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Improving intercultural pragmatic competencies in online L2 Spanish classrooms through task-supported learning

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Abstract

Learners of a second language often have limited access to the native culture of that language in an authentic way, resulting in them committing linguistic and intercultural mistakes. One of the main advantages of task-based learning is that it can expose students to real-world circumstances, which makes learning a language more meaningful and inclusive of appropriate language behaviour. Task-based learning has become an accepted method for learning a language in face-to-face classroom environments, but its applicability to online learning is largely unaddressed. The author proposed well-organised online role-plays based on a task-based approach involving native speakers, which helped students interact in an authentic way and demonstrate their understanding of culture. The author conducted the research to increase intercultural pragmatic competencies in online L2 classrooms regarding common pragmatic speech acts as to not only increase their pragmatic competency but to also motivate students. The students from the online experimental group who were exposed to task-supported role-plays performed better than the online control group of students; however, student motivation was only mildly impacted. Thus, pragmatics and interculturality can be effectively taught in online L2 classrooms through task-supported learning, though motivation may require longer interventions.

Keywords: interlanguage pragmatics, intercultural communication, online learning, motivation, task-based language teaching

Introduction

Language is a core element of the existence of human society and represents a primary factor in observing the human personality. Therefore, no human society has ever existed without language and culture (Soomro et al., 2015). Every culture has its norms, beliefs, customs and traditions. Therefore, the second-language (L2) acquisition process cannot be completed without emphasising culturally appropriate behaviour while interacting in the second language. It is for this very reason that the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL, 2018) created intercultural competence standards stating that it is essential for all novice students to recognise "obviously inappropriate behaviors in familiar everyday situations," "avoid major social blunders," and "transition smoothly from formal to informal styles of behavior" in the target language (p. 6).

Accordingly, some schools have developed sample learning targets in which the students are motivated to follow cultural norms while interacting. For example, in Bellevue School District (Washington, United States), language learning targets are developed around cultural contexts in which students must accept or refuse invitations based on culturally appropriate norms for the target language. Students have to follow different culturally appropriate standards while offering or receiving gifts, requesting assistance, using appropriate body language, turn-taking, interrupting and agreeing while interacting with others (Bellevue School District, 2015, p. 4). These intercultural competence standards require students to have a basic understanding of pragmatic norms and speech acts. This is where intercultural competence and pragmatics intersect.

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Pragmatic errors are likely to occur when the learners are not aware of the target language's cultural factors. It is challenging to avoid social blunders if the learners do not have ample knowledge of speech acts. It is equally challenging for educators to teach pragmatics to learners of a second language.

Many learners of a second language have less exposure to using authentic language within its cultural contexts. They have fewer or no opportunities to learn the target language out of the classroom, and they rely on teachers' instructions, textbooks, and visual programmes (Webb, 2013). Teachers may not be properly trained in how to teach pragmatics to students (Vellenga, 2011), which is problematic for two reasons: 1) students may not be able to meet intercultural standards, and 2) pragmatic errors may be perceived as more serious than grammar errors due to real-life implications (Wolfe et al., 2016).

In Spanish, refusals, requests and invitations are among the most commonly used speech acts (Langer, 2011). Strategies employed when carrying out speech acts vary greatly from culture to culture (Yoko, 1995). According to Langer (2011), the most common forms of invitations tend to be more direct in Spanish than in English. Requests in Spanish vary based on the level of imposition (the more imposition is used, the more courteous the request is). Finally, refusals are generally indirect in Spanish and often include an explanation or postponement.

According to Smith (2009), the above differences are not commonly taught in L2 classrooms. Smith also observed that Spanish learners are unfamiliar with native-like responses to requests and invitations. In Spanish, these responses are commonly brief, and typically, learners do not have the pragmatic skills to express what would be appropriate for the target culture (Smith, 2009). Like pragmatic errors, there are several challenges that educators face while teaching Spanish to elementary-level learners. However, teachers can make maximum use of non-verbal and verbal cues to minimise pragmatic errors.

Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, teaching activities shifted online, with teachers having to help their learners gain second-language competencies using virtual platforms, which posed great challenges especially for those teachers who had never delivered online classes before. This rapid transition from campus-based face-to-face teaching to virtual teaching required them to acquire online teaching skills. It was also necessary to adapt their teaching methods, structure, content and pedagogy (Rad et al., 2021). Several studies support the idea of teaching a second language online by employing a wide array of technologies (Herrera Díaz & González Miy, 2017; Jabeen & Thomas, 2015; Moneypenny & Aldrich, 2016). These technologies have only rarely been used to aid the development of students' pragmatic competence (Taguchi & Sykes, 2013; Yang, 2017).

Nevertheless, their effectiveness was suggested in a previous study (Kaliska, 2018). The author stated that digital sources offer teachers an opportunity to create tasks focusing on structure and collocations. Thus, educators can help increase students' pragmatic competence.

For the language teacher of this study, task-based and supported learning, in which tasks could be developed with the help of digital technology and multimedia, seemed like the answer to increasing students' pragmatic intercultural competence in the online environment due to the fact that task-supported learning has been shown to increase other language competencies, as explained below.

Literature review

The term "task" has been defined in multiple studies over the years. According to González-Lloret (2019), task-based activities and pragmatic instruction go hand-in-hand in the L2 classroom. Willis (1996) refers to a task as "a goal-oriented communicative activity with a specific outcome, where the emphasis is on exchanging meaning, not producing specific language forms" (p. 36). Skehan (1996) distinguishes between "weak" and "strong" versions of task-based language learning (TBLT). "Strong" refers to a task-based curriculum, whereas "weak" is when the curriculum has varying levels of task-based features. While the curriculum for this present study was not a task-based curriculum, it did implement many tenants of task-based learning to enhance the pragmatic competence of students, thus providing them with "task-supported" or "weak" versions of TBLT.

Another potential benefit of task-supported activities is that it may help motivate students to become life-long language learners. "Enhancing learners' motivation has always been a primary and widespread concern of most language teachers" (Hejrati et al., 2017, p. 233). Furthermore, motivation is key to the long-term retention of students in higher education language programmes (Rodriguez-Garcia, 2011). It was observed that the students' motivation level was higher in the case of TBLT than in the case of traditional langauge-learning methods (Namaziandost et al., 2017). To keep this motivation intact, the teaching approach must be engaging, and a task-based approach may be the solution. Some previous scholars explain that task-based approaches and task-supported activities may increase student motivation by making a language class goal-oriented rather than grammar-focused (Namaziandost et al., 2017). Due to its proposed effectiveness, task-based teaching has been a widely-discussed topic in the academic body of literature.

Language learning approaches have changed over time. Until the 1970s, language training used to be teacher-controlled, also known as the presentation-practice-production model (Hilsenbeck, 2011). Task-based language education denotes a shift in pedagogy from the traditional theoretical and teacher-oriented method of language learning to a goal-focused and student-centric approach. According to the language scholars of the 1980s, language is the core medium

