Introduction

Teachers of English to adult immigrants in New Zealand face many challenges associated with teaching a variety of English that is spoken in a small, relatively isolated country. One challenge is the lack of suitable material to teach the linguistic and pragmatic characteristics of New Zealand English. Local models are important for teaching the various conversational and transactional genres, the norms of which differ in various parts of the English-speaking world. Textbooks produced for international students and immigrants to the neighbouring country, Australia, are not ideal for teaching New Zealand immigrants. Models in local materials tend to be out of date and far from authentic (de Silva Joyce and Slade 2000). Therefore, it is important for teachers in New Zealand to find models that contain the language features and cultural norms of the local context.

Numerous authors have outlined the problems that arise from using contrived scripted dialogues (Carter and McCarthy 1995; Burns and Joyce 1997; Butterworth 2000; de Silva Joyce and Slade 2000; Gilmore 2004; Brown 2005). Scripted dialogues tend to be based on the grammar of written language, omitting or distorting many of the important features of real-life oral interactions and natural spoken language (Eggins and Slade 1997; Burns 2001). Some authors advocate the use of authentic data in the classroom as models for specific purposes or particular genres (Basturkmen 2001; Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor 2003; Newton 2004; Brown 2005; Malthus, Holmes and Major 2005; Riddiford and Joe 2005).

Approaches to teaching spoken language

Butterworth (2000) outlines a different approach to the development of listening materials that was developed in the New South Wales Adult Migrant English Service, a publisher of language and literacy resources. This approach uses whole text models based on recorded semi-scripted texts. The production of such semi-scripted texts involves the following steps:

1. recording authentic spoken language in context and analysing the discourse
2. establishing a context-based scenario and developing a broad outline of the desired interaction
3. allowing actors to hear the authentic discourse
4. rehearsing the interaction to ensure all desired features are included
5. recording the interaction.

The spontaneous nature of the resulting interactions provides models that are authentic enough to contain features of naturally occurring

ABSTRACT

The role of naturalistic recorded samples as models in English-language teaching has been debated in recent literature. Various compromises have been suggested between authentic data, collected in natural settings, and the scripted dialogues found in many textbooks. Although there is now agreement that the explicit teaching of pragmatics is desirable and effective, there has been little research into teaching pragmatic norms. The action research study outlined in this article explored the use of naturalistic semi-scripted models to teach the pragmatics of negotiation in a New Zealand tertiary institution. It sought to discover to what extent semi-scripted naturalistic models are useful and which classroom activities are most effective in teaching this feature of spoken language. The findings suggest that, for the majority of the students in this context, naturalistic semi-scripted models are effective learning tools that help the students to reflect on differences and similarities in pragmatic norms between the target language and their first languages.
speech, yet the situations are controlled enough to be relevant for classroom use (see Delaruelle 2001; Brawn 2002).

Suitable, relevant and ethically collected authentic samples for the situations relevant to my learners are not available and I do not have the resources or the time to collect these samples. Consequently I have used a similar semi-scripting approach to create New Zealand models for my classroom. These models are created by recording native-speaker role plays to ensure the most authentic language possible. By developing my own dialogues, I can ensure that they are relevant to the situations the learners face outside the classroom. McCarthy and Carter (2001) argue that teachers should continually consider teachability, learnability and relevance to the learner when making decisions for the classroom. These considerations reinforced my decision to use teacher-made models rather than authentic recordings from real life.

In the literature there has been broad discussion of the types of classroom activities suitable for teaching spoken genres (Burns, Joyce and Gollin 1996; Barraja-Rohan 1997; Liddicoat 1997; Carter, Hughes and McCarthy 1998; McCarthy 1998; Alcon and Tricker 2000; de Silva Joyce and Slade 2000; Burns 2001; Liddicoat and Crozet 2001; Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor 2003; Yates 2003, 2004; Brown 2005; Malthus, Holmes and Major 2005; Riddiford and Joe 2005; Huth and Taleghani-Nikazm 2006). Different approaches to engaging students with spoken language have been suggested, including the following:

- Students analyse the spoken models and, with guided consciousness-raising activities, notice relevant features and discuss them.
- Students are encouraged to collect samples and analyse the data themselves (Eslami-Rasekh 2005).
- Students engage in experiential activities such as role play (Burns, Joyce and Gollin 1996; Basturkmen 2001; Newton 2004; Brown 2005; Holmes 2005; Riddiford and Joe 2005).
- Students record and critique their own role-played output (House 1996; Barraja-Rohan 2003; Brown 2005).

