

Using examples from virtual conversations and Social Media to teach pragmatic strategies

Teacher's Day 2021, Saarland University
7. October, 4:00-5:50 p.m.

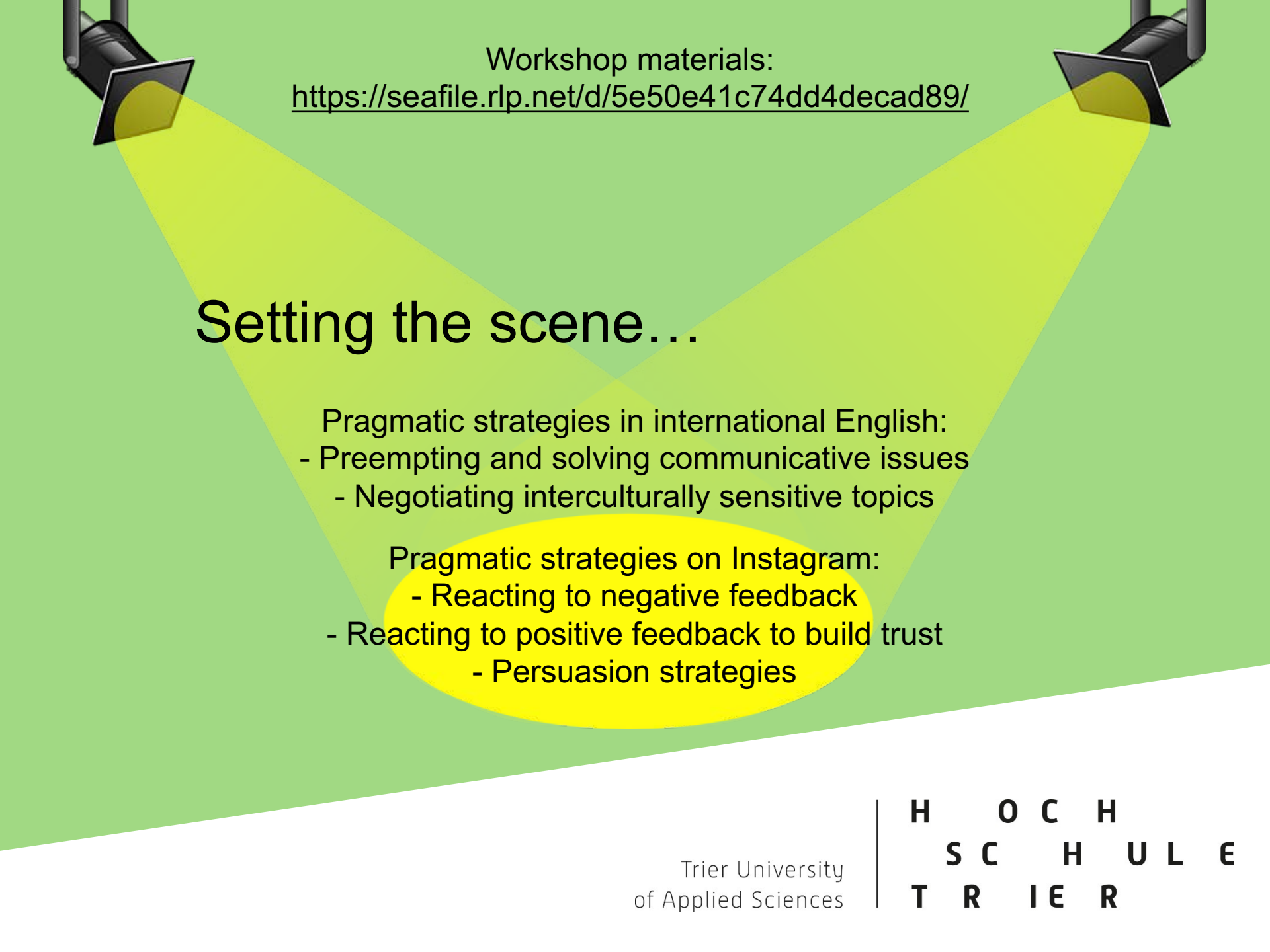
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Workshop materials:
<https://seafire.rlp.net/d/5e50e41c74dd4deca89/>

Setting the scene...

