

THE PRAGMATICS OF POLITENESS  
AS EXPRESSED BY ADULT, NATIVE ARABIC-SPEAKING ENGLISH LEARNERS

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This project answers the question: What are the areas of pragmatic difficulty for adult, native Arabic-speaking English learners when expressing politeness in English in ESL settings? Through research of relevant literature, conversations with cultural informants, and personal observations based on experiences as an instructor of adult, native Arabic-speaking English learners, the author identifies five areas as subjects for lessons in pragmatics with the purpose of lessening the occasion of pragmatic error for this group of ELs. Those five subject areas are:

- The pragmatics of complimenting in English-speaking cultures versus Arabic-speaking cultures.
- The pragmatics of inter-familial communication in English-speaking cultures versus Arabic-speaking cultures.
- The pragmatics of requests in English-speaking cultures versus Arabic-speaking cultures.
- The pragmatics of politeness in communication between the sexes in English-speaking cultures and Arabic-speaking cultures.
- Using euphemisms to express politeness in English.

These five lessons are the basis of this capstone project, a seminar on the pragmatics of politeness for adult, native Arabic-speaking English learners. The lessons are flexibly designed so that the instructor conducting the seminar can decide the length and volume of instruction, from one to three days, two to five lessons, and one to three hours per lesson. For example, one instructor may wish to conduct a one-day seminar that offers two lessons, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, each lasting two to three hours. Another instructor may wish to make use of all five lessons spread out over two to three

days. Another may wish to facilitate all five lessons in one day with each lesson being allotted less time. The lessons are designed in one-hour time blocks which can easily be expanded (doubled, even tripled), depending on the number and cooperation of the participants. Ideally, the lessons would be taught in two-hour time blocks to allow for thorough explorations of the subjects.

The lessons are shaped via influences from the backward design of Wiggins and McTighe, educational practices for English learners advocated by Parrish (Communicative Language Teaching), and the adult educational theories of Knowles. The elements of backward design (identifying results, evidence of student understanding, and related learning experience plans) are indicated throughout the lesson in parentheses, e.g., lesson objectives are credited in parentheses as *identifying results*, various assessments are credited as *evidence of student understanding*, and activities and teaching methods are credited as *learning experience plans*. Similarly, educational practices advocated by Parrish and Knowles are indicated in parentheses following the subheadings of the lessons, e.g., instructor modeling and guided practice are credited in parentheses for utilizing students' *prior knowledge*, *relevant life experiences*, and *collaboration*.

Students and instructors alike can benefit from this seminar. The student bodies it is intended to inform are adult, native Arabic-speaking English learners. Instructors tasked with teaching English to this group of ELs can use these lessons to guide and inform instruction of pragmatics, either in total as a seminar, or individually as time and resources permit. The intended results are to lessen the occasion of pragmatic error for this group of English learners.

## **Lesson One: The Pragmatics of Complimenting in English-Speaking Cultures versus Arabic-Speaking Cultures (60 minutes)**

**Objectives (Identify Results):** Students will be able to comprehend and describe common traits of compliments made by native English speakers versus compliments made in English by native Arabic-speaking English learners.

**Assumptions:** Students will be comfortable working in pairs and small groups, and students will be willing to share their life experiences with others in these units. Most (if not all) of the students have watched American television shows and movies, and many (if not all) of them have lived in a native English-speaking country for varying lengths of time.

**Anticipated Problems:** Some of the native Arabic-speaking students may not be comfortable working with members of the opposite sex as education (and most aspects of public life) is segregated by sex in many parts of the Arabic-speaking world (e.g., Saudi Arabia). Accommodations can be made for these students to work in same sex pairs and groups.

**Audience:** Adult, native Arabic-speaking English learners.

**Materials and Setting:** A room with tables and chairs large enough to accommodate movement for organizing in pairs and small groups by an anticipated number of adult students is required. A writing board (black or white) with the necessary tools for writing and erasing is also required.

