Communication Sciences and Disorders Faculty Articles and Research

Communication Sciences and Disorders

1-1996

Adolescent Pragmatic Skills: A Comparison Of Latino Students In English As a Second Language and Speech and Language Programs

Alejandro Brice
Mankato State University

Judith Montgomery
Chapman University, montgome@chapman.edu

Adolescent Pragmatic Skills: A Comparison Of Latino Students In English As a Second Language and Speech and Language Programs

Comments

Copyright

Adolescent Pragmatic Skills:
A Comparison of Latino Students in
English as a Second Language and
Speech and Language Programs

Alejandro Brice
Mankato State University, Mankato, MN

Judy Montgomery
Chapman University, Orange, CA

P ragmatics of culturally and linguistically diverse students is the focus of this study. Pragmatics is defined as the ability to use language in specific contexts and for specific purposes. According to Prutting and Kirchner (1987), pragmatics is concerned with the relationship between linguistic knowledge and the principles governing language use. Pragmatics must, therefore, account for two divergent aspects of communication competence: those aligned with structure and those that operate apart from the structural properties of utterances (p. 105).

ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study was to compare the pragmatic performance of students from two adolescent groups—students receiving English as a second language (ESL) instruction versus bilingual students receiving speech-language (BSL) therapy. A pragmatics screening scale (i.e., the Adolescent Pragmatics Screening Scale, Brice, 1992a) was used to measure pragmatic performance. The findings of this study indicated that the BSL students differed from the ESL students in expressing themselves, establishing greetings, initiating and maintaining conversations, listening to a speaker, and cueing the listener regarding topic changes. Both groups of students had difficulties regulating others through language. Thus, even language-intact students may have some difficulty acquiring the Euro-American pragmatic feature of language. Academic failure and possible school dropout may result for the BSL students as a result of their difficulties. Implications of this study for the speech-language pathologist and other school professionals are given.

KEY WORDS: pragmatics, adolescents, Latino students, English as a second language program, speech and language program

Students with language disorders may be expected to display pragmatic problems. In order to assess language functioning in the school environment, speech-language pathologists, English as a second language (ESL) teachers, and regular education teachers all need to be aware of their students' pragmatic functioning.

Classroom language demands increase when students enter the middle school environment (Brice-Heath, 1986; Larson & McKinley, 1987; Simon, 1985). The ability to use language appropriately becomes increasingly complex for adolescent students with language disorders. Students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) (students who do not speak English as their first language) are often quickly enrolled full time into regular education classrooms following transitional ESL instruction. Teachers and administrators with regular education backgrounds may expect these transitional students from CLD backgrounds to perform well in all aspects of language, including pragmatics (Cummins, 1984). However, the period of ESL instruction may not be sufficient for students with CLD backgrounds to acquire all the necessary language skills (Collier, 1987; Cummins).

Ellis (1992) studied the illocutionary act of requests in an ESL classroom with two English language learners. His study revealed that the students developed only a limited ability to vary their choice of request strategies in accordance with classroom demands and contextual factors. Ellis concluded that,

> ...even with more time the classroom environment is insufficient to guarantee the development of full target language norms, possibly because the kind of "communicative need" that learners experienced was insufficient to ensure development of the full range of request types and strategies. (p. 20)

Fraser, Rintell, and Walters (1980) found that between Spanish speakers (i.e., nonnative speakers of English) and

native speakers of English, the Spanish speakers showed more deference to other speakers and that this deference increased with the other person's age. In addition, more deference was shown to speakers of the opposite sex. Thus, with some Spanish speakers, it is customary to show increased deference to adults of increasing age.

Takahashi and Beebe (cited in Kasper & Dahl, 1991) examined how speech act corrections were performed by Japanese nonnative speakers of English and native speakers of Japanese and English. The factors analyzed in this study included the use of formulae to reduce the "face-threatening" impact of speech corrections (such as positive remarks, softeners, and expressions of regret) and style shifting according to interlocutor status. They found that lower status speakers opted out more, using softer formulae, but avoided generating positive remarks. Thus, the use of regulatory language and expressing oneself for speech corrections varied according to the addressee's status.

Wolfson (1989) found in a study of nonnative English speakers from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds that speakers exhibited difficulties in choosing appropriate responses (i.e., initiating and maintaining conversations). The nonnative English speakers failed to appreciate the function of compliments as social lubricants in Euro-American culture, especially as a means to initiate conversations. In an earlier study, Brice (1992a) indicated that Spanish speaking students enrolled in ESL classes displayed difficulties in making requests of others and in listening to a speaker. These difficulties may pose problems and place them at risk for failure in cooperative learning situations in the classroom. It was noted by Rice, Sell, and Hadley (1991) that ESL preschool children initiated fewer interactions than normally developing children or children with speech disabilities. Thus, normally developing ESL children experience pragmatic difficulties that may be associated with learning a second language. Brice and Montgomery (1993) indicated that bilingual students receiving speech-language therapy also experienced pragmatic difficulties in the secondary school environment but of a more severe nature than monolingual students receiving speech-language therapy.

Speech-language pathologists and other educational professionals may misinterpret and perceive culturally different behaviors as being indicative of language disorders. This possible misunderstanding of pragmatic norms of culturally and linguistically diverse students may result in the inappropriate referral for special education and/or speech-language evaluation. Thus, the ability to use language appropriately becomes an issue for adolescent CLD students. The school-based speech-language pathologist is often the leader of a collaborative assessment team designed to measure a child's functional language from several viewpoints. This collaborative approach can ensure that CLD students receive integrated educational and clinical services from a team of professionals, including the ESL teacher, the general educator, and the specialist (Montgomery, 1994).

All students need to be placed in the most appropriate academic setting necessary to meet their unique academic needs. Consequently, school personnel are faced with the task of meeting the appropriate educational needs of students with language disorders as well as students from CLD backgrounds and differentiating between these two groups. One method of achieving this goal is to compare different student groups on measures of pragmatics (Brice, 1992a; Damico, Oller, & Storey, 1983). The purpose of this article was to determine if the pragmatics skills of CLD adolescents differed according to whether they received ESL services or speech-language services. Thus, two separate groups were studied—students receiving only English as a second language instruction versus bilingual students receiving speech-language therapy. Both groups of students experienced difficulty in school-based pragmatic behaviors (Brice, 1992a; Brice & Montgomery, 1993). The hypothesis of this study was that these groups would differ significantly in their pragmatics performance. It was expected that the bilingual students receiving speech-language therapy would perform poorer. It was felt that the normative information provided by this study would help differentiate normal second language acquisition difficulties from difficulties associated with a language disorder.

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to compare pragmatics performance across two student groups using an adolescent screening scale such as the Adolescent Pragmatics Screening Scale (APSS, Brice, 1992a) (refer to the Appendix). The scale is used to differentiate students who have difficulty in this area of language versus those who do not. This comparison yielded information concerning how Latino bilingual students enrolled in one of two programs differed on pragmatic skills. The groups consisted of students in an English as a second language program and not receiving therapy (ESL comparison/control group) and students in therapy for speech-language disorders (BSL experimental group). Data were obtained in public schools in north-central Florida and southern California.

