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The Effect of a Study Abroad on Acquiring Pragmatics

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by

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Brigham Young University

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

Date

Date

Date

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As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the

format, citations and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

Date

Chair, Graduate Committee

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ABSTRACT

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Table of Contents

Title Page	i
Graduate Committee Approval	ii
Final Reading Approval and Acceptance.	iii
Abstract	iv
Acknowledgments	vi
Table of Contents	vii
List of Tables	ix
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE	3
Defining Pragmatics	4
Research Using the Term Pragmatics	4
Research Using the Term Communicative Competence	5
A Working Definition of Pragmatics	5
General Research in Pragmatic Acquisition	6
Effect of Setting on Pragmatic Development	6
Motivation and Pragmatic Development	8
The Foundation for Current Research in Pragmatics	9
Research Focusing on Refusals	10
Refusals and Arabic	12
Research Question and Hypothesis	13
CHAPTER 3: THE STUDY	14
The Participants	14
Instruments	14
Procedures	15
Design and Data Analysis	15
CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF RESULTS	17

CHAPTER 5: Conclusion	22
Limitations	23
Future Research	24
Conclusion	25
REFERENCES	26
APPENDIX A: Pre-Test	29
APPENDIX B: Post-Test	31

List of Tables

Table 1: t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means	17
Table 2: Comparison of Pre and Post for Each Question	18
Table 3: Correlation Matrix	24

Chapter 1

The events of September 11th were eye-opening for many Americans. Those who had hardly given much thought to the Middle East were suddenly aware of its importance and influence. Much of this awareness turned into misdirected hatred towards Muslims and Arabs. The events also reinforced the importance of the Arabic language in the eyes of Americans. Government agencies have been seeking Arabic speakers, government funding has been granted to train these Arabic speakers, and enrollment in Arabic courses across the United States has increased dramatically. For example, in fall of the 2000 scholastic year, Brigham Young University offered of Arabic 101 and had 36 students enrolled in the class. By fall 2002, 65 students were enrolled in the same class.

Many universities are not able to keep up with the increased demand, due largely to a lack of well-trained faculty and partly to a lack of materials. The selection of Arabic instructional materials is very limited, as is documentation dealing with Arab culture.

Foreigners find very little material available to help them understand Arab society. Not much has been written on the subject of Arab cultural and social practices, either in Arabic or in English. A great deal of the material which exists is over thirty years old and appears dated to anyone who is familiar with Arab society today. Some observations made only twenty years ago are no longer applicable. In recent years changes in education, housing, health, technology, and other areas have also caused marked changes in attitudes and customs (Nydell 1996, pg. xi).

Without the resources to understand Arab cultures students can not hope to truly master the Arab language. There can be no doubt that language and culture are inseparable: “When communication is between people with different world views, special skills are required if the messages received are to resemble the messages sent. The most important overriding skill is understanding the context within which the communication takes place. The context is to a large extent culturally determined” (Seelye pg. 1). This study of

contextually conditioned usage, or pragmatics, has only recently begun to be studied and there is much more research to be done.

Available research suggests that culture is difficult to teach in a foreign language setting. Many universities encourage students to participate in study abroad programs to try and compensate for the absence of pragmatics in the classroom. Brigham Young University promotes its study abroad programs using the following excerpt:

International Study Programs makes the oft-cited BYU slogan "The World is Our Campus" a reality by supporting the aspiration of over a thousand students annually to have a significant off-campus, international learning experience. ISP serves students, faculty, and departments by facilitating the development and implementation of quality international academic experiences in an intercultural setting focusing on: 1) quality academic experiences, 2) cultural immersion and exchange, 3) humanitarian aid, and 4) character development and spiritual growth (International).

Cultural immersion is one of the primary goals and benefits of the study abroad programs. Students participate in these programs hoping to gain experience and knowledge that can not be adequately conveyed in the classroom.

