

**Getting it all to work:
Teaching and learning
transcultural pragmatics**

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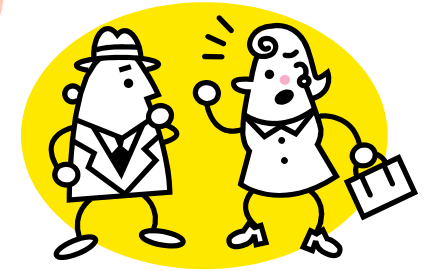


Romance in the classroom

Lynda Yates

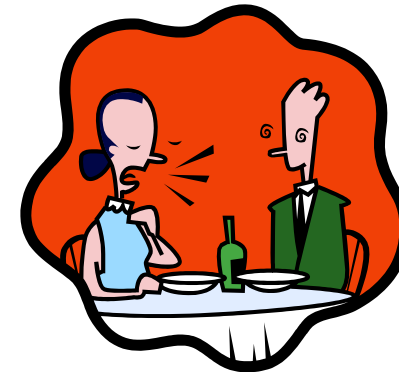
Macquarie University

What is pragmatics?

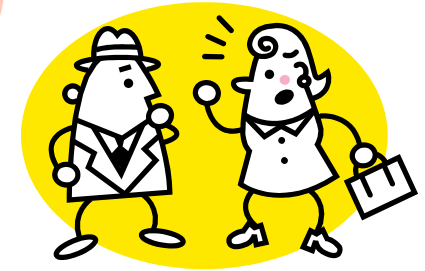


'the study of speaker and hearer meaning created in their joint actions'

(Lo Castro 2003: 15)

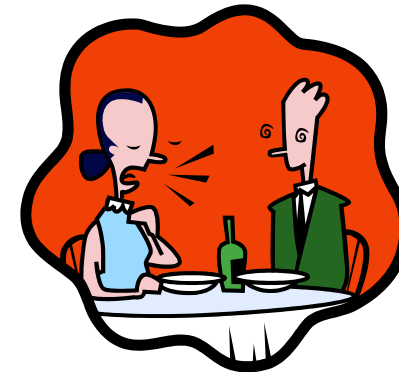


What is pragmatics?



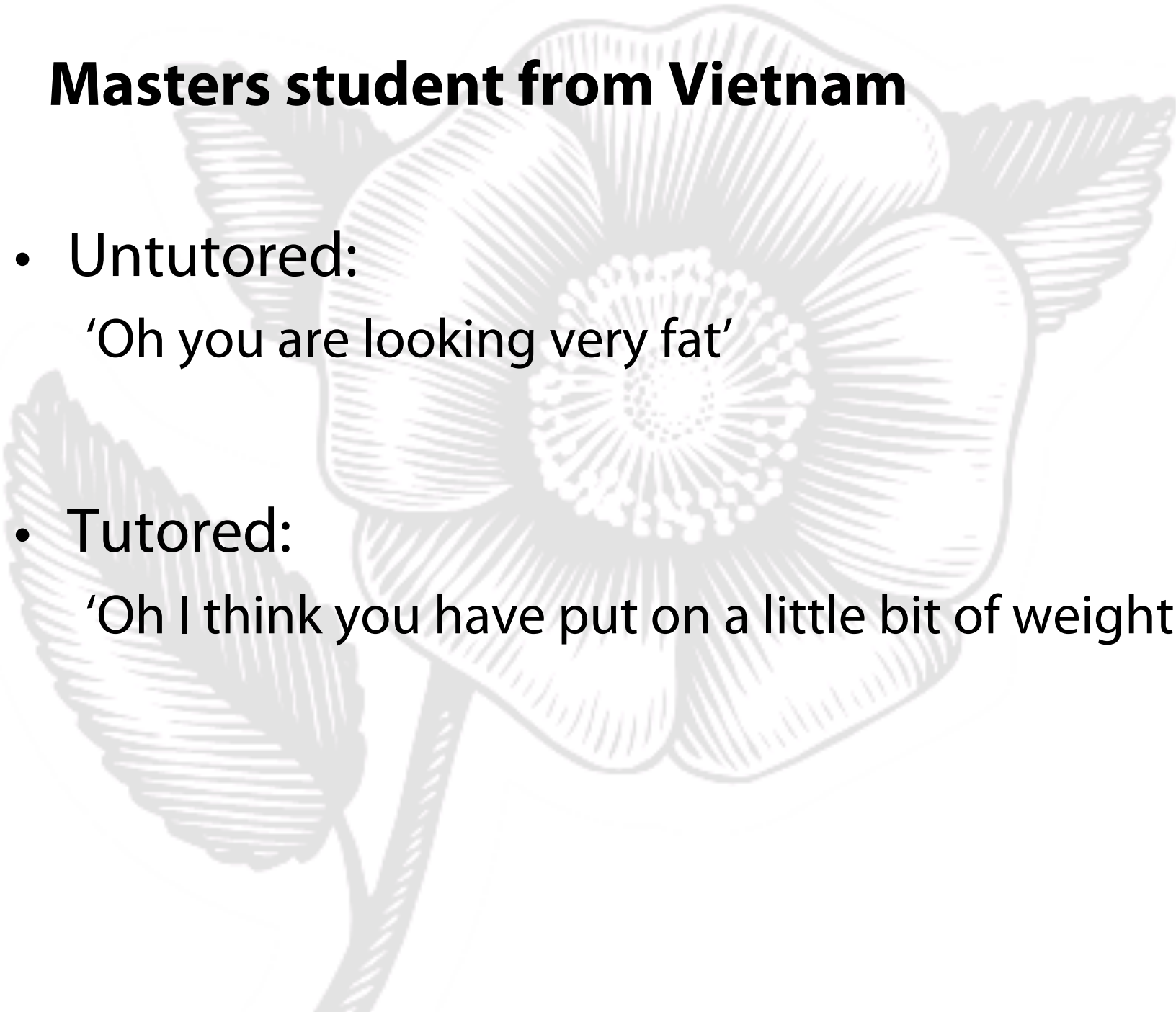
'saying what you intend to say and understanding what people really mean'

