TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGE CONVERSATION:

A CONVERSATION NORMS APPROACH

A Thesis

Presented

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California State University, Chico

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in

Teaching International Languages

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by

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ABSTRACT

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Being able to converse is an essential part of a complete foreign language education. However, the teaching of conversation is often equated with the teaching of speaking, leaving language learners unprepared for target language interaction with members of the target culture. A Conversation Norms Approach to teaching conversation incorporates aspects of authentic native speaker (or expert speaker) conversation, such as spoken grammar and pragmatics, into instruction. This paper takes a closer look at conversation and its pedagogic history, and examines issues connected with the effective teaching of conversation. An informal inquiry of the foreign language conversation classroom also provides insight into the reality of teaching and allows for a practical application of the theory found in the literature.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Foreign language 'fluency' is a major goal of many language learners, teachers, and program and material designers, and rightly so. To communicate clearly and naturally with native speakers of a language is the end that makes the means of studying, memorizing vocabulary, and practicing the language worth the effort. Achieving 'fluency' through foreign language education, however, has focused historically on the standard, written language, rather than the acquisition of conversational competence. The Communicative Language Teaching movement created a shift towards language learning though spoken communication, but the majority of language learners still are not reaching levels of proficiency that would allow them to be considered 'fluent' by native speakers of the language. The issue remains that students are being taught standard, written language spoken aloud, rather than being taught actual native speaker norms of conversation.

If language learners were never expected to use their language with native speakers in the target culture, this approach towards teaching would be logical. However, the increasing reality of a global community—one in which nationality is less important than world-wide citizenship—creates a stronger need for language education that enables language learners to communicate with speakers beyond the borders of their own culture.

The component that is missing from the type of foreign language education that would support this global citizenry is instruction in conversation. While language learners in typical language education programs are using the target language orally and interactionally, they are not being taught to engage in authentic conversation as would native speakers of that language. It has been thought that knowledge and understanding of these native speaker norms of authentic conversation can be learned only through direct immersion in the target culture, and for this reason, instruction of conversation norms is generally not included in language curriculum. However, the lack of instruction in conversation can cause language learners to seem overly formal, rude, or awkward in their interactions in the target language, and can often be the root of cultural misunderstandings between native and non-native speakers. Moreover, failing to instruct language learners in conversational expectations can prevent them from successful integration into the target culture. "It is imperative for second language learners to be familiar with the intricacies of ordinary conversation so they can have access to the target language community and become social participants in that community" (Barraja-Rohan, 2000, p. 65).

Statement of the Problem

Unfortunately, the research on teaching conversation is limited. This lack of research is due partially to the fact that teaching authentic conversation as part of a language education program has been a relatively recent development. However, many 'conversation' classes are still based on communicative activities in which "teaching conversation is equated with making students talk" (Barraja-Rohan, 2000, p. 65).

Moreover, the majority of studies published on the subject address only specific aspects of conversation and not an integrated approach. There is no solid theoretical basis for (and little agreement on) any methodology for teaching conversation (Rühlemann, 2008). Conversation classes are not systematic because the methodology has not provided information about which conversational skills or language input should be used (Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1994, p. 40). Several studies have attempted to put forward an approach for approaching authentic conversation (see Brown & Yule, 1983; Eckard & Kearny, 1981) and others have created models for teaching specific aspects of conversation (Barraja-Rohan, 2000; Rühlemann, 2008; Timmis, 2005; Zhou, 2006). However, there is no comprehensive framework that presents a method of incorporating an integrated approach into the demands of the actual classroom.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is (1) to describe conversation and its place in foreign language education, (2) to examine the main problems and issues concerning the teaching of conversation, and (3) to investigate the reality of the 'conversation' classroom in order to compare what the research reveals to the reality of teaching and current classroom practices.

Definitions of Terms and Abbreviations

Throughout this paper, the use of double quotation marks (i.e., " ") will be used to indicate the presence of directly quoted materials, while single quotation marks (i.e., '') will be primarily used for creating emphasis on or drawing attention to a word. Other terms and abbreviations that will be used frequently are defined below.

- *EFL, or English as a Foreign Language*: This term refers specifically to English courses taught in a country or cultural context where English is not a native language.
- *EIL, or English as an International Language*: English used as a language of international communication, usually removed from its social and cultural norms and often spoken between two or more non-native speakers of English. Also known as English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). EIL is preferred in this context for clarity.
- *ESL, or English as a Second Language*: This term refers specifically to English courses taught in a target culture, like the United States, United Kingdom, or Australia.
- *Foreign-language context*: An acquisition-poor language learning context, in which the language learner is far removed from both the target culture and an abundance of native speakers of the target language.
- *L1, or the first language*: Any language under study that is the language learner's native language. (See also NL.)
- *L2, or the second language*: Any language under study that is not the language learner's native language. A language learner can have multiple second languages.
- *Language:* Unless specified, 'language' is meant to refer to language in general, not a specific language.
- *LL, or language learner*: Any student of foreign language(s), regardless of language or proficiency. Language learners are not necessarily limited to the school setting, so this term is generally used in place of 'student' (exception: 'student' is used when the emphasis is on the instructional relationship between the teacher and the language learner).

- *NL or native language:* the first language.
- *NNS, or non-native speaker*: A language user communicating in a language other than his or her native language.
- *Non-standard language*: Any form of a given language that is not the standard. This can include spoken language, as well as other dialects.
- *NS, or native speaker*: A language user communicating in his or her native language.
- *Second-language context:* An acquisition-rich language learning context, where the language learner is immersed in the target culture and has the opportunity to interact with native speakers of the target language.
- *Standard language*: The widely accepted, 'correct,' or high version of a given language. It usually corresponds to the written form, and often has some type of social or political prestige.
- *TC, or target culture*: The culture(s) associated with a country, region, or people-group that speaks the target language.
- *TL, or target language*: the specific language under study by a given language learner or taught by a language instructor.
- *World Englishes*: Cultural variations of English, e.g., Japanese English, Korean English. Similar to EIL, World Englishes are removed from the target cultures, and are used mainly between non-native speakers of the same linguistic background. World Englishes typically have features that syntactically and phonetically contrast with Standard English. (See also EIL.)

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND

What is Conversation?

In order to discuss the teaching and learning of conversation, it is necessary to first describe what is meant—and what is not meant—by the term 'conversation.'

What Conversation is Not

Conversation is Not a Neatly Defined Genre of Language. There is no single set of circumstances, rules, or divisions that can 'box up' conversation, although many have tried to create classification systems that account for the wide variety of conversation types, purposes, and functions. Brown and Yule (1983) propose two overlapping categories of language function—transactional and interactional—that describe the possibility of conversations, while Carter and McCarthy (1994) divided natural conversation into four genres of casual conversation, narratives, service encounters, and language-in-action.

Another categorization of conversation is a register approach, which identifies different aspects of conversation by the context in which they occur; even then, however, it is difficult to define a set of register-types: "Registers are varied not only in terms of the situation types that give rise to them but also in terms of the language use that is characteristic of them" (Rühlemann, 2008, p. 674). Moreover, interlanguage variability makes it difficult to create a universal register-type system. Eckard and Kearny (1981)

report that most languages have at least three registers, but that the specific number is determined by the society. English, they claim, has five registers: Peer Style, Formal, Small Children, Informal Family, and Informal Non-Family Adult (p. 3).

Conversation is so complex that, often, it cannot be neatly categorized into linear categories. Adolphs and Carter (2003) describe oral conversation texts from a corpus using two axes of classification: a context-type axis and an interaction-type axis. Along the context axis are various levels of interpersonal relationship between the speakers, ranging from very close to very distant (Adolphs and Carter call their broad categories intimate, socializing, professional, and transactional). The interaction axis measures the level of collaboration from all members of a conversation, from a low-collaboration, speaker-dominated conversation to a task-based conversation demonstrating collaboration from every member group. In sum, conversation is difficult to describe.

Conversation is Not Random and Unstructured. The lack of a clear classification system for describing conversation does not mean that it is random and unstructured. When judged against standard language, conversation is thought to be susceptible to irregular variations; the differences between written language and conversation, along with the historical preference for the regulations of written language, have left it seemingly lacking in structure (Brown & Yule, 1983; McCarthy & Carter, 1995). This contrast has caused some aspects of conversational language, such as "dislocation" (clauses or phrases in non-standard sentence positions) and "dysfluency" (speech management strategies) to be negatively termed, not because the features

themselves are unstructured, but because "[they] fail to satisfy the expectations raised by written standards and by the situational factors that underlie writing (such as the abundance of planning and editing time which helps writers achieve eufluency)" (Rühlemann, 2008, p. 682).

A one-time perception that the structural turns of spoken language did not match the rules of the written variation led people to dismiss oral language as 'wrong.' With the growing popularity of Conversation Analysis and Discourse Analysis (both "based on the premise that language does not happen in isolation…[but] is dependent on social context"), as well as on the increased availability of data from corpus linguistics research, it is becoming clearer that there are certain rituals and formulas for conversational organization (Eckard & Kearny, 1981, p. 7). In other words, conversation is not so much random and unstructured as it is affected by its interaction with the environment.

When viewed in light of its contexts, conversation's turns and structures are visible. The content and circumstances of a conversation may not be predictable, but there are expected patterns of organization. Sze (2005) reports that:

> Tsui's study of adjacency pairs in conversation confirms the finding that 'conversation is by no means a string of utterances tenuously related to each other. It is organised in an orderly fashion. Not only are there sequencing rules governing what is expected to occur but also what can occur if the discourse is to be coherent.' (as cited in Sze, 2005, p. 233)

An understanding of this organization, as well as of the sequence structures of conversations, like openings, turn-taking, interrupting, topic-shifting, closings and pragmatic speech act formulas (for thanking, apologizing, or complimenting, for example) is required for language learners (LLs) to be successful in conversation.

Although the specific structures and formulas are culturally and language dependent, departing from the structure can cause a break-down in communication.

Conversation is Not Perfect. There is an assumption in language education that native speakers (NSs) of a language speak without error, and that any LL must speak 'correctly' in order to be understood. This is untrue:

> Speakers may stutter ("ev…everybody"), may repeat words ("in…in"), twist grammar ("I didn't know there were spirits in the wood still there"), or make incomplete sentences. Yet they understand each other perfectly well. This is an amazing feature of speech among native speakers: meaning gets across in spite of inadvertent linguistic interference. (Dobson, 1974, p. 19)

Aside from NSs "not always employ[ing] perfectly complete sentences that are used in texts" (Eckard & Kearny, 1981, p.1), they often do not utilize textbook-like question answer sequences, and instead, choose to respond to a question with another question, or with a seemingly unrelated statement (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010b).

The error in the assumption about the necessity of 'correctness' lies not in the 'incorrectness' of spoken language, but in the fact that, as Hewings and Hewings (2005) note, "spoken language has traditionally been seen as 'an ill-formed variant of writing'" (as cited in Rühlemann, 2008, p. 681). However, while formal spoken discourse, such as a political speech, may be a 'spoken' variation of writing, conversational language is a creation of its circumstances—namely, pressure. The social and temporal pressures of conversation make it difficult to attain the same appearance of fluency as the written word, but speakers have many structures for overcoming those obstacles. Studies, such as Brower (2003), Cheng and Warren (2007), Dörnyei and Thurrell (1994), Roebuck and Wagner (2004), and Zhou (2006), identify several features of spoken language, referred to as 'conversational strategies,' which help speakers deal with a lack of perfection in

their spoken language. These include speaker strategies, such as word searches, appeal for help, message adjustment and avoidance, checking for understanding, fillers/hesitation devices, message repair, and repetition for message cohesion, as well as listener strategies, like paraphrase, asking for repetition, asking for clarification, and interpretive summary,

Conversation is Not Merely Speaking Written Words Aloud. While oral discourse does include more formal genres of the spoken language, such as debate, formal speeches, and presentations, conversation differs from these activities. There is a difference between learning conversation skills and practicing speaking skills, and it is important that teachers of conversation differentiate between the two (Sze, 2005).

Simply 'getting students to talk' is not the point of teaching conversation. Conversation is not just words—it is a complex process that emphasizes meaning over accuracy and spoken grammar over written grammar (Barraja-Rohan, 2000). The syntax of conversation is significantly simpler than written grammar (Brown & Yule, 1983), and, because of the shared context, the utterances are often, and acceptably, vague (Adophs & Carter, 2003; Carter, 1999; Rühlemann, 2008; Timmis, 2005). When speaking and conversation are treated as the same thing, LLs will fail to acquire conversational norms, and instead of gaining a NS-like sound, they will be perceived by others as seeming very formal or text-book like.

