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# Teaching Culture through Social Situations in English as a Second Language Classes

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University of San Francisco

**Teaching Culture through Social Situations in English as a  
Second Language Classes**

A Field Project Presented to  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Second Language

By  
Irina Andreeva  
May 2016

# **Teaching Culture through Social Situations in English as a Second Language Classes**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

by

Irina Andreeva

May 2016

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this field project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:

Dr. Sedique Popal  
Instructor/Chairperson

May 12, 2016  
Date

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## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Purpose of the Project

Theoretical Framework

Significance of the Project

Limitations

Definition of Terms

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

### Statement of the Problem

According to the “Relevant Qualitative Factors for Spoken Interaction” report, a beginning level English as a Second Language (ESL) student achieves sociolinguistic competence when she/he “can perform and respond to basic language functions, such as information exchange and requests and express opinion and attitudes in a simple way, is aware of the salient politeness conventions and acts appropriately, can act and respond to invitations, apologies and etc.” (Council of Europe, [www.coe.int/lang](http://www.coe.int/lang)). However, even after studying the language for some time, learners will go to the target language country only to find out that they are still unable to express themselves in social situations. What is more important is that the language learner may say a perfectly grammatical utterance but might not know the normal social meaning communicated by such an utterance in the target language culture. For example, according to Soler & Flor (2008), a Japanese learner of English might not say “Thank you” when expressing gratitude, instead he/she says “I am so sorry.” In Japan, an apology can function as a way of giving thanks. However, such an utterance does not have the desired effect since English does not use apologies for expressing gratitude and can result in confusion. This example shows that learning words and grammatical structures of the language is not enough to become competent in using a second language (L2). Cultural differences in language use create problems for the language learner because they can unknowingly violate the rules of speaking. These rules of speaking change from culture to culture and one has to know them to produce utterances that are appropriate to the given context. Cultural factors compose a large part of the non-grammatical aspects of language.

Despite research findings on the importance of culture in language learning, teaching of culture is often not included in the language classroom. Therefore, sociolinguistic issues are often left for the learner to learn by immersion experiences in the target language. There are also complications involved in the teaching of sociolinguistics. There are certain sociolinguistic norms for polite acceptance and refusal, directives and expressions of gratitude and condolences which differ cross-culturally (Holmes, 2013). These cultural variations in language are known as ‘speech acts’. According to Bach (1982), "almost any speech act is really the performance of several acts at once, distinguished by different aspects of the speaker's intention: there is the act of saying something, what one does in saying it, such as requesting or promising, and how one is trying to affect one's audience" (p.14). This involves some understanding of the cultural and social norms of their users. “Speech acts” are loaded with a social context and if not presented appropriately, can seriously offend people. Teaching socially and culturally appropriate language is very important and must be addressed in the foreign language classroom (Holmes, 2013). However, Yu (2006) states that the teaching of culture remains “insubstantial and sporadic, and is one of the most often neglected aspects in foreign language curriculum” (p.16).

### Purpose of the Project

Purpose of the project will be to develop a handbook with a series of lessons introducing language specific to social interactions in different situations, such as extending, accepting and declining invitations, giving and accepting compliments; asking permission and favors; asking for repetition or clarification, apologizing; giving and responding to news, expressing sympathy and offering condolences to help construct



sociolinguistic and strategic competences of a second language learner. Providing students with input on culturally specific linguistic phrases and appropriate body actions will help students gain an understanding of basic cultural differences.

### Theoretical Framework

This field project is supported by two theoretical frameworks: communicative competence (CC), which integrates four parts: linguistic competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence; and pragmatic fossilization, a term used to describe L2 learners who despite being exposed to the target language for a long time, continue to use the speaking rules of their native language.

The first theory that supports this field project is communicative competence. Dell Hymes introduced the term 'communicative competence' in 1967 in opposition to Chomsky's theory of competence and performance. Hymes (1972) points out that it is more important for language learners to understand the social and functional rules of language. Hymes referred to communicative competence as knowledge of the language that enables L2 learners to "convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts" (Brown, 2007, p. 219). Hymes' communicative competence model consists of two areas of competence: grammatical competence and sociolinguistic competence. Grammatical competence entails knowledge of grammar rules, whereas sociolinguistic competence consists of knowledge of sociocultural rules of the language. Canale and Swain in 1980 and 1983 conducted follow-up studies on communicative competence. They distinguished four parts of communicative competence:

1. Grammatical competence: it is the ability to use the linguistic code, grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary correctly.
2. Discourse competence: it is the ability to maintain cohesion between segments of discourse.
3. Sociolinguistic competence: it is the knowledge of the sociocultural rules of language and the ability of L2 learners to use language appropriately in various social contexts.
4. Finally, strategic competence: it is the learners' ability to repair communication breakdown and cope with gaps in knowledge of the target language. (Brown, 2007).

A similar research on communicative competence was developed by Bachman (1990). In his model of communicative competence, he distinguished three components: “organizational knowledge”, “pragmatic knowledge”, and “strategic competence”. Organizational knowledge includes grammatical knowledge and discourse knowledge. Pragmatic knowledge entails both awareness of sociolinguistic rules and functional knowledge. Functional knowledge is referred to as ‘illocutionary competence’ and is related to the ability to send and receive intended meanings. Strategic competence involves the ability to use available options such as wording, paraphrasing, and other means of communication to carry out a given task.

Wen (1999) proposed another model for communicative competence, where cross-cultural competence constitutes an important component parallel to communicative competence. She believes that the ability to handle cultural differences in various interactions should be integrated into communicative competence.

Materials developed for this project incorporate lesson plans designed to promote communicative competence of L2 learners. The lesson plans include different social situations to help build sociolinguistic and strategic competences of students.

The second theory that supports this field project is pragmatic fossilization. The term ‘fossilization’ is commonly referred to as the persistence of formal (grammatical, semantic, phonological) errors in non-native speakers of language (Selinker, 1972). However, this term can also be applied to the pragmatic aspects of language development. Trillo (2002) defined pragmatic fossilization as “the phenomenon by which a non-native speaker systematically uses certain forms inappropriately at the pragmatic level of communication” (p.770). During the learning process, learners are often exposed to a simplified and context-free register of the target language with no explicit teaching of the cultural specificity of language. According to Trillo (2002), pragmatic fossilization occurs not because of a lack of linguistic competence but because of a delay in presentation of the pragmatic variation.

Society’s cultural values are reflected in use of language. A choice of vocabulary and grammar of language predispose people to think and perceive the world around them in certain ways. Once a person learns cultural grammar and the rules and conventions that govern conversations, they can better assimilate with the new culture. Therefore, the handbook for this field project is developed to teach communicative competence along with sociolinguistic competence, as L2 learners can never succeed in being a fluent speaker in the target language without developing both competences.

## Significance of the Project

ESL students view the world through the prism of his or her values and cultural knowledge that they have learned throughout their lives. Most of the ESL students are unaware of the cultural differences between their culture and the culture of the studied language; moreover, they believe that everything in the target language has an equivalent in the native language. However, to express the meaning in a L2, one has to know the cultural context of the communication; therefore, ESL instructors must know sociolinguistic features connected to the teaching and learning of an L2 in order to help their students achieve sociolinguistic competence. Furthermore, they need access to teaching materials which focus on strategies for emphasizing sociolinguistic competence in adult ESL students with limited language proficiency.

## Limitations

There are several limitations identified in this field project. This project is intended for learners of English with intermediate to high intermediate level of proficiency. Therefore, students with lower level of proficiency may find the material too difficult to understand or may not comprehend the subtle notions of sociolinguistic conventions. Another limitation of this project is that the lesson plans were created with the notion that teachers of English as a second language should be aware of cultural norms and rules of specific speech acts. It is presumed that teachers of English as a second language are educated about cultural aspects of language, sociolinguistic norms, intercultural competence and pragmatics. Therefore, the deep context layer of the dialogues or other exchanges of the

material may be lost on students if presented by a teacher unfamiliar with sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects of language.

Other limitations of this field project may be related to the cultural aspect of language. It is difficult to teach culture due to the fact that it is a very complex notion. Teachers may believe that culture is something that must be experienced and that classroom instruction is not necessary. Some teachers do not feel comfortable discussing cultural differences and tend to avoid subjects that touch on cultural diversity.

### Definition of Terms

**Anomie:** It is a feeling of social uncertainty and dissatisfaction (Brown, 2007).

**Communicative Competence:** A term used to refer to L2 learner's grammatical (including rules of phonology, orthography, vocabulary, morphology, syntax), sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic knowledge of language (Celce-Murcia, 2001).

**Cultural myopia:** A term used to describe a person, who is embedded in his or her own culture and thus unable to see or accept other cultures (Bennett, 1998).

**Culture:** A concept that includes social values and other capabilities shared by members of society (Singer, cited in Bennett, 1998).

**Optimal distance model:** A theory that defines a critical period of second language acquisition in terms of acculturation, anomie and social distance rather than biological factors (Brown, 2007).

**Pragmatic transfer:** A term which refers to the transfer of the forms, meaning and culture of the first language to the second language (De Capua, 1998).