(Yates, today)



Masters student from Vietnam

- Untutored:
'Oh you are looking very fat'
- Tutored:
'Oh I think you have put on a little bit of weight'



Cross-cultural communication

Intercultural communication

Intercultural communicative competence

Intercultural pragmatics

Transcultural communication

Transcultural pragmatics

Transcultural competence

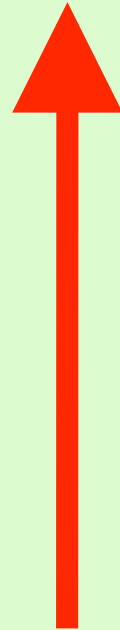
Interlanguage pragmatics

Intercultural mobility

Intercultural communicative competence

- Dispositions
- Attitudes
- Skills
- Knowledge

Transcultural pragmatics



Aim

- To help learners be understood in the way they intend and the way that works.
- To help learners understand what other people really mean by what they say.





What she said:

- Oh, that's nice for a change, dear.'

What she meant:

- I'm grinning and bearing it, but don't push me.

The problem

- None of us say exactly what we mean
- There are always hidden meanings
- If we grow up together in a culture we share a lot of understandings about:
 - What people usually do
 - What people 'should' do
 - What people expect
 - How people say things.
- **The 'secret rules' of communication**

An example



- A simple greeting
- Who do you greet in the street?
- When?
- What do you say?
- When do you use names?
- Which name?

Many anxious moments

- A British dilemma:
 - Who do you know well enough?
- What do you say?
 - GB vs Aussie vs Canada vs U.S.?
 - No name / first name / title plus last name?
- A Javanese dilemma
 - Where are you going?
 - Subordinate cannot take their leave first
- A Chinese offer of food?

Why it is important?

- Not as visible as grammar/ vocab
- Not as audible as pronunciation
- Difficult to separate out from personality
- Difficult to talk about
- Can cause immediate or ongoing misunderstanding



Yet how often do we teach it explicitly?




An example of difficulties in the workplace

Li Siyu was working on a report for her boss. She gets an email from her boss:


'I'd like to have the report this arvo. You might like to discuss with Bridget before you bring it over'

Several days later, the boss still has not received the report, and Bridget has not been consulted. What went wrong here?

My thanks to Marian May for this anecdote



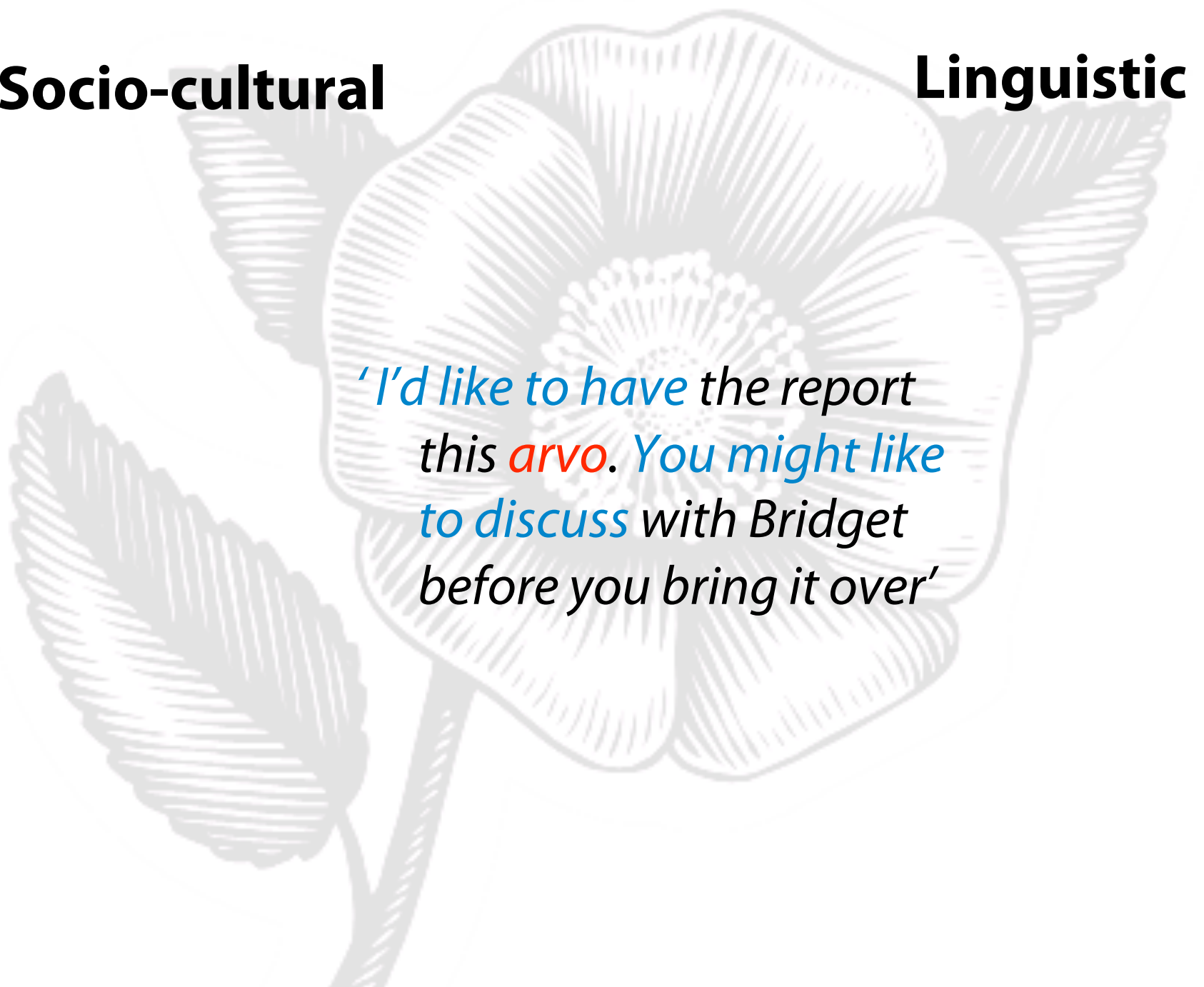
*'I'd like to have the report
this arvo. You might like
to discuss with Bridget
before you bring it over'*



