what Gumperz (1982) calls “cultural logic”. The fact that two speakers
whose sentences are quite grammatical can differ radically in their interpretation of each
other’s verbal strategies indicates that conversational management does rest on linguistic
knowledge. But, to find out what that knowledge is we must abandon the existing views
of communication which draw a basic distinction between cultural or social knowledge
on the one hand and linguistic signaling processes on the other.

Differences in “cultural logic” embodied in individual languages involve the
implementation of various linguistic mechanisms. As numerous studies have shown,
these mechanisms are rather culture-specific and may cause breakdowns in inter-ethnic
communication. Such communication breakdowns are largely due to a language transfer
at the sociocultural level where cultural differences play a part in selecting among the
potential strategies for realizing a given speech act. Hence the need to make the
instruction of speech acts an instrumental component of every ESL/ EFL curriculum.

When second language learners engage in conversations with native speakers,
difficulties may arise due to their lack of mastery of the conversational norms involved in
the production of speech acts. Such conversational difficulties may, in turn, cause
breakdowns in interethnic communication (Gumperz, 1990). When the nonnative
speakers violate speech act realization patterns typically used by native speakers of a
target language, they often suffer the perennial risk of inadvertently violating
conversational and politeness norms thereby forfeiting their claims to being treated by
their interactants as social equals (Kasper, 1993).

Communication difficulties result when conversationalists do not share the same
knowledge of the subtle rules governing conversation. Scarcella (1990) ascribes high
frequency of such difficulties to the fact that “nonnative speakers, when conversing, often
transfer the conversational rules of their first language into the second”. Americans
regard interruptions during a conversation as impolite, whereas here in India interruptions
are interpreted as acts of friendliness and active involvement in an interaction.

Learners who repeatedly experience conversational difficulties tend to cut
themselves from speakers of the target community, not only withdrawing from them
socially, but psychologically as well (Scarcella, 1990). ‘Psychological distance’ or a
‘high filter’ might be related to a number of factors, including culture shock and cultural
stress” (Scarcella, 1990) All these factors ignite a cycle that eventually hinders second
language acquisition. First, the learners experience conversational difficulties. Next, they
become “clannish”, clinging to their own group. This limits their interaction with members of the target culture and increases solidarity with their own cultural group. That, in turn, creates social distance between themselves and the target group. The end result is that the second language acquisition is hindered since they do not receive the input necessary for their language development. (Scarcella, 1990)

Therefore, the study of pragmatics explores the ability of language users to match utterances with contexts in which they are appropriate; in Stalnaker’s words, pragmatics is "the study of linguistic acts and the contexts in which they are performed" (1972). The teaching of pragmatics aims to facilitate the learners’ sense of being able to find socially appropriate language for the situations that they encounter. Within second language studies and teaching also, pragmatics encompasses speech acts, conversational structure, conversational implicature, conversational management, discourse organization, and sociolinguistic aspects of language use such as choice of address forms. These areas of language and language use have not traditionally been addressed in language teaching curricula, leading students to ask if they could be taught “the secret rules of English.”

Pragmatic rules for language use are often subconscious, and even native speakers are often unaware of pragmatic rules until they are broken (and feelings are hurt, offense is taken, or sometimes things just seem a bit odd). Neither does pragmatics receive the attention in language teacher education programs that other areas of language do. Nevertheless, rules of language use do not have to be “secret rules” for learners or teachers. A growing number of studies exist that describe language use in a variety of English-speaking communities, and these studies have yielded important information for teaching. From the teacher’s perspective, the observation of how speakers do things with
words has demystified the pragmatic process at least to the point that we can provide responsible and concrete lessons and activities to language learners. We are in the position to give assurance that they too can learn pragmatics in their second or foreign language and that they can be “in the club” of English speakers. Teachers can successfully decode the apparently secret rules for classroom learners. Why teach pragmatics in language classes? The teaching of pragmatics is advocated because quite simply, observation of language learners shows that there is a demonstrated need for it and that instruction in pragmatics can be successful. Added to this is the fact that the classroom is the training ground for professional development and is less threatening.

Learners show significant differences from native speakers in the area of language use, in the execution and comprehension of certain speech acts, in conversational functions such as greetings and leave takings, and in conversational management such as back channeling and short responses. (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996, 1999, Kasper & Schmidt, 1996; Kasper & Rose, 1999.) Without instruction, differences in pragmatics show up in the English of learners regardless of their first language background or language proficiency. That is to say, a learner of high grammatical proficiency will not necessarily show equivalent pragmatic development. As a result, learners at the higher levels of grammatical proficiency often show a wide range of pragmatic competence. Thus, we find that even advanced nonnative speakers are neither uniformly successful, nor uniformly unsuccessful, but the range is quite wide.

What makes pragmatics “secret” seems to be in some cases the lack of specific input and in others the lack of interpretation of language use. Language classrooms are especially well suited to provide both input and interpretation. The first problem of input
that instruction addresses is to make language available to learners for observation. Some speech acts, such as invitations, refusals, and apologies often take place between individuals, and so learners might not have the opportunity to observe such language without being directly involved in the conversation. The second problem of input that instruction addresses is salience. Some necessary features of language and language use are quite subtle in the input and not immediately noticeable by learners; for example the turns that occur before speakers actually say “goodbye” and the noises that we make when encouraging other speakers to continue their turns are of this type. Differences in making requests by asking “Can I” (speaker-oriented) versus “Can you” (hearer-oriented) might not be immediately salient to learners. By highlighting features of language and language use, instruction can inform the learner. Finally, classrooms are the ideal place to help learners interpret language use. Instruction can help learners understand when and why certain linguistic practices take place. It can also help learners interpret the input that they hear, in both actual comprehension (“What does this formula mean?”) and interpretation (“How is this used?” or “What does a speaker who says this hope to accomplish?”). A classroom discussion of pragmatics is also a good place to explore prior impressions of speakers.

Cohen (1996) claims that the fact that speech acts reflect somewhat routinized language behavior helps learning in the sense that much of what is said is predictable. For example, Wolfson & Manes, (1980) have found that adjectives nice or good (e.g., "That's a nice shirt you're wearing" or "it was a good talk you gave") are used almost half the time when complimenting in English and ‘beautiful’, ‘pretty’, and ‘great’ make up another 15 percent.
Yet, despite the routinized nature of speech acts, there are various strategies to choose from, depending on the sociocultural context, especially in the case of speech acts with four or more possible semantic formulas such as in apologies and complaints. Target language learners may tend to respond the way they would in their native language and culture and find that their utterances are not at all appropriate for the target language and culture situation. (Cohen, 1996).