**Pragmatic Fossilization:** It is a pragmatic barrier in acquiring a second language; when a L2 learner systematically misuses certain forms at the pragmatic level of competence (Bahar, Awal, 2013).

**Sociolinguistic Competence:** It is one of the dimensions of communicative competence used to refer to the ability to produce and understand utterances in different sociolinguistic contexts (Brown, 2007).

**Speech Acts:** Functions of language or utterances that serve to accomplish particular purposes in communication (Holmes, 2013).

CHAPTER II  
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Sociolinguistic Competence

Pragmatic Fossilization

Summary

## CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Introduction

The ultimate goal of the L2 teaching is to develop the communicative competence of the learners. Learners will have to use the language appropriately and effectively in a given situation. Therefore, the study of language cannot be limited to linguistic knowledge. Cultural connotation of words and expressions, knowledge of social values, differences in thinking patterns and their influence on the communication patterns should be taken into consideration when teaching the language.

The aim of this section is to investigate the role of culture on developing sociolinguistic and communicative competence of L2 learners. This section will explore existing literature and explain the necessity for addressing sociolinguistic competence of language students, as well as address the problems and complications associated with the second language acquisition.

The review begins by taking a closer look at one of the components of communicative competence, sociolinguistic competence. Sociolinguistic competence is hard to acquire due to the multitude of differences in language use. The author examines several theories that have been developed to define sociolinguistic competence and its components. One of the ways to teach sociolinguistic competence is to present students with specific to a certain situation speech acts. The first section also includes a description of speech acts in relation to teaching sociolinguistic competence. The integral part of the material developed for this field project implements sociolinguistic competence and various speech acts to develop communicative competence of L2 learners. In the second section



of the review, pragmatic transfer and theories that support this phenomenon are examined. The author discusses the importance of teaching culture and sociolinguistic aspect of language in order to avoid pragmatic transfer and fossilization.

### Sociolinguistic Competence

Sociolinguistics is a word used to describe the study of the appropriateness of language in different contexts. In other words, sociolinguistics is the study of how “situational factors such as the cultural context and setting of a speech event affect the choice of what should be said.” (Brown, 2000, p. 220). Sociolinguistic competence is one of the components, which include grammatical competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. Grammatical competence and discourse competence are defined as the linguistic system of the language, whereas sociolinguistic and strategic competences are the terms used to describe the functional aspects of communication.

Sociolinguistic competence is further separated into two pragmatic categories, which are the functional aspect of language and the sociolinguistic aspect. The functional aspect or “illocutionary” competence deals with sending and receiving intended messages (Brown, 2000). Sociolinguistic competence encompasses such aspects as politeness, formality, metaphor, register, and culturally related aspects of language. (Brown, 2000). Another component of sociolinguistic competence is nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication deals with not what you say, but how you say it, through body language, gestures, eye contact, physical distance and other nonverbal messages. Cultural aspects are connected to nonverbal communication to the point that according to E. Hall (1998) “the barriers to culture learning are more nonverbal than verbal.” (p. 54) There are six categories of nonverbal communication: kinesics or body language, eye contact,

proxemics or physical proximity, artifacts or clothing and ornamentation, kinesthetics or touching and olfactory dimension or sensory nonverbal messages. People from different cultures possess different nonverbal realities. For example, English language is more verbal than Japanese. It means that speakers of English prefer to express their thoughts and feelings through words rather than gestures. Japanese, on the other hand, puts more emphasis on a nonverbal implied message. Speakers of Japanese infer meaning from the context of statements, such as the way it is said, by whom, to whom and where (Bennett, 1998). Nonverbal behavior includes intonation and pitch of words. A change in pitch can imply a range of emotions from anger to friendliness. Through nonverbal messages one can indicate social status, place of education, home region. Another aspect of nonverbal behavior is turn taking in conversations. It is common for the European American patterns of conversation to look directly in the eye to cue turns. In contrast to this pattern, Asian cultures require averted eyes to indicate a turn in a conversation (Holmes, 2013). A study by Eibl-Eibesfeldt's (cited in L.Knapp, J. Hall, G. Horgan, 2014, p. 52), on studies of verbal and nonverbal human communication, lead him to conclude that rules related to greetings, getting the focus of attention or persuading a partner to give you something are essential of both verbal and nonverbal human behavior. He also acknowledges that cultural factors play an important role in making these strategies different from culture to culture.

It is difficult for L2 learners to notice and understand such unspoken codes of communication as the signs of formality, the handling of time, spatial relationships unless these cultural aspects are explicitly taught (Bennett, 1998). A study by Gumperz in 1977 (cited in Ochs and Schieffelin, p.308) found that even after living in London for ten

years, Indian speakers of English were still making sociolinguistic mistakes in speaking that made them sound rude to British speakers of English. Another challenge in acquiring sociolinguistic competence is contingent upon the multitude of differences in language use among cultures. Such variances as age, gender, status and the formality of the situation should be taken into account when one attempts communication. Wolfson (1989) introduced the term 'sociolinguistic relativity' in an attempt to describe the effects of different cultural contexts on language learning. She defines it as "cultural relativity, when extended to the evaluation of sociolinguistic rules, may be referred to as sociolinguistic relativity" (p.41). In other words, sociolinguistic relativity refers to considerable variety of the norms and values which help speakers construe knowledge as to what is appropriate to say to whom and under which condition.

Cultural norms and variations in language use are expressed through the speech functions or speech acts. According to Brown (2007), a speech act is the use of language to accomplish a certain purpose, such as requesting, responding or eliciting information, complimenting, inviting or expressing gratitude. There are different approaches to describe and categorize the functions of speech. Holmes (2013) posits the following list:

1. expressive function – utterances used to describe the speaker's feelings.
2. directive function – utterances that require someone to do something.
3. referential function – utterances that are used to provide information.
4. metalinguistic function – utterances that give comment on language itself.
5. poetic function – utterances that express aesthetic features of language.
6. phatic function – utterances that are used to show solidarity and empathy with others.

Any utterance might have more than one function. L2 learners might have excellent knowledge of grammar and lexis of the target language but still unable to communicate effectively. Therefore, students must learn how to use linguistic forms to accomplish certain language functions. Each speech act has a specific formula within it. According to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1983), the speech act of requests consists of the three components: “address term, head act and adjunct to head act” (p.200). Each of these components can further be categorized. Within the address term component, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1983) distinguish four categories: hearer oriented, speaker oriented, speaker and hearer oriented and impersonal. There are also various means to request an act, such as by the use of interrogatives, negation, past tense or embedded ‘if’ clauses. Adjuncts to head act are categorized by the following modifications: checking of availability, getting a precommitment, giving reasons for the request, expressing appreciation for the action, indicating awareness of possible refusal and finally, considering the cost of the request. The formula for apologizing is different from that of requesting. According to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1983), the speech act of apologizing consists of the following components: “taking on responsibility, explanation or account of cause, offer of repair, promise of forbearance” (p.208). A study comparing apologies between speakers of English, Russian and Hebrew found that Hebrew uses each component of apology less frequently than both speakers of English and Russian. Moreover, Hebrew has the lowest degree of apology of the three languages studied. (Olshtain, 1981, cited in Cohen and Olshtain, 1983). Holmes (2013), states that speech acts are loaded with sociolinguistic norms and ways of expressing certain speech acts vary across cultures. Such factors as formality of the situation, status of the participants

and solidarity come into play when one attempts a certain speech act. For example, in the case of complimenting, several social factors, such as gender and the relationship between the speakers come into play. According to Wolfson (1989) and Holmes (2013), most of the compliments in American and New Zealand English are exchanged between people of equal status and occur between friends, acquaintances and colleagues. However, Spanish speakers tend to give compliments to intimates more than English speakers do. Different cultures place different value on such factors as intimacy, gender and appropriateness. Furthermore, the cultural variations of speech acts make it particularly challenging for L2 learners to grasp. It is crucial that ESL teachers take into account the issues of cultural awareness and linguistic variation when teaching speech acts in the classroom.

### Pragmatic Transfer

Research on the speech acts of native speakers of English compared with nonnative speakers' norms gleaned interesting cross-cultural variations. Despite the fact that the speech acts appear to be universal, verbalization and use of the speech acts differ across cultures. For example, the majority of Russian speakers responded to the question 'What would you like?' in a restaurant setting with the imperative form 'Bring the menu, please' as the most natural way to address the waiter (Wierzbicka, cited in Trosborg, 2010). In this example a Russian speaker may be regarded as rude and aggressive, since it is inappropriate to address the waiter in this situation with an imperative. Learners of second language rely on the socially appropriate norms of their first language when they attempt a conversation. They tend to transfer the norms, meaning and culture of their first language to the second language. A study by De Capua (1998) on the phenomena of

pragmatic transfer lead him to conclude that “pragmatic transfer occurs when the second language learners apply the socially appropriate rules and formulas of their native language to target language situations either because they are unaware of target language routines or because they are psychologically unable to do so as the L2 norms and routines violate their first language internalized and culturally conditioned acceptable norms of speech behavior” (p.21). There are different definitions and classifications of pragmatic transfer. A study by Thomas (1983) describes two types of pragmatic failure: ‘pragmalinguistic failure’ and ‘sociopragmatic failure’. Thomas (1983) defines pragmalinguistic failure as a failure which occurs when the non native speaker uses linguistic and grammatical forms in the target language without knowing the social conventions of the target language. Whereas, sociopragmatic failure refers to the situations when a non native speaker uses cultural rules of his or her native language during communication. Pragmatic failure leads to the failure of communication, as the native language rules do not transfer well into the second language. Thomas (1983) pointed out that the pragmatic failure is more serious than linguistic errors. While linguistic errors indicate that the L2 learner is less proficient in the language, pragmatic failure may lead to the misjudgment of a person of being aggressive, unfriendly or dishonest.

