Call for Contributions
Pragmatics Undercover: (Subtitle TBD)
Deadline: December 31st, 2018

Editors:
Donna Fujimoto (fujimotodonna@gmail.com), Jim Ronald (jmronald@gmail.com), Jerry Talandis Jr. (talandis@gmail.com)

This is a call for contributions for a new teacher-resource book in the JALT Pragmatics SIG Pragmatics Resources series. The purpose of Pragmatics Undercover is to help language teachers help their students understand and use pragmatics to speak English more naturally and appropriately. Written especially for practicing language teachers, the starting point is the stilted or inadequate treatment of language found in many English textbooks. It will offer general guidance for identifying gaps that textbooks leave unaddressed and then for bridging these gaps with ready-made teaching activities. Advice for reviewing, expanding, and assessing pragmatic language will also be provided. This resource book is for busy teachers keen on exploring new ways to help their students speak English better, whether they have heard of pragmatics or not.

The book has a two-part structure designed to help teachers embed pragmatics into their teaching practice. The introductory chapters in Part 1 explain and illustrate the process of uncovering, teaching, reviewing, and assessing pragmatic language. Part 2 is a collection of classroom-ready activities to help teachers put into practice the ideas and information discussed in Part 1. Each activity aims to address something observed to be lacking or problematic in common language textbooks or classroom activities. Step-by-step directions are given for uncovering, understanding, and practicing specific elements of pragmatics, such as how to make a suggestion, give longer answers, continue conversations, listen more actively, or use natural classroom language. While the collection will include speech acts, we especially welcome activities that cover other aspects of pragmatic competence. Each chapter will also contain activity-specific suggestions for reviewing and assessing highlighted pragmatic elements. In other words, each activity chapter in Part 2 serves to “fix” something lacking in the materials we use, with the aim of helping learners engage in more natural interaction.

Contributions should be around 1,000 words (typically two or three A4 pages) and include any references, handouts, or other materials. In addition, make sure to test out your activity with your students before submitting it, and write it more like cookbook recipe than a scholarly article. In other words, do not add too many references, and make it clear and easy to follow. Send your ideas to: talandis@gmail.com. For guidance, please refer to the sample chapter, “Giving Peer Feedback” and the following checklist of chapter contents:

At-a-glance guide
Include short descriptions for each of the following: Activity Name; Level; Preparation; Resources (materials, equipment needed); Activity Length (in minutes); Problem (something lacking in common ELT textbooks); Pragmatic Focus (pragmatic element to be practiced); Goals (overall objectives of the activity). Complete sentences are not required.
Introduction
The first paragraph points out and addresses a problematic or puzzling aspect of language found in ELT materials or activities. This will usually center around some sort of unnatural language or something lacking in textbooks. While we should not “name names” of actual books or cite actual extracts, authors may provide a reconstructed example to illustrate the problem at hand. Next, introduce the pragmatic element that will address this problem. This may be some correction to what was uncovered in the problematic example, or the addition of something that was lacking. Finally, provide a short preview of the activity in a few sentences. Take care not to over-reference this section.

Procedure
The basic step-by-step directions for the activity. Each step should contain only one basic action and be written in a very clear and easy to follow manner, recipe book style.

Follow-up
This section should contain ideas for further review and expansion of your activity. Doing it once in one class is unlikely to result in much learning, so what can teachers do to ensure that this pragmatic element is revisited in subsequent classes?

Assessment
Provide guidance on how to evaluate learners’ proficiency with the pragmatic language featured in your activity. For example, you can identify level descriptors for a marking rubric or discuss what to look for when assessing this construct in real-time on a speaking test. Advice for students’ evaluation of their own progress through reflection or peer-assessment is also welcome.

Appendices
Here is where you can include any worksheets, handouts, or other photocopiable resources.

For More Information
In addition to the references, feel free to recommend other useful titles, websites, or other resources.
If you have any questions, please get in touch. We are happy to send you more detailed information. We are looking forward to working with you on your submission in order for it to be the best it can be.
Peer Feedback
Jim Ronald

Level: Lower intermediate to advanced

Preparation: For Class 1, prepare clothing, accessories; For Class 2, give a short presentation and prepare copies of feedback slips (Appendix I) for each student. For Follow-Up or Assessment, you can use Appendix III or make a handout of slides that are in need of advice.

Resources: Black/Whiteboard, clothing accessories, equipment for projecting presentation

Activity length: 30 minutes in each of two classes

Problem: The language that high school students learn for making suggestions is not suitable for use in peer feedback, in which the pointing out of mistakes or weaknesses may be a typical element.

Pragmatic focus: Softening language and strategies for giving advice

Goal: For learners to be able to give each other advice on presentations without causing offence.