Conversation is Not Classroom Discourse. Classroom discourse occurs in a specific setting and has different rules, roles, and relationships than real-life conversation contexts (Slade & Gardner, 1993, p. 87). Teachers' leading questions and brief student

responses have often masked themselves as 'conversation,' but in reality, this teacher-student communication is far removed from realistic conversation skills:

> As far as the foreign language is concerned, [the LLs] have been exposed in the classroom to highly unusual or deviant discourse patterns that have nothing in common either with the discourse patterns of their mother tongue or with those of the foreign language and culture. (Kramsch, 1981, p. 19)

Sharply contrasting with the natural setting and circumstances for a real conversation, "the usual classroom has seldom been conductive to relaxed, free expression" (DaSilva, 1974, p. 274).

Multiple studies of second-language (L2) and first-language (L1) classroom discourse have shown not only that the instructor does the majority of the talking, but that the instructor also initiates most of the interactions and asks a majority of the questions, which largely are display questions[1] (for a list of studies, see Ernst, 1994). Because of these formulaic initiate-respond-feedback exchanges, LLs have limited opportunities for participation in real conversation and are not given the examples or language models they need to learn important skills, such as conversation initiation, topic choosing, repair and negotiation of turns and exchanges during a conversation (Sze, 2005).

Some have suggested that learner-learner interaction (i.e., pair-work) may be the solution to the classroom discourse problem. Cheng and Warren (2007) note that "the importance and use of small-group communicative interaction as a way of developing language learners' oral skills is well documented in current [English as a Second Language (ESL)/English as a Foreign Language (EFL)] approaches and methods" (p.

[1] A display question is one in which the asker (in this case, the teacher) already knows the answer, and is asking the question in order that the answerers (in this case, the students) will *display* their knowledge. For example, "Johnny, what does *comida* mean in English?" or "Class, what is the past tense of the verb *tener* in the first person singular?"

190); however, even this learner-to-learner talk, which should function to build communicative skills, "falls short of providing adequate practice for the acquisition of conversational skills" (Slade & Gardner, 1993, p. 87). Learner-to-learner talk may be helpful for allowing LLs to practice speaking aloud, but LLs differ from NSs in the social, linguistic, and pragmatic acceptability of the utterances they choose and in the semantic and syntactic formulas they use (Bardovi-Harlig, 2003). In fact, conversation between two or more non-native speakers (NNSs) carries its own unique characteristics of conversational norms based on intercultural communication that differ from the norms of the target language (House, 2003). This type of discourse cannot provide strong models of real-life conversation, and it "reinforces ethnocentric attitudes rather than helping dispel them" (Kramsch, 1987, p. 28).

Conversation is Not a Scripted Textbook Dialog. The language presented not only lacks many aspects of real conversational language, but it is also instructional in nature, rather than communicative. There are several reasons that textbook dialogs do not reflect authentic language use:

> For one thing, its creator is *one* person who imagines how two (or more) people might converse, whereas real conversation always develops from the interaction of at least two persons. For another, the writer who invents a conversation usually has a preconceived notion of how it will develop and how it will end. People engaged in real conversation, on the other hand, have no idea of which way their conversation will wander, much less of how it will end. (Dobson, 1974, p. 17)

Language students are often made to memorize these textbook 'conversations' under the guise that repetition and recitation is the same thing as engaging in real communication and language learning; however, even proponents of the dialog memorization method

concede that students will forget most of the dialog if it is not constantly practiced (Chang, 1975, p. 123).

The block to learning conversation through dialog repetition is not only in the relative values of memorized and spontaneous production, but also in that most memorized dialogs are "contrived and artificial" (Sze, 2005, p. 230), and come from teaching materials that "do not adequately reflect the nature of casual conversation in [the target language], either because they use constructed data or simplified conversation...or because the situational context…is intended to provide a vehicle for the target function or structure" (Slade & Gardner, 1993, p. 1). Several studies confirm this claim. Wong's (2000) study comparing telephone conversation openings in ESL textbook dialogs with actual native-speaker telephone openings showed that none of the thirty textbook openings analyzed contained all four of the core sequences contained in real telephone conversations. Additionally, Brown's (2010) study on the presentation of Korean honorifics found that less than ten percent of dialogs in Korean language textbooks presented either marginal or significant age-rank subordination, while over sixty percent represented interactions between equals, providing a "simplified and, at times, confused picture of Korean honorifics" (p. 46).

Although the exact qualities and characteristics of conversation may be difficult to describe, it is unwise to leave the definition open to include examples of language that do not accurately reflect its nature. Equating conversation with text-book dialogs, classroom discourse, or any example of spoken language will not benefit LLs attempting to master conversation. Likewise, treating conversation as a bad form of

written language will similarly prevent LLs from acquiring NS-like proficiency in communication.

What Conversation Is

While the literature agrees on what conversation is not, there seems to be a less clear picture of what it is. However, there are a few characteristics of conversation that help to define it further.

Conversation is Spontaneous. The lack of time to prepare a structural turn or completely pre-think a thought, along with the difficulties of an ever-changing language situation, makes conversation different from other forms of oral discourse. As there is not always time for speakers engaged in conversation to plan their next turn, imperfections in language often arise; problems in speech, such as word searches and "doing-thinking" markers indicating that the speaker has not yet finished speaking (Brouwer, 2003), as well as the difference between written and spoken grammar (see Adolphs & Carter, 2003; Carter, 1999; Carter & McCarthy, 1994; McCarthy & Carter, 1995), illustrate the spontaneous nature of conversation.

Moreover, conversation is generally person-oriented (Slade & Gardner, 1993), face-to-face with a shared context, and highly interactive (Cullen & Kuo, 2007). With these features, the conversational context can vary greatly from moment to moment, and the participants must constantly adjust and respond to the immediate issues they face (Jakobovits & Gordon, 1980). More than just a feature of conversation, however, spontaneity (and achieving it in the classroom) is a primary goal and challenge for foreign language educators (Eckard & Kearny, 1981; Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1994; Jakobovits & Gordon, 1980).

Conversation is Socially Motivated. As a literate society, we could easily avoid the imperfections of conversation with the clear, pertinent style of written language, yet we daily choose to engage in conversation with those around us. That conversation is not the primary mode for this exchange of technical details and clear information is illustrated by Brown and Yule's (1983) analysis that a "limited syntax is required for adequate performance in producing the spoken language… Similarly, a great deal of the vocabulary which is produced is of a very general, non-specific sort" (p. 9). Conversational language is vague and simple because its main goal is to facilitate social interaction, not to provide the information that transactional language requires.

Social interaction is necessary for our daily life: society works through the interdependence of its members, and conversation is the language we use to mediate our social relationships. Speakers are aware of the interpersonal factors involved, and they adjust their vocabulary and grammar accordingly (Cullen & Kuo, 2007, p. 363). Goffman (1976) describes the social aspect of conversation as:

> talk occurring when a small number of participants come together and settle into what they perceive to be a few moments cut off from (or carried on to the side of) instrumental tasks; a period of idling felt to be an end in itself, during which everyone is accorded the right to talk as well as to listen and without reference to a fixed schedule ... and no final agreement or synthesis is demanded, differences of opinion to be treated as unprejudicial to the continuing relationship of the participants…(as cited in Sze, 2005, p. 264)

While this perspective of conversation is not always entirely accurate (often, conversation is not the "end in itself," and "differences of opinion" are sometimes a matter of relationship termination), the stories, chit-chat, gossip, and jokes speakers share function to establish and maintain social relations (Slade & Gardner, 1993, p.88).

Conversation is the Exchange of Thoughts, Feelings, Opinions, and Ideas. Although it is often regarded as any oral production of a meaningful combination of words and phrases, real conversation requires a "true communication of ideas" (Eckard & Kearny, 1981, p. 4). Harper and Lively (1986) describe a community college's foreign language department's successful conversation program, and in the curriculum, conversation is described as "not a study of grammar and structure" but rather, "the expression of ideas and opinions" (p. 2). This approach to conversation emphasizes that personal expression is vital in creating an environment for real communication.

Even within a positive environment of idea expression, DaSilva (1974) notes that it is difficult to engage students in conversation in a foreign language *unless* the instructor is saying something that the students want to hear or the students are saying something that they want to have heard (p. 274). It is natural that this would be the case because conversation in the real world occurs this way, as well. It needs to be a "meaningful spoken exchange of ideas, information, or feelings," complete with a participating sender and a receiver; if there is only sending or only receiving, but no exchange, there is no conversation (Eckard & Kearny, 1981, p. 4).

Without the aspect of exchange, language use is unmeaningful and limited to the repetition of set phrases or guessing of the right answer. LLs need to express their own thoughts and listen to the input of their co-interlocutor(s) in order to participate in the exchange that can build conversational competence.

In sum, conversation is spontaneous interpersonal communication that expresses authentic thoughts and ideas. As its primary function is to assist in the

maintenance of social relationships, conversation is not (and should not be) held to the written grammar's rigid standards, which often cause conversation to be viewed in a negative way. Moreover, conversation should not be equated with uses of language that are not authentic, spontaneous interpersonal communication, such as other forms of spoken language (e.g., speeches and formal debate), scripted textbook dialogs, or classroom discourse (which is primarily transactional, and not social).

A Brief History of Teaching Conversation

The timeline and evolution of language teaching theories has been described hundreds of times by researchers and educational theorists alike. There are many approaches that concentrate on language teaching in general, but for the present discussion, it has been necessary to describe the approaches as they relate to the teaching of conversation.[2] The three main approaches that concern the teaching of conversation, as named below, are the Controlled Communication Approach, the Free Communication Approach, and the Conversation Norms Approach.

The Controlled Communication Approach

The Controlled Communication Approach values the importance of LLs speaking the language in the classroom, but it does not necessarily emphasize authentic or relevant uses of the language. In reaction to the drills and the rigidity of the audio-lingual method, this approach encourages LL communication that is partially flexible, but not spontaneous.

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[2] As oral communication in the classroom has been a relatively new emphasis in language education, earlier language teaching approaches, including the grammar-translation and comprehension/input-based methods, are not relevant to this discussion, and therefore will not be addressed at this time. For more information on these two approaches, however, please see Lightbown and Spada (2006) or Hughes (2002).

The role of the instructor in this approach is to be a "manager…who knows how to encourage and give incentives" (Chang, 1975, p. 126). The instructor is expected to bring knowledge and expertise to the class and to help the LLs "in testing their newly acquired language skills and abilities" (p. 126). Instructors using this approach are concerned about language creativity, and they question the ways "to encourage flexibility, ingenuity, imagination, and creativeness in foreign language conversation classes" (Sinnema, 1971, p. 269). LLs are encouraged to use their own ideas in their creation of utterances and "to look for new ways of expression by finding synonymous phrases or words" (Grala, 1977, p. 154). However, despite the beginning signs of flexibility and creativity, the focus of the teaching is still very similar to past approaches in that, rather than encouraging and facilitating communication, it focuses "on teaching and learning a language through the medium of speech" (Hughes, 2002, p. 23).

Activities that are typical of this approach are drills (i.e., whole-class repetition of utterances spoken aloud by the teacher) and dialogue memorization (where LLs first memorize, and then recite pre-written dialogs aloud). Sinnema (1971) describes an alternative drill exercise that gives LLs options to respond in more meaningful ways, "rather than replying with a single average or expected response" (p. 271). Although this freedom allows LLs to choose language that is more relevant, the drills hardly constitute 'real-life,' authentic uses of the language. Chang (1975) reports on a Japanese language program where, after memorizing instructional dialogs, LLs write their own dialogs reflecting their personal ideas, memorize them, and perform them for the class. He claims that the benefit of this model is that there is "some latitude for the students to say

something personal and relevant to them almost from the very start of learning a foreign language" (p. 127). Grala (1977) describes a similar Polish language program that starts with the dialog memorization and drill repetition, but later, in the more advanced stages, moves into "short discussions on given topics, two-minute talks on after-class activities, and extra vocabulary exercises prepared by the teachers" (p. 156). Again, in this model is a sort of freedom for LLs to make the language their own. However, programs that focus on the memorization or recitation of dialogs (which may lack the expression of the speaker's own thoughts) and the repetition of drills (which lack a real exchange between LLs, if not also real expression of ideas) tend to produce LLs that cannot engage in natural conversation, since their exposure has been to the format of pedagogical texts rather than to the verbal construction, management, and communication of their own thoughts. Moreover, the ability of an LL to write out beforehand (and memorize) what he or she plans to say or to prepare speeches and presentations in advance does little to prepare that LL for spontaneous communication. These activities show that, although LLs are not yet engaging in free conversation, the beginnings of a communicative preference for language teaching are visible.

