A WEB-BASED TUTORIAL FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF SPANISH PRAGMATICS

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Abstract

In this paper, we present a Web-based tutorial (WBT), developed for instruction on Spanish pragmatics. The WBT was designed to teach learners of Spanish as a foreign language about the speech acts of complaints and requests, and the content of the WBT is based on available empirical evidence about these speech acts. We describe and illustrate, in detail, the format, structure, and various sections of the WBT, including: lessons, ancillary support, and assessment. In addition, some technical considerations in the development of the WBT, such as the user interface design, are also discussed. The paper concludes with suggestions for implementing this open access WBT in various teaching contexts, as well as a discussion of directions for future research. Given the paucity of materials available for the instruction of Spanish pragmatics, either in print or on the Web, the WBT fills an important gap and provides a model for the development of future online pragmatics-focused materials.

INTRODUCTION

By and large, the development of pragmatic competence is not a priority for most foreign language (FL) programs in the United States. Rather, the focus of instruction is almost exclusively on the development of grammatical competence. However,

grammatical errors are easily identified and forgiven by native speakers while pragmatic errors are not always identified as such and may result in misunderstandings, communication breakdowns, and even social isolation for second language (L2) learners (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990). Grammar instruction is concerned with the accuracy of structure (syntax and morphology) while pragmatics refers to language use and the appropriateness of utterances given specific speakers, content, and situations (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Levinson, 1983). It has been widely assumed among FL teaching professionals that learners must spend a long time intensively immersed in the target language (TL) culture to acquire pragmatic competence. (Although there is evidence which suggests that pragmatic errors may persist even after lengthy stays in the TL culture: e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). Traditionally, most FL textbooks have ignored the topic of pragmatics altogether (Reese-Pinto, 2002). Fortunately, there is now a growing body of research on second language pragmatic development (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Bouton, 1994; House, 1996; Kasper & Rose, 2002; LoCastro, 1997) that indicates instruction in pragmatics may be beneficial.

Bardovi-Harlig (2001) and Kasper and Rose (2002), for example, found that classroom instruction on speech acts helps learners to acquire pragmatic competence. According to Searle (1969), speech acts are language users' attempts to perform specific actions, in particular interpersonal functions that are typically universal to all languages. Some examples of speech acts include: apologies, requests, compliments, and complaints. In order to communicate effectively with native speakers in the TL, learners must be able to understand the intended meaning communicated by speech acts and they must also be able to produce speech acts using appropriate language and manner according to the surrounding social and cultural context, which is a difficult task for even highly advanced L2 learners.

Rose's (2005) review of the literature on pragmatics also indicates that instruction in pragmatics is more beneficial than exposure to the TL culture, and he asserts that there is ample research to justify the inclusion of pragmatics instruction into second and foreign language studies. Several studies that compared pragmatics instruction to exposure (or no instruction) have demonstrated a benefit for instruction over exposure (Billmyer, 1990; Bouton, 1994; Lyster; 1994; Wishnoff, 2000; Yoshimi, 2001). Billmyer (1990) examined compliments and compliment responses with two groups of English as a Second Language (ESL) students, those who received pragmatics instruction (the treatment group) and those who did not (the control group). She found that the treatment group outperformed the control group in all of the instructed areas: norm-appropriate use, adjectival repertoire, frequency of compliments, spontaneity, and deflection. With regard to compliment responses, the control group merely accepted compliments, failing to use any pragmatic strategies at all. Yoshimi's (2001) findings were similar to those of Billmyer. Her study demonstrated that students learning Japanese as a foreign language who received pragmatics instruction outperformed those who did not. Yoshimi investigated Japanese interactional markers, with the treatment group

receiving 24 hours of instruction spread out over the course of one semester. At the end of the treatment period, the students who received pragmatics instruction showed a significant increase in the frequency of interactional markers in their oral production while the control group did not demonstrate any such gains.

A more recent review of research examining pragmatics instruction (Taguchi, 2011) also corroborates these findings, stating unambiguously that, "instruction is better than non-instruction for pragmatic development" (p. 291). Therefore, because instruction is superior to exposure for the acquisition of pragmatic competence, there are clear implications for including pragmatics instruction in FL textbooks and curricula. Moreover, research studies conducted by Hoven (1999), Kramsch and Anderson (1999), and LeLoup and Ponterio (2000) support the use of multimedia and authentic materials for pragmatic and cultural instruction. The use of multimedia tools may be particularly effective for the instruction of speech acts, specifically through video-based lessons where students can observe native speakers realizing speech acts with both audio and video input. Taguchi (2011) underscores the compatibility of pragmatics instruction with instructional technologies, noting that "…some of the key instructional features endorsed by technology – for example, input, interaction, simulation, and a multimedia environment – are indeed key conditions for pragmatics learning" (p. 297).