The goal of my thesis is to further investigate Arabic pragmatics and, in particular, Arabic refusals. To do this I also investigate the effectiveness of Brigham Young University's Egypt 2004 study abroad program in helping students acquire these refusals. This research can give crucial guidance to both Arabic instructors and individuals involved with study abroad language programs.

Chapter 2

Pragmatics is an area of second language acquisition which has only recently begun to be studied. Consequently, a comparatively small amount of research has been done in this field. Prior to the 1960s pragmatics was not viewed as an important part of second language acquisition. It was not until the works of Van Ek (1975) and Wilkins (1976) that communicative language teaching (CLT) became part of language curriculums. Since then researchers and teachers recognize its significance, but more research is needed to determine how pragmatics develop and how to best facilitate that development.

Arabic pragmatics is in particular need of study because of the recent surge in demand for Arabic speakers in the United States. Since the events of September 11, the United States government has recognized the need for far more Arabic speakers in government agencies. U.S. federal organizations such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency and Defense Intelligence Agency have all reported major shortages in Arabic speakers. This surge in demand has resulted in an increased interest in post-secondary Arabic education. In fact, many colleges and universities are unable to meet the current demand for Arabic courses; due to budget constraints and the lack of qualified instructors (Al-Batal). If the language community hopes to meet this demand, more researchers must investigate how to better teach Arabic.

Defining Pragmatics

Research Using the Term Pragmatics

The varying research in pragmatics has been performed on such a broad scale that it is hard to find a set definition for the field. In some research, the field is referred to as pragmatics and in others it is referred to as communicative competence. Many researchers who use the term pragmatics rely on Crystal's (1997) definition, which defines pragmatics as "the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication." (p. 301)

This broad definition has been broken down into two main parts: the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic components of pragmatics. According to Leech (1983) and his colleague Thomas (1983), pragmalinguistics refers to the linguistic side, or, in other words, what pragmatic strategies, pragmatic routines, and modification devices are available in the language being spoken. For example, when refusing food in America one can simply combine the words "no," "thank," and "you" in that sequence, in order to convey the refusal. Sociopragmatics is the "sociological interface of pragmatics" (Leech 1983, p. 10). It concerns the restraints put on the speaker including social status, social distance and degree of imposition. Continuing with the previous example, in America when one is speaking with a friend, he can say "thanks, but no thanks" in refusal to something, but if speaking to someone such as a boss, one would be more formal and say "no thank you."

Research Using the Term Communicative Competence

Pragmatics is a subset of communicative competence. “The concept of communicative competence, first introduced by the anthropologist and sociologist, Hymes, in 1964, and defined in Hymes (1972), was born out of a reaction against Chomsky’s (1965) notion of competence which encompassed knowledge of the rules of grammar alone and disregarded contextual appropriateness” (Barron, 2003, p. 8).

From Hymes on, the idea of communicative competence was further developed by such researchers as Bachman (1990), Bachman/Palmer (1996) and Canale/Swain (1980). Bachman was the first to define pragmatic competence in 1990. In his model communicative language ability is broken down into three main parts: language competence, strategic competence and physiological mechanisms. Language competence is then broken down further into pragmatic competence and organizational competence. Pragmatic competence is composed of illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence, which are similar to pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics as described by Leech and Thomas.

A Working Definition of Pragmatics

A working definition of pragmatic competence, as stated by Barron (2003, p. 10), consists of “knowledge of the linguistic resources available in a given language for realizing particular illocutions, knowledge of the sequential aspects of speech acts and finally, knowledge of the appropriate contextual use of the particular languages’ linguistic resources.” In order to exhibit pragmatic competence, a language learner must understand what phrases and vocabulary are available in a language to tackle certain

situations. He must know when certain phrases are appropriate, and what kind of effect the different phrases will have on individuals.

General Research in Pragmatic Acquisition

Some researchers have focused on the relationship between pragmatics and grammar. Their research has offered little evidence to suggest that there is a connection between pragmatic and grammar development; however, through their research they have found that the environment in which students learn the language has a great impact on their development in both areas. Students who spend time abroad or learn a language in an SL context have much greater pragmatic competence than FL students who do not spend time in a country with the target-language (Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei, 1998; Niezgodna & Rover, 2001).