The Free Communication Approach

The Free Communication Approach, or what Dörnyei and Thurrell (1994) call the "indirect approach" to teaching conversation, sees appropriate instruction in conversation as having learners participate in activities that will foster 'conversation,' such as role play, problem solving tasks, info-gap activities, and language games (p. 41). Pulling from such areas of educational theory as Long's Interaction Hypothesis and the Communicative Approach, this model rejects instructional dialogs, claiming that

"conversation is not the repetition or manipulation of sounds, words, phrases, or sentences" (Eckard & Kearny, 1981, p. 4). Rather than emphasizing correct grammar and full-sentence production, the main goal of this approach is to have LLs engage in the "true communication of ideas, information, and feelings" (p. 4). DaSilva (1974) notes that, "free active communication is precisely our goal" (p. 274).

The role of the instructor in this approach is often that of the 'organizer.' The instructor is expected to provide a wide variety of relevant topics for the LLs to discuss, and must plan ahead to anticipate the direction of the conversation so that he can supply supportive materials and vocabulary to enhance the discussion (Harper & Lively, 1986). The LLs must participate and prepare for the conversation, but in general, the burden falls on the instructor to coordinate the conversation and make it cognitively available to the LL. In sum, the instructor's role "in stimulating conversation is not only to find subjects that will provoke the student to respond, but also to couch them in terms that are within his domain" (DaSilva, 1974, p. 274).

This approach, generally seen in communicative and content-based classrooms, encourages a variety of activities that foster conversation, such as role-play (Eckard & Kearny, 1981), class discussions (DaSilva, 1974; Eckard & Kearny, 1981; Gousie, 1981), problem-solving activities (Godfrey, 1977), and other games (DaSilva, 1974; Eckard & Kearny, 1981). Additionally, warm-up exercises (also called advance organizers and pre-conversation activities) are generally used by teachers to help the LLs review important vocabulary and to ready their minds for the upcoming discussions (Eckard & Kearny, 1981; Harper & Lively, 1986; Teichert, 1996). Within classroom

interaction, LLs actively interact with both the instructor and other LLs, correcting each other's mistakes and offering suggestions. This approach "sees the struggle to make and share meaning through the dynamic spoken form the very engine of language acquisition" (Hughes, 2002, p. 24).

What is missing in this approach, however, is the instruction and practice of NS cultural norms of actual conversation. LLs taught in this method will become proficient at speaking the written language aloud, and likely, will be able to do so spontaneously and with a solid knowledge of vocabulary and ideas in a variety of arenas. This knowledge is an important part of overall language proficiency; however, the issue remains that "within this view, the teaching of conversation is a means to an end (language acquisition), and not an end in itself. The result is language being acquired, not enhanced conversation skills" (Sze, 2005, p. 232). Even though the Free Communication Approach prepares LLs for oral communication in the target language (TL), it generally ignores the cultural aspects of conversation that LLs will need to know in order to successfully interact with NSs of the target culture (TC).

The Conversation Norms Approach

The Conversation Norms Approach is similar to the Free Communication Approach in that it emphasizes authentic exchanges of ideas; however, it additionally incorporates a focus on form that looks at "micro skills, strategies, and processes" of the TL and systematically integrates language input that will raise LLs' awareness of the TC norms (Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1994, p. 41). It recognizes the LLs' need to understand the more subtle issues of foreign language communication. As Barraja-Rohan (2000) points out, "just getting students to talk is not teaching them conversation…Students may be

learning from using [the TL], but in doing so they are not taught how conversation works and how participants manage talk-in-interaction" (p. 67).

Often, in this approach, the role of instructors is to co-research authentic language samples with the LLs. They also must bring to the LLs' attention two main features of the approach that are not typically present in classrooms using the earlier two approaches.

The first feature is spoken grammar. Spoken grammar is not merely written grammar that is spoken aloud, but a separate grammar which differs significantly from the standard, written grammar. It has its own sets of rules, expectations, and styles. For example, NSs in conversation take many shortcuts that are not permitted in the written forms of language, but that are perfectly acceptable in conversation; these 'shortcuts' and adaptations belong to the realm of spoken grammar. Adolphs and Carter (2003) call for a way to "highlight" these "non-grammatical" functions of spoken language for LLs, while Rühlemann (2009) urges educators not to view Standard English (or standard language in general) as the only acceptable form of language, but to teach the spoken language based on a "model of 'conversational grammar,' a more appropriate model" (p. 431).

The second feature that receives attention in this approach is pragmatic competence in the TL. Pragmatic competence deals with the cultural appropriateness of utterances in a TL and within a TC. Instructors using the Conversation Norms Approach are purposeful in their efforts to help LLs understand typical structure sequences, politeness strategies, and a host of other pragmatic concerns.

Unlike many of the communicative teaching materials and activities used in the Free Communication Approach, which fall into the trap of taking the language away "from any social, or indeed any realistic conversational, context" (Hughes, 2002, p. 55), the Conversation Norms Approach seeks to put language back in context, with an emphasis on preparing LLs for interaction with real speakers of the language and helping them to recognize NS norms in a foreign environment. With the rise in availability of conversation analysis and corpus linguistics data, instructors using the Conversation Norms Approach have the opportunity to make use of a wide range of authentic NS transcripts and other oral texts in the classroom. Some activities used include in-class discourse/conversation analysis (Barraja-Rohan, 2000; Zhou, 2006), noticing and consciousness-raising tasks (Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1994; Ishihara, 2010; Timmis, 2005; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2008), and discussions of contexts and cultural values that underlie language choices (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1994; Mugford, 2008). Often, these activities employ linguistic terminology to help the student describe what is happening, but as Lightbown and Spada (2006) note, this is not always the case, and LLs are not necessarily expected to describe why an utterance is correct or incorrect (p. 166).

Unfortunately, many teaching activities and strategies that fall into the Conversation Norms Approach have not been thoroughly studied and researched, and the feasibility of using this approach in connection to teaching the other macro-skills of language (e.g., writing, listening, or reading) remains uncertain. However, with its focus

on (cultural) meaning over (standard grammatical) accuracy, the Conversation Norms Approach does provide a means to facilitate LL linguistic integration into the TC.

The growing obviousness of an emerging world community and the need for global citizenship require that language learning emphasize social and cultural issues in addition to linguistic concerns. Neither the Controlled Communication Approach nor the Free Communication Approach prepares LLs for this necessary cross-cultural communication, as their focus emphasizes language acquisition over cultural understanding. The Conversation Norms Approach addresses the issue of building knowledge of authentic and culturally appropriate language use.

With a more refined understanding of conversation—its features and its characteristics, and how they interact with language—and a more culturally authentic approach towards teaching it, instructors can prepare LLs for conversation in the TL and TC in which the LLs are able to express ideas, thoughts, and opinions in a way that makes them accessible to NSs of that language.

CHAPTER III

THE ISSUES

The teaching of conversation is plagued, among other things, by a lack of direction in the aspects of conversation that need to be included in instruction, as well as a lack of supportive instructional materials. While there is a wide range of issues that could be addressed, the three biggest issues identified by the literature are all salient in the Conversation Norms Approach; these are (1) the inclusion of instruction in spoken grammar, (2) the inclusion of instruction in target language and target culture pragmatics, and finally, (3) the need for textbooks and other materials to accurately reflect the target norms. The following sections attempt to describe the current state of the issues and to describe the research and solutions presented to help improve them.

Spoken Grammar

As mentioned earlier, spoken grammar is a unique grammar with features and characteristics that differ from those found in standard, written grammars. Advances in corpus linguistics and discourse analysis research have provided evidence to confirm the existence of spoken grammar and to define its features, but more importantly, by highlighting the differences between the standard written grammar and spoken grammar used by NSs in conversation, the research has shown the importance of teaching spoken grammar to LLs.

Historically, there has been an overwhelming emphasis in language teaching on the written word, and "students have been coerced, by academic circumstances, to study literature and literacy theories to the exclusion of the spoken word" (Gousie, 1981, p. 51). Now, educators generally recognize NS models as a positive addition to instructional materials, but there is disagreement regarding the appropriateness or usefulness of teaching this spoken grammar (Goh, 2009). It is clear that most LLs are not being taught to speak in a way that will allow them to easily blend in with NSs, but that issue concerns some language instructors more than others.

What is Spoken Grammar?

Spoken grammar is a slippery concept. Not only does it change from one cultural context to the next (Goh, 2009), but it is person-and-emotion-oriented (Brown & Yule, 1983; Leech, 2000; Slade & Gardener, 1993), has a higher ego involvement than written grammar (Kong, 2009), is based on the shared context of the speakers (Leech, 2000), changes depending on the interpersonal relationship of the participants (Roebuck & Wagner, 2004), is spontaneous and unplanned (Cullen & Kuo, 2007), is interactive (Cullen & Kuo, 2007; Leech, 2009), and is vague and avoids elaboration (Adolphs & Carter, 2003; Leech, 2009; Mumford, 2009; Timmis, 2005). With all of these possible variations, it is no wonder that "for many features of spoken language it is quite hard to frame useful and digestible production rules" (Timmis, 2005, p. 120).

The creation of a grammar for spoken language has been a recent undertaking of researchers in corpus linguistics, and several works have been published on the subject. Unfortunately, the information has not yet made much of an impact in language classrooms, perhaps because spoken grammar has many characteristics that conflict with

standard, written grammar (Rühlemann, 2009). One is these characteristics is the prominence of phrasal chains; instead of whole sentences, NSs use simpler sequences that are "generally decomposable into short clause-like chunks, chained together in a simple incremental way for ease of processing" (Leech, 2000, p. 699). This feature of conversational syntax was also noted by Brown and Yule (1983), who argue that most conversational language is made up of simple, unsubordinated phrases that are connected by pausing, rhythm, or intonation, rather than by a grammatical structure. When grammatical structure is actually used, it consists of only a limited number of conjunctions, usually 'but,' 'and,' 'because' and 'so' (Mumford, 2009, p. 139). Some other features of spoken grammar that have been identified in the literature include:

- *Ellipsis*: "Ellipsis is a grammatical feature in which, most commonly, subjects or subjects and verbs are not employed because we can assume that our listeners know and/or understand what we mean" (Adolphs & Carter, 2003, p. 52; see also: Carter, 1999; Carter & McCarthy, 1994; McCarthy & Carter, 1995; Mumford, 2009).
- *Use of Heads (a.k.a. left dislocation) and Tails (a.k.a. amplificatory tags)*: Heads and tails are slots at the beginnings and ends, respectively, of clauses "in which a speaker can insert grammatical patterns that amplify, extend, or reinforce what the speaker is saying" or "give emphasis to…the new topic or sub-topic" (Carter, 1999, p. 151, 152; see also: Carter & McCarthy, 1994; Leech 2000; McCarthy & Carter, 1995).
- *Chunks and Tags*: Chunks and tags are usually fixed, listener-involvement phrases that NSs will use to modify their sentences in conversationally appropriate ways.

Examples of chunks are “sort of” and “you know,” and examples of tags are “Isn’t it?” and “Doesn’t it?” (McCarthy & Carter, 1995; Mumford, 2009).

- *Conversational Contractions*: Conversational Contractions are shortened versions of words, such as ‘Yeah’ for ‘Yes’ and ‘Cuz’ for ‘Because’ (Rühlemann, 2008).

- *Unique Discourse Markers and Reporting Verbs*: When speakers are talking about what another speaker has previously said, they usually preface the reported speech with a discourse marker or a reporting verb, such as ‘to be like’ in ‘She was like, [reported speech]’ or ‘go’ as in ‘He goes [reported speech].’ (See Adolphs & Carter, 2003; Carter & McCarthy, 1994; McCarthy & Carter, 1995; Rühlemann, 2009.)

- *Discourse Particles*: Discourse particles, such as ‘well,’ ‘ok,’ and ‘so,’ are used by NSs in conversation to mitigate statements or to manage thoughts (Lam, 2009). Discourse particles are also useful for maintaining floor (i.e., the right to be speaking).

- *Pausing and Repeating*: The need to pause or repeat phrases in written grammar is uncommon, and as such, these features of conversational grammar are often referred to as ‘dysfluencies.’ However, they are essential to spoken communication, and do not detract from listener comprehension (Adolphs & Carter, 2003; Mumford, 2009; Roebuck & Wagner, 2004).

- *Structural Flexibility*: Spoken grammar has less stringent rules than written grammar. Studies have shown comprehensible flexibility in the use of indicative and subjective tenses (Lee, 2006), in the use of plural forms versus singular forms (Carter, 1999), in word order (Carter, 1999; Mumford, 2009), and in “ungrammatical” use of conjunctions (Mumford, 2009; Leech, 2000).