**Researching the teaching of pragmatics**

In recent years there has been an interest in determining whether and how pragmatics can be taught in the classroom. Pragmatics has been defined by Lo Castro (2003: 15) as ‘the study of speaker and hearer meaning created in their joint actions that include both linguistic and non-linguistic signals in the context of socioculturally organised activities’. The study of pragmatics includes sociopragmatics (the cultural understanding implicit in the exchange) and pragmalinguistics (the way these understandings are realised in language). It is vital for immigrants, who need to use the language they are learning in day-to-day interactions, to master the ‘secret rules of language’ (Yates 2004: 3). A consensus has emerged that pragmatics can and should be taught and that explicit instruction and consciousness-raising is necessary to ensure that learners become aware of the differences between cultural practices and expectations in their first culture and those of the target language culture (Kasper and Rose 2002; Kasper and Roever 2004; Rose 2005).

Kasper and Roever (2004) note that data on the explicit teaching of pragmatics in the classroom are sparse and inconsistent. Many authors advocate cross-cultural discussion in the classroom to identify differences between the cultural and pragmatic norms of student first languages and the target language, while using authentic or semi-authentic texts as models (eg Barraja-Rohan 1997; Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor 2003; Yates 2004; Riddiford and Joe 2005).

My teaching routine prior to 2006 included students listening to models, completing comprehension and language analysis questions, and practising the noticed language through a series of paired role play activities. Assessment was also conducted through a paired role play. As I worked with the models, I became interested in their cultural underpinnings and started to develop models to support the teaching of pragmatics. In 2006 I began to create new models for an intermediate further-study stream using more authentic actors. For example, I recorded a Communication Studies lecturer and a student role-playing an unrehearsed course interview. I added new questions to the existing worksheets to help students notice pragmatic features in the recordings. I also added a series of discussion questions focusing on cross-cultural comparisons.
These were to be used after initial listening and practice, when students could be expected to be familiar with the concepts. Finally, I developed some materials (see Figure 1) to help students predict context and language features prior to listening to negotiation texts.

I started to encourage students to use these negotiation skills outside the classroom and to report back to the class. I also decided to undertake another series of action research studies to see...
whether the models, together with some of the new activities, could be used to teach pragmatics to this group of students. The pragmatic skills were chosen from those identified in the models and included appropriate openers, appropriate introduction of the topic for negotiation, polite and appropriate negotiation, appropriate negotiating strategies and appropriate closing.

This article reports on an action research cycle started in 2007. This research focused on the teaching of cultural and pragmatic norms of negotiation in New Zealand English. The variety of language modelled was middle-class New Zealand English spoken by Pakeha (non-Maori) people, since I believe that this is currently the variety used by most gate-keepers in the society. The two aims were to enhance the pragmatic skills of the learners and to clarify key similarities and differences between the first languages and cultures of the students and New Zealand language and culture. The focus was on the cultural norms for negotiating and how these norms are realised in language.

The students were enrolled in a tertiary-level general English program for immigrants and refugees at the second-highest level of a five-level program. The curriculum, which was competency based, covered conversation and negotiation in a community setting, listening to conversation and extended information texts, reading newspaper articles and brochures, writing opinion letters and accident reports, and learning strategies. Teaching methodology was eclectic and materials included teacher-made worksheets and adapted extracts from published materials, the majority published in Australia and New Zealand. The negotiation skills component of the course was taught for approximately three to five hours per week over five weeks of a fifteen-week semester. Table 1 provides a profile of the group.

Students in the general English program for immigrants and refugees are generally streamed according to their overall proficiency, but they are typically placed according to their weakest skill if there is a pronounced mismatch between their spoken language skills and literacy skills. Because of this practice, there was a wide range of spoken language skills in the class. The length of time they had spent in New Zealand meant that they had had some exposure to the local culture, but exposure to English outside the classroom and in their countries of origin varied.

The teaching of the pragmatics of negotiation was based on teacher-made, semi-scripted models of negotiation with four gate-keepers: a librarian, a teacher, an employer and a landlord. One further model was taken from a published text (Delaruelle 2001). In the teaching sequence the students were asked to:

- discuss the context, including, where relevant, the power relations in the situation
- recall any previous experiences in similar situations (see Figure 1)
- listen to the model and answer comprehension questions
- complete written consciousness-raising exercises, working from the tape and the transcript to find the relevant pragmatic and linguistic features

<table>
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<th>Table 1: Research group profile</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of students</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Countries of origin</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Educational background</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Length of time in New Zealand</strong></td>
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• discuss cross-cultural features and differences between the pragmatic norms of their first cultures and the target culture
• read summaries of the language of negotiation, based on the models
• practise from these models
• complete one written worksheet to practise indirect request forms
• attempt to negotiate with a native speaker outside the classroom before a final role play practice.