Raters

ESL teachers and speech-language pathologists were trained by the authors to gather the student data. All raters were thus trained by certified speech-language pathologists. All participants were trained using exemplars and non-exemplars from the APSS during a training session. Each participant independently rated from five to 25 students from his or her class or therapy group. Student ratings occurred after 2 weeks of teacher or speech-language pathologist indirect observation in their classroom, therapy room, lunch room, or hallway. All teachers and speech-language pathologists were familiar with the students' behaviors. Brice and Montgomery (1993) found that ratings by trained speech-language pathologists and teachers did not significantly differ ($p > 0.05$) when rating the same students across different environments (i.e., classroom vs. therapy group vs. other school setting). Teachers and speech-language pathologists predominantly observed their

students from interactions in the classrooms, therapy rooms, the lunch room, or the hallways. Ratings occurred at a later time after the observations.

Participants

Two groups of students were selected to participate in this study (n = 40). The groups consisted of Latino bilingual students, Grades five through eight, enrolled in either an English as a second language program (ESL comparison/control group, n = 25) or in therapy for speech-language disorders (BSL experimental group, n = 15). The authors are aware of the variation in size between the two groups and recognize this as a feature that needs to be addressed through further studies using the APSS. For the purpose of this study, the authors defined bilingual as any degree of proficiency in English or Spanish.

The students enrolled in ESL consisted of 25 Latino students, ages 11:0–14:0 (years:months), enrolled solely for ESL classes and not seen for speech-language services. They consisted of 11 Puerto Rican students, eight Central American (Mexican, Nicaraguan, and Panamanian) students, six Columbian students, and one Dominican Republican student. The students enrolled in ESL had been enrolled in U.S. schools and living in the United States from 1–2 years. All the students enrolled in ESL spoke Spanish as their first language. Entry criteria for this program consisted of a district-made criterion-referenced test (measuring English speaking, listening, reading, and writing proficiencies), a standardized test, a home language survey, an ESL teacher interview, and a parent interview.

States and school districts vary in their eligibility criteria for providing ESL services to students. Fradd and Tikunoff (1987) stated that the lack of an established English language proficiency definition makes federal, state, and district guidelines for bilingual programs difficult to ascertain nationwide. Entry criteria for both Florida and California generally include a home language survey, a standardized test, and a language proficiency test (Florida Department of Education, 1987; Rossell & Baker, 1988). Teacher judgment may or may not be used according to the specific district. However, both Florida and California must follow the same mandated public laws ensuring equal access for culturally and linguistically diverse children. (Public Law 89-11 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 1965; Public Law 89-750, Elementary and Secondary Education Act Amendments of 1966, Title VI, 1966; Public Law 90-247, Elementary and Secondary Education Act Amendment of 1968, The Bilingual Education Act, Title VII; Public Law 95-561, Elementary and Secondary Education Act Amendment of 1978; Public Law 98-511, Elementary and Secondary Education Act Amendment of 1984, Amendments to the Bilingual Education Act, Title VII) (Kretschmer, 1991). In addition, there have been numerous court cases affecting how bilingual education services are provided (Brown vs. the Board of Education, 1954; Lau vs. Nichols, 1974; Serna vs. Portales Municipal Schools, 1974; Aspira of New York, Inc. vs. the Board of Education of the City of New York, 1974; Keyes vs. the School District Number One, Denver, Colorado, 1976; Rios vs. Reed, 1978) (Kretschmer, 1991).

Florida and California also offer teacher certification in bilingual education and ESL education, and both receive Title VII funding from the government, indicating similarity in how services are provided to ESL students (Fradd & Tikunoff, 1987). Thus, it appears from the entry criteria, public laws, court cases, and Title VII governmental assistance that decisions made across the different school districts may be similar and that students enrolled in ESL programs in Florida and California would qualify equally in both states.

The bilingual students enrolled in speech and language therapy consisted of 15 Latino students (ages 11:0–14:0, all of Mexican background). Fourteen of the 15 bilingual students enrolled in the speech and language program spoke Spanish as their first language. The fifteenth student spoke English as the first language and Spanish as the second. The bilingual students enrolled in speech and language were identified according to the speech-language services criteria used in their school district. They had been enrolled in U.S. schools and living in the United States from 5–9 years and were not receiving ESL instruction. They were enrolled only for speech and language therapy.

Entry criteria for this program consisted of adhering to the California state criteria for language disorders. Students must score 50% or less compared to national norms on two tests of language development or language acquisition as administered by a speech-language pathologist. Students may also show a significant deficit, based on clinical judgement, on a language sample of 50 utterances. Interpreters are routinely used in all assessments for students who speak English as a second language. Hence, criteria for services of speech-language pathology followed California state guidelines. Florida guidelines also include that students must score significantly less compared on national norms on two tests of language development or language acquisition as administered by a speech-language pathologist. Guidelines in both Florida and California must adhere to federal mandates; thus, decisions for placement would be similar.

SCREENING INSTRUMENT

The Adolescent Pragmatics Screening Scale (APSS) was used to compare Euro-American pragmatics performance of students enrolled in middle school. The APSS provides a measure on six topical subtests, as well as a composite total score. The topics included the following:

1. Affects listener's behavior through language—Does the student effect a response from the listener?

2. Expresses self—Does the student express him/herself appropriately?

3. Establishes appropriate greetings—Does the student greet others appropriately?

4. Initiates and maintains conversation—Does the speaker use language to sustain and maintain the social and linguistic interactions of the group?

5. Listens actively—Does the student take active participation as a listener in a conversation?

6. Cues listener regarding topic shifts—Does the student have the capacity to regulate and monitor the conversation? Does he or she tell the listener verbally or nonverbally that a change in conversation is about to occur?

A sampling of 38 individual behaviors were analyzed through observation by teachers or speech-language pathologists. Behaviors sampled on this scale included classroom (academic language) and interpersonal interactive (oral language) behaviors seen in a school culture. Students were observed over a minimum of 2 weeks before using the scale. At a minimum, the raters observed three occurrences of each behavior. The APSS was used in indirect observation (the attempt to study a person in action and recording of those actions with the use of checklists or rating scales at a later time). In sum, each rater knew the communication patterns of the student he or she was evaluating. Raters for this study were speech-language pathologists and ESL teachers of the students in this study. The speech-language pathologists rated students enrolled for speech and language therapy and the ESL teachers rated their respective students (i.e., students enrolled in ESL classrooms). A discussion of the effectiveness of the ESL teacher ratings will be discussed in the section of rater reliability.