While this list is not exhaustive, it does illustrate a few of the features that distinguish spoken grammar from its written counterpart. The examples given apply mainly to English, but there are similar features of conversation in most (if not all) languages. Educators who include spoken grammar in language instruction should become aware of the specific features of spoken grammar in that language.

Teaching Spoken Grammar

Mumford (2009) identifies three current approaches to teaching spoken grammar. The first approach is to not teach it—this is the 'Lingua Franca Approach.' Many educators have argued against the instruction of spoken grammar in language education, despite the benefits it offers. In the foreign language context, the opinion that NS models of spoken grammar are inappropriate for classroom instruction are based partially on the idea that specific cultural norms are not relevant for language teaching in the international context (Mumford, 2009; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2008), and that LLs should strive for intelligibility, rather than adopting a single culture's norms. This issue is also addressed by Garcia (2005), who questions whether it is proper to include any specific socio-cultural information in English teaching materials because, as an international language, English is often used between NNSs in "neutral" contexts (p. 58). Teachers who have adopted this 'Lingua Franca' view normally teach the target language in contexts where NS interaction is rare. Other concerns that apply to a broader language education context include the potential negative effect of spoken grammar on writing and high-stakes exam preparation, the inappropriateness of the informal register for language instruction, and the 'unattainable standard' of NS grammar that would set LLs up for failure (Goh, 2009, p. 309).

The second approach described by Mumford (2009) is the "Passive Approach," which values the presentation of NS models of spoken grammar and their use in language instruction, but does not emphasize the production of the spoken grammar. Frameworks that adhere to this approach, such as Timmis (2005), incorporate spoken grammar listening tasks, noticing tasks, and language discussion exercises; they value the exposure, but wonder if learners should actually "produce these forms at any stage" (p. 120). The calls to "expose learners to natural spoken data whenever possible and help them become observers of the grammar" (Carter & McCarthy, 1994, p. 25) and the emphasis on incorporating noticing tasks and listening comprehension activities (Timmis, 2005) suggest that if NS models of spoken grammar are being incorporated at all, it is probably through this approach.

However, it is Mumford's last approach, the "Production Approach," which he argues should be adopted. It recognizes that many LLs see NS models of language—including spoken grammar—as part of an ideal level to be attained; it considers NS norms as an essential part of conversing in a foreign language. Along this line of thinking, Brown and Yule (1983) encourage the production of spoken grammar, with its limited syntax and general vocabulary, at an early stage. Zhou (2006) also presents a class description that focuses on having LLs analyze NS examples, imitate what they see, and then compare their recorded presentations with the NS models. This "Production Approach" is particularly practical for learners that have or will have direct contact with NSs.

Aside from the idea that learners would be exposed to more authentic and more varied language that will help their overall oral production skills, another salient argument for teaching spoken grammar through this "Production Approach" is that spoken grammar is simpler than written grammar. Leech (2000) explains that spoken grammar is *functional* grammar, and that it has been created by NSs partially to reduce the cognitive demand on the speaker. He notes that the pressures of "real-time processing" on the working memory influence the spoken realization of grammar by forcing it to become stream-lined and reduced. The simplification is made possible, in part, by the nature of conversation; the shared context and many interactive features that accompany the linguistic part of conversation allow speakers to take grammatical shortcuts that are not permitted in a decontextualized, written grammar. Use of a cognitively less-demanding, yet authentic, grammar has pedagogic potential. By reducing the intensity of cognitive demand in an arena that is already quite challenging, spoken grammar may help LLs to communicate more advanced ideas at an earlier proficiency level. Moreover, teaching NS models of spoken grammar in the language classroom could help reduce the affective pressure on LLs to produce perfect sentences every time they speak. A Chinese EFL instructor participating in Goh's (2009) study on perspectives of teaching spoken grammar pointed out that:

> [Students] may think too much of the structure of the language, which in fact can prevent the communicating process. For example, the knowledge of 'ellipsis' or flexible positioning in spoken grammar might, to some extent, encourage the students to overcome the psychological obstacle and speak out without thinking too much. (Goh, p. 307)

Proper instruction and explanation of the differences between spoken and written grammars could assist LLs in overcoming anxiety related to producing spoken

language, but, “if we as teachers insist that students conform to ‘written grammar’ norms while speaking, we may again be making their task more difficult” (Mumford, 2009, p. 139).

Proposed Solutions

Although there are no conclusive or comprehensive answers to the questions surrounding the teaching of spoken grammar, there are several solutions to the problems presented in the research.

As far as the appropriateness of teaching spoken grammar is concerned, Timmis (2005) claims that the Lingua Franca and the NS models are not mutually exclusive (p. 124). For example, while it may not always be practical to hold LLs of English to British or American cultural norms, instructors should consider that other World Englishes, specific cultural norms, and knowledge of multiple registers of language can still be helpful in teaching LLs to negotiate meaning in an international context. However, it is clear from Goh’s (2009) study that the teaching of spoken grammar needs to take into account the environment where the LLs are expected to use their language and also to “specify the variety of casual conversation most relevant to [that] particular group of learners” (Slade & Gardner, 1993, p. 96).

Concerns about the Lingua Franca model and the inappropriateness of the informal, or ‘non-standard’ register for language instruction, as well as fear of the potential negative effect of spoken grammar on writing, have prompted solutions based on an approach that explicitly considers different varieties of language at the same time. Abdeljaber (1990) reports on a study of an Arabic language course that attempted to reconcile the formal written Arabic with a spoken “Middle Dialect” of Arabic so that

students could communicate with their dialect-speaking colleagues while maintaining a working knowledge of the formal language. The diaglossia approach suggested by Abdeljaber lines up with Timmis' suggested "heteroglossia" approach, in which multiple flavors of language, including "standard" grammar and native-speaker models, could inform speakers' use of language "for different communicative purposes" (2005, p. 124).

Instead of considering language to be 'standard' or 'non-standard,' which Carter (1999) points out to be a set of terminology biased in favor of 'standard' language, Rühlemann (2008) presents arguments for teaching grammar based on core varieties of written and spoken grammar registers, one of which is a conversational register. Even within this spoken, conversational register, however, there are many sub-registers: Adolphs and Carter (2003) recognize four conversational registers—intimate, professional, transactional, and socializing; Eckard and Kearny (1981) note that there are at least three universal registers—formal or polite, colloquial, and slang or vulgar; and Carter and McCarthy (1994) identify four genres of spoken language—casual conversation, service interaction, narratives, and language in action. Timmis (2005) offers some examples of language discussion tasks (prompted by questions such as, "How well do you think the speakers know each other?" and "What do you think they would say in a more formal context?") that could be used to help LLs identify registers (p. 121). Not every register must be taught, but an approach that incorporates a variety of different registers and highlights the differences between them may help LLs be more successful in separating the spoken grammar from written or formal grammar. In order for this type of approach to be adopted, teacher education courses need to begin

emphasizing the interactions between written and spoken grammars, so language instructors know "more about the ways in which spoken and written forms intersect…and work with the different values which different forms carry in different communicative contexts" (Carter, 1999, p. 159).

As far as high-stakes exams are concerned, some have suggested that "test taking sophistication" and high-stakes exam preparation should be the student's responsibility and that teachers should focus on oral communication skills (Jakobovits & Gordon, 1980), but the reality is that, in most contexts, this approach is neither realistic nor practical. While conversational competence is an important skill for language learners, the immediate demands of national or international assessments cannot be ignored by instructors. While it seems that increased exposure to NS models could only help LLs improve their overall language skills, Rühlemann points out that "claims to greater fluency, naturalness, and more communicative success through exposure to authentic language have to date not been substantiated by empirical evidence. Therefore, verifying (or falsifying) them would be a useful objective for future applied corpus-linguistic research" (Rühlemann, 2008, p. 689). Moreover, EFL teachers in Southeast Asia reported that many examiners "are not familiar with…natural spoken output in English-speaking countries and may therefore expect candidates to produce utterances that are constructed according to written English structures" (Goh, 2009, p. 308). A better solution, perhaps, is to call for better testing procedures and standards, or further research to inform new assessments.

Pragmatics

Pragmatics exists in the intersection of language and context; the social and cultural aspects of language use, like turn indicators, expected structure formulas, and word choice that properly reflects intended force, are an essential part of communication between speakers of a language. Levinson (1983) defines pragmatics as "…the study of the ability of language users to pair sentences with the contexts in which they would be appropriate" (p. 24). Language cannot be isolated in its linguistic forms; LLs also need to have knowledge of the "social and contextual factors underlying…language" (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2008, p. 349).

A Description of Pragmatic Competence

Pragmatic competence deals with the actual ability of a speaker "…to employ different linguistic formulae in an appropriate way when interacting in a particular social and cultural context" (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2008, p. 349). In other words, pragmatic competence is "…knowing what to say to whom in what circumstances and how to say it" (Ghobadi & Fahim, 2009). These definitions, however, fall short in providing an explanation that explains how pragmatic competence is influenced by the variations in context that the speaker faces.

A more complete definition of pragmatic competence, then, is that it is a speaker's ability to appropriately coordinate the interplay of the linguistic aspects of language (the grammar and the vocabulary) with their social, cultural, and personal contexts.

In this definition, the *social context* refers to the relationship between the speakers and the way it might affect language choice. The language that speakers use

with each other can range from intimate to professional, from socializing to transactional (Adolphs & Carter, 2003). A factor that influences the choice of language speakers use is the distance perceived between them. Aspects that affect distance include comparative age, rank, office, status, and power (Brown, 2010; Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1994; House, 2003).

The *cultural context* refers to the ways in which the speakers' cultural values, ideas, and expectations can affect their linguistic choices. For example, Bardovi-Harlig (2001) reports that, when judged by American standards, Japanese refusal strategies are seen as too vague. The American speaker expects a refusal that provides a specific reason for the refusal; however, Japanese speakers do not expect this same response. This discrepancy is due to differences between the two language cultures. In pragmatic acquisition, the cultural context deals with knowing the differences between cultures in many linguistic areas, such as prosody and norms of interaction (Barraja-Rohan, 2000), social norms of appropriate language use on the formality-informality scale (Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1994), and appropriate linguistic patterns and formulas used by NSs.

The *personal context* refers to the speaker's expression of his or her own unique identity(s) through linguistic selection. It is often overlooked in traditional definitions of pragmatics, perhaps because it is most salient in interlanguage pragmatics (or, the acquisition of L2 pragmatics), where LLs must deal with a new set of NS language norms that differ from the way they have learned to express their values and opinions. House (2003) partially refers to this context by the term of "social competence,…an innate or acquired competence which speakers acquire with their L1(s)

referring to such traits as being (or not being) ‘a good talker,’ being able to use language effectively, being witty, humorous, being capable of organizing, structuring, and presenting one’s story well, and so on” (House, 2003, p. 138). Also within the personal context is the speaker’s freedom to choose divergence from NS norms, to maintain individuality, and to express “social identity, attitudes, beliefs, and personality” while communicating with other speakers (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010b).

Pragmatics Instruction

In language teaching, pragmatics used to be regarded as an aspect of language that was universally similar between cultures, and it was assumed that the proper L2 norms would simply be transferred from the LLs native culture (House, 2003). However, research in the field of pragmatics has shown this assumption about universality of pragmatic norms to be untrue, and negative transfer of pragmatic norms can occur when LLs depend on their NL pragmatic norms in an L2 context where the norms are different: “In a community where the L2 norms are quite different, … the transfer of behavior consistent with L1 [a.k.a. NL] norms may cause awkwardness, misunderstanding, or even a temporary communication breakdown” (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010, p. 78). It is possible to have positive transfer of pragmatic norms, but the existence of similar norms should not be assumed, due to the considerable diversity of linguistic and social conventions across cultures (House, 2003, p. 136).

Sociolinguistic and strategic competence should be included in the teaching of language (Sze, 2005). Even though L2 norms may be learned without instruction by LLs

in acquisition-rich environments (Rose & Kwai-fun, 2001)[3], pragmatic norms still need to be taught in the classroom because LLs do not necessarily gain pragmatic proficiency as they become more advanced grammatically (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Bardovi-Harlig, 2003; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010b)[4]. Mugford's (2008) study of impoliteness shows that even when LLs can understand intended impoliteness in interactions with NSs of the L2, they are often unable to respond due to a lack of instruction in this area. This, and other recent studies, suggests that instruction is both beneficial and necessary for the development of pragmatic competence (Campillo, 2003; Ghobadi & Fahim, 2009; Ishihara, 2010; Soler, 2005).

