Code, L. E. Exploring the Relationship Between Culture and Second Language Pragmatics: A Case Study of an ESL Journaling Activity (2014)

A substantial amount of L2 pragmatic research focuses on speech act realization and conversational maxims yet few studies examine L2 pragmatics from the perspective of learners' attitudes or use information contributed from learners' lives. This study examines the attitudes of an adult class of intermediate and advanced level English language learners toward second language pragmatics. It addresses the primary question of whether journaling about second language culture affects learners' attitudes toward second language pragmatic forms. Key influences were my teaching experience; initial research impetus comes from Roumiana Ilieva. The study employs a cultural exploration journaling activity, attitude surveys, in-class writing exercises, classroom discussions and post-treatment exit interviews to collect data pursuant to the research question. Results obtained from the surveys suggest minimal improvement in participants' attitudes. However, the results from the exit interview sessions tentatively conclude that journaling may be effective for exploring L2 culture and negotiating meanings of L2 pragmatic forms.

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURE AND SECOND LANGUAGE PRAGMATICS: A CASE STUDY OF AN ESL JOURNALING ACTIVITY

by

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A capstone to be submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Master of Arts in English as a Second Language

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April 2014

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a debt of gratitude to my wonderful capstone advising team: Feride Erku, PhD; Michal Moskow, PhD; and Michelle Fuller, MA. Without your support and encouragement, I could not have finished this paper. I also thank Kelly Crocker, Alice Han-Carlson and Becky Lahniche, my Hamline classmates. I could not have asked for better friends in this program. And last, but certainly not least, I thank Daniel Crombie for always believing in me.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This study examines the attitudes of a class of intermediate and advanced level English language learners toward second language pragmatics. A substantial amount of second language pragmatic research focuses on speech act realization and conversational maxims. Few studies examine second language pragmatics from the perspective of learners' attitudes. Fewer still engage learners as cultural informants to gather authentic pragmatic data from learners' own lives. For this study, a cultural exploration journaling activity, two attitude surveys, in-class writing exercises, classroom discussions and post-treatment exit interviews are used to collect data that address the following primary question and three secondary questions:

Does journaling about second language culture affect learners' attitudes toward second language pragmatic forms? What L2 pragmatic forms and behaviors are students hearing and experiencing in their daily interactions? How do students' primary cultural backgrounds affect their understanding of L2 pragmatic forms? How do students' primary cultural backgrounds and their understanding of L2 culture inform their second language pragmatic choices?

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I discuss issues pertaining to culture, pragmatics and second language learning. I explain the origins of my interest in these topics, and I provide a

rationale for and description of the current research.

Culture, Pragmatics and Second Language Learning

Non-native English speakers face numerous social and linguistic challenges when studying English. Among them are trouble understanding how to accurately interpret cultural information and difficulty with using that learning to build situationally appropriate second language (L2) pragmatic skills. Pragmatic failure can easily occur when learners misread a communicative interaction and react too explicitly or implicitly relative to the context (Nguyen, 2008). While this type of miscommunication is part and parcel of the second language learning process, learners who do not receive and examine constructive feedback from native speakers may continue to misinterpret pragmatic input and fossilize their responses to it (Selinker, 1978; Thomas, 1983; Trillo, 2002; Wei, 2008).

Pragmatic misunderstandings are not the sole domain of the lower level learner. Misfires can occur at all stages of language proficiency, even among fluent non-native speakers (Thomas, 1983; Tanck, 2002; Eslami, 2011). This suggests that all levels of second language learners could benefit from an instructional approach focused on expanding first-hand cultural knowledge as a means to engage more completely in communicative exchanges.

The attitudes non-native speakers hold toward target language speakers and culture may affect their ability to notice and receive new pragmatic information. Sociocultural factors, such as social and psychological distance, learner identity and

positive/negative feelings toward and from the target language community, can help or hinder students' pragmatic awareness and development (Gardner, 1985; McGroarty, 1996; Ortega, 2008). Learners with negative attitudes may overlook or discount pragmatic input and miss the opportunity to incorporate that information into their second language toolkit (Cutting, 2002).

When learners make pragmatic choices counter to target language norms, they may appear rude, dull or foolish to native speakers. However, correcting students' pragmatic utterances or providing constructive feedback should be approached sensitively (Thomas, 1983). Pragmatic choices, which relate to the speaker's sociocultural background and personal beliefs, are social in essence before being realized linguistically. As Thomas notes, non-native speakers may accept corrections to their grammar, but will likely be sensitive to critiques related to their individual opinions or social views (1983). From an instructional perspective, this suggests that a student-centered approach to teaching pragmatics would be a useful addition to classroom discussions about speech acts and conversational norms. That is, an approach focused on such questions as the following would make sense: What L2 pragmatic forms and behaviors are students hearing and experiencing in their daily interactions? How do students' primary cultural backgrounds affect their understanding of L2 pragmatic forms? How do students' primary cultural backgrounds and their understanding of L2 culture inform their second language pragmatic choices?

Origins of Interest

In my experiences as a second language learner and ESL instructor, I have developed a keen interest in the positive relationship between culture learning and pragmatic development. As a learner, my curiosity is rooted in an enthusiasm for exploring new cultures and learning how languages function relative to their cultural contexts. While living and traveling abroad, I have experienced the culture-language connection in a variety of cross-linguistic, cross-cultural settings. Many times, I have 'misread' pragmatic cues and laughed when I should have been serious or frowned when I should have smiled. Despite years of Spanish language study and strong communication skills, I occasionally miss the point of a comment only to realize much later what my conversation partner intended to convey. To this day, I continue to overestimate the amount of personal information I should share and am often too direct in situations where indirect speech is expected.

Native Spanish speaker responses to my pragmatic gaffs have run the gamut from laughter and bemusement to sarcasm and umbrage—and those are just to the mistakes that I have recognized. As happens to many second language learners, their native interlocutors may chose not to remark on pragmatic misuses of language, especially when made by highly proficient non-native speakers. Whether out of politeness, indifference or the belief that a non-native speaker's pragmatic use was intentional, native speakers may inadvertently reinforce non-normative pragmatic behavior by not reacting to it.

While I find native speakers' corrections at times embarrassing, and often

humbling, I value their criticism (whether positively or negatively given). I view my pragmatic stumbles as opportunities for real growth in my second language ability. Every time I make a pragmatic error, I stretch my understanding of the social uses of the target language and the possibilities of my response to it. I also try to cut myself some slack, recognizing that many of my second language pragmatic responses are conditioned by long-held, first-language sociocultural scripts.

As an ESL instructor, one of my goals has been to find an effective way to communicate to my students the interconnectedness of culture and situational pragmatics. More specifically, I want to help learners evolve their understanding of culture as static, knowable bits of information into the perspective of culture as a complex, dynamic and somewhat opaque social phenomenon. The latter is something that we may subconsciously acknowledge in our first language. But when learning a second language, we tend to seek concrete footholds to better understand our new language environment. This desire for cultural rules may be natural, but it can lead to stereotyping (e.g., Minnesotans always shake hands in greeting) and potentially prevent learners from noticing situational factors that influence pragmatic behaviors. For example, shaking hands may occur in formal contexts, such as interviews, business meetings or professional introductions, but may not in informal encounters, such as casual introductions, greeting friends or asking for assistance in a store. By shifting the mindset from culture as content (i.e., discrete facts) to culture as context (i.e., situational) (Geertz, in Ilieva, p. 7), language learners and teachers can examine how cultural knowledge

informs and shapes pragmatic intent and interpretation during conversation. This shift can promote deeper culture learning by moving away from stereotypical discussions of cultural artifacts, such as art, food and landmarks, into more meaningful discourse about the multi-functional nature of culture within a society. In this way, students may begin to consciously recognize the influence of their own cultural beliefs in their interpersonal communications. This new way of seeing culture and its relationship to language may help learners improve their intentionality during conversation and ability to make informed and accurate pragmatic choices when conversing with native speakers.

Why This Study?

There are many facets of culture and second language pragmatics deserving of study. This paper investigates the effects of a culture exploration journaling activity on the attitudes toward second language pragmatics of a group of intermediate and advanced level adult ESL learners.

The catalyst for this study was an article on the potential benefits of a cultural exploration activity on second language development (Ilieva, 2001). The author, an experienced English-as-a-Foreign-Language teacher from Bulgaria, had found her English-language cultural assumptions routinely tested when she immigrated to Canada. As a newcomer to that country, she had fully anticipated the need for cross-cultural negotiation. She was, however, surprised by the inadequacy of her prior knowledge of the language and Canadian customs, and she felt ill-equipped for her daily interactions with Canadians.

I was affected by the author's frustration, but not surprised by her story. It is a common refrain among second language learners. Learners often believe they know the target language culture, only to discover how incomplete or inaccurate their knowledge is, and realize they are uncertain how to build a reliable second language sociocultural skill set (Ilieva, 2001).

The discrepancy between a learner's cultural knowledge and the realities one encounters can, in part, be explained by traditional but outdated ways of thinking and teaching about culture. It can further be understood by the limited and/or stereotyped presentations of English-language cultures by the news and entertainment industries. In second language classrooms, in particular, culture is often taught as a defined set of knowable facts and behaviors with little discernible relationship to language. It may be exemplified by such events as culture day in school or at the local library, and often relies on generalizations and may fail to reflect culture as a dynamic, multidimensional construct (Marsh, 2009; Kubota, 2004) that learners encounter in myriad forms every day and can employ to build second language pragmatic skills. As Wright (1996) contends, teachers must become aware that language and culture are not mutually exclusive and should not be taught as though they are. Further, Wright's assertion should be explicated to those learners who believe culture is an ancillary or unnecessary part of language learning (Judd, 1999).

For Ilieva (2001), her cross-cultural conundrum had a silver lining. Her experience motivated her to rethink the traditional method of culture teaching in second

language classrooms. She proposes changing the mainstream approach of instructor-led culture teaching to student-driven, teacher-guided cultural exploration. Her personal experience, and that of countless other second language learners, makes a compelling case for doing so. I was inspired by her general proposition and decided to construct a study to investigate it. The current study focuses on using student-led cultural exploration to examine learners' attitudes toward second language pragmatics.

Project Description

According to Hwang (2008), second language teachers need new, forward-thinking ways to integrate culture and pragmatics learning into their curriculums. Cultural exploration journaling may be a positive technique that teachers and students can use to bridge the gap between classroom learning and students' real-world experiences. With that suggestion in mind, the current project investigates the effects of a cultural exploration journaling activity on participants' attitudes toward second language pragmatics. Specifically, this study examines the following primary question and three subquestions:

Does journaling about second language culture affect learners' attitudes toward second language pragmatic forms? What L2 pragmatic forms and behaviors are students hearing and experiencing in their daily interactions? How do students' primary cultural backgrounds affect their understanding of L2 pragmatic forms? How do students' primary cultural backgrounds and their understanding of L2 culture inform their second language pragmatic choices?

This 8-week case study has been conducted with a group of intermediate and advanced level adult English language learners at a Midwestern community college. Participants met as a class once a week for seven weeks and kept personal journals of their communicative interactions with native English speakers. During the eighth week, participants returned for individual exit interviews. In the weekly classroom sessions, students shared information from their journals and discussed their entries as a class. As the instructor, I monitored the discussions and provided guidance as needed. During the study, data was collected from five sources: 1) pre- and post-treatment attitude surveys, 2) participants' journals, 3) in-class writing exercises, 4) class discussions and 5) post-treatment exit interviews. All of the class discussions and exit interviews were audio recorded. These methods of data collection produced an abundant amount of information on participants' experiences with culture and language learning. However, only data that is relevant to this study's research questions will be shared in this paper. That information is discussed in the research findings and reflections described in chapters four and five, and included in Appendices G, H and I.

Ultimately, this study seeks to demonstrate how a journaling activity can encourage learners to actively question and discuss target language pragmatic conventions from both their first (L1) and second (L2) cultural perspectives. Through the journaling and class discussion process, learners may benefit by 1) noticing the connection between culture and pragmatic behavior, 2) exploring how their L1 cultural backgrounds influence how they negotiate and interpret L2 pragmatic forms,

3) discovering whether their pragmatic behaviors are conveying what they intend them to convey and 4) developing skills to make informed L2 pragmatic decisions. In addition, they may find that journaling and classroom discussion are personally effective methods to gain insight into target language culture and pragmatic norms.

From a pedagogical perspective, this study's findings may inspire teachers to reevaluate their culture teaching methods and adopt journaling as an effective approach for exploring second language pragmatics. By replicating the study's activities, teachers can obtain authentic and relevant data from their students' lives which they can use to help their students develop effective L2 pragmatic skills.

Summary

This study examines the following primary question and three secondary questions: Does journaling about second language culture affect learners' attitudes toward second language pragmatic forms? What L2 pragmatic forms and behaviors are students hearing and experiencing in their daily interactions? How do students' primary cultural backgrounds affect their understanding of L2 pragmatic forms? How do students' primary cultural backgrounds and their understanding of L2 culture inform their second language pragmatic choices? In this chapter, I discussed the genesis for the current study, the relationship between culture and language and the importance of developing second language pragmatic knowledge and skills. I also presented the case for improving current second language culture and pragmatics teaching methods, the connection between attitude and second language learning, an overview of the research project and a

summary of the potential benefits of this study.

In chapter two, I review relevant past research on second language culture learning, pragmatic development and pragmatic error correction, and I discuss the relationship of these subjects to the current study. In chapter three, I present the methodology and tools used to answer the research questions and provide information about the participants and setting. In chapter four, I present and analyze the collected data, and discuss major themes that emerged. In chapter five, I discuss the implications and limitations of the study, reflect on the process and outcome, and suggest future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study was devised to explore the relationship between second language culture and situational pragmatics. While this link is well-acknowledged (Courchene, 1996; Dash, 2004; Hwang, 2008), English as a Second Language teaching practices do not always reflect this connection. This suggests that opportunities exist to develop an integrated approach to culture and pragmatics learning in ESL classrooms. By doing so, learners may expand their understanding of the connection between these two social constructs. To that end, this research investigates the following primary question and three secondary questions: Does journaling about second language culture affect learners' attitudes toward second language pragmatic forms? What L2 pragmatic forms and behaviors are students hearing and experiencing in their daily interactions? How do students' primary cultural backgrounds affect their understanding of L2 pragmatic forms? How do students' primary cultural backgrounds and their understanding of L2 culture inform their second language pragmatic choices?

Chapter Overview

To provide background for this research, this chapter explores selected research relating to second language pragmatic competence, including approaches to teaching second language culture in the classroom, issues surrounding pragmatic instruction and error correction, and benefits of reflective journaling. This chapter also reviews previous

studies of second language research which have influenced this study's design.

Pragmatic Competence

In the field of second language acquisition, definitions of pragmatics abound. It is generally accepted that pragmatics is the study of the contextual background features of language (Cutting, 2002). Pragmatics may also be described as the analysis of communicative action in its sociocultural environment (Kasper, 1997). According to Kasper, such action includes speech acts (e.g., greeting, thanking, apologizing) and conversational participation (e.g., interacting in and sustaining various forms of discourse and complicated speech events) (1997). Pragmatic competence then may be defined as both knowing how to use language to achieve specific ends and how to interpret language in context (Chomsky, 1980; Thomas, 1983; Bialystok, 1993; Barron, 2003).

Pragmatic competence is a key component of communicative competence. As introduced by Hymes (1972), the idea of communicative competence increased awareness of the importance of understanding the appropriate uses of linguistic forms (Murphy and Neu, 1996). Hymes theorized that speakers of a language must possess more than grammatical competence in order to communicate effectively in that language. He suggested that it is not enough for speakers to understand the structure of an utterance (i.e., its face value). They also need pragmatic knowledge to understand how members of a speech community use language to accomplish communicative purposes (LinguaLinks Library, 1999). Hymes further suggested that linguists consider the feasibility and appropriateness of utterances on an equal footing with grammaticality (Murphy and Neu,

1996).

For many second language students, the learning curve to acquire target language pragmatic conventions can be steep and may require explicit attention to build awareness. Even learners with high grammatical competence do not necessarily have strong pragmatic skills (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). This suggests that second language learners could benefit from enhanced input in the classroom to foster pragmatic awareness and develop pragmatic abilities (House, 1996; Kasper, 1997; Eslami-Rasakh, 2011).

Pragmatic rules and information are often unconsciously held (Kasper, 1997; Moon, 2001; Yates, 2004 & 2005). Even a native speaker may be unaware of a pragmatic rule until she breaks it and sees the reaction to her mistake (e.g., annoyance, confusion, laughter) (Bialystok, 1993; Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003). For a native speaker, the upside may be that the speaker immediately recognizes the error and is able to swiftly correct it. Non-native speakers, however, may not even realize a pragmatic convention has been breached. And even if they do, they may not understand the extent to which their utterance is problematic or how to repair the situation. Thus, when a pragmatic breakdown happens to a non-native speaker, the consequences may be more serious and unfairly reflect upon that individual. Native speakers may perceive non-native speakers' pragmatic errors as intentional, rather than resulting from a lack of cultural knowledge or from the transference of a different set of pragmatic rules from the speaker's first language (Boxer, 1996).

These misunderstandings may be especially acute with high proficiency non-native speakers. Due to their otherwise strong language skills, these learners' "pragmatic misfires" can appear thoughtless or deliberately rude (Grundy, 2000, p. 16). As a result, native speakers may not question or correct such mistakes if the utterances are otherwise linguistically accurate. However, without explicit attention, non-native speakers may continue to make pragmatic miscalculations, negatively impacting their social, academic and professional relationships.

Since native speakers are unlikely to begin correcting non-native speakers' utterances, a pedagogical solution seems warranted. A practical idea would be for teachers to help learners increase their target language cultural knowledge and use that information to build pragmatic skills.

Culture and Culture Learning

The influence of culture on communication is generally well-acknowledged (Hymes, 1972). But what does one mean exactly when one refers to culture? Definitions are numerous and can be found in the fields of psychology, anthropology and linguistics. For instance, Useem and Useem (1963) define culture as the learned and collective behavior of an interactive community of people. The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (2014) expands this definition, stating that culture is acquired through socialization whereby individuals recognize the shared communicative, cognitive and affective patterns of their group. These commonalities identify individuals as group members, while also helping to distinguish them from non-group members (http://

www.carla.umn.edu/culture/definitions.html).

In terms of second language acquisition, Wright (1996) states that "language is culture and culture is language" (p. 37). Similarly, Peterson & Coltrane (2003) assert that language is contained within the definition of culture, but is likewise reflective of culture. It is this interrelationship, according to Wright and others, that language teachers must keep in mind when working with learners. In the classroom, however, language is frequently decontextualized and considered separately from culture (Buttjes, 1990). Culture, in turn, is often presented as a defined set of learnable facts and behaviors with little apparent relationship to language (Atkinson, 1999; Ilieva, 2001; Fleming, 2003). Classroom culture lessons may focus on food, festivals, history, people and art.