### **Warm-Up**

(5 minutes: activate language)

Students are asked to get acquainted with one of their neighboring classmates. In the course of their introductions, they are prompted to ask two questions:

- What is the nicest thing anyone has said to you in the past few days?
- What is the nicest thing you have said to anyone in the past few days?

### **Lead-In**

(10 minutes: hook students, pique their interest, activate language, activate prior knowledge)

Students are organized into two concentric circles, facing each other. The students in the outside circle are tasked with finding a quality in the person they are facing and giving that person a compliment. Once they have done this, the students in the inside circle are tasked with doing the same—finding a quality in the person they are facing and delivering a compliment. When these initial pairs exchanges are completed, the people in the outer circle move over (clockwise) one person, face a new partner and repeat the exercise, (i.e., the new pairings exchange compliments). This rotation is repeated until the participants have turned full circle and are facing the partners with whom they began this exercise. Though they are speaking in a second language—English—the students are

encouraged to express themselves naturally, in a manner in which they are most comfortable and accustomed.

**Context and Instructor Modeling** (Learning Experience Plans)

(15 minutes: activate language, prior knowledge, and new ideas)

Once the compliment carousel has come full circle, students are organized into small groups and asked to reflect on the compliments paid to one another via discussion questions provided by the instructor.

1. How often do you hear people paying compliments to one another?
2. What do people commonly say when complimenting one another? Are compliments more often one-sided, or are they equally exchanged?
3. How do people respond to compliments?
4. Are you always comfortable with the way you exchange compliments in English? When, if ever, do you feel uncomfortable, and why?
5. Thinking about compliments in your first language, what do people say when they give and receive compliments in your home country?
6. Reflect on the differences, if any, between complimenting in English (in the United States) and complimenting in Arabic in your home country.

Instructor shares authentic example from Chapter Two of this capstone project. Compliments paid to the American instructor by his native, Arabic-speaking students were often effusive. To the students who wanted to pay him a compliment for being a good teacher, he was often praised as “the best teacher in all of the state, etc.” The instructor elaborates with examples of how a native English-speaking American student would likely pay such a compliment and invite comparison between the two styles from the students.

**Guided Practice** (Learning Experience Plans)

(10 minutes: activate prior knowledge and experiences, self-direction, collaboration)

Students are asked to share their own, authentic examples of how they have experienced compliments from both native, Arabic speakers and native, English-speaking Americans in pairs or in small groups. They are asked to compare and contrast the nature and style of compliments paid by the two language groups. A member (or two) of each group is tasked with noting examples.

**Student Practice** (Learning Experience Plans)

(15 minutes: activate prior knowledge, relevancy, and collaboration)

The students come together and share their experiences and examples with one another. They are asked to make note of similarities and differences with volunteer or appointed participants documenting the findings on a board in front of the class. Those documenting

for the class are encouraged to list a) the experiences in English with native English speakers separate from b) the examples experienced in Arabic with native Arabic speakers. The separate lists, side by side in close proximity, should facilitate a productive and meaningful compare and contrast exercise by the class. Students report and discuss their findings. To highlight discoveries, students role play some of the differences when complimenting with the words and people of the two language groups.

**Check for Learning / Learning Assessment** (Evidence of Student Understanding)  
(5 minutes: goal-oriented)

Students are asked what strategies they may employ, or things they may say or do differently when complimenting native English speakers in English. Students' responses should reveal what they have learned as they discover their own answers to questions raised by their own, authentic experiences when complimenting in English.

### **Lesson Two: The Pragmatics of Inter-Familial Communication in English-Speaking Cultures versus Arabic-Speaking Cultures** (60 minutes)

**Objectives** (Identify Results): Students will be able to comprehend and describe differences in inter-familial communication commonly found in American families versus inter-familial communication typically found in families from native Arabic-speaking cultures.

**Assumptions:** Students will be familiar with inter-familial communication norms in the United States, having witnessed them firsthand while living in the country or having watched them via American television and cinema. Students will be comfortable working in pairs and small groups, and they will be willing to share their life experiences and what they have witnessed with the class at large and in the aforementioned smaller units.