At present, there are an increasing number of studies dealing with teaching speech act behavior in an ESL/EFL classroom. Olshtein and Cohen (1990), for instance, conducted a study of apologies made by EFL learners in Israel who were taught a set of lessons on the strategies used by native English speakers to apologize. They found that situational features can indeed be taught in the foreign language classroom. Whereas, before these apology lessons, the nonnative speakers' apologies differed from the native English speakers', after instruction, learners selected strategies, which were more native-like.

Scarcella (1990) provides second language instructors with a number of guidelines intended to reduce negative consequences of communication difficulties and increase the learners’ conversational competence through improving their motivation:

1) Stress the advantages of conversing like a native speaker.
2) Stress that it is not necessary to converse perfectly to communicate in the second language.
3) Impress upon learners that they should not be overly concerned with communication difficulties.
4) Help students accept communication difficulties as normal.
5) Provide students with information about communication difficulties.

6) Do not expect students to develop the conversational skills needed to overcome all communication difficulties.

7) Provide communicative feedback regarding student success in conveying meaning and accomplishing communicative objectives.

8) Teach students strategies to help them overcome communication difficulties in the real world.

The notion of highlighting this issue originated from students’ reports on difficulties they faced when trying to use the language to communicate in situations out of the classroom and from the necessity of finding a means of doing something as a language teacher-researcher to better prepare learners for the situations they are going to face in everyday interactions in the professional sphere. (As indicated from the analysis made from the findings elaborated in chapter 4.)

5.2.2 How does one develop pragmatic competence?

Leech and Thomas (1990:173) define pragmatics as the study of the meaning of linguistic utterances for their users and interpreters. Watson and Hill (1993:146) define it as the “study of language from the view-point of the user, especially the choices he/she makes, the constraints s/he meets in employing language in social situations and the effects the use of language has upon others”. To Yule (1996:3), the definitions of pragmatics can be captured fully from four perspectives:

Pragmatics is the study of speaker meaning

Pragmatics is the study of contextual meaning

Pragmatics is the study of how more gets communicated than is said; and
Pragmatics is the study of the expression of relative distance. The main interests of pragmatists lie in functions, intentions, goals and effects of utterances, and ultimately in the kind of linguistic competence required to use language in specific social situations (Wales, 1989:369).

In essence, pragmatics is concerned with the study of who says what, where and how, our re-formulation of Harold Lasswell’s famous definition of politics as who gets what, when and how? It studies the users of language (who), the context of use (where) and the manners of speaking/ non-verbal cues and codes (how). Linguistic competence is insufficient without pragmatic competence because every utterance is context-dependent. Communicative competence which is a language user’s “ability to select, from the totality of grammatically correct expressions available to him, forms that appropriately reflect the social norms governing behavior in specific encounters” (Gumperz, 1972: 205) is a dominant aspect of pragmatic competence.

What kinds of pragmatic knowledge can children draw on as they acquire communicative skills? Children always attend to speaker intentions on the one hand which reflect some aspects of pragmatic development, and also to what the addressee already knows on the other. Attending to these two factors in an exchange requires that children make use of common ground, updating it as needed; it also requires that they take note of speech acts, and learn which inferences to draw from what speakers do and don’t say (Austin 1962, Levinson 1983, Horn 1996).

A number of activities that are useful for pragmatic development can be classified into two main types:

- activities aimed at raising students’ pragmatic awareness, and
• activities offering opportunities for communicative practice. (Kasper 1997)

Awareness raising activities are activities designed to develop recognition of how language forms are used appropriately in context.

Through awareness-raising activities, students acquire information about pragmatic aspects of language; for instance

(a) the strategies used for apologizing in their first language (L1) and second language (L2).

(b) what is considered an offence in their culture compared to the target culture?

(c) what are the different degrees of offence for different situations in the two languages?

(d) how the nature of the relationship between the participants affects the use of apologies.

The aim is to expose learners to the pragmatic aspects of language (L1 and L2) and provide them with the analytical tools they need to arrive at their own generalizations concerning contextually appropriate language use. These activities are designed to make learners consciously aware of the differences between the mother tongue and target language speech acts. The rationale for this approach is that such differences are often ignored by learners and go unnoticed unless they are directly addressed (Schmidt 1993). The two major techniques commonly used are teacher presentation and discussion of research findings on different aspects of pragmatics, and a student-discovery procedure in which students obtain information through observations, questionnaires, and/or interviews (Kasper 1997) which has been done in chapters 3 and 4.
Teachers can use presentation and or discussion techniques to relay information drawn from research on pragmatic issues to students. This can be done inductively (from data to rules) or deductively (from rules to data). To show the importance of contextual variables in the use of different language forms, teachers need to provide detailed information on the participants, their status, the situations, and the speech events that are occurring. The information provided to students in awareness raising activities will help learners build awareness of pragmatic features in both L1 and L2.

Another strategy could be that the student discovers the strategies on his/her own.

1. Through role play games students can discover and learn on their own where one person pretends to be the native speaker. And the other one is the language learner who has just come to the country.

2. Practice with the formal/informal forms: You go to a teacher or you go to the office on your own and interact with your superior asking for a day or two off since you are stressed out and need a break to recuperate.

3. “Show a kind of authentic context. Watch videos of authentic interactions between native speakers, and let the learners see what is happening in their interactions. Then practice some role plays.”

In addition, one should try to practice language in functions to accomplish goals using contextualized language.

5.2.3 What and how does one teach pragmatics and speech acts?

First, students need to be made consciously aware of pragmatics—the fact that native speakers violate its rules demonstrates that it is not easily or consciously learned. Awareness of this issue can be achieved by first directly introducing the topic and naming
it as pragmatics, the way people use language out in the “real world” as opposed to in books.