In most cases, L2 learners follow a ‘binary track’ in their second language acquisition: the formal vs. the pragmatic track. (Zhao, 2013). The formal track includes the grammatical and semantic rules, whereas the pragmatic track refers to the social use of language structures in different social situations. According to Ochs and Schieffelin (1984), native speakers of language acquire both tracks simultaneously. However, L2

learners develop the formal and pragmatic tracks through formal instruction. L2 learners are often not exposed to the social relations in speech. A summary by Ochs and Schieffelin, (1984) of studies written on the effect of immersion in second language in the target language culture lead them to conclude that “the cultural knowledge necessary for appropriate social interaction may lag behind or never develop” (Ochs and Schieffelin, 1984, p.501).

#### Acculturation

A L2 learner who misuses the language at the pragmatic level of communication is said to suffer from pragmatic fossilization. Pragmatic fossilization can occur due to multiple reasons. According to Selinker (1992), language transfer is a big factor in pragmatic fossilization. Schmidt (1993) states that L2 learners who fail to notice the difference between their own and new language forms will fail to acquire the language and failure to acquire means fossilization. Krashen (1997) has introduced the “affective filter” hypothesis to explain socio-psychological barriers in second language acquisition and prevent comprehensible L2 input. Krashen (1997) states that a learner with low affective filter can learn the target language more quickly and efficiently than a learner with high affective filter. In other words, L2 students who experience such feelings as nervousness, boredom or anxiety or whose affective filter is high, cannot acquire language, as the input never reaches the language acquisition device. On the other hand, students who have high motivation, less anxiety and stress; who are relaxed and engaged in the learning process, will more likely succeed in L2 learning. A study by D. McCann, L. Hecht, S.Ribeau (1986) on the influence of Affective Filter Hypothesis on language

learning lead them to conclude that lowered Affective Filter supports language input and acquisition.

Fossilization can also be the result of an acculturation failure. In many cases, acculturation during adulthood involves the ability to function in diverse social situations. However, many immigrants do not feel comfortable around native speakers and prefer to remain within their first language immigrant community (MacWhinney, cited in Han, Zhaohong, Odlin, Terence, 2006). L2 learners who do not acculturate will fail to acquire the L2. In fact, Lybeck's (cited in Han, Zhaohong, Odlin, Terence, 2006) study of Americans in Norway provided empirical evidence in learners' fossilization. She concluded that when L2 learners failed to acculturate and form a new socio-cultural identity, fossilization in the process of acquiring second language occurred. Therefore, one's failure to socialize can be the cause of fossilization. Brown (1980, 2007) believes that L2 learners are better suited to learn the second language when certain conditions of acculturation are met. In the process of L2 acquisition a person goes through several stages of acculturation. According to Brown (2007), acculturation process has four stages. The first stage is the honeymoon, a period of newness and excitement. The second stage is referred to as the culture shock period. When a person experience feelings of hostility, anger, frustration, loneliness and resentment toward new culture, they are said to undergo culture shock. During this stage of acculturation, a person often finds himself being lost between two cultures. Culture shock can lead to feelings of social uncertainty and dissatisfaction, which Durkheim (1897) coined as a concept of anomie. An individual's capacity to learn new language depends on his state of emotional being, and a feeling of anomie can become a mental impediment in acquiring L2. The third stage is a



period of gradual recovery. By recovering from the culture shock and adjusting to the new culture, the person enters the fourth stage. The optimal period for L2 acquisition is when learners are in the third stage of acculturation or in the stage of recovery. As Brown (1980, p. 161) writes it “stage three may provide not only the optimal distance, but the optimal cognitive and affective tension to produce the necessary pressure to acquire the language.” The third stage of acculturation is also marked with the beginnings of mastery in a second language. Brown hypothesizes that if the learner knows enough language to feel distant or different from his or her culture, he can also see how far he is from the native speakers of the new language. If learners fail to master the second language during the third stage of recovery, they may never be successful in acquiring a target language to a high level. Another conclusion that Brown (1980, 2007) draws is that the failure to “synchronize acculturation and language learning” (p. 199) can be a reason for a learner’s inability to acquire the target language. Brown’s Optimal distance model suggests that adults who have learned to cope in the foreign culture during stage three without linguistic means can never achieve mastery in L2. Moreover, many of the linguistic forms that the learners do acquire at that stage are fossilized forms of language. It is important that L2 teachers be aware of the current cultural stages of learners and try to include acculturation support as part of or an addition to language teaching.

### Cultural Myopia

Another factor in pragmatic fossilization is cultural myopia. According to Bahar and Awal (2013), when people are embedded in their language to the point that they are unable to comprehend or accept the fact that other cultures may view the world differently, they are said to suffer from cultural myopia. It is very difficult for many

people to overcome cultural myopia due to the fact that people acquire personalities and cultures in childhood before they can evaluate or fully comprehend both. According to the study by Ochs and Schieffelin (1984), the process of socialization goes hand-in-hand with language acquisition. It has been shown that pre-linguistic infants can get the attention of others, make demands, take turns even before they obtain control of grammatical structures. Ochs and Schieffelin (1984) observed in their studies that different voice qualities signal different functions of the speech in infants. This suggests that much of one's understanding of reality is founded in the early cultural lessons. Culture becomes so embedded in people that they are often not aware of many characteristics within their own culture. Moreover, culture affects perception of the world so much so that persons may be unaware that other ways of viewing life are even possible. According to Stewart (1972, p.16) "the typical person has a strong sense of what the world is really like, so that it is with surprise that he discovers that 'reality' is built up out of certain assumptions commonly shared among members of the same culture." Ways to view the world vary dramatically from culture to culture and many beliefs and assumptions are not shared by members of other cultures. According to Hinkel (1999), even advanced and proficient L2 learners transfer sociocultural frameworks from their first language. Thomas (1983) explains that violations of cultural norms of appropriateness often lead to miscommunication and what is more important that L2 learners are not even aware that they display inappropriate linguistic behavior.

#### Summary

This literature review was done to support the idea that in order to develop communicative competence, L2 learners, in addition to mastering linguistic, strategic,

structural and discursual aspects of the language, have to acquire sociolinguistic rules and conventions. The development of sociolinguistic competence is a crucial element of second language acquisition. Regarding sociolinguistic competence, the following themes were investigated: 1) definition and different categories of sociolinguistic competence, 2) sociolinguistic relativity, 3) speech acts and speech functions. Another purpose of the literature review was to examine some important issues that lead to pragmatic transfer, acculturation and failure in L2 acquisition. The following important theories and aspects of pragmatic transfer, acculturation and cultural myopia were discussed: 1) definition and classifications of pragmatic transfer, 2) definition of pragmatic fossilization, 3) related theories that help explain the causes of pragmatic fossilization such as a) Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, b) Brown's optimal distance model, c) cultural myopia.

In first part of the literature review, sociolinguistic competence and its' components were discussed. Specifically, sociolinguistic competence consists of two major components: pragmalinguistics or appropriateness of form; and sociopragmatics or appropriateness of meaning. Sociocultural norms, conventions and variations are most often expressed through the speech functions or speech acts. Speech acts of requests, apologizing and complimenting were described to highlight the fact that each of these speech acts has a specific formula within it. A proper understanding of speech acts' rules will help L2 students communicate effectively.

The second section of the literature review focused on pragmatic transfer which is one of the main problems in second language acquisition process. Two types of pragmatic transfer were discussed: pragmalinguistic failure and sociopragmatic failure. Other reasons account for pragmatic fossilization among L2 learners: 1) failure to notice the

difference between L2 learners' own language and new language forms, 2) high affective filter (feelings like nervousness, boredom or anxiety) hinders language learning and can result in pragmatic fossilization, 3) acculturation failure, 4) cultural myopia.

To sum up, the information provided in the literature review indicates the importance of teaching sociolinguistic aspect of the language to achieve communicative competence. Examining speech acts used in various social settings can facilitate second language acquisition and provide learners with an understanding of the relationship between linguistic forms and socio- cultural contexts. The failure to acquire sociolinguistic competence can lead to pragmatic fossilization and, ultimately, inability to master the second language.