In the case of international languages, especially English, arguments against teaching pragmatics in language instruction are similar to those against teaching spoken grammar—that specific cultural norms should not be taught because they are irrelevant in the lingua franca context (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2008). However, interactional studies on speakers of English as an International Language (EIL) show that language users still must contend with intercultural pragmatics (House, 2003), suggesting that perhaps the lingua franca context should be considered its own culture, and that students learning a language for intercultural communication should be instructed in general pragmatic awareness and noticing methods.

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[3] The level of pragmatic competence of LLs without instruction is usually linked with the length of stay in the TC (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001); without formal instruction, it can take ten years to learn and produce pragmatically appropriate utterances in an acquisition-rich environment (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010a).

[4] However, it is possible that general language proficiency influences transfer. Bardovi-Harlig (2001) reports that advanced learners have been shown through various studies to more accurately identify and use appropriate TL pragmatic norms (p. 27).

Explicit and Implicit Instruction. The argument of implicit versus explicit instruction addresses whether the "secret rules" (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001) of pragmatics should be clearly stated. Explicit instruction teaches "using a particular metalanguage, providing a theory, [and] giving systematic explanations of form-function relationships"; in implicit instruction, the instructor presents "input or enriched input only and rely[s] on extensive practice of pragmatic phenomena" for LLs to acquire the target forms (House, 2003, p. 136). A study that used role-play as an elicitation method found that LLs exposed to explicit instruction outperformed LLs exposed to implicit instruction (Tateyama, 2001). However, another study found that implicit instruction helped with LLs initiation strategies (i.e., strategies that a language user employs to begin a specific structure sequence), but that neither approach was particularly effective in helping them to produce appropriate responses (House, 2003). Most studies on the matter, however, show explicit instruction to be more effective at "facilitating acquisition and consciousness-raising" (Tateyama, 2001, p. 220; see also: Ghobadi & Fahim, 2009; Ishihara, 2010; Soler, 2005). "Simple exposure" to the language alone will not help LLs acquire pragmatic norms, "since pragmatic functions and relevant contextual factors are often not salient to learners and so not likely to be noticed" (Ghobadi & Fahim, 2009, p. 527). For most LLs, input that is not accompanied by noticing tasks or consciousness-raising activities will not seem relevant, and therefore, the salience of the input provided to LLs must be enhanced by language teachers through instruction (Bardovi-Harlig 2003). Moreover, providing input about general L2 norms may not be as effective as direct explanation of the contrast with the LL's own culture and helping LLs become

aware of the pragmatic differences between the NL and TL cultures (Barraja-Rohan, 2000).

Deductive and Inductive Instruction. Also discussed in the literature is the argument of inductive versus deductive instruction. Deductive instruction features an explicitly stated pragmatic rule or pattern provided to LLs before they are exposed to examples, while inductive instruction relies on the LLs to create a pragmatic rule by analyzing sample L2 data (Ishihara, 2010, p. 116; Rose & Kwai-fun, 2001, p. 148). Although inductive instruction is often preferred in general education because of its connection to higher-order thinking skills, in the case of pragmatics, it may not be as helpful, and the research is inconclusive regarding the effectiveness of either approach (Ishihara, 2010). However, research indicates that the actual use of these approaches is not an 'either-or' situation, but that instruction usually contains both approaches or falls between the two (Ishihara, 2010; Rose & Kwai-fun, 2001).

Instruction for Awareness and Production. Like inductive and deductive teaching, teaching for awareness and teaching for production may not be 'all-or-nothing' approaches. The literature suggests that a double focus on awareness and production would be helpful in teaching pragmatics to LLs. In the beginning levels of language learning, LLs lack the knowledge to produce utterances that follow L2 NS norms (Bardovi-Harlig, 2003). However, Tateyama's (2001) research shows that, although the LLs that received explicit instruction in the study had no improvement for the target forms in the role-play assessment[5], which is a production task, those same LLs did show an improvement in the multiple choice test, which is a more receptive task. These results

[5] Actually, they performed more poorly after the explicit instruction than before (Tateyama, 2001).

suggest that even beginning LLs can effectively be taught at the awareness level and that, in these early stages, perhaps instruction should be geared towards noticing and consciousness-raising. Moving into production of target forms can be a difficult task for LLs: "Even when the learner has acquired fairly good knowledge of pragmatic rules of the target language, applying those rules in an actual communicative situation is far more demanding" (Tateyama, 2001, p. 213). Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2008) present a learner-based model for teaching pragmatic issues (specifically, mitigating devices). Their method includes learner exploration (awareness-raising activities), leading into learner production (practice opportunities and additional exposure to contrasting contexts), and finally to learner feedback (peer discussion regarding TL usage). This model provides a more appropriate framework for pragmatics than does McCarthy and Carter's (1995) call for a revision of language teaching methodology from the Presentation-Practice-Production approach to an Illustration-Interaction-Induction method, which does not account for LLs' needs for pragmatic awareness to precede production (Bardovi-Harlig, 2003).

Ishihara and Cohen (2010b) agree that the emphasis for teaching pragmatics should be on both receptive and productive skills, but they warn that the productive focus should be on ability to produce, not on forced production of TC norms. Instructors should be sensitive to the LLs own culture when encouraging L2 pragmatic production; if L2 NS norms are desired from the LL, Ishihara and Cohen suggest that prompts should be worded as "What would most people in [the TC] say in this situation?" rather than "What would you say in [the TL] in this situation?" (p. 87-88). Bardovi-Harlig (2003) goes

further by suggesting that, instead of seeking to elicit L2 NS norms, pragmatics instruction should serve "to help the learner encode her own values (which again may be culturally determined) into a clear, unambiguous message" (p. 31).

Pragmatic Divergence. Although divergence from L2 NS norms is not always a result of an LL's lack of pragmatic competence, it very often can be. Thomas (1983) identifies two types of unintentional pragmatic divergence, which are referred to as pragmatic failures. These are (1) socio-pragmatic failures, which come from misconceptions about the target culture's social norms, and (2) pragmalinguistic failures, which come from inappropriate word or formula choice and communicate unintended force (as cited in Bardovi-Harlig, 2003, p. 28). Some causes of unintended pragmatic divergence are negative transfer, limited grammatical proficiency, the effect of instructional materials, and overgeneralization of perceived L2 NS norms (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010b). Instructors should also be aware of the issue of 'problematic divergence,' and should differentiate between LLs' *problematic realizations* of TL pragmatics, i.e., those utterances which will likely cause misunderstandings, and *unproblematic realizations*, i.e., those utterances which communicate effectively, albeit with a distinct NNS sound (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010b, p. 88).

Content of Pragmatics Instruction

The research suggests that indirect language use will be among the most difficult of the pragmatic items for LLs to learn on their own, and that pragmatics instruction should explicitly point them out (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Campillo, 2003; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2008). Besides general conversational structure sequences, such as conversation opening, turn-taking, closings, topic management and negotiation,

interrupting or insertion sequences, and repair (Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1994; Kramsch, 1981, 1987; Sze, 2005, Zhou, 2006), some of the other most common pragmatic structures and issues that LLs should be taught include:

- *Apologies and Apology Formulas*: The strategy for presenting an apology, as well as the situational need for an apology, differs between cultures. For example, Bardovi-Harlig (2001) describes an EFL role play situation where the LL was supposed to apologize to a friend for being late to go to the library. The LL did not think an apology was warranted by the context, and his response may have left a NS of English offended in real life. (See also: Garcia, 1989; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010a.)

- *Compliments and Compliment Responses*: The proper formula and proper response for a compliment is culturally determined. For example, some cultures deny the compliment, while others will thank the complimenter. Moreover, the purpose of a compliment can also vary between cultures. For example, Americans will often use compliments as conversation openers, e.g., "I like your hat" or "That is a beautiful scarf." NNSs in this situation could be perceived as rude or unfriendly if they merely thank the complimenter rather than engaging in social conversation (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; see also: Ishihara & Cohen, 2010a; Rose & Kwai-fun, 2001).

- *Conversational Implicature*: Often, instead of responding directly to a question, NSs will provide a seemingly unrelated statement or question. In order to understand the answer to the original question, the other speaker must know the answer or understand the reference in the second. The classic example of implicature is the 'Pope Question,'

where the first question is answered by another question with an obvious answer, e.g., "Is the Pope Catholic?" (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010a).

- *Interjections and Intensifiers*: These fixed phrases (e.g., "Watch out!" or "Oh, my!") vary between cultures, and their force is not inherently clear. LLs need to be taught to use them in a situationally-appropriate manner. (See Ishihara & Cohen, 2010a; for a list of American English examples, see Dobson, 1974.)

- *Modality*: Using modal verbs (e.g., 'would,' 'may', or 'might') to soften statements is necessary to achieve proper illocutionary force. Without instruction in modality, LLs can be perceived as demanding, insistent, or rude. (See Bardovi-Harlig, 2003; Campillo, 2003.)

- *Refusal Formulas*: These formulas vary in structure, as well as in specificity and included mitigating devices. For example, a language user may be direct ("No, I can't") or indirect ("I'm sorry, I wish I could help you") in their refusal. Indirect refusals will be more difficult to teach and learn, and include strategies such as providing an excuse, promise of future acceptance, and avoidance, among other things (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010a).

- *Request Formulas*: There are several issues, including degree of imposition and social relationship, which affect the type of language that should be used in a request. The request language can be modified by a variety of linguistic devices, such as lexical downgraders (e.g., "please" or "if it isn't too much trouble"), bi-clausal requests ("Could you [verb]?" or "Would you mind if I [verb]?"), and the use of internal mitigating devices (openers, softeners, and fillers) and external mitigating devices (preparators, disarmers,

justifiers, expanders, and promises of a reward). LLs also need to be taught to notice and use indirect requests, where the actual request is implied by a suggestion or question. (See Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Campillo, 2003; Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1994; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010a; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010b; Soler, 2005; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2008.)

- *Thanking Formulas*: Again, these formulas can be different for each culture. For example, the Japanese thanking formula, where the speaker will thank the giver by apologizing for the trouble he or she took, differs from the American formula, which has been described by Ghobadi and Fahim (2009) as following the structure of (1) expressed surprise, (2) the actual thanking formula, (3) another statement of pleasure, (4) complimenting the giver, and (5) expression of desire to repay the favor. (See also: Ghobadi & Fahim, 2009; Tateyama, 2001.)

Instructors should research the specific pragmatic structures of the language they are teaching in order to better prepare their students for interaction in the TC. Additionally, LLs need be made aware that their NL strategies and structures may not transfer. When teaching pragmatics, class materials should include authentic NS oral texts, such as television and radio (Brown, 2010; Soler, 2005; Tateyama, 2001), as well as transcripts and recordings of NS conversations (Cheng & Warren, 2007; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010b). Teachers should be aware of salience issues and adjust their instruction to make the input relevant and comprehensible for the LLs (Bardovi-Harlig, 2003).

Text and Materials

That textbooks and materials for language learning are imperfect should be no surprise to anyone. The variety of textbooks for any given language or level, alone, (not

to mention their multiple editions and revisions) illustrates the disagreement between publishers or editors regarding the content necessary and/or beneficial for language learning. Since the advent of the popularity of the Communicative Approach, it has been accepted that "learning to speak a language is more than just memorizing long lists of words and grammatical rules" (Ghobadi & Fahim, 2009, p. 536). Unfortunately, the materials used for teaching language, especially conversation, have not evolved much past their lists and rules. Many language textbooks still treat 'conversational language' as pronunciation activities, oral drills and patterns, and communicative activities; these activities give little attention to real-life skills (Sze, 2005).

Due in part to the increasing availability of data from corpus linguistics, recent research has found the presentation of items in language teaching materials to contrast with their use in NS speech—especially in conversation. However, this discrepancy may or may not be detrimental to language learning. In the case of English, Rühlemann (2009) notes:

> Given that, for reasons of applied linguistic grading and simplification, school English will, to some extent, always be at variance with naturally occurring English, a crucial question to be addressed is whether, in dealing with discourse presentation, we are dealing with some remote or otherwise negligible aspect of conversational behaviour that school English need not be modeled on in great detail or whether it constitutes something more important in the conversational arena which school English should take great care to represent to its best of abilities. (p. 415)

The question, then, is to what extent should language materials—especially those used in teaching conversational language—reflect language in use? Language learning materials need to be held to higher standards of language presentation because they "play an important role in shaping people's language use…especially when exposure to the target

language is limited" (Lee, 2006, p. 80). Often, non-native speaking teachers will rely on the textbook as the language expert, and due to the treatment of certain language features, they may perceive acceptable aspects of conversational language as 'wrong' (Lee, 2006). When they eventually interact with NSs, NNSs who learn from these incomplete texts will "constantly have to reshape their linguistic behavior in those areas of the language which were not taught properly" (Mindt, 1996, p. 232).