Language learning should be experiential and should aim at developing learners’ communicative competence. The task-based approach to language learning emphasizes learning to communicate through purposeful interaction. Through the use of tasks, learners are provided with purposeful contexts and engaged in processes that require them to exercise critical thinking and creativity, explore issues and solutions, and learn to use the language skills and functions, grammar items and structures, vocabulary, and tone, style and register for meaningful communication. The use of tasks also provides opportunities for the development of language learning strategies, generic skills, learner independence, and positive values and attitudes conducive to lifelong learning. They are as follows:-

5.2.3.1 I. LANGUAGE FOR POLITENESS

a. The Hedge

The Hedge “I’d really like to come to the party on Saturday, but I’m not sure if I can,” means “I probably won’t be there.” The speaker needs to respond to this invitation but doesn’t want to give a direct “yes” or “no” and instead hedges, or approaches the invitation indirectly, to avoid offending the host or committing himself to coming when he can’t.

b. Euphemism

Euphemism is the “pretty language” we use to cover up a sensitive matter: “a little heavy,” for “fat,” for example, and “mature” for “old.” Euphemisms are very indirect
and are an attempt to in some way evade the truth; they can be confusing for even native
speakers.

The instructor should go over some of the sensitive or “taboo” topics of their culture--
death, ageing, weight—and some of the common euphemisms for them. Usually, the
more sensitive the topic, the more euphemisms it will have; think of how many alternate
ways we have to say “to die”: “passed away,” “has gone to a peaceful abode,”
“kicked the bucket,” “went to heaven,” and so on. Now here an Indian student would
use expired and think it is a right expression for “death.” Expired is wrong. Expired is
used for policies and medicines but not for people.

c. The Apology or Pseudo-apology

The apology or pseudo-apology: ‘I’m sorry I’m late.’ ‘Traffic is miserable’ or similar
apology with an excuse is necessary for such minor transgressions as being late. In
contrast, a “pseudo-apology” is often used as an expression of sympathy: ‘I’m sorry to
hear about your father’s death.’ This is obviously not actually an apology but an
expression of sympathy and mistaking its function can lead to some rather comical
exchanges: e.g., ‘It’s okay; it’s not your fault.’

d. Requests

All languages have some way, and usually many ways, of asking for help: all of us do
this to various people, and over different things, sometimes just in the course of a day. So
there are many ways to ask for help. Generally speaking, the closer the relationship and
or the smaller the request, the less formal and polite the language. As the favour grows
bigger and or the relationship is more distant, the more polite the language becomes. For
example, one might say to his brother, “Hey, lend me a ten for the parking meter,
please?” but to a board of directors of an organisation, one would say, “I sincerely request that you seriously consider funding this worthy program for your professional success…” Switching the two registers, or levels of formality and politeness, would be completely inappropriate.

5.2.3.2 II. TERMS OF ADDRESS

‘Sir, Ma’am, Madam,’ and ‘Miss’: When is it polite to use these, if at all?

‘Sir’ is used with men; ‘Ma’am’ is used for ladies; ‘miss’ usually for a teenager or young adult. ‘Ms’ is a title used before a family name or the full name of a woman whether she is married or not.

These are used when the addressee’s name is not known: e.g., ‘Sir, would you have the time to sit through my presentation?’ They are also used for customers and clients: e.g., ‘What can I get for you, Ma’am?’

Some interesting notes on terms of address: ‘Lady’ in American culture is not polite when used as a means of address; rather it is a dishonorific, as in ‘Lady, move your car.’ ‘Boy’ as a term of address for male service people, especially African American ones, has long fallen out of use in the United States, seen rightly as racist. However, ‘girl’ is still heard to refer to, not address, female service people, such as waiters, no matter the age of the person: e.g., ‘I already gave my order to the girl,’ when ‘the girl’ might be sixty years old.

5.2.3.3 III. DISCOURSE MARKERS

The next focus is on “salient language.” Phrases, such as “on the other hand” is used a lot in academic language. Students often make mistakes while using it. They say “in the other hand,” rather than “on the other hand,” so explicitly teaching phrases such as this
and practising it is a valuable investment of course time. The other phrases that are generally used are the following “in contrast to,” “in addition to,” “in order to,” “with reference to,” “as a matter of fact,” “in accordance with,” “in summation,” “a matter of time”. These need to be practised in the classroom through presentations. These phrases are called discourse markers but do not receive much attention as it is believed that students will pick these phrases up as time goes by.

5.2.3.4 IV. COLLOCATIONS

Collocations are vital aspects of language use which, if not used correctly can lead to breakdown in communication. This can also lead to serious misunderstandings and culture distortions. The richer in collocations the learner’s lexicon is, the higher precision, accuracy, coherence and authenticity his speech reflects. This is one crucial way to fluency and proficiency in the language that helps achieve language competence.

There are three basic approaches to teaching and learning collocations-

The lexical approach.

The semantic approach.

The structural approach.

It is Firth, who is widely regarded as the father of collocation, who developed the lexical and the most traditional approach to this phenomenon. Advocates of the lexical approach claim that the meaning of a word is determined by the co-occurring words. Consequently, lexis is considered to be independent and separable from grammar. Thus, a part of the meaning of a word is the fact that it collocates with another word. However, those combinations are often strictly limited, e.g. make an omlette but do your homework while both the verbs do and make have only one
Polish equivalent *robić*. One of the Firth’s revolutionary concepts was to perceive lexical relations as syntagmatic rather than paradigmatic ones.

Sinclair [1966] and Halliday [1966] are Firth’s followers. For Halliday, collocations are examples of word combinations; he maintains that collocation cuts across grammar boundaries. For instance, *he argued strongly* and *the strength of his argument* are grammatical transformations of the initial collocation *strong argument*.

In his works, he highlights the crucial role of collocations in the study of lexis.

Benson, Benson and Ilson [1997] define collocations as specified, identifiable, non-idiomatic, recurrent combinations. In their dictionary, they divide them into two groups: grammatical and lexical collocations. The first category consists of the main word (a noun, an adjective, a verb) plus a preposition or ‘to+infinitive’ or ‘that-clause’ and is characterized by 8 basic types of collocations:

- noun + preposition e.g. *blockade against, apathy towards*
- noun + *to*-infinitive e.g. *He was a fool to do it, They felt a need to do it.*
- noun + *that*-clause e.g. *We reached an agreement that she would represent us in court, He took an oath that he would do his duty.*
- preposition + noun e.g. *by accident, in agony*
- adjective + preposition e.g. *fond of children, hungry for news*
- adjective + *to*-infinitive e.g. *it was necessary to work, it’s nice to be here*
- adjective + *that*-clause e.g. *she was afraid that she would fail, it was imperative that I be here*
- 19 different verb patterns in English e.g. verb + *to*-infinitive (*they began to speak*), verb + bare infinitive (*we must work*) and other.
Lexical collocations do not contain prepositions, infinitives or relative clauses but consist of nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs.