Reliability of the APSS

A classical item analysis model (Crocker & Algina, 1986) involving comparison of the item scores to an internal criterion was used for the 38 APSS items. The internal criterion used consisted of the total score and topic scores of the APSS. An item-to-test correlation was then performed involving comparisons between topic scores and total scores. The reliability index was achieved by calculating a Cronbach's (1949) α coefficient. Coefficients ranged from 0.66 for topic six (cues the listener regarding topic shifts) to 0.91 for topic one (affects listener's behavior through language). (Topic six contains the least number of items [3] and topic one contains the most items [11]). Topics with more items were found to be more reliable indicators of pragmatics performance, with no single behavior possessing more strength than the other items. The total score reliability coefficient was found to be 0.93 (i.e., the correlation between all 38 behaviors and the total score). These results were judged to be sufficiently robust to warrant the retention of all topics for the final form of the APSS. Refer to Table 1 for intercorrelations of topics and total score.

Rater Reliability

Inter-rater reliability was then obtained for purposes of this study. Two separate sites, a north-central Florida site and a southern California site, were used in rating student behaviors. The north-central Florida site achieved inter-rater

Table 1. Intercorrelations of topics and total.

	Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3	Topic 4	Topic 5	Topic 6	Total
Topics							
1	1.00						.91
2	.71	1.00					.83
3	.41	.67	1.00				.72
4	.64	.71	.49	1.00			.82
5	.67	.62	.59	.75	1.00		.86
6	.57	.47	.37	.71	.73	1.00	.67

agreement of 1.00 on a 5-point scale (using ESL teachers). The southern California site achieved inter-rater agreement of 0.89 on a 5-point scale (using speech-language pathologists). Use of a second rater for each site (i.e., the authors and trained speech-language pathologists) was used for establishing an inter-rater agreement with the speech-language pathologists and teachers. The formula used for obtaining the agreement was as follows:

$$\% \text{ agreement} = \frac{\text{number of agreements}}{\text{number of agreements} + \text{number of disagreements}}$$

Brice and Montgomery (1993) previously found no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between the ratings of ESL teachers and speech-language pathologists when rating the same students (bilingual students with speech and language disorders) and when given prior training on use of the APSS. This is noteworthy because both the ESL teachers and the speech-language pathologists observed the students in different settings. ESL teacher ratings prove to be reliable indicators of pragmatics performance for the observed students and add to the variance of responses obtained. Thus, a more accurate sample of student behaviors can be obtained by using speech-language pathologists in addition to using trained teachers.

VALIDITY OF THE APSS

Validity of the APSS was established through content validity means. Content validity of the APSS was established via four methods: (1) comprehensive review of the literature; (2) face validity of items, or goodness of fit of items to topics; (3) critique by reviewers; and (4) preliminary pilot testing. Criterion-related validity or concurrent validity data for the APSS have not yet been obtained. Further investigations should obtain this information. Thus, at present, the authors acknowledge this limitation. However, the APSS does seem to possess content and face validity and, as an experimental instrument, it is being used to identify problems in pragmatics. For a further review regarding the APSS, refer to Brice (1992b).

Comprehensive Review of the Literature

The identification of pragmatic topics and associated behaviors obtained through a review of the literature was

an initial procedure in establishing content validity of the APSS (Brice-Heath, 1986; Damico, 1985; Damico & Oller, 1980; Damico, Oller, & Storey, 1983; Dore, 1979; Halliday, 1978; Nezer, Nezer, & Siperstein, 1985; Nippold & Fey, 1983; Searle, 1976; Stephens, 1978). Seven initial topics were identified for use on the APSS: (1) affects listener's behavior through language, (2) expresses self, (3) establishes appropriate greetings, (4) initiates and maintains conversation, (5) listens actively, (6) cues listener regarding topic shifts, and (7) contracts with others. The seventh topic, *contracts with others,* was incorporated into *affects listener's behavior through language* because of an overlap of material. These topics were selected on the basis of what appeared to be congruence of categories in the pragmatics literature appropriate for adolescents. The more recent literature provided a basis for the development of 38 individual behaviors that corresponded to these topics (Brice-Heath, 1986; Damico, 1985; Damico & Oller, 1980; Damico, Oller, & Storey, 1983; Nezer, Nezer, & Siperstein, 1985; Nippold & Fey, 1983; Stephens, 1978). The topics and behaviors were arranged according to a best fit classification and verified by an item-to-topic matching procedure discussed next.

Goodness of Fit of Items-to-Topics

The 38 item behaviors and the six topic behaviors were matched for goodness of fit (how well the 38 individual items matched and corresponded to the six topics they were assigned to) using a structured matching process involving the course instructor and graduate level speech-language pathology students enrolled in a language course at a large southeastern U.S. university. They were briefed about the use and development of the APSS and were provided with a description of the 38 individual items and the seven general topic areas (one topic was dropped for the final form of the APSS). They then received a form on which to record their judgement of which items matched which topics.

Black and Dockrell (1984) stated that a review of test items should include training the reviewers, conducting a structured review, and adequately describing the domain definition. Results of this review assigned the items to the topics (for goodness of fit) according to the information given by the informed group of speech-language pathology students and course instructor. Changes made to the APSS were based on a median average of matching. Changes made included moving 13 behaviors to other topics for a better fit. The five behaviors under the topic of *contracts with others* were identified as having a better fit with the topic of *affects listener's behavior through language.* Therefore, *contracts with others* was deleted because of redundancy with the topic of *affects listener's behavior through language.* Six topics were used on the final form of the APSS. Thus, this matching procedure, ensuring face validity of the topics, along with the item analysis procedure, indicates that the items and topics are valid categories with an appropriate number of responses. These topics and behaviors represent the range of pragmatic functions as seen in U.S. schools.

Critique by Reviewers

Expert professionals initially reviewed the APSS during its initial construction. They consisted of six speech-language pathologists, five special educators, two bilingual educators, and one educational psychologist. Of the six speech-language pathologists, two were university professors in speech and language pathology with expertise in the area of child language. The other speech-language pathologists included an associate professor/assistant dean at a California university with expertise in bilingual speech-language pathology issues; a program director of a multicultural training program in communication disorders at a New Mexico university; an associate professor/department chair of speech-language-hearing sciences at a Pennsylvania university; and one school clinician working with middle and high school adolescents in a north-central Florida school district. The five special educators included two professors at a Florida university department of special education, one bilingual special education research and grant director, one special educator with school experience working also as a researcher, and one bilingual special education professor at a Texas university. The two bilingual educators were a university professor and a middle school teacher working in an ESL classroom in north-central Florida. The educational psychologist was a university professor.

Changes made to the APSS included deleting certain behaviors; rewording the topics, behaviors, and examples; and adding new behaviors and examples. The basic format of the APSS was retained. Most of the topics, behaviors, and examples remained intact.

All items were then reviewed by a panel of professionals knowledgeable about pragmatics and teachers working in the field. The teaching professionals were a speech-language pathologist, a special education teacher, and a guidance counselor. Professional experience ranged from 2–15 years of teaching experience. These teachers came from a north-central Florida school district. All participants were approached via a telephone call and followed up with a personal visit. They were asked to give their recommendations concerning the format and item specification of the APSS. All participants then responded by providing written recommendation or verbal comments regarding (a) appropriateness of the test for use with the intended populations, (b) appropriateness of the test format, (c) applicability of the general topics, (d) applicability of the specific behaviors, (e) scoring of the items, (f) wording of the items, (g) applicability of the examples, and (h) appropriateness of item matching to the topics (i.e., do the items fit the topics?). Items were revised according to comments made by the various professionals.