Effect of Setting on Pragmatic Development

The pertinent research to date has shown that while some aspects of pragmatics can be taught in a FL context, the principles are usually only retained for a short amount of time, because of the lack of input available to the students. Liddicoat and Crozet (2002) conducted a study to determine the effects of classroom instruction on Australian college-level French students' ability to answer a question concerning what they had done over the weekend. To Australians this is a routine question which requires no real details in answering it, but to the French this is a heartfelt question which requires a detailed answer. Liddicoat and Crozet found that with the instruction learners were able to more closely approximate French norms, but through a delayed post-test, they found that after one year students had remembered the vocabulary necessary to answer the question but had returned to their previous responses which exemplified Australian

norms. During this year, these students had little to no contact with any French natives. It is the delayed post-test that gives the study added significance. This suggests that pragmatics can be taught effectively in the classroom, but without sustained chances to use what is learned, it may be forgotten.

Rover (as cited in Rose & Kapser, 2001) conducted a study which compared the pragmatic competence of two groups of German EFL learners: those who had spent some time in an English speaking country and those who had spent none. In this study the students were required to identify situationally appropriate routines. Rover found that those who spent even as little as six weeks in an English speaking country were far superior at recognizing pragmatic appropriateness. Even though this study did not require the students to produce the appropriate routines, it shows that there was a lack of necessary pragmatic input within the classroom. It also shows how little time it takes once surrounded by the target language for one to be able to start to notice what is culturally appropriate in the target-language.

Matsumura (2001) conducted one of the few longitudinal studies researching the effect of study abroad on EFL learners' pragmatic competence. This study focused on the offering of advice to different social classes, that is, those in a higher social class, those in the same, and those in a lower class. He first tested 199 Japanese EFL learners' ability to offer advice and then 97 of these students participated in a year long study abroad in Canada, while the rest remained studying in Japan. Before the study abroad these 97 students happened to show, in general, lower pragmatic performance than the rest, but after the study abroad, they had surpassed the students, which had stayed in Japan and continued to study. Again, this suggests that spending time surrounded by the target

language provides much more pragmatic input, allowing the student to develop at a rate far greater than could ever be achieved by study in the learner's native country.

Motivation and Pragmatic Development

There are many factors which influence L2 development, including motivation. It may be argued that students in the target country have more motivation than those studying only in the classroom, but some case studies performed by Schmidt (1983) and Cohen (1997) refute this notion. Schmidt observed a native Japanese-speaking participant named Wes over the course of three years as he learned English. During this time he lived in Honolulu, and, while there, he showed a greater increase in pragmatic competence than in grammatical competence. In fact, his grammatical competence stagnated early while his pragmatic competence grew. Schmidt attributes his increase in pragmatic competence to his strong motivation to interact with native English speakers and not necessarily to his environment.

Motivation plays a key role in acquisition, even in a SL environment, but motivation alone cannot make up for a lack of target-language input in a FL environment. Cohen (1997) conducted a longitudinal case study investigating a FL situation. He examined his own study of Japanese at the University of Hawaii through his audio journal entries. This was his eleventh foreign language and he decided that this study should focus on his pragmatic development. He was very frustrated by the FL learning environment. The course offered him instruction in grammatical structures, some grammar rules, vocabulary, and basic conversation, but did not offer him means to know which phrases were appropriate in which contexts. He had very little opportunity to interact with any native Japanese speakers outside of class and he felt uncomfortable

speaking with the few Japanese tourists he met, because he was not sure if he was approaching them in culturally appropriate ways.

Some may argue that a highly motivated person can learn pragmatics regardless of their environment. However, these studies show that because of the way languages are typically taught, the environment one is in and the type of input it provides are key to acquiring pragmatic competence. In both studies, the language learners were highly motivated, but it appears that students with motivation in an SL context are much more able to increase their pragmatic competence than students with motivation in an FL context. In a FL context, no matter how high one's level of motivation, the input is typically not sufficient to increase pragmatic competence at the same rate as grammatical competence.

