

Utah State University

DigitalCommons@USU

All Graduate Plan B and other Reports

Graduate Studies

5-2022

Pragmatics in Game Activities, Humor, and Technology in Second Language Learning

Zachary Brandon Brown
Utah State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/gradreports>



Part of the [Applied Linguistics Commons](#), [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), [First and Second Language Acquisition Commons](#), [Language and Literacy Education Commons](#), and the [Online and Distance Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Brown, Zachary Brandon, "Pragmatics in Game Activities, Humor, and Technology in Second Language Learning" (2022). *All Graduate Plan B and other Reports*. 1644.
<https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/gradreports/1644>

This Creative Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Graduate Plan B and other Reports by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usu.edu.



PRAGMATICS IN GAME ACTIVITIES, HUMOR, AND TECHNOLOGY IN SECOND
LANGUAGE LEARNING

by

Zachary Brown

A portfolio submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

Approved:

Dr. Karin DeJonge-Kannan
Major Professor

Dr. Abdulkafi Albirini
Committee Member

Dr. Marta Halaczkiwicz
Committee Member

Dr. Crescencio López González
Interim Department Head

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

Logan, Utah

2022

Copyright © Zachary Brown
All rights reserved

ABSTRACT

Pragmatics in Game Activities, Humor, and Technology in Second Language Learning

by

Zachary Brown: Master of Second Language Teaching
Utah State University, 2022

Major Professor: Dr. Karin DeJonge-Kannan

Department: World Languages and Cultures

This portfolio compiles work the author explored and developed during the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program at Utah State University (USU). It encompasses a range of experiences from teaching abroad and at USU, insights from the observation of other classrooms, and reflections from studies in the MSLT program.

Three distinct sections comprise the portfolio: teaching perspectives, research perspectives, and an annotated bibliography. The teaching perspectives detail beliefs regarding games, computer technology, humor, and pragmatics and how they influence second language learning based on the author's personal experiences. The research perspectives and annotated bibliography elaborate further on those topics by investigating related research findings.

(95 pages)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I must certainly begin by thanking Dr. Karin DeJonge-Kannan, whose guidance directed me years ago to pursue second language (L2) teaching. Supported by her reliable, constant, and motivational mentorship, I embarked on a journey leading me through a minor in Linguistics, an English Teaching Assistantship with Fulbright in Slovakia, and then to the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT). Her investment of time, effort, and attention to my growth reaches far beyond the scope expected of any professor, and her impact will be felt not only by me, but by all those with whom I interact throughout my future as a teacher.

I also thank Dr. Marta Halaczkiwicz, who I first had the pleasure of working with as an undergraduate classroom assistant, then later as a graduate instructor (GI). Her invitations to learn from and participate in meetings and other responsibilities outside of the typical routine for GIs afforded me extra experience and growth. I deeply value her exemplary encouragement, positivity, and kindness, as well as every chance to chat with her in Polish and Slovak.

Dr. Abdulkafi Albirini helped me discover an interest in research that I did not previously realize I had. I thank him for his dedicated insistence that if possible, I should pursue opportunities to conduct my own research, particularly through obtaining a doctorate degree.

Finally, I most especially thank my loving wife for her selflessness, and my parents, grandparents, sisters, brothers-in-law, and closest friend who have always offered their heartfelt support, particularly in their care for my newborn son, as I have progressed through my studies.

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-------|
| ABSTRACT..... | iii |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS..... | iv |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | v |
| LIST OF ACRONYMS..... | vi |
| LIST OF APPENDICES..... | vii |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| TEACHING PERSPECTIVES..... | 2-12 |
| Professional Environment..... | 2 |
| Teaching Philosophy Statement..... | 3-8 |
| Professional Development through Teaching Observations..... | 9-14 |
| RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES..... | 15-45 |
| LANGUAGE PAPER | 15-32 |
| Orientation & Reflection..... | 15-16 |
| Gamified Communicative Activities and their Value in Second Language Learning | 17-32 |
| CULTURE PAPER | 33-50 |
| Orientation & Reflection..... | 33-34 |
| Humorous Language Play in Second Language Learning: Benefits, Cautions, and Implementations | 35-50 |
| ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 51-66 |
| How Computer-mediated Communication Influences L2 Pragmatic Competence | 51-66 |
| LOOKING FORWARD..... | 67 |
| REFERENCES..... | 68-75 |
| APPENDICES..... | 76-88 |

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACMC = Asynchronous Computer-mediated Communication
CALL = Computer-assisted Language Learning
CMC = Computer-mediated communication
F2F = Face-to-face
GCA = Gamified Communicative Activity
ICC = Intercultural Communicative Competence
L1 = First Language
L2 = Second Language
MSLT = Master of Second Language Teaching
SCMC = Synchronous Computer-mediated Communication
SCT = Sociocultural Theory
SLA = Second Language Acquisition
TPS = Teaching Philosophy Statement
USU = Utah State University
ZPD = Zone of Proximal Development

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A. GCA Lesson Plan: Questions Fuel Conversation

Appendix B. Learning Sarcasm

INTRODUCTION TO THE PORTFOLIO

My portfolio contains a collection of research-founded work developed over the course of the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program, and the pieces are tied to my personal experience with the topics presented. Some of the components began as a part of coursework, though I subsequently and substantially expanded and revised them. While in practicality the portfolio cannot adequately capture each and every piece of knowledge and understanding I have accrued throughout the MSLT, it does serve to highlight the most meaningful concepts personally developed over the course of the degree.

My Teaching Philosophy Statement serves as the portfolio's guiding core, supported and clarified by the other pieces that surround it. Its main areas address three key topics of particular importance to me: gamified communicative activities, computer-assisted language learning, and attention to second language (L2) pragmatics. I discuss specific aspects related to those topics at length in two research perspectives and an annotated bibliography. Additionally, a piece dedicated to reflecting on the practices of other L2 teachers compares the features of their teaching to the concepts of the Teaching Philosophy Statement in a variety of observed classrooms.

Finally, the closing piece of the portfolio describes my general attitudes and goals for my future development as an L2 teacher with an eye to the future. The portfolio thus represents the culmination of my professional identity to the point of graduation from the MSLT.

PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT

My personal language learning journey began in a high school French classroom, then truly developed in England, where I acquired advanced proficiency in Slovak while teaching and learning from the sizable immigrant communities in Sheffield. My interest in languages first attracted me to translation and interpretation, but soon blended with my love of teaching, drawing me to teaching English as a second language (L2). My personal development as a language teacher budded as an undergraduate Classroom Assistant at Utah State University, then began to blossom during my subsequent time as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Slovakia, where I simultaneously further developed my own second language skills in Slovak. Soon after, I joined the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program at USU, accepting a position as a Graduate Instructor to teach a Conversational English course while pursuing my own studies. From my experiences learning and teaching languages springs a desire to enable multicultural aptitude in others, a goal accomplished through direct attention to language pragmatics in the classroom.

While my goal is to primarily teach in a traditional in-person classroom setting, the unique circumstances imposed by COVID-19 at the onset of my MSLT studies have broadened my skillset and experience with utilizing computer-assisted language learning tools in language teaching. I anticipate continuing to utilize such tools, whether in online or traditional teaching.

I intend to spend the majority of my career at US institutions, but I do expect to spend time teaching and performing research outside the United States. With a focus on strengthening learners' abilities to function as successful participants in an L2 language culture, I aim to teach adults English as a second or foreign language in collegiate academic settings.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

Introduction

In this Teaching Philosophy Statement, I highlight fundamental facets of my attitudes and related approaches to second language (L2) teaching. I offer the context of my personal teaching experience and how it has influenced my development and current methods I use in my classroom. Specifically, I examine how gamified communicative activities can be implemented in a classroom to encourage student engagement with the material. Next, I address the role of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) in facilitating telecollaboration to enhance L2 learning. Finally, I explain advantages to explicitly teaching language pragmatics in the classroom, as well as effective approaches to doing so.

Gamified Communicative Activities and L2 Learning

From a young age, I benefited from exposure to multiple cultures and languages. I remember—and even have old journal entries of—an early elementary school activity when we as a class took imaginary trips to other countries. We boarded pretend airplanes, waved goodbye to our parents, and immersed ourselves in a new culture for a week. That immersion included tiny crash courses in language basics, and I loved it. My heart caught hold of an experience I knew I wanted: to learn the language and culture of people around the world.

Gamified communicative activities (GCAs) such as these (adapted in form and content, of course, to age and proficiency level) have the potential to fuel students' active imaginations as they did mine, including in L2 classrooms. That energy correlates with the joy of discovery, creation, and achievement, all of which act as powerful motivators to press onward in the learning process. Unfortunately, instructors, institutions, students, and parents of students

sometimes tend to look down upon using games in the classroom. Somewhere along the way for those with such views, education came to connote the absence of fun, such that students cannot enjoy the learning process.

Many education systems around the world foster an exam-focused educational environment, and teachers in that setting must follow a standard curriculum as required by their employer. This means that GCAs will often require the consideration of test preparation as a major motivating factor for their objectives. Even so, Guerreiro and Nordengren (2018) “suggest the need to tread carefully when introducing new assessment designs based on gameful principles” (p.145) due to teachers’ and participants’ existing conceptions of assessment and learning. Yet, if teachers recognize, value, and demonstrate GCAs’ potential for positive impact on L2 progress, the general perception of GCAs may change even in exam-focused systems.