The current culture teaching approach of memorizing static bits of information has limited utility and, in some cases, may even foster cultural stereotypes among teachers and learners (Young, Sachdev & Seedhouse, 2009). Teachers and learners should be cautious of approaching any language or cultural group as uniform or monolithic with no individual variability (Yates, 2005; Peterson & Coltrane, 2011). This form of learning fails to reflect culture as a dynamic, multidimensional construct (Marsh, 2009), a reality learners experience daily in their second language communicative interactions.

So how can cultural information be better utilized in the classroom? Courchene (1996) believes teachers could better serve learners if instructional methods reflect that culture is constantly shifting to meet societal needs. Young, Sachdev & Seedhouse (2009) propose using culture in the classroom as context, not content. Nault (2006) encourages

teachers to investigate culture more closely, then create teaching and learning goals that reflect students' needs.

Chavez (2002), however, cautions that many learners may resist the notion that culture has a legitimate place in language learning. She states that while teachers and researchers believe learners understand the concept of culture and its value in language classrooms, students commonly fail to confirm those beliefs. In a study of college-level foreign language students, Chavez found this discrepancy was due, in part, to students' narrow definitions of culture, their belief that language (i.e., grammar) is the primary purpose of language study and a lack of coherence in the way culture is presented in language classrooms. Chavez's findings highlight the difficulty of changing students' beliefs about culture and its role in language learning. It also underscores the need for new approaches to culture teaching that help students expand their understanding of culture and realize the culture-language connection. For example, student-centered activities, such as cultural exploration journaling, may help learners see how culture affects their communicative interactions, especially in terms of how culture shapes the use and interpretation of pragmatic forms.

An additional aspect of receptivity to culture learning may be that learners' understanding and appreciation of target language culture can affect their attitudes toward learning the language (LoCastro, 2001; Wright, 1996). Several teacher preparation textbooks suggest that learners who struggle with cultural differences may be less receptive, or even resistant, to learning the target language (Parrish, 2004; Lightbown &

Spada, 2006; Cutting, 2002). These considerations may result in some learners having a harder time accurately comprehending and using second language pragmatic forms.

Pragmatic Learning

Second language pragmatic information is not superfluous or subordinate to other linguistic knowledge, such as grammar or pronunciation (Kasper, 1997). Indeed, second language learners must possess a reasonable level of pragmatic competence in order to communicate effectively. By thoughtfully and authentically integrating pragmatic information into classroom instruction, teachers can empower learners to make informed pragmatic choices (Eslami-Rasekh, Z., Eslami-Rasekh, A., & Fatahi, 2004).

According to Kasper (1997), learners already have L1 pragmatic information at their disposal, and while some cultural differences exist, some pragmatic practices may be universal or transferable to the target language, including the concept of conversational routines and the use of context to convey and interpret pragmatic intent. Kasper (1997) recommends that teachers activate learners' L1 pragmatic knowledge and encourage them to apply that information to L2 situations rather than specifically teaching their students L2 pragmatic forms.

Hwang (2008) states that pragmatic conventions, such as speech acts, are embedded with cultural information. While native speakers can usually intuit culturally conditioned meanings during discourse, non-native speakers often lack the appropriate cultural referents necessary for understanding. By exposing learners to authentic target language information, she believes that learners have a chance to develop such intuition.

She cautions that inattention to pragmatics' role in language may diminish learners' conversational comprehension. Further, Eslami-Rasekh et al (2004) state that helping learners comprehend how second language pragmatic principles operate may raise their pragmatic awareness and help them avoid conveying messages they do not intend.

The research described above suggests the benefits of dynamic inclusion of pragmatic forms into everyday teaching practices. Current classroom pragmatic instruction, however, is generally textbook-based and formulaic, focusing on common speech acts (e.g., greetings, requests, refusals) and rarely incorporating authentic information from students' lives. Indeed, a study by Nguyen (2011) found that textbook pragmatic materials are often decontextualized and lacked meta-pragmatic information, such as when, where, with whom particular forms can be used. This top-down and limited approach provides students with a shallow understanding of second language pragmatics, and it highlights the opportunity teachers have to improve upon second language pragmatic instruction (Kasper, 1997; Ilieva, 2001).

While some learners may embrace second language pragmatic forms, others may be culturally resistant. Cohen (2011) suggests that to know the correct L2 form but choose not to use it amounts to pragmatic failure. Teachers would do well not to insist on conformity to a particular target-language norm. Instead, students should be encouraged to familiarize themselves with the full range of target language pragmatic devices and practices, such as politeness markers, humor, sarcasm and irony. With increased awareness of and attention to second language forms, non-native speakers may expand

their pragmatic knowledge, interpret that information more accurately and choose how or if they want to use those forms. In doing so, non-native speakers may gain control over their conversational contributions and their ability to preserve their cultural identities (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003).

Pragmatic Error Correction: Is It Necessary?

Both native and non-native speakers with low pragmatic abilities may have problems developing and maintaining social relationships at work, school or in their communities. Pragmatic difficulties may be compounded as positive relationships are often key to social, academic and employment opportunities, and speakers with weak pragmatic skills may find themselves at a disadvantage (Matsuda, 1999; McLean, 2004).

Bardovi-Harling (2001) asks whether cross-cultural pragmatic differences always require instructional attention. More specifically, she questions whether every difference needs to be fixed. The simple answer seems to be that it depends on the situation. Bardovi-Harling argues that difference does not necessarily equate to mistake. Learners may very well intend what they say. Of course, they also may not. Her argument challenges language teachers to examine their own cultural assumptions and consider the validity of learners' pragmatic choices.

Even when correction seems warranted, Thomas (1983) cautions that repairing pragmatic problems is a sensitive task. Learners' pragmatic choices may be social before linguistic. And while leaners may welcome grammatical suggestions, they may be more sensitive to corrections about their social, political or moral reasoning (Thomas, 1983).

Further, learners may not develop a positive attitude toward the target language and its speakers if they feel unable to express themselves for fear of being corrected (Thomas, 1983). Keeping these considerations in mind, teachers can assist their students' and their own cross-cultural pragmatic development by asking students to explain their usage rather than assuming learners have made a mistake. Suggestions include using feedback phrases such as the following: That's interesting. Tell me more. I'm not sure I understand what you mean. Can you explain? This learner-centered approach may build students' confidence and lessen the possibility of teacher or instructional ethnocentrism.

What seems clear is that learners need meaningful input to develop second language pragmatic skills (Saville-Troike, 1996; Bardovi-Harling, 2001). McLean (2004) suggests providing learners with authentic target language pragmatic information based on native speaker use while Hall (1999) proposes asking learners to provide sociocultural information from their own lives. Input gathered in the latter manner may be more meaningful, as it contextualizes and highlights the wide variety of ways second language pragmatic forms may be used. This approach based on students' own experiences may expand learners' awareness and help them develop more flexibility when using and interpreting various second language pragmatic forms. Further, this approach could lead to what Brown and Campione (1994) call guided discovery, building a community of learners where students organize themselves and create a framework for researching, sharing knowledge and interpreting that information.

Providing meaningful input is the first step in developing learners' second

language pragmatic awareness. Hall (1999) states that pragmatic patterns are learned in two specific ways: 1) guided practice with higher level learners/speakers and 2) conscious and systematic study where learners "mindfully abstract, reflect upon and speculate upon patterns of use" (p. 140). She submits that learners need more than an input-rich environment to learn. Likewise, Schmidt (1994) asserts that for learning to occur, unattended processing of linguistic input or mere exposure to the target language is insufficient. Critical-thinking processes are required. Bardovi-Harlig recommends not simply relying on formulaic information or speech acts, but encourages the examination of real-world communication where different factors shape speaker communication (as cited in Cutting, 2002, p. 223). Judd (1999) supports this approach and suggests providing contrastive natural speech samples that demonstrate pragmatic and sociolinguistic variability. As he states, learners may believe that certain pragmatic forms are not context dependent, for example that requests made to a friend use the same form as to a teacher. His approach may help learners move away from formulaic utterances into a more nuanced understanding and use of the target language outside of the classroom (McLean, 2004).

Judd (1999) reminds teachers that teaching pragmatics is similar to teaching other language topics. As with any aspect of English, total mastery is not likely, nor is it necessarily a reasonable goal. Indeed, learners themselves may not have that objective and may choose not to use certain target language forms as a point of personal identity (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991; McLean, 2004). Therefore, measuring success in

terms of "optimal convergence rather than total convergence" may be a more realistic and appropriate aim (McLean, 2004, p. 85). As Judd (1999) concludes, teachers can feel gratified if they succeed in raising students' pragmatic awareness and understanding such that learners can actively negotiate and use second language forms.

Learner Attitudes Toward L2 Pragmatics

Research suggests that pragmatic competence may be related to learners' attitudes toward the target language community (Wright, 1996; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996; LoCastro, 2001). While several studies have been conducted investigating the correlation between attitude and second language learning, there has been relatively little research about learners' attitudes and their adoption of L2 pragmatic forms, especially amongst adult learners.

A search for prior studies that used cultural exploration journaling to measure attitudes toward L2 pragmatic behavior was unsuccessful, but I did find studies that examined the attitudes of adult English-language learners toward L2 culture and pragmatic forms. These studies raised my awareness of issues that could arise from my research, such as the relationship between learner identity and pragmatic choices, and the possible disconnect between learners' professed positive attitudes toward and actual use of target language norms. One such study was conducted by LoCastro (2001).

In 2001, LoCastro examined the degree to which a group of English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) university students in Japan sought to adopt L2 language-related behaviors. Her research was motivated by anecdotal reports of mismatches between

language learners' declared positive attitudes toward learning English and their actual willingness to accommodate L2 cultural and communicative norms. Using varied data collection tools, she gathered participants' self-reports on their feelings toward the target language, subjective responses toward L2 pragmatic forms, and desire to adapt to those norms. She found that participants had a generally positive, though instrumental orientation toward learning English. While there were reports of resistance to L2 cultural and linguistic accommodation, the data showed that the level was not high. LoCastro argues that, contrary to the commonly held belief based on Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model of motivation in second language acquisition (SLA), a desire to assimilate or become like a native speaker may not be an underlying factor in a learner's positive feelings toward learning English. Rather, her data suggests that a learner's convergence or resistance to L2 linguistic standards may be linked to individual differences, particularly attitude, motivation and learner self-identity. Based on her data and that of other researchers, she recommends that learner differences be given more prominence in professional discussions about motivation in SLA, particularly as they relate to learners' identities as non-native speakers of English.

Hinkel (1996) examined the perceptions and attitudes of ESL university students toward L2 pragmatic norms vis-a-vis their self-reported use of L2 linguistic behaviors. Using a 10-point Likert scale, participants ranked their agreement or disagreement with statements about L2 pragmatic forms. The results indicated that non-native speakers understood what forms were expected in L2 environments. However, they frequently

perceived L2 behaviors unfavorably when compared to their L1 pragmatic forms. As such, they were often disinclined to comply with L2 conversational expectations and instead consciously opted to apply L1 rules to L2 settings. Similar to LoCastro's findings, Hinkel suggests that his subjects likely had an instrumental need to learn English as it was key to their goal of obtaining an American university degree. In the process of learning English, Hinkel suggests that his participants were exposed to and became aware of L2 socio-cultural norms. This was likely an ancillary outcome of their studies, rather than a deliberate desire on their part to learn about and adopt L2 forms. While participants recognized the value of using L2 politeness forms, complying with target language community expectations may not have been high amongst their priorities. To that end, Hinkel's research supports anecdotal reports of the mismatch between learners' self-reported professed willingness to use L2 forms and their actual behavioral follow through. This, he suggests, may be explained by non-native speakers' attitudes about the value of L2 behaviors relative to L1 forms and feelings of isolation from the target language community, amongst other considerations.

In other studies of L2 pragmatics, information about learners' attitudes was often a byproduct of the research, rather than its focus. For example, a study by Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei (1998) found that learners living in a target language culture felt that pragmatic errors were more serious than grammatical errors. Their EFL counterparts, however, believed the opposite. This suggests that learners living in an ESL context may be more aware of the role pragmatics play in L2 communication than learners in EFL

environments. The data further suggests that each group's level of pragmatic awareness might also affect their attitudes toward L2 pragmatic forms. That said, Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei were not specifically examining learner attitudes toward L2 pragmatics. Rather, they were investigating the degree to which instructed L2 English learners were aware of differences in learners' and native speakers' production of grammar and pragmatics. Thus, the relevance between their study and the current research is limited.

Also, it may be worth noting that some studies examining learner attitudes toward L2 pragmatics focus on EFL students who may have limited first-hand knowledge of the target language culture or experience using L2 pragmatic forms in that context. As such, data from these studies may be of limited practical value for ESL instructors whose learners live in the target language culture and have their attitudes toward the L2 culture and language tested on a regular basis.

Based on the research results summarized above, the current study aims to contribute additional information to the field of second language pragmatics by investigating the effects cultural exploration journaling may have on learners' attitudes toward L2 pragmatic forms.

Reflective Journaling

Reflective journals are used in many disciplines to encourage individuals to examine experiences, investigate personal beliefs and explore new subjects. By recording and questioning their thoughts, attitudes and interactions, learners take a personalized role in their learning and may effectively process information and gain deeper insight into

an issue or problem (Norton-Peirce, 1995; Moon, 1999; Boud, 2001; Dunlap, 2006). Reflective journaling, therefore, can be learner-centered, allowing individuals to develop and determine their own conclusions rather than being taught or told what to think.

Bean (2011), in his book on classroom writing practices, promotes exploratory writing as a means to promote higher-order thinking skills, richer classroom discussions and active learning. Sharing journal entries during class discussions raises awareness of both similar and divergent viewpoints among classmates. Further, students who journal on a topic prior to a classroom session may be better prepared to discuss it during class.

According to Hubbs and Brand (2005), reflective journaling may be transformative. The action of reflection may help learners see when their thinking is automatic rather than purposive. This, in turn, may challenge learners to question their beliefs, consider new information and possibly arrive at new understandings (Mezirow, 1998). Further, it may enable learners to link their internal thinking to their daily realities (Hubbs and Brand, 2005), building self-awareness and self-knowledge in the process.

The practice of reflective journaling is not new to second language learning. Learners have used it successfully to help themselves make sense of their new surroundings and enhance their language learning (Jungkang, 2005). When learners write about their personal experiences, they become ethnographic researchers, recording and interpreting input from a first-person perspective.

Reflective journaling activities can be structured in a variety of ways. These could include teacher-directed questions, student-teacher dialog journals and personal diaries.

Ilieva (2001) encourages learners to write about situations or problems that they identify as important in their own lives. In doing so, learners may find it easier to contextualize, analyze and comprehend that information. This emic approach may appeal to learners as it requires them to take an active role in their own learning. Ilieva suggests learners use a question-posing strategy to guide their journal entries and help them dig more deeply into the situations they have chosen to explore. Her questions include the following: What did you see? How does this relate to your life? How and why do you react to that? Is this a problem for you? (Ilieva, 2001, p. 11-12). This question-posing method, which was adopted in the current study, may help learners recognize themselves as individuals with important cultural and pragmatic knowledge to contribute to their second language learning process.

Research Gap and Current Study

Seemingly absent from the literature are studies investigating classroom activities that actively engage ESL students as cultural informants and seek to learn their strategies for negotiating pragmatic meaning within their new cultures. Absent, too, are studies exploring the link between students' attitudes toward L2 culture and their pragmatic ability (LoCastro, 2001). Given this gap and the research findings summarized above, the current study is designed to involve students as cultural informants and engage them in the practice of reflective journaling in order to measure their attitudes toward second language pragmatic forms.

With this research, I investigate the effects of a cultural exploration journaling

activity on participants' feelings about second language pragmatics. Specifically, I pursue the following primary question and three secondary questions:

Does journaling about second language culture affect learners' attitudes toward second language pragmatic forms? What L2 pragmatic forms and behaviors are students hearing and experiencing in their daily interactions? How do students' primary cultural backgrounds affect their understanding of L2 pragmatic forms? How do students' primary cultural backgrounds and their understanding of L2 culture inform their second language pragmatic choices?

Summary

In this chapter, I restated the current research questions, discussed relevant prior research on second language culture and pragmatic teaching methods, discussed issues surrounding pragmatic error correction, examined the pedagogical benefits of journaling and identified the research gap. In the following chapter, I provide information about the participants and setting, describe the methodology and tools used to answer the research questions and discuss research considerations for this study. In chapter four, I review the study's purpose, detail the data collection effort, analyze the results, and reflect on the data's connection to current research. In chapter five, I discuss the study's implications for second language instruction, suggest possible future research, and acknowledge the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

This research study investigates the effects of a cultural exploration journaling activity on participants' attitudes toward second language pragmatics. Specifically, it examines the following primary question and three secondary questions:

Does journaling about second language culture affect learners' attitudes toward second language pragmatic forms? What L2 pragmatic forms and behaviors are students hearing and experiencing in their daily interactions? How do students' primary cultural backgrounds affect their understanding of L2 pragmatic forms? How do students' primary cultural backgrounds and their understanding of L2 culture inform their second language pragmatic choices?

In this study, participants assumed the role of primary cultural informants, providing first-hand accounts of their communicative interactions with native English speakers. Students recorded these personal experiences, reflected on the cultural basis for their pragmatic responses, and discussed their findings during formal class sessions.

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I provide information about the study's participants and the research setting. I explain the research methodology and tools, and I discuss the timeline and process for conducting the study. I briefly discuss the issues of bias and validity and explain the data analysis process and suggest potential benefits of the research.

Participants and Setting

This 8-week case study was conducted with a group of six intermediate and advanced level English language learners[1] at a Midwestern community college. Students were enlisted during a formal recruitment session where they received information about the topic and purpose of the study and the role of participants in the research process. In order to participate, a student had to be an English language learner with intermediate level oral and writing skills and currently enrolled at the community college. Anyone who met the criteria was invited to participate, and learners self-selected to participate. Participation in the study was voluntary, and members could opt out at any time. These students received no compensation or academic credit for taking part. In fact, they made personal accommodations to fit the study into their busy schedules, giving up their Wednesday lunch hours to take part in the research. Participants did, however, receive constructive feedback on their writing from the researcher. To protect participants' privacy, their identities and the data collected from surveys, journals, class discussions, in-class writing samples and exit interviews have been anonymized.