This article describes a Web-based tutorial (WBT) for the instruction of Spanish pragmatics. The WBT presented in this article focuses on the speech acts of complaining and requesting in Spanish. Although there are few Web-based resources that are available for teaching Spanish pragmatics, the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) developed a self-access website for learning speech acts in Spanish. Their website, *Dancing with Words*, offers instruction on a variety of speech acts including compliment sequences, gratitude and leave taking, apologies, requests, invitation sequences, service encounters, advice, suggestions, and reprimands. Although the *Dancing with Words* website offers instruction on a number of speech acts in Spanish, the present WBT offers lessons on the speech act of complaining in Spanish, which is not available on CARLA's website. In addition, the Spanish pragmatics tutorial offers a unique and highly interactive user interface where learners have the option of recording a video response (with their web cams) to the discourse completion tasks (DCTs) that are presented to them during the pragmatics lessons. DCTs are open-ended questionnaires that ask participants to respond to a scenario. The *Dancing with Words* website also employs DCTs, but users only have the option of replying with a written response via a text box. Thus, the present WBT makes better use of the capabilities of the Web-based format, has a more appealing user interface design, and has greater interactivity for users than the Spanish pragmatics lessons that are currently available from CARLA. The WBT also offers an introduction to pragmatics, two stand alone lessons, resources for learning Spanish pragmatics, and an interactive assessment. Following a brief description of the design and

development process, each section of the Spanish pragmatics tutorial is described in detail below.

GUIDELINES FOR PRAGMATICS MATERIALS

In an effort to produce a high quality research-based WBT that is effective for learning Spanish pragmatics, CARLA's (2006) guidelines for developing Web-based pragmatics materials were followed as closely as possible. The guidelines, which are based on empirical evidence in the field, are listed below:

- Goals and objectives of the site will be explicitly stated.
- Video clips, tasks, and contexts will be as authentic as possible.
- Tasks will be learner-oriented, varied, and lend themselves to the use of learning strategies and self-discovery
- Content will be empirically-based and informed by experts.
- Content will encourage individual pragmatic performance at a variety of levels.
- Ancillary support will be given for each lesson.
- Feedback will be learner directed, scaffolded throughout the site, and not prescriptive.
- The website and interface will be designed so as to provide the most optimal learning environment possible for learners.

Instructional Objectives

For the present WBT, the instructional goals and objectives are clearly listed for learners on the lessons page. The objectives are written in English and in the second person to avoid a formal tone and to demonstrate that the tasks and activities presented in the WBT are learner-oriented. The instructional objectives are listed below.

At the end of this lesson you will be able to:

1. Notice the strategies that you use to complain in English
2. Recognize how you transfer your pragmatic knowledge of English into Spanish, either appropriately or inappropriately.
3. Identify the strategies that native speakers of Spanish use to complain in both public and private settings.
4. Understand the various social factors and language strategies that are important when complaining in Spanish.

Authenticity of Tasks

In order to approximate natural data on the speech acts of requesting and complaining in Spanish, the dialogues in the video clips were not scripted. The interlocutors were given DCTs that set up each complaint scenario, and they were asked to express themselves as they normally would, given the context and the problem at hand. While the language in the video-based lessons represents elicited rather than natural data, the language that is elicited by the DCTs is likely to characterize what native speakers perceive as appropriate or acceptable language use. In addition, the DCTs represent scenarios in which learners could likely find themselves, lending weight to the authenticity of the video clips in the WBT. The two Spanish-speaking interlocutors that are presented in the video-based lessons are both Cuban Americans in their late twenties who have lived in the United States less than five years; thus, both interlocutors share a similar social and cultural context for the completion of their DCTs in Spanish.

Awareness of L1 Pragmatic Strategies

Before learners are presented with any information or material on pragmatics in Spanish, they are encouraged to become aware of or discover the pragmatic strategies that they use to request and complain in English. The first part of each video lesson presents learners with a complaint scenario in English. For example, in Lesson 1 there is a video of two English-speaking roommates; one roommate is attempting to study while the other roommate is listening to music very loudly. The student who is trying to study asks her roommate to turn down the music. At first, the roommate complies, but then he quickly turns up the volume again. A text bubble pops up that says,

> *Your roommate is playing music while you are studying for a big test. This has already happened three times this week. You say to him . . .*

Learners must complete the previous DCT in English (their L1) by typing their responses into a text box, and after they click *next*, they are shown a list of the most common pragmatic strategies that are used to request and complain in English. The WBT encourages students to examine the pragmatic strategies that they use to request and complain in English and to compare these with the most common strategies that are used by native speakers of English.