A recent example of a GCA from my own classroom reflects the goals of increased learner excitement and engagement with lesson material. The teaching mode led me to organize material from previous class sessions into a review activity where the students divided into teams and took turns choosing from categories separated into incremental point values; answering correctly garnered points, while incorrect answers allowed the other team to answer and steal the points. Without the aid of notes, the students needed to collaborate in discussion with one another to determine a correct answer in a limited amount of time, facilitating interpersonal communication and spontaneous recollection of learned material. The students recognized the activity’s direct connection to class content, demonstrated significant motivation to participate, enjoyed the fun competitive aspect, and later evidenced retention of concepts reviewed in the activity.

Computer-assisted Language Learning

With my graduate studies beginning in an era stricken by a pandemic, I discovered a newfound interest in the topic of computer-assisted language learning (CALL), particularly the synchronous variety. As a brand-new graduate instructor, I needed to develop a class taught entirely online through video conference meetings, something that hadn't been done in this particular class yet, nor in others in the program. Technology's inherent role in every lesson meant evaluating my constant use of that tool, and considering how it would affect my implementation of teaching methods, such as GCAs. A series of priorities emerged in importance. First, I needed CALL tools to have easy accessibility for myself and my students. Next, I needed the tools to have a consistent, direct, and positive impact on lesson material. Finally, the tools needed to fill a function that I couldn't otherwise achieve through more effective and efficient means. Telecollaboration, a form of virtual exchange involving "online interaction between two or more learners with similar language and learning objectives" (Hřebačková, 2019, p. 10), held promise in terms of fulfilling those priorities.

In the end, we used the telecollaborative videoconferencing platform called Zoom. At the bare minimum, the app allowed us to meet virtually when we could not in person. Beyond that, it provided other features, such as a typed chat function, and video/audio sharing capabilities. Through the chat, students could practice synchronous written communication with one another and/or myself even in a face-to-face communication environment. Video/audio sharing meant that I could present authentic language material from clips of movies or TV shows, facilitating discussion and examples of real-world language implementations.

In connection to the prior section on GCAs, CALL enabled me to utilize the review game in spite of not meeting in person. Using Zoom, I shared my screen with the students so they could see the category options and questions. The students communicated with group members using the private message feature, which allowed them to practice synchronous text-based interpersonal communication. Similar to the results of Hřebačková's (2019) study, this and other telecollaborative tasks helped make my students' learning motivating and enjoyable even as learners developed skills in the target language.

Attention to Pragmatics

My first semester in the MSLT program included a course in language pragmatics, a topic I had not previously studied. With the instructor's invitation to put my metaphorical antennae up, I focused great attention on the inexplicit nuances of my target language teaching context. My studies in that class and beyond brought great clarity that hinged on a key idea; words alone mean little to nothing without the cultural context informing them. Such a fundamental concept, yet it is still a relatively new field of research. Topic after topic flowed to my attention: politeness, humor, small talk, complaints, and more. All vital to competent communication in any language, but so rarely addressed in second language textbooks. I needed to take the next step. How could I most effectively teach those pragmatics to my students?

According to Kim and Taguchi (2015), "pragmalinguistic forms can be taught using collaborative tasks, which facilitate learner-learner interaction" (p. 674). Collaborative, interactive practice activities with room for creativity, such as roleplays or the aforementioned GCA review activity, have proven very effective for learners in my own context. Youn (2015) supports the use of roleplays, noting that "role-plays created opportunities for the examinees to

employ pragmatic competence in interaction” (p. 217). Discussing my students’ linguistic products from collaborative tasks and encouraging them to think not only about what they say, but why they say it, has led to their broader understanding of how to apply their vocabulary and grammar to L2 situations in the world around them.

In line with the importance of learners’ perception of relevance as discussed in the game-based communicative activities section, my students exhibit greater eagerness (i.e. motivation) to acquire new words, phrases, and syntactic constructs when they see the direct significance of their use in a culturally-informed conversation. From that point, they are no longer simply memorizing vocab and grammar structures for an exam, but for anticipated real-life situations. For example, learning the colloquial use of “you bet” as a way of saying “you’re welcome” or “yes” heightens in value when students understand how/when it’s used by store cashiers, strangers holding the door open, a teacher speaking to a student, and so on. After our discussion on the topic (among other colloquial phrases), my students used “you bet” often and pragmatically appropriately with me and each other, almost always with smiles and laughs inspired by their successful use of a new pragmatics concept.

Conclusion

Like in my own experience, teachers seeking to prevent or remediate learners’ low motivation may find that GCAs, CALL, and attention to pragmatics can help, even when facing the pressures of assessment. These categories need not operate independent of one another, but may blend together for a more effective overall result, as evidenced by my reference to the review-style GCA in each section.

I seek to make my classroom a place where students enjoy their learning process, noticeable in their high motivation levels. In doing so, I also aim to bolster their pragmatic confidence and ability. In sum, I strive to accomplish this through deliberate implementation of relevant learning resources and strategies, including GCAs and CALL tools.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Introduction

In my experience, classroom observation of colleagues can prove instrumental in highlighting areas for an observer's own improvement. For example, inspiration for self-improvement might come from witnessing successful teaching strategies and realizing that those same techniques could be effectively applied in the observer's own classroom. Observers might also notice a common learning obstacle shared by both their own students and the learners they observe, and devote more focused attention to overcoming the issue in their own classrooms.

Though polite observers typically do not share much feedback in dialogue with their observed colleagues since doing so might put off the observed teacher and discourage future observations, the method of peer observation still constitutes a means of collaboration. Teachers work together to pool knowledge, share experience, and inspire action. Ideally, such collaboration would occur among a diverse group of colleagues teaching multiple levels, demographics, and languages, allowing all participants access to a wider collection of experience, methods, and perspectives, both similar to and varied from their own. As part of my observations in the MSLT program, I had the opportunity to observe second language (L2) classes taught at high school and university levels, including English, Spanish, Mandarin, Japanese, and American Sign Language.

While I connect the findings of my observations with the topics of my Teaching Philosophy Statement, I do so with full recognition that the emphases of my own preference do not represent the entirety of successful teaching ideals. Rather, the connection between my point of view and the classes I observed demonstrates the flexibility of learning through observation;

observing with purpose can empower teachers to enhance and inform their own teaching according to their needs and goals.

Gamified Communicative Activities

In my Teaching Philosophy Statement (TPS), I assess how gamified communicative activities (GCAs) can enhance L2 learning. In the several classes I observed, only the single American Sign Language class included such activities. In the GCAs, the class split into groups that engaged with the activities largely without direct involvement from the teacher. Students remained engaged for most of the GCAs' duration, though the smallest group lost engagement sooner than the largest. This led me to conclude that maintaining as even numbers as possible when dividing students into groups for GCAs could help extend the effective duration of the activities. Additionally, the students in both groups ran out of ideas/interest several minutes before rotations to new activities, so an earlier rotation could have helped maintain consistent engagement. This led me to conclude that in case activities do not last as long as expected, it could be helpful to have backup GCAs with flexible durations to cover remaining time. Indeed, if even a planned lesson that does not involve a GCA does not go as long as planned, a GCA could serve as an effective use of excess time.

While the other observed teachers did not include GCAs in those particular classes, it does not necessarily mean their entire syllabus is devoid of GCAs. On the other hand, though the sample size is small, I do feel this reflects the relatively uncommon inclusion of GCAs in L2 classrooms, even in the United States where such activities are in some places more encouraged than in many pedagogical structures outside the US. This gives me cause to question why other instructors do not treat GCAs with the same level of importance highlighted by my TPS. In

connection with my autoethnographic experience introduced in the research perspective “Game-based Communicative Activities and their Value in Second Language Learning” later in this portfolio, I believe a major contributor to the scarcity of GCAs is a long-held systemic tradition that games do not belong in a classroom.

Computer-assisted Language Learning

Since my observations were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, a majority of the classes I observed met virtually. This allowed me the opportunity to witness a greater abundance of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and computer-mediated communication (CMC) than I would have prior to the pandemic.

Zoom, a videoconferencing software, represented the predominant digital tool utilized in those classes. This especially interested me since I used the same tool in my own classroom for two semesters, as detailed further in my TPS. While I noticed some drawbacks to the telecollaborative classrooms I observed, I also noticed some advantages. For example, the use of breakout rooms provided students the chance to use the L2 with a smaller group of peers without the noise of other groups around them or the presence of the teacher. Some groups I joined to observe became sidetracked quickly and didn’t completely fulfill the purpose of the breakout room before returning as a whole class. In those cases, a teacher’s presence could have encouraged greater focus.

On the other hand, the students in breakout rooms couldn’t listen to other groups’ discussions (which I noticed in some of the in-person classes I observed), so they had to think creatively on their own to respond to assigned discussion topics. Additionally, I observed that cross-group chatting in the L1 sometimes occurred during in-person small group work, while

doing so was not feasible while in a virtual breakout room. When with the whole class, students exhibited greater reticence to virtually raise their hand or unmute and speak in response to the teacher or their peers compared to students in the in-person classes raising their hand or chiming in. Some of the reticence may stem from the awkwardness of accidentally interrupting someone due to visual/audio delay when videoconferencing, which is an inherent disadvantage of the tool itself. Students' reluctance might also arise from distractions like surfing the Internet, playing games, or doing other activities unrelated to the class discussion.

Overall, teachers using telecollaborative resources (whether by choice or by necessity) seem to have found similar benefits to those noted in my TPS, including heightened motivation and enjoyment among their students. The observations also surfaced general drawbacks to telecollaboration that could benefit from teachers' deliberate attention to remedy or circumvent.