CHAPTER III  
THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

Description of the Project

Development of the Project

The Project

## CHAPTER III THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

### Description of the Project

This field project contains a handbook with a series of lessons introducing expressions and vocabulary relating to social interactions in different situations. The materials for the handbook are developed for students who have achieved intermediate to high intermediate level of proficiency. The handbook covers such situations as extending, accepting and declining invitations; giving and accepting compliments; asking permission and favors; asking for repetition or clarification; apologizing; giving and responding to news; expressing sympathy and offering condolences. Each of the unit focuses on culturally specific linguistic phrases and expressions that will help students gain an understanding of cultural differences and develop conversational skills. Each lesson has been designed to provide lively, engaging interaction that might occur among acquaintances or colleagues. The dynamic of warm-up, activity, and follow-up prevails to make the best use of the content. The following units are presented:

- Unit 1: Invitations. In this lesson, students will learn how to extend spoken and written invitations and how to accept or decline invitations. They will practice inviting each other to an event, accept or decline an invitation and write an invitation to a formal event. The goal of this unit is to expose students to culture specific speech act of invitations.

- Unit 2: Complimenting. Students will see examples of compliments and practice complimenting each other's clothing. They will be presented with idiomatic expressions of clothing. The speech act of complimenting will be discussed.
- Unit 3: Difficult conversation situations. In this lesson, students will learn how to ask for repetition and clarification, how to avoid or change the subject, how to apologize. They will learn phrases related to conversations and how to cut a conversation short. The goal of this unit is to expose students to the ways of handling difficult situations and present language specific to the listed situations.
- Unit 4: Asking favors. In this lesson, students will learn how to ask permission and favors, how to accept and avoid a commitment. They will learn expressions related to favors and promises. The goal of this unit is to construct students' linguistic and sociolinguistic ability of dealing with uncomfortable situations
- Unit 5: Good and bad news. Students will learn ways to express sympathy, praise and congratulations as well as offer condolences. Students will be presented with expressions about news and misfortune and offered to incorporate these expressions in their own sentences and dialogues. The goal of this unit is to emphasize idiomatic expressions, present students with specific vocabulary and expressions.

The units are designed to facilitate speaking and develop communicative competence. A variety of instruction techniques are used to address different learning styles, promote engaging and student-centered activities.

### Development of the project

Coming from the culture where teacher is an unquestionable expert and learners are passive listeners, I can relate to students with a similar background where speaking out in class is unusual, the focus on real communication is new and perhaps disconcerting. This project was developed with those students in mind to help such students break free from the constraints of their past learning experiences and get involved into conversations, discussions and debates. This project is for students who despite studying English as a second language for years, still have great difficulty in expressing themselves when it comes to social situations. Teaching sociolinguistic skills may be a way to help students develop a sense of language, learn to communicate effectively, acculturate and gain a feeling of belongingness. The project serves to teach students speech acts that are appropriate in the social situations by drawing students' attention to the sociolinguistic rules of language.

A huge source of inspiration for this project comes from research in second language acquisition. Research on motivation, multiple intelligences, learning strategies has been taken into account when developing the project. Research shows that adults as learners want their learning to be immediately applicable to their lives, and they want to know why something needs to be learned. Lesson plans developed for the project include a variety of activities that relate to real life situations and set up the way that students feel motivated to complete them. The theory of multiple intelligences suggests that teaching will be most successful if differences in learning styles and preferences are acknowledged and responded to in a lesson. If a language learner has a high musical intelligence, putting language into a musical frame will help them learn more quickly. If someone has spatial



intelligence, charts, maps and diagrams will all help and if someone has bodily kinesthetic intelligence, movement activities will suit them well. Lesson plans are developed to suit the variety of learning preferences L2 students have.

Overall, the main objective of this project was to utilize second language acquisition theories, various language teaching approaches, research findings on language competence and my personal vision on teaching.

### The Project

The project in its entirety can be found in the Appendix.

CHAPTER IV  
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Recommendations

References

Appendix

## CHAPTER IV CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

This Field project is based on two premises: communicative competence and pragmatic fossilization. Communicative competence implies the idea that speakers of a language have to have more than just grammatical competence to communicate effectively in a language. They also need to be able to choose a proper language to express themselves and accomplish their purposes in communication, which requires that the learners get to know how to handle cultural differences in various interactions. Sociolinguistic competence is one of the components of communicative competence that entails cultural differences, appropriateness of form and meaning. A review of literature on sociolinguistic competence yields that culture is deeply ingrained in every individual; and that variations in language use account for the difficulties in acquiring sociolinguistic competence. When language learners are unaware of cultural differences in language use, they apply their native language rules to the target language. Pragmatic fossilization occurs as a result of continuous use of pragmatic transfer despite prolonged exposure to the target language culture. Moreover, language learners who do not acculturate and are unable to comprehend the fact that there is a different cultural view on the world may fail to acquire the second language.

The purpose of this project was to design a series of lessons to promote a deeper appreciation of how culture and language interact. Discussions, role-plays, video lessons were developed to reinforce cultural concepts and to provide ample opportunities to

practice. In many of the activities students can explore interactional differences as in apologizing or interrupting instances and develop an understanding of the relationship between linguistic forms and socio-cultural competence.

The significance of this project is that it provides students with interactive, engaging material that can help promote an understanding and awareness of conventional behavior in common situations in the target culture, develop a sense of language and ultimately communicate effectively.

### Recommendations

The handbook for this Field project was designed for adults who have achieved intermediate to high intermediate level of proficiency in English. It focuses on conversational skills and emphasizes socio-cultural aspect of the language. To ensure successful implementation of the handbook, the author would like to recommend to fellow teachers the following suggestions:

- 1) help students feel comfortable and relaxed to contribute to the discussions;
- 2) ensure that the class sessions become a forum for lively discussion where all points of view and cultural sharing are welcome;
- 3) ensure that students have sufficiently understood the content so that they can fully participate in the activities;

The first three units of the handbook were fully developed; however, the material for the last two units is intended simply to give an outline and suggestions for further development or provide additional talking points should there be a need of them. Also, grammar teaching is not included in the lessons; therefore, the author suggests that the

lessons be supplemented with additional grammar exercises. While lessons include a variety of exercises and reading texts, it may be a good idea to expand the lessons with additional texts or homework that you find suitable.

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## Appendix

Teaching culture through social situations – a handbook for students



TEACHING CULTURE THROUGH SOCIAL SITUATIONS – A  
HANDBOOK FOR STUDENTS

Welcome Students!

**Congratulations!** You are about to plunge into the most enjoyable, the most useful and the most applicable to life English lessons.

This handbook will give you the tools you need to communicate in various social situations. You will learn:

- ✓ Vocabulary and expressions that can be used in different social situations
- ✓ Appropriate way to carry a conversation
- ✓ Turn-taking
- ✓ Cultural differences
- ✓ I hope you enjoy the lessons and the exciting conversations you'll be having!



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## INVITATIONS

## Lesson I: Extending Invitations



## DISCUSS:

When was the last time you received an invitation? What was it for? Do you remember what it (or the person) said?

Examples of invitations:

- Are you doing anything on Friday?
- I was wondering if you'd like to join us for dinner.
- I'd like to invite you to a picnic.
- Would you like to join us for dinner?
- Would you like to come?
- Are you free on Saturday?
- You are cordially invited to attend the annual holiday ball.
- Your presence is requested at the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.
- Are you free on Friday?

## INVITATIONS

Look at the chart:

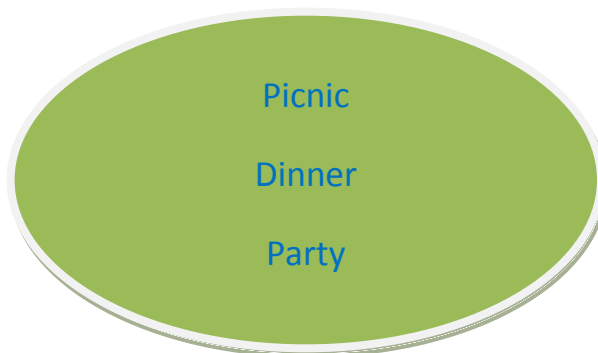
Invitations	Very formal	Informal	Formal	Very formal

Put the invitations in the chart according to the formality of the expressions.



1. Invite your boss to your house for dinner.
2. Invite the president of the company to a celebration in your department.
3. Invite an older aunt to an anniversary party.
4. Invite your best friend to your house.

**Pair work: brainstorm places and events to invite people:**



- Choose an event and a date and extend an invitation using the information.

INVITATIONS



**DISCUSS:**

How would you invite someone to a formal banquet? A dinner party at your home? What if the person is your boss/a colleague/a close friend?



Answer the questions:

1. What is this invitation for?
2. Is this formal or informal event?
3. What is the meaning of RSVP?

Complete the chart to a wedding party by providing the following information:

When	Where	What time	Gift	Dress code	RSVP by

- When you plan a special event, you may invite honored guests to attend.



- Write an invitation for a birthday party, retirement party, or art exhibit opening, by either filling out this form or creating your own.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

\_\_\_\_\_ respectfully invites you to its  
\_\_\_\_\_. We would be honored to  
have you \_\_\_\_\_. Please RSVP by  
\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Discuss:**

On what occasions could you send:

- A formal invitation?
- A printed fill-in invitation?
- An informal handwritten invitation?