L2 Pragmatic Strategy Use

The tutorial also informs learners that they are likely to transfer the pragmatic strategies that they use to formulate speech acts from their L1 to their L2 without conscious awareness that they are doing so. Learners are also explicitly told that transferring pragmatic strategies from their L1 to their L2 may be either appropriate (positive transfer) or inappropriate (negative transfer). In other words, pragmatic transfer from one language to another may be either helpful or harmful when communicating with native speakers in the TL.

According to Reese-Pinto (2002), learners should be explicitly informed about the outcomes of transferring pragmatic strategies from the L1 to the L2, as both low and high proficiency learners may engage in negative transfer without realizing it. The WBT provides learners with examples of how native speakers perform the speech acts of requesting and complaining in Spanish, and learners are encouraged to compare their production with native speaker norms. Learners are also provided with information about the differences and similarities between the two languages with respect to the linguistic forms and structures that are typically used to formulate the speech acts of requesting and complaining in Spanish.

Cohen (1998) asserts that students need to have adequate sociocultural and sociolinguistic abilities in order to successfully produce speech acts in the L2. Sociolinguistic ability refers to a language learner's ability to select and utilize the correct register and to manipulate the appropriate linguistic forms and structures when realizing a speech act. Thus, a learner's lack of sociolinguistic ability often results in pragmalinguistic errors, which are errors that occur when a language learner knows which speech act to use and when to use it, but does not know the appropriate language (forms, structures, vocabulary) to form a linguistically acceptable speech act.

Sociocultural ability, however, is generally a much more complex issue, involving knowledge of the TL social and cultural norms as well as the situational and personal factors that affect the realization of the speech act (Cohen, 1998). Sociopragmatic mistakes occur when the learner does not know which speech act to use or when to use a speech act appropriately. The present WBT focuses on the pragmalinguistic errors that learners are likely to make rather than on their sociopragmatic errors, as the former are likely to be more similar across the various cultures where Spanish is spoken.

Since pragmatic strategies are difficult to notice even by native speakers during real time communication, the tutorial utilizes text bubbles that pop up outside of the video frame, which point out the pragmatic strategies that are used by the native speakers to complete the DCTs in Spanish. In addition, learners are provided with a detailed list of the non-targetlike pragmatic strategies that L1 speakers of English

typically rely on when realizing the speech acts of requesting and complaining in Spanish in both public and private settings. Learners are also given explicit information about which linguistic forms and structures are appropriate to transfer from English to Spanish and which ones are less appropriate. Further, the WBT contains a resource page at the end of each lesson with links that review the specific linguistic forms, structures, and vocabulary items that are necessary to complete the two DCTs presented in the tutorial, which provides learners with the sociolinguistic knowledge that is necessary to form linguistically appropriate speech acts in Spanish.

Empirically-Based Content

All of the content in the tutorial is based on empirical evidence from the field. Although most of the research on interlanguage pragmatics focuses on advanced L2 learners of English, there are a few studies that have investigated requests and complaints by L2 learners of Spanish. Specifically, Reese-Pinto (2002) examined requests, complaints, refusals, and apologies, focusing on learners' interlanguage pragmatic development in Spanish. He compared speech act production among native Spanish speakers, native English speakers, and four levels of Spanish language learners in an effort to understand where Spanish language learners' production of speech acts diverges from native speaker norms. He found that the majority of the differences were primarily pragma-linguistic.

Thus, Reese-Pinto recommends that teachers address the specific linguistic forms and structures that could assist their students in producing more native-like speech acts in Spanish. Similarly, Cohen and Olshtain's (1993) study revealed that learners' lack of lexical development led to pragmatic failure in the formulation of requests. Olshtain and Cohen (1989) also found that communication failure occurred because L2 learners of English did not possess sufficient linguistic competence to realize certain speech acts. In some instances where there would be an expected positive transfer from the learners' L1 to the L2 with regard to speech acts, Blum-Kulka (1982) and Cohen and Olshtain (1981) found that L2 learners avoided making the transfer because they lacked the linguistic ability to do so.

Reese-Pinto (2002) also found that among native speakers of Spanish, complaints generally result in a request for an action to repair the grievance. His findings echoed Giddens (1981), who asserts that native speakers of Spanish from a wide variety of Spanish-speaking countries employ combinations of seven semantic formulas when complaining, with over 90% of complaints terminating with a request for an action to remedy the wrong. The remedy component is actually a request that could potentially be perceived as a face-threatening act. The pragmatics-focused materials that were developed for this project focused on requests of this nature.

Additionally, the present WBT is appropriate for learners of Spanish who range from novice to advanced because the video-based lessons are first presented in English, which helps students discover the pragmatic strategies that they employ in their native language. After viewing the English version of the complaint scenario, learners are presented with the same scenario in Spanish.