The Foundation for Current Research in Pragmatics

One of the main studies in the effects of SL versus FL settings is by Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei (1998). This study is the foundation for much current research according to Niezgodá and Rover (2002). In this cross-sectional study, Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei tested 178 ESL learners from Indiana University, 370 Hungarian high school and university EFL students, 28 native-speaking ESL teachers in the United States, 25 Hungarian EFL teachers, and 112 Italian EFL teachers.

During the study, participants viewed twenty video scenes containing conversations in English. These videos clips included either a grammatical error, a pragmatic error, or no error at all. The students were asked to identify which clips contained an error, if any, and to rate the severity of the error. The ESL learners identified more pragmatic errors and rated them as being more severe than grammatical

ones. The EFL learners did the opposite; they identified more grammatical errors and rated them as more severe. Interestingly the native-speaking ESL teachers also rated pragmatic errors as more severe than grammatical errors and the non-native teachers in Hungary and Italy did the opposite.

The results suggest, as stated earlier, that in an SL environment students have a greater awareness of pragmatics and the role it plays in communication. In a classroom it is difficult to provide sufficient exposure to native or native-like speech, which is necessary for students to be able to develop an awareness of what phrases or responses are culturally acceptable in the target language.

Research Focusing on Refusals

To date, the majority of researchers have neglected refusals, focusing instead on aspects of pragmatics such as apologies and requests. In the area of refusals, there have been “fewer studies, none of them longitudinal, and a narrow range of subjects (only adult Japanese)” (Ellis, 2002, p. 181). These few refusal studies have been conducted mainly by Beebe and her co-researchers (Takahashi & Beebe 1987; Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz 1990).

In Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990), the researchers used a written discourse completion questionnaire given to Japanese speakers of English in the US and compared their responses with native-speaker refusals. The results showed that these Japanese speakers of English used the same semantic formulas as native-speakers, but they differed in the order in which they used them. The factor which most influenced this difference was social status, which is something given more credence in Japanese culture than in American. For example, the Japanese speakers often did not apologize when they

refused something, if the person they were refusing was from a lower social class. Also the Japanese speakers tended to increase the number of formulas they used when addressing high status individuals, while the native-speakers increased the number of formulas used when addressing people with which they had a higher degree of familiarity.

While Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) focused on the difference between native and non-native types of refusals, Takahashi and Beebe (1987) focused more on how the amount of pragmatic transfer differs depending upon the proficiency of the non-native speaker. The study compared the refusals of lower level ESL learners to those of high level learners, meaning those who had been in the United States. Takahashi and Beebe hypothesized that the lower level learners would give simple refusals, which did not exemplify their own cultural background, because their vocabulary is not advanced enough to allow them to translate what they would normally say in Japanese into English. On the other hand, they hypothesized that the higher-level students would show more pragmatic transfer from Japanese, because their vocabulary is sufficiently developed. The analysis of the different learners supported this hypothesis, with the lower-level learners giving very simple responses and the higher-level learners using much more formal responses as is typical in Japan.

Research into refusals is quite limited due to the fact that pragmatics has just recently become an area of increased interest in the field of linguistics. There are many gaps that research needs to fill, and filling such gaps would aid all foreign language learners. Research to date shows that it is difficult to teach pragmatics in the classroom and that an SL setting is what contributes the most to pragmatic development. A specific

look at refusals shows that not much research has been done in that area, and the research that has been done focuses more on the differences between Japanese and American culture. There is a need for more research into refusals in all languages, not just Japanese learners of English. Teaching pragmatics within the classroom and maximizing the opportunity to learn in an SL context are characteristics that many classrooms lack.