In the study group, two participants were male and four were female. The group included immigrants, refugees, a temporary legal resident and a foreign exchange student. Their cultural backgrounds were Somali, Chinese, Ecuadorian and Vietnamese. Five

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[1] Initially, there were ten participants. Two dropped out immediately. Two additional participants dropped out due to scheduling conflicts after participating in a four sessions. I have included selected data from the latter two sources in chapters four and five.

participants were between 21 and 30 years of age. One participant was in her early 40s. All were non-native English speakers. Participants' length of U.S. residence varied between one and five years. However, some participants did not respond to this question. Participants' years studying English ranged from one and fourteen years. All had intermediate to advanced level English oral and writing abilities.

Students participated in the study by 1) completing a pre- and post-treatment attitude survey, 2) keeping a written journal about their interactions with native English speakers, 3) discussing their journal entries during seven one-hour class sessions, 4) doing in-class writing activities based on researcher-provided cultural scripts, and 5) participating in one-on-one exit interviews with the researcher. Due to a scheduling conflict, one student could not attend the regular discussion sessions. Instead, he participated in seven one-on-one discussion sessions with the researcher. Like the other participants, he took both surveys, kept a journal, did in-class writing exercises, discussed his attitudes toward culture and second language learning, and completed an exit interview.

Methodology and Tools

This study used a mixed methods approach to data collection. As mentioned above, the process had five components which were determined to be appropriate for the current research and proper for triangulation of findings. These qualitative and quantitative methods and their corresponding tools are described in detail in what follows. All in-person sessions were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

1) Pre- and Post-Treatment Attitude Surveys: These surveys were identical and composed of fifteen ranked choice questions (see Appendices A and B). Using a 5-point Likert scale of *very positive, positive, neutral, negative and very negative*, participants responded to questions about their attitudes toward common American pragmatic behaviors. The pre-treatment survey's purpose was to obtain baseline data on students' attitudes toward these behaviors. This data could then be compared to participants' post-treatment survey results to determine whether the journaling and group discussion activities affected their attitudes toward second language pragmatics.

Survey questionnaires are commonly used across a variety of disciplines to quantitatively measure participants' attitudes, opinions or behaviors (Creswell, 2005; Lavrakas, 2008). Combined with the other data collection methods, surveys can help triangulate research data and promote a clearer understanding of the findings. As I prepared to undertake this study, I found research suggesting that learners' understanding and appreciation of target language culture may affect their attitudes toward learning the language (Wright, 1996; LoCastro, 2001). I had also read in teacher preparation textbooks that learners who struggle with cultural differences may be less receptive, or even resistant, to learning the target language (Cutting, 2002; Parrish, 2004; Lightbown & Spada, 2006). These considerations may result in some learners having a harder time accurately comprehending and using second language pragmatic forms.

2) Classroom Discussion and In-class Writing Exercises: The teaching intervention was a two-part process. It was composed of guided class discussions about

culture and second language pragmatics and in-class writing exercises using cultural scripts.

Each week, participants took part in formal, one-hour classroom discussions where they shared entries from their journals. As proposed by Ilieva (2001), students worked together to negotiate meanings of unfamiliar or confusing interactions, and shared their interpretations of pragmatic information using both their L2 cultural knowledge and their L1 cultural points of view.

Class sessions began with a discussion of one or two open-ended questions about culture, including the following: What is culture? Is it fixed or can it change? How do you react to a culture clash? The purpose of these questions was to activate students' prior knowledge about culture as a social construct, prepare them to discuss their journal entries and elicit their attitudes towards L1 and L2 pragmatic forms. Additionally, the discussions allowed participants to develop a deeper understanding of other participants' cultural viewpoints.

During the last ten minutes of class, participants did an in-class writing exercise, selecting from one of two pragmatic scripts proffered by the researcher. Scripts included the following questions: A friend asks you about your religion; how do you react? A stranger comments on your appearance; how do you react? (see Appendix C). Participants used Ilieva's (2001) question-posing strategy to guide their discussions and writing activities (see Appendix D). They did not answer each question individually. Rather, they used the questions as a conceptual framework to organize their opinions

about the topics under discussion.

The group discussion and in-class writing laid the foundation for the journal writing activity. Both helped activate participants prior knowledge and provided a structure to help them start their journals.

3) Cultural Exploration Journaling: Participants were asked to keep a personal journal of their interactions with native English speakers and record a minimum of two communicative encounters each week. For this activity, they also used Ilieva's (2001) question-posing strategy to guide and structure their entries (see Appendix D). They were given a sample journal entry to get a better idea of how to use the strategy effectively (see Appendix E). Students were told to analyze their feelings, questions and impressions about these communicative encounters, and note successes and challenges they had with pragmatic understanding. The purpose of journaling was to learn what participants were experiencing in their daily lives vis-a-vis second language culture and pragmatics, and how they were interpreting and responding to that information. Each week, participants discussed their journal entries during the group sessions, then submitted their journal entries to the researcher for grammatical feedback on their writing.

4) Exit interviews: The researcher conducted one-on-one exit interviews with all participants, using a predetermined, nine-question format (see Appendix F). The purpose of the interviews was to gain deeper insight into participants' individual attitudes toward culture, second language pragmatics and cultural exploration journaling as a method to use and interpret L2 pragmatic information. The idea to do interviews came from

Mlynarczyk (1998) who successfully used this method to collect additional data during her study of second language learners and journal writing. According to Creswell (2005), one-on-one interviews can be helpful in eliciting comments from participants that reach beyond the original question. In the current study, the researcher prepared for the interviews by reviewing each participant's journal and by listening to the audiotapes of the class discussions. The interview questions were open-ended and intended to elicit honest, in-depth feedback from participants. Interviews ranged from 15 to 30 minutes and were conducted at the community college.

Timeline and Process

The timeline for this study was eight weeks, spanning the two summer semesters at the community college. At the first meeting, the researcher reviewed the study's purpose, discussed participant responsibilities, administered the pre-treatment survey, introduced the question-posing format and initiated the conversation about culture and second language pragmatics. During the subsequent six sessions, participants addressed culture and pragmatics questions posed by the researcher, discussed their journal entries and completed in-class writing exercises on pragmatic scripts. The eighth meeting was canceled due to participants' scheduling conflicts. In lieu of the final session, the researcher conducted exit interviews that week. In addition to answering the interview questions, participants also completed the post-treatment intervention survey and submitted their final journal entries.

Research Considerations: Validity and Bias

Validity is a key element of any research project. In the current study, multiple data collection tools were used to substantiate evidence for the themes that arose (Creswell, 2007) and ensure the integrity of the research findings. The research schema used in this study and proposed by Ilieva (2001) had not to my knowledge been tested previously. Therefore, it was critical to explore the research questions from several angles to ascertain whether the data collected accurately represented participants' viewpoints. By using both quantitative and qualitative methods (i.e., surveys, journals, class discussions, in-class writing exercises and exit interviews), I was able to corroborate the collected data and analyze it in terms of the research questions.

Bias is an ever-present concern during the research process. In working with English language leaners, Harklau (1999) states that teachers should be mindful of how they represent both English-language culture and students' home cultures in the classroom, taking care to acknowledge and respect differences. If not approached properly, such conversations may alienate students or polarize a class. Teachers and students should avoid judging or ranking cultural and pragmatic behavior as "better" or "worse" than another. Likewise, teachers should be alert to inadvertently introducing or reinforcing the idea of learners as 'others' (i.e., separate or different from 'real' Americans). Many students may, in fact, be U.S. citizens. Other learners may be working toward that goal.

While conducting the present study, I paid close attention to Harklu's (1999)

cautionary advice and sought to maintain a supportive atmosphere where participants were on equal footing and could share their views judgment-free. I was mindful of my own language and careful to include supportive statements in my interactions with participants. I also took care to ensure that participants knew that my opinions were my own and not representative of all Americans. Likewise, I made sure they understood the same about each other.

Data Analysis and Potential Benefits

The data collected throughout the eight-week study period has been transcribed and analyzed with respect to the research questions. Charts have been created to present the findings and review potential ramifications in a concise format. That information is detailed in chapter four.

Cultural exploration via journaling may help students develop a practical understanding of L2 pragmatics and empower them to make informed pragmatic decisions. In this way, learners can choose to comply with target language norms or not, but with full knowledge that they are doing so purposefully and not by accident (Thomas, 1983).

Previous research on L2 pragmatic development generally represents the teacher/ researcher's viewpoint and focuses on identifying communicative misfires (Eslami-Rasekh, Z., Eslami-Rasekh, A., & Fatahi, 2004). The purpose is to identify and mitigate students' errors rather than analyze why miscommunications occur. While this information is important, it misses both the opportunity to explore why students choose

the L2 pragmatic responses they do and the chance to ask them to examine and explain their choices (Thomas, 1983).

The focus of this research is not to look for a way to fix learners' pragmatic problems. Rather, it is to examine whether the cultural exploration journaling process can be an effective tool for affecting attitudes toward second language pragmatics, and in doing so, find a portable and effective process language learners can use to expand their target language pragmatic awareness.

Summary

In this chapter, I restated my research questions and discussed the purpose of the study. I described the participants and the project setting, outlined the methodology and materials used to collect data, and provided the timeline. I also considered the issues of researcher bias and validity, outlined the data analysis process and suggested potential benefits of the study.

In the subsequent chapter, I review the study's purpose, detail the data collection effort, analyze the results and reflect on the data's connection to current research. In chapter five, I discuss the study's implications for second language instruction, suggest possible future research and acknowledge the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Learning a language requires more than simply understanding grammar and acquiring proper pronunciation. A speaker needs communicative competence: the ability to know what to say to whom and in what context, as well as what not to say (Gumperz, 1982; Wrigley & Guth, 1992; Yule, 1996). Second language communicative competence involves both the knowledge of second language pragmatic behaviors and the ability to use those forms accurately. Pragmatic forms are frequently culturally driven and can manifest themselves very differently depending on the language (Wierzbicka, 2003). As such, second language learners would be well-served to examine target language pragmatic behaviors and use that information to build pragmatic skills.

Learners may have difficulty accepting or adopting target language pragmatic forms if they have a negative attitude toward the culture (LoCastro, 2001; Wright, 1996). The purpose of this research study was to explore whether learners' attitudes toward second language pragmatics are affected by a cultural exploration journaling activity. Specifically, this study collected data to answer the following primary question and three secondary questions:

Does journaling about second language culture affect learners' attitudes toward second language pragmatic forms? What L2 pragmatic forms and behaviors are students hearing and experiencing in their daily interactions? How do students' primary cultural

backgrounds affect their understanding of L2 pragmatic forms? How do students' primary cultural backgrounds and their understanding of L2 culture inform their second language pragmatic choices?

Overall, the quantifiable results obtained from the surveys used in the study suggest minimal improvement in participants' attitudes; in fact, they suggest the attitudes were quite positive to begin with. However, the results obtained from the one-on-one interview sessions support the proposition that journaling may be effective for exploring L2 culture and negotiating meanings of L2 pragmatic forms. It also seemed to raise participants' awareness of L1 and L2 pragmatic characteristics and helped them make choices about which forms to use. Several interesting themes emerged from this research which will be detailed later in this chapter.

Chapter Overview

In the previous chapter, I reviewed the research questions and discussed the participants and project setting, the data methodology and collection tools, and the timeline. I gave a general description of reflective journaling, and I suggested potential benefits of the current study. In the remainder of this chapter, I summarize the data collection effort, present the data obtained during this process, analyze the findings and reflect on their possible connection to the current research.

Data Collection and Results Obtained

Five tools were used to collect data: pre- and post-treatment attitude surveys, participant journals, group discussions, in-class writing exercises and one-on-one exit

interviews. The findings associated with each tool are outlined below.

Attitude Surveys and Results Obtained from Surveys

Surveys were used to collect data on participants' opinions about common American pragmatic behaviors, including requesting information, giving opinions and making eye contact during conversation. Both surveys primarily generated positive and neutral responses. There was little negative feedback. In terms of the research questions, the general positivity of the results makes it challenging to determine the extent to which the study treatments (i.e., writing about and discussing culture) influenced participants' attitudes.

The pre-treatment attitude survey was administered during the first class session (Appendix A). The purpose of the survey process was three-fold. First, it was used to gather baseline data on the participants' attitudes toward second language pragmatic forms. Second, it provided a starting point for class discussions and in-class writing activities about culture and second language pragmatics. Third, it was used to compare and measure change in participants' attitudes at the end of the study.

In general, the study's pre- and post-treatment survey results were positive. I was surprised by both the positivity and general similarity of participants' responses. I had anticipated a wider range of results based on participants' diverse backgrounds, including age, gender, first culture and religion. However, there was little variation in their survey feedback. While participants' attitudes toward most survey questions were similar, there were some outliers. Opinions about talking to teachers, parents and the opposite sex were

viewed negatively by some respondents. Likewise, some respondents felt negatively toward Americans' requests for and sharing of personal information. By and large, however, most participants had positive or neutral feelings toward those behaviors. In post-treatment surveys, there was a slight shift toward neutrality in some questions. This may indicate participants' heightened awareness of these pragmatic forms in their daily interactions. It could also reflect the difficulty of responding to questions about decontextualized behaviors. Therefore, a neutral response could mean one of a few possibilities, such as that the participant did not have experience with that behavior, did not have a strong feeling about it or did not know how to answer based on the information provided.

The survey questions were not intended to be an inventory of all possible American pragmatic behaviors. Rather, they were a sampling of fifteen common behaviors with which participants would likely be familiar. Respondents had to use their prior knowledge of each behavior rather than a supplied definition to determine their opinion of it. For example, participants had to draw on their own experiences to define student-teacher interaction and decide whether their attitude toward the American behavioral form was positive or negative. The questions were designed this way to mitigate the possibility of presenting pragmatic information as static or stereotypical. Even so, this consideration could not prevent participants themselves from applying fixed definitions of culture and/or stereotypes to inform their responses. Conversely, the ambiguity of the survey questions meant that participants may have characterized those

behaviors differently.

The following tables present each survey question with its corresponding pre- and post-treatment data. As previously stated, the data was generally positive. There was also little change between the first and second surveys. From the results, it is difficult to determine the impact of the journaling activity on participants' attitudes. Their post-treatment responses may reflect the influence of the journaling activity and class discussions, including a greater awareness of the variability of pragmatic forms within American culture. Alternatively, participants may have under- or over-reported their opinions on the first survey.

Table 1

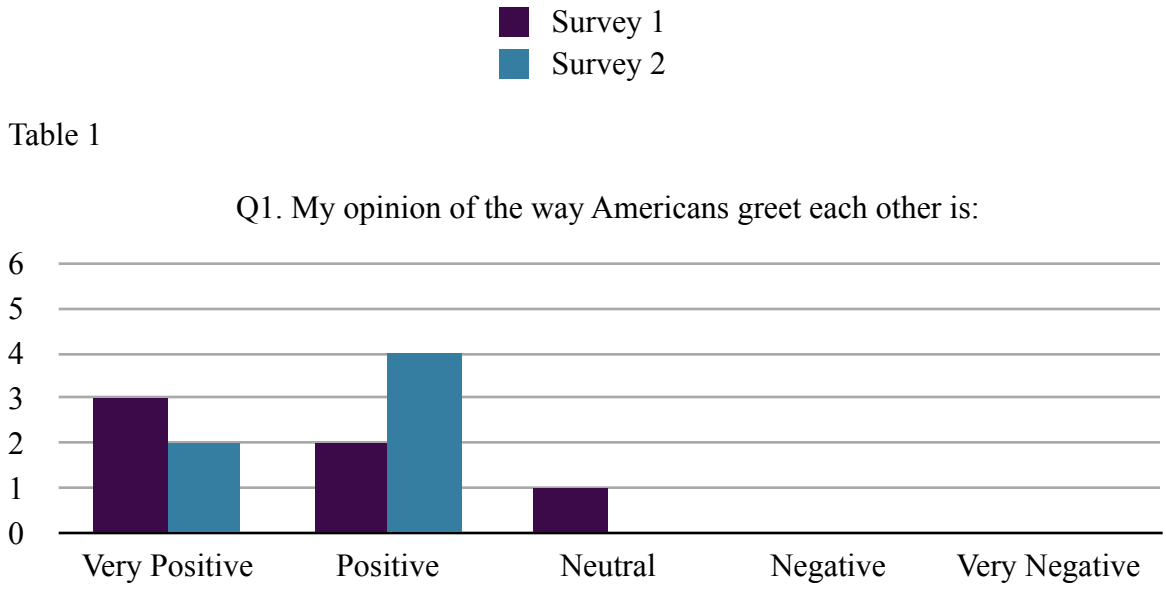


Table 2

Q2. My opinion of the way Americans request information is:

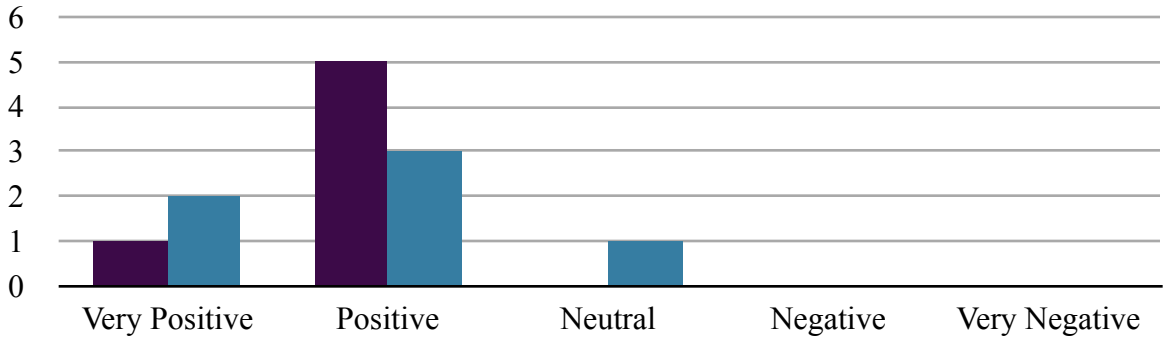


Table 3

Q3. My opinion of the way Americans interact with authority figures is:

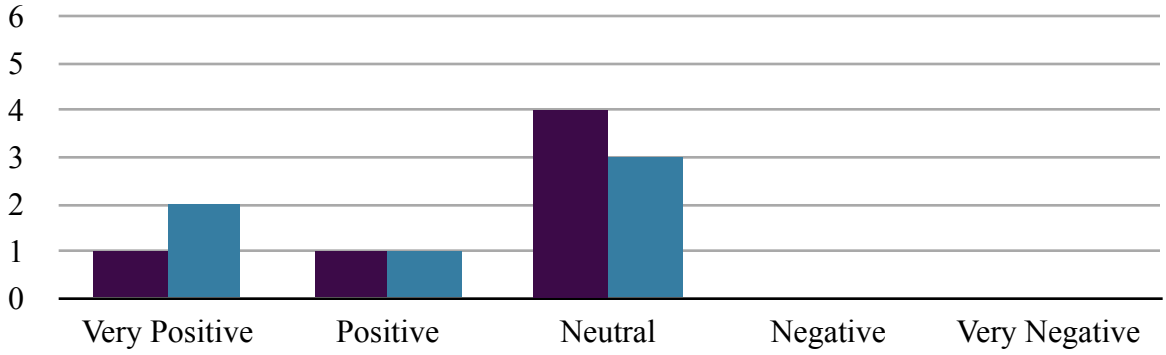


Table 4

Q4. My opinion of the way Americans make apologies is:

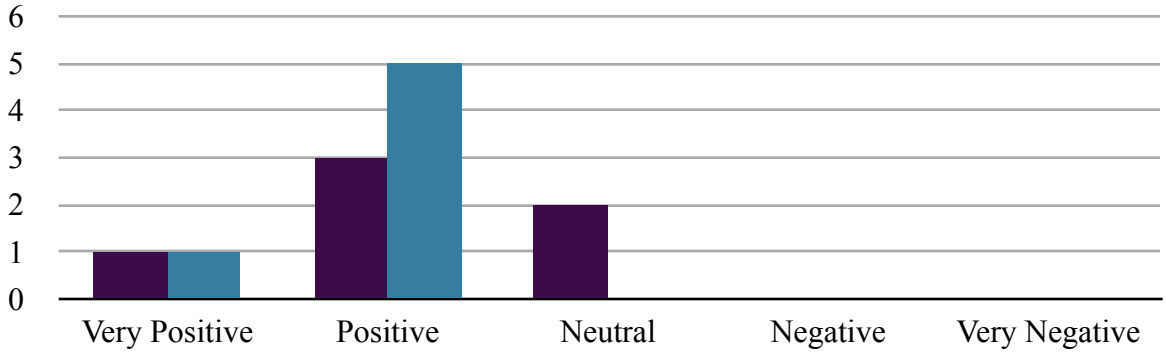


Table 5

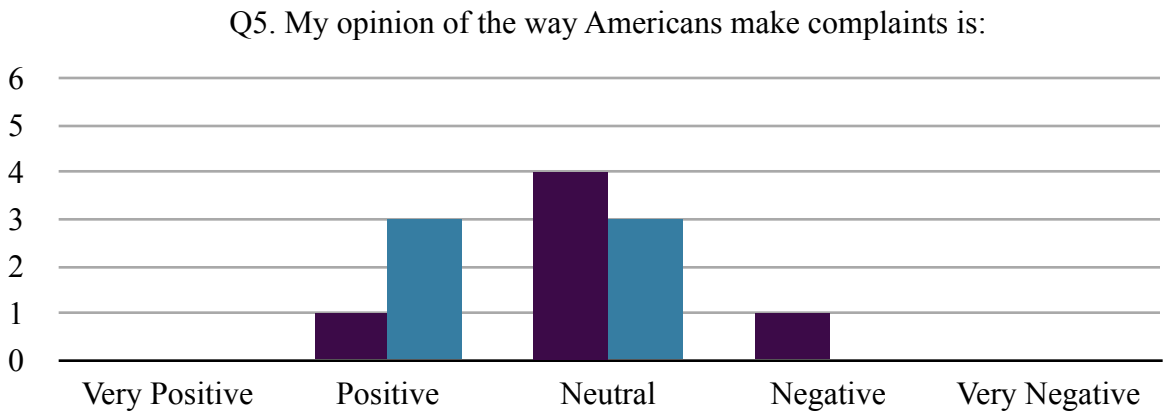
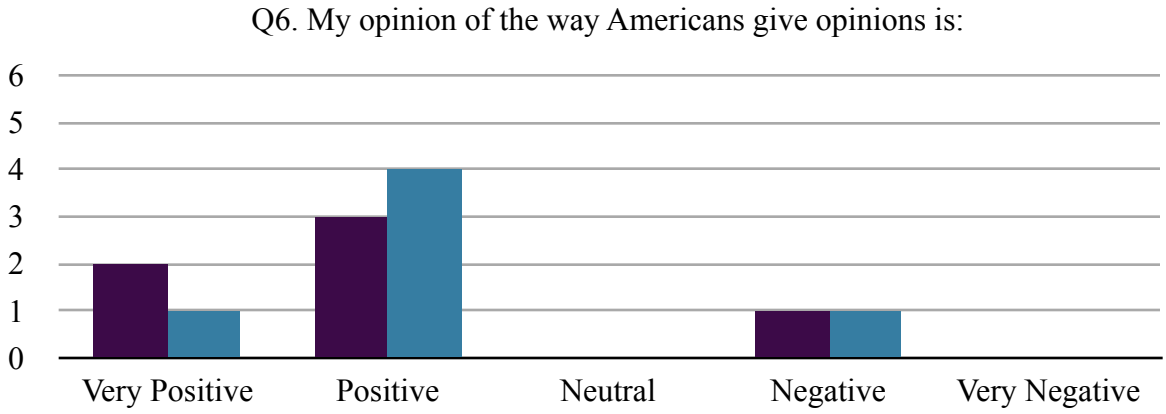


Table 6



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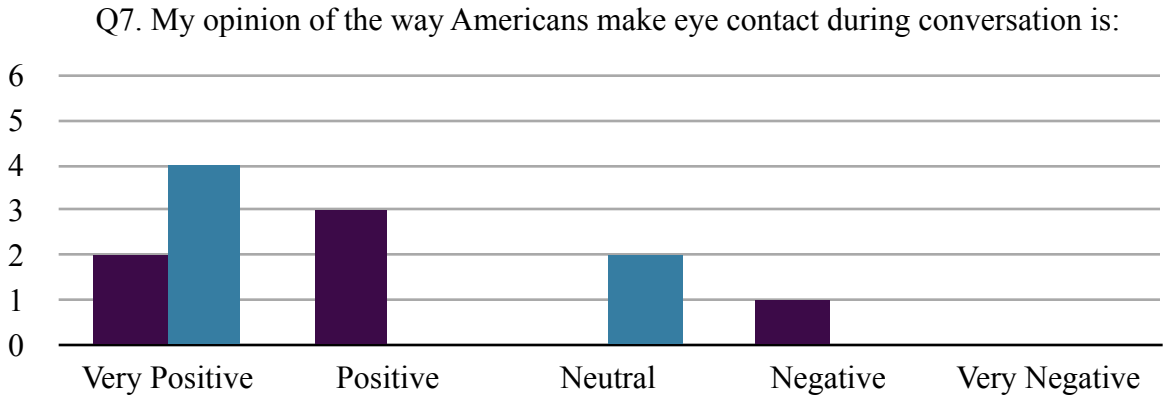
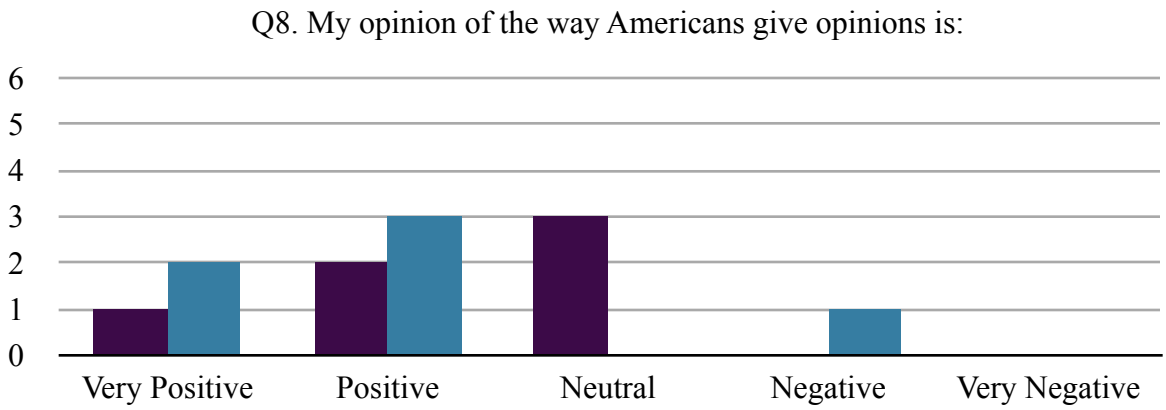


Table 8



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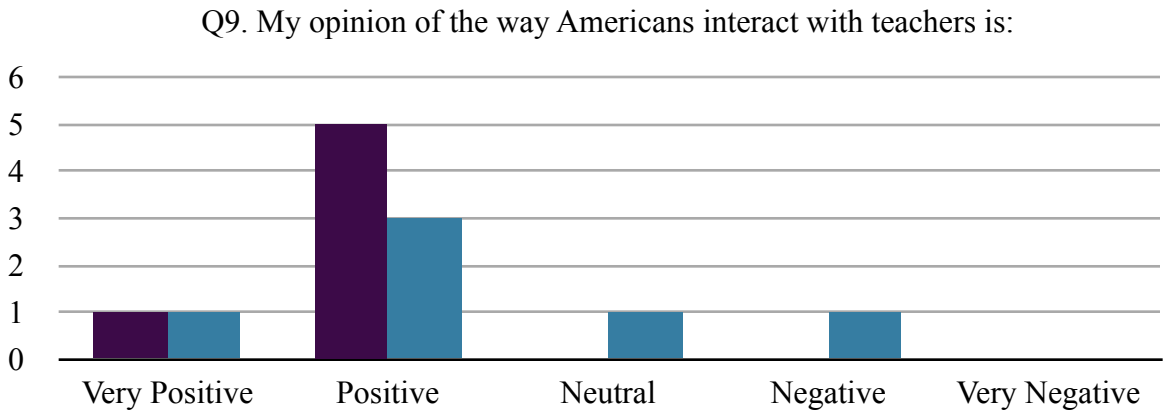


Table 10

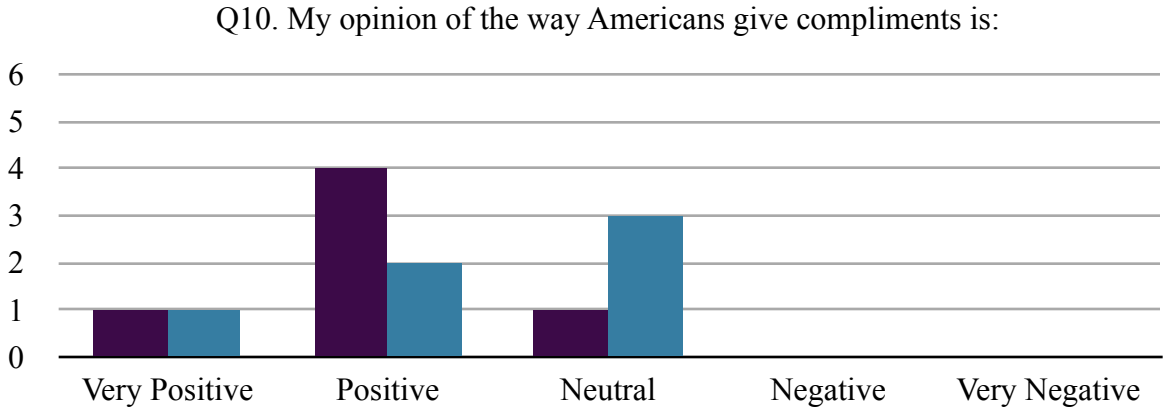


Table 11

Q11. My opinion of the way Americans give opinions is:

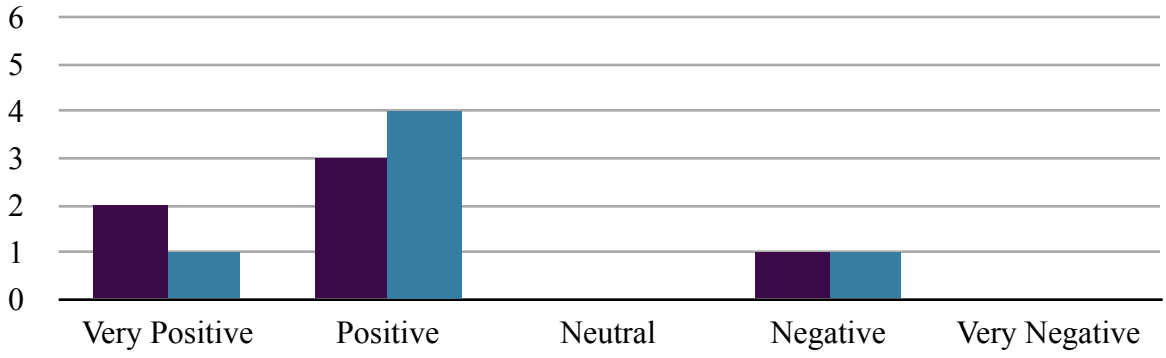


Table 12

Q12. My opinion of the way Americans share personal information is:

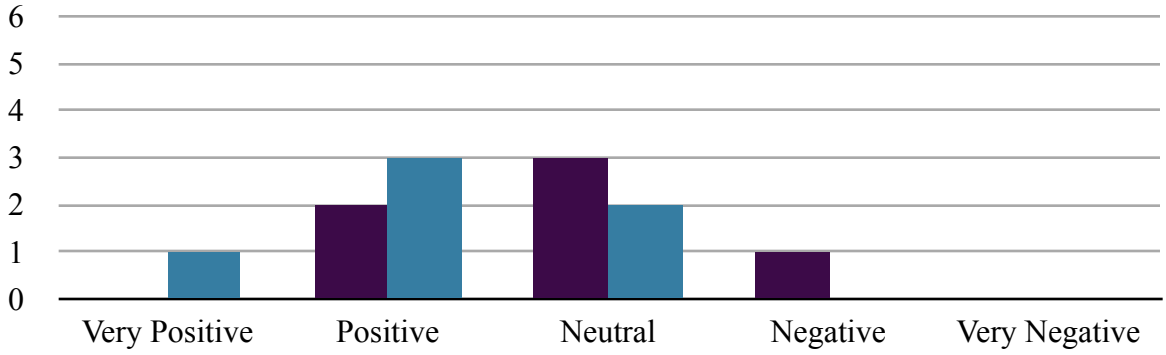


Table 13

Q13. My opinion of the way Americans speak to member of the opposite sex is:

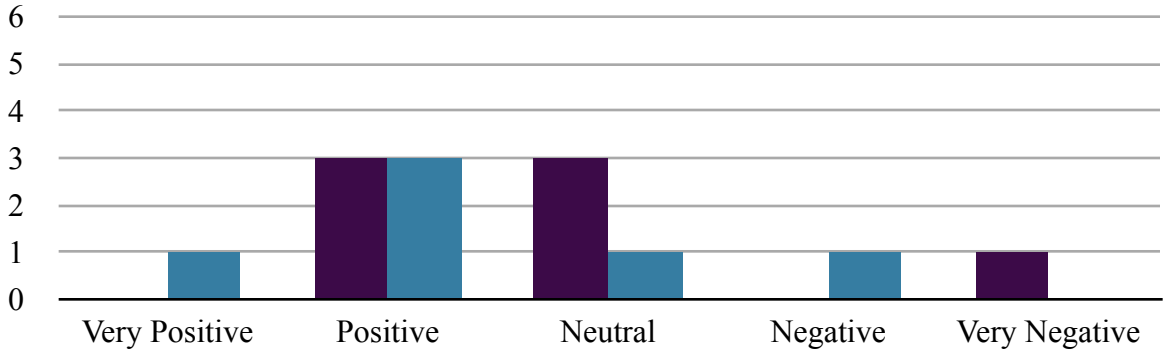


Table 14

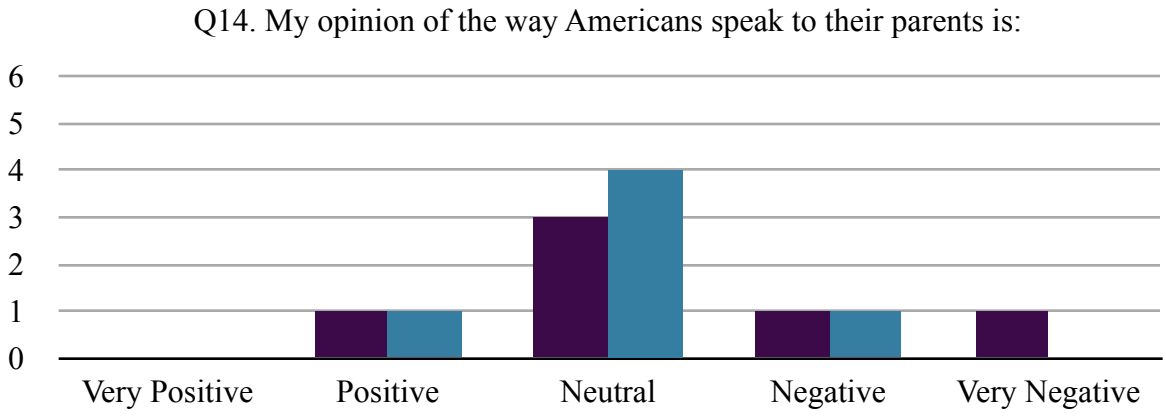
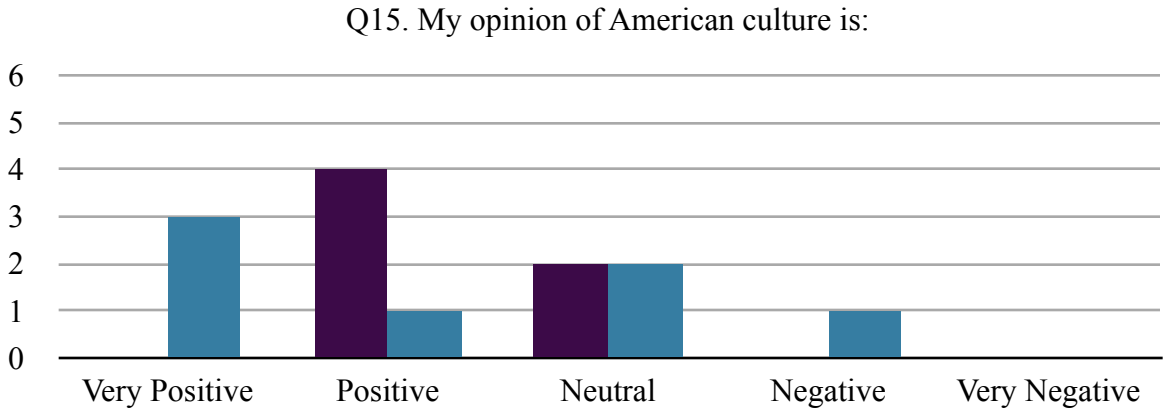


Table 15



In terms of the overall positivity of survey responses, most participants indicated during group discussions and exit interviews that they felt good about American culture prior to the study. One participant, who came to the U.S. as a refugee, described her gratitude toward Americans for helping her immigrate. Others discussed their interest in American culture and their desire to expand their knowledge and use it to improve their communication with native English speakers. Two participants indicated that in their home countries aspects of their first cultures are evolving due to generational differences and increased interest in Western communication styles. That said, several participants

also shared how they automatically reference their first cultures when they communicate in English, and how it can sometimes be difficult to accept and use certain L2 pragmatic forms, such as having to informally address teachers or share opinions in class. However, as one participant stated, “It’s just a culture.” In other words, American culture is neither good nor bad, just different.