Attention to Pragmatics

In the classes I observed, there were varying degrees of attention to L2 pragmatics, the third of the three major components of my TPS. While most classes involved no direct instruction on pragmatics topics, some teachers made a deliberate effort to highlight differences in pragmatics between the students' L1 and L2. For example, the teacher in one entry-level Spanish course helped the students understand that while the adjective "fat" in American English tends to carry a negative connotation, "gordita" in certain Spanish-speaking contexts can be used as a positive compliment. The teacher gave examples of when L1 Spanish speakers might use "gordita," such as when calling out to an attractive woman or as a term of endearment with a spouse. As a result, the students reflected on the pragmatics of the two languages, navigating in class a difference that could have led to inadvertent offense if misunderstood outside of class.

The same teacher also explained why learning imperial system words in Spanish would not be particularly useful to the students, as L1 Spanish speakers use the metric system, so measurements in feet or miles would mean almost nothing to them. The students exhibited great interest afterward in learning metric system vocabulary when they might have otherwise dismissed it, thinking they wouldn't use it.

The exemplary class demonstrates the kind of attention to pragmatics that my TPS claims can heighten students' motivation to learn and their interactivity with the teacher and one another. The lack of pragmatics instruction in most of the other classes I observed certainly doesn't mean that such instruction didn't occur at other times over the course of the semesters or school years. However, it does show that while the topic of pragmatics continues to gain traction as a fundamental part of language learning, it has not yet reached widespread and constant implementation, even among teachers who value pragmatics.

Conclusion

Throughout the course of observing an array of classrooms, I found that though nearly every observation included some element of the three values outlined in my TPS, none of them included all three. In itself, this is unsurprising given the differences in students' needs and each context's resources and limitations. Omissions of those three TPS values in the observed classrooms also does not necessarily mean that those elements had no place elsewhere in the teachers' course plans, though it is worth recognizing differences in prioritization and emphasis.

Of greater interest, though, is how each classroom benefited from whichever of my TPS values it did include. By analyzing the highlighted instances described in the sections above, the values of game-based communicative activities, attention to pragmatics, and computer-mediated

communication carry demonstrable benefits in a wide variety of L2 classrooms, including across multiple languages and learner proficiency levels.

ORIENTATION AND REFLECTION
GAMIFIED COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES AND THEIR VALUE IN SECOND
LANGUAGE LEARNING

I selected and developed this paper for my portfolio to directly expand on the concepts discussed in the “Gamified Communicative Activities and L2 Learning” section of my Teaching Philosophy Statement (TPS). To do so, in this paper I delve into related theories and research that support the use of gamified communicative activities (GCAs) in second language (L2) learning. I highlight how GCAs connect to findings, values, and needs in L2 research that range from foundational works to contemporary publications. Thus, I endeavor to show that the beliefs communicated in my TPS are not based solely on anecdotal personal experience, but rather based on research and confirmed by my personal experience.

I wrote the beginnings of this paper in a course called Culture Teaching and Learning. In that course among the topics that resonated with me, I learned about cultural autoethnography and practiced writing my own as a class assignment. When I began, I chose an experience related to my TPS, and since the experience I wrote about felt particularly meaningful and significant to me, that autoethnography became the introduction of this paper. The introduction then needed support by means of a literature review of related work, so that led me to further investigate the topic of GCAs in L2 learning.

In the class I also created a lesson plan that implemented some of the beliefs expressed in my autoethnography. Thus, I reference my experience in conjunction with related research in this paper, and I reflect briefly on its implementation in the paper’s conclusion. To offer readers the

clarity provided by a full example, I also included the lesson plan in the Appendix of the portfolio.

Investigating this topic felt more difficult than most of the other topics I have researched over the course of the Master of Second Language Teaching program, including the other topics in my portfolio. While the impact of digital gamification has garnered research attention over the years, I found a relative scarcity of attention towards researching non-digital GCAs. It surprised me to learn of that gap in existing research, particularly since non-digital GCAs can have more potential for general application than digital games because they do not have any technology requirement that might otherwise exclude classrooms without such access to technology. I could not even find a consensus designation for the kind of activities I wanted to research, which made researching based on key terms particularly difficult. In the end I decided to call them GCAs based on the research connected to the ideas of gamification and communicative activities. With all that in mind, I compiled a paper to demonstrate not only the benefits of GCAs in L2 learning, but also to encourage more research on the subject.

In terms of my own teaching practice in the future professional contexts I envision, this means that I will make a concerted effort to incorporate GCAs in my own classroom. Depending on the nature of the classes I will teach, this may entail adjusting existing learning materials or creating my own. Beyond that, I hope to personally contribute to future research on the topic of GCAs in L2 learning.

GAMIFIED COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES AND THEIR ROLE IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Introduction

While teaching as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant at a secondary vocational school in Slovakia, I found the typical classroom environment focused on preparation for the students' graduation exam. The local teachers primarily used the textbook associated with the exam, rarely expanding beyond the printed material. As a result, while students could perform English tasks well enough on paper, they often struggled in dynamic oral conversations. Additionally, I observed that most students tended to prefer chatting with neighboring peers, scrolling on their phones, or whatever else they could find to do aside from paying attention to the lesson or participating.

In an effort to increase the low student engagement in class and bolster their oral communicative competence, I decided to implement gamified communicative activities (GCAs) that revolved around students using vocabulary and grammar related to the textbook contents. By incorporating textbook contents into the GCAs, I hoped to simultaneously fulfill the goal of preparing the students for their future graduation exam. While I perceived the activities as largely successful in enhancing engagement by bolstering participation and discouraging distractions, the teachers I assisted reacted somewhat dismissively towards the gamified approach. They did not exhibit any anger, frustration, offense, or annoyance, but just didn't value it beyond entertainment for the students.

I present the prior experience as a form of cultural autoethnography, drawing on the definition of ethnography that it "seeks to understand how people within a given culture

categorize and prioritize their experience” (Bateman, 2002, p. 320). The addition of “auto-” to the term clarifies that the ethnography details my own experience; thus, the brief cultural autoethnography serves to inspire further understanding about second language (L2) teaching. Specifically, this approach led me to seek insight regarding the use of GCAs in an L2 classroom, particularly to promote communicative competence. Based on my findings from the research below, I compiled an example lesson plan (included in the Appendix) that demonstrates an approach to incorporating GCAs in the classroom.

GCAs and Gamification

GCAs arise from gamification, “the application of game-design elements in various non-game contexts” (Nistor & Iacob, 2018, p. 308), in this case L2 learning activities. Kapp (2012) elaborates on gamification’s elements and their purpose, including “mechanics, aesthetics, and game thinking to engage people, motivate action, promote learning, and solve problems” (p. 125). Of crucial importance, GCAs also prominently feature interpersonal communication in the target language, such as among learners, the teacher, and/or highly proficient speakers of the target language. Thus, GCAs give learners the opportunity to apply learned material in a dynamic, interactive, and engaging setting. Though gamification often entails digital games, GCAs do not necessarily need to include digital materials at all, though they can certainly do so. GCAs may notably share game-like features similar to digital games, such as cooperation and/or competition to score points or make some other kind of tracked progress.

One of the primary purposes of gamification, and by extension GCAs, is “to engage and motivate students in learning” (Mohamad et al., 2018, p. 22). Zainuddin et al. (2020) note that “lack of motivation and engagement is a particular problem for students taking courses in

universities or schools” (p. 1), which traditional strategies fail to ameliorate, as demonstrated by my experience with distracted, disinterested students. Applying the benefits of gamification in the context of GCAs, GCAs can therefore help counter the pervasive challenge of motivating and engaging students.

An important distinction between gamification and game-based learning also matters in the case of GCAs. As explained by Alsawaier (2018), game-based learning “relies on using games to meet learning outcomes. The learning is facilitated through playing games whether digital or non-digital” (p. 59). If GCAs stem from a game-based learning approach, where learners “play games to learn content” (p. 59), the game acts as a short-lived instance that doesn’t extend from the start to finish of a course. The approach lacks the broader application of gamification’s key elements, such as those discussed above, to the classroom environment. GCAs, then, would most ideally stem from the gamification of existing communicative practices in L2 classrooms in order to extend the positive benefits beyond a singular activity. Rather, a persistent pattern of gamified activities involving interpersonal communication—GCAs—could broaden the benefits of higher motivation and engagement throughout an entire course.

GCAs and Communicative Language Teaching

With the word “communicative” in the GCA designation, it is of course relevant to discuss GCAs’ connection to communicative language teaching. Richards (2006, pp. 22-23) outlines the following ten core assumptions of communicative language teaching:

1. L2 learning is facilitated when learners are engaged in interaction and meaningful communication.

2. Effective classroom learning tasks and exercises provide opportunities for students to negotiate meaning, expand their language resources, notice how language is used and take part in meaningful interpersonal exchange.
3. Meaningful communication results from students processing content that is relevant, purposeful, interesting and engaging.
4. Communication is a holistic process that often calls upon the use of several language skills or modalities.
5. Language learning is facilitated both by activities that involve inductive or discovery learning of underlying rules of language use and organization, as well as by those involving language analysis and reflection
6. Language learning is a gradual process that involves the creative use of language, and trial and error. Although errors are a normal product of learning, the ultimate goal of learning is to be able to use the new language both accurately and fluently.
7. Learners develop their own routes to language learning, progress at different rates and have different needs and motivations for language learning
8. Successful language learning involves the use of effective learning and communication strategies.
9. The role of the teacher in the language classroom is that of a facilitator who creates a classroom climate conducive to language learning and provides opportunities for students to use and practice the language and to reflect on language use and language learning.
10. The classroom is a community where learners learn through collaboration and sharing.