Refusals and Arabic

An interesting area that has a glaring need for more research into refusals is English-speakers learning Arabic. Pragmatics in Arabic needs to be studied for two main reasons: first, the large cultural difference between American and Middle Eastern society; and second, the recent surge in demand for Arabic speakers in the US. Especially in regard to refusals, what is acceptable in America is rarely acceptable in Arabic speaking countries. There are very few occasions when refusal of an offering of food or other hospitalities is acceptable. In Arab culture, family members are expected to help each with anything they might need, including money. If that is not possible they are expected to find the means for what they need. American culture permits one to deny help in certain circumstances when Arab culture does not. This habit is one of the hardest things for English-learners of Arabic to acquire, thus contributing to the strong need for effective teaching of pragmatics in Arabic L2 classes.

The inability of the US to meet the demand for more citizens who are linguistically and culturally fluent in Arabic demonstrates the importance of research in Arabic pragmatics. Spikes in Arabic enrollment, as have been reported in the *ADFL Bulletin*, clearly follow major events in the Middle East (Wells 2004, pg. 13). Since September 11th, the Middle East has been in the forefront of the news, causing an

unprecedented rise in the need for Arabic programs. Institutions are not equipped with enough faculty and resources to provide sufficient numbers and varying levels of Arabic classes. Now more than ever, research needs to be done into how to improve Arabic pragmatic instruction both in the United States and through study abroad programs.

Research Question and Hypothesis

This thesis is designed to address the lack of research in both pragmatics, in general, and Arabic refusals, specifically. The following research question is:

1. Can a study abroad experience teach students refusals in Arabic that they have not mastered in the classroom?

The hypothesis is to be tested as follows:

1. A study abroad experience can not teach students refusals in Arabic that they have not mastered in the classroom.

Chapter 3

The Study

The Participants

There were 84 participants, all of which were Arabic students at Brigham Young University. When initially tested all the subjects were second-year students. By the completion of the study, those subjects that were given the post-test were third-year Arabic students at Brigham Young University and had completed a three and a half month study abroad in Alexandria, Egypt. Their ages range from 18 to 27. The group was composed of 34 women and 50 men. While the initial group, including all of those given the pre-test and all those given the post-test, was comprised of 84 participants, in the end only 39 subjects were used for testing the hypothesis. This happened for a number of reasons. First some of the students had either spent a month or more in the Middle East prior to the study abroad or they were of Arab descent. Since these students had had exposure to Arab culture before the study abroad they were disqualified. Also some students were not included because they decided not to participate in the study abroad. Finally, some of the students who were given the post-test at the end of the study abroad, had not been given the pre-test, because they were at a more advanced level than the students who were originally tested.

Instruments

A written discourse questionnaire was developed consisting of eight scenarios requiring subjects to make a refusal. The scenarios were written in English and the students were instructed to respond in Arabic. The scenarios were written in English so that none of the students' answers could be influenced by a misunderstanding of the

context in which they were supposed to be responding. The students were given fifteen minutes to complete the task. The time limit was set so that the students would be forced to answer with their initial response and not have a large amount of time in which to debate their response. In a real life context these students would be expected to give an immediate answer, and the desire was for the questionnaire to reflect that as much as possible. The questionnaire and the appropriate answers were developed with the help of native Egyptians, both here at BYU and in Alexandria.

Procedures

BYU second year Arabic students were given the discourse completion questionnaire, and as mentioned before, they were given 15 minutes in which to complete it. Following BYU's three and a half month long Egypt study abroad program, the students that attended the program were given a similar version of the questionnaire, which contained the same refusal questions, but also a few other scenarios to help mask the purpose of the test. At the end of the program the students had completed their third year of Arabic. Both tests were evaluated based on cultural norms as defined by native Arabic speakers at BYU and at the institute in Alexandria, Egypt. The students' responses were marked right or wrong, based on whether they would be considered offensive or not. The questionnaires were graded by myself and by the native Egyptian at BYU, who had assisted in the original development of the questionnaire.