of communication, and students should know the appropriate application of the L2. Teachers and scholars have always expressed their concern about the gap between language teaching in the classroom and their application outside of the classroom (Singhasiri & Thepsiri, 2015). Past studies have focused on the importance of the task-based learning approach (González-Lloret & Nielson, 2014; Willis & Willis, 2007). A task-based curriculum allows students to be creative with language and solve problems. They are encouraged to better comprehend course material, since it is presented in the form of meaningful tasks where they can apply the language. It is a modern learning method in which students are exposed to the natural context to communicate (Permatasari et al., 2021). According to Nunan (2007), the seven principles of task-based language teaching are *Scaffolding*, *Task dependency*, *Recycling*, *Active learning*, *Integration*, *Reproduction to creation* and *Reflection*. In the Scaffolding principle, the teacher has to provide the language training required to complete the assigned task. The Task dependency principle states that the assigned tasks should be interconnected and arranged in sequence. Through recycling, students can learn how the target language functions in the related context. In the Active Learning principle, one learns language by using it actively. The teachers' role is passive. The educator should ensure that linguistic forms, communicative function, and semantic meaning are incorporated (*Integration*). The reproduction to creation principle states that students reproduce the language the teacher provides and use it to apply their own creativity. Overall, a task-based curriculum focuses on meaning but does not overlook form. The emphasis is on engaging learners' natural abilities to acquire a second language. It aims at engaging the learners with language as a meaning-making tool and is different from the structural approach in which language is perceived to be the object that is to be taught systematically, and learning is intentional (Ellis et al., 2019).

TBLT is rested on the belief that language learners need to be exposed to meaningful input from the very early stage. Even though they have limited linguistic resources they should try to engage in meaningful communication in the second language. Therefore, the learners' focus should be placed on the meaning and not on the grammar or linguistic accuracy. Language knowledge is built on the implicit knowledge that the learner acquires during conversations and interactions in the respective language (Van den Branden, 2016).

Even though most students learn a language so that they can use it, language scholars have observed that traditional textbooks do not meet real-world needs (Wen-Cheng et al., 2011). Therefore, the effectiveness of task-based education has come to the forefront. More innovative learning approaches may include task-based learning. González-Lloret and Nielson (2014) carried out a study that aimed at evaluating task-based learning in the context of learning Spanish in a government agency. The aim of conducting this

language course was to help the employees become more efficient and productive language users. The authors' findings suggested that a task-based course to learn Spanish prepared learners to complete critical job tasks in the L2 (González-Lloret & Nielson, 2014).

One of the pioneers of the task-based approach, Prabhu (1987) stated that the effective learning of a L2 is possible only when students are engaged in language tasks, rather than just learning about the language. To make the task-based method smoother, Mosquera (2012) suggested some further recommendations and introduced two stages of TBLT. According to the author, teachers should prepare apprehensive students significantly in the pre-task stage. It will help reduce students' anxiety level, and their language acquisition confidence will be improved. Pre-task stage preparation will also assist in bringing spontaneity and fluency, making language learning a pleasurable experience for students. In addition, the task-based model helps to achieve a significant degree of communicative and linguistic competence among students. According to Willis and Willis (2007), "This is one of the most valuable things we can give a learner: the confidence and willingness to have a go, even if their language resources are limited" (p. 2).

Ellis (2003) focused on some of the principal features of a task in the context of the language education process. First, the author states that the task is a work plan and focuses on the meaning. Second, it is designed to use the language in a real-world environment. Third, it consists of any of the language skills; listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Finally, a task engages cognitive processes and has a clearly defined communicative outcome. This is where it seems plausible that task-based activities could support the acquisition of pragmatic competence among students, even in online contexts.

Materials and methods

Considering the effectiveness of the task-based approach in both online and offline education processes, the present research is based on analysing the positive outcomes of the task-based approach in enhancing pragmatics competence in Spanish L2 classrooms. The research purposes are as follows:

- Explore students' intercultural competence in the online L2 classroom concerning common pragmatic speech acts in Spanish.
- Explore students' motivation to learn Spanish in higher education (leading to retention).
- Provide justification for pragmatic lessons in the online L2 classroom.

Research questions

The following research questions were developed:

- What effects do task-supported role-plays have on online L2 Spanish students' intercultural pragmatic competence?

- What effects do task-supported role-plays have on online L2 Spanish students' motivation to learn the language?