There are 7 types of them:

- verb (which means creation/action) + noun/pronoun/prepositional phrase e.g. 
  *come to an agreement, launch a missile*

- verb (which means eradication/cancellation) + noun e.g. *reject an appeal, crush resistance*

- [adjective + noun] or [noun used in an attributive way + noun] e.g. *strong tea, a crushing defeat, house arrest, land reform*

- noun + verb naming the activity which is performed by a designate of this noun e.g. *bombs explode, bees sting*

- quantifier + noun e.g. *a swarm of bees, a piece of advice*

- adverb + adjective e.g. *hopelessly addicted, sound asleep*

- verb + adverb e.g. *argue heatedly, apologize humbly.*

### Table-7 – Collocations

The use of the words “make”, “give,” “present”, “do”, “under”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>do homework</th>
<th>give a presentation</th>
<th>make an apology</th>
<th>present a bouquet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>do a task</td>
<td>give a smile</td>
<td>make an entrance</td>
<td>present a report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do an assignment</td>
<td>give a pink-slip</td>
<td>make an exit</td>
<td>present a medal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do a project</td>
<td>give the nod</td>
<td>make a declaration</td>
<td>present a proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do a favour</td>
<td>give a proclamation</td>
<td>make a commitment</td>
<td>present a momento</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>give prizes</td>
<td>make time for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>give an offering</td>
<td>make a profit/loss</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of general collocations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bang on time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>run out of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dead on time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from dawn till dusk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>great deal of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>early/late 19th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>next few days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>past few weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>months ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time goes by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time passes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>august gathering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>select audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slight drizzle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heavy rain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>firm decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>magical figure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>efficacious medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brush with death</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Matching exercises and completion exercises can make students aware of how collocations in English should be used. They can be given discourse tasks in the use of collocations.

Another important aspect when teaching speech-acts and pragmatics is that teachers need to inform the learners that certain forms of politeness can and do vary from culture to culture. It has been said that culture is like an iceberg, that only ten percent of it is visible and the other ninety percent is hidden below the surface. For this reason, ESL teachers must make intentional efforts to teach cultural understanding and tolerance to their students.

5.2.3.5 CULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM

Culture is reflected by the food, holidays, music, clothing, time, traditional stories and myths, currency, family, etc which is peculiar to a certain community and country.

Task 1. Everyone eats, but not everyone eats the same food and the differences in diet from one culture to the next can be very dramatic. Ask students to study the cuisine of different cultures and ask them to give the benefits of that particular food. If you have students from other countries, ask them to give a description of how their traditional food is cooked and served and eaten. We all know about how the Japanese serve tea. Ask the students to find out the benefits of different types of teas, example: - green tea, black tea, lemon tea, ginger tea, cardamom tea and the like. Get the students to do a project on food allergies and the antidote for the allergies.
Task.2. Take few calendar holidays and talk about the relevance of that day. Talk about the special foods associated with that holiday. What better time to talk about traditional foods than during the holiday. The holiday is generally given to celebrate festivals so students can be grouped and asked to give information about the festival, the traditional dress and food, the national traditions, family traditions etc. The students in your class will enjoy sharing some of their traditions as well as hearing about those of their classmates. You can invite your students to wear traditional clothing on a certain day or bring pictures of themselves or others in traditional dress. Encourage each person to explain the significance of the different pieces, and give an opportunity for everyone in class to ask questions.

Task.3. Ask students about what people do in their free time. Generally, a person’s schedule will be reflective of his or her values. How do people distribute their time? What are the different things they do, which is out of the routine? How do they manage different art forms keeping their culture in mind? The answers to these questions and the differences from one culture to another will help students understand and appreciate what their classmates’ value.

Task.4. While on the subject of art, ask students if anyone in their class play a traditional instrument? That may not be all that common, but most students could probably play some popular music from their country for the class. Bring in an iPod dock and play a little rock and roll, then invite your students to share some of their music. Again, encourage open conversation and questions among your students. Be sure to remind your
class that national preferences vary as do personal preferences, and remind them to be sensitive to what their classmates share.

**Task.5.** Invite students to bring in a currency from their native countries. Ask the students to give a brief history about the coins and paper currency peculiar to the country. At the end of the informal discussion, ask students to talk about the first coins of various countries and their historical relevance. By sharing stories about what is important enough to put on the country’s currency, students will gain another level of cultural understanding from their classmates.

**Task.6.** Folk tales are traditional tales that depict culture and are handed down from generation to generation. Grandmother stories are folk tales that spell the culture and tradition and superstition too of a country or an area. Ask students to narrate folk tales which is another way to bring culture and history into the classroom. They could even be asked to enact the tales. They could learn how to handle conflicts and challenges. Moral values and ethical behaviour and chivalric acts can be learned the natural way, so, in the face of challenges, students would find clues in these stories besides also learning the pragmatics of story-telling. When students enact the folk-tales, they could inspire others by the language they use, by the way they play the role others could learn how conflicts are handled. This activity could motivate and instil integrity and pride for one’s nation.

Culture permeates every aspect of our beings. Teachers can weave a lot of activities on generic topics such as those mentioned above. While studying culture is interesting, it could also be very sensitive if not handled carefully in the classroom. As the adage goes “never discuss politics and religion at the dining table.” The same holds good in a class
of students from diverse backgrounds. The best the teacher can do in such situations is to steer the discussion in another direction like movies or television programs. Students get involved easily in topics of this nature.

As we have learnt that pragmatics and speech acts are important in order to achieve communication competence essential for the workplace, tasks designed by teachers should therefore encourage learners to see how language operates in its natural environment. They should be able to experience by getting involved personally in real-life investigations, so, projects should be given to students.

5.2.3.6 PROJECTS

Projects allow learners to pursue a topic of interest by themselves, set their own learning targets, and plan and reflect on their course of action. Personal involvement of this sort enables learners to become more responsible for their own learning.

Projects may encourage learners to move out of the classroom into the community, allowing them to connect what they learn at the classroom with the world at large. Through planning, organizing and participating in real-life investigations, which involve exploring problems from various perspectives and presenting information in various modes, learners develop not only language knowledge and skills but also the generic skills, positive values and attitudes that are conducive to lifelong development.