Thus, novice-level learners' comprehension is scaffolded with the English language examples that occur at the beginning of each lesson. The WBT is also appropriate for intermediate and advanced-level learners because the DCTs of the native Spanish-speaking interlocutors were not scripted, and their speech includes colloquial expressions and complex linguistic forms and structures.

Learner Support

Ancillary support is available on the resources pages, where learners are encouraged to explore further information on Spanish grammar, vocabulary, and culture. Learners are also supported with transcripts of all of the videos that are presented on the WBT, both in English and in Spanish, on the resource pages. The transcripts allow learners to check their own comprehension if they desire to do so.

User Interface Design

From an SLA perspective, Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis (1993, 2001), undergirds the design of the WBT. Furthermore, the WBT was authored in Macromedia Flash Version 8 in order to stream video, create graphics and animations, and allow user interaction in real time. This user interface was designed to provide the most optimal environment for learners to "notice the gap" between their production and native speaker norms through comparisons of responses to DCTs via text box and/or web cam video. The text box feature allows students to compare the language structures and vocabulary that they use to complete DCTs in Spanish with native speakers' written responses. Video responses to DCTs allow learners to compare their oral language production and other paralinguistic features, such as facial expression and gesture, with native speaker norms.

While DCTs in English, which comprise the first part of each lesson, must be answered via a text box, learners have the option of using a text box or a web cam to respond to the DCTs in Spanish, which comprise the second part of each lesson. If learners choose to record a video response, they are taken to a screen that explains in detail how to make a recording with their web cams. A screen shot of the instructions for recording a video response to Spanish DCTs is presented in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Instructions for Recording a Video Response

Further, the user interface allows pragmatic strategies to be pointed out in real time, as text bubbles appear beside the video frame as the native speakers interact and employ pragmatic strategies. The developers also took into careful consideration elements such as navigation, screen size, color, images, and animation in order to create a user interface that is pleasant and appealing to learners. Alpha and Beta tests were conducted with two Spanish language instructors who are native speakers of Spanish and with ten university-level second semester students of Spanish.

Alpha tests checked the overall usability (Nielsen, 1993) of the WBT (Learnability, Efficiency, Memorability, Errors, and Satisfaction) and Beta tests checked the instructional content. The alpha tests did not reveal any problems with the usability or navigation of the website. However, the Beta tests revealed that some of the language used on the lesson content pages was unclear to some of the users. The problematic language was reworded and/or simplified. The second round of Beta tests did not reveal any problems with the instructional content.

COMPONENTS OF THE TUTORIAL

The WBT has four main components as follows: (a) An introduction to Pragmatics, (b) Two self-contained video-based lessons, (c) An assessment, and (d) Resources for developing pragmatic competence. Each component is described in detail below.

Main Page

The WBT was designed to be circular rather than linear in nature. In other words, learners do not have to move in a lock-step fashion through the tutorial; rather, they are able to begin anywhere that they like, and they are encouraged to navigate to areas of the website that capture their attention. The main page introduces learners to the field of pragmatics by utilizing an animation that demonstrates the sociocultural differences between the American and Mexican cultures with respect to the amount of interpersonal space that is considered to be appropriate. Figure 2 presents a screen shot of the main page of the Spanish pragmatics tutorial.

Figure 2: Main Page of Spanish Pragmatics Tutorial

In US culture, individuals typically prefer more interpersonal space than individuals from Hispanic cultures, such as citizens of Mexico City, one of the most densely populated cities in the world. In the animation, the American misinterprets the proximity of the person standing behind him in line; he believes that the gentleman from Mexico City is trying to pick his pocket because he is standing very closely to him in the line. However, the animation presents learners with the Mexican citizen's thoughts, which are on his own stomach. (The text bubble shows that the gentleman is hungry). Students are also informed about how the misconception on the part of the American due to his lack of knowledge of the sociopragmatic differences between the two cultures on the issue of interpersonal space could result in very negative consequences for himself, such as social conflict and/or the failure to build solidarity with members of the TL culture. Animation was included to capture attention and introduce the concept of pragmatics

Introduction to Pragmatics

The pragmatics section features a mini tutorial where learners can listen to an introduction to field of pragmatics and view a slide show of the most salient points that are covered in the audio presentation. The audio version takes about five minutes to play, and learners are given this information before they begin. However, if learners do not wish to listen to the audio version, they are also given the option of reading a text-based version of the presentation. Thus, learners have autonomy about the modality in which they access information. Figure 3 depicts a screen shot of the Introduction to Pragmatics Tutorial (audio version) below.