The action research

Teacher action research is based on notions of reflective practice and has a long history as a professional development tool (Zeichner 2001; Burns 2004). In New Zealand it has been used for professional development in the tertiary, secondary and primary education sectors (Denny 2005, 2006; Kitchen and Jeurissen 2006). In three cycles of action research undertaken from 2002 to 2005 (Denny, in press), I explored the teaching of casual conversation genres and the negotiation of agreement with gate-keepers through teacher-made, semi-scripted language models. These models were originally designed to teach the language of conversation and negotiation and later to teach pragmatics. The research was conducted in my own tertiary-level classrooms with three groups of intermediate-level adult immigrants to New Zealand. The research involved cycles of data collection, reflection and action.

In order to improve and test the new directions in my teaching, I posed two questions:

1. Can the pragmatic and pragmalinguistic norms of negotiation in New Zealand English be taught to intermediate-level adult immigrants using semi-scripted role-played dialogues?
2. Which classroom activities contribute most to the acquisition of pragmatic and pragmalinguistic norms of negotiation for this group of adult immigrants?

The data used in this investigation were collected through:
• teacher pre-tuition and post-tuition assessments of student role plays
• student pre-tuition and post-tuition self-assessments
• a pre-tuition and post-tuition survey to determine student perceptions of the differences and similarities between their first cultures and the target culture in the pragmatics of negotiation
• a student post-tuition survey to determine which activities students saw as contributing to a better understanding of local norms (see Figure 2)
• a teacher reflective journal kept during planning, teaching and gathering, and initial analysis of the data
• follow-up questionnaires given to a few students to clarify their responses to the surveys.

Given that I knew my students well, I endeavoured to make the self-assessment questionnaires and surveys as anonymous as possible. A colleague allocated numbers to the students and these were used to identify them in the self-assessments and surveys. This colleague also obtained consent from those who opted to take part in the study and issued the follow-up questionnaires.

Results

The self-assessment and teacher-assessment data for the consenting students were collated and the raw results compared to see if there was an overall improvement in post-tuition self-assessment ratings and post-test scores. The changes in individual ratings were also examined by comparing pre-test and post-test ratings for each student.

The results of the survey were collated to gauge student perception of the activities that helped and most helped any change (see Figure 2). Conclusions were drawn from this as to whether the teacher-made negotiating models helped in this change and which activities contributed to improvement. The responses to the questions about awareness of New Zealand English sociocultural norms and areas of mismatch with first language and culture were collated, together with follow-up questionnaires. The latter were completed by a few students to clarify ambiguous responses so that they could be included in the data. Observations were then made about student awareness of cultural differences before and after tuition.

The teacher journal was coded thematically and used to elucidate the findings of the other data. In particular, the analysis of journal entries was used...
to identify and determine the relative frequency of activities used in the classroom. This helped me consider whether frequency of use in the classroom could have been a factor in student perceptions of the usefulness of different activities.

Figure 3 represents the number of individuals who improved in each skill in the teacher and student post-tuition data. This shows improvement in all skills for the majority of students except for Negotiate successfully (No 4) in the student data and Finishing the conversation politely and appropriately (No 5) in the teacher data. In No 5 most students were judged competent pre-tuition by the teacher.

A comparison between the teacher assessment and student self-assessment data of competency is shown in Figure 4. The results show that changes in student competency post-tuition, as assessed by teacher and students, were all positive (ie showed improvement).

I needed to find out which classroom activities contributed to this improvement. The students were surveyed anonymously and asked to indicate which classroom-based and out-of-class activities had helped them to improve. From the same list of activities, they were also asked to select two activities that they considered had most helped their improvement (see Figure 2).

The resulting data is represented in Figure 5. Activities included listening to tapes and answering comprehension questions, questions on linguistic and pragmatic features in the models, studying transcripts of the models, and practice role plays. Students also learned from worksheets that summarised the pragmatic language found in the models (for example, a list of discourse markers, pragmatically appropriate conversational openers and indirect request forms). Information about the language in the models was given orally by the teacher, as well as feedback on role-played practice activities. Other activities that could enhance learning included cross-cultural discussion and listening and speaking outside the classroom.