The teacher plays a crucial role in facilitating project learning. Before assigning project work, the teacher needs to plan and make appropriate arrangements, taking into consideration the theme or topic, the learning targets and objectives, the generic skills,
values and attitudes, the resources, the amount of time required, the parties involved and the products.

For project work to be genuinely learner-centered, the teacher needs to be flexible and open-minded when working with learners, and to provide appropriate support. Real-life communication seldom involves the use of just one language skill, and so learners are strongly encouraged to learn and exercise the integrated use of skills for authentic, purposeful communication.

5.2.4 Activities that develop communication and pragmatic skills

1. Role play – adults and other learners to model social situations at home, shopping, etc.

2. Puppets – adults and learners to model social situations through puppet plays and stories.

3. Tell me – ask the learners to talk about personal experiences to the class. Subtle adult questioning should ensure that a learner keeps to the topic and gives relevant background information.

4. Making faces – miming activities, specifically teaching learners how to show feelings through facial expression. This could be part of miming scenes from well-known stories.

5. Board games – these involve turn-taking - Example :- a pictionary game, checkers, a vocabulary puzzle and word scrabble or a jigsaw puzzle, a cross word puzzle, grammar games etc.

6. Parachute games –these involve collaboration and need to be introduced gradually until the learner can work as a team.
7. Circle time – gives opportunities to develop the ability to listen and speak. The story has to be continued from where the previous person leaves and the story turns out to be hilarious and often ends on a totally unexpected note.

8. Reactions – ask the students to choose a reaction, from a choice of three, to a particular social situation. Then talk about the possible consequences of each reaction.

9. Speech bubbles – using well-known story characters. Read the students a scene from the story and then ask them to write, in the speech bubble, what the character might say at the end of the scene.

10. Just a minute – ask the learners to talk about a particular subject for one minute. This is good practice in keeping oneself focused on the given topics.

11. Social stories – a well-researched and published approach to help learners cope with certain social situations that they find difficult.

12. Comic strip conversations – a well-researched and published approach to help learners cope with making choices in certain social situations.

Teachers can make learners aware of second language sociocultural norms without offering lectures or texts on them. Here is an example of a socio-cultural norm in English: a situation can be given with multiple expressions which may seem appropriate or inappropriate in different contexts. A discussion can be generated on the responses.

**Situation:** Your friend John looks depressed and says to you: "Oh, I have an awful headache and I have an interview today."

Your first response is to say:
a. It must be allergies.

b. I'm sorry to hear that.

c. Don't feel bad, lots of people do.

d. What bad luck.

Short situations such as the one above can be given with options so that the class can discuss why only one answer is correct and not the others. Such tasks can generate discussions and bring about awareness of social and cultural norms, thus making them ready for the workplace interactions which are generally of this nature.

A discourse completion task (DCT) which Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) used for data collection in cross-cultural pragmatics research can be used as a starter for the activities mentioned above. The use of such expressions and linkers as these: after all, at any rate, besides, by the way, first of all, frankly, furthermore, however, if you want my opinion, in conclusion, indeed, in other words, moreover, now that you mention it, on the other hand, otherwise, strictly speaking, to digress, to oversimplify, and to put it mildly, can be tested in DCT.

There are all sorts of other standard forms of words which are used to perform speech acts of certain types without making explicit the type of act being performed, e.g. “It would be nice if you . . .” to request, “Why don’t you . . . ?” to advise, “Do you know . . . ?” to ask for information, “I’m sorry” to apologize, and “I wouldn’t do that” to warn. Even in the case of hedged and embedded performatives, such as “I can assure you . . .,” “I must inform you . . .,” “I would like to invite you . . .,” and “I am pleased to be able to offer you . . .,” in which the type of act is made explicit by its usage. This is often
not understood by low-proficiency learners and needs to be taught through the tasks
given above.

5.2.5 Implementation of Pragmatics in Multimedia lab based Language teaching

Multimedia Lab is generally developed on the basis of conventional video/audio
language Lab with computer and multimedia technology. A variety of information
sources can be integrated easily even if they are indifferent forms such as text, image,
picture, movie, animation and music etc. Given such powerful and diverse functions,
classroom teachers can think it on how to make these functions serve the implementation
of the latest understanding like pragmatic awareness especially in case nothing more can
be done with teaching activities that occur in conventional classrooms.

Generally, the four major skills which are dealt within the multimedia labs are listening,
speaking, reading and writing.

a. Listening

To help learners develop the various skills required in listening, teachers need to
expose them to a broad range of listening experiences and to make use of a wide selection
of authentic listening materials such as advertisements, announcements, telephone
conversations, speeches, films, poems, songs and rhymes. It is important to draw
learners’ attention to the use of spoken English in their daily lives and encourage them to
make use of available resources such as English language programmes on TV and the
radio, and to build their confidence by providing them with learning experiences and
activities in which they can be successful. This activity would sensitise students to
recognize words; sentence and clause boundaries; contracted forms; stress and intonation patterns and their significance; speech rhythm; changes in pitch, tone and speed of delivery; and discrimination between similar speech sounds, homonyms, etc.

Apart from this, students can listen to others’ ideas in group discussions and evaluate them in the light of their own knowledge, experience and ideas, and make critical judgments.

Students can interpret the speaker’s intent or attitudes as well as the underlying meaning of what the speaker says by examining:

- the language used (e.g. choice of words, use of repetition, use of hyperboles);
- the manner of speech (choice of intonation and stress; volume, pitch and pace).

b. Speaking

For effective oral communication, learners need to acquire a range of speaking skills and strategies. These include:

**Accuracy:** the skill of using pronunciation (which covers speech sounds, stress, rhythm and intonation), grammar and vocabulary correctly to communicate ideas and express feelings;

**Fluency:** the skill of linking what one says together and producing it at a reasonably “normal” speed;

** Appropriateness:** the skill of using the right sort of language (e.g. formal or informal language) to suit particular situations;

**Cohesion:** the skill of producing spoken utterances which “hang together” grammatically;
**Coherence**: the skill of producing spoken utterances that “hang together” semantically and logically; and

**Interaction strategies**: such as seeking further information, asking for clarification, negotiating meaning, and taking turns appropriately at relevant points in an oral interaction.

Students could listen to recordings of speeches or dramatic episodes to identify the use of different intonation patterns to convey meaning. They try to imitate the stress, rhythm and intonation used, record their own performance for self, peer and teacher feedback and make improvements on their accuracy.