Preliminary Pilot Testing

Preliminary item and scale testing was conducted on 15 students by three school professionals. Adolescents from middle and high school populations were studied. The school personnel were trained to use the instrument by the primary author during a training session with each

professional that lasted approximately 45 minutes. The session covered the intent of the APSS, how to use the APSS, how to rate the behaviors, how to score the APSS, what the scores meant, and specifically what the individual behaviors and topics meant. Positive and negative exemplars of the behaviors were verbally discussed in defining the behaviors. The school personnel held preliminary testing of the APSS after 2 weeks of observation and then made recommendations concerning each of the segments of the APSS. A final revision of the APSS was made, taking into consideration the comments of school personnel. Thus, the APSS has undergone extensive content validity and its items and topics seem justifiable.

RESULTS

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed. Results from the analysis indicated a significant difference between the group means ($p < 0.05$) on six of the seven APSS measures. The total score measure, and topics of *expresses self, establishes appropriate greetings, initiates and maintains conversations, listens actively,* and *cues the listener regarding topic shifts* revealed significant differences between the ESL and BSL group means (p values ranged from 0.027 to 0.001).

A summary of these data is presented in Table 2. The figures visually illustrate that the greatest differences occurred with the topics of (from most to least difference) *initiates and maintains conversations, cues the listener*

Table 2. Summary table of analysis of variance.

APSS measure	ESL mean (SD)	BSL mean (SD)	F	p value
Total score	79.68 (17.64)	93.91 (27.40)	5.158	0.027[a]
Topic 1	Affects listener's behavior through language			
	26.16 (6.68)	26.05 (8.85)	0.002	0.962
Topic 2	Expresses self			
	14.8 (4.60)	19.17 (6.23)	9.792	0.004[a]
Topic 3	Establishes appropriate greetings			
	5.56 (1.68)	7.35 (3.29)	6.198	0.016[a]
Topic 4	Initiates and maintains conversation			
	12.36 (3.35)	15.82 (4.25)	11.366	0.001[a]
Topic 5	Listens actively			
	14.28 (3.94)	17.29 (5.63)	5.253	0.026[a]
Topic 6	Cues the listener regarding topic shifts			
	6.52 (2.29)	8.44 (2.48)	9.167	0.004[a]

[a] Significant at $p < 0.05$

regarding topic shifts, expresses self, establishes appropriate greetings, listens actively, and the total score. Figures 1–7 illustrate the ESL and BSL group results on all APSS measures.

DISCUSSION

Two groups of adolescent students (students enrolled in ESL vs. bilingual students receiving speech-language therapy) were compared on a screening pragmatics measure, the APSS. The only measure that did not show group differences was the topic *affects listener's behavior through language.* In this topic, both the ESL group and the BSL group were unable to regulate others using language. Brice (1992a), Damico and Damico (1993), and Fraser, Rintell and Walters (1980) mentioned that the behavior of not regulating others through language may be a cultural trait showing deference to teachers and authority figures. Ellis (1992) reported that bilingual students do not receive ample practice in the range of classroom requests. Even language-intact students may have some difficulty acquiring this Euro-American pragmatic feature of language. It thus appears that classroom requests is not a pragmatic function that readily transfers from the Spanish language and culture to North American standards.

The BSL students demonstrated a pervasive pragmatics deficit as measured by the APSS. They showed an inability to express themselves in the classroom, to initiate and finish classroom discussions, to listen to classroom discourse and follow teacher directions, and to cue others about the course of classroom discussions. They also experienced difficulties in expressing themselves, which may be attributable to inadequate grammatical control. Simon (1985) noted that a person's language system should possess flexibility (i.e., they should have a variety of forms available to them in order to carry out pragmatic functions). It may be that the students with speech and language disorders lack the syntactic and semantic devices to

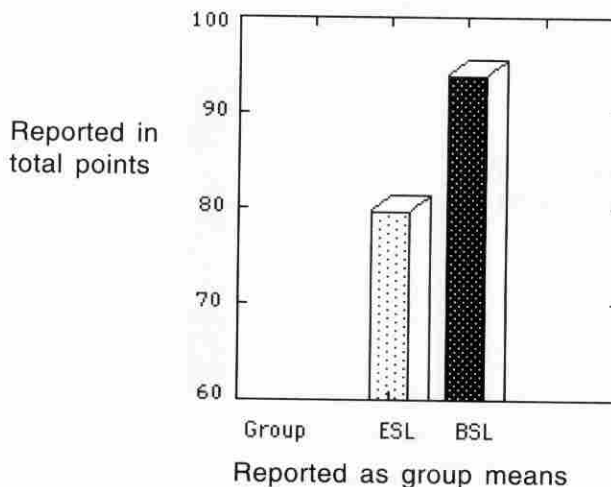**Figure 1.** Total score reported as total points and as group means.

Reported in total points

Reported as group means

Figure 2. Topic one (affects listener's behavior through language) reported as total points and as group means.
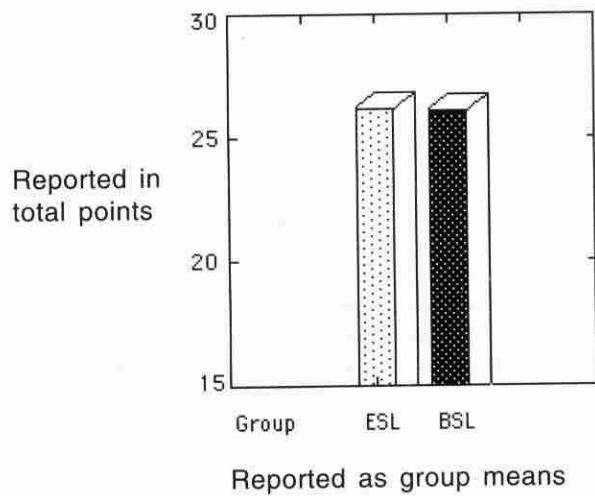
Reported in total points

Reported as group means

Figure 3. Topic two (expresses self) reported as total points and as group means.