**Anticipated Problems:** Some of the native Arabic-speaking students may not be comfortable working with members of the opposite sex. Accommodations can be made for these students to work in same sex pairs and groups.

**Audience:** Adult, native Arabic-speaking English learners.

**Materials and Setting:** A room with tables and chairs large enough to accommodate movement for organizing in pairs and small groups by an anticipated number of adult students, computer audio/visual capabilities to project scenes excerpted from American television programs and films, and a board (black or white) with the necessary tools for writing and erasing are required.

#### **Warm-Up**

(5 minutes: hook, pique interest, activate language and prior knowledge)

Students will view a compilation (or series) of clips from American television shows and films depicting scenes of American family members interacting with one another. As American culture is ever-changing (especially the popular culture found in television and

film), it is recommended that scenes played for the students be updated regularly. For example, early episodes of “Rosanne” and “Everybody Loves Raymond” may provide some excellent examples of inter-familial interactions, but classes of contemporary students may find episodes of these series to be rather dated. To remain relevant, it is important that the students feel they are viewing up-to-date scenes from shows depicting contemporary family relations. Instructors are encouraged to use the most up-to-date material available. Students are encouraged to observe the interactions of family members carefully, and to take notes regarding those interactions while watching the film clips.

### **Lead-In and Context** (Learning Experience Plans)

(15 minutes: relevance, collaboration)

Students are organized into small groups to describe the interactions they observed in the clips. For these initial, post-viewing descriptions, students are asked to detail the accounts like objective newspaper or television reporters, i.e., they are asked to describe the details but not to make any judgments about the interactions or the players involved. Students are tasked with citing at least three different inter-familial dynamics observed by the group. An individual or two must serve as the documentarian who will note the family dynamics cited by the group members. After an allotted time, each group will share their observations, which will be listed on the board in front of the class and categorized via the dynamics of the family members involved, e.g., parent to parent, parent to child, child to parent, child to child, adult sibling to adult sibling, etc. Once the scenes have been detailed and categorized, each group will be given two or three of the scenes to discuss and compare them with how they believe these interactions would have played-out in the home of a family from a native Arabic-speaking culture, or how that scene may have transpired if the players were native Arabic-speaking and the setting was a country in the Middle East and not in the United States.

### **Instructor Modeling and Guided Practice** (Learning Experience Plans)

(15 minutes: utilizes prior knowledge, life experiences, relevance, and collaboration)

Working within their groups, students are asked to make a direct comparison between the scenes of American families they just watched and how they believe those scenes would have played-out among native Arabic-speaking family members in a country in the Middle East.

The instructor gives an example of one such comparison. Expanding on the example of the cultural informant from Chapter Two of this capstone project, the instructor creates a scenario where a teenaged boy is disagreeing and arguing with his parents about how long he can stay out on a particular school night and whether or not he can take the family car to meet his friends at the planned destination. The interaction includes a heated exchange between the teenager and the parents, including complaints by the teenager regarding the job his mother and father are doing as parents. That is contrasted by the reaction of the Saudi informant who witnessed the exchange and felt “embarrassed” for his friend. If a similar disagreement occurred in a Saudi household, he explained, there would be no arguing with the parents and insults leveled by children at their parents would be unconscionable.

Students are directed to make further comparisons with the television and film scenes that were played for them. These clips may remind them of family interactions—good or bad—that they witnessed firsthand in the time that they have lived in the United States. Students are encouraged to share those experiences with their classmates, along with other examples they may have simply heard of or viewed in other television shows or films. The examples are to be discussed, analyzed, and contrasted with how they believe the interactions may have been different (or not) in a native Arabic-speaking culture in the Middle East.

**Student Practice** (Learning Experience Plans)

(15 minutes: relevance-oriented)

The students are tasked with selecting one example, either from the scenes viewed in class or from their own experiences which they shared in their groups, and role playing two likely results of the same scenario—one as it would unfold in an American family, and one as it would play out in a native Arabic-speaking family located in the Middle East. The role plays are to be demonstrated in front of the class at large.