Students could make presentations on a topic of their choice or a book they would like to introduce to the class, taking note of the use of voice, stress and intonation to achieve the desired effect.

Students could listen to recordings and identify useful expressions that encourage people to say more, or identify the use of conversational fillers such as “Really?” and “I see” to sustain interaction. They then apply these strategies in discussions or conversations.

Students could engage in discussions where they use communication and negotiation skills to solve problems or reach a consensus. Learners can take turns to be the chairperson or group leader and ensure that each group member contributes to the discussion. Another group of learners may play the role of observers and carry out peer assessment by taking note of the interaction strategies used by each participant and giving feedback to the group on its effectiveness at the end of the discussion.
c. Reading

Reading is a means to help learners to seek information, develop thinking skills, enrich knowledge, enhance language proficiency and broaden perspectives. Reading should be promoted in schools and integrated into regular English Language lessons with the other language skills of listening, speaking and writing. Emphasis has to be placed on motivating learners and providing them with proper guidance and opportunities to enhance their enjoyment, learning capacity and personal growth through reading. Teachers select or develop appropriate learning activities based on texts that interest learners, so that they will learn to appreciate the value of reading and become motivated to make reading a lifelong pleasure.

Learners can be encouraged to notice and read the signs, display boards, notices and advertisements in their immediate environment. These materials can promote the development of functional reading skills and help learners to relate English Language learning to daily life.

Suggestions for enhancing reading skills and strategies:-

To develop and activate learners’ schemas, the teacher guides learners to:

- predict the content of a text from information such as the title, headings, sub-headings, pictures, table of contents, preface and appendix; and
- use semantic maps to categorise ideas and concepts and visually illustrate the relationship between ideas and concepts.

Students should be able to consider the use of figures of speech, cohesive devices, rhetorical devices and contextual clues which help bring out the underlying meaning.
d. Writing

In the English Language curriculum, a process approach to writing is recommended. This approach focuses on learners exploring and being aware of what they do, and the choices they make during writing. The following are some suggested strategies and activities which teachers can use to develop learners’ skills at the various stages of the writing process, which include pre-writing, drafting and revising.

When students engage in reading tasks, it will allow them to develop their thinking, build vocabulary, develop insights into the structures of various text-types and appreciate what makes an effective piece of writing in terms of cohesion within and across sentences, coherence in the logic of the writing and the overall organisation of the text.

To develop the skills in identifying writing purposes and audience, learners may need to

- examine sample texts to consider the writers’ purposes and the intended audience;
- examine how a single event or issue has been reported from a variety of angles;
- consider an event or a situation from the various points of view presented in the text;
- rewrite an argumentative text from the perspective of the opposing viewpoint;
- assess whether a thesis needs refining, and write a brief and flexible outline which can be reshaped as they discover new ideas.

Teachers should also develop various other procedures to enable learners to better assess themselves. For example, learners can:

- keep a language learning log or journal/diary to record and reflect on their learning experiences;
- keep records of their work in a folder, reviewing this from time to time in order to monitor their progress towards their own targets; and
- make use of checklists or answer keys to carry out self and peer assessment. The latter gives them an extra incentive to try their best as they have a real audience.

Learners should be encouraged to see self-assessment as an ongoing process which enables them to identify their strengths and weaknesses, develop a critical awareness of their language learning progress and establish goals for future development.

The use of web-based or computer-assisted interactive learning tools to complement direct face-to-face contact not only provides learners with powerful mechanisms for communication and collaboration with the teacher and each other, but also promotes better understanding of their learning progress. For example, teachers can:

- present the lesson in a motivating and engaging way by making use of multimedia presentation tools;
- provide opportunities for learners to take charge of their own learning through selective use of online resources;
- encourage learners to become active users of English when they apply their IT skills for presentation, critical thinking, information evaluation and knowledge management, using information on the Internet; and
- engage learners in interactive and collaborative work through online discussions and sharing of ideas.

All these activities provide opportunities for experiential learning and life-like experiences will certainly prepare students for the workplace.
The teacher should provide scaffolds or means of support to assist comprehension of the tasks. For example, the teacher may help build learners’ vocabulary by explaining key words and phrases. S/he could help them with questionnaires and interview techniques when they undertake projects that require them to meet people in the outside world. This can also be achieved through asking learners to use contextual clues to work out the meaning of key words. Further, the teacher may help increase learners’ world knowledge by encouraging them to find information about a certain topic, issue, historical event or cultural practice that is related to the central theme or event presented in a text. Likewise, prompting learners to reflect on their own experience, and to project themselves into a situation similar to that which occurs in the text, is a good way of ensuring that learners approach it with the right mind set.

To foster a close interaction with the text and develop higher-order thinking skills, open-ended questioning is strongly encouraged. Whether they are involved in a group discussion or are working on a reading comprehension worksheet, learners should not be engaged only with questions which aim at eliciting information-based responses. They should also be provided with questions that stimulate probing investigation and reasoned interpretation. For example, they might be asked to discuss the motive of a certain character, who has opted for a particular course of action, and give justifications for their interpretation. Engaging learners in this inquiry mode of learning will enable them to explore their own feelings, develop their own responses and make their own judgments – crucial skills which they can apply to the understanding and appreciation of a wider range of imaginative texts.
Constructive feedback or advice should be provided during and after each learning activity to let students know how well they have done and how they can make further improvement. For example, learners could be asked to rewrite the ending of the imaginative text which they have read, and the teacher may provide comments on their drafts in terms of content, organisation and language, based on which students will make revisions to produce texts of better quality. Of course, the teacher need not be the sole source of quality feedback, which can also come through learners’ direct involvement in assessing their own and others’ work. Peer and self feedback, based on clear criteria, enhance audience awareness and encourage a critical response to texts.

5.6 Teachers’ perspectives on English Language Teaching

A survey was conducted through informal chats and also structured interviews wherein teachers were asked to give their views on English Language Teaching. The teachers of ELT believed that language learning should not be restricted to only textbook and classroom activities. It is believed that language acquisition would be most effectively facilitated if it could be embedded with the learners' field of study or work. Through appropriate pedagogy for learning, the more the learners are exposed to real world tasks, the better language users they will become. Real world tasks as defined by Nunan (1989) are those which "require learners to approximate, in class, the sorts of behaviours required of them in the world beyond the classroom"
The four main principles that should underlie the activities in the language classroom so as to facilitate learning are:-
1. Language acquisition is most effectively facilitated if it is embedded within the learners' field of study or work. The activities should be designed to promote language acquisition through the content.