*'I'd like to have the report
this **arvo**. You might like
to discuss with Bridget
before you bring it over'*

Socio-cultural

Linguistic



*'I'd like to have the report
this arvo. You might like
to discuss with Bridget
before you bring it over'*

Socio-cultural

Linguistic

Informal vocab is ok at work

Informal vocab

'I'd like to have the report this arvo. You might like to discuss with Bridget before you bring it over'

Bosses in this context make indirect requests to employees

Form of indirect request

What socio-cultural knowledge?



Li Siyu - not aware of some of the 'secret rules' of communication :

1. 'Informal language is okay in emails at work'
2. 'Direct instructions from a boss can look like indirect requests (or suggestions or something else).'
3. What else? – immediate follow-up, questions ok,

Why?



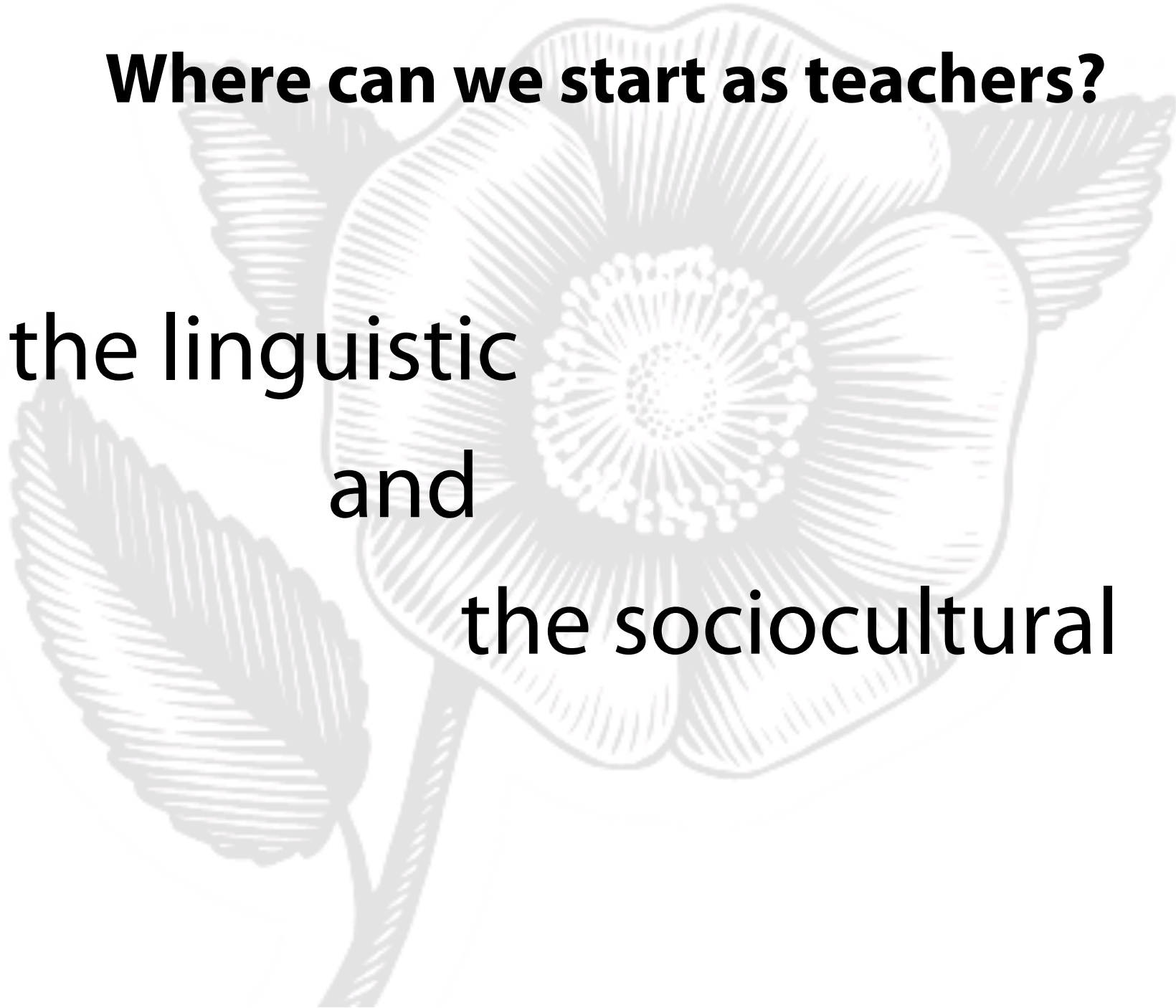
- How formal you are in different places can be different across cultures
- Your relationship with different people (e.g. boss, teacher, sales assistant) is different across cultures
- How far you display hierarchy/ deference can be different across cultures.
- So how you will react in a situation will vary across cultures