**Check for Learning** (Evidence of Student Understanding)

(10 minutes: relevance-oriented)

After all of the role plays have been demonstrated, students are asked to summarize the differences in inter-familial communication between American families and families of native Arabic-speaking cultures as perceived and portrayed by themselves and their classmates. A list of the main points is to be made at the front of the class, and students are asked to reflect on those differences and their reactions to them. The following questions may help them process their thoughts:

- What exact differences or similarities were portrayed in the two cultures?
- What would your response be if you were to witness any of the examples cited or portrayed?
- Would any of the behavior demonstrated in the role plays alter or affect a relationship that you may have with an American who acted similarly? How so?

**Lesson Three: The Pragmatics of Requests in English-Speaking Cultures versus Arabic-Speaking Cultures** (60 minutes)

**Objectives** (Identify Results): Students will be able to differentiate between standard American responses and standard Arabic responses to commonly asked questions and requests made in English in ESL settings.

**Assumptions:** Students will be comfortable working in pairs and small groups, and they will be comfortable sharing personal experiences with one another.

**Anticipated Problems:** Some of the native Arabic-speaking students may not be comfortable working with members of the opposite sex. Accommodations can be made for these students to work in same sex pairs and groups.

**Audience:** Adult, native Arabic-speaking English learners.

**Materials and Setting:** A room with tables and chairs large enough to accommodate movement for organizing in pairs and small groups by an anticipated number of students, writing boards (black or white) on which to organize ideas and display collaborative work, and the necessary tools for writing and erasing are required.

### **Warm-Up**

(10 minutes: pique interest, utilize self-direction, life experiences, and collaboration)  
Students are asked to pair with a classmate and make a list of interesting questions and/or requests that native English speakers have asked of them. Students are encouraged to think of those questions/requests in three ways: Were they a) funny, b) uncomfortable, or c) problematic? Each question/request listed is to be labeled with one of these adjectives. If a student has had rather limited experience living among native English speakers and cannot think of any questions/requests, they are asked to speculate what questions they believe they may likely be asked that would prove either funny, uncomfortable, or problematic. Each pair should try to document two to three questions/requests per label (funny, uncomfortable, or problematic).

### **Lead-In and Context** (Learning Experience Plans)

(15 minutes: collaboration)

Students are organized into small groups by combining two or three of the previously organized pairs. Working in the newly formed groups, students are asked to share their lists of questions/requests with one another, and further instructed to narrow their combined lists to two or three examples which they decide as a group are best representative of each of the three categories—funny, uncomfortable, and problematic. Once the examples are narrowed to two or three choices per category, students are directed to consider how each question/request unfolded (or would unfold, if speculated) in an ESL setting—first with native English-speaking players asking the question (or making the request) and, second, how such a question/request would play-out (if at all) in an Arabic-speaking context.

### **Instructor Modeling and Guided Practice** (Learning Experience Plans)

(15 minutes: relevancy-oriented, collaboration)

The instructor gives the students a definition of negative transfer, when a language learner incorrectly applies the rules of one's first language (L1) to the second language (L2) that one is in the process of learning. Negative transfer can also occur in the realm of pragmatics, when a language learner incorrectly applies the pragmatic norms of one's first language (L1) to the second language (L2) that one is learning. This can result in pragmatic failure, when a first language speaker perceives the purpose of a second language utterance as something other than what the second language speaker intended. The instructor presents the following example from Chapter Two of the capstone project

to the class. Mariam, a young woman from Syria and an acquaintance of the author, shared an experience of hers that demonstrates pragmatic failure caused by negative transfer:

“In the Arabic-speaking world, when someone offers you food or drinks, you are supposed to say ‘no’ even if you want it, then you are supposed to insist a couple of times, and then you say ‘yes.’ When I first arrived to the U.S., I was dropped off at my residence, and I was supposed to meet one of my English teachers the next day who would take me around campus. I had no idea how to do anything, and I tried going to a supermarket, but it turned out to be fifty times bigger than any grocery store I had been to in Syria. I was so overwhelmed and didn’t even know how to buy the right food. The next morning, I was starving. When I met my teacher, she took me to the cafeteria and asked me if I wanted to eat anything. And of course, in a very polite Syrian manner, I said ‘no,’ expecting her to insist over and over, but she in a very polite American manner, just said, ‘okay.’ I ended up not having anything to eat all morning. I was so sad and hungry.”

The instructor highlights the question/request in this scenario: “Can I get you (or buy you) something to eat?” Or said another way, “Would you like something to eat or drink?” We learn from this example that someone from an Arabic-speaking culture may decline the request perfectly expecting to be asked a second, even a third time, after which one may receive the “true” answer. Individuals from native English-speaking cultures will likely not wait for a second or third repetition of the same request before moving on. They will likely process the first reply and respond according to one’s word.

The students are asked to look again at the questions/requests that they have narrowed to a group of four to six, and to select two or three which demonstrate a cultural difference between how the two language groups in question—native Arabic speakers and native English speakers—would handle and/or respond to the questions/requests. This time the students are asked to go beyond imagining and visualizing. They are to present to the class at large the questions and/or requests and the stories behind them. Like the example relayed to them by the instructor, students should demonstrate how each side interpreted the question/request, how each side responded, and the pragmatic failure that resulted from the misunderstanding. The instructor (and any teaching assistants recruited for the seminar) will mingle among the groups and be available to help flesh out the stories behind the questions/requests. Suggestions may be offered regarding how the question/request scenarios can be presented to the class at large.

### **Student Practice** (Learning Experience Plans)

(15 minutes: self-directed, collaborative)

Students are encouraged to be creative as they piece together their presentations. They can be delivered in the form of a narrative (as demonstrated by the instructor), or demonstrated via role plays and original skits. The scenarios could also be presented via a combination of narrative and theater. The question/request for each presentation should be clearly stated. How each side understood and responded to the question/request should

also be clear. Finally, students are asked to explain the fallout, or the consequences, of the pragmatic failure they present.

**Check for Learning** (Evidence of Student Understanding)  
(5 minutes)

After each group has presented and explained their questions/requests, students will be asked in a round robin of the tables in the room what question/request was demonstrated by the neighbor to the right, and what they learned from the responses of the two language groups. Students will be further asked to differentiate between a common response to the question/request by native Arabic speakers and a common response given by native English speakers.

**Lesson Four: The Pragmatics of Politeness in Communication between the Sexes in English-Speaking Cultures and Arabic-Speaking Cultures** (60 minutes)

**Objectives** (Identify Results): Students will be able to differentiate common interactions between the sexes in native Arabic-speaking cultures versus native English-speaking cultures. Students will also be able to detail their choices when engaging in interpersonal communication with members of the opposite sex in English in an ESL setting.

**Assumptions:** Students will be willing to interact with members of the opposite sex in pairs activities, small groups, and the class at large. Students will be willing to share their interpersonal communication experiences with members of the opposite sex in Arabic-speaking settings and in English-speaking (ESL) settings.

**Anticipated Problems:** Some of the native Arabic-speaking students may not be comfortable working with members of the opposite sex. Accommodations can be made for these students to work in same sex pairs and groups.

**Audience:** Adult, native Arabic-speaking English learners.

**Materials and Setting:** A classroom with tables and chairs large enough to accommodate movement for an anticipated number of adult students to organize in pairs and small groups.

**Warm-Up**

(5 minutes: activates prior knowledge and life experiences)

Students are paired and asked to consider how they would react if they were approached and addressed by a) their mother or father, b) their sister or brother, c) their aunt or uncle, d) a cousin of the opposite sex, e) a brother/sister-in-law, f) a family friend of the opposite sex, g) a male/female classmate.