Reflective Journals and Data Obtained from Journals

Cultural exploration journaling may be an effective way for language students to learn about second language culture and develop corresponding pragmatic skills (Ilieva, 2001). The purpose of the reflective journals was for participants to document their interactions with native English speakers and explore their reactions to those exchanges. Participants were provided with a journaling notebook, a question-posing strategy to guide their writing (Appendix D) and a sample journal entry (Appendix E). Two participants, out of eight total, had previous experience keeping a journal for an academic class.

Each week, participants wrote about current first-hand communicative encounters with native English speakers. While pragmatic scripts were provided for in-class writing exercises, they were not given for journal entries. Instead, participants themselves chose the encounters they wrote about in their journals. This was intentional. By making their own decisions on what to record, students acted as amateur ethnographers (Judd, 1999), collecting and analyzing cultural information from their own lives. According to McLean (2004), encouraging students to take a more active role in their pragmatic development

may help them grow as autonomous learners.

In this study, participants' journal entries covered various topics, including talking with teachers, speaking to strangers, making friends and interacting with coworkers. Their writing revealed some recurrent themes, such as the recognition of cultural differences, need or desire to adopt American pragmatic behaviors, importance of maintaining one's cultural or religious identity, and need to address cultural stereotypes.

In terms of attitudes, participants' writing generally indicated favorable feelings toward American cultural and pragmatic forms. Even when those behaviors were different from their first culture norms, participants were mostly non-judgmental about those differences and avoided ranking behaviors as better or worse. In some instances, participants seemed to prefer certain American behaviors to those of their home cultures. In others, they were surprised by American norms. Two illustrative examples are provided below.

Example 1: Participant 1 made a point of not taking sides when writing about cultural differences. For example, he wrote about his appreciation of the "flexibility" of American culture. He gave the example of asking his professor if he could take an exam before the official test date. Based on his prior L1 experiences in China, he was both surprised and pleased that his professor allowed him to do so. He noted that test dates are difficult to change in Chinese schools. He further stated, however, that this difference simply demonstrates an alternative cultural perspective, not a "right or wrong" approach to the situation. In another entry, he observed that Americans seem more individually

oriented than the Chinese, whose culture is more collective. Again, this participant stated that neither one way or the other was necessarily preferable.

Example 2: Participant 6 recounted her experience of taking an early morning walk in a park and trying to talk to another female walker. The other woman told her she did not want to converse. This embarrassed Participant 6 since talking with strangers is acceptable in her first culture. The lesson, she said, is that talking to strangers "varies from community to community and person to person."

Overall, participants recognized the importance of understanding American cultural and conversational expectations. This was preferable, they said, to simply not knowing what forms were expected, and was true even if they did not intend to change their behavior. By understanding what was customary, participants felt they would be better prepared to either use the appropriate form or explain why they were unable to comply.

Some participants were less circumspect about using L2 forms, feeling that accommodating L2 behaviors would not compromise their L1 identities. For example, Participant 3 discussed cultural differences between American and Ecuadorian concepts of time. In Ecuador, she said, being late is not a problem. You simply make your excuses and apologize. Here, she says, if she is late for an appointment, she usually has to reschedule. Interestingly, she thinks it is impolite that no one asks why she is late. What if she had a problem? This lack of polite inquiry frustrates her, but she has learned that punctuality is important in the U.S. In her opinion, Ecuadorians living here need to adopt

American behaviors. Similarly, Participant 1 said he is trying behave more like an American and be more outgoing than he would be in China. Here, he says, people are easy-going and talk to strangers. In his country, if he were to strike up a conversation with a stranger, that person would walk away. An abridged sample from this participant's journal is included in Figure 1. See Appendix G for three additional samples.

> I have always believed that compared to Chinese culture, American culture is more open. For example when strangers pass you, usually they will try to say hi or wave a hand. In the past week, I have made three friends.
>
> The other day when I was walking to the park in my neighborhood, I saw a guy about my age. I introduced myself and I asked him whether he was a student. He told me he just graduated from university with a math degree. After chatting for awhile, we exchanged contact information and decided to become basketball buddies.
>
> In China, people normally hang out with people they already know. Let me give you an example. After I graduated from high school in Beijing, I planned a short trip and invited several people to an amusement park. It was a difficult process. When I sent out the invitation, most people asked me questions, such as "Who will go?" and told me they didn't want to attend because they were not familiar with some of the people. In Chinese culture, I think most people feel uncomfortable when surrounded by people they don't know. It often takes time to develop a new friendship. It's pretty common to see strangers in America talk to each other or make jokes. This rarely happens in Chinese culture. In the future, I'll try to be more outgoing to fit into American culture.

Figure 1. Participant Journal Sample

Class Discussions and Data Obtained from Discussions

Class discussions supported the cultural exploration journaling activity and generated additional data to address the research questions. In these sessions, participants discussed L1 and L2 culture, contributed excerpts from their journals, worked together to negotiate meaning of L2 pragmatic forms, and shared positive and negative experiences from their L2 learning journeys. Through the class discussion process, participants learned that other students had experienced similar cross-cultural or cross-pragmatic misunderstandings. Some students indicated that this realization made them feel better about their own efforts to understand and correctly use target language cultural information.

Seven in-person classroom sessions were held over a seven-week period. These meetings were audio recorded and transcribed. (Two excerpts from these transcripts are provided in Appendix H.) Each conversation produced a rich amount of authentic information on culture, pragmatics and second language learning. However, only data pertinent to this study's research questions is presented here.

After the initial session, each subsequent class began with a question or two related to culture. This technique served to activate students' prior knowledge about culture and prepare them to discuss their journal entries. As participants became more comfortable with that topic and the format for the class discussions, the class spent less time discussing cultural behavior in general terms and more time sharing experiences from their own lives.

During the second class meeting, I introduced the topic of culture and its relationship to second language pragmatics. I elicited responses to two questions: 1) what is culture? and, 2) does culture change or does it not change? In response to the first question, participants provided various descriptors: religion, customs, beliefs, language, traditional, inherited, from family, ancestor to ancestor, and a person's manner (i.e., behavior). In general, the group agreed that culture is composed of most or all of these elements.

On the second question, whether culture is fixed or changeable, participants were evenly split. Participant 4 stated emphatically that it does not change, while another participant from the same cultural and religious background stated that occasionally it can. Three participants indicated that younger generations could create cultural changes. Participant 3 stated, "...new generations have the possibility to change some customs and that could change the way that you might be or the way that you behave and that is related to culture." Another agreed, but felt root traditions would persist. Other participants were more definite in their opinions that culture can change. Participant 8 said, "I think it changes. Always changing."

In the third classroom session, I introduced the relationship between culture and second language pragmatics by asking: do our cultures affect how we communicate with each other? This question seemed to confuse participants, so I provided an example from my own second language learning experience. That prompt led two participants to discuss their experiences as Muslim women trying to tactfully navigate American social

behaviors while staying true to their religious beliefs. As Participant 6 explained, Somali Muslim women generally do not shake hands with men. However, she understands that Americans may interpret this as a rude or disrespectful behavior rather than a culturally or religiously governed practice. She tries to explain this distinction to people. As she puts it, people often reply that they have learned something new about her culture. As this participant's example illustrates, pragmatic learning can and should be bidirectional.

The study's findings suggest that the female Muslim participants are fully aware that by not following American social customs, they may be perceived negatively. They say they accept this possible consequence in order to maintain their cultural/religious identities, but also make an effort to soften any social offense by explaining their behavior to their non-Muslim conversation partners. Frequently, they find themselves being challenged by employers and coworkers who tell them that other Muslim women shake hands with men. However, Participant 7 says she tells people that those Muslims are wrong in adopting pragmatic behaviors contrary to Islam and that she does not care what other people do. "It's my identity. If they are not accepting me, like o.k." Nevertheless, these participants state they are willing to respect pragmatic differences, as long as they are not expected to change their behavior. As stated above, however, this tolerance of difference may not extend to members of their own cultural/religious group who adopt L2 pragmatic forms.

During each session, participants described the experiences they recorded in their journals, sharing their reactions to the cultural similarities and differences they

encountered. Group members were encouraged to ask questions, contribute different viewpoints, identify problems and offer solutions. To guide their conversation, the group used the same question-posing strategy that they used for their journal writing. Those questions were:

1) What did you see? What was happening?

2) How does this relate to your life?

3) How do you react to that? Is this a problem for you?

4) Why do you think you react in this way?

5) Why do you identify this as a problem or not as a problem?

6) How do you plan to deal with situations like that? (Ilieva, 2001, pp. 11-12)

An interesting finding was the proximity of participants' attitudes toward certain L2 pragmatic behaviors. There was cross-cultural overlap especially on issues related to respect for elders and teachers. Several participants expressed their surprise and often shock at the disrespectful treatment of teachers in the U.S. In China, Vietnam and Somalia, in particular, teachers are authority figures and not to be challenged. Participants 6 and 7 stated that in Somalia teachers are considered "second parents" and accorded an equal level of respect. Participants 5 and 7 discussed intergenerational clashes with younger family members, primarily kids who had not attended school in their home countries or were U.S.-born. Their school behavior differed dramatically from that of their elders.

In analyzing these findings, it is important to note that the educational system is a

top-down model in some participants' countries and the Socratic Method is not used. In those environments, students may not be encouraged to interact with teachers by asking questions or offering alternative points of view. Considered from that perspective, it is easy to imagine how someone might be surprised at the informal and interactive approaches employed by some teachers in American classrooms.

During the group conversations, participants made an additional discovery. The participants became aware that while they were learning about American culture, they were reciprocally contributing to each other's knowledge of their first cultures. As Participant 3 stated, they were all foreigners to Americans, but likewise they were foreign to each other. As such, they needed to understand cultural and pragmatic differences between themselves and other immigrants in order to communicate effectively in the U.S. This was an astute observation, as well as practical advice for anyone living in a multi-cultural society.

In-Class Writing Exercises and Data Obtained from Exercises

As described in Chapter 3, the idea of incorporating in-class writing exercises into the study came from Mlynarczyk (1998). Given that journal writing is less formal than academic writing, Mlynarczyk used writing exercises in class to help her students familiarize themselves with the writing process and develop fluency in that style. The purpose of the present study's in-class writing exercises was essentially same. In addition, it also served to activate students' schema about culture and pragmatic behaviors, and it gave them ideas for similar types of scenarios they could record in their journals.

With each in-class writing exercise, participants were given the choice of two cultural scripts. This was both a research and a practical consideration. First, each script related to a different pragmatic behavior, provided a context and asked a question to guide student's writing. Second, the use of scripts let participants use the allotted time to write rather than think of an appropriate scenario to record. Participants chose one scenario and wrote their reactions to it. Examples included the following: A friend asks you out for dinner, then doesn't pay for your meal. How do you react? Your teacher asks you to call her by her first name. How do you react? The exercises were done during the last ten minutes of class and collected by the researcher at the end of each session. See figure 2 for an example.

Script: Your teacher asks you to call her by her first name. How do you react?

Response: I will call him by his name even though I'm not comfortable with calling his name. I was taught by my parents to respect teachers as parents and not to talk back, not cheat, but listen. When I come here everything was different. I thought how can I accept this new culture? It is taking time to learn to call the teacher by his name because I think I'm breaking some rule. I'm trying to fulfill both cultures as much as I can and not make any mistakes. I respect the teacher's culture.

Figure 2. In-class Writing Sample

As a tool to familiarize students with the journal writing process, the in-class writing exercises were useful. However, the data produced was limited. Some students

seemed better able to organize their thoughts and develop cogent responses to the scripts. However, others seemed to struggle with getting that information onto the paper within the given timeframe. After three in-class writing exercises, I decided to stop doing this activity due to the time constraints of the class. At that point, participants had a handle on how to write in their journals which was a primary purpose of in-class writing. Perhaps more importantly, however, I realized that I was often interrupting productive group discussions in order to do this activity. As the researcher, I decided that the class discussions were more valuable.

Exit Interviews and Data Obtained from Interviews

At the conclusion of the study, individual exit interviews were conducted with the six remaining participants. The purpose of the interviews was to have a one-on-one discussion with each participant to recap their experience in the study and discuss their attitudes toward second language culture and pragmatics. By conducting private sessions, I felt participants might provide more in-depth and personal answers versus in a group setting. Each interview was transcribed and samples of the raw data are available in Appendix I. Each participant was asked nine questions pursuant to their experience in the study. The questions, which are individually discussed below, focused on participants' feelings toward journaling as a vehicle to learn about second language culture and pragmatics.

Figure 3 provides a summary view of the results obtained from the individual exit interviews. A more detailed description follows Figure 3.

1. Do you think the journaling activity was useful?	All participants were uniformly positive about journaling and felt it was a useful tool for personal reflection and expression.
2. Do you think the class discussions were useful?	All participants were uniformly positive about the class discussions and felt they gained valuable information during the class discussions.
3. How do you feel about American culture?	Participants were generally positive about American culture. They professed interest in and tolerance of cultural differences. However, some participants cited certain American cultural norms that they will not adopt themselves.
4. Did journaling about culture affect your attitude toward English?	Most participants indicated that cultural journaling positively affected their attitudes toward English. Those who reported that it did not stated that their attitudes toward English were positive prior to the study and stayed the same.
5. Did journaling about culture affect how you talk to native English speakers?	Most participants reported no change in their communication with English speakers. Others were unsure. One participant stated that journaling helped him understand the cultural differences between himself and native speakers, and that this awareness has translated into a desire to improve his L2 pragmatic skills.
6. Did the classroom discussions affect your attitude toward English?	Overall, participants felt class discussions positively affected their attitudes toward English. Some students said it improved their confidence to interact with native speakers outside of the study sessions.
7. Did learning about culture affect your attitudes toward American conversational behaviors?	Participants' responses to this question were mixed. Overall, people felt their attitudes (most of which were already positive) stayed the same. Others felt they learned new information about L2 pragmatic behaviors and that helped them better understand how to use and interpret common speech acts.

8. Will you continue to use your journal?	All participants voiced a desire to continue their journals.
9. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?	Participants' final comments were gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the study.

Figure 3. Summary of Exit Interview Data

Q1: Do you think the journaling activity was useful?

Participants agreed that journaling was a useful technique for learning about second language culture and pragmatics. In order to journal effectively, they had to pay close attention to their daily interactions with native speakers. One participant said it proved to be a useful method for self-expression as it was different than merely talking about one's experiences. Writing allowed him to go deeper into examining his experiences. Another stated that journaling helped him summarize his conversations and, in that way, he could better reflect on what had occurred. He also found it an effective tool for comparing and contrasting his L1 culture with American cultural responses. One participant said journaling allowed her to organize her argument that culture and religion are different social constructs. This, she said, helped her to better articulate her belief both during and outside of class.

Q2: Do you think the class discussions were useful?

All indications are that participants felt positively about the discussion portion of the study. Overwhelmingly, they enjoyed sharing their experiences with other English language learners. A loose camaraderie developed as participants learned that they all

have had difficulties interpreting and responding to American cultural information and have experienced similar culture clashes. This seemed to be an “aha” moment for some students. Language learning can be an isolating process and learners may not realize the extent to which other learners are confused or frustrated, too. The group discussions helped raise awareness of the universality of these feelings and build connections between participants.

One participant said that her state of mind changed upon learning her experiences were not unique. Prior to the study, she would ask herself, “Why me?” when she encountered a perplexing cultural situation. During the group discussions, she realized that other language learners were having the same difficulties. She felt empowered by this knowledge and now feels more comfortable living in her community and confronting new situations.

Learning from other’s experiences helped some participants realize there were different ways to approach familiar situations, such as addressing teachers, inviting friends out to eat and interacting with strangers. Class discussions raised participants’ awareness and provided strategies for helping them adjust to American society, such as getting feedback from American-born family members and friends, talking to other immigrants about their experiences and making friends with native speakers.

The opportunity to share one’s feelings in a supportive environment was a plus for participants. They could express themselves freely without concern about inadvertently offending someone. It was a time to listen, discuss, question and learn without passing

judgment.

One participant commented on the benefit of learning about culture in a multi-cultural society. While English language learners are often focused on increasing their knowledge of mainstream American culture, this participant recognized the value in understanding the cultures of other immigrants in the study. As she put it, participants' cultural backgrounds differ not only from Americans, but also from one another's. Accordingly, immigrants living in the U.S. need to recognize each other's cultural points of view, too.

Q3: How do you feel about American culture?

Overall, participants reported positive feelings toward American culture. Some participants noted that their feelings had evolved over the years and become more positive after living in the U.S. for a while. Other participants acknowledged that differences between their first culture and American culture sometimes made it challenging to accept certain target language behaviors. Yet others discussed positive aspects of American culture that they wished were present in their first cultures.

Perhaps because they are immigrants, some participants voiced a broader view of American culture than one might hear from Americans themselves. For that reason, the complexity of American multiculturalism, and its subsequent impact on English pragmatic responses, may be more apparent to this group of language learners. As one participant stated, American culture is huge and one cannot avoid interacting with people from a variety of different cultures. He likened it to a large circle that contains many sub

circles, representing different ethnic and domestic cultures. All those elements contribute to the whole, making it a challenge, if not impossible, to define a central "American" culture. All of this, he noted, was quite positive as he likes to associate with people from different backgrounds and feels it helps him grow intellectually.

One Somali participant was somewhat noncommittal, stating that American culture was merely okay. "It's just a culture," she said, and, as such, neither positive or negative. It bears noting that this participant felt that culture played a very small role in her life. Religion, Islam in her case, not culture was her guiding force. In her exit interview, she indicated that her native community has a culture and that Americans might appreciate or dislike aspects of it. Culture, she indicated, is something one is born with. It has been around for centuries and cannot change. This response contradicted earlier statements she made about the difference between culture and religion. Despite several conversations, it remains unclear what her actual definition of culture is. She is adamant that it is different than religion. A culture can change, but a religion cannot, she said at different points in the study. She did not seem to accept the possibility that religion and culture could be connected in any way (e.g., Islamic culture).