Participants

The research was conducted in a higher education institution in central Illinois (United States) during the autumn of 2020 after the midterm and after having received approval from the Institutional Review Board. According to U.S. News & World Report (2020), this is a public institution with approximately 5,000 students. The ethnicity of the institution is primarily White - approximately 72% of students. The average student age is 22 years old, and 54% are female and 46% are male. This demographic information is consistent with that of the students who participated. A total of 32 students fully participated in the study, which was experiment-based. They had an elementary level of competence in Spanish (SPAN 101). Participation was voluntary, and the students had equal opportunities to participate in the experiment. The participants were divided into two groups; one was the control group, which included 10 participants. The other was the experimental group, consisting of 22 participants. The experimental group included task-based role-plays to promote pragmatic language acquisition. The control group was taught without using a task-based approach. They instead carried out role-plays, as explained below, without going through the task-supported steps. Both groups were taught online.

Data collection and instruments

Three interventions were performed in the experimental group, consisting of task-supported role plays involving requests, invitations, and refusals (one each). In the final cumulative role-play, all three speech acts were incorporated. Thus, the final, cumulative role-play was performed in both the control and experimental groups. The purpose behind performing the final role-play in both groups was to make a comparative analysis. Aside from assessing the final role-plays for pragmatic ability, an additional instrument was used for the present study. This was a Multiple-Choice Discourse Completion Test (MCDCT) (Langer, 2011) taken in two phases, pre and post-intervention in both groups. Along with the test, pre and post-motivation surveys (Al Khalil, 2011) were conducted as well. MCDCTs have been used with success in past pragmatic research (Bachelor, 2016, 2020). Additionally, the motivation survey developed by Al Khalil (2011) was selected since it looks at integrative motivation and attitudes toward L2 learning.

The task-supported role-plays were conducted in three steps for the experimental group: pre-task, task, and post-task. In the pre-task phase, students watched an authentic video of a native Spanish speaker performing the speech act in question. In the task phase, the learners completed the task via role-play with a speaker from the TalkAbroad platform, which uses online video conferencing to connect students enrolled in an L2 course with native speakers of the target language. This step promotes the use of the speech act in question in order to complete the task. The conversations of the students were recorded. In the third and last process, the post-task process, the students reviewed the recorded conversation, filled out a self-evaluation checklist, and repeated the scenario with their classmate using Zoom through Canvas integration.

An example of one of the task-supported role-plays assigned to the experimental participants is provided below.

> **Person A**. Social distancing has led to tutoring taking place on Zoom. At the end of the tutoring session, you decide to invite your tutor to your Zoom movie club (you and other friends watch Netflix movies and then have a movie club, similar to a book club, on Friday nights). Your task is to convince your tutor to try out your movie club this Friday.
>
> **Person B**. Social distancing has led to tutoring taking place on Zoom. You are a tutor and also a student. At the end of your tutoring session, your tutee invites you to a Zoom movie club. Your task is to find out the pertinent details and decide if you want to attend or not.

The self-evaluation checklist for the student consisted of "yes" or "no" questions concerning students' ability to present main ideas clearly in Spanish with some details, to provide simple and easily comprehensible questions and answers, to get the point without offending the other person, to use strategies to avoid unfamiliar language and compensate by using familiar language, and ultimately, to determine if the student was successful in completing the task.

The final task-supported role-play that took place in both groups was as follows:

> **Person A**. One of your classes is on Zoom. The professor has added you to a breakout room with Person B. You invite Person B to a Zoom coffee meeting after class and also request their notes. Your task is to convince your classmate to meet up later and give you their notes.
>
> **Person B**. One of your classes is on Zoom. The professor has added you to a breakout room with Person A, who asks you to have a Zoom coffee meeting and for your class notes. Your task is to turn down/refuse the note request and to instead invite Person A to another Zoom event of your choosing.

The MCDCT used in this study was based on a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) created by Langer (2011) that measured three different speech acts: Invitations, requests, and refusals. Under these acts, a total of ten scenarios were formulated; three for the request, three for refusals, and four for the invitation.

