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THE MULTICULTURAL ASPECTS OF TEACHING ITALIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Analysis of recent research and publications. The authors highlight the importance of providing language teachers with «specific guidance in how to teach and assess pragmatics systematically in order to feel comfortable incorporating empirically based pragmatics more into their teaching». In essence,

what follows in this paper is just that: a description of a two-semester project to incorporate in a more intentional manner the teaching and assessment of pragmatics into the first-year curriculum of a university-level beginning Italian language course. Using the videos and textual information from the course

textbook as the starting point, students were taught pragmatically appropriate ways of carrying out various speech acts (e.g., greeting others, extending invitations, and making requests) as well as appropriate forms of address, indicators of politeness, and conventional expressions. Instruction was reinforced through in-class activities and then assessed using an adapted version of ACTFL Integrated Performance Assessments or IPAs. The outcomes of the project will be presented in terms of student satisfaction and instructor self-efficacy.

Studies have demonstrated that students do not intuitively «pick up» on how to accomplish these speech tasks in a socially and culturally appropriate way. Instead, Bardovi-Harlig [Bardovi-Harlig 2012, 2015] has called for instructors to be intentional about incorporating metapragmatic instruction into their curriculum, even at the beginning levels of language learning. She has demonstrated that L2 learners who do not receive instruction in pragmatics are noticeably different from native speakers in their understanding and use of a variety of pragmatic functions, including speech acts and conversational functions and management (e.g., greetings and leave taking).

The aim of the article is to highlight the specific of multicultural education and to show the quintessential role of background knowledge in time of learning the foreign language, in our case Italian language.

The main material of the study. Studies that have sought to examine the success of instructional interventions in the teaching of pragmatics have shown mostly positive results. Bardovi-Harlig and Vellenga focused on the teaching of formulaic routines [Bardovi-Harlig, 2012]. Their results showed that learners made gains on certain conventional expressions but not on others. The authors explained the mixed results in terms of the lack of relative transparency of some expressions (e.g., Thank you for having me) and the level of the interlanguage grammar of the learners. This finding highlights the two different facets of pragmatics: sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics. The former refers to the awareness of the culturally appropriate rules and conventions related to pragmatic functions, while the latter refers to the linguistic resources (expressions/vocabulary and grammar) needed to express these functions. In order for L2 learners to be pragmatically appropriate in their target language usage they need to have both the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge and resources available to them. If they do not, they risk confusing or even offending their

interlocutor.

Bardovi-Harlig and Vellenga wondered whether the lower gains found in their study may also be attributable to a lack of production opportunities. To explore this possibility, Bardovi-Harlig, Mossman, and Vellenga conducted a follow-up study in which they investigated the effect of instruction on the acquisition of pragmatic routines (particularly agreement, disagreement, and clarification) in the academic discussions of 36 low-advanced ESL university students. They used specially developed corpus-based instructional materials that consisted of the presentation of authentic language input followed by noticing and production activities. They found an overall increase in the targeted pragmatic routines in students' oral production which they attributed to instruction and assessment.

Table 1. Summary of pragmatic functions in colloquial speech

Chapter	Chapter Theme	Pragmatic Function(s)
1	Per Cominciare (Introduction)	greeting and saying goodbye to someone; expressing politeness/formality; finding out someone's name and where the person is from; expressing likes and dislikes
2	Com'e'?? (Describing oneself and others)	asking how someone is; asking about someone's nationality
3	Cosa ti piace fare? (Free-time)	getting someone's attention; asking and telling time; asking when events occur; asking about and saying what you like to do in your spare time
4	Che bella famiglia! (Family)	meeting people and finding out what they do for a living; commenting on things and complimenting people
5	A tavola! (Restaurant terms and food)	inviting someone to do something; declining an invitation and making excuses
6	Vestiti alla moda (Clothing)	making polite requests; asking permission
7	Cosa hai fatto questo weekend? (What you did in the past)	expressing surprise, pain, etc. (interjections); asking what happened
8	Che bella festa! (Italian holiday celebrations)	asking for information; expressing good wishes

Whereas Americans may offer something once and, if the other person says «no, thanks» consider the matter settled, Italians consider it polite to decline the first offer, so as not appear too eager or to cause their host any trouble.