Each of these points correlate directly with the beliefs underpinning the use of GCAs in L2 classrooms. The 1st, 2nd, 5th, 9th, and 10th points especially highlight the advantages of GCAs, which directly put those assumptions into practice. In essence, GCAs are a way to operationalize some of the most fundamental facets of communicative language teaching.

GCAs and SCT

The highly social nature of GCAs allow them to be effectively filtered through the theoretical framework of sociocultural theory (SCT) and the related writings of Lev Vygotsky and others who expanded on his work. At the core of SCT is the argument that “the most important forms of human cognitive activity develop through interaction within social and material environments, including conditions found in instructional settings” (VanPatten et al., 2020, p. 223). L2 learning certainly fulfills the functions of mediating, regulating, and internalizing social interaction in an instructional setting, especially when developing their critical thinking skills and problem solving abilities through GCAs. Of the relevant components to GCAs in SCT, this paper primarily emphasizes three key elements.

One key element is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), defined as “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving and under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). GCAs can utilize collaboration between learners and teachers in order to navigate the ZPD, including by means of dynamic assessment, which “integrates both assessment and instruction as a single activity” (van Compernelle & Kinginger, 2013, p. 289). The concept of using GCAs for assessment purposes is discussed in greater detail below in the “GCAs and Assessment” section.

The second element found often in modern approaches to SCT is “the intentional development of second language ability through systematic explicit instruction” (VanPatten et al., 2020, p. 241). One way to implement systematic explicit instruction is through metacognitive instruction, where teachers “help learners plan, self-monitor, and self-evaluate their learning processes and products” (Sato & Lam, 2021, p. 900). Teachers can systematically embed language-learning goals in GCAs by connecting the achievement of goals to the accrual of points or other gamified measurements of progress. This gives learners an explicit basis for planning, monitoring, and evaluating their target language learning. GCAs thereby act as a step in the systematic, explicit instruction of the target language. Metacognitive instruction’s relevance in the context of GCAs is heightened by findings that it can increase collaborative interactions in communicative activities, as well as the amount of L2 production (Sato & Lam, 2021). Additionally, metacognitive instruction also provides an opportunity for teachers to help learners navigate the aforementioned ZPD.

The third element is internalization, by which social cognitive functions such as planning, categorization, and interpretive strategies are creatively appropriated and made available as cognitive resources (p. 228). As specified by van Compernelle (2011), internalization involves languaging/verbalization, mediating “cognition and leading to a deeper understanding of a skill or concept” (p. 3275). GCAs can offer learners ample opportunity to plan, categorize, and interpret the target language through the structure of the game activity. Since GCAs also promote interpersonal communication, they also provide room to language/verbalize. Altogether, then, the potential for internalization through GCAs can deepen learners’ understanding of specific skills and/or concepts targeted by the teacher. Vivality, GCAs give learners the chance to practice topics

of instruction with other speakers, as opposed to relying exclusively on individual practice or listening to non-interactive lectures.

GCA's and Assessment

Slovakia, of course, is not the only country with a heavy focus on exam preparation in second language classrooms. China, for example, has a reputation for its exam-focused educational environment, as do a number of other countries around the world, because exam results define learners' subsequent educational or employment paths (Carless, 2011; Nunan, 2003). This means that GCA's will often need to include test preparation as a major motivating factor for their objectives. The widespread nature of exam-focused curricula also means that my cultural autoethnography has a degree of generalizability for L2 teaching contexts. Even so, though some classrooms face resistance towards games' place in education, it isn't necessarily guaranteed. Still, the issue arises commonly enough that approaches to resolving it are worth examining.

A study conducted in Hong Kong L2 English classes highlighted an activity designed to circumvent "students' perceived lack of relevance of communicative tasks to public exams" (Yung, 2020, p. 441). The cited obstacle is similar to the Slovak teachers' perception of GCA's in my experience. The study uses a fishbowl discussion/debate activity, which organizes some students in a small group at the center of a circle composed of the rest of the students; the larger group observes and evaluates the small group while they discuss an assigned topic picked from a past official exam in order to establish relevance of the tasks (p. 442). The students are divided into teams, and each member spends equal time in the center of the circle, where they could also receive notes passed from team members outside the center (p. 443). The study proposes that

such a design cultivates “students’ active engagement and collaboration with peers and encourage[s] the use of the target language in an integrated manner” while avoiding threatening aspects of a formal debate which demands prepared speeches and excludes non-debaters (p. 442). Though the students in this format do prepare ahead of time by analyzing the question at home, they do not need to compile a formal speech, merely study relevant vocabulary and brainstorm ideas for or against the debate question.

The study mentions the fishbowl debate’s inherent requirement for spontaneous oral implementation of preparation and practice outside of the usual reading and writing (p. 444), which mirrors an important quality of GCAs. Indeed, one of the student responses to post-activity surveys said “when we have the fishbowl debate, we are participating in a game rather than just assessment so this can make us speak in confidence and enhance our authentic communication” (p. 444). Instead of “just a game,” the student describes “just assessment.” The flipped perspective compared to my experience demonstrates the value of prefacing a GCA with its relevant connection to the students’ goals, in these cases exam preparation.

Similar to Yung (2020), Guerreiro and Nordengren (2018) faced the challenge of navigating learners’ pre-existing conceptions of games’ place in assessment. Participants in their study acknowledged “divided thought within themselves, between ‘old-fashioned me’ with traditional views of assessment and learning, and a more pragmatic acknowledgment that using games in the classroom had clear positive effects” (p. 145). Specifically, the study found that gamified assessments can not only measure achievement, but also enhance student satisfaction to heighten engagement (p. 145). In settings like these where GCAs are not familiar to students, the

teacher clearly has an instrumental role in promoting understanding of the GCAs' purpose and benefits, including how the activities further students' progress toward language goals.

Zainuddin et al. (2020) performed a study on gamified quizzes as a means of formative assessment and found that competition played an important role in incentivizing learners to demonstrate positive engagement with the assessment. Their positive engagement then led to "better scores or performance" (p. 11). While the study's quizzes lacked the interpersonal communication focus of GCAs during the quizzes themselves, the results still have relevance on gamified learning in assessment. Notably, the participants demonstrated greater proactivity in other "classroom activities and attempting to improve the quality of their learning" (p. 11). Extending that finding to a GCA context, the positive impact of GCAs could also extend beyond engagement with the GCAs to other classroom activities and assessments.

I have used gamified assessment in the form of a GCA to gauge my students' progress partway through the semester as well as near the semester's conclusion through an activity aimed at reviewing past topics and evaluating students' understanding of those topics. What began as a more traditional quiz with short response, multiple choice, and fill-in-the-blank questions was gamified and made collaborative, becoming a GCA. During the review activity, students competed in teams to score points by responding to topics from a Jeopardy-style board, albeit without the confusing format of answers as questions, and with the opportunity to formulate longer responses. When a team received a question (with a time limit to answer), they collaborated with each other in the target language before making a final decision on their response. That particular aspects brought communicative collaboration in the target language, which the original quiz format lacked. Meanwhile, the other teams simultaneously performed the

same process in the hope of stealing the opposition's points if they could answer correctly where their opponents could not. The speed and accuracy of the students' answers demonstrated how much they retained and understood from previous class topics, and the students exhibited increased engagement with this gamified assessment compared to traditional assessment.

My experience with the review quiz GCA aligns with the assertion of Guerreiro and Nordengren (2018) that increased engagement can “impact both student satisfaction and overall assessment accuracy and validity” (p. 134). The review quiz GCA can also be considered a form of dynamic assessment, given the teacher's role in evaluating students' answers and offering correction or expounding when appropriate to further students' learning.

GCAs and Learning

Since “research has indicated that boredom is associated with a range of negative learning behaviors and outcomes, and SLA researchers argue that the efficient regulation of it is a vital part of autonomous and self-regulated L2 learning” (Nakamura et al., 2021, p. 1), the entertaining aspect of GCAs can be viewed as a way to alleviate learner boredom rather than as irrelevant or frivolous. Even so, the implementation of GCAs alone does not guarantee students will not be bored. For example, Nakamura et al. (2021) identified the factor of activity mismatch among a number of contributors to learner boredom. The authors defined activity mismatch as “negative perceptions about the given situation” where learners connected “boredom to their unsatisfied desire, desire for something different, or disagreement” (p. 9). This factor stands out in relation to GCAs because the study highlighted an excerpt where students expressed that dissatisfaction with insufficient time allotted to complete a GCA led to boredom with the

activity. Thus, students' engagement or boredom with a GCA depends in part on the appropriate matching of structure (content, time, difficulty, etc.) with their expectations, desires, and needs.

Building on the idea that GCAs can promote motivation and engagement, Malone and Lepper (1987) identified several kinds of intrinsic motivations that can improve learners' engagement with games and learning: challenge, goals, uncertain outcomes, performance feedback, and self-esteem. These various motivations certainly apply to GCAs.

GCAs need to challenge learners, make them stretch, but not beyond their ability to achieve since "activities that provide some intermediate level of difficulty and challenge will stimulate the greatest intrinsic motivation" (p. 231). The difficulty directly correlates with learning goals, both long- and short-term, which help learners and the teacher perceive and pursue progress. In order to maintain a genuine sense of challenge and goal achievement, GCAs can also incorporate uncertain outcomes, where the learners' performance determines a variable result.