There are three main problems highlighted in the literature in regards to language teaching materials: first, textbooks that improperly address spoken grammar or spoken vocabulary cause the language learner to sound like a textbook, rather than a NS; second, language teaching materials are not realistic in their presentation of cultural and interactional aspects of language, leaving the LL (who may have limited access to real NSs) inadvertently using uncommon or rude structures; third, the format and organization of the materials is not consistent with the frequency of use of language in real life, presenting learners with additional trouble comprehending common NS structures. Some of the solutions proposed to date have potential, but have not yet been developed fully.

Spoken Grammar and Vocabulary

One of the problems with language teaching materials is their failure to address the features of spoken grammar and vocabulary. Perhaps as a consequence of the written format, language teaching texts tend to teach formal, written language at the expense of other conversational vocabulary and structures. Where textbook authors choose to ignore conversational language in favor of formal written English, they—by omission—treat the truly standard form as incorrect.

When texts and materials do deal with any type of spoken grammar, the skewed or incomplete presentation of items presents another issue. Language texts generally have an unbalanced emphasis on fixed lexico-grammatical units that have no morphological change, such as hedging devices, like 'sort of' or 'kind of.' These units are merely 'tacked on' to the pre-existing forms, and as such, are quite simple to teach. The tendency is to treat all presented conversational language as "chunks" rather than to approach it as a different grammar, and in doing so, the texts neglect to present other productive constructions and grammatical features that are equally important for LLs (Cullen & Kuo, 2007). Even these fixed units, however, are not appropriately addressed. In his study of optional linguistic discourse particles in EFL texts, Lam (2009) notes that the discourse particle "well"—although it is one of the most frequent words in conversational language—is very minimally treated, and even where it is shown, the function of "well" in the text does not match how it is used in real conversation. This is unfortunate, because, as a major feature of conversation language, "failing to master the use of discourse particles may seriously impair the communicative competence of learners," causing them to sound confusing, foreign, or rude (Lam, 2009, p. 261).

The vocabulary in language teaching materials has problems, as well. Textbook vocabulary definitions are generally informed by encyclopedias and dictionaries rather than by colloquial word meanings. Moreover, Meunier and Gouverneur (2007) reported in an analysis of the metalanguage in vocabulary sections of EFL texts that the high frequency of the term "word" in the introduction to vocabulary encourages LLs to think of their new terms in isolation, rather than to notice their

combinations. The idea of vocabulary as single-word units marginalizes the communicative importance of idioms, collocations, and word combinations.

Pragmatics and Other Cultural Issues

While purposefully and explicitly teaching the grammar and vocabulary of conversational language is important, it is also essential that the materials claiming to teach 'real language' address and explain its actual conversational use—not only the words/phrases, but also the cultural or interactional features of that language. Unfortunately, many texts fail to do so.

The cultural aspects of spoken language are central in conversation instruction: "Having access to critical socio-cultural issues associated with target countries is of utmost importance for more effective language learning" (Garcia, 2005, p.58). Unfortunately, these same aspects of culture and language are hugely misportrayed in language texts. Brown's (2010) study on the presentation of honorifics in Korean as a Second Language shows texts that under-represent the importance of the correct form and the wide variety of possible social contexts. Moreover, Brown found that, in contrast to the Korean culture of "name-calling avoidance" (where they generally do not use a referent's name, but instead use his or her title or other referential item), the texts were dominated by this form of address. Instead of giving LLs a realistic view of the honorifics and address systems, the texts tried to simplify the process for learners, and therefore provide "[in]adequate exposure to the language for students who aim to study or work in Korean speaking environments" (p. 47). Grala (1977) describes a situation where a LL of Polish asks about a greeting phrase used in his Polish text that, after seven weeks in the

target culture, he still had not heard because it was not used in actual conversation (p. 155).

Studies have also shown that the social and cultural aspects of language texts may disproportionately promote tourism and a consumerism culture (Garcia, 2005). Many language texts merely prepare LLs to financially invest in the TC culture, by emphasizing tourist attractions and various ways to spend money, such as buying food and buying clothes. Additionally, by superficially focusing on culture through the lens of holidays, foods, and customs, rather than exploring the underlying beliefs and motives behind cultural values and traditions, texts promote a static, 'foreigner' view of the TC and its members.

Accurate examples of interactional features of conversational language are also poorly represented in texts. Conversational structures have been shown to be inaccurately portrayed in dialogs. Openings of telephone conversations shown in textbooks do not contain the same sequence structures as found in real-life telephone communication (Wong, 2000). When these interactional issues are addressed in texts, they are not given the attention and explanation needed for LLs to understand how the language is affected. Vellenga (2004) analyzed samples of ESL and EFL texts and found that ideas of appropriacy were grammatically addressed, but rarely given detailed metapragmatic explanations; moreover, "terms such as formal, informal, polite, and impolite are used throughout all eight texts, though descriptions of situations which may require formal or polite usage in terms of social relationships between interlocutors, status differences, or other contextual factors are rarely included" (p. 11). In another

study, Cheng and Warren (2007) examined a set of fifteen English Language Teaching (ELT) textbooks in conjunction with a corpus of spoken language and found that, although they explicitly taught the interactional strategy of checking understanding in conversation, they emphasized the use of phrases and structures that were not used in actual speech. For example, even though the use of "Sorry" or "Pardon" as a lead-in to a clarification statement or question was a very common feature in the textbooks, it was completely absent from the corpus. Moreover, the study showed that the textbooks place the burden of the responsibility for clarification of meaning on the hearer, when the data from the corpus of real conversation shows that the majority of the clarification strategies are used by the speaker.

Frequency and Order of Introduction

Intuition and tradition, rather than empirical data, seem to form the order of introduction of grammatical features in language texts. The contrast between the frequency of language items in actual NS conversation and their order of introduction in textbooks can mislead LLs.

In his analysis of three German EFL texts that claim to focus on spoken communication, Mindt (1996) shows that the grading of grammatical items does not correlate with their frequency of use in a corpus. For example, for future orientation, 'will + infinitive,' (e.g., 'will eat dinner,') is introduced significantly earlier than 'going to + infinitive' (e.g., 'going to eat dinner,'), even though 'going to + infinitive' is both much more frequent and earlier acquired by NSs in L1 development. Bardovi-Harlig (2003) noted in her study of NS and NNS use of 'will + infinitive' and 'going to + infinitive' that, indeed, LLs use 'will' in circumstances where NSs would use 'going to.' The issue

'will' versus 'going to' is not the only example of situations where textbook grading can mislead the LL. Mindt (1996) also notes that in the German EFL texts, the modal verbs 'must' and 'may' precede the modal 'will' in textbook introduction order, despite the fact that 'will' is significantly more used than either 'must' or 'may.' Dobson (1974) shows that the frequency of long answers versus the frequency of short answers in textbooks misrepresents the true linguistic expectation of a NS: "Many EFL/ESL text books leave the impression that 'long' answers are used frequently in English, since LLs are often required to give long answers for drill purposes. However, English speakers, like speakers of most other languages, have a natural tendency to use short answers" (p. 27).

Order of introduction can influence the proper acquisition of conversational language. LLs will find it difficult to understand the structure that is more commonly used in real conversation until they are exposed to it at a later time (Mindt, 1996). Moreover, the discrepancy between the language forms represented in the text and the forms that occur in actual language can cause LLs to use forms which to them seem neutral, but to NSs, come across with more illocutionary force than intended (Bardovi-Harlig, 2003).

Proposed Solutions

Recently, some of the proposed solutions to the problem of language teaching materials have been technological in nature. Sha (2009) suggests using chatterbots (computer programs designed mimic human-human communication) to assist LLs who have no opportunity to practice with an expert—or be exposed to cultural and interactional aspects of language—because of large class sizes or distance from the target culture. The disadvantages of these chatterbots, however, are that most are not

programmed for language teaching and that, as a result of their non-human characteristics, they are not always skilled at giving useful information or demonstrating interpersonal functions of language. Tangible learning companions, or learning robots, are another technological possibility, but they, too, have related limitations when it comes to speech production and interpersonal interaction (Young, et al., 2010). These computer-based solutions may be helpful for assisting LLs memorize strings and question-response sequences, but they alone are not the solution, as "activities that practise social formulas only are not enough to develop LLs' ability to sustain a conversation" (Sze, 2005, p. 241).

Kong's (2009) comparison of language-learning websites and textbooks found that the written language used on the websites more closely resembled spoken language in terms of Chafe's theory of involvement and detachment:

> According to Chafe (1985), spoken language is marked by features of involvement. These include ego involvement (such as 'I think'), involvement with the listener (such as the use of personal pronoun 'you' and the word 'right') and involvement with the subject matter (such as 'It is really important'). In contrast, written language is characterised by features of detachment such as nominalisation, passive voice and use of prepositional phrases. (as cited in Kong, 2009, p. 37)

Kong's study found that there was three times as much involvement on the webpage than in the textbooks, suggesting that the use of websites may be a valuable option to explore, as they are often "considered a hybridised form of spoken and written language" (p. 35).

Another proposed solution is allowing the learners to deal with the corpus data on their own. Cheng and Warren (2007) suggest that the answer to the problem of language texts may lie in a combination of Johns' Data-Driven Learning Approach and

Tognini-Bonelli's Corpus-Driven Research Approach. In this way, students who are at the same time language learners and language researchers can pull their own theories of the target language from corpus evidence and use authentic data to identify language patterns apart from a textbook. It is also important—along with providing NS language samples—to give LLs terminology to discuss what they find. To this end, Meunier and Gouverneur's (2007) call for creation of (and instruction in) a consistent meta-linguistic terminology, as well as good explanations of those terms, would be an essential element of this approach. This suggestion may be a useful direction to explore in further research.

None of the proposed solutions alone is enough to solve the problem of language teaching materials. In the future, we may see combinations of these solutions, such as website-based corpus data specifically for language learners or chatterbots linked to an up-dateable online knowledge base informed by corpus research. However, even with perfect language teaching materials, "it would be a mistake, in teaching the spoken language, to assume that it is always clear what the speaker said or what he intended to say (even to himself) or suppose that there is only one single correct interpretation of the smudged acoustic signal which the speaker produces" (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. 24).

CHAPTER IV

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

The literature suggests that there are certain problems occurring in the conversational language classroom that can be solved by a better approach to instruction. There are many theoretical approaches to teaching and to material or activity inclusion, but the demands of teaching do not always create a perfect environment in which theory can exist. The current chapter examines how the literature matches the reality of teaching conversation in a standard university foreign language course in order to provide supportive evidence for the discussion on teaching conversation and from which to frame suggestions for instruction.

The Inquiry

Informal surveys and interviews were conducted in order to gauge the status of conversation courses in the university setting. The two populations used in the research, foreign language students and foreign language professors, were both convenience samples, identified by their enrollment in or instruction of a foreign language course that had a stated emphasis in oral communication or conversation. These courses all took place at a state university that is fairly typical of many public universities, and the languages taught/studied were major European languages. The professors were interviewed using the guide in Appendix A: Professor Interview Guide, and the students (from three separate courses, all taught by professors who also

participated in the interviews) were surveyed using the questionnaire in Appendix B: Student Survey.

The responses collected were analyzed qualitatively, for the expressed purpose of discovering opinions and beliefs about the teaching and learning of foreign language conversation. Questions 1 – 3 on the student surveys were mostly disregarded after it was found that students were unclear about the terminology used. Nonetheless, some general observations will be drawn from those responses. Responses to Question 4[6] and Question 5[7] were determined to not have been negatively affected by the terminology used in the survey, and the responses to these informal survey questions are presented in Appendix C: Student Responses to Questionnaire. The specific responses of the professor interviews will remain private in order to protect the anonymity of the participants, but their collective and individual opinions will be included in the discussion.

Discussion

The results of the informal surveys and interviews were not conclusive by any means, but they did offer a glance into the opinions and expectations of both LLs and language instructors, as well as information about the situations they encounter.

Professors

The interviews with professors of foreign language conversation classes provided insight into the reality of teaching language—and that reality is that most 'conversation' courses are actually 'speaking' courses. The classes that the instructors

[6]Question 4 asks, "Do you feel that this course is adequately preparing you to engage in casual or spontaneous conversation with native speakers? Why or why not?"