An example is given below.
The participants will ask their close friends whether they can use their friends' Spanish textbook.

A. *¿Me das tu libro?*
B. *Quisiera tener tu libro, por favor.*
C. *Por favor, dame tu libro.*

The data regarding the motivation level of the learners towards task-based learning was acquired through Likert-scale questions. For this study, Likert questions were in the form of statements in which the respondents had to show their agreement ranging from 1 to 4, with one indicating that the statement was "absolutely true" for the student, and four indicating that it was "not true at all." A four-point scale was employed to force participants to express a positive or negative opinion. The questions were based on an L2 learner motivation survey created by Al Khalil (2011). There are 15 items in total, five to evaluate integrative motivation and ten to evaluate attitudes toward L2 learning.

The following is an example:
Studying Spanish is important to me because it will allow me to make friends among Spanish speakers.

At the end of the study, the final role-play conversation was analysed using criteria based on Félix-Brasdefer (2018), García (2008), and Langer (2011), as to assign a *pragmatic* score (see Table 1).

Statistical procedures

The procured data from the experiment and the survey were analysed using statistical tools. Descriptive statistics were calculated using Microsoft Excel to compare the pre and post-motivation survey results, with a focus on the mode. Paired *t*-tests were performed to test the pre and post-MCDCT in the control and experiment groups. Post-to-post scores (control vs. experimental) on final role-play were obtained by applying unpaired *t*-tests. The effect size is procured using the unpaired *t*-test result from the final role-play.

Results

In terms of the Likert-scale motivation survey, some positive movements in the mode were observed in the experimental group only. There were no negative changes observed. The control group did not undergo changes. For example, there was a 1-point increase on questions 6, 10, and 11. It is presented in Table 2.

Regarding the MCDCT, the paired *t*-test results indicated an insignificant statistical difference in either group, using a significance level of .05 (see Table 3).

Table 1
Types of conversations

Invitations	Requests	Refusals
• Direct invitation • Suggestive invitation • Collective invitation • Downplaying inconvenience • Insistence	• The level of courtesy matches the level of imposition (command or present tense for very low level vs. conditional for high level)	• Excuse/explanation • Puts off the decision making until later

Source: author's own work based on findings by *Pragmatics & Discourse at Indiana University,* C. Félix-Brasdefer, 2018 (https://pragmatics.indiana.edu/speechacts); Different realizations of solidarity politeness: Comparing Venezuelan and Argentinean invitations, C. García, 2008. In K. P. Schneider, & A. Barron (Eds.), *Variational pragmatics: A focus on regional varieties in pluricentric languages* (pp. 269–305), John Benjamins (https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.178.13gar); *The effects of pragmatic instruction in the Spanish language classroom* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation), B. D. Langer, 2011, University of California.

Table 2
Positive mode changes observed on the motivation survey

Question	Statement	Change
#6	Learning Spanish is really good	2-1
#10	Learning Spanish is one of the most important things for me as I grow as a person	3-2
#11	I like the atmosphere of my online Spanish class	3-2

Source: author's own work.

Table 3
MCDCT results

Control group			Experimental group		
	Mean	Standard Deviation		Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre-test	32	16	Pre-test	40	15
Post-test	39	10	Post-test	44	16
$t(9) = 1.65$		$p = 0.13$	$t(21) = 1$		$p = 0.33$

Source: author's own work.

Control group scores from pre-test ($M = 32$, $SD = 16$) and the post-test ($M = 39$, $SD = 10$); $t(9) = 1.65$, $p = 0.13$ indicate an insignificant statistical difference. Experimental group scores from pre-test ($M = 40$, $SD = 15$) and the post-test ($M = 44$, $SD = 16$); $t(21) = 1$, $p = 0.33$ indicate an insignificant statistical difference.