Pragmatic strategies in international English:

- Preempting and solving communicative issues
- Negotiating interculturally sensitive topics

Pragmatic strategies on Instagram:

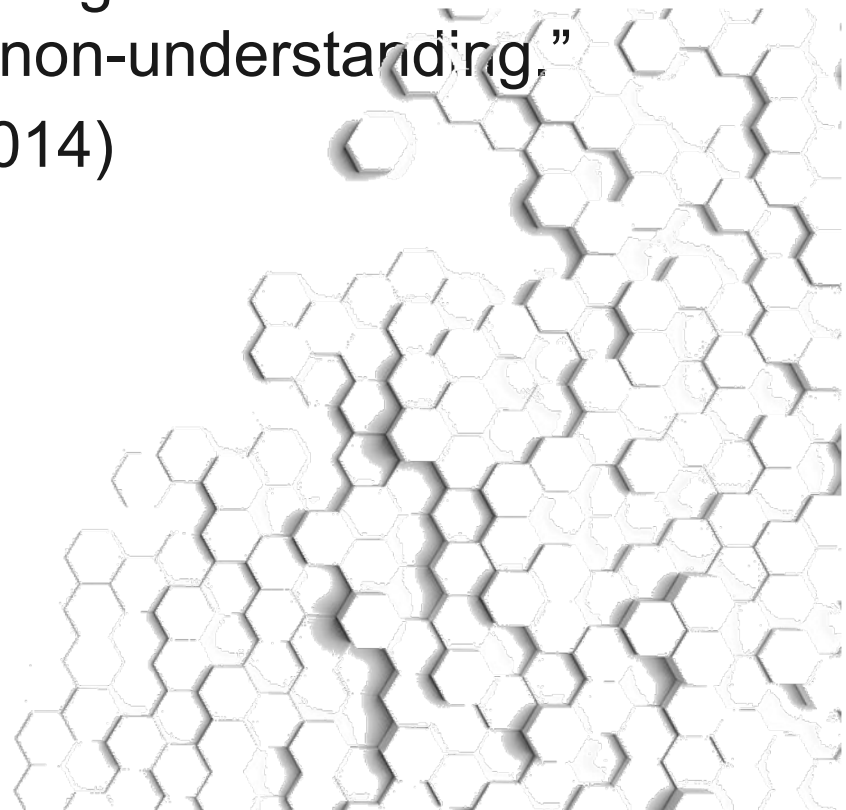
- Reacting to negative feedback
- Reacting to positive feedback to build trust
- Persuasion strategies

Pragmatics = Meaning in context

Pragmatic strategies =

“Speakers actively and skillfully shape and co-construct the language [...]. What this means is that speakers [...] establish communicative strategies to facilitate understanding and overcome non-understanding.”

(De Bartolo 2014)

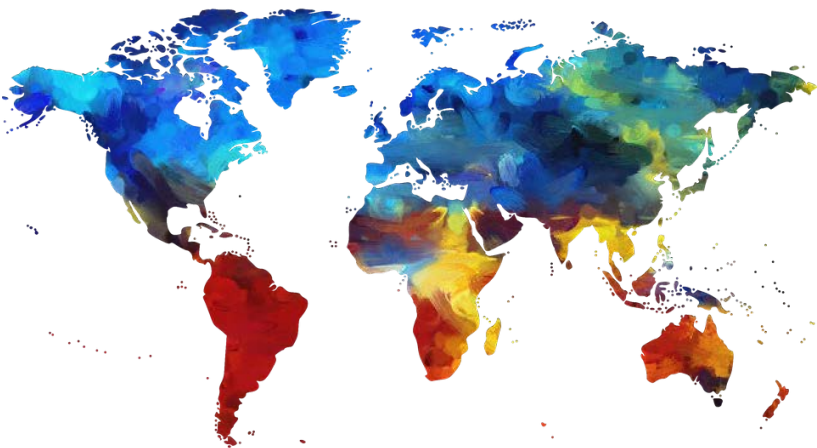


Data: International English

ViMELF. 2018. Corpus of Video-Mediated English as a Lingua Franca Conversations. Birkenfeld: Trier University of Applied Sciences. Version 1.0. The CASE project [umwelt-campus.de/case]

Freely available for non-commercial research: www.umwelt-campus.de/case

- 20 ELF Skype conversations (12.5 hours), ca. 150,000 tokens
- Transcribed & annotated with basic prosody, paralanguage, non-verbal elements
- Available data sets: fully annotated, lexical, pos-tagged, xml annotation
- Also available: audios/videos and sociolinguistic background data



**Video ELF
Mediated**

General pragmatic strategies to preempt and solve communicative issues

Persuasion Strategies

Metadiscourse,
repetition and
explicitness

Let-it-pass &
Make-it-normal

Defining and
rephrasing (also
pre-emptively)

Non-verbal
explanations



Combined strategies

Look at the following excerpt and identify the general pragmatic strategies that are used.

SB93: **i- is it true that alcohol's ((/ 'ælkɔls/))
so expensive there?**

or is it,

is was that just Norway,

HE19: oh which one? {leans forward}

SB93: **alcohol ((/ 'alkɔ:l/)).**

[was that just in Norway],

HE19: [{shakes head once, leans forward}]

what is it,

aikai ((/aikai/))? {leans forward}

SB93: **so,**

alcohol ((/ 'alkɔ:l/)),

**<alcohol> ((/ 'alkohəʊl/)). {imitates
breathalyzer by blowing
into end of pen}**

[what you drink]. {holds pen to mouth}

HE19: [oh: the], {scratches head with left hand}

the brand?