Where can we start as teachers?

the linguistic

and

the sociocultural



A simple black outline map of Australia, including the island of Tasmania, serves as a background for the text.

Australian talk

Fiction of egalitarianism

Dislike of overt hierarchy

Use of:

First names

'B' words

Shows of solidarity (not difference)

No dobbing

Informality/ friendliness

Dislike of intimacy

Mateship

CANADA

Canadian talk

What communicative values?

How are they reflected in what you say and do?

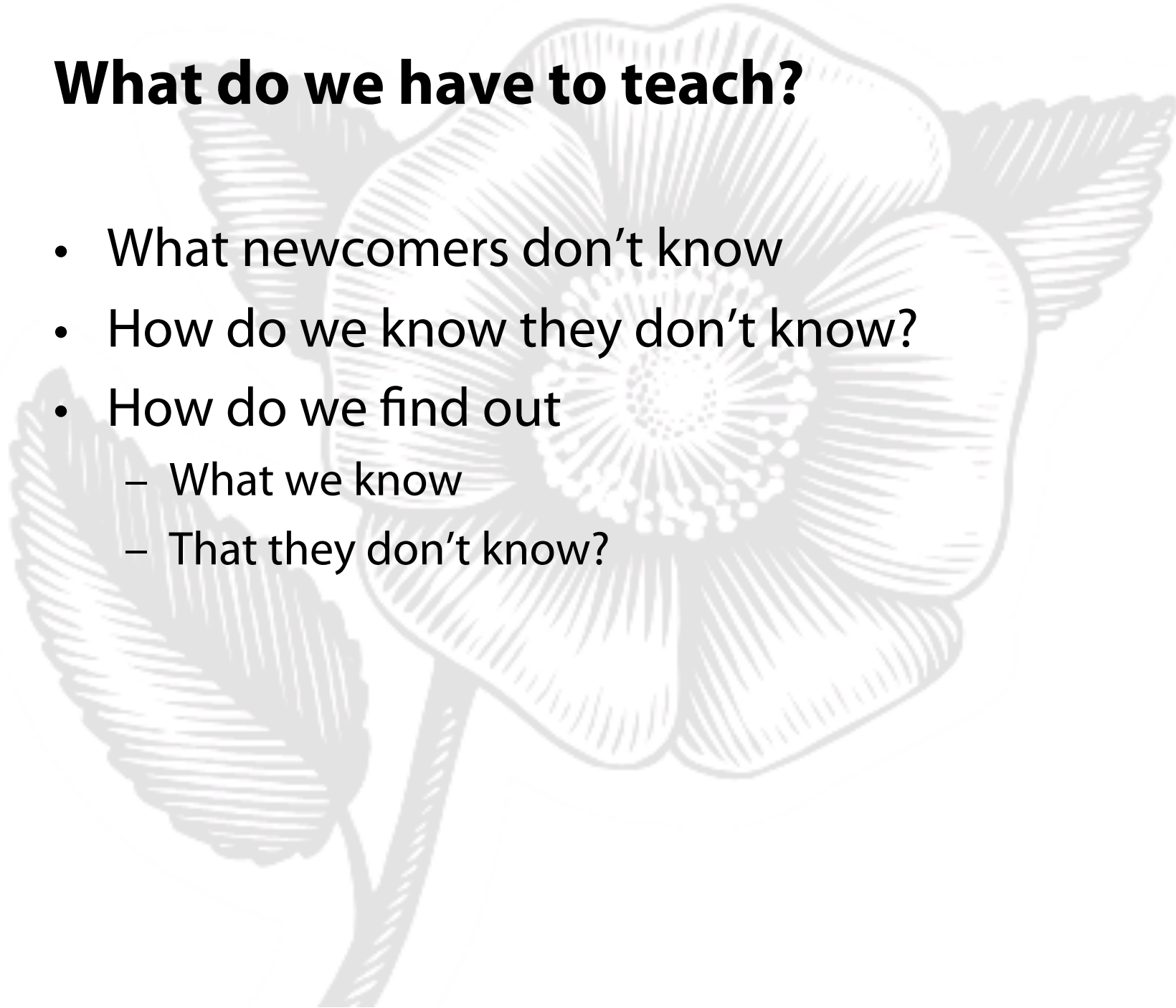
Transcultural pragmatics



- What do we have to teach?
- What can people learn?
- How can they learn it?
- How quickly can they learn it?
- So how do we teach it?