Once the strategic was presented, students completed practice activities, which generally move from recognition to production and from more controlled and guided to the more open-ended and creative. These sections most often culminated in some form of a role-play or a similar meaning-focused activity based on an exercise from the textbook, on a modified version of one such exercise, or on a supplementary activity created by one of the instructors. For example, after learning how to make polite requests, students watched video examples of Italians being asked and responding

to various requests and then completed a comprehension-based matching activity. This was followed by a production-based information-exchange activity, which was a modified version of an activity already in the textbook. Essentially, students needed to request information from their partner using the appropriate formula for a request (they were provided only with the second part starting with an infinitive, e.g. *dire a die ora arriva il treno*). The partner would then have to respond appropriately and with the correct information using a list of possible responses (e.g., *alle 9.30*).

Example of a polite request:

S1: *Scusa, puoi dirmi a ora arriva il treno?*

S2: *Certo. Alle 9.30.*

S1: *Grazie.*

S2: *Prego!*

Clearly, in order to complete this type of activity, students must be able to connect the pragmatic form to its function. As is often the case with such activities, it was difficult to create an authentic context that would require a change in form to mark increased politeness (e.g., *mi pud* as opposed to *mi puoi*) without simply indicating to students that their roles had changed, which didn't seem to be the most effective or authentic means to do so. This problem is undoubtedly more marked in a foreign language teaching context where an application of the expression is not immediately obvious to a student. With no prior experience, students may have difficulty imagining, for example, that at the train station they would be expected to use a different form with the train conductor than with an Italian student waiting beside them on the train platform. Finding ways to create genuine contexts that do not require students to play roles they would never play in real-life and that keep the complexity and demands of the activity at a level appropriate for the beginning level is a challenge to be sure, but one that needs to be addressed by instructors and textbook writers in the future.

Although the Strategic sections had always been part of the first-year curriculum, the intentional focus on pragmatic functions this year led to a change in our approach to the teaching and assessment of these sections. First, regarding teaching, we made sure to present the new expressions in terms of pragmatic functions - without necessarily using that term - so that students could make a conscious connection between the linguistic strategy and resource presented, e.g., *mi puoi/ pud...?* and the illocution it encoded (e.g., *chiedere una cortesia*). Of course, while we presented this information (generally via Powerpoint) in Italian, it was also presented in English in the

textbook and the students always had access to it there. However, the addition of a more deliberate locus on pragmatics led to a clearer and more unified sense of purpose in the presentations of the instructors when it came to teaching the strategic. We no longer saw them as just 'useful expressions' for students to know, but as forming part of students' developing pragmatic competence. In turn, then, we needed to make sure we were dedicating adequate time in class for students to be able to develop an understanding of the meaning and function of a particular set of communication strategies, and to practice using them in a real-life context. As indicated above, activities were provided in the textbook, but other times we created our own. Again, although completion of these types of activities was not necessarily new to the curriculum, we were less likely to hurry through them so as to allow time for the "important stuff" (like vocabulary and grammar sections). In short, the intentionality contributed to a greater sense of purpose and clarity on the part of the instructor, and, we believe, led to a more meaningful and thorough interaction with materials on the part of the students. Finally, knowing that we would ultimately assess what the students could do with the language presented in the Strategic - and indeed in the entire chapter - by means of the addition of the Performance Assessments, gave more value to the time spent developing pragmatic competence at the beginning of each chapter.

It is important that students know how they will be assessed. For this reason, the evaluation criteria was always included.

Conclusions and prospects for further researches of directions. The teaching of cultural aspects is relevant, essential, and possible even at the beginning levels of language instruction. The importance of developing pragmatic competence as part of our students' communicative competence should not be overlooked. This paper has provided one example of an attempt to incorporate a more intentional focus on pragmatic instruction and assessment in a first-year Italian language course curriculum. The outcomes were presented in terms of increased instructor self-efficacy as well as, generally positive student reactions. Finally, some indications were suggested for instructors wishing to develop their own students' pragmatic competence in the future.