Figure 3: Introduction to Pragmatics Tutorial

Both versions of the introduction to pragmatics (audio and text) contain the same content, and they provide learners with the following information: (a) a definition of pragmatics, (b) the importance of studying pragmatics, (c) a definition of speech acts with examples, (d) information on face or politeness systems, and (e) the types of pragmatic errors that L2 learners typically make (pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic), with a definition of each error type and examples.

Lessons

The lessons section of the tutorial contains two stand alone pragmatics lessons that are video-based: Lesson 1 is for an informal complaint (the interlocutors know each other well), and Lesson 2 is for a formal complaint (the interlocutors do not know each other). Learners must take into account the following social variables (Brown & Levinson, 1987) when forming speech acts to complain:

1. The social distance between the speaker and the hearer
2. The power difference between the speaker and the hearer
3. The degree of imposition on the hearer

The WBT provides students with explicit information on face-threatening acts (FTAs) since the recipient of a complaint has a high risk of becoming offended. L2 learners may avoid complaining altogether because they do not want to offend members of the TL culture; however, in order to avoid being taken advantage of, sometimes it is necessary to complain. Students are informed that all complaints are potentially FTAs.

The notion of losing face refers to being embarrassed or humiliated, and it closely relates to the culturally accepted norms of linguistic politeness. Speakers often try to save their own face, but it is also considered polite to protect the face of the hearer. The goal of the tutorial is to help learners employ various strategies to complain in Spanish with the intention of saving their own and their hearer's face.

The main lessons page contains two video-based lessons: Lesson 1 takes place in a private or informal setting and Lesson 2 takes place in a public or formal setting. Figure 4 depicts a screen shot of the main page for Lessons 1 and 2, which shows the two complaint scenarios for learners to work through.

Figure 4: Main Page for Lessons 1 and 2

The complaint scenario in Lesson 1 is between two roommates, one of whom is playing music very loudly while the other is trying to study. The second complaint scenario in Lesson 2 is between a hotel guest and receptionist. The hotel guest ordered breakfast from the room service menu, which was supposed to arrive after 15 minutes. However, the hotel guest has been waiting for his breakfast for 45 minutes and his tour bus leaves in 15 minutes. He must call guest services to complain that his meal has not yet arrived. A screen shot of the complaint scenario for the DCT (Spanish version) from Lesson 2 is presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Complaint Scenario for Lesson 2

Before viewing the video-based lessons in Spanish, learners' pragmatic awareness is raised in their L1 through the completion of DCTs in English. For Lesson 1, learners are shown that in English their tendency is to use the following pragmatic strategies when complaining in a private setting: (a) Questions formed with ability modals such as *Can you?* or *Could you?*, (b) The word *please*, and (c) The phrase *You need to* rather than a direct command in the imperative mood.

For Lesson 2, learners are made aware of their tendency to use the following pragmatic strategies when complaining in English in a formal setting: (a) Saying the word *please* multiple times, (b) Ability questions such as *Can you?* or *Could you?*, (c) The conditional mood (*would*, *could*), and (d) Multiple downgraders, which are statements that soften the impact of the utterance on the hearer (*I was wondering if you could?* and *Would it be possible for you to?*). Figure 6 presents a screen shot from Lesson 2, which demonstrates the pragmatic strategies that are common when complaining in English in a public setting.

Figure 6: Pragmatic Strategies for Complaining in English in a Public Setting

After completing the DCTs in English, learners are presented with the same scenario for each complaint in Spanish. Learners are prompted to respond to DCTs in Spanish in one of two modalities: written via text box or spoken via web cam. After learners complete the DCTs in Spanish, they are given explicit information regarding the appropriate and inappropriate transfer of pragmatic strategies from English to Spanish. They are also alerted to the pragmatic strategies that native speakers of Spanish typically employ when complaining in private and public settings.

For Lesson 1 (the informal setting), learners are informed that native speakers of English are likely to transfer the use of ability questions from English to Spanish, which is inappropriate (negative transfer). They are also likely to avoid the use of direct language and imperatives, which are commonly used by native speakers of Spanish. In addition, Spanish language learners whose L1 is English also tend to use politeness markers and downgraders, which are inappropriate or negative transfer for complaints and requests in an informal setting. Learners are also informed that native speakers of English typically use less gesticulation than native speakers of Spanish. Figure 7 depicts a screen shot from Lesson 1 of the explicit instruction that learners receive about appropriate versus inappropriate pragmatic transfer from English to Spanish.

Figure 7: *Explicit Information on Appropriate versus Inappropriate Pragmatic Transfer*

Similar to Lesson 1, after completing the DCT in Spanish for Lesson 2 (the formal setting), learners are given explicit information about the positive and negative pragmatic transfer that they are likely to make between English and Spanish when complaining in a public setting. For example, they are informed that it is not appropriate to transfer ability questions (*Can you? Could you?*) and the word *please*; however, it is appropriate to transfer the use of modal verbs and multiple downgraders when complaining in a public setting, although most Spanish language learners fail to transfer the latter because they tend to lack knowledge of the linguistic forms and structures to do so, which is known as a pragmalinguistic error.