SB93: **nO,**

what you drink, {imitates drinking}

in,

what's in beer,

SB93: **[and wine].**

HE19: [oh: sorry], ((laughing)), {closes eyes, leans
back, raises both hands in a throwaway gesture}

SB93: **[alco], ((laughing)), {leans forward}**

HE19: sorry °sorry°, ((laughing))

alcohol, {nods}

sorry, {nods}

now I understand, {nods}

yeah yeah yeah, {nods}

oh it's very expensive in Finland,

I think we have a very high tax on alcohol, {raises
right hand, pressing

fingers together}

SB93: yeah.

HE19: [yeah].

SB93: [so that] wasn't just in Norway,

HE19: no:, {shakes head}



Pragmatic strategies to negotiate interculturally sensitive topics



Method: Searching for trouble

Using examples from ViMELF

1. Searching for potential trouble sources

- Open reference to culture (lexical reference, pronouns, direct questions)
- Verbal indication of stance (“I think”)
- Signals of non- or misunderstanding in connection with culture (negation, minimal & explicit questions), Disfluency markers (hesitation, repetition, pauses)
- Physical stance shifts (e.g. leaning back) & gestures (e.g. shaking head)

2. Discussion of potential issue

3. Discussion of interaction & solution

4. Generalization of strategy



Signalling trouble

Patterns tend to cluster around problematic issues

ViMELF 06SB73ST14

SB73: (1.4) is uhm do you still celebrate this uhm <bull racing>?

... uhm,

ST14: ... OH the bull fighting,

SB73: yeah,

Stance ST14: yeah,

(1.0) ((clears throat)) [well,-]

SB73: **I think** it's a celebration for **you** or? isn't it?

ST14: (1.0) well. {rolls eyes}

(1.5) okay.

Pauses ... uhm ... <Spain is a ((/eɪ/)) very: diverse country.

... and it might not look like so. ((clears throat))

{left hand to mouth}

... because it's not very big,

{stretches arms, palms facing inwards}

... but it has a lot of **cultures**.

{raises hands, waving back and forth}

Question

Lexical reference

Pronouns

Gestures

Paralanguage

Lexical reference

Hesitation

Pragmatic strategies to negotiate interculturally sensitive topics

1. Indicating an issue

- Subtle stance shifts
- Reassurance or content questions

2. Evasion

- Disalignment
- Change of topic
- Let-it-pass

3. Addressing the problem

- Creating rapport
- Explanation & mediation
- Cooperative negotiation

Usually in sequence or combination

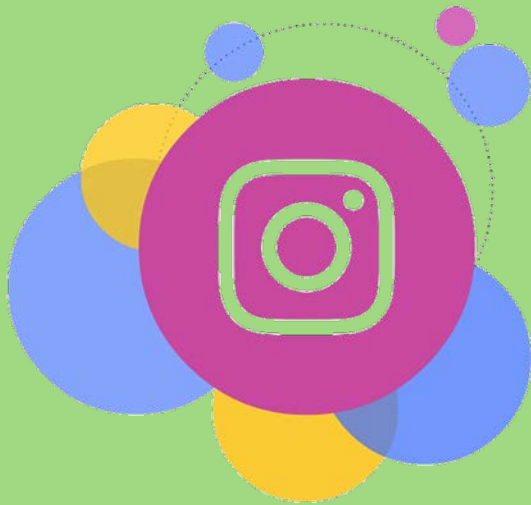


Pragmatic strategies for the classroom

- General pragmatic strategies to preempt and solve communicative issues
 - “let-it-pass”/ “make-it-normal”
 - metadiscourse, explicitness, repetition
 - rephrasing, definitions, metalinguistic comments
 - non-verbal resources
- Pragmatic strategies to negotiate interculturally sensitive topics
 - Indicating an issue
 - Evasion
 - Addressing the problem

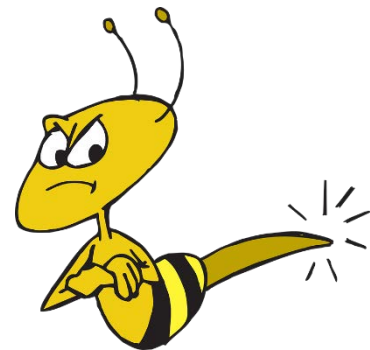
Using real data, students can identify and practice pragmatic strategies that help the meaning-construction process or impede communication (cf. McKay 2010).