What do we have to teach?

- What newcomers don't know
- How do we know they don't know?
- How do we find out
 - What we know
 - That they don't know?



Getting ready for the workplace

- Immigrant who is hoping to enter aged-care or childcare
- Duff et al 2002
 - Everyday activity and language more urgent than technical vocabulary
- How would you teach directives (getting/asking people to do things)?
- For example, how would you.....

In a childcare context, how do you...?

- How do you get children to do things?
 - Be quiet
 - Pay attention
 - Help clear up
 - Wash hands
- How do you stop children doing things?
 - Put hands in their mouths
 - Hitting each other
 - Cycling the wrong way round a track

Getting kids to do things

- Be quiet
 - OK. Excuse me, that's a bit loud. What voices do we use inside?
- Pay attention
 - Sitting up nicely? Bottoms on floor? Legs crossed? I'm waiting for....L. L, can you sit on your bottom?
- Help clear up
 - Show me what a big helper you can be.
- Wash your hands
 - Do you want to go and wash your hands?

Stopping kids doing things

- Cycle one way round the track:
 - How about we use this side of the track to go this way and this side of the track to go that way (pointing to indicate direction).
Good plan?
- Don't put your hands in other people's mouths
 - Everyone needs to remember, if we put our hands on our friend's mouths, we'll get some germs. We don't want germs, do we?
- Don't fight
 - You don't need to use your hands, just use your voice.

So...what is there to teach?

- Sociocultural?
 - Philosophy of childcare
 - Importance of modelling
 - Degree of authoritarianism that is (or is not) appropriate
- Linguistic
 - Directives that don't look like orders
 - Directive 'avoidance' behaviours (e.g. stating rules etc.)
 - Delivery of these
 - Softeners etc.

Contexts differ

- What would these directives look like for immigrants preparing to work in other industries?
 - Miners
 - Nurses
 - Doctors
 - Factory workers
 - Agricultural workers
 - Secondary school teachers
 - Hospitality

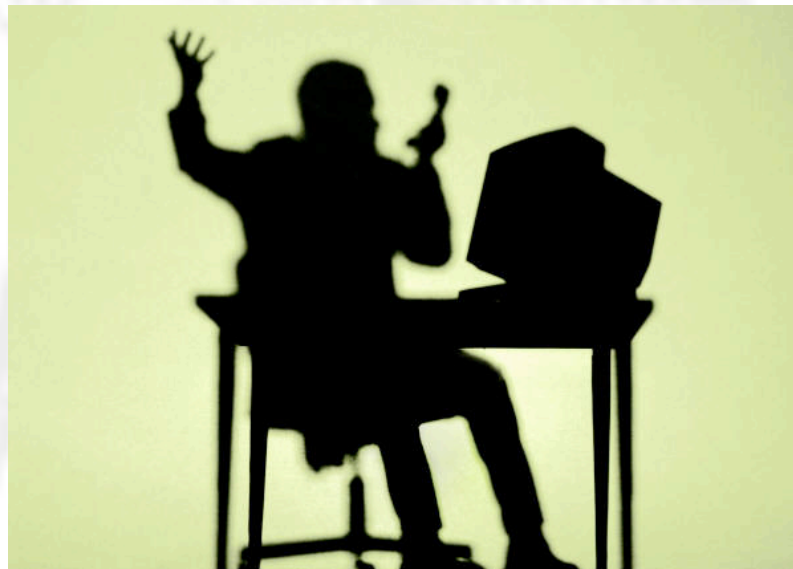
What can people learn?



- Research suggests pragmatics can be taught and learned
- Sociocultural issues may be
 - More deeply felt
 - Considered to be a matter of right and wrong
 - Less tangible, therefore less visible
- Linguistic items may
 - Not exist in L1
 - Exist in L1 but be used differently
 - E.g. 'of course', 'can you'

Can you?

Of course!



How do people learn pragmatics,

- How did you learn it?
- Difference adult/ child
- Importance of noticing
- Difficulty of noticing
- The need to:
 - Experiment
 - Practice
 - Decide for themselves, e.g.:
 - Female speakers of Japanese
 - Colombian speakers of Australian English

How quickly?

- Long term migrants
- Degree of comfort
- Degree of enthusiasm
- Practical need
- The right environment
- Pragmatics teaching needs

ROMANCE

What should we aim for in class?