Reported in total points

Reported as group means

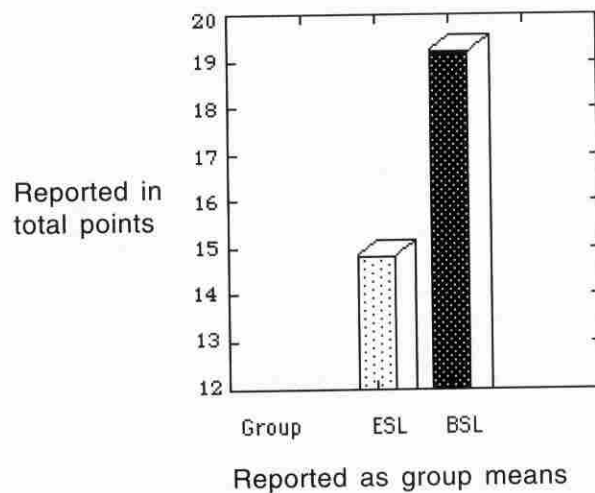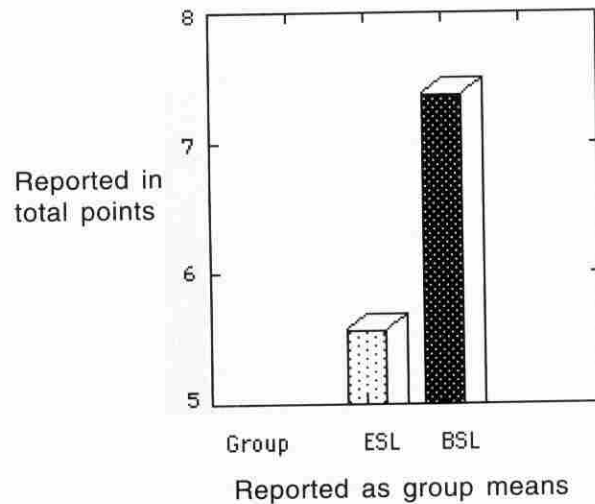**Figure 4.** Topic three (establishes appropriate greetings) reported as total points and as group means.

Reported in total points

Reported as group means

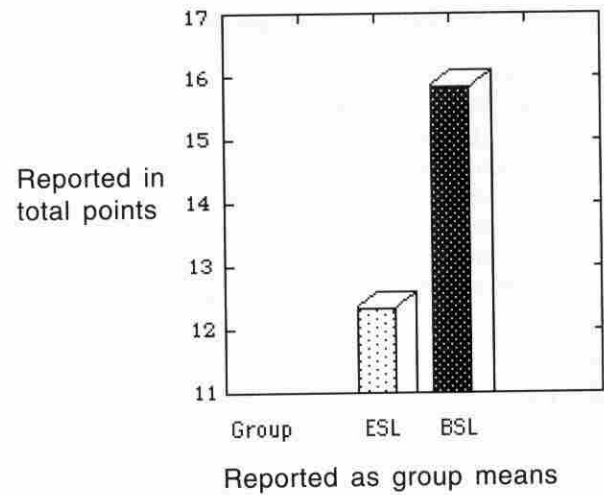**Figure 5.** Topic four (initiates and maintains conversations) reported as total points and as group means.

Reported in total points

Reported as group means

Figure 6. Topic five (listens actively) reported as total points and as group means.
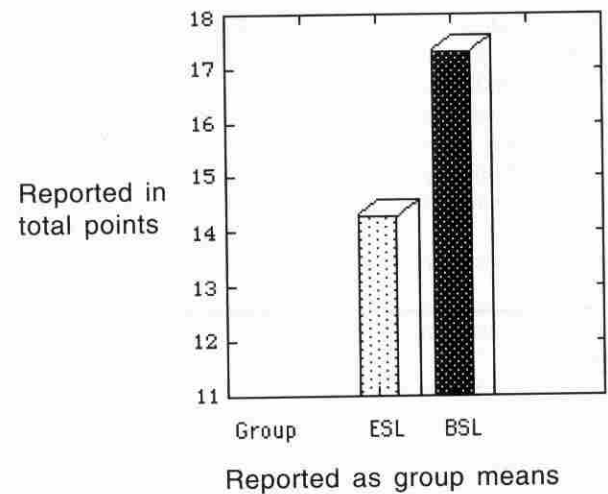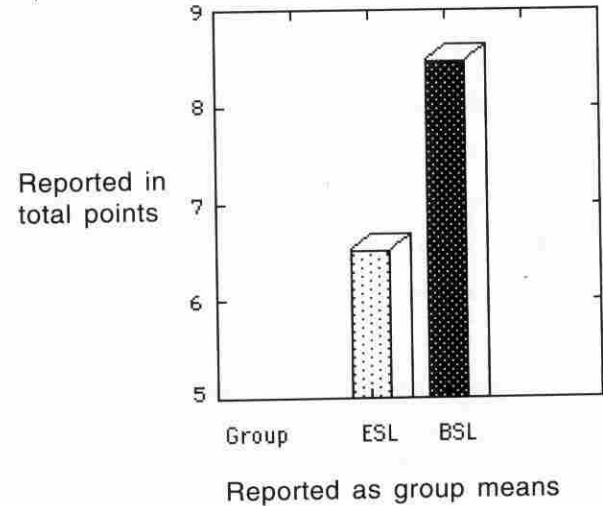
Reported in total points

Reported as group means

Figure 7. Topic six (cues the listener regarding topic shifts) reported as total points and as group means.

Reported in total points

Reported as group means

fulfill pragmatic functions. The difficulties associated with initiating and maintaining conversations may stem from a failure to assess the needs of the listener and of the context. Such skills may involve metalinguistic competencies that these students may not possess. Metalinguistic competencies involve a student's awareness of strategies in sustaining conversations. Tough (1981) mentioned that all students, especially students with learning difficulties, need direct learning experiences to support their learning. It may be that metalinguistic awareness and skills, involving higher order linguistic capabilities, are not easily attainable through direct experiences alone, without intervention.

Several behaviors under the topic of *listens actively* involve some aspect of timing in conversation. These included displays appropriate response time, asks for more time, waits for appropriate pauses in conversation before speaking, and notes that the listener is not following the conversation and needs clarification or more information. The students with speech and language disorders may display weaknesses in timing, focus of attention, and metalinguistic awareness. Their difference from the ESL students could have been a result of not having sufficient receptive language skills.

Many of the behaviors under this topic may be considered to have an academic language emphasis. Such behaviors included asks to repeat what has been said for better understanding, looks at teacher when addressed, listens to others in class, changes activities when asked by the teacher, and differentiates between literal and figurative language. The behaviors in cueing a listener (waits for a pause in the conversation before speaking about something else, looks away to indicate loss of interest, and makes easy transitions between topics) contain many metalinguistic aspects that may impede the BSL student group's acquisition.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

The bilingual students with speech and language disorders may face alienation from their peers by not being able to appropriately greet others, to begin and terminate personal discussions, to listen attentively to what others say, and to move among topics of conversation with ease. This places these bilingual students enrolled in speech and language therapy at risk for academic failure and possible school dropout (Brice, 1992a; Simon, 1985). Pragmatics in the school classroom are often viewed in an even broader context (Wong-Fillmore, 1992). For example, Wong-Fillmore noted that the teacher's use of oral directions, written directions, and classroom groupings are often culturally based and can have a profound effect on academic success. The following suggestions may assist speech-language pathologists working with all Latino students in achieving school and classroom success. Seven tips from the Institute for Educational Research (cited in American Teacher, 1990) were adapted and follow:

1. Provide written copies of directions and assignments to compliment oral instruction (to assist pragmatic behaviors of listens actively and follows directions).