Finally, an insignificant difference between the score from the control and experimental group was observed in the final role-play when running an unpaired *t*-test, as shown in Table 4. Scores from control ($M = 59$, $SD = 36.12$) and experimental ($M = 75$, $SD = 30.58$); $t(14) = 0.192$, $p = 0.37$ indicate an insignificant statistical difference, using a significance level of 0.05.

studies regarding the impact of task-supported learning on pragmatic competence; however, these other studies were not conducted in the online teaching and learning contexts, nor were they focused exclusively on intercultural pragmatic competence.

In this present study, when the control and experimental groups were observed, it was found that the experimental group performed better than the control group when producing spoken language, according to the large effect size. Thus, the research findings are similar to the findings of Lou, Chen, and Chen (2016). Likewise, Pearson (2006) carried out a study in which a similar experiment was conducted for L2 learners as was carried out in the present research. The author targeted 94 L2 learners of Spanish, in which they watched

Table 4

Final role-play comparison between control and experimental groups

Control group		Experimental group	
Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
59	36.12	75	30.58
$t(14) = 0.192$		$p = 0.37$	

Source: author's own work.

However, Cohen's *d* effect size calculation using the final cumulative role-play resulted in the following:

$$d = (79.55 - 55) / 27.27 = 0.9$$

This is considered a "Large effect" in which 82% of students in the control would perform worse than students in the experimental group on a similar role-play task, according to Coe (2002).

Discussion

The present research aimed at investigating the outcomes of using task-supported role plays on L2 students' intercultural pragmatic competence and motivation to learn the language. The objective of the experiment was to justify the pragmatic lessons in the classroom and enhance student motivation. The effect size findings indicate that the task-supported role-plays that students completed were effective in improving the pragmatics skills among Spanish L2 learners when producing language during role-plays. However, this was not the case when recognising language on the MCDCT. Task-supported role plays may also increase student motivation and retention, though a longer intervention period may be required for more significant findings.

Several previous studies have discussed the importance of pragmatic competence in the target language context and how to improve pragmatic competence among language learners (Allami & Naeimi, 2011; House, 2013). For example, Youn (2018) found that task-based learning was essential for language communication and pragmatics. The findings from this present study are consistent with these previous

a scene from the video series *Destino*. The students were asked to identify four speech acts (thanks, apologies, commands, and requests). The students practiced these acts through role-plays. However, the students found the videos boring and outdated (not relevant to the present context). It indicates that while designing the role plays for L2 students, it should be ensured that the videos complement the context. A merely task-based approach is, therefore, not sufficient.

It is important to support language learners to acquire intercultural pragmatic competence and thus enhance their motivational level. Motivation is necessary to be maintained while successfully achieving second language learning goals. According to Kusnierek (2015), by using role-plays teachers promote real-world learning. It is the interaction among the learners with similar competence and language abilities. Role plays motivate learners and teachers to take the initiative to interact constructively with other students involved in learning activities.

According to Zhang and Papi (2021), students with high intrinsic motivation are more likely to acquire pragmatic competence earlier than students who lack it. However, it cannot be expected that all students from language classrooms have intrinsic motivation. The teacher has to create external factors related to improving pragmatic competence. Extrinsic motivation can be given through rewards, which leads to individual satisfaction and happiness. The task-based learning approach motivates students to communicate in order to complete a specific learning task. According to Tan et al. (2017), when the language learning experience is pleasurable and cultural-specific, it leads to positive outcomes of language learning and pragmatic competence.

There are several challenges in task-based learning, especially in pragmatic competencies. Pragmatics has been directly associated with the culture of the language, and therefore its competence depends upon the cultural literacy of the learners. According to Hamouda (2014), pragmatic failure is an unintentional offensive action and error of the learners. However, it is not an intentional mistake. The cultural diversity and lack of awareness of pragmatic rules are the primary obstacles in realising the speech act in other cultures. Lack of appropriate media facilities can also cause a problem in language acquisition and the pragmatic competence process. Lack of time is another challenge. Due to time constraints, teachers do not always include pragmatic instructions. Nevertheless, these challenges can be mitigated with appropriate strategies, such as through task-supported role plays. Regardless of these challenges, the task-based model has shown to be effective, relevant and ideal in teaching languages to online L2 learners.