**Lead-In**

(15 minutes: activate language and life experiences)

In a deliberate imitation of a speed-dating setting, chairs are placed in two rows with each chair directly facing another chair. Students are asked to take a seat in the row designated for their sex. Each student should be facing a classmate of the opposite sex. In the likely event of uneven numbers, chairs can be arranged so that students are grouped two to one as needed, or one of the rows can be unisex. The row of women (or a majority of women) will remain stationary, while the men's row will rotate—every two minutes (variable) the men will stand up and shift on chair to the right (with the individuals on the right end circling round to take the first seat(s) on the far left). The students will make two complete rotations. The first time around students are asked to get acquainted with their classmates by asking the kind of questions one would ask when first meeting a member of the opposite sex. The second time around, the students are asked to exchange their reactions to being approached and addressed by people representative of the groups designated in the warm-up activity—a) a mother/father, b) sister/brother, c) aunt/uncle, d) a cousin of the opposite sex, e) a brother/sister-in-law, f) a family friend of the opposite sex, g) a male/female classmate.

### **Context and Instructor Modeling** (Learning Experience Plans)

(5 minutes: demonstrates relevancy)

Students are addressed regarding something that they very likely already know—that interactions between men and women are different in the United States than they are in most native Arabic-speaking countries. To illustrate one of the differences, the instructor relays an example from Chapter One of this capstone project—the Saudi citizen who met his American family for the first time when he was eighteen years old. He describes his initial meetings with the girlfriend of his American brother as awkward and embarrassing. Having been raised in Saudi Arabia, it was customary and polite for the young Saudi man to look down in the presence of girls and women who were not part of his immediate family. Therefore, he would politely cast his eyes downward and speak very little in the presence of his American brother's girlfriend. The girlfriend interpreted the young Saudi's expressions as a sign that he did not like her, and she deduced that the Saudi man thought she wasn't good enough for his brother nor his family. He won't even look at me, she thought, and concluded that the Saudi was arrogant and aloof.

### **Guided Practice** (Learning Experience Plans)

(15 minutes: utilizes life experiences)

The students are asked to discuss in groups their reactions to the warm-up and lead-in exercises, when they were asked to think about and exchange their reactions with their classmates regarding how they would respond to meetings with various family members, friends, and acquaintances of the opposite sex.

Once students have thoroughly talked about their own reactions, they are asked to discuss how an American peer of theirs would respond when addressed by a representative of each of the six groups cited in the earlier exercise. Students are encouraged to share their firsthand witnessing of American counterparts interacting with representatives of each group in question. If their firsthand experiences are limited, the students are asked to speculate based on what they know, read, or have seen on television and in movies. Last, students are asked to compare and contrast their responses (as individuals from native

Arabic-speaking cultures) with those of Americans (as witnessed or speculated). Views from the different groups are shared among the class at large, creating further opportunity for the students to discuss how the culture of the two language groups may differ in relation to communication and interaction with members of the opposite sex.

**Student Practice** (Learning Experience Plans)

(15 minutes: collaboration)

Students are organized in gender-balanced pairs, or placed in groups of three in the likely event that there is not an even gender balance in the class. The pairs/groups are tasked with creating and performing small skits that demonstrate how people from the culture of the two language groups (Arabic and English) would typically respond when interacting with a member of the opposite sex from one of the six groups cited in the opening exercises. Students are encouraged to demonstrate the interactions of a pairing in which there is a noticeable difference in the interaction of the native Arabic speakers and the native English speakers. Both sides should be adequately and fairly represented. The skits will be performed before the class, and it is expected that notes and/or scripts will be used to assist the students.

**Check for Learning** (Evidence of Student Understanding)

(5 minutes)

Once each pairing/group has performed, students have the opportunity to share their observations regarding how the different language groups interact when paired with the opposite sex: What is usual and customary in each culture, and what is polite? Students are asked to reflect on whether or not their classmates fairly represented the customs of the two language groups in the skits. The sessions will conclude with the students citing the “take aways” from the seminar. The following questions will help the students to focus and process the information received:

- Is there a difference in the manner in which men and women interact in Arabic-speaking and English-speaking cultures?
- What are those differences?
- What is considered polite interaction between unrelated men and women in both cultures?