[7] Question 5 asks, "How would you change this course to make it more effective for learning conversational language?"

described, and the activities that they prefer to use, are consistent with the Free Communication Approach. Four of the five instructors reported using controversial or current topics to spark discussion in the classroom, and three mentioned that they used a variety of conversation games to help students speak freely. None of the teachers mentioned any conversation analysis or explicit instruction in spoken grammar (although instruction in standard grammar was often addressed) or pragmatics.

The instructors' use of the Free Communication Approach, however, does not mean that they are attempting to teach conversation and failing, but that their goals for their students are based on general language proficiency and speaking improvement, rather than TL NS norms. There are at least three legitimate reasons that this could be the case.

First, the professors noted that administrative requirements and a lack of financial resources often cause two or more courses to be combined into one or cause courses to be cut altogether. Most of the courses that address conversation were labeled as either "Oral Expression" or "Conversation and Composition." One professor said that there were several specifically-labeled conversation courses in the university catalog, but since they had not been made requirements for the language major or minor, they were always the first courses to be cancelled. The need to address a variety of language skills (besides conversation) would make the Conversation Norms Approach more difficult to incorporate and, possibly, less effective.

Second, four of the five professors interviewed indicated that the wide range of ability levels of the students in the class was a major challenge in instruction. While

perhaps the more advanced students in each class would benefit from the type of instruction described in the Conversation Norms Approach, many of the students in each class may have been at a proficiency level where the information would not have been salient. Grammar instruction and vocabulary building for these students is likely perceived as a more immediate necessity.

Third, most of the professors reported that they thought a conversation class should not be taught on its own, but that other oral skills, as well as vocabulary, reading, listening, and writing should be taught concurrently. The Conversation Norms Approach focuses specifically on conversation at the expense of the other macro-skills, and is not an effective approach for general language proficiency. The Free Communication Approach, however, integrates content well, and allows instructors to work on general language proficiency through speaking.

As far as classroom materials are concerned, all of the instructors dealt with the deficiency in language textbooks by either supplementing a grammar text with other TL materials, such as websites, literature, short readings, and music, or by using only those supplemental materials and no textbook at all. The internet was one of the most effective resources in the eyes of the professors. They noted that the TL sites designed for NSs, especially news and video sites, were a helpful addition to the class.

It is understandable, based on the interview responses, why the Conversation Norms Approach has not been adopted in the teaching of foreign language conversation. However, the lack of instruction in conversation norms will continue to negatively affect students who intend to use their language in the TC or with NSs of that language.

Students

The professors' use of the Free Communication Approach did not appear to cause any problems as far as student expectations and goals were concerned. The students' top goals for the course matched their perceptions about the primary course focus; for example, the most common goals identified by students centered on the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary, and the most common perceptions of the focuses of the courses were the same.[8] These responses agree with Bardovi-Harlig's (2001) interviews with over 500 LLs and their instructors. She found that LLs in a foreign language context viewed grammar correctness as more important than pragmatics and cultural appropriacy, but that LLs in a second language context viewed the pragmatic correctness as more important (p. 21). All of the conversational language courses in which students were interviewed were foreign language; a lack of interaction in the target culture and a disproportionate amount of 'book language' may have influenced their goals.

The students who considered the course to be helpful in preparing them for casual or spontaneous conversation with NSs emphasized the exposure to language and the speaking practice that the course offered, saying:

> "We only speak in [the TL] during class and the professor corrects us when we misuse the language or pronunciation, so it is helpful practice" (Survey, S32)

[8] This data is taken from the first two questions in the survey. Question 1 asked, "What are your main goals in taking this course?" Question 2 asked, "What are the main focus points of the conversation course?" Students were asked to choose their responses from a list provided. While the choice of responses was deemed inconclusive because of students' lack of knowledge of the terminology used in the response list, the students overwhelmingly chose equivalent answers to both questions. Therefore, despite the lack of understanding, it can be concluded that students' goals for the course (regardless of the original definition of the choice) match their perception of the courses' primary focus.

> "[The course] allows us to make mistakes, we cannot speak English, only [the TL], forcing us to look up words we don't know" (Survey, S7)
>
> "We talk in groups every time we meet" (Survey, S16)
>
> "This course forces you to think in [the TL] and that in turn helps me to be able to pick up on conv[ersation]s" (Survey, S20)

However, the exposure the students receive in these courses is mostly exposure to classroom talk and to the written word spoken aloud. Moreover, some students noted that the topics chosen for conversation did not facilitate conversation as much as formal speaking, but only four students (out of 33) mentioned a desire to see actual conversation instruction (i.e., instruction consistent with the Conversation Norms Approach) or any cultural/regional uses of the language. A few students also noted that more NS inclusion in the classroom would be helpful, and one student specifically wanted "conversation partners upon request to get used to speaking [the TL] conversationally" (Survey, S8).

In regards to course materials, students overwhelmingly perceived instructional text materials (e.g., textbooks) to be 'very helpful' or 'somewhat helpful' in learning conversation, but generally did not rate the target culture materials as highly. [9] These results could be due to salience issues, as instructional materials often have built-in noticing or awareness-raising devices, while TC materials are created for NSs who have no immediate need to consciously notice features of their own conversational language. Moreover, preconceived notions about the importance of instructional materials could influence students' ideas of what is and what is not helpful. Altbach (1991) notes that, "despite its shortcomings, the textbook is considered to be the most important tool used

[9] This information was pulled from the student survey, Question 3. Again, while the complete responses were deemed inappropriate as supporting evidence for the inquiry, a few general conclusions were able to be collected.

in the classroom" (as cited in Vellenga, 2004, p. 1). This seems to still be true in the foreign language conversation course.

Most of the findings pulled from the student surveys are limited by the knowledge that students have of the concepts of spoken grammar, NS conversation norms, and the way that conversation can differ between cultures. These students are neither linguists nor TC experts, and they may not even be aware of the meaning of spoken grammar, as presented in this paper, or that there are differences between cultures in pragmatics. While students perceive that these courses meet their needs for TL communication skills, that perception alone is not enough to justify the lack of instruction in conversation norms.

Towards the Conversation Norms Approach

The results of this inquiry show that the Conversation Norms Approach is not being used in the classrooms reviewed. The professors, for many reasons, favor the Free Communication Approach, and very few students call for changes in the direction of the Conversation Norms Approach. The teaching of conversation, and of language in general, is surrounded by demands and complications that limit instructors' freedom, and it may not be practical or wise in most settings to exclusively teach conversation. However, the literature clearly suggests that instruction in conversation norms will benefit language learning. With this in mind, perhaps the best approach, and the most practical, is to integrate the teaching of conversation norms into all foreign language classes. Some suggestions for beginning to incorporate instruction in conversation norms into a setting similar to the one presented by the inquiry include:

- *Focus on Register*: When teaching conversation, especially in a setting where standard or written grammar will also be addressed, it is important to focus on register. Teaching in a way that highlights aspects of spoken grammar and conversation norms as 'the informal, spoken register' can help differentiate it from the 'the formal spoken register' (e.g., speeches and debate) and 'the standard, written register.'[10] In this way, there is less likelihood that students will use the aspects of conversation in their writing.

- *Research the Relevant Context*: Instructors need to identify the specific language forms with which the LLs will interact. In this way, the instructors will be able to teach to the context and present material that is appropriate and applicable. There are a variety of cultural contexts for any language, and it is important that students are not being held to irrelevant standards. In cases of international languages (e.g., EIL), the context may not pertain to a specific culture, but rather to intercultural norms.

- *Use Authentic Data*: Instruction should include authentic NS (or expert speaker[11]) conversation data, including transcripts, audio recordings, and audio-visual recordings of real conversations—not conversation created for teaching purposes. These data are available in a variety of places (like television, research collections, internet videos, and call-in talk shows, to name a few). Moreover, additional articles can be created by recording NSs (or expert speakers, if relevant) in real conversation. As mentioned previously, language texts and pedagogic materials are insufficient to provide students with the information about authentic interaction in the TL.

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[10] It may also be interesting, if appropriate for the context, to delve into the 'the informal, written register,' which could include aspects of written language such as internet talk (e.g., abbreviations and norms).
[11] In the case of International Languages, NS norms may, in fact, not be relevant, and Expert Speaker norms instead would be more appropriate.

- *Make Students the Researchers*: Instructors should allow students to interact with the authentic data and discover conversation norms through research. Conversation analysis and other language noticing tasks can help students form a base for understanding not only the TL, but also language in general. However, instructors should first provide LLs with a solid framework for learning about conversation by teaching them the metalanguage to talk about what they will observe in the authentic data and by teaching them how to discover language patterns on their own.
- *Explicitly Describe the Conversation Norms*: It is important that the instructor point out to the students not only what the conversation norms are, but also when, where, and why they occur. Aspects of spoken grammar and pragmatics will likely be missed if they are just included in course input and not discussed. Moreover, a comparison between the NL norm of the LLs and the TL norm could be useful in helping students understand the form.

There could be situations in which it is both possible and advantageous to focus exclusively on NS norms of conversation, and in these situations, the above suggestions will also be helpful. A comprehensive model for teaching NS norms has not been described thus far in the literature; however, instructors who wish to begin implementing the Conversation Norms Approach, spoken grammar, and/or pragmatics into their teaching may benefit from Appendix D: Resources for Teaching Conversation.

Directions for Future Research

Unfortunately, the research on a solid methodology for teaching with the Conversation Norms Approach is lacking. Further exploration and examination of the

three important aspects of teaching and learning TL conversation norms will help fill the gaps in the literature and will provide a clearer direction for future research. For the time being, however, these aspects should be incorporated as best as they can be.

Awareness

Foreign language conversation is commonly interpreted by instructors and LLs as merely speaking interactionally; this is not surprising, as conversation is commonly interpreted the same way by language texts, materials, and syllabi. Speaking is a very important skill in the development of foreign language acquisition, and should rightly receive attention before students are expected to learn NS norms of interaction. However, the misnomer can cause LLs to think they are conversationally competent, when in fact, they are not.

The results of the student surveys in the inquiry suggest that instruction in NS norms of conversation will be a change for most LLs—a change they may or may not appreciate, since most students feel that their language goals are being met by the current state of instruction. As so, it is likely that teaching NS conversation norms will be met with some resistance, especially since the focus would depart from the standard grammar, vocabulary, and speaking practice that LLs view as helpful to the development of their communicative competence. The use of a different set of teaching materials—transcripts and recordings of NS conversations—may also be troublesome to LLs who view the traditional pedagogic materials as very important.

It will be important, therefore, to raise awareness of the existence of NS norms of conversation, both in the L1 and in the TL. LLs will need to be given

information about the importance of NS norms and the place of those norms in the process of foreign language acquisition. Instruction in L1 spoken grammar, pragmatics, and other NS norms may be helpful in introducing these concepts, including metalanguage and terminology, to the LL. Perhaps the addition of a prerequisite L1 linguistics course focusing on spoken grammar and pragmatics would be a benefit to foreign language learning. Once the LLs have an awareness of, and an appreciation for, NS norms in their own language, the norms of the TL will seem relevant to communication in that language.

Further research in this area could begin by studying the actual effect of L1 or general linguistic education on LLs acquisition of NS norms of conversation. It would also be interesting to find whether increased instruction in the structures of conversation and the variations between cultures would lead students to perceive a productive knowledge of NS conversation norms as more important.

Professional Development Courses

Many instructors may not have been prepared by their education to teach NS norms of conversation, and NS and NNS instructors alike may not even be aware of the existence of the NS norms. Moreover, differences in teaching philosophy may lead them to value an exclusively formal, standard grammar language education. A framework for professional development in this area is necessary for an effective wide-spread teaching of conversation norms.

A professional development course (or a series of courses) should be developed to include not only a study of the actual norms and their characteristics, but

also of teaching methodology and techniques for introducing norms with cultural sensitivity. Future studies on a solid teaching methodology for a Conversation Norms Approach should include information and research that (1) addresses the most appropriate stage to introduce NS norms, whether from the beginning levels, or not until LLs reach a more advanced stage, (2) creates a working metalanguage for teaching, learning, and discussing characteristics of NS conversation, and (3) provides attainable goals and standards for NS norm acquisition through the different stages of language learning.

Integration of Technology

The use of technology in the teaching of NS conversation norms is an important tool. As many of the interviewed professors reported, the internet can be a helpful tool for bringing NS texts and artifacts to LLs who might not have otherwise been exposed to them. Moreover, advances in technology, wide-spread internet access, high-speed electronic communication, and increased availability of linguistics data have made frequent interaction authentic TL data a more realistic possibility for the classroom.

Electronic resources for teaching conversation are promising, and further research to develop these options should be pursued. The creation of internet-based materials or curriculum is not outside the realm of possibilities for this area, and could even prove beneficial as a resource to instructors in the FL context.