2. Be an example of correct language. Correct Hispanic student's errors only during formal instruction (to assist syntax acquisition for regulatory language and personal language).

3. Do not restrict Hispanic students to the basics. Keep expectations high and engage students in tasks that require higher level thinking (to encourage metalinguistic language skills).

4. Students who may seem proficient in conversational English (oral language skills) may still need help with academic language tasks, including following instructions and understanding subject specific vocabulary.

5. Build lessons on understanding background knowledge for textbook readings (to assist following directions and listening actively).

6. Keep Hispanic students involved by asking prediction questions, such as "What do you think...?" (to encourage metalinguistic language and expression skills).

7. Teach self-study skills such as note taking, self-questioning, organizing, and test taking (to encourage metalinguistic language skills).

Rules of classroom interaction and use of strategies, provided by speech-language pathologists, may be in need for the Latino students enrolled for speech and language therapy. Several suggestions for school and classroom remediation for these students are taken from the literature (Allwright, 1980; Chesterfield, Chesterfield, Hayes-Latimer, & Chavez, 1983; Odlin, 1990; Pica, 1991; Pica & Doughty, 1985; Pica, Young, & Doughty, 1987; Pienemann, 1984; Schmidt & Frota, 1986; Swain, 1985; Veltman, 1988; Wong-Fillmore, 1992; Zobl, 1980) and provide a basis for modifying instruction to enhance English learning and pragmatics learning. They include:

- The speech-language pathologist should use teacher strategies such as encouraging Latino students to ask questions. Students should seek clarification and ask for repetitions and the speech-language pathologist should reinforce these behaviors.

- Speech-language pathologists should rely less on modeling as a form of correction. Latino students in initial learning stages should be allowed to make mistakes. Speech-language pathologists also should employ more pauses and wait time for responses in order to allow the students to monitor and reflect on their language.

- Latino students need (a) reasons to communicate; (b) interaction and opportunities to speak with proficient English speakers (peers, teachers, or community members); (c) interaction, support, and feedback from others; and (d) close and continued interaction with others lasting 3 or 4 years.

- Latino students need to have increased student-to-teacher interactions to encourage regulatory, heuristic, informational, and instrumental language.

- Latino students need opportunities to share information with other students in order to express, initiate, and maintain conversations.

- Practicing an activity prepares the Latino student to later talk about it.

- Speech-language pathologists should ask open-ended clarification questions (i.e., questions that allow for expansion and elaboration to encourage heuristic language).

- The use of grammatic drills and direct instruction (i.e., teaching specific skills such as note taking) is beneficial for the adolescent student). A naturalistic approach can be used to reinforce learned skills.

- Latino students can benefit from peer grouping with other students of similar ability levels to practice classroom discourse skills.

- Latino students should have more practice at formalized, structured speaking situations in order to encourage classroom discourse skills.

CONCLUSION

Pragmatics for students in middle school is an important aspect of functioning within the classroom. Pragmatic skills are critical to academic progress and in building peer relationships. Students learning English as a second language and bilingual students with communication disorders may need instruction in pragmatics skills.

The APSS is a screening tool to be used by various school professionals including speech-language pathologists, ESL teachers, special education teachers, and regular classroom teachers. Brice and Montgomery (1993) found that if ESL and special education teachers were trained to observe pragmatic behaviors, then their ratings did not significantly differ from those of speech-language pathologists observing and rating the same students. Thus, the APSS can reliably be used by various school personnel, not just speech-language pathologists. These various school professionals can discuss the student's performance and participate in a collaborative assessment procedure.

In order to prevent the pragmatics problem from becoming an overall pervasive disorder and possibly leading to school failure, students must be identified early (Brice-Heath, 1986; Garcia & Ortiz, 1988; Hymes, 1972). Early identification and remediation of pragmatics disorders in CLD students appears to be a critical factor for school success. It is important for school personnel to be aware of pragmatics in order to assist all students in their education, particularly adolescents at risk for academic failure or social adjustment problems. Comparison of pragmatic skills across groups should assist school personnel in making proper educational decisions for their students. In turn, students learning English as a second language and

bilingual students with speech-language disorders will have increased opportunities to acquire the skills they need to function as competent communicators in their schools and in society. Speech-language pathologists in collaboration with ESL teachers can make more accurate assessment with a pragmatics screening tool, such as the APSS, that differentiates students with pragmatic deficits from those demonstrating normal second language learning processes. Awareness of, and sensitivity to, persons who differ in culture, language, or ability, are critical for success in our culturally diverse education programs.

REFERENCES

Accommodating diversity. (1990). *American Teacher, 8*(74), 2.

Allwright, R. (1980). Turns, topics, and tasks: Patterns of participation in language learning and teaching. In D. Larsen-Freeman (Ed.), *Discourse analysis in second language research* (pp. 165–187). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Black, H., & Dockrell, W. (1984). *Criterion-referenced assessment in the classroom.* Edinburgh, Great Britain: The Scottish Council for Research in Education.

Brice, A. (1992a). The Adolescent Pragmatics Screening Scale: A comparison of language-impaired students, bilingual/Hispanic students, and regular education students. *Howard Journal of Communications, 4,* 143–156.

Brice, A. (1992b). The Adolescent Pragmatics Screening Scale: Rationale and development. *Howard Journal of Communications, 3,* 177–193.

Brice, A., & Montgomery, J. (1993, November). *The Adolescent Pragmatics Screening Scale: Assessing Asian, Hispanic, and Middle-Eastern students.* Paper presented at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association Annual Convention, Anaheim, CA.

Brice-Heath, S. (1986). Sociocultural contexts of language development. In D. Holt (Ed.), *Beyond language: Social and cultural factors in schooling language minority students* (pp. 142–186). Los Angeles: Evaluation, Dissemination, and Assessment Center.

Chesterfield, R., Chesterfield, K. B., Hayes-Latimer, K., & Chavez, R. (1983). The influence of teachers and peers on second language acquisition in bilingual preschool programs, *TESOL Quarterly, 17*(3), 401–419.

Collier, V. (1987). Age and rate of acquisition of second language for academic purposes. *TESOL Quarterly, 21*(4), 617–641.

Crocker, L., & Algina, J. (1986). *Introduction to classical and modern test theory.* New York: CBS College Publishing.

Cronbach, L. (1949). *Essentials of psychological testing.* New York: Harper and Brothers.

Cummins, J. (1984). *Bilingualism and special education Issues in assessment and pedagogy.* San Diego: College-Hill Press.

Damico, J. (1985). Clinical discourse analysis: A functional approach to language assessment. In C. Simon (Ed.), *Communication skills and classroom success: Assessment* (pp. 165–206). San Diego: College-Hill Press.

Damico, J., & Damico, S. (1993). Language and social skills from a diversity perspective: Considerations for the speech-language pathologist. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, 24,* 236–243.

Damico, J., & Oller, J., Jr. (1980). Pragmatic versus morphological/syntactic criteria for language referrals. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, 11,* 85–94.

Damico, J., Oller, J., Jr., & Storey, M. (1983). The diagnosis of language disorders in bilingual children: Surface-oriented and pragmatic criteria. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders, 48,* 385–394.