**Lesson Five: Using Euphemisms to Express Politeness in English** (60 minutes)

**Objectives** (Identify Results): Students will be able to define *euphemism*. Students will be able to identify common American English euphemisms. Students will be able to use common American English euphemisms in conversation.

**Assumptions:** Students will be familiar with euphemisms from their first language, Arabic.

**Anticipated Problems:** Experience and proficiency in English among the students can vary widely. Some students may have lived in an American ESL setting for only a short

time. Students with limited experience living in the United States may not be very familiar with common American English euphemisms. In addition, some students may not be comfortable working with members of the opposite sex, particularly regarding sensitive language. Accommodations can be made for these individuals to work in same sex pairs and/or groups.

**Audience:** Adult, native Arabic-speaking English learners.

**Materials and Setting:** A classroom with tables and chairs large enough to accommodate movement for organizing in pairs and small groups among adult students, a board (black or white), necessary tools for writing and erasing on the board, euphemism handout, euphemism exercise sheet, note cards, and tape are required.

### **Warm-Up**

(5 minutes)

Students are asked to recall, and share with their neighbors, their most recent (or their favorite) end of Ramadan feast.

### **Lead-In and Context** (Learning Experience Plans)

(15 minutes: practicality, relevancy, collaboration)

Instructor recounts personal story of eating too much over American holidays, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, and having to deal with the consequences of weight gain thereafter. Focus shifts to alternative words/phrases for *fat*.

Instructor defines *euphemism*—known as polite, pretty, or soft language, euphemisms are words used to express subjects that are unpleasant (e.g., death), embarrassing (e.g., bodily functions), or taboo (e.g., one's age or weight). Generally speaking, euphemisms are employed to express whatever is socially awkward to talk about directly. Euphemisms are a big part of English conversation. Some experts believe that fluency in English cannot be achieved without knowledge of euphemisms. All languages have euphemisms, but most are specific to a certain language.

Instructor gives another example of an American euphemism in usage.

The students think/pair/share with each other regarding English euphemisms they may have encountered in the course of their studies, travel, and time living in the United States.

### **Instructor Modeling** (Learning Experience Plan)

(5 minutes: relevancy)

Instructor calls students' attention to words written on the board in the front of the room—words commonly euphemized in English. Instructor uses two examples of euphemisms, *heavy* and *aged*, to model identification of a euphemism with its direct English counterpart (e.g., *heavy* is a euphemism for *fat*, and *aged* is a euphemism for *old*).

**Guided Practice** (Learning Experience Plan)

(25 minutes: goal-oriented, practicality, collaboration)

Students are paired again and tasked with sorting through note cards containing common American English euphemisms. Students are to match each card to the word on the board that it represents (via taping the cards underneath the respective words on the board). When the exercise is completed, students read aloud and discuss their choices on the board. Next, students will read sample sentences from an exercise handout that contains common American English euphemisms. Students will be tasked with identifying and underscoring the euphemisms in the sentences. They will be asked to re-state (or re-read aloud) the sentence using simple, direct English in place of the euphemisms in the sentences.

**Student Practice** (Learning Experience Plan)

(5 minutes: prior knowledge, practical application)

Students will be asked to recall (in their best English interpretations) euphemisms from their first languages and cultures. The sharing and discussion will involve the class at large. Students will be asked to pair with a classmate and practice saying and using euphemisms from their handout in conversation. Students are encouraged to ask any questions regarding euphemisms in general, the specific ones they have learned, or any of the ones listed on their handout.

**Check for Learning** (Evidence of Student Understanding)

(5 minutes)

Students are asked to repeat their favorite English euphemism and its less polite counterpart in a round robin of participation that continues until the students have run out of options.

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