R Reflection

O On

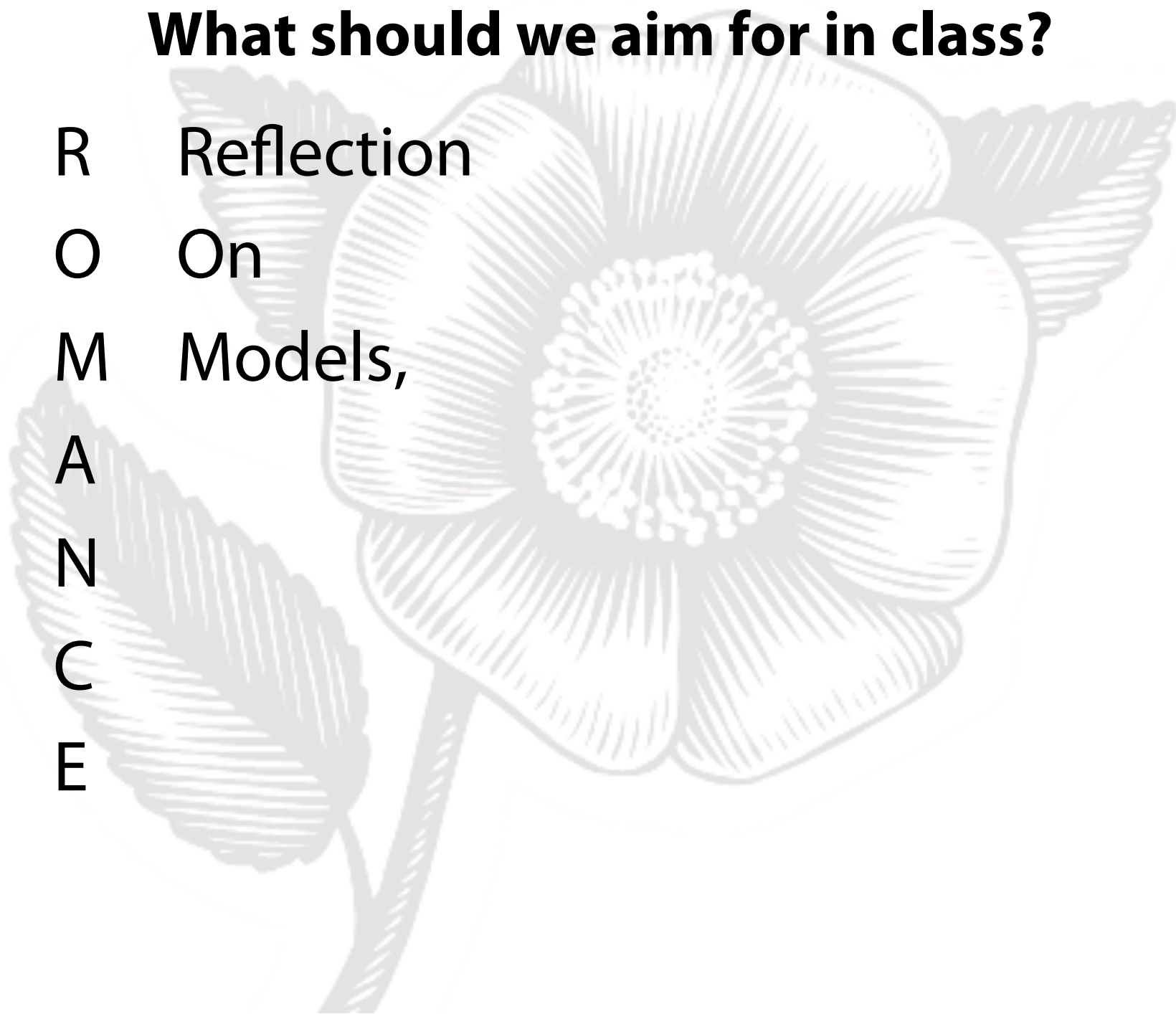
M Models,

A

N

C

E



Something to aim for....