Dore, J. (1979). Conversation and preschool language development. In P. Fletcher & M. Garman (Eds.), *Language acquisition* (pp. 337–361). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ellis, R. (1992). Learning to communicate in the classroom. A study of two language learners' requests. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 14,* 1–23.

Florida Department of Education. (1987). *A study of educational services for limited English proficient students: Policy recommendations. A report to the commissioner of education and the legislature.* Tallahassee, FL: Author.

Fradd, S., & Tikunoff, W. (1987). *Bilingual education and bilingual special education: A guide for administrators.* Boston, MA: College-Hill Press.

Fraser, B., Rintell, E., & Walters, J. (1980). An approach to conducting research on the acquisition of pragmatic competence in a second language. In D. Larsen-Freeman (Ed.), *Discourse analysis in second language research* (pp. 75–91). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Garcia, S., & Ortiz, A. (1988, June). *Preventing inappropriate referrals of language minority students to special education* (Focus, 5, Occasional papers in bilingual education). Wheaton, MD: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.

Halliday, M. (1978). *Language as social semiotic.* Baltimore, MD: Edward Arnold.

Hymes, D. (1972). *Introduction.* In C. Cazden, V. John, & D. Hymes (Eds.), *Functions of language in the classroom* (pp. xi–lvii). New York: Teachers College Press.

Kasper, G., & Dahl, M. (1991). Research methods in interlanguage pragmatics. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 13,* 215–247.

Kretschmer, R. (1991). Exceptionality and limited English proficient student: Historical and practical contexts. In E. Hamayan & J. Damico (Eds.), *Limiting bias in the assessment of bilingual students* (pp. 1–38). Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Larson, V., & McKinley, N. (1987). *Communication assessment and intervention strategies for adolescents.* Eau Claire, WI: Thinking Publications.

Montgomery, J. (1994). Service delivery issues for schools. In R. Lubinski & C. Frattali (Eds.), *Professional issues in speech language pathology and audiology* (pp. 218–232). San Diego: Singular Press.

Nezer, H., Nezer, B., & Siperstein, G. (1985). *Improving children's social skills: Techniques for teachers* (Available from Center for the study of Social Acceptance, University of Massachusetts/Boston, Downtown Center, Boston, Massachusetts, 02125-3393).

Nippold, M., & Fey, S. (1983). Metaphoric understanding in preadolescents having a history of language acquisition difficulties. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, 14*(3), 171–180.

Odlin, T. (1990). *Language transfer.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Pica, T. (1991). Classroom interaction, participation and comprehension: Redefining relationships. *System, 19*(4), 437–452.

Pica, T., & Doughty, C. (1985). The role of group work in classroom second language acquisition. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 7*(2), 233–248.

Pica, T., Young, R., & Doughty, C. (1987). The impact of interaction on comprehension. *TESOL Quarterly, 21*(4), 737–758.

Pienemann, M. (1984). Psychological constraints on the teachability of languages. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 6*(2), 186–214.

Prutting, C., & Kirchner, D. (1987). A clinical appraisal of the pragmatic aspects of language. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders, 52*(2), 105–119.

Rice, M., Sell, M., & Hadley, P. (1991). Social interactions of speech-and-language-impaired children. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Research, 34,* 1299–1307.

Rossell, C., & Baker, K. (1988). Selecting and exiting students in bilingual educational programs. *Journal of Law and Education, 17*(4), 589–623.

Schmidt, R. W., & Frota, S. N. (1986). Developing basic conversational ability in a second language: A case study of an adult learner of Portuguese. In R.R. Day (Ed.), *Talking to learn* (pp. 237–326). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Searle, J. (1976). A classification of illocutionary acts. *Language in Society, 5*(11), 1–23.

Simon, C. (1985). *Communication skills and classroom success: Therapy methodologies for language-learning disabled students.* San Diego: College-Hill Press.

Stephens, T. (1978). *Social skills in the classroom.* Columbus, OH: Cedars Press.

Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In S. Gass & C. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second language acquisition* (pp. 235–256). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Tough, J. (1981). *A place for talk.* London, England: School Council Publications.

Veltman, C. (1988). *The future of the Spanish language in the United States.* New York: Hispanic Policy Development Project.

Wolfson, N. (1989). The social dynamics of native and nonnative variation in complimenting behavior. In M. Eisenstein (Ed.), *The dynamic interlanguage: Empirical studies in second language acquisition* (pp. 219–236). New York: Plenum.

Wong-Fillmore, L. W. (1992, September). *When does 1 + 1 = < 2?* Paper presented at Bilingualism/Bilingüismo: A Clinical Forum, Miami, FL.

Zobl, H. (1980). The formal and developmental selectivity of L1 influence on L2 acquisition. *Language Learning, 30*(1), 43–57.

Contact author: Alejandro Brice, Department of Communication Disorders, MSU 77, P.O. Box 8400, Mankato State University, Mankato, MN 56002-8400. e-mail: brice@vax1.mankato.msus.edu

APPENDIX. THE ADOLESCENT PRAGMATICS SCREENING SCALE (APSS)

Student information:

Name_____ Age____ Grade____ School_____ Date_____

1. Indicate the student's first language background.   _____
2. Indicate the student's home language background if different from first language.   _____
3. Indicate the student's English language proficiency level from 1 to 5 (1 = native-like, 2 = near native-like, 3 = medium, 4 = limited, 5 = very limited).   _____
4. Indicate the student's cultural/ethnic background (e.g., Euro-American, African-American, Hispanic, Asian-American, Native American, or the student's specific cultural background).   _____
5. Indicate the number of years the student has been in schools in the United States.   _____

Teacher/Rater information:

6. Indicate your professional background (speech-language pathologist, bilingual teacher, ESL teacher, regular education teacher, special education teacher, special education-classroom, psychologist).   _____
7. Indicate your first language background.   _____
8. Indicate your proficiency level from 1 to 5 in English (1 = native-like, 2 = near native-like, 3 = medium, 4 = limited, 5 = very limited).   _____
9. Are you proficient in another language other than English (Yes/No)?   _____
10. If yes, indicate what language.   _____
11 Indicate your proficiency level from 1 to 5 in your other language (1 = native-like, 2 = near native-like, 3 = medium, 4 = limited, 5 = very limited).   _____
12. Are you culturally knowledgeable or aware about another culture?   _____
13. Indicate your cultural knowledge/awareness level of the other culture from 1 to 5 (1 = native-like, 2 = near native-like, 3 = medium, 4 = limited, 5 = very limited).   _____
14. Indicate which culture or cultures.   _____

Test Score information:
Scoring: Mean Topic Scores (M.T.S.)

Topic 1 Sum of the individual behaviors   ___ divided by 11 = ___ No. 1.
        M.T.S.

Topic 2 Sum of the individual behaviors   ___ divided by 7 = ___ No. 2.
        M.T.S.

Topic 3 Sum of the individual behaviors   ___ divided by 4 = ___ No. 3.
        M.T.S.