Pragmatic strategies on Instagram



Webcare

- Webcare: “**online damage control**” / “the act of engaging in online interactions with (complaining) consumers, by actively searching the web to address consumer feedback” (Van Noort and Willemsen 2012: 115)
- Customer complaints should be encouraged since successful complaint management (and generous compensation) is an “**effective tool for customer retention**”, this effect is increased the more competitors are in the market (Fornell & Wernerfelt 1988: 296)
- **Different intentions** play a role in social media interaction based on company’s idea of individual digital return (Brunner & Diemer forthcoming)



Webcare strategies

- Companies use a **range of strategies** when addressing critical customer feedback, focusing on personal, brief messages that specifically and individually address the respective issues (cf. Zhang & Vásquez 2014, Einwiller & Steilen 2015), confirmed in our data
 - **Positive customer experience** on social media enhances stable customer relationships (Wibiwo et al. 2021), increasing
 - purchase intention and loyalty
 - participation, e.g. providing information to and interacting with others
 - **Positive and active customer engagement** on social media (Wu et al. 2019), e.g. building rapport, promoting action, increases
 - number of customer interactions and positive tonality
 - customer liking and sharing
 - **Conversational Human Voice** important (Decock et al. 2020)
- **Successful complaint management** (Decock et al. 2020:18) features
- “inclusion of individual names and personal pronouns”
 - “accommodating to someone’s language style” (formal/informal)
 - “variation in wording across organizational responses [...] to create the impression of addressing customers on an individual basis.”



Instagram as a medium

- Continuously growing since its founding in 2010
- More than 1bn active users
- 400m stories every day
- Youngest social medium after Snapchat (68% of users < 35 yrs)
- More than 70% of US businesses use Instagram for marketing
- 80% of users outside the US
- Classical visual influencer medium adapted by companies, tonality: peer communication
- Increasingly immersive and cross-medial experience

(Instagram 2021; Statista 2021; Clark 2021; Enberg 2020, Brunner & Diemer 2019)



How to get data



- 1. Select an instagram account with a good follower base and interaction frequency**

Additional selection criteria: activity, salience (high interaction, feedback, likes, prominence ranking, reach), cross-border / international customer interaction

- 2. Follow the account and observe interaction**

- 3. Identify relevant sequences for analysis in the classroom**

- 4. Collect examples**

Screenshots, copy & paste comments,
further info see also Brunner & Diemer (forthcoming)



Our Data: Some ideas

IG accounts (Since 2017, collection ongoing)

Ca. 50 companies, e.g.

- *Cosmetics & Fashion:* Kylie Cosmetics, Yves Rocher, LVMH, Purelei, Hellobody, Pandora, Nike, Adidas, Rituals
- *Food:* Bitburger, Karlsberg, Mymuesli, Zec+, Innocent, True fruits, Wendy's, Starbucks, Hellofresh, Ritter Sport
- *Manufacturing:* Audi, Mercedes, Tesla, Renault, BMW, chilly's bottles, soul bottles, 24bottles, myequa, nvidia, Adidas, Nike
- *Retail & Wholesale:* Aldi, dm, Target, Supermaxi, Ebay
- *Software, Services & Entertainment:* SAP, Eventim, Sixx, Paypal, Lieferando, Disney+, Netflix, Spotify, Bird, Lime, Airbnb
- *Social Entrepreneurship:* Vivaconagua, Waterdrop, Ecosia, Bottegaverde, Toogoodtogo





Speech acts on Instagram



Complaint management – reacting to negative feedback

Providing and reacting to positive feedback to build trust

Persuasion strategies



Persuasion Strategies

Humor
→ Attract attention,
engaging &
entertaining customer

**Emotional connection
and involvement**
→ Memories, feelings,
atmosphere, desires,
prestige etc.

**Participation and
customer engagement**
→ Interactive polls,
games, prizes, feeling
valued

**Visual strategies, e.g.
color use, cut**
→ Salience,
coherence, theme

**Promoting charity /
social causes**
→ Branding,
image/reputation
improvement

**Narrative strategies
and storytelling**
→ Audience design

Fear appeal
→ Story as temporary
offer, focus on missed
opportunities

Testimonial
(customer/peer,
expert, celebrity)
→ Legitimization
(credibility, trust)



Pragmatic strategies on Instagram

- Instagram as complex multimodal medium, ideally suited for a wide range of classroom activities
- General pragmatic strategies:
 - Positive tonality and humorous atmosphere
 - Quick and personal communication
- Reactions to both positive and negative feedback important to build trust and increase interaction:
 - Reactions to complaints: Explanation, offer to remedy, apology
 - Appreciating and reinforcing positive feedback
- Key persuasion strategies: Humor, emotional connection, participation, visual strategies, social causes, narrative, fear, testimonial, argument

With Instagram data, learners can explore and practice the important genre of business communication and increase their digital communication experience

Thank you!

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