After viewing explicit information about positive and negative pragmatic transfer, learners are shown a video of the entire complaint scenario between the two native speakers of Spanish as they complete the DCTs and resolve the problems using language that is socially and culturally appropriate. The pragmatic strategies that they use are pointed out to students in real time graphically through the use of text bubbles that appear beside the video frame. Learners may view the video multiple times until they are able to recognize all of the pragmatic strategies that the native speakers employ. While research shows that it is very difficult for learners to recognize native speakers' pragmatic strategy use in real time (Kasper, 1996; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996), the user interface in the present WBT makes use of the capabilities of the Web-based format in order to make pragmatic features salient for learners. Figure 8 presents a screen shot from Lesson 1 that depicts pragmatic strategy use in real time.

Figure 8: Pragmatic Strategies in Real Time

Ancillary Support

Finally, at the end of each video-based pragmatics lesson, learners are provided with a resource page to help them find out more about Spanish pragmatics and how to sound more native-like in their Spanish language production. Each resource page is specific to the lesson that was completed. According to Rodriguez (1997) and Walters (1979), learners need to have mastered a wide range of verbal morphology; namely, the present, conditional, imperative, and past subjunctive, in order to realize the speech act of requesting in a manner that is comparable to native speaker norms. In addition to mastery of these tenses and moods, learners must also be able to

distinguish between formal and familiar verb forms and use them appropriately. The resource page at the end of Lesson 1 provides learners with links that contain explicit information on the formation of familiar commands, guidelines on when to use familiar language and commands, tips for sounding more native-like (such as dropping the subject pronoun), and information on the difference between gestures and gesticulation with a link for a lesson on common gestures in Spanish-speaking countries.

The resource page at the end of Lesson 2 provides links that contain explicit information on how and when to use the past subjunctive mood, how to form the conditional mood, how to use direct object pronouns and direct language, as well as how to use familiar versus formal subject pronouns correctly. Learners are also informed that native speakers of Spanish are much less likely to use the words *please* and *thank you*. Rather than say *thank you,* Spanish speakers are much more likely to issue an invitation to demonstrate reciprocity. Thus, learners are provided with a link to help them find out more about issuing invitations in Spanish. At the end of each lesson, learners may replay the lesson or move on to the next lesson. A screen shot from the resource page at the end of Lesson 2 is presented in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Resource Page for Lesson 2

TUTORIAL ASSESSMENT

The assessment was designed to be an interactive game that would motivate learners to attempt it multiple times. After an initial splash/welcome page, learners are prompted to look at a DCT and then determine which statements were made by

native speakers of Spanish and which statements were made by Spanish language learners who are nonnative speakers of Spanish. The two DCTs in the assessment are the same DCTs that were presented to learners in the pragmatics tutorial. The goal of the assessment is for learners to recognize whether statements are pragmatically appropriate or inappropriate given the DCT at hand. In order to elicit data for the assessment, two classes of university level second semester students of Spanish and ten native speakers of Spanish who were working as Teaching Assistants (TAs) at a large urban university in the southeastern United States were asked to complete the two DCTs. Their responses were examined and sixteen were included in the assessment: eight from the Spanish language learners and eight from the native speaker TAs. Nonnative responses to DCTs included the use of ability questions, overuse of politeness markers, and the use of subject pronouns, which are inappropriate pragmatic strategies when requesting and complaining in Spanish. Native speaker responses included the pragmatic strategies that are typical for the speech acts of requesting and complaining in Spanish; namely, the use of direct language (imperative mood) without any mitigators such as the word *please* in a private setting and the conditional mood and multiple downgraders in a public setting.

For the assessment, two black talk bubbles appear in the middle of the page, which are titled *Native Speaker* and *Nonnative Speaker*. Learners are prompted to drag the letter next to each response and drop it into the correct black talk bubble. They are informed that there may be multiple native speaker and multiple nonnative speaker responses. After dropping all of the responses into the black talk bubbles in the center of the page, learners are required to check their answers before moving on to the next item. If they answered incorrectly, they may reset the page and try again until they answer correctly. However, after checking their answers, learners may move on to the next item and revisit incorrect responses at a later time. Figure 10 presents a screen shot from the assessment section of the pragmatics tutorial.