Design and Data Analysis

As mentioned before, I was able to use 39 different students before and after questionnaires for comparison. I used their raw scores to do a paired t-test of significance, with a p-value of less than .05 being significant. (see Table 1). I then wanted to look at

the change in each individual question before and after. In order to avoid doing multiple t-tests and risk having a result show significance by chance, I choose to simply calculate the mean and standard deviation of the answers for each of the questions and then compare the before and after to check for overlap. (see Table 2).

Chapter 4

Analysis of the Results

The results of the paired t-test showed no significant change between the before and after scores, causing me to not reject the null hypothesis (see Table 1). By investigating each individual question I found that only two questions showed any significant change. The question “Someone you do not like asks for help. How do you respond?” showed in a significant improvement, while the question “You are given food you do not want, how do you respond?” actually showed digression (see Table 2).

Table 1

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means

	<i>Pre-Test</i>	<i>Post-Test</i>
Mean	4.897435897	5.179487
Variance	1.620782726	1.940621
Observations	39	39
Pearson Correlation	0.337095364	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	38	
t Stat	1.145192586	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.129645474	
t Critical one-tail	1.685954461	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.259290948	
t Critical two-tail	2.024394147	

Table 2

Comparison of Means Before and After

	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Mean	Stdev	Mean	Stdev
Question 1	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00
Question 2	0.85	0.37	0.90	0.31
Question 3	0.85	0.37	0.74	0.44
Question 4	0.26	0.44	0.41	0.50
Question 5	0.54	0.51	0.56	0.50
Question 6	0.87	0.34	1.00	0.00
Question 7	0.85	0.37	0.46	0.51
Question 8	0.10	0.31	0.10	0.31

The lack of a significant change between the before and after scores came as a surprise, considering all the previously cited research, which concludes that pragmatics is best acquired in a SL setting. There are several aspects of our study abroad that may have influenced this. First, the study abroad only lasted three and a half months, with the first two weeks involving extensive traveling and site seeing. In studies such as Matsumura (2001) the study abroad participants were able to learn how to give advice appropriately, but this was after living and studying in Canada for one year. A second aspect is that our students lived in apartments with other Americans as opposed to some type of home stay. Again in Matsumura's study, the students lived in the dorms and had native speaker roommates. While students in our program were able to make friends, many times any meetings between our students and native speakers took place at cafés and places outside of the home. Many of our students were never truly incorporated into the Arab family and Arab lifestyle.

While there was no significant difference between the test scores, I still wanted to investigate each individual question. The first question is "A close friend or relative offers you food and you are not hungry. How do you respond?" In both American and

Arabic culture you could turn down food under these circumstances, so it is no surprise that this questions was answered correctly by all of the students on both of the tests. The typical response both before and after was for students to say “No thank you” and then say they were not hungry or had already eaten.

The second question “You are invited to a party and you do not want to see the people that are going to be there. How do you respond?” resulted in the majority of the students answering correctly both before and after. Students would respond saying “Sorry I cannot come” and after some students had picked up on saying “God willing,” which is an acceptable way to avoid actually answering the questions. It would be appropriate, to make up an excuse for not being able to attend the party or even say you may be there, but it is inappropriate to state you actually do not want to see the people there. Perhaps the students that did miss this did not feel comfortable enough with the language to venture far outside the question.

The third question “You are offered food you do not like. How do you refuse it?” was perhaps worded poorly. I did not specify whether this was a family member/close friend relationship or whether this someone being met for the first time. This would affect what kind of responses you could use. Many students, especially after the program, responded saying that they were full or had already eaten, which would be appropriate when speaking to a friend or family member, but it regardless of the situation, would not be appropriate to say you do not like the food, because this could be taken as an insult to the person who prepared it. Again I think students who actually said “I don’t like this,” may have missed this question because they focused on the repeating the question instead of actually considering the pragmatic situation.