## Responding to invitations:

Accepting	Declining
Thanks, I'd love to.	I'd like to, but I'm afraid I can't.
That's very nice of you.	Thanks, but I won't be able to make it.
It would be our pleasure.	That's very kind of you. Unfortunately...
That would be great. Thanks.	I'm sorry, but I've already made other plans.



- Invite each other to an event and accept or decline.

### Exercise 1

Match the event with the invitation.

- |   |     |  |
|---|-----|--|
| 1. Let's go visit my parents on Saturday.   | ___ | a. You're inviting a colleague.        |
| 2. Mr. Miller requests the pleasure of your company on Saturday.                      | ___ | b. You're inviting a friend.           |
| 3. Bill from marketing is having a party on Saturday. Would you like to come with me? | ___ | c. You're sending a formal invitation. |



### Discuss in groups:

- When an invitation says a party will start at 7:00 p.m., do you have to be there at 7:00? Is it Ok to be late?
- What does it mean to be on time for an appointment in your country?
- Are deadlines flexible? If yes, how flexible?
- What does it mean to be “fashionably late” for a party or get-together?

## INVITATIONS

Reading: Parties

### 1. Pre-Reading

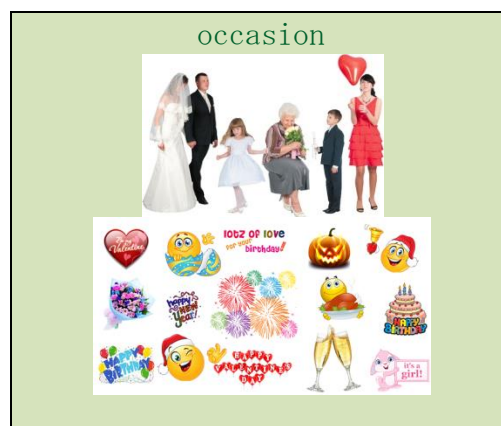
**Discuss:**

Have you ever been to a housewarming party? Baby or bridal showers?  
When? What was it like?

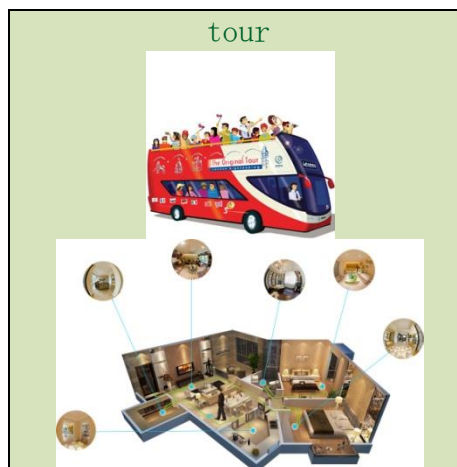


➤ Can you guess what kind of event this picture shows?

## 2. Vocabulary Presentation



INVITATIONS



## Parties

A party is a gathering of people who have been invited by a host for the purposes of socializing. There are different types of parties. Some parties are held in honor of a specific person, day or event.

### Housewarming party

A housewarming party may be held when a family, couple, or person moves into a new house or apartment. It is an occasion for the hosts to show their new home to their friends. Housewarming parties are typically informal and do not include any planned activities other than a tour of the new house or apartment. Invited family members and friends may bring gifts for the new home.

### Showers

A shower is a party whose primary purpose is to give gifts to the guest

of honor, commonly a bride-to-be or a mother-to-be. Guests who attend are expected to bring a small gift, usually related to the upcoming life event, like getting married or having a baby. Themed games are a frequent sight during showers as well.

### 3. Post-reading exercises:



Answer the questions:

1. When is a housewarming party held?
2. Do you need to bring gifts?
3. What types of showers are mentioned?

#### Survey

Survey classmates on types of events they attended; how they were invited and whether they brought any gifts. When finished, report your findings.

## INVITATIONS

Gift giving and receiving



Discuss:

In many cultures, it is important to bring a gift to a party or celebration.

- What should you bring to a dinner party?
- When is it important to give a gift in your country?
- What kinds of gifts are not appropriate in your country?

Read:

Occasion	Typical Gifts
❖ a meal at someone's place	❖ a bottle of wine, flowers, candy
❖ an overnight stay at someone's home	❖ an object from your country (for example, a vase or dish), gifts for the children
❖ friends' birthdays, particularly the "big" birthdays (21, 25, 30 etc.)	❖ books, records, decorations for the house, photo albums (this depends on the person who is giving the gift.)
❖ religious ceremonies such as Baptism (Christian), Confirmation (Christian), or Bar/Bat Mitzvah (Jewish)	❖ books, religious objects (for these occasions, it is a good idea to ask people for suggestions)
❖ weddings	❖ items for the home such as dishes, pots, towels, blankets,



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ showers (baby showers, wedding showers)</li>   <li>❖ birth of a baby</li> </ul>	<p style="color: blue; margin: 0;">photo albums</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ baby showers: sheets, blankets, diaper bags, baby toys. Wedding showers: usually small things for the kitchen</li> <li>❖ clothes, toys, stuffed animals, things for the baby's room.</li> </ul>
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### Exercise: When to give gifts

There are times when a gift is appropriate and times when it is not. In the following exercise, decide in which situations you would give a gift. Discuss what you would do in your own culture and in the U.S.

1. You have studied English with a tutor for about two months. Your tutor cannot continue because of a busy schedule. You will be meeting with your tutor for the last time.

Would you give a gift? (yes/no) my culture \_\_\_\_\_ U.S. \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what would you give? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Your supervisor at work just gave you your six-month performance review. He gave you an excellent review and an increase in salary.

Would you give a gift? (yes/no) my culture \_\_\_\_\_ U.S. \_\_\_\_\_

### INVITATIONS

If yes, what would you give? \_\_\_\_\_

3. A teacher has helped you after class when you had difficulty in a subject. She stayed more than an hour after class on three different days to help you. You appreciate her extra help.

Would you give a gift? (yes/no) my culture \_\_\_\_\_ U.S. \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what would you give? \_\_\_\_\_

4. It is one of your co-worker's birthdays. You don't know this person very well, but you like him and you know that other people will be getting presents for him.

Would you give a gift? (yes/no) my culture \_\_\_\_\_ U.S. \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what would you give? \_\_\_\_\_

5. You have a small problem with your car and your neighbor, a mechanic, looks at your car. He finds the problem in a couple of minutes and fixes it right away.

Would you give a gift? (yes/no) my culture \_\_\_\_\_ U.S. \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what would you give? \_\_\_\_\_

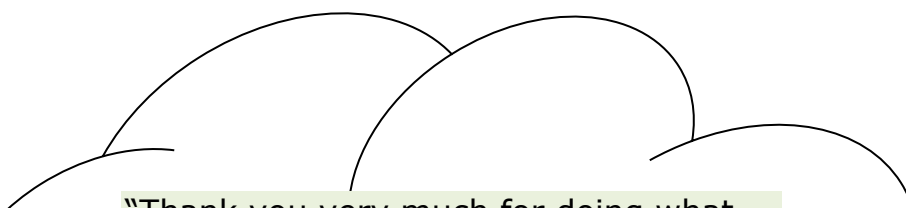
6. You have been sick for a few days. One of your neighbors has been bringing food for your family every day.

Would you give a gift? (yes/no) my culture \_\_\_\_\_ U.S. \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what would you give? \_\_\_\_\_

## INVITATIONS

### Showing appreciation





## **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter, you practiced language and communication skills in the areas of:

- Invitations;
- Accepting and declining invitations;
- Occasions;
- Gift giving and receiving

COMPLIMENTING

Lesson II - Complimenting



DISCUSS:

What compliment could you make about someone's appearance? clothing? job?