Although the researchers tried to be multidimensional in their approach, there are some limitations to the design. Therefore, it is highly recommended that future research overcomes them while carried out in the same area.

Limitations

The first limitation is the sample size, which is considerably small, making it more difficult to generalise the findings to larger populations. Only 32 Spanish learners participated in the experiment. A larger sample size means a larger volume of data. The larger sample size helps to obtain more precise and accurate mean values. For example, the mean value of 32 participants would certainly differ with 100 participants, providing more accuracy. The larger sample size also enables being closer to the population, which helps to remove outliers or other data points. Due to these outliers, the data may be mispresented.

The data collection period is another limitation of our research, as we collected data for one semester only. It was cross-sectional, one-time research. If the data of the whole year had been available, the findings might be different, impacting the accuracy of the research. Considering this limitation, the author recommends procuring annual data.

Additionally, pragmatics is culturally-focused. Cross-cultural pragmatics is also a separate topic of study. In the case of Spanish, there are various dialects, with Spanish spoken in Spain, Latin America, Mexico, Caribbean countries, and other geographical zones. Though the language is the same, the culture may differ. For example, Mexican culture is different from Spanish culture. In such circumstances, the pragmatics taught in universities may not be applied while communicating with all Spanish-speaking regions. Hence, it is highly recommended that the pragmatic tasks be designed considering the target cultural context.

The assessment tool used in the research also has some limitations. In the experiment, the researcher divided the students into two groups, control and experimental, to observe their performance. However, a one-time experiment may lead to several errors, especially while assessing students' language competence. Many participants are likely to be conscious if they realise that they are part of an experiment. The experiment method should have been supported with observation and interview methods. With the presence of these three assessment tools, the results could have been more accurate and spontaneous.

The present research discussed a task-based approach in motivating students to acquire the Spanish language. However, the study did not focus on other motivational factors that are equally important. Separate research can be conducted focusing on motivational factors behind the language learning process in the classroom. This study did also not focus on other dimensions of the task-based approach such as the duration of tasks, interest-generating ability, the effectiveness of individual, pair or group tasks etc. The focus was mainly on role-plays. However, several other tasks could be assessed.

Conclusion

The present research analysed the success of task-supported role-plays in an online classroom on pragmatic competence and student motivation in the L2 Spanish context. Therefore, the author proposes role-plays as an effective task in the language acquisition process of learners specific to certain speech acts. These role-plays should be based on a real-world scenario. Furthermore, previous studies have elucidated the significance of the task-based approach. The shift from the presentation-practice-production model (teachers-centric traditional learning approach) to the interactive task-based approach may increase the motivation level of students. The approach is based on the active learning principle in which students need motivation. If students lack intrinsic motivation, teachers have to create such a motivational learning environment. The researcher gathered evidence to suggest the significance of the task-based approach in increasing the ability to produce speech acts during role-play; certain motivation points were also impacted.

Considering the changing needs of students, pragmatics should be taught in an online L2 classroom with a task-based approach. However, several challenges and issues need to be addressed while using a task-based approach. First, teachers should be trained in pragmatic teaching (Vellenga, 2011). Second, they must have the knowledge and skills to design tasks for students (Bryfonski, 2021). Interesting tasks should engage students and motivate them to learn the language. Finally, teachers should be supported within their departments to implement curricular changes that help students improve their pragmatic competencies through task-supported learning.

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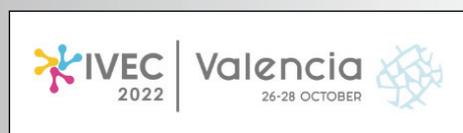
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