Figure 10: Pragmatics Assessment

After completing the assessment, learners are given their results. They are provided with the number of correct and incorrect items and a total score in the form of a percentage. After viewing their results, learners are prompted to *Play Again.* The primary goal of the WBT is to help learners build sociolinguistic competence, a key component of communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). Recently, Chapelle (2009) redefined the term communicative competence to include ". . . the ability to communicate using readily accessible L2 technology aids . . . the ability to make appropriate linguistic choices in face-to-face, remote, written, and oral modes, and the ability to choose appropriate technologies for communication and language learning" (p. 751). According to Chapelle's updated definition, the game-based assessment in the present WBT may help learners build communicative competence remotely because they are required to choose appropriate linguistic responses to DCTs.

Regarding the efficacy of the WBT for pragmatics instruction and assessment, Garrett (2009) asserts that CALL materials should be evaluated with respect to a given technology's ability to help language learners complete specific tasks in context. The WBT contextualizes the instructional content for learners, as the video-based lessons present native speakers interacting in real time to realize speech acts. Moreover, the game-based assessment at the end of the tutorial requires learners to select socially and culturally appropriate responses to complaint scenarios, and correct responses depend upon whether the setting is formal or informal. Thus, the assessment piece to the WBT is also appropriately contextualized for learners. In addition, alternative technology-based assessments (such as digital games) are able to incorporate more authentic tasks than traditional computer-based testing (CBT), which is typically dominated by multiple-choice items (Ockey, 2009). Carr (2011) claims that selected response items that are creative and non-traditional could be more effective than multiple-choice items because they "may require more language competence, may be more authentic, or may allow the tapping of aspects of language ability not easily assessed by traditional multiple choice" (p. 342). As the present WBT attempts to assess pragmatic competence, which is typically not addressed or assessed in second and foreign language curricula, an alternative game-based approach using drag-and-drop matching was implemented to tap into this aspect of language learning. Further, Carr asserts that animation, drag-and-drop matching, and pull down menus are more engaging for learners than traditional CBT.

Potential Limitations to the Assessment Design

For the assessment component of the present WBT, learners are required to select the most appropriate response to DCTs and answers are scored automatically by the program. This assesses learners' ability to recognize appropriate pragmatic strategies. However, it does not guarantee that learners will be able to produce appropriate language and manner when interacting with native speakers during real

time communication. Ockey (2009) suggests that for the assessment of multidimensional constructs (such as the development of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence) human discourse must be taken into account, which is still a challenge for computer-based assessments. Cummins and Davesne (2009) assert that qualitative human-based assessment may be necessary for the interpretation and evaluation of L2 production, as traditional CBT is limited to scoring selected response items, matching responses to a key (answers must be an exact match), and key word or text string matching, which is only able to assess content and not grammatical accuracy (Carr, 2008; Carr & Xi, 2010). In the present WBT, the assessment could possibly be strengthened by adding a module that requires learners to produce language in response to various complaint scenarios, but this would mean that learners' responses would have to be assessed by their teachers, which would be a drawback for learners who are not formally enrolled in Spanish language courses.

CARLA (2006) recommends that feedback should be learner directed, scaffolded throughout the site, and not prescriptive. The present WBT provides this type of feedback at set intervals throughout the video-based lessons, as learners are continually prompted to compare their written and/or oral production with that of native speakers. Learners are also provided with explicit feedback on appropriate pragmatic strategy use in both the L1 and the L2 for formal and informal settings. At present, the WBT's assessment only provides implicit feedback. In other words, learners are only told if their answers are correct or incorrect. Sanz (2004) conducted a computer-based study that investigated feedback type and the acquisition of word order and object pronouns in Spanish. She found no significant difference between a group that received explicit individualized feedback and a group that received implicit feedback. Brandl (1995) examined high and low achieving students' preferences for feedback options while completing computer-based grammar activities on the German passive voice. He found that both high and low-achieving students preferred implicit feedback (right or wrong message) over the following three types of feedback irrespective of the level of task difficulty: (a) error location, (b) grammatical description of correct response, and (c) the correct response. However, both Sanz and Brandl focused on the instruction of second language grammar and their findings may not be generalizable for the instruction of pragmatics. It is presently unclear which type of feedback is the most beneficial for Web-based pragmatics instruction.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING & RESEARCH

The WBT described here has not yet been implemented and evaluated with Spanish language learners, nor has it been empirically tested. The focus of this article has been on the design and development process for the creation of a research-based

WBT for the instruction of Spanish pragmatics. Suggestions for instructional applications, evaluation, and empirically testing the WBT are included below.

Instructional Applications

We believe there are many possible ways in which the WBT could be used to support language learning. In a traditional face-to-face language learning context, the WBT could be incorporated into an existing curriculum, for example, in a Spanish Conversation class. In contexts with adequate computer laboratory facilities, students could work through the WBT over several class sessions. Another application is for students who plan to study abroad in Spanish speaking countries. The WBT could be used for pragmatics instruction prior to the study abroad experience, as approximating TL norms in pragmatics is particularly relevant for these learners.