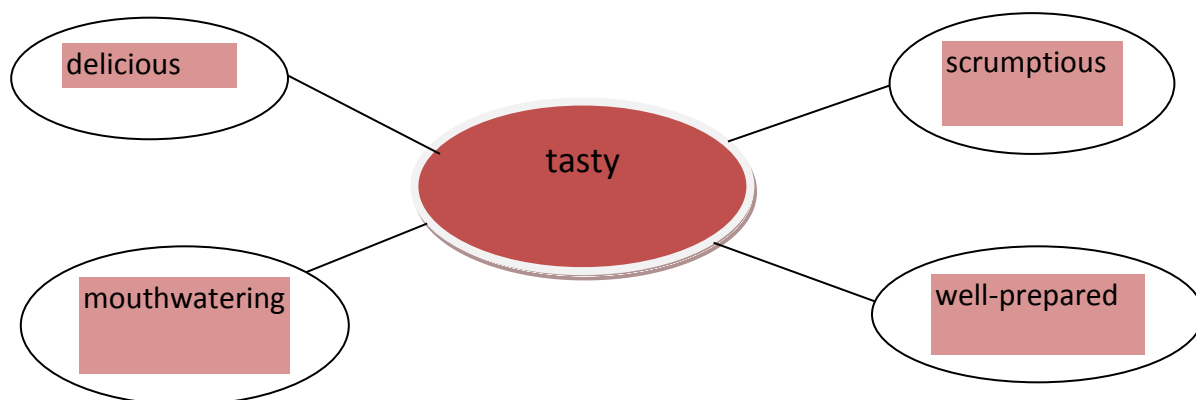
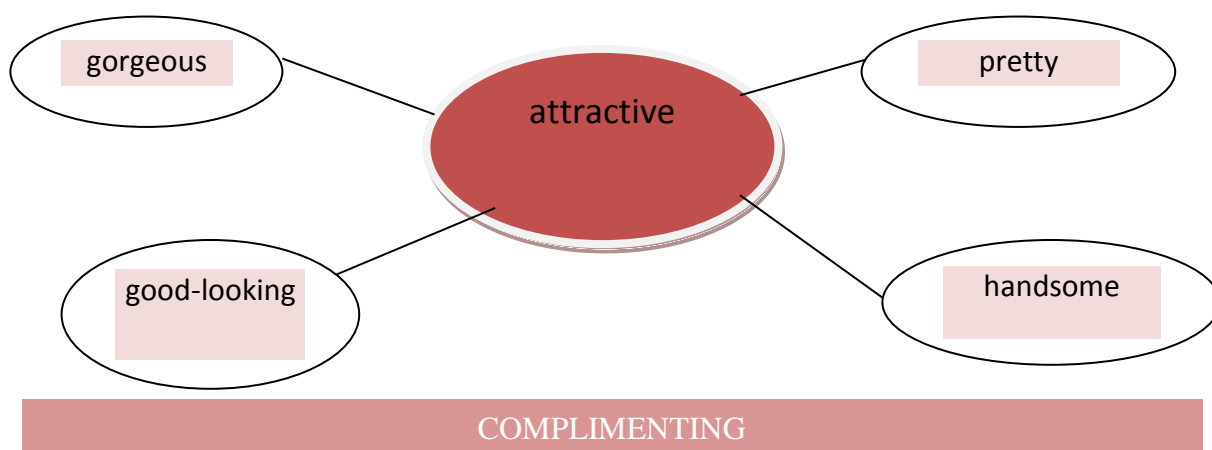
### Choosing words for complimenting

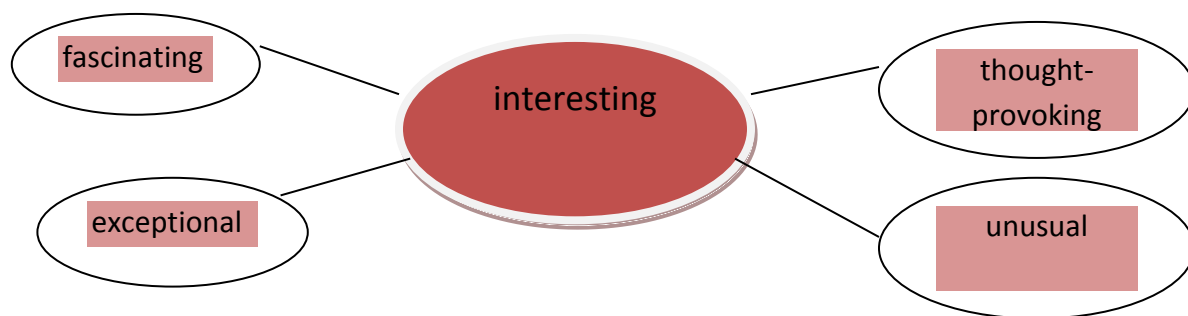
The following lists what Americans commonly compliment. Read the list and in the blank write "Yes" if this is a common compliment in your language and culture, write "No" if it is not.

<i>What Americans Compliment</i>	<i>Common in Your Language/Culture</i>
1. Physical Appearance Example: ➤ You have a beautiful smile. ➤ Your hair looks nice.	_____
2. Personality Example: ➤ You have a good sense of humor. ➤ He's got a great personality.	_____
3. Family Member Example: ➤ Your children are cute. ➤ Your wife is beautiful.	_____
4. Abilities Example: ➤ You gave an excellent speech. ➤ You teach very well.	_____

<p>5. People' s Things (possessions)</p> <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Your car is nice.</li> <li>➤ You have a beautiful home.</li> </ul>	<hr/>
<p>6. Meals, Food</p> <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The dinner is great.</li> <li>➤ I love this dish.</li> </ul>	<hr/>

Adjectives used to describe people or things:





### Exercise 1: Choosing Words for Complimenting

Choose an appropriate word or words from the adjectives above and fill in the blanks.

1. (two co-workers) "The speech you gave yesterday at work was \_\_\_\_\_."
2. (two friends) "That's a \_\_\_\_\_ dress. Is it new?"

### COMPLIMENTING

3. (teacher/parent) "Your child's work is \_\_\_\_\_. You should be proud of her."
4. (two neighbors) "What a \_\_\_\_\_ car!"
5. (boss/employee) "You did an \_\_\_\_\_ job. I really appreciate it."
6. (two friends) "The picnic today was \_\_\_\_\_. Let's do it again soon."
7. (mother/daughter) "You look \_\_\_\_\_ today. The dress \_\_\_\_\_ you."
8. (teacher/student) "I \_\_\_\_\_ your essay very much. There were very few mistakes."

9. (guest/host) "The meal is \_\_\_\_\_. I really \_\_\_\_\_ the noodle salad."
10. (husband/wife) "The meal turned out \_\_\_\_\_. Everyone \_\_\_\_\_ it."

### Starting Conversations with Compliments about Clothes

- One of the reasons Americans compliment frequently is to start a conversation. Read the following examples of compliments and think how you can turn them into a conversation.

## COMPLIMENTING

### Examples of compliments:

1. - I like your earrings!  
- Thanks, I got them in Mexico last year.
2. - I love your watch. Is it new?  
- Yes, it was a birthday present from my husband.
3. - That color looks wonderful on you.  
- Thanks. I've never worn it before.
4. - Great outfit. Where'd you get it?  
- This old thing? I don't remember anymore – but thanks for the compliment.



### Exercise 1:

Read the following compliments and put a check mark in front of the appropriate compliments and an X in front of the inappropriate compliments to give to the hostess of the party you're attending.


1. \_\_\_\_\_ What a pretty color on you. It goes well with your hair.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Great outfit. Where did you get it?
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I've seen you in that suit before.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I love your T-shirt. Is it new?
5. \_\_\_\_\_ What a great old dress you have on!
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I love your watch. Did your boyfriend give it to you?
7. \_\_\_\_\_ You look lovely.

## COMPLIMENTING

### EXPRESSIONS WITH CLOTHING

- This dress was made for you. It **fits you like a glove.**
- John is very generous. He would **give you the shirt off his back.**
- I'm afraid we can't join you at the beach in July. We've had to **tighten the belt at our house.**
- Poor Jess just got laid off. I wouldn't like **to be in her shoes.**
- Great job! **Hats off** to you.



-  Group work: create and act out a situation where you would need to compliment someone. Use one of the expressions with clothing.

## COMPLIMENTING

-  Role play:



Role A: You are out shopping for an event. You are in an area where there are several nice stores. All of a sudden, you realize that the person in front of you is a friend you haven't seen in a while. Your friend has an excellent taste. The outfit she is wearing today looks great. Speak to your friend. She might be willing to help you choose an outfit for the event.

Role B: You are out shopping during your lunch break. You are in an area where there are several nice stores. You run into a friend you haven't seen in a while. Say hello to your friend.

## COMPLIMENTING

### Starting Conversations with Compliments about a Well Done or not so Well Done Job



Examples of compliments:

#### **FOR A JOB WELL DONE**

- Congratulations! You did a great job!
- Thank you for all your hard work and dedication.
- Nice work! You did a wonderful job under difficult circumstances.

## FOR A JOB NOT SO WELL DONE

- We need to get together and discuss how the project went. I think we can learn a lot from this experience.
- You can do much better work. And that's what I'd like to see on the next project.
- That was a difficult project. What do you think we can learn from the problems we had?

### Read the dialogue:

Maria: "You did a nice job on the project the boss asked you to do."

Julia: "Thanks. It took about two weeks to do it."

Maria: "That's not bad. It takes some people four weeks to do that job."

Julia: "Really? I didn't think it was that hard."



### Exercise 2:

What would you say? A member of your staff completed a project. He:

- Did a wonderful job and completed it two days ahead of schedule.
- Worked overtime for two weeks to complete the project and finished right on schedule.

- Had to work hard to complete the project – one of his colleagues quit during the project and another was sick for a week.
- Was two days late and over budget; he usually does better work.
- Finished a little late, but it was his first time managing a big project.

## COMPLIMENTING



Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opMQxa1JkuM>

### THE POWER OF COMPLIMENTS/THE SCIENCE OF LOVE

Pre-Viewing

Discuss:

What do you think the title of the video means? What do you think the video will be about? What do you say to a compliment? Do you like receiving compliments?