Of these activities, practice role plays, information from worksheets, studying transcripts, listening to tapes, and feedback and spoken information from
Figure 3: Negotiating in English – teacher and student data – number of individuals improved

Figure 4: Negotiating in English pre-/post-student achievement in teacher and student data

Figure 5: Student survey – activities that helped and most helped in improvement
the teacher were each identified by more than 85 per cent of students as helpful, a higher percentage than for the other activities. Furthermore, at least a third of the students ranked either worksheets, studying transcripts, listening to tapes and spoken information from the teacher as one of two most helpful activities in effecting improvement. These four activities were based, either directly or indirectly, on an analysis of the models. Fewer students ranked practice, feedback or discussion in the most helpful category. More than half of the students indicated that they learned from listening and talking outside the classroom, but few ranked these as most-helpful activities.

Data from the reflective journal was collated to identify which activities had been most often used in class and might therefore be seen by students as more useful. Although role play practice and discussion, often used in the classroom, were frequently ranked as helpful, they did not figure as prominently in the most-helpful rankings, whereas listening to tapes, which, according to the journal data, did not occur as frequently, was rated by a relatively large number of students as both helpful and most helpful. Thus the frequency of activities was not the only factor when the students assessed the helpful and most helpful activities.

In the survey appended to the self-assessment, the students were asked to indicate whether they believed they had better post-tuition cultural knowledge. They were also asked about their before and after tuition perceptions of the differences between the New Zealand culture of negotiation and that of their first language and culture. When these results were collated, it was found that all 15 students believed they had better knowledge of this area post-tuition. The data for the perceived differences between the first culture and target culture are interesting. There is a small change and adjustment after tuition in student perception of cultural differences. Some preconceptions of differences, such as the use and meaning of feedback, ways of making suggestions, and ways of starting and finishing conversations were confirmed, and one more student identified introduction of problems as different. However, other areas such as the power of the teacher and the employer were identified as cultural differences by fewer students post-tuition.

Students believed that they had a better grasp of the New Zealand culture of negotiation following tuition but overall there were fewer differences identified between their first and target culture than before tuition.

**Discussion**

The findings from this research suggest considerable improvement after tuition for the majority of students in their understanding of the cultural norms of negotiation in New Zealand English, as demonstrated in the models. A large percentage of the students indicated that the process of improvement was helped by activities, which were directly or indirectly derived from an examination of the semi-scripted role plays. This was found even for activities based on the naturalistic texts that were used less frequently during tuition.

Students consistently felt less confident in having mastered successful negotiation. However, this was not reflected in the teacher assessment data, which assessed student ability against an exit standard defined in the university criteria for the level. Success was less defined for the students, and possibly for them this was a more ambitious gain to claim. Successful negotiation of agreement requires more than linguistic and cultural resources, and the students may have been assessing their performance in less-predictable situations outside the classroom. One should hesitate, therefore, to conclude that they could now negotiate successfully in any situation. It is probably safe, however, to conclude that at least at the time of the post-test, they had sufficient cultural knowledge and language skills to negotiate appropriately in a reasonably predictable situation of the type practised in the classroom, and that their knowledge had increased.

The skills showing most improvement in the student and teacher data were politeness in negotiation, getting attention, introducing the topic politely and, to a lesser extent, finishing politely. It is likely for these skills that learning formulaic language can quickly improve student language to an acceptable, or close to acceptable, level of cultural appropriateness, and the use of appropriate formulaic chunks drawn from the models was emphasised in the teaching. This was achieved by noticing the chunks in the models, reminding students of this language in the practice role plays and listing them in summary worksheets. The student self-assessment data show that they felt less confident about negotiating, but in this there
is more discrimination required in the choice of language and strategy. As House (1996) observed, there is also a greater need during negotiation to listen to and process the responses of the interlocutor during an exchange where responding behaviour, which is so important to negotiation, is concerned. The achievement of successful negotiation, therefore, imposes a greater processing and strategic demand on speakers, thus possibly requiring more confidence, exposure and practice. In addition, the skills that were the weakest in the teacher post-test data (ie introducing the topic and negotiating politely and appropriately) require the use of more complex language and also more facility in processing what the other speaker says to gain complete mastery. As a result these skills were not as easy to achieve at the exit level as were more formulaic moves such as getting attention or closing appropriately.