Next, the learners need feedback about their performance "for the reformulation of goals" (p. 232); when they learn from a GCA, students subsequently need to adjust their goals to reach higher, but they likely need feedback from the teacher to confirm their progress and encourage continuation. Success can also promote increased motivation to engage with the learning material, so Malone and Lepper (1987) note that "performance feedback should be structured so as to promote perceptions of personal competence and effort and to minimize the possibility of diminishing the learner's self-esteem" (p. 232). In the context of a GCA, the activity should then avoid designs that revolve around punishing or embarrassing students for not knowing something, but rather embrace a structure that rewards students for learning something.

To provide an example of the concept of rewarding learning and minimizing punishment/embarrassment in a GCA, the review quiz GCA from my class can serve as a point of reference. If a team answered incorrectly, the other team had the opportunity to provide the correct answer and steal the points. However, if the first group's answer evidenced a degree of correctness and showed some understanding of the answer, they received partial points and then the rest went to the stealing team if they correctly filled in the gaps. By doing this, the students were rewarded for what they knew, even if the answer wasn't perfect, and this helped prevent diminished self-esteem.

When utilizing GCAs, the teacher has an important role in ensuring the students use the target language as much as possible. Part of doing so comes through the activity design itself, and part comes from the teacher's encouragement in moments where learners might otherwise resort to the L1. For example, the design of the review quiz GCA requires participants to work together to decide on an answer. That portion of the game can strongly support communicative practice if done in the target language, but holds much less value if performed in the L1. Without instructions to do otherwise, students are likely to switch to the L1, as occurred in Edstrom's (2015) study (p. 28). Of course, this poses much less of a challenge in a classroom with learners who don't share an L1, versus a more homogeneous classroom where learners can easily translanguage instead. With support from both the activity design and the teacher, learners' willingness to communicate in the target language can subsequently match the language learning goals of a given GCA. Willingness to communicate in an L2 features prominently in MacIntyre et al. (1998), who offer a definition for the term as "the probability of engaging in communication when free to choose to do so" (p. 546).

In a study examining specific factors that influenced willingness to communicate in L2 English learners, a list of prominent influences included excitement, type of interaction, type of task, and topic (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2021). The study focused on a single high-achieving student at a Polish university to “investigate a link between a set of well-identified individual characteristics and readiness to interact in the target language” (p. 2). The study utilized self-reporting measures by having all students periodically rate their willingness to interact with their peers or the instructor; the student of focus also completed pre- and post-semester questionnaires, who evaluated his willingness to perform various communicative tasks on a Likert scale.

The study found a notable increase in the student’s willingness to communicate during a game-like communicative activity during class; he rated his willingness at a 6 during the game (on a scale of 1 to 7), which starkly contrasts the parts of the lesson outside the game, rated at levels 3 or 4. The researcher suggests factors like “evident satisfaction and pride” in his ability to succeed in the activity as possible reasons for the higher rating (p. 7). The study notes that these kinds of activities resulted in his highest levels of willingness to communicate, but that the “levels did not necessarily drop...if watching or reading sessions were perceived as useful in preparing for subsequent tasks announced beforehand” (p.10).

In the context of Mystkowska-Wiertelak’s (2021) study, then, using GCAs as the mode of organizing types of interactions and tasks could increase learner excitement and engagement with lesson material. In conjunction with Yung’s (2020) aforementioned study, a topic directly related to the learners’ future possible exams could further enhance their willingness to participate, thereby extending their L2 growth, especially since Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2021) notes that throughout the course of the semester, the topic of discussion had an instrumental role

in determining levels of willingness to communicate (p. 10). Malone and Lepper (1987) similarly assert that “performance goals should be personally meaningful” (p. 232) to maximize motivation. These studies show that perceived relevance and personal meaningfulness are key to extending the benefits of GCAs throughout the activities themselves and also into other portions of the lesson.

With the established need for content relevance/meaningfulness and active communication, what else can help ensure the effectiveness of GCAs? A study conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic offers some answers thanks in part to its experimentation with games (including party, cooperative, and escape games) as an L2 learning tool for French learners (Dubreil, 2020). As a precursor, participants “envisioned what could be learned about the French language and culture through playful practices and game design” (p. 252), which again reinforces the importance of establishing relevance to the learners before introducing a GCA. The teachers selected games based on one of two core qualities: “(a) language or language play was the focal point of gameplay...or (b) verbal communication (i.e., language use) between players was key in the success of the game” (p. 252). This highlights another key component of including effective GCAs in an L2 classroom; they need not just to include language or verbal communication, but rather *revolve* around those qualities.

Successfully using games to enhance L2 learning “is less predicated on the technological tools—although having access to them helps—but rather on our ability to reflect critically on our values and beliefs, and on pedagogical practices we want to promote” (p. 257). The same can be said for GCAs—the activities themselves help achieve language learning goals, but the foundation for success in doing so is founded on the teacher’s purposes in using them. Purposes

might include those listed in the conclusion of the study, to “equip [students] with the critical thinking and interactional competencies they need to understand others and themselves and perhaps foster the empathy we all need to develop and sustain meaningful social relationships in today's multicultural, multilingual societies” (p. 257). That statement also presents further benefits to including GCAs in an L2 classroom; learners can develop their critical thinking, interactional competencies, and empathy.

Conclusion

In addition to the previously-discussed review quiz GCA, my own implementation of another GCA-centric lesson plan (included in the Appendix) validated the key concepts examined above. The GCA built on the topics from multiple prior classes so my students were prepared to implement in the GCA what they had learned. They also demonstrated high motivation and willingness to communicate at least in part because they understood the significance and importance of the topic. Thus, pre-existing boredom with the topic, discernable though slight, did not impede the effectiveness of the GCA, nor did uncertainty about the language-learning benefits of the GCA.

Certainly, “teachers cannot expect that gaming will solve all the problems of learning [an L2]” (Hanson-Smith, 2016, p. 231). However, provided that students understand the relevance to their L2-related goals, GCAs can increase students’ willingness to participate in class and engage their peers in conversation in the target language. To accomplish those results and foster language learning, GCAs should center on language and language use, and can serve as a means to teach culturally significant concepts that enhance intercultural communicative competence. The adaptability of GCAs allows for their general application in a variety of forms throughout a

course, not just in standalone activities. GCAs can even effectively work as a means of both assessment and instruction, being highly flexible in terms of structure and purpose.

It is notable that relatively few studies have examined GCAs that don't involve digital games compared to the much larger number of studies that do. Though gamification using digital materials has strong implications for GCAs, L2 teachers and learners could benefit from greater research attention to non-digital GCAs.

ORIENTATION AND REFLECTION

HUMOROUS LANGUAGE PLAY IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING: BENEFITS, CAUTIONS, AND IMPLEMENTATIONS

My Teaching Philosophy Statement (TPS) outlines attention to pragmatics as a crucial concept for second language (L2) learning. Pragmatics, however, is a very broad category, so this paper focuses on a specific aspect of pragmatics: humor, or humorous language play in the target language. In doing so, I support the idea communicated in my TPS that attention to pragmatics in L2 classrooms can equip learners with crucial understanding of both the target language and culture. Specifically, I show that learners can benefit from the implementation of humorous language play in communication with each other and the teacher. Additionally, I explore how humor can serve as an explicit topic of instruction to enhance L2 learning and development.

I wrote this paper for the Second Language Pragmatics class at the very start of my studies in the Master of Second Language Teaching. That class's topics inspired my desire to investigate research on the topic of humorous language play, and the class and my resulting paper proved to be a veritable treasure for developing my perspectives as a teacher. In fact, I applied what I learned about pragmatics and humorous language play in my own classroom, experimenting with various ideas generally with positive reception from my students. On top of that, game-based communicative activities (GCAs)—another core part of my TPS and the topic of the preceding research perspective—share the element of fun also present in humorous language play. Given all those factors, it felt both appropriate and necessary to include this piece in my portfolio.

Beyond writing this paper for the Second Language Pragmatics class, I later developed the piece further in order to present it at the Utah State University College of Humanities and Social Sciences Research Symposium during the Spring 2021 semester. Furthermore, the topic interested me enough to eventually consider pursuing it as a focus in a future doctorate program. The topic has thus held persistent appeal to me and relevance to my studies and teaching, solidifying my motivation to write about it and include it in this portfolio.

From investigating this topic, I learned more about humor's place in language learning from the perspective of a teacher. For example, I learned that teachers can implement planned, explicit instruction on humor in their classrooms—they don't need to solely rely on spontaneous opportunities to do so, though those opportunities hold great potential for learning as well. Comparing those findings from the research to my own personal experiences as both a learner and teacher, I was pleased to find they aligned. To that end, I have included a sample lesson plan as Appendix B, which offers an example of how a teacher might approach explicit humor instruction on the topic of sarcasm.

In my future professional context as an L2 teacher, then, I look forward to including humorous language play in my classroom. With the perspectives gained from writing this paper, I will be better able to plan the inclusion of humorous language play in ways that maximize its possible benefits and avoid potential downfalls. I also intend to contribute my own research on the topic in the future, using the concepts in this paper as a foundation and reference point.