One participant discussed the evolution of his feelings toward American culture and pragmatic behaviors. When he was new to the U.S., he felt cultural differences more acutely and was less willing to accept American ways of speaking and behaving (e.g., using a loud voice, making eye contact) that were at odds with his upbringing. He feels some of his discomfort may be linked to his first culture's focus on group harmony (i.e.,

collectivism) versus the focus on individualism in American culture. Four plus years later, his feelings have transformed and he views 70-80% of American culture positively. Further, he believes that by continuing to live and interact with Americans, that remaining 20% will seem normal to him someday.

One participant, who came to the U.S. as a refugee, said she knew very little about American culture prior to her arrival. Up until that point, she had heard only descriptions of the culture. Living here, she has been favorably impressed by what she has found. She likes that Americans are generally respectful of cultural differences and do not interfere in other people's business. She was pleased to note these behaviors are in keeping with her religion of Islam. She said she has learned not to ask people personal questions, a behavior that is commonplace in Somali culture. In fact, her kids admonish her not to ask people questions or for assistance unless she really needs it. Their motivation for saying this was unclear, but she has taken it to heart. Their admonition may simply be a strategy for navigating interactions with Americans. If one is not sure whether a request or turn of phrase is appropriate, one approach is to simply avoid the interaction all together. This seems a possibility as Americans commonly ask one another personal questions and request assistance of each other.

Participant 5 stated that her first culture was quite traditional. Some aspects of American culture were appealing, while others were not. She specifically noted the concept of personal freedom in American culture. While this was positive to her in some ways, it also clashed with her beliefs about the roles of parents and children. She feels

that American youth have a different relationship with their parents than they do in her native country, Vietnam, especially in terms of respecting parents and obeying their wishes. She has mixed feelings about this. On one hand, she likes that American parents allow their kids to decide their own futures. She gave the example of parents here giving their children the freedom to pursue a particular field of study or career. On the other, she feels American familial relationships are not as tight as Vietnamese. As she put it, "Parents and children here don't grow together." She also discovered that she prefers the Vietnamese way of respecting elders. As a 30-something woman, she is often surprised, and sometimes hurt, by the lack of respect her younger American-born relatives give her. From her first culture perspective, she feels they are impolite.

Q4: Did journaling about culture affect your attitude toward English?

Overall, participants felt the journaling task was beneficial. However, not all felt that it had an impact on their attitudes toward English, primarily because their attitudes were already positive. Those who felt a positive attitude change said journaling helped them better understand aspects of American culture relative to their first culture. It also helped them see the differences between their communication styles and those of native speakers. For two participants, this was valuable information that they said they could use to improve their English communication skills. By exploring the ways native speakers approach and react to different communicative scenarios, one participant said, strange behavior can become familiar. Through this process, these participants noticed how cultural differences influence language choices and communicative behaviors. They used

that information dynamically to expand their pragmatic skill sets and craft their own responses in preparation for future conversations with native speakers.

Participants who said journaling did not affect their attitudes fell into two camps: 1) those who were already positively disposed to English and 2) those who seemed ambivalent to the process. A participant from Ecuador noted that she has always liked English. The journaling activity did not change that, but helped her open her mind and view American culture and language more clearly. From that perspective, she felt journaling was a plus. Likewise, one Somali participant noted that despite the differences between American culture and her religion, Islam, she felt there were positive similarities between American and Somali communicative behaviors. She feels that some American cultural and conversational behaviors mirror tenets of Islam, such as greeting/welcoming people, respecting elders and giving to charity. Her good attitude toward American culture and language is likely influenced, too, by her refugee experience and the assistance she received to immigrate to the U.S. As she said, “I sometimes say, Chuck E. Cheese is where kids can be kids. America is where humans can be human.” She is grateful to be living here and interested in expanding her cultural and pragmatic knowledge.

Only one participant reported indifference to the journaling process, stating it had no effect on her attitude. She said that she had experiences with native speakers at different jobs and that she was still learning about culture and religion. Unlike the other participants who reported no change in attitude, hers was not due to already having a

positive attitude toward the target language. This participant had previously stated that her religion guides her communicative behaviors and that culture is not a factor.

Q5: Did journaling affect how you to talk to native English speakers?

Journaling made participants more aware of how they interface with native speakers and how native speakers communicate. For some participants, this meant reconsidering their assessments about native speakers' communicative intent. One participant said she used to feel people were rude or racist if they treated her poorly. As a result of her participation in the study, she has reconsidered her assumptions and acknowledges that some of these incidents may have been cross-cultural misunderstandings on her part.

Participant 2 said that journaling definitely affected how he communicates in English. Journaling helped him recognize and analyze the differences between himself and native speakers. The journaling process helped him expand his perspective about communication in this first culture. He continually thinks about his communication style and how he could better anticipate the pragmatic behaviors native speakers might expect in a given situation. This particular participant was very introspective. He uses communicative misfires and misunderstanding as platforms for learning. He said, "I ask myself if a native speakers thinks I'm rude, why do they think that? What did I say or do that was inappropriate to them? What did they say or do that was inappropriate to me? What's the solution to this problem?"

While participants felt journaling was useful, some were not sure how or if it

affected their target language communication. One participant stated that the activity itself forced her to find opportunities to communicate with English speakers. This was something she previously did not do. For her, the effect was that she increased her overall interactions with native speakers. Another stated, “I have my own formula for talking. I don’t think it changed much from the journaling.”

Participant 5, who is a new U.S. resident, stated that many aspects of American culture are novel to her, such as indirect speech and informally addressing teachers. As part of the study group, she gained knowledge about American culture and how native speakers talk with one another. She felt journaling and class discussions helped her understand that she cannot ask strangers or new friends personal questions. While this behavior is customary in traditional Vietnamese culture, she does not like it and tries to avoid answering personal questions herself. Of special note, she mentioned how learning about the other study participants’ cultures has helped her communication, too. She indicated that she now understands that people’s cultures can influence how and why they communicate as they do. As for journaling’s effect on her English usage, she said she may be less likely now to feel hurt by certain conversational behaviors due to her new understanding of other cultures.

One Somali participant was unsure whether journaling affected her communication with native English speakers. She indicated that in her culture, women do not normally address the public or speak in front of men who are non-family members. However, she realized that she would have to modify those behaviors here and adapt to

American cultural expectations. Thus prior to the study, she was already working to change the way she communicated with native English speakers. However, she felt the journaling did, at times, positively affect her communication.

Q6: Did the classroom discussions affect your attitude toward English?

Overall, participants reported that the group discussions gave them more confidence about their English communication skills and their abilities to speak with native English speakers. They found that sharing their opinions and discussing cultural questions with each other made them realize they were not alone. They were all experiencing similar cultural ups and downs in their language learning process. This realization was heartening to them.

Participant 3 shared that she had recently participated in a group interview for a job. She had been nervous, but told herself, "Don't be afraid to talk. If you can talk...with your classmates, in front of Laura, sharing your experience, you're going to be fine." While she did not get the position, she said she would not be intimidated from doing similar future interviews in English. She attributed this self-confidence to her participation in the study.

Similarly, another female participant felt the sessions had improved her self-confidence, too. In other classes with native speakers, she often felt shy about speaking and worried she might misunderstand something. Conversely in the study group, she felt participants were on equal footing as everyone had roughly the same English proficiency level. She was not preoccupied with making mistakes as she felt everyone in the group

made them, too.

One participant said the discussion improved her attitude toward English. As she discussed in her response to Question 5 (i.e., Did journaling affect how you to talk to native English speakers?), some American cultural behaviors hurt her because they were so different from her first culture. She gave an example of going into stores and seeing the clerks greet American customers, but ignore her. She often wondered if this treatment was racially motivated. It very well may have been. However, the class discussions expanded her thinking about these situations. Now, she is less quick to assume a behavior is rude or impolite. Rather, she may consider it to be a culturally different response. With this increased awareness, she says she is less likely to feel bad in such exchanges.

Q7: Did learning about culture affect your attitudes toward American conversational behaviors?

Participants were split on this question. For those who already had positive opinions about American culture and English, their opinions about common speech acts remained positive. For other participants, their attitudes improved as they examined the relationship between cultural and conversational behavior, and learned about the different ways Americans use various speech acts.

As one participant said, he is still learning about American conversational behaviors. He aptly noted, “The longer you stay here the more you experience, see these things happen in front of you.” He stated that journaling has alerted him to cultural differences and helped him explore his feelings toward those differences. Now, he says,

certain Somali conversational behaviors seem rude to him, such as forms used to address disabled or non-familial older people. In those areas, he prefers the American way of speaking. He illustrated his point by sharing his opinion that disabled people are often poorly treated in his country of origin. He finished by saying that sometimes people do not know there is an alternative way of interacting until it is presented to them. At that point, they might realize they favor the latter form of communication.

Similarly, several participants said they felt the American forms of speech were direct and respectful. One Somali participant said she felt Americans were opened-hearted and willing to listen to explanations about religious differences, such as the Islamic prohibition on shaking hands that some Muslims follow.

Another Somali participant said her attitude changed a bit. She noted the difference between her first and second cultures and gave an example of using eye contact in conversation. In America, she said, eye contact is important. In Somali, however, it is not a big deal. She said she likes that American children are taught, from an early age, to use eye contact. This behavior shows that people are paying attention and taking you seriously. Another area of difference was the use of personal space when conversing. In the U.S., she said, you have to give people space, but in her country, physical distance is not an issue. Her awareness of these issues also indicated her recognition that these forms were expected when interacting with native speakers. During one class discussion, she mentioned changing her behavior depending on the culture of her interlocutor. With Somalis, she would use her first culture conversational

conventions. With Americans, she would tailor her speech to American conversational norms.

Q8: Will you continue to use your journal?

Overwhelmingly, the participants said they would like to continue using their journals. They thought it was an effective way to learn about American culture and improve their writing. They especially appreciated receiving written feedback on the content and grammar of their entries.

In terms of the study's focus, participants indicated that they enjoyed examining their first and second cultures. They felt it helped them better understand their own thinking about culture and language. One person said the physical act of writing down and analyzing his thoughts helped him put his experiences into perspective and learn from them. Another participant said that as a new American, she was being flooded with new cultural information, and that continuing her journal would be one way to help her process it. This sentiment was echoed by other participants, who also felt writing down their new experiences helped expand their cultural awareness and language skills. The participant, who focused on Americans' misperceptions of her religion, felt journaling improved her ability to defend her belief in the difference between culture and religion. While Somalis have a culture, she said again, it is not the same as their religion or as important.

Q9: Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

Participants were highly positive about their participation in the study project.

They enjoyed the focus of the research, but also appreciated interacting with people from other cultural backgrounds. They liked the positivity of the group and the active level of participation. They also appreciated having a venue to share information from their first cultures and discuss their opinions and questions about American culture.

One woman said that while other participants might adopt aspects of American culture, there were certain behaviors from her religion that were non-negotiable, such as daily prayers. She again shared her frustration that Americans do not understand the difference between culture and religion. She cited an example from her workplace where a woman asked her about her clothing and why she had to pray. According to the participant, part of the problem is that some Somalis do not pray at work or, if they are women, do not wear a hijab. As she put it, "It's hard sometimes. How even your own people are mixin' up religion and culture and tellin' people different." She spoke of her frustration with continually having to defend her behavior. In the end, she said, she has just learned to let it go. She is open to well-intentioned questions about her religion and tries not to worry about negative comments.

In his final comment, Participant 1 said, "Keeping your own culture doesn't necessarily mean you cannot accept a new culture. Actually, that's how American culture forms. The immigrants from Europe, they carried...their culture to America and formed the American culture as a whole."

Overall, it can be said that the results gathered during the exit interviews were overwhelmingly favorable. Participants were glad to have joined the study and

appreciated having the opportunity to share information from their first cultures, compare their second language experiences with other non-native English speakers and ask questions of a native speaker.

Themes

During the study, several general themes about culture and second language learning emerged. The following details the major themes and their relationship to the research questions: Does journaling about second language culture affect participants' attitudes toward second language pragmatic forms? What L2 pragmatic forms and behaviors are students hearing and experiencing in their daily interactions? How do students' primary cultural backgrounds affect their understanding of L2 pragmatic forms? How do students' primary cultural backgrounds and their understanding of L2 culture inform their second language pragmatic choices?

Culture can inform pragmatic choices

When a person is immersed in her native culture, she may not realize the extent to which culture influences her pragmatic choices. Her awareness may be subconscious or vague (Kasper, 1997; Moon, 2001), leading her to automatically use the culturally appropriate pragmatic form for a given situation. Often it is not until a person notices or experiences a markedly different response that she may acknowledge that other possible pragmatic choices exist.

In target language contexts, non-native speakers are regularly presented with familiar situations that may require culturally different pragmatic responses. As speech

acts are embedded with cultural information (Hwang, 2008), learners' L1 prior knowledge of conversational routines (e.g., greeting, requesting, apologizing) may prevent their awareness of the need for alternative pragmatic reactions. Similarly, Saville-Troike (1996) states that non-native speakers may view behaviors using a different set of paradigms and may find L2 forms lacking in meaning. As a result, learners may continue to draw reflexively from their first language schema and apply that information to their L2 interactions. Depending on the cultural distance between their L1 and L2, learners may achieve varying degrees of communicative success. It may, however, be more likely that learners under or overreact vis-a-vis target language expectations.

When learners expand their knowledge of the target culture, they may begin to notice and appreciate the different and nuanced ways native speakers communicate. In doing so, they may recognize the influence of culture in communicative behaviors and choose to incorporate that information into their target language use. In this study, several participants remarked on their growing awareness of the target culture's influence on conversational behaviors. But they also reported that they were sometimes unsure or uncomfortable about using those forms. They often choose to use an L1 pragmatic form because it felt more appropriate to them, even when they knew the L2 form was expected. This does not necessarily indicate that participants thought their pragmatic choices were better than L2 forms. Rather, it may demonstrate how cultural conditioning affects one's attitudes toward using or adopting new pragmatic forms. One participant illustrated this point by saying she was unable to call her professor by his first name, even

though he had invited students to do so. She could not overcome her belief that it was inappropriate to address him informally. She tried to comply, but reverted to her L1 behavior of calling him "Professor." This may suggest that even with attention to target language culture, non-native speakers may still default to their first language pragmatic behaviors because those forms are more comfortable to them. Further, it may demonstrate how ingrained first-language pragmatic information can be and how challenging it can be to change one's thinking and behavior.

Of course, there are many non-native speakers who recognize the influence of culture on their language choices and communication styles, and who know their usage changes depending upon their interlocutors. To illustrate this point, one participant said when she sees other Somalis on the street, she considers them as family, even if they are strangers. She does not have to consider the culturally appropriate way to communicate with them and thus, she recognizes the automaticity of her pragmatic behavior in her L1 communication. In contrast, she describes having to actively think about what communicative behaviors are required when communicating with native English speakers. Her pragmatic choices are more deliberate. When she does not think about the culturally appropriate way to communicate, she says she risks a communication breakdown. She says that her kids tell her not to talk to native speakers. According to them, her L2 communication style is often not appropriate. She perseveres, however, believing that native speakers will recognize that English is not her primary language and give her the benefit of the doubt when she makes mistakes.

Attitude can affect adoption of L2 pragmatic forms

When learners receive unfamiliar or culturally objectionable second language pragmatic input, they may experience different emotions, including shock, anger, bewilderment and amusement, as they work to comprehend that new information and put it into context. Data from this study suggest that a leaner's desire or need to make accommodations to the target language culture can affect whether they may accept or reject certain L2 pragmatic forms.

In the current study, participants reported generally positive attitudes toward American culture and pragmatic forms. Upon closer inspection, however, they identified pragmatic behaviors toward which they felt negatively and/or struggled to understand. This is similar to findings by Hinkel (1996), who reported a mismatch between learners' professed positivity toward L2 pragmatic behaviors and their actual use of those forms.

Participants cited certain behaviors, such as lack of respect for teachers and parents, as off-putting and challenging to accept. They said that, at times, they feel frustrated by cultural differences and their inability to know how to interact in certain situations. When this happens, they say their otherwise good attitudes toward learning English conversational behaviors may falter. This seemed to be especially true for students who had a great distance between their L1 and L2 pragmatic forms.

Most of the study's participants reported that, in general, any negative feelings they have toward English or the target language community are usually situational and short-lived. That does not mean, however, that they adopt target language forms. Rather,

most participants said when they have confusing or unsuccessful encounters with native speakers, they reflect on what happened and try to learn from those experiences. After doing so, they then decide whether or not to use the American form.

Many participants felt the study's journaling and group discussion process were positive extensions of what they were already doing informally on their own, such as self-reflection and talking to friends/family. Discussing their experiences with other non-native speakers helped them realize that other learners' attitudes toward L2 pragmatic behaviors waxed and waned. Several participants stated that both out of necessity and personal interest, they work hard to notice and understand how L2 pragmatic forms are used. Most said that despite occasional reservations, their attitudes toward using L2 pragmatic forms are good. Participants were more positively disposed toward L2 pragmatic forms that were similar to their L1 behaviors, such as greeting people by saying hello versus shaking hands. However, even in situations where there was a greater disparity, a few participants said they chose to use the L2 form because that was the L2 cultural expectation. Other participants were more neutral toward target language forms. While they stated that their attitudes toward the culture were generally good, they were disinclined to use L2 pragmatic behaviors that went against their culture or religion.

Culture clashes can be L2 learning opportunities

The so-called culture clash is not uncommon to language learners as they navigate the target language environment. By its definition, this type of communicative misunderstanding catches one off guard and disrupts one's assumptions about what

should be occurring. At best, it can leave non-native speakers and their native speaker counterparts embarrassed or confused. At worst, it can result in anger or hurt feeling and leave interlocutors at a loss for how to repair the situation. While non-native speakers may prefer to avoid culture clashes, these situations can provide valuable input that learners can use to expand their L2 cultural knowledge and potentially improve their future communications (Acton & Walker de Felix, 1986; Ilieva, 2001).

All participants in the current study reported having numerous culture clashes. For the most part, they were circumspect about these occurrences and felt they were able to learn from these encounters. For example, Participant 3 said that after a difficult or confusing target language encounter, she reflects on what was said or not said and prepares herself to face similar situations in the future. She said this might involve approaching conversations with a different attitude or pragmatic form. In this way, she hopes to prevent future culture-based communication problems.

