

Pragmatics Menu

Use this menu to focus your lesson on raising awareness, providing practice, and eventually having students create their own original role-plays.

A. Pairs read dialogue and answer questions about place, characters, and context.

1. Who are they? How old are they? Do they seem male or female? What else can you guess?
2. What is their relationship? Formal or informal?
3. What are the moves (shifts to a new stage in the conversation)?
4. What does each person want? Does he or she get it?

B. Compare the conversation to other languages, cultures, and subcultures.

1. How would this conversation come across in your/another language?
2. Would you feel comfortable having this conversation? Explain.
3. Imagine the characters are all male or all female or a different age. What would you change?
4. How would a nonnative speaker feel at the end of this conversation?

C. Listen to or practice the conversation to work on sounds, stress, and intonation.

1. Listen and read. Mark linking, stress, and/or intonation. Then listen again. Check your marks.
2. Listen and say the dialogue along with the speaker. Practice the pronunciation.
3. Listen to detect any emotions or power relationships that arise from the tone of voice.

D. Highlight language that scaffolds the moves in a conversation.

1. What language supports bonding among speakers?
2. What language shows repair or clarification of meaning?
3. What language helps speakers introduce a topic or prepare listeners for what is to come?
4. What language shows a culturally appropriate response to a situation?
5. What language allows speakers to hedge, delay, or voice discomfort?

E. Practice the dialogue.

1. Stage the conversation. Stand and use gestures. Then process the experience to see if you feel comfortable with the language.
2. Keep the same role but change partners. Practice again.
3. Have speaker A put away his/her script. B reads one part, and A improvises. Switch.
4. Have both speakers put down their script and role-play the conversation from memory.

F. Create variations on a theme.

1. Set a pragmatics role-play assignment with a new topic. Put students in A/B groups. Have Group A discuss motives for its half of the conversation. Have students in Group B discuss theirs. Then create A/B pairs to write a new script or role-play.
2. Rewrite the dialogue but change the characters' gender, age, relationship or personality—think about people you really know to establish character. How does language change?