Topic 4 Sum of the individual behaviors   ___ divided by 6 = ___ No. 4.
        M.T.S.

Topic 5 Sum of the individual behaviors   ___ divided by 7 = ___ No. 5.
        M.T.S.

Topic 6 Sum of the individual behaviors   ___ divided by 3 = ___ No. 6.
        M.T.S.

Sum of **ALL** the individual behaviors   ___

Sum of ALL the individual behaviors   ___ divided by 38 = ___ **Total Score (T.S.)**

15. Do you feel that this student's performance was influenced by the student's cultural background?   _____ Yes _____ No.

If the answer is **yes**, please indicate which behaviors led you to this conclusion by making a notation in the **Observation** section next to the corresponding behavior.

The Adolescent Pragmatics Screening Scale (APSS)
Name:_____ Page One

A. Performance Rating Scale

Please indicate the student's level of
performance using the scale below.
1. Behavior is highly appropriate.
2. Behavior is moderately appropriate.
3. Behavior is borderline appropriate.
4. Behavior is moderately inappropriate.
5. Behavior is highly inappropriate.

B. Observations

This section is reserved for observations
that you feel are pertinent to your rating.

1. Affects listener's behavior through language

SCORE   **OBSERVATIONS**

1. Asks for help (e.g., "I don't know how to do this
   problem" "Can you show me how to look up a word
   in the dictionary?" "How do you spell _____?")   **1.____**
2. Asks questions (e.g., "How many times does 9 go
   into 72?" "How does a President get elected?")   **2.____**
3. Attempts to persuade others (e.g., "I really think
   John is the best candidate because_____." "I don't
   think I should have to do this because _____.")   **3.____**
4. Informs another of important information (e.g.,
   "Teacher, someone wrote some bad words on the wall
   outside." "I saw a snake in the boy's bathroom down
   the hall.")   **4.____**
5. Asks for a favor of a friend/classmate (e.g., "Can you
   give me a ride to school?" "Will you ask Sally out
   for Friday night for me?")   **5.____**
6. Asks for a favor of the teacher (e.g., "Can I redo the
   homework assignment?" "Can I get out of class 5
   minutes early so I can catch the new bus?")   **6.____**
7. Asks for teachers' and/or adults' permission (e.g.,
   going to the bathroom, asking to get a drink of water,
   asking to sharpen a pencil)   **7.____**
8. Asks for other student's permission (e.g., "Can I
   invite John to go with us?" "Can I ask your girlfriend
   for her phone number?")   **8.____**
9. Able to negotiate, give and take, in order to reach an
   agreement ("I'll give you a ride to school if you pay
   me five dollars a week for gas." "I'll help you with
   your algebra homework if you help me paint the signs
   for homecoming.")   **9.____**
10. Is able to give simple directions (e.g., telling how to
    find the Spanish teacher's classroom or how to find
    the bathroom.)   **10.____**
11. Rephrases a statement (e.g., "You meant this, didn't
    you?" "Did you mean this _____?")   **11.____**

_____ **Topic 1. Sum of Scores**

2. Expresses self

1. Describes personal feelings in an acceptable
   manner (e.g., says, "I wish that this English class
   wasn't so boring." "I'm feeling really frustrated by
   all the setbacks on my homework.")   **1.____**

A. Performance Rating Scale

B. Observations

SCORE

OBSERVATIONS

2. Shows feelings in acceptable manner (e.g., taking audible breaths to contain one's anger or smiling with enthusiasm to show pleasure)   **2.**____

3. Offers a contrary opinion in class discussions (e.g., "I don't believe that Columbus was the first to discover America. Leif Ericson was said to have reached Greenland and Nova Scotia before Columbus." "I don't believe that the two party system really offers a choice to voters.")   **3.**____

4. Gives logical reasons for opinions (e.g., I believe that the two party system offers a wider choice than the one party system____." "I think we should work on something else. We did something like this yesterday.")   **4.**____

5. Says that they disagree in a conversation (e.g., "I don't agree with you." "We can't agree on this one.")   **5.**____

6. Stays on topic for an appropriate amount of time.   **6.**____

7. Switches response to another mode to suit the listener (e.g., speaks differently when addressing the principal than when addressing a friend; speaks differently to a younger child of 2–3 years than when addressing peers of the same age.)   **7.**____

_____ **Topic 2. Sum of Scores**

3. Establishes appropriate greetings
1. Establishes eye contact when saying hello or greeting.   **1.**____
2. Smiles when meeting friends.   **2.**____
3. Responds to an introduction by other similar greeting.   **3.**____
4. Introduce self to others ("Hi, I'm _____." "My name is_____, what's yours?")   **4.**____

_____ **Topic 3. Sum of Scores**

4. Initiates and maintains conversation
1. Displays appropriate response time   **1.**____
2. Asks for more time (e.g., "I'm still thinking." "Wait a second." "Give me some more time.")   **2.**____
3. Notes that the listener is not following the conversation and needs clarification or more information (e.g., "There's a thing down there, down there, I mean there's a snake down in the boy's bathroom down the hall.")   **3.**____
4. Talks to others with appropriate pitch and loudness levels of voice (e.g., uses appropriate levels for the classroom, physical education, the lunchroom, or after school.)   **4.**____

A. Performance Rating Scale

B. Observations

SCORE **OBSERVATIONS**

5. Answers questions relevantly (e.g., "Nine goes into 72 8 times." "The President gets elected by the people.") **5.**____
6. Waits for appropriate pauses in conversation before speaking. **6.**____

_____ **Topic 4. Sum of Scores**

5. Listens Actively
1. Asks to repeat what has been said for better understanding (e.g., "Could you say that again?" "What do you mean?") **1.**____
2. Looks at teacher when addressed (e.g., through occasional glances or maintained eye contact) **2.**____
3. Listens to others in class (e.g., head is up, leaning toward the speaker, eyes on the speaker) **3.**____
4. Changes activities when asked by the teacher (e.g., is able to put away his or her paper and pencil or close a book or pull out something different without having to be told personally) **4.**____
5. Acknowledges the speaker verbally (e.g., Says "Uh-huh, yeah, what else?") **5.**____
6. Acknowledges the speaker nonverbally (e.g., looks at the speaker through occasional glances, maintained eye contact, or nodding) **6.**____
7. Differentiates between literal and figurative language (e.g., The student knows that the expression "John is sharp as a tack" actually means that John is very smart, or that if "Sally's leg is killing her," it does not mean that Sally will die.) **7.**____

_____ **Topic 5. Sum of Scores**

6. Cues the listener regarding topic shifts
1. Waits for a pause in the conversation before speaking about something else (e.g., waits for a pause of approximately 3–5 seconds at the end of a thought or sentence.) **1.**____
2. Looks away to indicate loss of interest in conversation (e.g., looks away and maintains this look for approximately 3–5 seconds.) **2.**____
3. Makes easy transitions between topics (e.g., the listener does not question what they are talking about.) **3.**____

_____ **Topic 6. Sum of Scores**