The fourth question “A good friend asks you for help and you cannot help them. How do you respond?” was missed by the majority of the class, both before and after. Many of the students responded as they would in English simply saying “Sorry,” but in Arab culture it would be more appropriate to say you will do what you can or to offer to find someone who can help them. Saving face is central in Arab culture and even if you had to lie to be polite, you would do so. As mentioned earlier, many of our students never really integrated into the culture, and this could be why there was no significant improvement.

The fifth question “You are visiting someone for the first time and they offer you food. You are not hungry. How do you respond?” was missed by approximately half the students both before and after. In America you may be able to respond by saying you are not hungry, but that would be taken as an insult in Arab society. I thought our students would have improved on this question, but this lack of improvement may actually be a result of the classes they attended. Many students who missed this question would reply saying that they were full and physically couldn’t eat any more, using phrases we had learned in class. This is probably due to the fact that these phrases were taught as a way to refuse food at the end of a dinner when the hosts keeps insisting that you eat more and the students over-generalized the use of this phrase.

The sixth question “Someone you do not like asks for help. How do you respond?”.was answered correctly by the majority of the students before and by all of the students after. In this scenario it is appropriate to say that you cannot help and have some kind of excuse, but it would not be appropriate to just say no. Many students responded saying “I am sorry I cannot help you now, but maybe later.” I think with even minimal

daily interaction with natives a student could realize that Arabs almost never directly answer no.

The seventh question “You are given food you do not want. How do you respond?” actually resulted in the greatest difference in mean scores and the scores were actually worse. I think this may have been due to the wording. My intention with this question was to convey that without notice some type of food was placed in front of you and you did not want it. In that case the only appropriate thing to do would be to eat it. However many of the students, again over-generalizing, answered with the phrase “I am full and I cannot physically eat anymore.” This would be appropriate had I been referring to food given at the end of a meal. If that had been the case, the percentage correct would have shown no significant change.

Finally, the eighth question “A close friend or relative asks you for money, but you do not have any to give them. How do you respond?” was only answered correctly by four of the students both before and after. In this instance it would be appropriate to promise to help and offer to find the money some how. In most cases students just responded saying “Sorry I can’t help” or “Sorry I don’t have any money.” Again I think there was no improvement in this question, because the students were not given enough time and opportunities to build the kind of relationships that would result in this situation.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The lack of improvement in students' ability to make refusals draws into question the effectiveness of study abroad programs and what changes need to be made. As stated earlier, Matsumura's (2001) study abroad program consisted of a year long program in Canada in which the Japanese students lived in the dorms with native English speakers. Brigham Young University's program consisted of a three and a half month program in Egypt in which students lived with other English speakers from the program. I believe that these two factors had a profound affect on the results of our program. They acted as boundaries preventing most of the students from integrating themselves into Egypt society and specifically the Egyptian family.

There is another factor I observed that may be unique to our situation in Alexandria. Many of the students chose to live in poorer areas of town in order to save money. Because of this many of the friends they made were working class. Even though the students were living in the poorer apartments too, they were American and as such were immediately considered part of the upper class. In Arab and Egyptian society, hospitality is a major motivator for much of their behavior. Someone from the working class would not feel comfortable hosting someone such as an American, since they could not provide the hospitality that someone from a higher class would expect. For example, one student in the program, made friends with two college age men from a very poor area of town. Even though they were friends and met socially at least three times a week for the three month period, this student was never invited to come to their homes or meet

their family. From my own experience in the Middle East, this would not have been the case had these men felt that they were in the same social class as the student.

Limitations

As mentioned earlier, some limitations of the study became clear during the administration of the questionnaire, when certain scenarios were not detailed enough. A simple pilot study could have solved this problem. Another limitation might have been the written format. In a face to face oral interview students may have reacted differently due to the anxiety that is typically associated with oral interviews. Another issue arose with the timing of the post-test. It was administered at the very end of the study abroad program, while students were busy taking finals, completing other end of semester questionnaires, saying goodbye to friends, and doing last minute shopping. Some of the students who simply repeated back the question in their answer, may have been feeling fatigue and overwhelmed with everything else going on and may not have taken the questionnaire seriously. They may also not have taken the questionnaire because their thoughts were focused on leaving Egypt and getting back to America. Many students experienced culture shock and perhaps by the end they were not concerned with whether or not what they said was culturally appropriate.