Peer feedback on presentations or reports is an increasingly common feature of classes, but many students are not equipped with the language they need to give feedback in an appropriate manner. At high school, students do learn some language for making suggestions, such as where to go sightseeing or what to eat, using language such as “You should...” or “Why don’t you...?” However, neither they, nor perhaps their teachers, may be sensitive to the difference between this type of suggestion and the constructive criticism often contained within peer feedback. With peer feedback, while one part may – and should – be recognition of good aspects of the presentation or report, feedback should also contain criticism, pointing out weaknesses or mistakes. If learners want to keep good relationships with classmates or, in the working world, with colleagues, they need to learn how to soften this criticism.

One way of softening face-threatening acts such as feedback that contains criticism is to use mitigators: hedges or other softening devices (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 171) such as maybe in Maybe you should... or a little / a bit in Your hat is a little / a bit strange.

Preparation:
Prepare clothing and accessories, ready for putting on or adjusting in class. For Class 2, be prepared to give a short presentation.

Procedure:
Class 1: Feedback on clothing

Raise awareness of the pain caused by inappropriate language
1. Make various adjustments to your clothes (but nothing illegal or offensive!). For example, wear different colour socks, take off one shoe, fill your pockets with board markers, put on a hat and sunglasses, wear two ties or scarves, put your jacket on backwards... ideally so that there is one item requiring change for every two students in the class.
2. Stand in front of the class. Ask students to stand and give you advice. Each time you receive unmitigated advice, such as “Take off your hat!”, “Your socks are strange!”, or “You should take out the pens!” respond with an “Ouch!” of pain.

Elicit advice-giving language
3. When a student gives advice starting with “You should...”, write it on the board, with a line in front of it: ______ you should... and ask what can go before. Either a student suggests Maybe, or you write it in, making Maybe you should... Ask for suggestions about how to make it softer, and add Maybe you could... Also, if a student says something like “Your hat is strange”, write “Your hat is _ ___ strange” and elicit or write in “Your hat is a bit/little strange”.

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Respond to suitable advice
4. Now ask again for advice. Each time a student gives suitably mitigated advice using the language on the board, say thank you, adjust your clothing in response, and tell that student, and to sit down. In larger classes, two students can sit down for one good piece of advice. Continue until all the students are seated and your clothes are returned to normal.

Over to the students
5. Depending on how confident the students are, ask them to adjust their clothing in a couple of ways, then, in groups of three or four, give each other mitigated advice, as above. (This step can be omitted.)

Class 2: Presentation feedback
1. Review the language introduced in Class 1.
2. Hand out feedback slips (Appendix I).
3. Give a presentation that is far from perfect, in terms of visuals, language, and delivery.
4. Students watch the presentation and write feedback on the slips.
5. (Optional) Read out the collected feedback slips; students respond by nodding for feedback that is softened or calling out “Ouch” for feedback that is not.

Follow-up
The best follow-up is for students to give feedback on each other’s presentations or oral reports. Alternatively, or in addition, a reflective type of follow-up, as in Appendix II, is worth doing. Appendix III can also be used in class, or as homework, with students giving feedback for each slide.

Assessment
An ideal form of assessment of learning and use of the feedback language is to collect or photograph the students’ completed feedback slips for each other’s presentations. A more test-like form of assessment could be to show a video of a presentation, during which students complete feedback slips. Alternatively, students could write feedback slips for faulty presentation slides, as in Appendix III.

For More Information

Appendix I
Peer feedback slip From _______________ To _______________
Something good

Some advice
Appendix II: Suitable for small class or groups. Or as homework, maybe prior to class discussion.

Reflection on giving advice
Look at the picture and think about this question:
*Why is getting advice sometimes like being slapped with a fish?*

Have you ever had an experience like this? If you don’t mind, please tell us about it.
(Best if the teacher tells of a painful experience first)

What’s the difference between these:
*Giving a suggestion*  *Giving advice*  *Giving an order*  *Criticizing*

What do you think about softening advice?
Is it better to soften advice? Always? When? Who with?

What are some good ways to soften advice?

How about...
*Next time you can speak more loudly.*
*Your voice is small... but I like your smile!*
*More eye contact please!* 😊

Is it different for speaking and writing? (How?)

There is an English expression – also a song (from the musical *Mary Poppins*) with the words:
*A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down!*
Explain what it means – and give examples!

Any more ideas or thoughts?

What advice would you give about how to give advice?
Appendix III
Give feedback for each of the following slides

Peer feedback on presentations or reports is an increasingly common feature of classes, but many students are not equipped with the language they need to give feedback in an appropriate manner. At high school, students do learn some language for making suggestions, such as where to go sightseeing or what to eat, using language such as "You should..." or "Why don't you...?" However, neither they, nor perhaps their teachers, are sensitive to the difference between this type of suggestion and the suggestions often contained within peer feedback. With peer feedback, while one may - and should - be recognition of good aspects of the presentation or report, feedback should contain criticism, pointing out weaknesses or mistakes. If learners want to keep good relationships with classmates or, in the working world, with colleagues, they need to learn how to soften this criticism.