HUMOROUS LANGUAGE PLAY IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING: BENEFITS, CAUTIONS, AND IMPLEMENTATIONS

Introduction

Humor maintains a universal presence in language, though it manifests in a wide variety of ways depending on factors like personality, relationship, and culture. In the classroom, humor or humorous language play, terms used interchangeably in this paper, has been shown to facilitate and enhance language teaching and learning by breaking down barriers that prohibit progress in the target language. In this article, I present research and analysis that encourages the use of humorous language play based on its potential benefits, provides caution to help prevent or mitigate conceivable negative consequences, and offers insight on how to effectively implement humor in a second language classroom.

Based on the ideas presented by Cook (1997), language play consists of the intelligent manipulation of sounds, like with rhyme and rhythm, and/or semantic units to create a meaningful fiction. Humorous language play, then, would manipulate language in that way to inspire laughter. Humorous language play also often involves physical movements in addition to oral utterances. Matsumoto et al. (2021), for example, focuses on an instructor's embodied explanations, i.e. "explanations that are conducted through body movements" (p. 2), and the laughter subsequently elicited from the students.

One widespread example of humorous language play in English is sarcasm. Like conversational implicature in second language (L2) pragmatics research (see Grice, 1975), sarcasm is when someone says something but intends a different meaning than the explicit words, often the opposite meaning in the case of sarcasm. Therefore, the actual statement is

fictional, but meaningful because it conveys the true intent. While sarcasm may carry a somewhat negative stigma due to its possible use with hurtful or derogatory intent, it can also be used positively. For example, it might be used to build solidarity, convey empathy, and reduce stress like when remarking to someone who complains about their weekend homework assignments that it “sounds like exactly what you want to spend all weekend doing.”

Culture heavily influences the use and interpretation of humorous language play—what is funny in one culture might not be funny in another. With the entwined nature of culture and language, learners of an L2 can find themselves in situations where applying the approach of their first language (L1) might result in misunderstanding when communicating with a speaker of the target language. Florea (2013) surmises that “misunderstandings often arise when culture-specific knowledge from an intra-cultural communication situation is transferred to a situation of intercultural communication” (p. 130). Existing literature demonstrates the need for teaching language pragmatics in L2 classrooms (Byram, 2020) in order to bolster intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Humorous language play represents one aspect of language pragmatics, knowing how to say what to whom and when (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013), so teaching humor in L2 classrooms by example and direct instruction holds the potential to benefit learners’ ICC.

ICC can be summarized as the “competences [learners] bring to any encounter” (Byram, 2020, p. 20) when communicating with speakers of the L2. Byram (2020) elaborates that in ICC, communication “is more than an exchange of information and sending of messages...it is focused on establishing and maintaining relationships” (p. 22), often involving indirect ways of

speaking that are considered more polite. Humorous language play can fulfill this function of ICC, allowing speakers to demonstrate sensitivity to cultural perceptions of language use.

Benefits of Humor in Language Learning

So, what exactly can humorous language play do for language learners? In connection with research findings, Ahn (2016) asserts that “episodes of language play could serve as a locus for and a medium through which language learners demonstrate, develop, and reflect their [language awareness] through [engagement with language]” (p. 44). An earlier study by Bell (2005) agrees that humorous “language play is indicative of proficiency” (p. 212). Together, these analyses suggest that learners who pay attention to and practice humor strategies in the classroom have an advantage in developing and demonstrating target language proficiency over those who do not by engaging on another level with the language than they otherwise would, and exercising their linguistic abilities on that level.

Humorous language play can also help overcome natural impediments to learning. A common obstacle to students’ successful learning is a mental barrier against receiving language input in the classroom—Krashen (1987) labels such resistance as affective filters. In Krashen’s (1987) oft-discussed research on affective filters, he states that:

Our pedagogical goals should not only include supplying comprehensible input, but also creating a situation that encourages a low filter... The input hypothesis and the concept of the Affective Filter define the language teacher in a new way. The effective language teacher is someone who can provide input and help make it comprehensible in a low anxiety situation. (p. 32)

Humorous language play offers a means of lowering students' affective filters by reducing situational anxiety, which in turn makes input more accessible to learners. In connection to such a theory, preliminary research conducted in EFL university classrooms in Luoyang, China found that "reduced anxiety/tension, improved relationship between teachers and students, and increased levels of interest may result from the use of humor in class" (Liu 2012, p. 406). Ahn (2016) similarly found that students extending a humorous dialogue with the teacher "lessened the language anxiety as they produced a collaborative voice, exempt from any potential individual condemnation" (p. 50). Thus, not only can humorous language play reduce anxiety, it can also promote more positive relationships and greater interest, which all together strengthen the impact humorous language play has on bringing down mental barriers to language input.

In the vein of positive classroom relationships, Forman (2011) found that "the teacher's humorous initiative signalled an opening-up of interpersonal roles in the classroom, serving to reduce social distance between teacher and students, both at that moment and as the lesson unfolded" (p. 550). Forman (2011) noted that in instances where the teacher used humorous language play, students did the same soon after, even only seconds later. The reduced social distance between the teacher and students that results from the teacher's use of humorous language play, then, can further encourage students to practice humor strategies themselves.

Along similar lines, Waring (2013) provides a number of examples from a conversation analysis that shows how speakers play with identity for humorous results in an L2 classroom. Examples include a learner momentarily assuming a corrective role towards the teacher when the teacher made a language error, or a learner taking a parental identity to chastise an inattentive

peer. While these moves might ordinarily be considered disrespectful or unwelcome, the learners instead drew laughter and acceptance from both the teacher and their peers. By using humorous language play, the learners simultaneously “challenge[d] and [upheld] the status quo” (p. 199). Thus, teachers and learners can benefit from spontaneous, topic-related humorous language play during official lesson time because it allows for communication that might otherwise be prevented by social expectations.

To that effect, research has characterized humor as a safe house (Pomerantz & Bell, 2011), a space where learners can enjoy “high degrees of trust, shared understandings, [and] temporary protection” (Pratt, 1991, p. 40). Canagarajah (2004) adds that in those safe houses, students can communicate criticism of dominant institutional norms in an effort to improve their situation. The safety of humor comes when learners use it “to avoid or mitigate [face-threatening] exchanges” (Pomerantz & Bell, 2011, p. 150) or to critique from a relatively powerless position in the classroom without as much fear of negative reprisal. Students in an L2 classroom regularly encounter face-threatening exchanges, as attempting to say something in the target language runs the risk of making an error that results in embarrassment. If learners recover from that embarrassment through humor, the validation of their peers’ and the teacher’s laughter might provide encouragement to keep trying to use the L2 in spite of errors.

Pomerantz and Bell (2011) assert that “engagement in spontaneous humorous performances can provide rich opportunities for language use and development, beyond those found in more tightly controlled classrooms” (p. 157). To highlight a specific aspect of language use and development from humor, Matsumoto et al. (2021) conclude that “laughing moments can demonstrate students’ sociopragmatic knowledge, which enables them to participate in

laughing moments in an appropriate manner” (p. 26). In other words, humorous language play between the teacher and learners can provide learners room to show their sensitivity to pragmatics in dynamic conversation. This provides teachers with an opportunity for informal assessment, gauging whether students understand not only the vocabulary and grammar used, but also its meaningful implications.

Additionally, humorous language play can have the effect of enlivening an otherwise boring topic for students. After all, factors such as fatigue, disinterest, personal concerns extraneous to the class, health, or even the time of day can impact how much students engage with a lesson, and boredom easily compounds those distracting elements. Humorous language play can establish an unspoken agreement between students and teachers along the lines of Forman’s (2011) glossed lesson overview, “*Yes, we know that we have to follow a boring textbook—but we can make it interesting and funny ourselves*” (p. 559). Humorous language play can thus invite students to buy into the lesson even though the content itself might not otherwise interest them. By so doing, humor bolsters student engagement with lesson material. Forman (2011) reports that in the classroom where the teacher implemented humorous language play, even though the students were low-level English learners, “their desire and effort to participate was high, and quite different from the verbal reticence which characterized the majority of other lessons observed” (p. 561). Overcoming students’ verbal reticence represents a major benefit of humorous language play in the classroom, one teachers would do well to capitalize on.

Cautions

Humorous language play in the classroom, as in other contexts, does have the potential to go awry. Foreman (2011) states that “‘pushing boundaries’ is often both the pleasure and danger of humour” (p. 557). While some goals of humorous language play might include the reduction of affective barriers and social distance, the opposite of those goals might be achieved if a teacher mishandles the implementation in the classroom.

Boundaries for appropriate humorous language play in the classroom represent one caution teachers should consider. Research in a Pakistani university’s EFL classroom found that though teachers used humorous play in keeping with expectations, they did not identify those limits to their students (Ali, 2015). Deliberate guidance from the teacher, then, involves establishing boundaries for humorous language play with students—leading by example isn’t always sufficient on its own. Rather, explicit commentary regarding the appropriateness of certain humorous language play strategies may prove necessary. The same study found that even though the students enjoyed the fun of humorous language play in the class, “only half of them support their teachers in their use of humour because their use of humour is offensive to them” (Ali, 2015, p. 139). This study highlights for consideration another key component of successful humorous language play in the classroom: sensitivity to offensive subjects on the teacher’s part. Poor choice of topics could undermine the purposes of implementing humorous language play in the first place.