Now that the students have returned from the program and have had time to reflect on their experience and perhaps forget some of their frustrations, a second post-test might result in significantly different results. Interestingly, the gender of the native speaker chosen as a reference might also affect the outcome of the study. The main reference that I used at BYU was a woman and the teachers I consulted with in Egypt were also woman. I then had a male native speaker correct the questionnaires and it

appeared that his idea of what is offensive was different in some of the scenarios. To examine interrater reliability, 18 tests were rated independently by three raters, one male native, a female native, and myself. The correlations were not as high as would be expected for formal rating rubrics. (see Table 3) The biggest correlation was between the female native's and my own ($r = .68$) while the lowest was between the female native's and the male native's ($r = .27$). Although some of the correlation between the two female raters could be explained by the female native's marginal involvement in the development of the instrument, the fact that hers differed so markedly from her countryman's scores is a clear call for more investigation into this effect.

Table 3

Correlation Matrix

Raters	female	male	author
female	1	0.265222	0.678019
male	0.265222	1	0.545924
author	0.678019	0.545924	1

Future Research

In order to better understand which types of study abroad programs are most effective for teaching culture, more detailed studies need to be done comparing programs that have different lengths and different types of housing situations. Also, in order to better understand how to acquire Arabic pragmatics, research needs to be done in various countries. It is easy to lump all the Arabic speaking countries into one convenient term, but obviously each country has its own unique social structure. It has been my experience through visiting Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, and through speaking to students who have studied in all three places, that while each country shares many of the same common

courtesies, the social structures are very different and integrating into one may be easier than the other.

Conclusion

With the recent rise in research in pragmatics and the recent surge of demand for Arabic speakers in the United States, it is clear that more research needs to be done in the area of Arabic pragmatics. Since research has shown that pragmatics are best acquired in an SL environment, universities need to evaluate their study abroad programs to see if they are truly providing the best opportunity for students to progress in their language learning and to assimilate as much as possible into the target culture.

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Appendix A

Pre-Test

Refusals in Arabic

Age:

Year in school:

Sex: Male Female

Have you ever been to the Middle East?

If yes, how long did you stay there?

Please respond to the following questions to the best of your ability in ARABIC.

1. A close friend or relative has offered you food and you are not hungry. How do you respond?

2. You are visiting someone for the first time and they offer you food. You are not hungry. How do you respond?

3. You are invited to a party and you do not want to see the people that are going to be there. How do you respond?

4. A good friend asks you for help and you cannot help them. How do you respond?

5. Someone you do not like asks for help and you cannot help them. How do you respond?

6. A close friend or relative asks you for money, but you do not have any to give them. How do you respond?

7. You are offered food that you do not like. How do you respond?

8. You are given food that you do not want. How do you respond?

Appendix B

Post-Test

Refusals in Arabic

Age:

Year in school:

Sex: Male Female

Have you been to the Middle East on a trip other than the Egypt 2004 study abroad?

If yes, how long did you stay there?

Please respond to the following questions to the best of your ability in ARABIC.

1. A close friend or relative has offered you food and you are not hungry. How do you respond?

2. A friend compliments your sweater. What should you say in response?

3. You are invited to a party and you do not want to see the people that are going to be there. How do you respond?

4. A good friend asks you for help and you cannot help them. How do you respond?

5. You accidentally step on someone's foot while trying to get to a seat in the movie theater. How do you apologize?

6. A close friend or relative asks you for money, but you do not have any to give them. How do you respond?

7. You are visiting someone for the first time and they offer you food. You are not hungry. How do you respond?

8. You are offered food that you do not like. How do you respond?

9. Someone you do not like asks for help and you cannot help them. How do you respond?

10. Someone is standing in your way and you need to get around them. What do you say to them?

11. You are given food that you do not want. How do you respond?