Another manner in which the WBT could be used is as a supplementary self-access resource, which would enable learners to work independently, at their own pace, outside of class time. Ishihara (2007) describes such a use of a similar WBT (focusing of compliments and apologies) for intermediate learners of Japanese. In her context, the WBT was used by students in an extracurricular fashion to support classroom instruction of Japanese. Perhaps the greatest potential offered by the Spanish WBT would be for a distance learning FL class. In this type of context, the WBT could be integrated into an existing online curriculum, supplementing other existing lessons, which may not emphasize pragmatics or language and culture connections.

WBT Evaluation & Suggestions for Future Research

We believe that future evaluation of and research on the WBT falls into three related domains. The first of these would entail assessing users' perceptions of the WBT. In other words, do students believe that it helps them learn? Do they find the content and format to be engaging and motivating? There are a number of ways of exploring this issue: for example, by administering surveys or conducting interviews with learners. In an exploratory study of students' use of a WBT focusing on Japanese pragmatics, Ishihara (2007) asked learners to keep reflective journals to document their experiences with the WBT. She found that students' reflective journal entries indicated that they responded positively to the pragmatic material presented in this format.

The second domain of research involves further investigation of what students actually do as they work through the WBT. In other words, which features of the WBT are they exploiting? In what ways are they interacting with the lessons and

assessments? Are they making use of ancillary support material? One way of addressing such questions would be to observe a sample of students as they use the WBT in a computer lab. Another related alternative would have researchers asking learners to complete think-aloud protocols as they work through the WBT, and (when relevant) having learners reflect on why they make the navigational choices they make. Yet another option (and one that offers the advantage of less direct researcher intervention) would be to install a program such as Camtasia on learners' computers, which captures screen recordings, and which would enable researchers to chart learners' moves as they interact with the WBT.

The third domain of research involves evaluating the effectiveness of the WBT in terms of learner outcomes. In other words, does engagement with the WBT lead to gains in students' understanding that complaints and requests differ in English and Spanish? Does use of the WBT result in increased awareness of which pragmalinguistic forms are appropriate in the formulation of those speech acts in Spanish? Is use of the WBT related to improvement in learners' L2 speech act performance? Ishihara's (2007) study demonstrated that, after using a WBT, learners' reflective journal entries showed that they had enhanced awareness of Japanese speech acts. We believe that research studies that combine learner self reports with more objective measures (such as a traditional quasi-experimental pre-/post-test design) hold the greatest potential for documenting the extent to which WBTs can impact learners' L2 pragmatic development.

CONCLUSION

By and large, research findings indicate that instruction in pragmatics helps learners improve in their pragmatic competence (Cohen, 2005; Jeon & Kaya, 2006; Rose, 2005; Taguchi, 2011), which may in turn affect their interactions with native speakers. Since the majority of FL textbooks fail to include instruction in pragmatics, the Internet is an ideal repository for pragmatics-focused materials. The inclusion of video-based lessons in the current WBT allows learners to view native speaker pragmatic strategy use in real time. In addition, pragmatic strategies are pointed out with text bubbles that appear beside the video frame, which demonstrates how technology can be used to make pragmatic features more salient for learners.

The unique user interface design also enables learners to compare their production with native speaker norms, either via text box or web cam technology. The web cam feature allows learners to make both visual and auditory comparisons. By using technology as a vehicle for instruction, the current WBT encourages learners to notice the gap between their production and native speaker norms with respect to pragmatic strategy use. As Spanish language learners' production of speech acts primarily diverges from native speaker norms due to pragmalinguistic

differences (Koike & Pearson, 2005; Reese-Pinto, 2002), the WBT also offers resources for explicit instruction on the language forms, structures, and vocabulary necessary to produce linguistically appropriate speech acts. Although it is widely accepted that grammatical competence does not ensure pragmatic competence, Bardovi-Harlig (1999) cautions that grammatical competence may be the platform upon which pragmatic competence is built. Further, there is growing research-based consensus (e.g., Taguchi, 2011) that explicit metapragmatic explanation is critical for pragmatic development.

The ultimate goal of the WBT is to help Spanish language learners become aware of the pragmatic strategies that native speakers use when realizing speech acts and to incorporate these strategies by using appropriate language and manner when requesting and complaining in Spanish. Currently, there are very little pragmatics-focused materials available for Spanish language learners, either in print or on the Web. The present WBT fills an important gap and provides a model for the creation of research-based and pedagogically sound materials for the instruction of Spanish pragmatics that take advantage of the capabilities of the Web-based format. The WBT described in this article is open and available and can be found at: www.slaitresearch.com Educators, learners, and researchers alike are welcome to use it.

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