R Reflection

O On

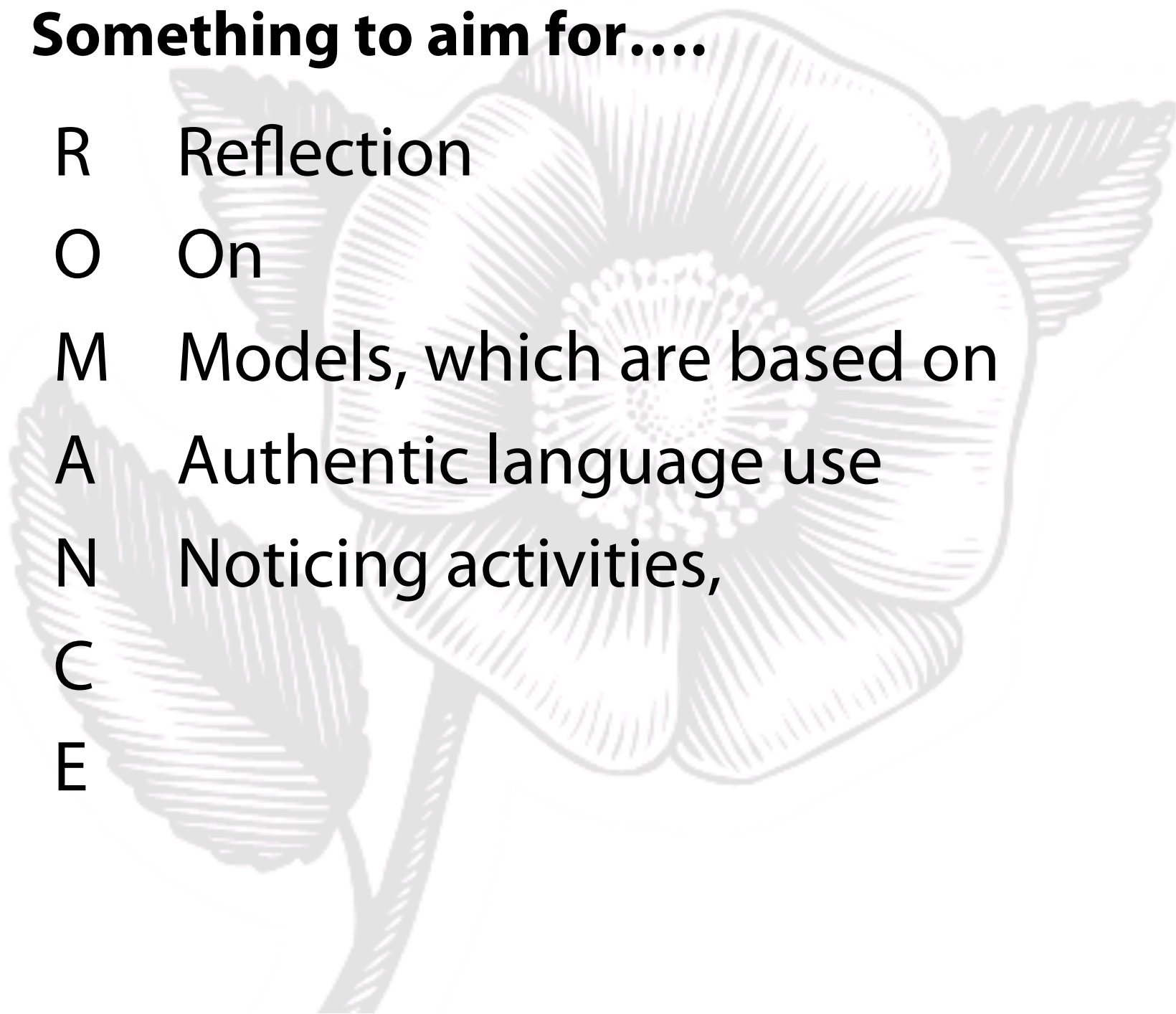
M Models, which are based on

A Authentic language use

N Noticing activities,

C

E



Something to aim for....

R Reflection

O On

M Models, which are based on

A Authentic language use

N Noticing activities, to enable

C Comparison and reflection,

E

Something to aim for....

R Reflection

O On

M Models, which are based on

A Authentic language use

N Noticing activities, to enable

C Comparison and reflection, before

E Experimentation and debriefing

Authentic models

- Recording
- TV?
- Mini-research projects
- Homework research projects
 - Authentic dialogues
 - Net interactions
 - Authentic but semi-scripted dialogues
 - Dialogues around town



Chapter 8

Colleagues negotiate a time to meet



Who are these people?

Where are they?

Vocabulary:

project

Chris – the boss

flexible

totally out

site

Exercise 1

Listen to two colleagues, Philip and Kathy, talking.
Answer the questions.

1. What's it about?

2. What's the problem?

3. What's the outcome?

Chapter 8

Colleagues negotiate a time to meet



Who are these people?

Where are they?

Vocabulary:

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Noticing

- Draw attention to things normally taken for granted
- Activities to make salient, e.g.:
 - Understanding the context/ social coordinates
 - Listening for specific features
 - Listening for structure
 - Focussing activities:
 - Underlining
 - Matching meaning - word
 - Re-ordering items in/ from context



Exercise 4

There are three stages in this dialogue:

Greeting

Negotiation

Conclusion

Listen and say where you think the three stages are.

Exercise 6

Now read the text and highlight the parts where one of them rejects a suggestion.

Exercise 7 (noticing and discussion)

There are points in the dialogue at which one of the colleagues rejects a suggestion made by the other. Compare the rejections you highlighted with your neighbour.

Some give a reason and some give an alternative. Some do neither.

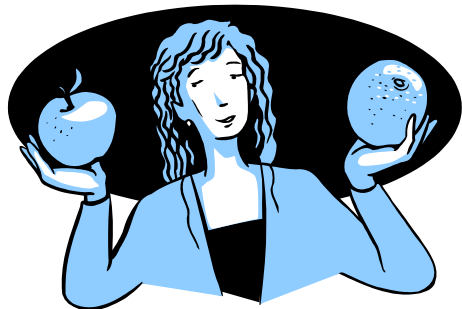
Look at the rejections you have found and write them in the table below under the appropriate heading. One has been done for you.

Rejection with reason	Rejection with alternative
	No well we could do it at 8 o'clock...
Rejection without a reason or alternative	

Comparison and reflection



- Understand what others may do, how they do it and why.
- Understand what they would 'normally' do and why.
- Activities:



- Annotation
- Discussion

Exercise 8 (noticing, reflection and discussion)

Use of *well* in the example given above.

It is used here to avoid making a direct answer; ie: I'm not saying YES and I'm not saying No

Discuss:

Think of words in your language that you would use to do the same thing and discuss them with your neighbour.

Cultural note:

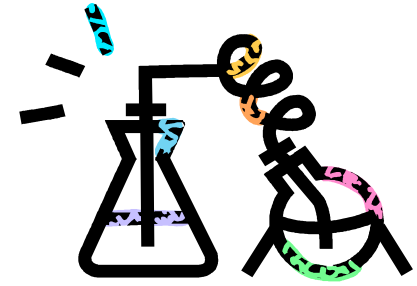
In Australia, people prefer to avoid saying NO too often or too directly, and so they give reasons why something can't be done or suggest alternatives to support, or sometimes instead of, rejecting an idea or suggestion directly

Reflection and discussion

What is the effect of providing a reason or alternative?