Role-play: Compliment and respond

1. Two neighbors : one compliments the other's garden
2. Guest/host: the guest compliments the meal
3. Two friends: one compliments the other's clothes

Viewing I

- Brainstorm adjectives that are used to compliment; put a checkmark next to the adjective if you hear it in the video:

stunning	<input type="checkbox"/>
intelligent	<input type="checkbox"/>
fantastic	<input type="checkbox"/>
stylish	<input type="checkbox"/>
adorable	<input type="checkbox"/>
funniest	<input type="checkbox"/>
caring	<input type="checkbox"/>
confident	<input type="checkbox"/>
wonderful	<input type="checkbox"/>
unique	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Viewing II

**Group work.** Work in groups of 4. List as many words as you hear in your category as you watch the episode. One member of your group should be the designated “scribe”. The other group members should listen and tell the scribe what to write. After viewing present the words/phrases listed under each category.

Complimenting	Receiving Compliments	How compliments made recipients feel

Post-Viewing

**Pair work:** Write 5 compliments to each other. Present your compliments and say how it makes you feel.

### **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter, you practiced language and communication skills in the areas of:

- Giving and receiving compliments
- Starting conversations with compliments
- Showing appreciation

## DIFFICULT CONVERSATION SITUATIONS

### Lesson IV - Difficult Conversation Situations



#### DISCUSS:

What do you say or do if you accidentally offend someone? How do people show that they are listening to another person?

When you offend someone: apologize

- I'm sorry, I didn't mean to offend you. What I meant was....

- I think you misunderstood me. I'm sorry if I've hurt your feelings. Please forgive me.
- There seems to be a slight misunderstanding. I'd like to explain.
- I'm sorry, that's not what I meant. What I was trying to say was....
- Please accept my apologies. I promise this won't happen again.

### DIFFICULT CONVERSATION SITUATIONS

- I'm so sorry, can you forgive me?



Pair work

Create short exchanges. Incorporate one of the examples into your dialogue.

#### Discussion

Have you ever found yourself in a situation when you needed to apologize? What was the situation? Were you offended or did you accidentally offend someone else? What did you say/do?

#### Language note:

In English people tend to apologize, even when they've done nothing wrong. For example: whether asking for clarification or restating what you've said, it's usual to apologize first – either for understanding or not making yourself clear the first time.

Asking for clarification:

<b>You didn't hear</b>	<b>You didn't understand</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>I'm sorry</u>, it's very loud here. Would you mind repeating your question?</li> <li>• <u>Sorry</u>, I missed that. Could you say that again?</li> <li>• <u>Sorry</u>, I didn't catch that. Could you repeat it?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Sorry</u>, I don't quite follow you. Could you run through that again, please?</li> <li>• I'm afraid I don't see what you mean. Could you explain that to me?</li> <li>• <u>Excuse me</u>, but I didn't quite understand.</li> </ul>



**Role Play:** Look at the cartoon and put the image into words



Asking for Meaning

DISCUSS:



What kinds of difficulties could you have during a conversation? What could/would you say in such situations?

Read the dialogue:

Head Waiter: "When you put out the salad, put the *coleslaw* on the left."

Bus boy: "The cold salad?"

Head Waiter: "No, the coleslaw...that salad there....the one with cabbage."

Language note: It's not always enough to repeat what you have said.

Sometimes it's helpful:

1. Ask for spelling: "Coleslaw? How do you spell that?"
2. Ask for meaning: "Coleslaw? What does that mean?"

### **Role Play: Asking for Meaning**

Work with a partner. Student A should choose one of the following topics and tell student B about it. Student B should interrupt whenever he or she needs to ask about the meaning of a word or phrase.

1. *How to cook a dish from your country.*
2. *How weddings are celebrated in your country.*
3. *How major holidays are celebrated in your country.*
4. *How to fix something that's broken.*



## Exercise 1

Match the situations with what you would say.

- |         |   |    |   |
|---------|---|----|---|
| 1. ____ | You're at a party and you didn't hear what someone has said to you. | a. | "If I understood correctly, you said...." |
| 2. ____ | You're not sure you have understood what somebody has said to you.  | b. | "What I was trying to say was...."        |
| 3. ____ | Somebody didn't understand what you said.                           | c. | "Would you please repeat what you said?"  |

## Interrupting

Imagine that you are at a small business meeting or in a small class with about ten people. You don't understand what the speaker/teacher is saying. Would you interrupt the speaker? How would you do it? When would you do it?



## Fill this table

	<b><i>Common in my language and culture</i></b>	<b><i>Common among Americans</i></b>
<b>1.</b> Interrupt right away, in the middle of the person's sentence, to ask a question.	_____	_____

- 
- 2.** Interrupt at the end of the sentence. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3.** Interrupt nonverbally only (for example, look confused). Do not speak. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4.** Do not interrupt the speaker. Wait to talk to the speaker another day. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.** Interrupt if necessary, but apologize several times. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6.** Do not interrupt the speaker. Ask another person questions later. \_\_\_\_\_
- 7.** Do not interrupt the speaker. Ask another person questions while the speaker is talking. \_\_\_\_\_
- 8.** Never interrupt the speaker because the interruption means that he or she didn't explain clearly. This would insult the speaker. \_\_\_\_\_
- 

#### Phrases for Interrupting Politely

- Excuse me, but I didn't quite understand.
- I'm sorry, but I have a question.
- Could I ask a question?
- Sorry to interrupt, but I didn't understand.
- Could I interrupt for a quick second?
- Just a quick interruption, if it's OK.

## DIFFICULT CONVERSATION SITUATIONS



Exercise: Interrupting

### **Example:**

Teacher: "I'm going to talk about American attitudes toward quitting a job."

Student: "Excuse me, but what does 'quitting' mean?"

I'm going to talk about American attitudes toward quitting a job.

Sometimes people decide that they do not want to continue working at their present job and they decide to quit. It is important that they understand the terms of the contract when they quit. Usually it is necessary to give at least two weeks' notice before quitting. If you belong to a union, you can talk to the shop steward about any grievances you may have. Sometimes the union can help you get better wages or working conditions. If your company has an Employee Relations Department, you can talk to someone there about your problems.

---

quitting a job – leaving a job

present job – job you have now

terms of contract – what your contract says

give at least two weeks' notice – tell the employer that you plan to quit two weeks before you will quit

union – organization of workers

shop steward – the union representative who works at your company

grievances – complaints

wages – pay, salary

### DIFFICULT CONVERSATION SITUATIONS

Working conditions – work hours, safety on the job

Employee Relations Department – section of the organization or company that takes care of employees' problems at work

### Cutting a Conversation Short

DISCUSS:

What are some of the reasons you might need to end a conversation?  
What are some ways to end a conversation?

Cutting a conversation short:

- Would you mind if we continued this conversation another time?
- Well, it was nice talking to you, but I'm afraid I have to run.
- Oh, it's getting late. I should get going. Talk to you later, OK?



### Exercise 2

What would you say in these situations?

1. You are speaking with a colleague when you see a client come in for an appointment.
2. You've been chatting with a colleague. It's now 5:30 p.m., and you told a friend you'd meet her at 6:00 p.m.

## DIFFICULT CONVERSATION SITUATIONS

3. A friend has called to chat. You're in the middle of dinner.

## EXPRESSIONS RELATED TO CONVERSATION

- Can I bring a friend to the party? – What party? - Oops, forget I said anything. It was just a **slip of the tongue**.
- Asking about a reporter's sources can be a **touchy subject**.
- I shouldn't have said that, me and my **big mouth**.
- She always has to **stick her nose** into matters that do not concern her.



## Exercise 3

Think of a personal story that can illustrate the expressions above.

Then share your story without saying which expression it illustrates.

The other students have to guess which expression best describes the "story".

## DIFFICULT CONVERSATION SITUATIONS



Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TChRv8m79zs>

### THE GUY WHO LISTENS BY INTERRUPTING YOU

Pre Viewing

Discuss: What do you say to show that you're listening? What are some nonverbal ways to give feedback in your country?



Write T (true) or F (false) in the space.

1.	_____	If you don't understand what someone says, it is often all right to interrupt and ask for an explanation.
2.	_____	It is usually all right to repeat, briefly, what another person says so that you can be sure that you understood them.
3.	_____	People usually depend on verbal rather than nonverbal language to express themselves.
4.	_____	People normally give feedback in the middle of the sentence.

## DIFFICULT CONVERSATION SITUATIONS

## Viewing I

Watch the episode and write down verbal and nonverbal ways to give feedback.

Phrases used to Give Feedback

Nonverbal Ways to Give Feedback

## Viewing II

Answer the questions:

1. Did the listener give feedback after every sentence?
2. Did the listener give feedback in the middle of the speaker's sentence?
3. How do you know that the listener listened?

## Post Viewing

Discuss:

- What is your reaction to the episode? Were you annoyed by the way the listener interrupted the speaker? How often do you give feedback when you are listening? Are you completely quiet when you listen? Do you give nonverbal feedback?

DIFFICULT CONVERSATION SITUATIONS





### Exercise: Giving Feedback

Read the dialogue with your partner. One student reads the part of the employee; the other reads the supervisor's part. Every time the employee sees a blank line, she or he will give feedback that means "I'm listening and I understand". You can use the following phrases and nonverbal feedback:

Phrases to give feedback	Nonverbal feedback
<b>Oh, sure.</b>	Make eye contact with the speaker.
<b>Oh, I see.</b>	Smile.
<b>Okay.</b>	Nod your head.
<b>Hmm.</b>	Look confused when you don't understand.
<b>I understand./I don't understand</b>	Look surprised when something surprises you.
<b>All right.</b>	
<b>Well...</b>	

Supervisor: Okay, for this job you need wear gloves.

