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## 2. Look for teachable moments about pragmatics.

If a student greets you when entering the classroom with "What's up" or "Hey," use this as an opportunity for all students to practice appropriate greetings in different contexts. Also, many U.S. teachers, when addressed as "Teacher," react negatively to being referred to with this word. They consider it silly (e.g., being called by their profession), rude, or discourteous. If this happens, discuss how teachers and professors prefer to be addressed and how this may differ in different educational settings (K-12, adult education, or university). If a student enters the class late and tries to greet you and all the other students individually rather than quietly taking a seat, take this as an opportunity to discuss classroom routines, and differences depending on whether the setting is elementary, high school, or university. (You may want to refer to the activity "Class Begins" in DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2016, pages 37-38.)

## 3. Keep a journal or notebook about pragmatic differences.

Now that you have developed an understanding of pragmatic differences and how much language use reflects underlying cultural norms and values, make notes on what you (or your students and/or colleagues) notice when interacting with speakers from other languages and cultures. How is language used differently?

For example, in which contexts do people thank, apologize, or demand? How do they express gratitude or displeasure? What age, gender, generational, and/or status differences are there?

In addition, if journals and blog entries were started in Myth 1 (see What We Can Do), review these entries and consider re-evaluating them in light of the discussion in this chapter on pragmatic differences.

#### 4. Prepare mini-scenarios that illustrate potential areas of pragmatic misunderstandings.

After each mini-scenario (critical incident), offer three or four possible responses, only one of which is appropriate in English. Ask students to read the scenarios, make their choices, and discuss their responses, focusing on cultural norms underlying each response. (See Myth 1, What We Can Do.)

##### SAMPLE MINI-SCENARIO 1

Diana is sitting at a desk in the classroom as Mervat, a fellow classmate, enters and sits next to her. Diana notices that Mervat is wearing a beautiful scarf so she compliments her on it. Mervat takes off her scarf, hands it to Diana, and tells her it is now hers.

- a. Diana's behavior was inappropriate. People should not compliment each other unless they are family or very close friends.
- b. Mervat should have just thanked Diana.
- c. Mervat's behavior was appropriate. When people compliment something, it means they want it.
- d. Diana should have thanked Mervat, immediately put on the scarf, and should bring her a gift soon.

In another type of mini-scenario or critical incident, a situation is presented that can be interpreted in various ways, as shown here in Sample Mini-Scenario 2.

### SAMPLE MINI-SCENARIO 2

A U.S. teacher is speaking with Mrs. Torres, a parent from Mexico. The teacher says, "It's important that Sonia spend at least an hour doing her math homework every night. Can you please check on her at home to be sure that she does so? Sonia will make so much more progress if she does this." In response, Mrs. Torres says, "I will talk with her."

What do you think Mrs. Torres meant with her response? Why?

There is no one answer to the question posed at the end of the mini-scenario. Some students may suggest that Mrs. Torres' response "I will talk with her" is an affirmative response indicating that she will follow the teacher's suggestion. Other students may argue that Mrs. Torres' response means that she is not really committing to anything specific because her response is vague. Some students might wonder if Mrs. Torres' response is related to her coming from a high-context culture; others whether it might be a language issue.

What this mini-scenario illustrates how it is not always easy to understand what someone means, particularly when we interact with people from different cultures and languages. It is important to clarify meaning by restating, asking again, or summarizing what one thinks has been said. For instance, the U.S. teacher could have followed up with a reformulation and question such as, "Good, then we agree that you will pay attention to be sure that she does her homework, right?"

### 5. Help to develop students' observation and analytical skills.

Ask students to observe and analyze how speakers are interacting with one another in authentic materials, such as clips from movies or TV shows. Clips showing instances of pragmatic failure, either cross-culturally or between members of a single culture, are par-

ticularly useful. Some movies and TV shows that are useful for this activity are: *The Gods Grew Tired of Us*, *Lost in Translation*, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, and *Spanglish*. Some TV shows are: *Friends*, *The Office*, or *Mind Your Language*. (More ideas and specific suggestions on how to do this, along with a sample observation template, can be found in DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2016, pages 303–308.)

## 6. Provide students with scenarios and ask them to role play the situations.

Just as athletes often tape and watch their practice sessions to identify problems and refine their skills, students can learn by watching videos of themselves in different scenarios. Videotape the situations, play them for the students, and then discuss what is said as a class. Remind students that critiquing is not the same as criticizing and that feedback on performance should be practical and encouraging.

### Sample Scenario 1 for the Role-Play

Student A has missed a week of class because of illness.

- Student A asks the teacher for an extension on the assignment.
- Student A asks Student B for help in catching up on the missed work.

### Sample Scenario 2 for the Role-Play

The students are working in pairs. Student A and Student B are engaged in a very loud discussion, which is bothering Students C and D who are sitting next to them.

- Student C asks Students A & B to be quieter.
  - A few minutes later, they continue their loud discussion.
- Student D complains to Students A & B.
- Student A apologizes.