Participant 2 stated his frustration with culture clashes. He says that when native classmates share information in his other academic classes, everyone understands because they have similar prior knowledge about the subject. However, he does not. When he speaks, he sometimes unwittingly shares information that may be shameful or taboo in American mainstream culture, such as the use of corporeal punishment in some Somali families. But he does not recognize this is a problem until he hears his classmates' reactions. He aptly notes that culture clashes are inevitable. People are rarely prepared for them because they are drawing from their previous experiences and have no

reason to believe their speech or behavior is unusual. It is through these surprising exchanges that this participant says he expands his pragmatic knowledge. He states, however, that one simply does not adopt another culture and change one's behavior overnight. Rather, it may require a great deal of personal reflection to decide whether to alter one's pragmatic behavior.

When participants in this study successfully manage a challenging L2 communicative encounter, they say their attitudes toward English improve. They report feeling relieved, encouraged and accomplished. Their successes boost their confidence and foster positive feelings toward target language learning.

Learner identity can affect attitudes toward L2 pragmatics

In second language pragmatic research much has been written about learners' pragmatic errors and the need to correct those mistakes. The general theme seems to be that learners should adopt target language pragmatic forms in order to build solid communication skills. While it is imperative that learners understand pragmatic differences, forcing them to adopt L2 pragmatic forms may have a negative effect on learners' attitudes. As Thomas (1983) states, pragmatic behaviors may be social, before linguistic, and relate to a learner's identity. What appears to be a pragmatic mistake may, in fact, be intentional. This suggests that approaches to teaching L2 pragmatics should focus less on correction and more upon expanding bidirectional pragmatic awareness (i.e., learners toward the L2 and teachers toward learners' L1s). This approach may be an effective way to improve learners' pragmatic understanding and help them engage more

intentionally in L2 communications.

Maintaining one's L1 cultural identity while adapting to a new culture can be challenging. Learners may feel pressure from teachers, employers, family members and even themselves to conform to L2 cultural and pragmatic norms. However, learners who feel their identities are respected by target language speakers may have a more positive outlook toward the target language and its community (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Talyor, 2003).

In the current study, some participants reported feeling defensive or frustrated when they have to justify their behavior to native speakers. For these participants, certain L2 forms are contrary to their cultural or religious identities and, on those behaviors, they are understandably unwilling to compromise. Admonishing learners to change or correct their pragmatic behavior can be an affront to their sense of self. This tension may result in negative feelings toward the target language and its speakers. Cultural exploration journaling, coupled with classroom discussions, may be a less face threatening way for students to examine L2 pragmatic forms relative to their L1 cultural backgrounds. This method acknowledges learners as culturally positioned human beings with valuable knowledge and experiences that can positively inform their L2 learning process (Ilieva, 2001; Haneda, 2002).

Over time, learners' attitudes towards L2 pragmatic forms may evolve. In the current study, some participants discussed how their attitudes toward certain L2 pragmatic forms had changed. One man stated that after four years living in the U.S.,

behaviors that he once felt threatened his L1 identity are no longer problems for him. Further, he says that his present identity is a hybrid of his L1 and L2 cultures. He's found a third way of being and relating to the world around him. As he said, "Back home, I might have done or accepted things because everyone else was doing the same. When I came here, I was able to compare different ways of living and thinking about issues. I'm sorting and filtering, trying to figure out what I want to preserve and what I want to discard. What's going to work for me and what isn't."

Communicating in a second language does not require learners to change their identities. Teachers should be aware of this and communicate this message to their learners. Most participants felt it was possible to respect L2 cultural differences as well as adopt some L2 behaviors without compromising their L1 identities. These students said they adopted a casual 'a la carte' approach to target language pragmatics. Other students, however, were overtly opposed to certain L2 forms. That said, all participants wanted to expand their knowledge of target language culture and pragmatic forms. One participant stated, "Once you understand the [target language] culture and the values of certain communities then it's gonna be easier for you to interact with them." Thus, while it is not necessary to relinquish one's first culture identity to communicate effectively in one's second, it is important to understand what pragmatic forms are expected and why.

One participant, who is a temporary U.S. resident, stated that her visiting in-law was concerned she was not maintaining her Spanish and was forgetting her first culture. She told her in-law that a person can learn about and adopt different cultural practices

without becoming, in her case, less Ecuadorian. She further stated, “We are living here. We have to adapt here. We have to interact with people here.” She conceded that learning the language and customs was challenging, but she wanted to take advantage of the opportunities to learn about American life and improve her English.

Some participants, however, were resistant to L2 pragmatic forms which they felt were incompatible with their first-culture identities. The study’s female Muslim participants explained this issue in terms of their religious beliefs. Due to their religious faith, they will not adopt some L2 behaviors, specifically shaking hands with or being alone with men. These women all stated that to do otherwise would compromise their identities. While they understand that noncompliance with L2 pragmatic expectations may hurt them socially or employment-wise, they accept those possible consequences. They try to mitigate some of this potential fallout by explaining their behavior to their interlocutors. They view these conversations as opportunities to teach others about themselves and their religion. According to one participant, “People are becoming more and more curious about other cultures. When we actually see someone in the flesh...it’s an opportunity to learn more.” Thus, they have developed a strategy that allows them to participate in their target language community, while maintaining their first-culture identities.

Culture and religion are different social constructs

An interesting discovery was learning that some participants view culture and religion as distinct social constructs. This belief was voiced throughout the study by three

Muslim participants. They rejected the idea that culture and religion were interconnected. Culture, one participant said, is discretionary. Individuals can decide which aspects of culture work for them and discard the rest. However, freedom of choice is not a feature of religion, she stated. If one is a believer, one must abide by the religion's rules. Period. According to this participant, "To Somali people, culture is not number one to us. Religion is number one." In her life, she looks toward her religion, not L1 or L2 culture, to guide her daily interactions.

This participant was frustrated, and slightly resigned, that Americans and some Muslims do not seem to understand the difference between cultural and religious beliefs. She frequently corrects people's misperceptions that her comportment, such as wearing hijab and praying at work, is cultural and therefore optional. Other Muslim women in the study corroborated her account with their own stories. Just because some Muslims do not follow Koranic rules, they said, does not mean the rules are elective. Rather, those people are not doing a good job following their religion. As one participant said, native speakers often tell her they know Muslim women who shake hands with men. "I tell them that those Muslims are wrong," she said.

The argument these women make is thought-provoking, but it fails to consider the close and often fuzzy line between culture and religion. It does not recognize that a religion may have its own culture or that it may heavily influence the culture of a community (Boyer, 1996; UNESCO, 2010). It also fails to reflect that some believers interpret and use religious doctrine more loosely. Likewise during the study, these

participants occasionally blurred the line themselves, inadvertently demonstrating the difficulty of keeping a solid distinction between the two. One participant said she felt some behaviors, such as not shaking hands with the opposite sex, were both culturally and religiously driven.

All the study's Muslim participants generally delineated culture from religion, but not all negated the presence of culture in their daily communicative transactions. While the female Muslim participants had less tolerance for Muslims, especially women, who flouted Koranic rules, they are making cultural and religious adjustments to American life, too. These same women are participating in public life, attending school with men and working outside the home—behaviors that are not common for women in Somalia. Faced with the realities of life in a new culture, they realize some accommodations are necessary.

Summary

In this chapter, I detailed the data collection effort, analyzed the results and reflected on their connection to current study. As a result of this research, I found that cultural exploration journaling can be an effective method for examining the relationship between culture and pragmatic behavior, even more so when combined with class discussions. The findings from the study also suggest that learners who use this approach may increase their awareness of similarities and differences between L1 and L2 pragmatic forms, and that this awareness may help the accuracy of their pragmatic intent. Further, I found that the decision to use L2 pragmatic forms may be related to learners'

personal, cultural or religious identity, as well as their attitudes toward the target language culture.

In chapter five, I discuss the study's implications for second language instruction, suggest possible future research, and consider the limitation of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This study was constructed to examine the relationship between second language culture and pragmatics. Specifically, it investigated the following primary question and three secondary questions:

Does journaling about second language culture affect learners' attitudes toward second language pragmatic forms? What L2 pragmatic forms and behaviors are students hearing and experiencing in their daily interactions? How do students' primary cultural backgrounds affect their understanding of L2 pragmatic forms? How do students' primary cultural backgrounds and their understanding of L2 culture inform their second language pragmatic choices?

From the data collected, it can tentatively be concluded that the cultural exploration journaling activity had a minor effect on learners' attitudes toward second language pragmatic forms. As the pre-treatment survey responses indicated, participants' attitudes were already quite positive prior to their participation in this research. However, the results obtained from the one-on-one interview sessions support the research convention that journaling may be effective for exploring L2 culture and negotiating meanings of L2 pragmatic forms. It also seemed to raise participants' awareness of L1 and L2 pragmatic characteristics and helped them make choices about which forms to use.

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I discuss the study's results and findings, explain its limitations and suggest future research, and cite its potential benefits to stakeholders and the field of second language acquisition.

Results and Findings

As discussed in detail in chapter four, we can tentatively confirm that the cultural exploration journaling activity had a minimal impact on learners' attitudes toward second language pragmatic forms. However, anecdotal evidence from one-on-one interviews suggests that journaling coupled with class discussions may be an effective method for exploring L2 culture and developing a deeper understanding of target language pragmatic forms. These conclusions are conditional based on the study's small sample size. In order to corroborate these findings, future studies should be conducted with a larger and more linguistically diverse group over a more sustained period of time, such as six months to one year.

Prior to undertaking this study, I projected that participants' attitudes toward American culture would be less positive than they actually turned out to be. This assumption was predicated on materials and case studies I had read during my teacher-training program that cited cultural differences as a factor affecting learner attitudes toward learning English. However, the data I collected from the study's pre-treatment survey indicated that participants' attitudes were already generally positive. I was surprised by this finding and wondered what results I would be able to show at the end of

the study.

Participants' survey results, however, told only part of the story. In their journals, class discussions and exit interviews, participants had the opportunity to explain their attitudes more fully and give contextualized examples of L2 pragmatic behaviors they liked and disliked. While their explanations often supported the survey findings, there were also contradictions. Indeed, some participants who professed positive attitudes toward target language culture did not always agree with or use certain L2 pragmatic forms. This mismatch between stated attitudes and actual behavior has been documented by other researchers (Hinkel, 1996; LoCastro, 2001) and may be attributable to individual or L1 cultural differences.

Several other findings emerged from the data. First, pragmatic decisions may be culturally conditioned. This conditioning may lead to automaticity in pragmatic use, such as conversational routines. While this behavior can be efficient in L1 settings, it can also result in communication problems in L2 environments where pragmatic rules may differ substantially. Second, culture clashes can offer L2 pragmatic learning opportunities. While learners may prefer not to have cultural communication problems, they can use breakdowns as catalysts for learning. The study's participants indicated that they analyze these misunderstandings to gain insight and improve their future communications. Third, learner identity can affect attitudes toward L2 pragmatics. While learners should be encouraged to understand L2 pragmatic forms, they should not be forced to adopt them (Thomas, 1983). To do so may threaten learners' sense of self and result in negative

attitudes toward the target language culture and its speakers. Finally, some learners consider religion and culture to be separate social constructs. This finding is important for teachers working with students who may hold such beliefs. Teachers may consider expanding classroom conversations about culture's influence on pragmatic forms to include the influence of religious beliefs, too.

Limitations and Future Research

This project was my first foray into primary research. I enjoyed the process and felt it generated useful information for the field of second language acquisition, as well as the study's participants. That said, there were hitches along the way. During the study, I identified opportunities for design and implementation improvements. Here I share the study's limitations and suggest ways these issues could be mitigated in future research.

This study could be replicated as currently designed. However, it may be better suited to a structured learning environment, such as an English for academic purposes class. Students may be more likely to write regularly and participate more actively in class discussions if there were an incentive to do so, such as academic credit. Likewise, participants may submit more robust data if the journal activity and class discussions were graded assignments. Further, had this study happened in a class where students had less choice about participating, the findings may have revealed a broader range of opinions about L2 culture and pragmatics. As participants self-selected to be part of the current research, they may have entered the study positively predisposed to American culture and English. Future researchers should not, however, be dissuaded from doing

this study as an extracurricular class. The only additional caution is that participants may prioritize other aspect of their lives over the study, as happened occasionally with this research.

In terms of this study's design, participants did not respond particularly well to the study's student-led, interactive learning approach. The class required much more teacher-led instruction than I had anticipated and wanted to give. Even though students had strong English-language skills and indicated that they understood my directions, only one student actively posed questions and engaged other students during class discussions. Everyone else looked to me for leadership. That said, participants were keen to share information. They just did not want to lead the class and this may be due to cultural differences as well.

In keeping with the study's research questions, participants' reluctance to lead conversations or speak extemporaneously without being called upon by me may reflect a negative attitude toward those L2 pragmatic forms. In a conversation about classroom behavior, one Somali participant said that learners from Africa and Asia are not accustomed to participating in or leading classroom discussions. According to him, the educational systems in those regions do not encourage it. As such, adapting to American classroom expectations can be challenging. Future researchers should consider adding a pre-study session to teach participants about interactive learning, practice using the question-posing strategy, communicate researcher expectations for learners' participation and work out any potential problems.

Measuring change in participants' attitudes was challenging as there was little difference between the pre- and post-treatment survey results. Ideally, there would have been greater disparity in the responses, giving a stronger baseline from which to ascertain change and analyze the impact of the treatment tools (i.e., journals, in-class writing and class discussion). The proximity of participants' responses may have been due to the decontextualized nature of the questions. It also may have been the result of participants' pre-existing positive feelings toward American culture. Future researchers might gain more compelling data by contextualizing survey questions, increasing the number of questions, changing the scope of the questions, or doing a combination of these things. Researchers may also consider eliminating the pre-treatment surveys and using a different tool to measure participants' baseline attitudes. For example, pre-treatment individualized interviews may elicit more authentic and accurate information and result in a richer dataset at the study's end.

The in-class writing sessions were not as helpful as I had anticipated. In this activity, participants were given two possible scenarios to write about. Examples included the following: A stranger comments on your appearance. How do you react? Your teacher asks you to call her by her first name. How do you react? Participants selected one scenario and were allowed ten minutes to generate a written response. The purpose of this writing exercise was to help students identify possible scenarios to explore in their journals and to practice using the question-posing strategy. The results of this activity were mixed. While it was good practice for students to work with the question-posing

strategy, the data produced was not as plentiful as hoped. In addition, scheduling this activity during the last ten minutes of class made it feel rushed. With a few improvements, however, this activity could be valuable. For example, future researchers could schedule this exercise earlier in the session and allow sufficient time for a follow-up discussion. I suggest a 15-minute free write followed by a 15-minute discussion of participants' essays. These changes would give participants the opportunity to share and compare their responses to specific scenarios—which was not done, but would have been useful in the current study.

As mentioned previously, the interactive learning method was integral to the study's design, specifically the group discussion sessions. However, participants did not respond well to it. While explicit instruction was given on how to use the question-posing strategy to guide class discussions, participants waited for me to lead each session. I tried to hand over the reins many times, but participants did not want to take them. A possible solution to this problem would be to assign the role of task monitor to different participants throughout the study. The benefits would be three-fold: 1) it would guarantee that class sessions are participant-led, 2) it would ensure that participants use the question-posing strategy with each other, and 3) it would allow the researcher to maintain an advisory role in the process as originally designed. The role of task monitor could be rotated each session, further ensuring active participation by all learners.

The length of the group sessions could have been longer. Originally, the study group was scheduled to meet for ninety minutes per session. To accommodate

participants' schedules, however, class time was reduced to sixty minutes. While this change was necessary, longer sessions would have allowed for stronger participation and perhaps more thoughtful discussion. For example, some participants took a while to warm up to the discussion. Often by the time they were ready to speak, the session was nearly over. Students' confidence and/or English language skills may have played a role in this warm-up period. They may have needed time to process the topic and organize their thoughts before contributing to the discussion.

Finally, people who participate in studies tend to be affable and may unintentionally skew their responses to meet the researcher's objective. In this study, it is possible that students overrepresented their positivity in order to feel closer to the researcher and/or the target language community. Occasionally, I wondered whether participants were sharing their true attitudes or if they were telling me what they thought I wanted to hear, the so-called *halo effect*. It is possible that some participants withheld their actual feelings in order to be respectful or maintain group harmony. This tendency may also reflect the isolation some learners feel and their desire for and appreciation of the researcher's attention. Indeed, participants indicated they valued being able to share their stories with a native speaker, especially one who had experience living in another country and understood the challenges of communicating in another language. Mitigating this problem may be difficult. Before undertaking a similar study, future researchers should be aware of its potential and work hard to create a classroom environment where participants feel comfortable sharing their true feelings.

Implications

In conversations between speakers of the same language, interlocutors typically assume that the pragmatic forms their conversation partners use are intentional. Likewise, they believe that their interpretation of that information is accurate. However, making this assumption during interactions with non-native speakers can be problematic. Non-native speakers may have a strong command of English pragmatic forms or they may give the false impression that they do. Non-native speakers' pragmatic choices may be completely intentional or they may mistakenly use forms they do not intend. Further, they may automatically use L1 forms, not recognizing that familiar interactions may require different, culturally conditioned L2 pragmatic responses.

In any communicative exchange, a degree of speaker-to-speaker accommodation is needed to maintain conversational flow. During native speaker interactions, such accommodation happens naturally and often with little thought. This courtesy may be lacking in some exchanges between native and non-native speakers, with the former believing the latter responsible for all accommodation. However, non-native speakers should not be exclusively responsible for this task (Yates, 2004). It is unrealistic to assume that non-native speakers, especially new language learners, will know all the required pragmatic forms and consistently use them in situationally appropriate ways. It is also unfair to place this responsibility exclusively upon their shoulders. In doing so, learners may feel forced or coerced into adopting pragmatic forms they do not want to use. This, in turn, may negatively affect their attitudes toward target language speakers

and L2 pragmatic behaviors.

Native speakers can help non-native speakers develop or refine their second language pragmatic skills. If a pragmatic choice seems out of place, native speakers can tactfully ask for clarification to determine whether the form was intentional (e.g., Can you tell me more? How do you feel about this?). Native speakers should be open to the possibility that the chosen form was deliberate, even if it is contrary to the second language norm. Non-native speakers may indeed mean what they say. Or, they may simply be using an L1 cultural scripts, relying on familiar L1 conversational routines to guide their L2 communications.

From the data gathered in this study, non-native speakers may be able improve their attitudes toward L2 pragmatic forms by journaling about L2 culture. More likely, however, they can use this tool to increase their understanding of the role of culture in L2 pragmatics and use that information to build situationally appropriate L2 pragmatic skills. The knowledge learners can gain from journaling could be helpful to them in several domains, including family, friends, work, school, healthcare settings and community.

