

Response to Professor Elwood

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Professor Elwood's presentation on Speech Acts in the EFL classroom clearly illustrated the direction of new EFL pedagogy: from grammar-oriented methods to pragmatics-oriented methods. Recent studies on politeness theory or discussion on appropriateness of discourse suggest that EFL classes must include modules that will teach the aspect of pragmatism so that the learner will be fluent not only in language but also in "communication."

The presentation provided an overview of one way to improve the awareness of speech acts, illustrating with the teaching material that Prof. Elwood uses. The method—the use of a Discourse Completion Test—is an interesting example of the attempt to combine language education and communication education. The discourse that the students will learn will facilitate smoother communication and more appropriate forms of communication between L1 and L2 speakers.

The idea advocated, however, poses two issues. One is the adequacy of using American responses as a template to evaluate student's responses. When we teach students a set of pragmatic rules to the students, selection of a rule or a standard requires culturally, linguistically and politically sensitive decisions. Using a single rule, whether it is American or Australian or British or whatever, will plant in students the idea that the rule they learn is "the" standard. This is in direct conflict with "World Englishes" movement. Being fully aware that we need to present a set of rules for teaching and evaluation, English teachers should at the same time be careful to consider English varieties and to try to strike a balance with pragmatics-based English education.

The second point regarding the teaching method proposed is the extension of this class activity. Students will be able to learn the pragmatic and semantic differences well in the classroom setting. The students will discuss and yield English sentences that they think are appropriate; then, they will receive feedback. Yet, the variety of situations or contexts we can provide

them with is very much limited. What the students will need to acquire is the ability to learn independently by applying the basic idea of “speech acts.” This transition from the classroom-based education to field-based education is not easy for students; thus, we must develop some curricula.

Use of Speech Acts is a promising teaching method for any language education. Prof. Elwood has made a significant contribution by introducing concrete class plans to elucidate this new and innovative model.