2. The main role of the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instructor is to manage learning. The instructor should set up relevant tasks and act as a resource person to the learners on matters related to language. It is important that the ESP instructor, being a language expert, does not take it upon himself to teach the content.

3. Input that is comprehensible and authentic promotes language acquisition. The input, especially in the form of written texts, has been graded both conceptually and linguistically, from simple (but authentic) to complex. The instructor's aim is to assist the learners to eventually become independent users of English for academic and professional purposes.

4. Language training is part of human resource training. Through relevant activities the learners can develop the skills of time management, teamwork and interpersonal communication.

Teachers were interviewed and their responses could be grouped into three major categories: culture connection, classroom experience and personal language learning issues. For purposes of this analysis, terms other than pragmatics supplied by teachers were considered to be relevant to the teaching of pragmatics, such that it was hoped that teacher participants would include more information about pragmatics if they were encouraged to use terms like culture, politeness in describing core elements of teaching pragmatics.
Some teachers felt that teaching students from other cultures led them to see more ways pragmatics was relevant to teaching a second language: “I’m simply more aware of cultural difference and ways of talking to non native speakers” (T1).

Although researchers have posited that learners do not “acquire the pragmatics of the target language on their own” (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003), teachers seemed to question the necessity of explicit teaching of pragmatics, although some did indicate that perhaps teaching pragmatics was helpful:

“I think students would ultimately pick up a lot of pragmatics outside of the classroom as they are practising their English, but it’s helpful to teach it in the classroom to prepare them for academic life. I think even native speakers don’t think about how much pragmatics plays a role in communication.” (T3)

Several teacher participants were able to draw on their own language learning experiences to incorporate aspects of pragmatics in their own teaching:

“I think every experience influences us as we see what interactions are successful and which are not. When I was a student, I reflected on what works best for me and tried to incorporate those strategies in my own learning.” (T4)

This more general comment can be applied to the teaching of pragmatics in terms of the use of semantic frames or pragmatic strategies, concepts that were introduced in the materials that teacher participants used in the lessons.
“It is important to teach the pragmatic concepts of advice giving, polite speech and refusal. In class, practice of producing pragmatic speech is essential for students to retain this information.” (T5)

Other teachers tied student goals to high-stakes standardized testing, reinforcing the concept of backwash (Hughes, 1989) while at the same time, stressing its importance for teachers in training:

“Teaching pragmatics is really important . . . [because] pragmatics is now also incorporated in TOEFL, IELTS and has becoming increasingly important, and should consist a part of both teacher training and teachers should teach it.” (T2, 4&5)

The majority of respondents not only acknowledged the need for more background (substantive knowledge) information in order to know how to teach pragmatics in ELT contexts, but also exhibited interest and enthusiasm for this aspect of language teaching. For one instructor participant, learning about teaching pragmatics became very important:

“For pragmatics, before I saw the lessons, I only had a vague idea of how to communicate. It all became clear after the lessons why we have to make a big deal about it, and how we should go about teaching it.” (T5)

Teachers also drew on their own experiences as learners to recognize the importance of pragmatics in terms of politeness and intentionality: “while native speakers often forgive the phonological, syntactic and lexical errors made by L2 speakers, they are less likely to forgive pragmatic errors” (Nelson, Carson, Al Batal & El Bakary, 2002).
Reflection about one’s own pragmatic competence in a second language, evidenced through expressing politeness and being a competent language user through using specific language forms in the proper contexts, can positively influence teacher practices in terms of teaching pragmatics:

“It wasn’t until I committed my own social gaffe pragmatically by appearing too abrupt for lack of the proper words that I realized I was teaching more than culture . . . teaching appropriate forms for the context has become more focused [in my teaching] in the last 5 years.” (T2)

Based on their own language learning experience combined with their time in the classroom, most teachers felt that teaching aspects of pragmatics, such as culture, politeness, and usage, was valuable.

5.7 Conclusion

Teachers of English need to organize teaching around speech activities as discourse rather than around isolated speech acts. Thus, for example, in the classroom, rather than designing lessons on ‘information questions’ or ‘requests’, we would organize teaching around ‘small talk’ as a social practice. Arendt (1996) provides a range of examples of small talk as well as pedagogical techniques, and Rings (1989) offers a model of how to work with an example of a casual conversation in the classroom. Most importantly, a focus on a practice such as small talk provides an opportunity to explore cultural differences in how interlocutors create conversational involvement in initial encounters. Such a teaching focus fosters a particular habit of mind.
Firstly, we need to develop in learners the ability to look for patterns through discourse analysis and a certain critical distance, rather than ‘facts’ or ‘rules’ about language and culture (Bardovi-Harlig et al. 1991; Bardovi-Harlig 1996). In effect, we need to inspire their interest in language and culture, and give them the tools to become ethnographers of their own communication.

The use of authentic discourse as examples for analysis is extremely important. Possible sources are video clips from film and television, collected both by the teacher and by learners, illustrating prototypical discourse from both the native culture and the target culture. Such discourse can be used for analysis, but it is essential that each cultural perspective be represented. Role-plays, ideally videotaped and then used to provide feedback and an opportunity to redo the roleplay, are an extremely valuable tool for working on all aspects of interactional competence (Davies and Tyler 1994).

Secondly, we need to present cultural themes for both the public versus the private self and what is the boundary between an acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and the degree of self-disclosure in small talk. In promoting awareness of a different ethos, we can start by having students consider how they may have experienced different situations in their own lives. Class discussions should probe learners’ cultural knowledge concerning, for example, (a) when the focus of a conversation is on information content or social bonding; (b) when it is socially acceptable to argue and how arguing is done; (c) acceptable and unacceptable ways to interrupt people; (d) who jokes with whom, when, how, and about what; (e) when it is acceptable to express strong emotion; (f) what topics are acceptable and unacceptable for small talk, and whether students agree with the
taboo against discussion of politics, religion, and sex; (g) when direct enforcement of social norms is considered acceptable and unacceptable. This technique allows learners to recognize that within each culture there is a wide range of modes, and that a general cultural ethos represents an emphasized tendency which they also have within their repertoires. A follow-up technique would be to have students design role-plays as potential manifestations of an ethos in terms of specific interactional behaviors, emphasizing implications for misinterpretation of communicative intent across subcultures within their own culture, and extending analysis then to the implications for crosscultural miscommunication.