The topic and style of humor also matters in the context of culture. For example, Hodson (2008) found that adult Japanese speakers of English preferred longer, narrative-style jokes over lexically dense and shorter English jokes. The consequence of inappropriate humor use by the teacher can hinder communication between the teacher and students, as noted by Mulligan and

Kirkpatrick (2000). One way that can occur is by inadvertently leaving out learners who do not understand an instance of humorous language play when others of their peers do understand; doing so can lead to feelings of apprehension (Zhang, 2005) and exclusion (Nesi, 2012). Since some goals of humorous language play in the classroom are to lower affective filters (Waring, 2013) and strengthen trust, teachers should aim for complete inclusiveness when it comes to learners understanding the humor employed in class. Diana (2019) recommends joking in a manner typical of the target language culture, but not difficult to understand in a multicultural context. Granted, it may be difficult to perceive what might be broadly understood with the same degree of humor—experience with learners’ L1 backgrounds could help with that understanding, but can’t be generally guaranteed, especially in classrooms with learners from varying L1 contexts.

Teachers, recognizing the potential for humor to work against the intended purpose, might be inclined to simply avoid using it altogether. Diana (2019) cited concerns that initially inhibited her own implementation of humor in an L2 classroom, including fear that “students would find it insignificant and that I would seem less of a teacher if I would do so” (p. 697). Self-doubt, fear of losing face, etc., comprise major concerns for teachers weighing the role of humorous language play in their classrooms. While it may be beneficial to encourage the incorporation of humorous language play in L2 classroom conversations, it is also important to recognize that teachers may have personal reservations related less to the positive potential of doing so, and more related to their own ability to succeed. Sensitivity to teachers’ concerns is thus highly important.

To offer some comfort, hope is not necessarily lost if a teacher's attempt at humorous language play fails in a classroom. Preparing students with understanding of phrases such as "I'm joking," "just kidding," etc., could preempt negative consequences should a joke go over their heads because such phrases allow "a speaker to retract statements that are not well received" (Skalicky, 2015, p. 19). Additionally, a teacher might turn failure into success by modeling the use of these phrases so that students themselves might salvage their own instances of failed humorous language play in the future as well. While not a perfect remedy, teaching students these phrases prior to broaching humorous conversation could offer some relief from the pressure to land every joke.

Teachers can also offer explicit explanation of humorous language play if students do not immediately understand. Teacher awareness of differences in sociocultural norms helps provide valuable context for when humor warrants such explanations, but as Victoria (2019) points out, "having to spend too much time explaining the meaning of a phrase or word can dilute or 'delete' humour" (p. 191) and could accrue a negative perception. Explanation can help, but teachers need to exercise caution towards over-explanation in order to avoid negating the benefits of using humorous language play to begin with.

Implementing Humorous Language Play in a Language Learning Classroom

Since humorous language play has established beneficial effects on language learning—provided it is effective and appropriate—the question arises of how best to implement it in the classroom. After all, humorous language play can prove difficult for L2 learners to use and interpret due to its inherent connection to cultural knowledge and potentially complex linguistic construction. Indeed, as Bell (2005) states, "humour thrives on the unexpected, [so] creative and

unusual uses of linguistic resources often occur in playful conversation” (p. 204). With such difficulties arising from unpredictability, cultural roots, and complicated structure, careful and deliberate guidance from the teacher proves essential to successfully using humorous language play as a language teaching tool. Yet, as documented by Davies (2003), the sociocultural and linguistic complexity of humor does not disqualify beginning learners from initiating and participating in joking behavior with one another and even highly proficient speakers of the target language. So then, what key components should teachers consider in order to effectively implement humorous language play into classroom language learning?

It makes sense that in order to use humorous language play effectively as a teaching tool and avoid causing offense, teachers could find it necessary to explicitly teach how to use a given humor strategy in the target language. For example, if instructors find that they often utilize sarcasm in the target language, they might devote class time to teaching the pragmatics of sarcasm. This would likely entail developing the learners’ “ability to read an array of potential cues that mark an utterance as sarcastic as well as the capacity to correctly interpret a speaker’s motivation for using sarcasm (i.e. humor or insult)” (Kim & Lantolf, 2016, p. 209). A similar approach could be employed with respect to other forms of humorous language play, where the teacher helps students learn to identify verbal/nonverbal cues of humor and also gauge motivations for using it. Learners are likely to recognize the value of learning to accurately read cues and understand motivations in the context of humorous language play, since they “often feel alienated as a consequence of missing the intentions underlying sarcastic utterances” (p. 209).

Kim and Lantolf (2016) investigated whether L2 learners showed improved comprehension of sarcastic utterances in the target language after receiving explicit instruction

on the topic. The instructors in the study supplemented their instruction on the topic with examples from both scripted and non-scripted popular media. Following the explicit instruction, the study's learners demonstrated a much more complete understanding of what sarcasm is, both in their L1 and their L2. Beyond a theoretical understanding, they did indeed display improved comprehension ability, such as correctly interpreting meanings and reading nonverbal cues and prosodic changes. Some learners even expressed the need to produce sarcasm in the L2 themselves, which was not a goal of the instruction, but made sense as a next step for the learners after adopting the perspective that sarcasm is "one of the many communicative tools speakers use to express emotions and thoughts" (p. 228) instead of a solely negative speech act. Thus, devoting time to explicit instruction about common humor strategies in an L2 can improve learners' ability to accurately deduce nonliteral meanings, and can motivate learners to use the humorous language play themselves.

Frumuşelu (2020) supports the idea of using original audiovisual media content to introduce "slices of life" (p. 125) to L2 learners, much like what was done in the Kim and Lantolf (2016) study. Frumuşelu (2020) notes an important benefit that audiovisual content provides: "the student has the opportunity to learn words and expressions directly associated to the non-verbal references (gestures, images, situations)" (p. 126). This matches the importance of embodied explanations highlighted by Matsumoto et al. (2021). While recognizing that TV and film dialogue "does not reproduce entirely the spontaneity and realism of spoken conversation, it is in fact this partial naturalness that benefits the educational context of L2, given its normalized, standardized and comprehensible authentic language" (p. 129). Basically, the dialogue pares down fluff and filler like "um," allowing for more focused attention on target language concepts.

With the value established of using audiovisual popular media as an example for learners to analyze and emulate, it is worth considering other possible approaches to explicit instruction about humorous language play.

The findings of Larson, Morris, and Shaw (2019) detail observed pedagogical functions of sarcasm in an urban high school English classroom, such as breaking expectations (saying something the students wouldn't expect the teacher to say according to their cultural expectations), indexing interpersonal distance (defining the closeness of a relationship), saving face (recovering from embarrassment), evaluating disruptive behavior (orally addressing it and encouraging change), motivating (encouraging participation and engagement), building positive rapport (increasing trust and openness in communication), reducing stress, and more. Instructors could explicitly discuss these functions (with realistic examples of each) with their classes, which could not only help students learn to use the humor strategy, but also understand it when used by the teacher in class, and by others outside of class. Accompanying the discussion, structured practice activities could greatly enhance students' mastery of a given humor strategy. As Ahn (2016) notes, "it is through language play that students could actualise their awareness into performance" (p. 51)—teachers can establish the foundation of awareness through discussion, but actual language play practice should follow so that the students can implement what they learn.

In keeping with the idea of structured humorous language play practice in the classroom, one of Bell's (2012) studies found that "although [language] play itself was a regular occurrence, very little of it involved metalinguistic reflection" (p. 260); her analysis of the associated corpus of spontaneous language play reflected that the deliberate introduction of humorous language

play as a defined learning task demonstrated a positive effect on recall of meaning. Thus, though humor occurs naturally in language play, teachers can make it the subject of direct focus to teach pragmatic and semantic meaning. Utilizing humorous language play in this way can have the added benefit of making the learned material more memorable, and students certainly need to remember how to use and interpret the discussed strategies beyond the class period.

Similar to Kim and Lantolf (2016), Miller et al. (2017) found that using humorous instructional videos based on popular media from the target language increased student engagement, stimulated interest, relaxed the learning environment, and contributed to learning. The videos (from the *English for Uni* website) parodied themes and characters from films and TV shows familiar to the learners, but did so while highlighting aspects of the L2 for both observation and practice in line with the course's learning goals. This approach shows another way that teachers can systematically incorporate humorous language play in a classroom: relating language topics to familiar media from the L2 in the form of amusing parody. In this case, the humorous language play is not the topic of instruction, but rather a medium for understanding other aspects of the L2.

Opportunity for humorous language play even outside of a structured lesson could hide in plain sight within the classroom itself. Victoria (2019) proposes that such potential exists in the moments before stragglers find their seats at the beginning of class, or near the end of class when students start gathering their belongings. Victoria (2019) assesses that “unofficial spaces make the enjoyment of sociality and playful talk allowable” (p. 194) when such play might not be as acceptable in the midst of official curriculum. Hence, a teacher's attention to students' behavior,

mood, and conversations in moments outside of official lesson time allows for organic development of humorous language play with all the potential benefits that accompany it.

Still important, however, is teachers' ability to recognize humorous language play by the students in the midst of planned curriculum, but outside of a planned discussion on the topic, and respond to it. Doing so could encourage further learner creativity and flexibility, both of which play fundamental roles in language proficiency. Yet, as noted by Ahn (2016), teachers in an English immersion camp did not capitalize on spontaneous, collaborative, student-driven language play instances as teaching opportunities; Ahn suggests factors such as viewing the humorous language play as unimportant or irrelevant, lack of awareness in the students' L1, and the pressure of fulfilling program curricula. Teachers who seek to incorporate humor into language teaching and learning must thus prepare for unplanned instances of humorous language play and deliberately intend to incorporate it into the curriculum. Teacher attention and sensitivity to students' humorous language play attempts in the target language allow for organic teaching opportunities to manifest.