Discuss how you would reject a suggestion by a colleague in your culture. Discuss why you would do it in this way, and how far it is similar to the way it is done in the dialogue. Think of a specific example to tell the class.

Experimentation



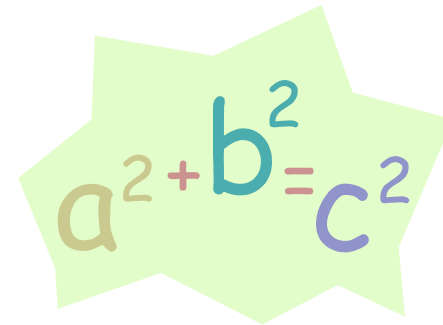
- People need to try things out in a safe place
- How:
 - Discussion of 'how to'
 - Practice of formulae
 - Role plays
 - Homework



Practising formulae

Yates, L.2003. Comment-response mingle. In
Bardovi-Harlig, K., & Mahan-Taylor, R. (Eds.),
Teaching Pragmatics.

[http://exchanges.state.gov/englishteaching/resforteach/
pragmatics.html](http://exchanges.state.gov/englishteaching/resforteach/pragmatics.html)



And debriefing

How did it feel? Why? What next?

- Transcultural mobility
- Hybrid
- 3rd place
- Constantly changing
 - Time
 - Space
- 3rd space



Some resources

Springall, J. (2008). *Keys to Work*. Melbourne: AMES

Springall, J. (2007). *Taking Care -Trainer Guide and DVD/CD Pack*.

Tatsuki, D. & N. Houck (2010) (Eds.), *Pragmatics from research to practice: Teaching speech acts* (pp. 67-86) Alexandria, VA: TESOL.

<http://www.ames.net.au/bookshop?link=78>



Some free resources

Generic skills fact sheet

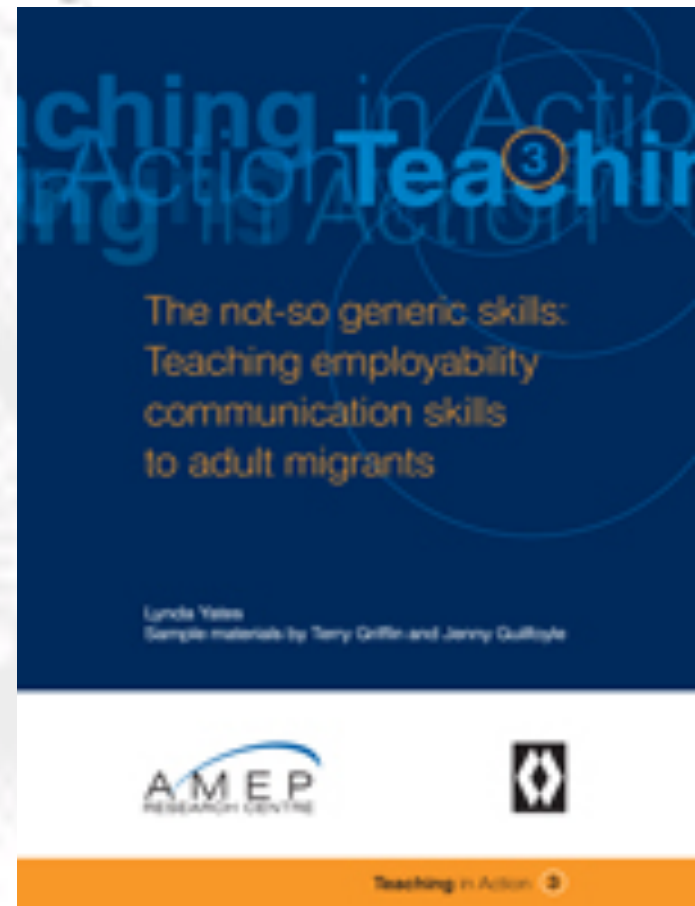
<http://www.ameprc.mq.edu.au/>


Bardovi-Harlig, K., & Mahan-Taylor, R. (Eds.), *Teaching Pragmatics*.

<http://exchanges.state.gov/englishteaching/resforteach/pragmatics.html>

Yates, L. (2008). *The not-so generic skills: Teaching employability communication skills to adult migrants*.

<http://www.ameprc.mq.edu.au/>





**Thank you
And enjoy!**



So what does happen at work?

The social/cultural

At work, do you . .

show overt respect to those of higher rank

e.g. use 'Sir' to address the boss

wait until asked to give your view

adopt a formal, 'professional' stance

e.g. use formal language

Or do you . . .

downplay overt hierarchical differences

e.g. use a first name to address the boss

suggest new ideas without invitation

adopt a familiar, informal stance

e.g. use informal language

Example

Approaches to teaching pragmatic skills

- Aim - action researchers
- Models based on authentic language
- 'Noticing'
- Explicit comment
- Reflection, comparison & sensitive discussion L1/C1 and L2/C2
- Practice and experimentation in/ outside the class
- Exploration and debriefing personal reactions
 - A third way

<http://www.ames.net.au/bookshop?link=78>

- <http://www.ames.net.au/bookshop?link=78>

Cross-cultural communication

Intercultural communicative competence

Transcultural communication

Transcultural competence

Intercultural mobility

Intercultural communication

Intercultural pragmatics

Transcultural pragmatics

Interlanguage pragmatics