Conclusion

At one time, it was thought that NS norms of conversation could be acquired in immersion environments only, and that it was ineffective to teach them in the

classroom. However, the literature suggests that instruction can and will help in the acquisition of conversation norms, both in the second language and in the foreign language environments. While the immersion experience is, without doubt, a helpful experience in TL acquisition, it alone is not sufficient to teach LLs everything they need, especially since salience issues and conflicts with cultural identity can create barriers to learning. Moreover, most LLs do not have the opportunity to go abroad for a period of time long enough to acquire these norms 'naturally'. For these reasons, LLs must receive supplemental instruction to acquire TL conversation norms.

While there remains much to be clarified on the topic of teaching NS norms of conversation, it is obvious that, with increased access to world languages and NSs of those languages, knowledge of at least the existence of NS norms of conversation will become ever more important. Providing LLs with instruction to raise awareness of their existence and the tools to learn about the specific norms that are relevant to them is the first step in helping them to be truly communicatively competent.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

PROFESSOR INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What are some of the most challenging aspects of teaching the conversation course?
2. What are your goals for your students when they finish the course?
3. What type of activities do you find most effective? What type of activities do you find least effective? Why?
4. What types of materials do you use in class?
5. What, if any, are the requirements/issues from/with the department or university administration that makes teaching a conversation class frustrating? What steps do you see that could be taken to improve that/those situation(s)?
6. What does a normal day in your conversation class look like? What is your role in the class? What do you expect the students' role to be?

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

STUDENT SURVEY

Thank you for participating in this survey. This survey is anonymous and the information you provide will be kept completely confidential. Your responses will not be connected to your name or to your professor's name in any way, nor will they be provided to the administration for course or professor evaluations. The data collected from this survey will be used only to inform a study about students' opinions on the problems with the teaching/learning of conversational language.

Foreign Language:_____

SECTION 1: Please select **three** of the given responses for each question below. If you would like, you may use the lines provided to note additional information.

What are your main goals in taking this course? (choose 3)

- ☐ To improve my aural comprehension of native-speaker accents/pronunciations
- ☐ To develop a native-speaker-like accent/pronunciation
- ☐ To improve my comprehension of spoken/informal grammar when used in conversation
- ☐ To improve my use of spoken/informal grammar
- ☐ To improve my comprehension of different registers (formal vs. informal) in conversation
- ☐ To recognize and practice when to use certain registers (formal vs. informal) in conversation
- ☐ To improve my comprehension of spoken vocabulary (slang, colloquialisms)
- ☐ To develop a larger spoken vocabulary (slang, colloquialisms)
- ☐ To improve my comprehension of "natural" (non-instructional) conversation
- ☐ To sound "natural" in conversation with native speakers
- ☐ To overcome my affective/emotional issues connected to speaking (nervousness or embarrassment to speak)
- ☐ Other:_____
  _____
  _____
- ☐ **Only** to fulfill a degree requirement.

Comments:
_____
_____
_____
_____

What are the main focus points of the conversation course? (choose 3)

- ☐ Understanding different native-speaker accents/pronunciations
- ☐ Developing a native-speaker-like accent/pronunciation
- ☐ Understanding spoken grammar
- ☐ Producing "correct" spoken grammar
- ☐ Understanding different registers (formal vs. informal) in conversation
- ☐ Properly using the correct register (formal vs. informal) in conversation
- ☐ Understanding spoken vocabulary (slang, colloquialisms)
- ☐ Properly using spoken vocabulary (slang, colloquialisms)
- ☐ Understanding "Natural" (non-instructional) conversation
- ☐ Sounding "natural" in conversation with native speakers
- ☐ Overcoming Affect/Emotion (nervousness or embarrassment to speak)
- ☐ Other:_____
  _____
  _____

Comments:
_____
_____
_____
_____

SECTION 2: Please rate each of the following aspects of **your conversation class** according to how helpful you find it to be in improving your foreign language conversation skills.

1	2	3	n/a	
Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not at all Helpful	This aspect is not present in my class	
1	2	3	n/a	The instructional text materials for the course (includes texts, workbooks, and handouts)
1	2	3	n/a	The instructional audio-visual materials for the course (includes videos, audio-recordings, or audio-visual internet activities created for learners of the language)
1	2	3	n/a	Target Culture text materials used for the course (includes newspaper/magazine articles, literature, websites, etc. intended for native speakers of the language)
1	2	3	n/a	Target Culture audio-visual materials used for the course (includes music, film, video or radio news clippings, podcasts, etc. intended for native speakers of the language)
1	2	3	n/a	The inclusion of native speakers in the class instruction
1	2	3	n/a	Conversation "Games" (such as Role-play, Class discussions, or problem-solving activities)
1	2	3	n/a	Direct explanations of the linguistic and paralinguistic features of conversational language

SECTION 3: Please provide a **brief** response to the following questions. (Bullet points, short notes, and lists are O.K.)

1. Do you feel that this course is adequately preparing you to engage in casual or spontaneous conversation with native speakers? Why or why not?

2. How would you change this course to make it more effective for learning conversational language? (You may refer to the list of aspects in Section 2, or suggest some of your own ideas.)

If you have any questions about this project or your participation in it you can contact me at rdonaldson2@mail.csuchico.edu. Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

STUDENT RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRE

Do you feel that this course is adequately preparing you to engage in casual or spontaneous conversation with native speakers? Why or why not?

S1: Yes, we practice speaking every class. No English is used. We also de debates and speeches

S2: No, we have just worked on research debates about gender issues and homosexual issues

S3: Not at the moment, we aren't really studying casual topics.

S4: Yes, I am getting over my nerves to speak to people in [the target language] and I am learning new vocab

S5: Yes, because we're constantly being introduced to new vocab

S6: Yes, especially the debates, although there are a lot each time I become more comfortable. Learning vocab about specific themes.

S7: Yes, because it allows us to make mistakes, we cannot speak English, only [the target language], forcing us to look up words we don't know

S8: Somewhat. I feel that since there are many native and fluent speakers in the class, I am often shy to speak up

S9: Yes, because we routinely have conversations in class that help develop confidence and correct usage of conversational elements

S10: Yes, this course is expanding my vocabulary and comprehension. I personally have to investigate translation sometimes; this class forces me to do so

S11: Yes and No. I am getting much better at being conversational in [the target language], but I have always felt (just knowing myself and how I learn) that being directly immersed in a foreign county would have the biggest impact. The classroom environment is not the best environment for me to excel in foreign languages because class is only 50 minutes or 2 hours. After that it is all English.

S12: Yes, there are different forms of communication: debate, presentations, and discussions. Vocabulary is provided before each topic.

S13: Yes, by requiring me to speak out loud in front of people

S14: I feel this class is preparing me in engaging casual or spontaneous conversations with native speakers because, for one, I am a native speaker and most of my family speaks [the target language], so I want to be able to speak with them correctly

S15: I travel to [the target culture] all the time, and this course has dramatically improved my ability to speak in a public setting without fear. It has redefined my vocabulary and allowed me to notice subtleties within the spoken language to help my comprehension

S16: Absolutely yes. We talk in groups every time we meet.

S17: Yes, because the teacher speaks perfect [target language] and we have native speakers in class

S18: Yes, we have to use our spoken language every day and we have to learn not to rely on English to communicate

S19: Yes, because of the diversity in the conversation topics, the class can diverge and spontaneous conversation is necessary

S20: Yes, because this course forces you to think in [the target language] and that in turn helps me to be able to pick up on convos.

S21: Yes, it helps me improve my grammar, expand my vocabulary, and gives me a place to consistently practice my speaking

S22: (No) It is providing the fundamentals of [the target language], not enough to speak with someone though

S23: Yes, my first immersion class in 15 years and most in depth in 45 years

S24: Yes, besides strengthening ground-level knowledge, I get lots of practice speaking and hearing the language

S25: Somewhat. [The target language] is spoken most of the time in class but we have to push ourselves to get over the nervousness of participating

S26: Yes, Lots of listening and speaking practice, and a study of current topics of interest to native speakers and learners

S27: I think that it does but I would prefer a contemporary reader

S28: Yes, because I try as hard as I can. It takes a personal desire to make it useful

S29: No, there isn't enough focus on speaking the language and applying what we use

S30: Yes, Conversation hour as well. You get as much back as you put in and [the professor] provides the option

S31: Yes, through listening and speaking, my [target language] develops; through discussion, I get to understand what I may not have understood before.

S32: Yes, we only speak in [the target language] during class and the professor corrects us when we misuse the language of pronunciation, so it is helpful practice

S33: No, I feel that the text we are reading has outdated language and the other class focus is grammar, which is reviewed minimally once a week

How would you change this course to make it more effective for learning conversational language?

S1: Slightly more grammatical instruction

S2: I would do daily speaking exercises along with proper vocab as well as cultural slang

S3: Use more casual topics

S4: Maybe have a conversation topic and a partner and talk more, then switch partners

S5: More vocabulary, and gear the class more towards native speakers who want to strengthen the [target language] foundation they have

S6:---

S7: Having the students teach the class over something that helped them improve their [target language]

S8: Conversation partners upon request to get used to speaking [the target language] conversationally

S9: More emphasis on colloquialisms and <u>regional</u> usage of different parts of speech (other than that, great class)

S10: More individual analysis of our skills and what to improve

S11: I guess more class discussions. It is set up very well.

S12: Different topics other than diversity

S13: Spend more time discussing common aspects of conversational language and informal vocabulary.

S14: What I would change in this class is to use a lot of social interaction with different people and to do more presentations

S15: More native speakers and more examples of the various types of [target language] accents found throughout the [target culture].

S16: More games, so people are even more relaxed to open up verbally

S17: The teacher should correct our oral mistakes more often…feelings won't be hurt ☺

S18: More conversation about things that are on our level, i.e. not talking about health insurance so much as about what we did this weekend, etc.

S18: ---

S19: Nothing

S20: ---

S21: Make people speak much more

S22: Very little

S23: No idea

S24: Learn other ways to get over the nervous feeling

S25: I really like it the way it is. Possibly additional grammar/word usage and word choice practice

S26: More use of the language lab to practice [the target language]

S27: Bring in Native Speakers every once in a while

S28: I would focus more on speaking, comprehensions and grammar, instead of delving into literary aspects

S29: Make Conversation Hour mandatory a couple of times

S30: More exercises involving listening (with audio tapes)

S31: Encouraging the class to speak more off the top of their head, get conversation going

S32: Bring in Native Speakers, use games (as opposed to grammar), and incorporate film

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX D

RESOURCES FOR TEACHING CONVERSATION

Dobson, J. M. (1974). ***Effective techniques for English conversation groups*****. Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers, Inc**.

Although this book addresses conversation teaching as speaking practice, it does purposefully integrate features of "Standard Informal English" (i.e., spoken grammar) and cultural/language-based elements of speaking. Dobson shows the beginning stages of a movement towards the Conversation Norms Approach, and her book has many practical suggestions for integrating conversation-specific elements into instruction. Also, the appendices of her book have very helpful lists of American English rejoinders and exclamations.

Kramsch, C. J. (1981). Discourse analysis and second language teaching. In ***Language and Education: Theory and Practice*****. Center for Applied Linguistics. ERIC. (ISBN: 0872811581).**

This work was a pioneer piece in the theory behind teaching conversation. Kramsch talks about the differences between natural discourse and classroom discourse, and gives a list of ways to incorporate the teaching of different skills and moves necessary for natural conversation.

Barraja-Rohan, A. (1997). Teaching conversation and sociocultural norms with conversation analysis. In A. J. Liddlicoat and C. Crozet (Eds.), ***Teaching languages, teaching cultures*** **(65-77). Australia: Language Australia.**

Barraja-Rohan focuses on the idea of using Conversation Analysis as the basis for teaching conversation. She discusses several different features of conversation that should be included in instruction, and provides a helpful list of items that should be included in a course text.

Hughes, R. (2002). ***Teaching and researching speaking*****. London: Longman.**

This book provides a solid background on the educational theory behind teaching 'real' speech. Hughes addresses the need to teach spoken communication in context, and to include in instruction such aspects of language as spoken grammar and vocabulary, pronunciation, and pragmatics.

Ishihara, N. & Cohen A. D. (Eds.) (2010). ***Teaching and learning pragmatics: Where language and culture meet*****. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.**

Ishihara and Cohen have dedicated an entire book to the research on teaching pragmatics, covering everything from the logic behind teaching it, to the basic elements of instruction, to useful assessment practices. Each of their chapters finishes with a convenient application activity that helps line up the theory with the reality of the instructor's environment.