Employee: \_\_\_\_\_.

Supervisor: All right. Now, first you make sure that this light is off.

Employee: \_\_\_\_\_.

Supervisor: And then you move this part....

Employee: \_\_\_\_\_.

Supervisor: ....like this and open the door carefully and watch out for the steam.

Employee: \_\_\_\_\_.

Supervisor: Wait a few seconds for the dishes to cool down.

Employee: \_\_\_\_\_.

Supervisor: ...and then you can unload everything.

Employee: \_\_\_\_\_.

## **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter, you practiced language and communication skills in the areas of:

- Apologizing
- Interrupting
- Asking for clarification
- Giving feedback

## ASKING FAVORS

### Lesson III - Asking Favors

**DISCUSS:**

Do people often ask you to do favors? Do you like to do favors? Why?/Why not?

Asking permission:

1. - Would it be possible for me to leave work a little early today?  
It's my anniversary.  
- Sure, no problem. And congratulations.
2. - Do you mind if my husband joins us?  
- Of course not. The more the merrier.
3. - Is it alright if I smoke?  
- I'd rather you didn't.
4. - Would you mind if I used your phone?  
- Not at all. Here you are.

**ASKING FAVORS**Pair work:

Act out one of the scenarios:



Exercise 1.

Make a request using the prompts below:

1. Ask your boss if you can leave early because.....
2. Ask your coworker if you can.....
3. Ask your boss if it is Ok to.....
4. Ask a friend to do a favor for you.

ASKING FAVORS

**DISCUSS:**

If you wanted to ask a favor, how would you go about asking? What are the ways to show you are willing to do a favor? What are the ways to avoid a commitment?

Asking favors:

- Do you think you could do me a favor?
- Can you do me a favor?
- I have a big favor to ask. Could you...?

Accepting and avoiding a commitment

Accepting	Avoiding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You can count on me.</li> <li>• Sure thing!</li> <li>• No problem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I don't want to make any promises, but I'll try my best.</li> <li>• Well, I'm not really sure. We'll see.</li> <li>• Isn't there anyone else who can do it instead of me?</li> </ul>

## ASKING FAVORS

Exercise 2.

Respond by either accepting or avoiding a commitment.

1. A friend wants you to help paint his house.
2. A colleague has asked you to help her prepare a presentation.
3. You've been asked to coach a children's sports team.
4. Distant relatives would like to stay at your house for two weeks.

#### Pair work

You would like to borrow your neighbor's video camera while you're on vacation. Unfortunately, the last time you borrowed something from his friend you broke it. You've since replaced the item, but your friend was not happy.

#### EXPRESSIONS RELATED TO FAVORS AND PROMISES

- She helps me out when I have too much to do, and I ***return the favor*** when I can.
- You know, John always **promises the moon** but never finishes the work.
- **I'm having second thoughts** about hiring Brian. He doesn't seem very motivated.

## GOOD AND BAD NEWS

### Lesson V - Good and Bad News



#### DISCUSS

Over the past few years what kinds of good/bad news have you received? Did you share any news with others? How?

#### Giving news:

- Did you know....?
- Have you heard...?
- You'll never guess what happened.
- Guess what!
- Have you heard the latest?

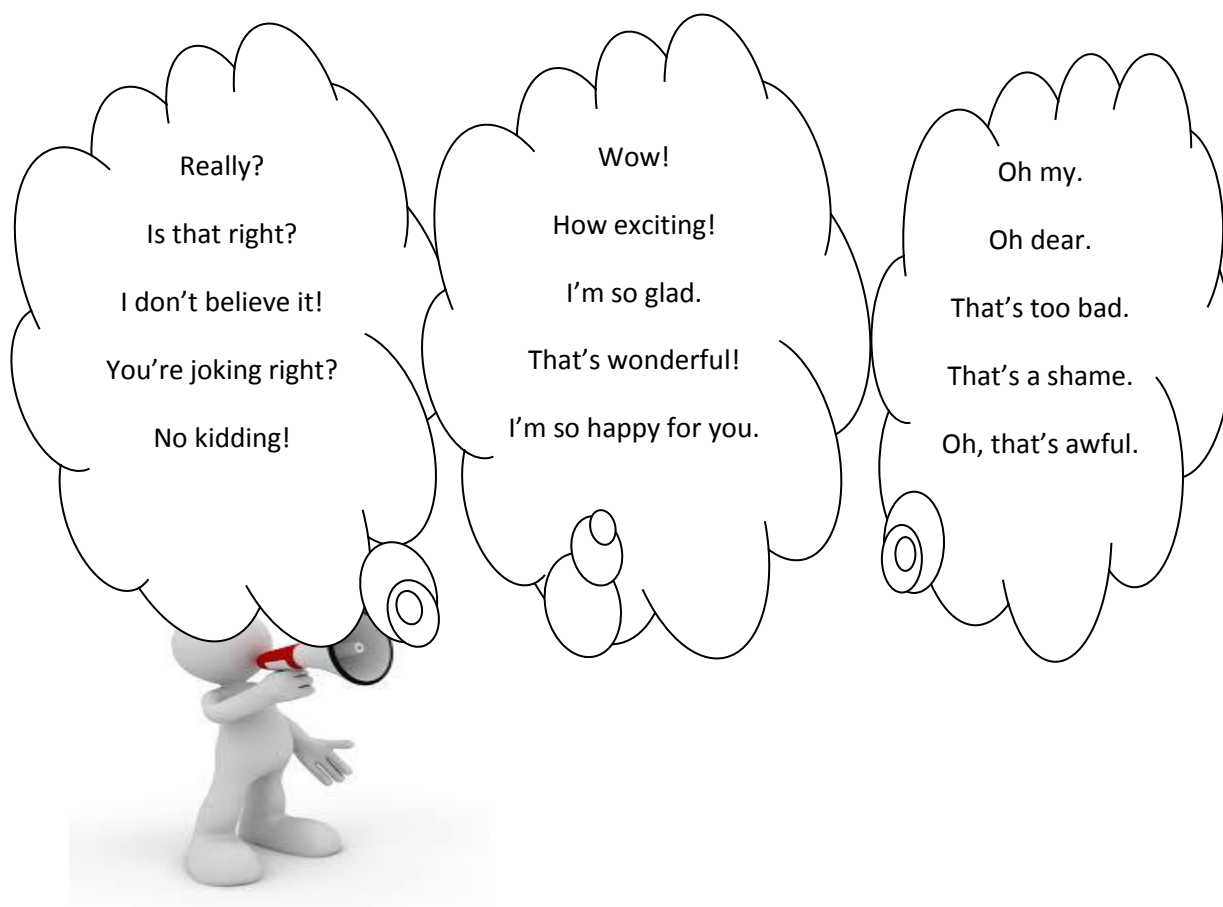
### GOOD AND BAD NEWS

#### Exercise 1

Choose one of the expressions/phrases and deliver some imaginary news.

Example: Guess what – I'm moving to Paris!

Responding to news:



GOOD AND BAD NEWS

Exercise 2

Respond according to the prompts.

1. Guess what. Chris asked Vicky to marry him!

That's good news. \_\_\_\_\_

That's bad news. \_\_\_\_\_

That's neither good nor bad. \_\_\_\_\_



2. Guess what. I quit my job.

That's good news. \_\_\_\_\_

That's bad news. \_\_\_\_\_

That's neither good nor bad. \_\_\_\_\_

**DISCUSS:**

When do we offer our sympathies/condolences to someone?



## GOOD AND BAD NEWS

Sympathy and condolences:

1. - I heard you had to cancel your trip. What a shame.  
 - Yes. I was really looking forward to it.  
 - I hope you'll be able to reschedule it.  
 - I plan to in a couple of weeks.
2. - I'm sorry to hear about your husband's illness.  
 - Thanks for your concern. This is a difficult time for us.

- Let me know if there's anything I can do for you.
  - Thank you. I will.
3. - I was so sorry to hear about your mother passed away. Please accept my condolences.
- Thank you. That's very kind of you.

### Group work

What is the best way to communicate your sympathies to the following situations:

1. A friend's grandmother passed away.
2. A relative didn't get the job he was hoping for.
3. A neighbor's apartment was broken into.
4. A friend broke his leg while skiing.

## GOOD AND BAD NEWS

### The Language of Flowers

*Not so long ago, flowers were used to send messages for someone. A kind of language widely practiced by many to express their sincerest feeling for some situations that were thought by some people to be a little awkward when expressed in words but, rather more romantic by using the language of flowers. In fact, during the Victorian era, nearly every flower had its own special meaning. Today, only a few flowers still communicate specific messages. Red roses are a sign of romantic love, and white lilies are often associated with funerals.*

#### EXPRESSIONS ABOUT NEWS AND MISFORTUNE

- I already told you that my wife lost her job and our house was robbed last night. Well, **misfortune never comes singly**.
- I hope Jill will be able to get over the loss of her mother.