The materials development landscape is marked now by its range and diversity. The reasons are many, but two key factors most certainly arise: (a) the increasing number of generic technologies available which can be used to facilitate and encourage interaction between

the teacher and students and among students themselves across the in-class/out-of-class divide and (b) students' and teachers' increased proficiency in the use of the technologies. These two factors have meant that we now have the means and the skills to enhance and perhaps intensify the in-class/out-of-class relationship.

However, in spite of all this, we are still seeking the optimal in-class/out-of-class mix. This still is, and perhaps always will be, a work in progress because, as Jim Pusack and his colleagues pointed out many years ago (Hope, Taylor & Pusack, 1984), ultimately it all depends upon the teacher. Without the pivotal role played by the language teacher in developing CALL materials and orchestrating their implementation, the potential of an engaging, powerful language-learning environment breaks down. The demands on the teacher are becoming even more intensive compared with the early days of CALL, partly because the expectations of the student body are now much more sophisticated and demanding.

Clearly this has significant implications for teacher education and CALL. But these issues do not only concern the teacher per se. They also invoke the need for a rich institutional and technical support structure, and also learner training so that learners can distinguish between using generic technologies for learning as opposed to social purposes. Although, again, much learner training may come back to the work of the language teacher in class, perhaps there are avenues for increased learner training to be conducted through tutorial software out of class, in larger groups beyond the individual class, or even across language-learning programs. These factors are particularly important if we wish to avoid the novelty trap in CALL and want the student experience to be engaging and sustained over the long term. In all of this, still, locating the ideal in-class/and out-of-class mix and the teacher's role are critical.

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ІНСТИТУТ ОМБУДСМЕНА ЯК СКЛАДНИК СИСТЕМИ ЗАХИСТУ ПРАВ ДІТЕЙ В УКРАЇНІ

Постановка та обґрунтування актуальності проблеми. Важливим напрямом розвитку і становлення України як демократичної, правової та соціальної держави є розбудова і зміцнення національного правозахисного механізму, невід’ємним складником якого сьогодні є інститут омбудсмена – представника і захисника прав, свобод та законних інтересів людини у її відносинах з державою. У світовій практиці накопичено значний позитивний досвід функціонування як універсального уповноваженого з прав людини, так і спеціалізованих омбудсменів, покликаних сприяти у захисті прав окремих категорій осіб (військових, людей похилого віку, національних меншин тощо), або на певній території/регіоні, або у специфічних сферах суспільного життя (охорона здоров’я, освіта, інформаційні відносини тощо). Особливе місце у цій розгалуженій мережі посідає омбудсмен, призначення якого – сприяти в реалізації дітьми їхніх прав, забезпечувати, охороняти й захищати права дітей.

У зарубіжних країнах відповідна посадова особа може позначатися не лише, як «омбудсмен», але мати й інші назви – комісар/уповноважений з прав дітей/із захисту прав дітей/у справах неповнолітніх. Необхідність і доцільність запровадження

такого інституту зумовлена тим, що діти – специфічна вікова категорія, яка за своїми фізіологічними, психологічними та іншими особливостями не може самостійно захищати свої права у разі їх порушення. Інституціоналізацію та поширення омбудсмена з прав дітей у світі пов’язують з прийняттям Конвенції ООН Про права дитини (1989) та необхідністю втілення положень даного документа у національні правозахисні практики. Дана Конвенція, у свою чергу, ґрунтується на Декларації прав дитини (1959). Обидва документи виходять з того, що дитина внаслідок її фізичної і розумової незрілості потребує спеціальної охорони і піклування, зокрема належного правового захисту, до і після народження. На необхідність у цьому акцентовано в Женевській декларації прав дитини (1924), Загальній декларації прав людини (1948), у статутах міжнародних установ і організацій, що опікуються питаннями добробуту дітей. Принцип 8 Декларації прав дитини проголошує: «Дитина за будь-яких обставин має бути серед тих, які першими одержують захист і допомогу». Згідно з Принципом 9, «Дитина має бути захищена від усіх форм недбалого ставлення, жорстокості та експлуатації».

Аналіз останніх досліджень і публікацій. Проблема забезпечення прав