Family

English language learners may have children and other family members who are target language native speakers. Culture clashes can occur when family members use and interpret pragmatic information differently. Both sides can help the other understand the cultural basis for their pragmatic choices. By identifying similarities and differences in L1 and L2 pragmatic forms, learners and their families may improve their understanding

of, and perhaps attitudes toward, pragmatic differences.

Friends

Many learners want or have friends who are native speakers. Developing and maintaining friendships require effective communication skills, including the ability to accurately use and interpret pragmatic information. Misunderstandings may be avoided when non-native speakers understand that their target language friends bring different cultural perspectives and behaviors to their interactions. Native speakers, for their part, can help learners navigate confusing cultural behaviors and build situationally appropriate L2 pragmatic skills.

Work

Employees who recognize that workplace expectations may differ between their primary and secondary cultures may be better able to identify and handle culturally-based, work-related problems. This ability may, in turn, help them become more effective at their jobs. Employers can play an important role, too, by clearly explaining workplace expectations to non-native employees. This could be accomplished on a one-on-one basis or as part of a workplace training. The latter would be an opportunity for all employees to discuss cultural differences and encourage mutual respect among staff (e.g., explaining why some Muslims do not shake hands with the opposite sex, while others do; explaining why some non-Muslims may be confused by this discontinuity).

School

Similar to the workplace, learners' L1 school experiences may differ substantially

from their L2. Learners who examine and understand how American classrooms operate may have better learning experiences than those who do not. Teachers can help students adjust to new classroom environments by recognizing that learners' first languages and primary cultures may influence how they communicate. For example, a student who calls her instructor "Teacher" likely does so because that is customary and respectful in her first culture. She may not realize that form is generally not considered appropriate in American English. Instructors can help learners' improve their knowledge of L2 classroom behaviors by discussing similarities and differences in L1 and L2 practices and asking students to explain their pragmatic choices.

Healthcare Settings

The American healthcare system can be challenging to navigate. Language barriers and cultural differences can make doing so even more complicated. Approaches and attitudes toward health and wellness can differ greatly based on a person's cultural background and can potentially thwart interactions between patients and medical professionals. Non-native speakers who understand this may better represent their concerns and receive the appropriate care from their doctors. In turn, medical professional must be aware that some patients have cultural considerations that make them resistant to certain examinations or treatment modalities. Healthcare providers may be able to mitigate patients' concerns by having available translated materials and interpreters who can not only translate verbal language but also interpret pragmatic behaviors to both parties. This would help patients' advocate for themselves and allow

doctors to communicate their recommendations clearly.

Community

Vibrant communities are created when all residents feel part of the social fabric and welcome to participate in every aspect of public life. Non-native speakers may want to become involved in civic life, but may not know how to do so. Neighbors and local leaders can encourage non-native speakers to become civically engaged. They should be aware that some non-native speakers may approach civic issues and interpersonal communications differently. These differences should be acknowledged, explored and respected.

Conclusion

Investigating the relationship between second language culture and learner attitudes toward second language pragmatics is a challenging endeavor. This study merely scratches the surface of this complicated topic. With my research, I examined this connection through the lens of a cultural exploration journaling activity and investigated its possible role in producing attitude changes toward L2 pragmatic forms. In the end, the answer I sought to my primary research question remains somewhat elusive. The data collected shows a minor link between the journaling activity and learners' attitudes toward pragmatic forms. As discussed earlier in this chapter, several factors, including participants' overall positive attitudes toward American culture and English, may have skewed the dataset. Additional research is needed to draw a more definitive conclusion about journaling's effect on attitude change.

The study did, however, produce additional results about cultural exploration journaling that addressed my secondary research questions and that could be immediately useful to the field of second language acquisition. Information collected during the one-on-one interviews suggests that journaling may be productive for exploring L2 culture and negotiating meanings of L2 pragmatic forms. In their interviews, participants expressed their interest in American culture and pragmatic forms, as well as their desire to correctly interpret and use that information to improve their English-language communication. Some participants also shared the difficulty of wanting to communicate effectively, but at the same time wanting to maintain aspects of their first language culture, even when those behaviors may clash with American communicative expectations. They indicated that the journaling and class discussion process helped them explore those issues critically and with other people who were experiencing the same challenges. While further research should be conducted on this topic, the results from this study show promise in this area.

As an ESL educator and based on the findings of this study, I would like to encourage second language teaching professionals to use cultural exploration journaling in their classes. While the activity may have a small effect on learners' attitudes toward L2 pragmatic forms, it provides an opportunity for students and their teachers to explore the relationship between culture and language learning—an area that is often ignored in second language classrooms. This process can also help teachers and students improve their understanding of each other and the cultural contexts that inform their pragmatic

choices. Issues raised in students' journals may be integrated into classroom lessons to further promote pragmatic and culture learning. As such, this approach has the potential to help students expand their understanding of L2 pragmatic information and develop a level of competency in this area. Facilitating students' exploration of their real-life L2 experiences may help them realize that alternative pragmatic forms and behaviors exist. This realization, in turn, may help learners make accurate pragmatic choices and feel more confident that what they say truly conveys what they intend. As a teacher, I could wish for no better outcome for my students.

APPENDIX A: Pre-Treatment Attitude Survey

Pre-Treatment Attitude Survey

Part A: Please rank your opinion of each question and circle your answer.

1) My opinion of the way Americans greet each other is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

2) My opinion of the way Americans request information is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

3) My opinion of the way Americans interact with authority figures is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

4) My opinion of the way Americans make apologies is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

5) My opinion of the way Americans make complaints is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

6) My opinion of the way Americans give their opinions is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

7) My opinion of the way Americans make eye contact during conversation is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

8) My opinion of the way Americans use personal space during conversation is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

9) My opinion of the way Americans interact with teachers is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

10) My opinion of the way Americans give compliments:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

11) My opinion of the way Americans share personal information is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

12) My opinion of the way Americans ask for personal information is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

13) My opinion of the way Americans speak to members of the opposite sex is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

14) My opinion of the way Americans speak to their parents is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

15) My opinion of American culture is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

Part B: Please answer the following questions:

Gender:

Age:

Length of residence in U.S.:

Number of years you have studied English:

APPENDIX B: Post-Treatment Attitude Survey

Post-Treatment Attitude Survey

Part A: Please rank your opinion of each question and circle your answer.

1) My opinion of the way Americans greet each other is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

2) My opinion of the way Americans request information is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

3) My opinion of the way Americans interact with authority figures is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

4) My opinion of the way Americans make apologies is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

5) My opinion of the way Americans make complaints is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

6) My opinion of the way Americans give their opinions is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

7) My opinion of the way Americans make eye contact during conversation is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

8) My opinion of the way Americans use personal space during conversation is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

9) My opinion of the way Americans interact with teachers is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

10) My opinion of the way Americans give compliments:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

11) My opinion of the way Americans share personal information is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

12) My opinion of the way Americans ask for personal information is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

13) My opinion of the way Americans speak to members of the opposite sex is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

14) My opinion of the way Americans speak to their parents is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

15) My opinion of American culture is:

Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative

Part B: Please answer the following questions:

Gender:

Age:

Length of residence in U.S.:

Number of years you have studied English:

APPENDIX C: In-Class Writing Exercise Scripts

1. An acquaintance asks if you have a boyfriend/girlfriend or husband/wife.
2. A friend asks you questions about your religion.
3. A stranger comments on your appearance.
4. A store clerk is overly friendly. A store clerk is reserved.
5. Someone shares personal information with you.
6. A friend invites you out for coffee or tea, but doesn't pay for your drink.
7. You invite a person to come to your house for dinner, but they arrive late.
8. You arrive for a 1 p.m. appointment at 1:30. The person is upset that you are late. You don't understand why she is upset.
9. You met a person and they ask you many personal questions.
10. Your teacher requires you to give your opinions during class discussions.
11. A friend gives you a compliment.
12. A shop clerk greets you like you are a friend.
13. An acquaintance asks you on a date.
14. Your teacher asks you to call her by her first name.

APPENDIX D: Question-Posing Guide

Participants used the following question-posing strategy proposed by Ilieva (2001, pp. 11-12) to guide their journal entries and class discussions.

1) What did you see? What was happening?
2) How does this relate to your life?
3) How do you react to that? Is this a problem for you?
4) Why do you think you react in this way?
5) Why do you identify this as a problem or not as a problem?
6) How do you plan to deal with situations like that?

APPENDIX E: Sample Journal Entry for Participants

Yesterday, I went to a garage sale. While I was looking at the items for sale, the woman who was having the sale started talking to me. She seemed nice and we talked about some of things she was selling. They belonged to her kids who were in college and no longer living at home.

She asked me if I had children. I told her I didn't and she asked me why not? I was surprised that a stranger would ask me such a personal question. I felt uncomfortable because I didn't want to discuss my reasons for not having children with her. We had just met and I didn't know her! I didn't think it was any of her business to ask me such a question. On the other hand, I also felt like I should answer her question because I didn't want to be rude. I knew that she was expecting me to answer her question. I was really torn about what to do. So I sort of mumbled that I didn't want to be a mom. She looked surprised then asked me why I didn't want to be a mom. I sort of smiled, looked at my watch and said I had to go. Then I walked to my car and left. I was bummed because there were some things I'd wanted to buy, but I was too flustered and uncomfortable to stay.

I don't understand why some people think it's o.k. to ask strangers such personal questions. I don't think it's appropriate. In my family, you would only ask a close friend or relative such a personal question. Sometimes you wouldn't even ask such questions of a friend or relative. Some topics are just too personal. If a stranger wants to share personal information with me, that is his or her decision. But even then, sometimes I don't know how I should respond. In my culture, people are generally pretty private and don't share personal information.

I've thought a lot about what's appropriate and inappropriate to ask strangers in U.S. culture. I now realize that it varies from community to community and person to person. That can make it difficult to know what is acceptable to ask and what isn't. It also makes it hard to know what kind of response is expected of me. From my own perspective, I know I don't want to answer personal questions, but I also do not want to be rude. I've been thinking of ways to handle these situations in the future without offending the person I'm talking to. A possible solution is to politely say, "I'm not comfortable discussing this topic." Next time I'm in a similar situation, I'm going to say this and see what happens. It may be hard for me to do this, but I think I'll be more comfortable doing this than sharing personal details of my life with strangers.

APPENDIX F: Exit Interview Questions

1a. Do you think the journaling activity was useful?
1b. How was it useful? or Why wasn't it useful?

2a. Do you think the class discussions were useful?
2b. How were they useful? or Why weren't they useful?

3a. How do you feel about American culture?
3b. Why do you feel that way?

4a. Did journaling about culture affect your attitude toward English?
4b. How did it affect your attitude? or Why didn't it?

5a. Did journaling about culture affect how you talk to native English speakers?
5b. How did your speech change? or Why didn't your speech change?

6a. Did the classroom discussions affect your attitude toward English?
6b. How did your feelings change? or Why didn't your feelings change?

7a. Did learning about culture affect your attitudes toward American conversational behaviors?
7b. How did it affect your attitude? or Why didn't it affect your attitude?

8a. Will you continue to use your journal?
8b. Why? or Why not?

9. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

APPENDIX G: Abridged Samples from Participants' Journals

Sample 1:

There is no doubt that culture plays a key role in determining how everybody communicates. I want to share one of my social interactions with a native English speaker. I was with a coworker. One day, I went to our work cafeteria to order some food. According to Somali culture, first person to order the food usually takes care of the bill and treats his/her companion as a guest. Respecting my culture, I pulled out my wallet and tried to pay. Unexpectedly, my coworker tried to block me from paying on her behalf. But I insisted and paid the bill. Later on, I told her it's morally required in my community to honor the person who comes to your home or to your table at a restaurant. My coworker reacted with laughter. She told me that nobody just pays your bill unless he/she is your family member or close friend in accordance with American culture. In summary, I feel that the way everybody communicated in English is shaped by his/her culture and customs because if my coworkers were a Somali person, she shouldn't have asked me why I paid the bill.

Being Somali and having cultural preferences, I may not be able to fully understand native English speakers because my actions, intentions and values are dependent on my culture. Even if you are fluent in English, you still have difficulty expressing your thoughts, ideas or concerns freely due to cultural barriers.

Sample 2:

On Sunday, I went to a wedding. I met my Somali friend's nieces who were born here. They started talking to me and asking questions about all kinds of things. I was ashamed [by the questions] and didn't know how to answer them. They were curious about so many things. I felt speechless because I couldn't answer what they wanted to know. It was amazing to me that some parents don't care how their kids act.

I was surprised about all the things they said and how they had forgotten their [Somali] identity. To me, they were kids that didn't have good role models or a good family to tell them what is right and what is wrong. To me, family is responsible for their children's behavior. What you do is who you are. This relates to me because people who don't know anything about their culture and religion will see them and that makes us look bad, to ignore our identity. They were lost between American culture and our culture.

I was shocked, but it wasn't a big problem for me because I am not their parents. So it wasn't my place to change what they did or didn't do. It was just a culture thing. What can you do? I react this way because people have different perspectives. They could do whatever they want. I plan not to worry about this. In all kinds of situations I play it cool. Don't ask people's business and you will get along well. That's what I have learned in this world. Culture is stronger than water and don't mess up people's culture or beliefs.

Sample 3:

In Vietnam, we have high moral standards. For example, if you are young, you don't call an older person by name. We have some words to replace the name. Also, you don't call the teacher by name without the prefix teacher in front of the name. This means younger people have to respect elders.

On my first day at community college, I asked my professor a question. I called him "Teacher" without a name. My classmates looked at me after that. I became embarrassed. After that, I thought that I should call him "Professor" because I was in college. On the second day, I called him "Professor" to ask another question. I got a look from almost everyone in class. I was really confused. I thought my professor knew my feelings. He came to me and told me, "Let's call me by my name next time."

I know that calling elders by name is normal in America. But for me, a person who grew up in a traditional country like Vietnam, it is difficult to call an elder by name. I asked a classmate how I could address my professor if I didn't want to use his name. She told me I should add the prefix Mr. or Ms. in front of the name. These words I had studied, but I didn't know that they could be used in the classroom, too. Now, I can call my professor by name plus the prefix. I don't feel shy anymore.

APPENDIX H: Abridged Samples of Class Discussion Transcripts

Sample 1: Discussion about L1/L2 culture clashes

Participant 1: In China, if someone offers you something and you really don't like it, you say, "Oh, I like it." But you don't want to reject them directly. For example, if you don't like to play basketball with him, you can say, "I'd like to," but you don't really want to reject them. I think people here are more direct. If I don't like, I just don't like. I will tell you the truth. I don't want you to feel bad, but I'm telling you the truth. I think that's part of the cultural difference.

Researcher: So in Chinese culture, in general, people are... Maybe they don't want to hurt someone's feelings, so they make an excuse?

Participant 1: Yea. A liar.

Researcher: Not a liar, but trying to be nice. Trying to spare something's feelings. What do you all think? Do you think in the U.S. people are more direct?

Participant 5: More direct.

Participant 3: Yea, but for example in my country with all Ecuadorians when you ask for a favor from your friend or family and they want to say no, but they don't tell you, "No, I can't." They say, "Oh, let me see." And they try to go there another way and you catch the idea. But here, when you ask somebody for a favor, they tell you, "No, I can't do it" or "No, I can't go. Thank you. Sorry about that." Yea. Here they are more direct. And they don't care how you react. If you hurt feelings or something. The people here just tell you and that's it. In my country, it's not normal. Yea. It's not common.

Sample 2: Conversation about culturally and religiously based behaviors

Participant 4: I have a question. In Somalia, why you have to cover your head?

Participant 5: It's the religion.

Participant 4: Religion?

Participants 5 & 6: Yea.

Participant 4: Not culture?

Participant 5: No.

Participant 4: Somali people cannot not cover?

Participant 6: That is disobeying. Some people disobey. They don't cover their hair. They are disobedient people. They don't follow their religion. Some people are like that. The people who are obeying their religion are respecting it.

Participant 4: What's the reason you cover your hair?

Participant 5: It is a command of Allah. You can't say anything. You have to accept if Allah says something.

Participant 3: It's an option to follow the religion or it's not?

Participant 5: It's not an option. Wearing a hijab is not an option. It's a modesty.

APPENDIX I: Sample of Exit Interview Data

Exit Interview Data	
1a. Do you think the journaling activity was useful? 1b. How was it useful? or Why wasn't it useful?	
P1	Yeah, I think it useful... in everyday life I talk to native speakers all the time, but I think journal keeping is a way to summarize what you talked with others. For example, when I went to basketball court and made some new friends or talked to my professors or even strangers, so for me if I didn't keep those journals I may have forgot what I did and by taking the journals I not only summarized my point, I also tried to compare the difference between Chinese culture and American cultures. What was going on? Like the basic culture clash or similarities. So I think this is really helpful for that reason.
P2	Absolutely. I say that it was a great way of expressing yourself through writing. It showed me that I could think in depth while I'm writing, journaling. And then doing that way it's like you are putting your ideas in a nice way other than talking and saying your experience. I say it was a wonderful thing to do.
P3	Yeah. It was. it was very useful to me because I have improved my writing skills. I have take some times to review your notes and even if I didn't rectify my writings that I wrote for you just the action of checking have helped me a lot. You know what? Now I am taking fundamentals of writing so I am excited because the writings skills for me is tough to try to put all that I have in mind on the paper with correct words, conjunctions, prepositions. And everything it's tough and I'm still working on that and being here with you and other people from another countries and your advices helped me a lot. I would like to participate in the future in another journal session like this one.
P4	Yeah, it helpful because I have a problem in my writing class. The teacher don't .. she just show me where I wrong. She doesn't like correct for me. So in this class you help me like correct when I wrong. I very like it.
P5	It was. I learned different cultures, like different background like some of the folks are different countries and I didn't have a clue. It was nice and I got to meet you. I got to express how I feel about culture and people makin' mistake about mixin' up culture and religion. And how some people our culture is very important for them. It's like number one key and how us like Somali, Somali Muslim people culture is not number one to us. It's like religion, beliefs is number one. So I learn a lot of things and I had a good time.

P6	Yes. Because we had an opportunity to interact with each other and to come together with different students to practice our speaking for English, that makes us like self confidence it makes easy. Sometimes when we are at other places we little bit, we don't have self confidence. You know self confidence. This class we get opportunity to practice our talking and speak. Shut the door everybody speak. Don't worry. When we come to this class all the students have my, has same problems. So I say okay, nobody's perfect, we all like second language we are all like learning our language so we practice a little bit and it helps us, it helps us.

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