Such techniques emphasize the importance of sensitivity to the cultural definition of the situation. In this way, learners come to realize that what at first glance may seem very ‘foreign’ is also part of a familiar repertoire, but only in a particular context. This raises students’ awareness of the complexity of situated interpretation, and also prepares them to explore cultural stereotypes (both positive and negative) as potentially linked to specific behaviors with different cultural meanings.

The tangential analysis of teacher responses to pragmatics lessons can serve as an exploratory study of teacher attitudes towards the teaching of pragmatics. Using the framework of pragmatics, future research may build upon pragmatics as content for incorporation into curricular changes or reaction to implementation of a new pragmatics curriculum (Shawer, 2010). Framing the lessons as part of a mini-course on teaching pragmatics, incorporating an in-service approach, where students and teachers together
discover pragmatics and practice pragmatic strategies, may be a successful addition to practising teachers’ repertoires.

Information technology is an effective tool for promoting language learning. The Internet, for instance, is a powerful resource that can be exploited for language learning purposes, such as searching for information for a project and accessing online language resources for pleasurable and self-access learning. Teachers should help learners to capitalise on this resource by choosing Web materials appropriate to their linguistic and cognitive abilities and by using suitably designed activities to prepare them adequately for Internet-based tasks. They may also consider using multi-media resources and IT tools such as e-books, interactive simulation games or activities to enhance learner motivation and promote self-directed learning.

However, given their range in terms of quality and accessibility, care should be exercised in the choice of these materials. Good multi-media and IT resources should display the following characteristics:

- They involve good models of English use.
- The design is user-friendly, and graphics, sound and animation are used appropriately to increase learners’ motivation and support learning.
- The design of the activities promotes the integrated use of language skills.

The resources promote interactive learning by encouraging learner input, allowing learners to work at their own pace and providing feedback to them.
5.8 Recapitulating the essence of this study

Pragmatics and speech acts - essential for success at the workplace

Pragmatic competence has been recognized as one of the vital components of communicative competence (e.g. Bachman 1990). In Bachman’s model (1990), language competence is divided into two areas consisting of ‘organizational competence’ and ‘pragmatic competence’. Organizational competence comprises knowledge of linguistic units and the rules of joining them together at the levels of sentence (‘grammatical competence’) and discourse (‘textual competence’). Pragmatic competence consists of illocutionary competence, that is, knowledge of speech acts and speech functions, and sociolinguistic competence. ‘Sociolinguistic competence’ entails the ability to use language appropriately according to context. It thus includes the ability to select communicative acts and appropriate strategies to implement them depending on the contextual features of the situation. In Bachman’s model, pragmatic competence is not subordinated to knowledge of grammar and text organization but is coordinated to formal linguistic and textual knowledge and interacts with ‘organizational competence’ in complex ways.

An important question is whether learners need to be taught pragmatics. It can be argued that perhaps pragmatic knowledge simply develops alongside lexical and grammatical knowledge, without requiring any pedagogic intervention. However, research into the pragmatic competence of adult foreign and second language learners has demonstrated convincingly that the pragmatics of learners and native speakers (NSs) are quite different (Kasper 1997). Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) report that, ‘Even fairly advanced language learners’ communicative acts regularly contain pragmatic
errors, or deficits, in that they fail to convey or comprehend the intended illocutionary force or politeness value. Pragmatic competence is so vital that lack of it may lead to communication breakdown. It can cause misunderstandings, serious miscommunication, and even distort the communication goals when learners understand only the literal meaning of words but do not know the rules for interpreting them (Kasper, 1997; Lin, 2008). In certain cases, speakers who fail to use pragmatically appropriate language might appear rude or insulting, particularly those speakers considered as advanced learners who are expected to have high pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig et al, 1991). Such situations are believed to possibly happen to non-native speakers using English as a Second Language, and as a Foreign Language. Therefore, there is a need for L2 instruction to focus on the pragmatics of the language, and researchers in this area generally point out the positive impact of instruction aimed at raising learners’ pragmatic awareness (Kasper 1997).

Pragmatics as the study is not just of ‘meaning in use’ but also ‘meaning in interaction’ or ‘meaning in context’, which reflects the view that “meaning is not something which is inherent in the words alone, nor is it produced by the speaker alone, nor by the hearer alone.” (Thomas 1995). Accordingly, pragmatics is not about meaning; it is about making meaning, which is “a dynamic process, involving the negotiation of meaning between speaker and hearer, the context of utterance (physical, social and linguistic) and the meaning potential of an utterance” (Thomas 1995).

The language used in social interactions carries with it nuances of culture. Fear of not fitting socially may cause non-native speakers to shy away from having conversations or even making small talk with native speakers of English or non-natives who are
competent in English. This fear and reluctance may further hinder them from becoming competent in the language, linguistically and socio-pragmatically. Therefore, teaching the cultural aspects of language is a vital part of our duty as teachers to aid our students in becoming successful second or foreign-language speakers. ESL teachers should design contextualized, task-based activities that expose learners to different types of pragmatic information along with the linguistic means needed to perform a particular speech act. In addition, because of the function of different social variables (e.g., social status) in speech acts, students should be taught how to perform speech acts appropriately based on the relative status levels of the interlocutors.

Consequently, classrooms need to be studied as social contexts in their own right to gain a better understanding of the features of language and interaction that have pragmatic significance in them. In this light, Bardovi-Harlig’s (2001) suggestion that “providing authentic, representative language is a basic responsibility of classroom instruction” leads to the question: Authentic and representative in which sense? If it turns out that classrooms as institutional contexts operate under their own pragmatic principles— and we need more research on this – it means that the divide between classroom contexts and “real life” encounters remains as large as ever, and we are faced with the question on the extent to which classroom contexts can be arenas for acquiring pragmatic skills also applicable to other situations. Therefore, in addition to needing research on how instruction influences learners’ acquisition of L2 pragmatics, as suggested by Kasper (2001), we also need to investigate and problematize the very nature of L2 pragmatics in classroom settings.
As a teacher – researcher, we can expose learners to different types of pragmatic information along with the linguistic means needed to perform a particular speech act thus making them ready to face and brave the new world.