There were two significant observations arising from the student survey on pre-tuition and post-tuition perceived cultural differences. First, there were relatively few cultural differences identified in the pre-tuition and post-tuition data. This was surprising, since the first cultures of some students in the class are commonly believed to be very different from that of New Zealand Pakeha. Two possible explanations for the greater than expected similarities are found in the following journal entries.

7 May journal entry (week 4 of tuition):
Class concluded that economic situations and individual differences were more important in the relative power distance than culture in this [employer–worker negotiation] situation.

This was a possibility I had not considered prior to tuition.

14 May journal entry (week 5 of tuition):
Then we had a discussion about the cultural similarities and differences between NZ and the countries of origin in a negotiation between teachers and students and teachers and parents. It seems that there are increasingly fewer differences between cultures in this respect as some of the cultures [South Korea was explicitly discussed but this was not recorded in the journal] are more influenced by the west.

The second observation related to few post-tuition changes in perception of cultural difference. The student survey data was anonymous, so it was not possible to determine whether length of stay in New Zealand was a factor in prior knowledge. Where there were changes, they mostly involved a perception of less difference post-tuition than pre-tuition. The reasons for this are also matters for speculation. These students might have had limited knowledge and experience of negotiation in New Zealand English before tuition and may have assumed differences in cultural expectations in negotiation similar to the ones they had encountered in other situations.

A few caveats need to be considered when assessing the results. Most importantly, the purpose of this action research was to examine my own classroom practice, so the data was collected and analysed by myself. The student responses might therefore have been influenced by their relationship with me and the data analysis could also have been influenced by my preconceptions. However, these effects were minimised by four design features of the investigation:

1 Students were invited to be part of the research by another teacher.

2 Codes, allocated by another teacher, were used rather than names to ensure the greatest possible anonymity. It is acknowledged, however, that the 15 participants were well known to me and so I may have been able to identify the source of some of the responses.

3 Post-test scoring for the research was done from an analysis of the recorded data after results for the unit had been decided and returned to the students.

4 Criteria for the ratings were developed and recorded in writing before the analysis of pre-test and a post-test data, and representative samples of three pre-test and three post-test teacher ratings were moderated by a colleague, using the criteria.

The fact that similar key conclusions can be drawn from the teacher and student data also serves to reinforce the findings. However, given the varied oral proficiency and background of the students, the findings can only be seen as tentative and limited to the context of this investigation.

Conclusion
One could conclude that basing the teaching of the culture and pragmatics of negotiation in New Zealand English.
Zealand English on semi-scripted native speaker role plays helped the majority of the students in the research group to improve their pragmatic skills. One could also conclude that relatively quick gains can be made by raising consciousness of the formulaic language found in such models. However, these conclusions are not universally generalisable, since random selection of the students and a control group were not part of the research design. The group of participants was small and too varied to allow for valid measures of statistical significance but it is indicative of results that may be expected for a similar group. The results of this small-scale, classroom-based action research have encouraged me to continue using semi-scripted models when teaching spoken genres to adult immigrants, especially where knowledge of culture and pragmatics is significant for successful communication.

Research using a larger, more homogeneous sample would produce more generalisable results. Further investigation needs to be done to determine whether this methodology might also be successful for teaching the culture and pragmatics of less-structured and predictable genres such as those found in casual conversation. I plan to investigate this in a second cycle of action research to be undertaken in 2008. I also plan, as part of the next cycle, to investigate whether there is a disparity between student knowledge of cultural norms and their ability to use them in performance. It is likely, and indeed is suggested by some of the data in the reflective journal, that some of the students were not able to demonstrate their cultural and pragmatic knowledge because of online processing overload or because of cultural barriers. Those who had difficulty with listening and whose English was at a lower level of proficiency appeared to find it difficult to process what was being said while framing a response. The older Korean students told me that it was very hard culturally for them to negotiate with a teacher. In addition, it would be interesting to research the use of semi-scripted, teacher-made models with students in different age groups, proficiency levels and contexts. Another interesting area of research could be the reasons for perceived cultural differences and the changes in perception of these differences over time.

This study played a significant part in my development as a teacher and provided data to suggest that using semi-scripted models is worth pursuing. Recording and transcribing models is time-consuming, but worksheets can be developed, trialled and refined over time. The response from students to the models was overwhelmingly positive, since they recognised the situations and the types of speakers from their experiences of the local context. This inevitably proved highly motivating for students and rewarding for me as their teacher.

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