Such attempts should not be regarded as a useless sidetalk, but rather a springboard from which language teachers can better understand their students' development and further shape the classroom instruction. (Ahn 2016, p. 52)

Teachers can use these opportunities to reinforce current lesson material, which becomes more memorable thanks to the corresponding humorous language play, and more personally applicable for the students since they initiated the language play. Such conversations also develop an ongoing discussion about humorous language play, which bolsters content continuity throughout a given educational period. Matsumoto et al. (2021) emphasized the need for teachers

to be flexible with unexpected instances of humorous language play, recognizing the necessity of improvisation. This makes sense, given that a great deal of humorous language play doesn't come as a result of carefully planned dialogue, but rather in response to the natural flow of conversation.

As demonstrated by Leslie (2015), instances of spontaneous humor do not occur solely between the teacher and student, but also among students, and they use the same humor mechanisms as collaborative learners of the L2 as when interacting with a high proficient speaker of the target language, such as the teacher. This means that teachers can also introduce and encourage opportunities for L2 humorous language play even in interactions that do not directly involve the teacher, potentially extending even outside of the classroom.

Should a teacher wish to extend humorous language play in the L2 beyond the physical classroom, Bell's (2005) study found that "the humorous language play that arises in interaction outside of the classroom may provide opportunities that are especially conducive to the acquisition of vocabulary" (p. 213). That finding brings to mind another component of language teaching facilitated by humorous language play: out-of-class or homework activities. By engaging learners with highly proficient speakers outside of class, learners will naturally encounter humorous language play that inherently increases their vocabulary in a less didactic environment where their affective filters may be lower. Opportunities along those lines could be pursued through in-person connections, or by utilizing computer-assisted language learning tools such as video calling or text-based chats.

Conclusion

Humorous language play can arise unpredictably and naturally in conversation, but teachers can capitalize on its language learning benefits by structuring class frameworks in a way conducive to its teaching and application. By using humor as an enlivening medium for L2 study and practice, teachers may find that students engage more with lesson content, remember it better, lose some of their reticence to participate, and feel safer in making attempts to speak in the target language in spite of potentially face-threatening moments.

While humorous language play poses an inherent risk of misunderstanding, teachers can establish safeguards to mitigate that risk, particularly by prefacing humorous language play in the beginning of an educational period with clear expectations and boundaries, as well as teaching phrases early that allow them to quickly signal a statement's humorous intent. Sensitivity must also be shown to cultural factors influencing students' perspectives.

Teachers can find opportunities for utilizing humorous language play in the language learning classroom in both planned and unplanned settings, including the in-between times of class and in out-of-class assignments. While the benefits, cautions, and implementations presented in this article are not comprehensive, they offer a reliable framework for teachers to personalize a research-founded approach to facilitating L2 language learning through humorous language play.

HOW COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION INFLUENCES L2 PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE

Introduction

Due to pandemic precautions, the beginning of my studies in the MSLT program involved heavy reliance on technology for education. For the first time, I taught a second language (L2) class entirely online, relying primarily on the videoconferencing application Zoom. The unique circumstances hyper-focused my attention on the use of computer-assisted language learning (CALL), specifically computer-mediated communication (CMC), to facilitate intercultural communicative (pragmatic) competence. Though the worldwide health crisis demanded that most instruction involve some form of CALL, the situation presented the opportunity to learn how to utilize CALL in an EFL/ESL classroom even outside of pandemic conditions.

As part of my interest in the subject, I distributed a mid-semester survey to my Conversational English students, all of whom were adult learners ranging from intermediate to advanced proficiency levels. I designed three questions to elicit written responses that corresponded to the students' perceived pragmatic development in an entirely online oral conversation class. Three other questions simply asked for a rating on a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree: the class is of practical benefit to me as a student, class discussions are helpful to my learning, and the class is helping me become a better speaker. Another question asked for a written response: has learning through Zoom instead of a traditional classroom been better or worse for your learning? Why? While I cannot disclose my students' responses to the survey since I did not seek Institutional Review Board approval, my students' involvement in the course

and their survey responses further heightened my interest in analyzing what researchers have found in their studies regarding CMC's influence on learning second language pragmatics.

The definition for language pragmatics I use for this context is “how-to-say-what-to-whom-and-when” (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013, p. 169). In other words, pragmatics informs how to implement vocabulary and grammar based on cultural cues. Thus, pragmatics overlaps with intercultural communicative competence (ICC), which Thomé-Williams (2016) defines as the ability to “mediate different cultures and languages while interpreting and connecting two different ways of understanding the world” (p. 216), an aspect of establishing and maintaining relationships as discussed by Byram (2020). Wang (2020) adds that ICC requires L2 learners “to have knowledge of the culture as well as valuing the culture and the people originating from it” and also to self-reflect and understand the culture of their L1 (p. 3). Li and Wang (2018) point out that “cultural learning is an indispensable objective in [English L2] education,” (p. 75). It is important to note that a focus on developing pragmatics does not exclude the development of other language skills, as demonstrated by Wang (2020); students in the study's ICC-focused course “improved their English learning, particularly on the dimensions of reading and writing skills and vocabulary knowledge” (p. 11).

My personal classroom experience, combined with investigation of the following research, has led me to believe that teachers can use CMC tools to facilitate pragmatic learning for students. The sections below highlight how CMC can influence students' L2 pragmatic learning, including both strengths of various tools and methods, as well as challenges presented by CMC use in L2 teaching.

CMC's Positive Impact

While teachers have a wide array of options at their disposal when it comes to CMC tools, other factors than simply the type of tool itself can affect its success in improving overall student performance. Lin (2014) poses relevant research questions to what those other factors might be, synthesizing statistical analyses of data from a collection of 24 research studies to provide insight. Lin (2014), for example, starts by establishing that CMC-supplemented learning has a small to moderate, positive, and statistically significant and trustworthy effectiveness over face-to-face (F2F) interactions without CMC. This finding supports the idea that teachers can use CMC to positively influence pragmatic learning; language proficiency/fluency inherently requires pragmatic competence. The author later introduces the research question of whether certain task types are “more effective than others in promoting oral proficiency in the CMC environment” (Lin, 2014, p. 277). According to the author’s statistical analysis of 24 research studies, the opinion exchange task saw the most use (i.e. 18 of the studies), but it had only a relatively small positive effect size on performance improvement. Decision-making tasks, though far less common, demonstrated superior effects on oral performance (Lin, 2014). The scarcity of decision-making tasks exposes a need for further research into those and other underrepresented task types. Experimentation with a broader variety of task types in a classroom might help an instructor discover a more impactful method than opinion exchange, which though ubiquitous and mildly helpful, could be improved upon. Yet, overall, this study does show that CMC raises the potential for expanding language proficiency versus a solely F2F environment not supported by any kind of CALL, specifically CMC.

Having established that CMC can facilitate L2 proficiency development, the specific proficiency aspect of pragmatics warrants a closer look in relation to CMC. Ajabshir (2018) notes that the necessity of teaching pragmatics together with pragmatics' complexity "demand adopting innovative and effective approaches to instruction so as to promote learners' awareness of L2 pragmatic norms" (p. 170), and asserts that CMC tools offer a powerful means of accomplishing that purpose—that assertion matches the conclusions presented by Lin (2014). When discussing CMC, the topic has two major subsets: synchronous CMC (SCMC), which occurs in real time, like with videoconferencing, and asynchronous CMC (ACMC), which occurs with a delay, such as by email. Ajabshir (2018) compared the effectiveness of F2F instruction with SCMC and ACMC instruction, also seeking to determine whether there was a significant difference in effectiveness between SCMC and ACMC methods in the study. Participants in the study completed a pre-test on the pragmatic concept of polite low- and high-imposition requests, divided into three groups, then received targeted instruction for four weeks that included eight 90-minute class sessions. The instruction was identical for all participants, but they completed task-completion assignments either through synchronous text-based chat, asynchronous text-based chat, or F2F pairs. Following the instruction, the participants then completed a post-test to determine relative progress. The post-test results indicate a statistically significant difference between either CMC mode versus F2F without CMC, showing that ACMC and SCMC outperform F2F in both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic measures. However, the results show no significant difference between the effectiveness of ACMC and SCMC (Ajabshir, 2018). This study, then, confirms Lin's (2014) previously discussed findings: CMC of either form enhances proficiency acquisition as opposed to F2F teaching alone without CMC support. The

study also demonstrates a direct correlation with pragmatic learning in the area of polite requests. With this demonstration of a positive correlation between one facet of learning L2 pragmatics (polite requests) and the use of either APMC or SPMC, attention can be directed towards other examples of advantages to using CMC in pragmatics teaching.

One such advantage offered by CMC is the immediate and convenient ability to connect with speakers of the target language who would otherwise be inaccessible due to distance or other concerns, such as the aforementioned pandemic conditions from my own and many others' experience around the world. Yang (2013) examines the advantages that communicating via computer-supported collaborative learning provides. In Yang's study, students accessed ESPcafe, a website used to connect with students and teachers at other universities via chat and discussion forums; the site also included learning materials for download and assessments. Learning materials ranged from sample dialogues to case studies, and the eighteen multiple-choice assessments specifically assessed language awareness and indicated correct answers immediately after completion. In addition, the researchers could access log files that recorded the actions of participants in the virtual language learning community, tracking involvement such as duration of time spent in the community, which materials were downloaded, and the dialogues between students in the various contexts. The combination of communication tools with study and assessment resources and activity tracking capabilities expands the convenience of using such a tool for CMC purposes for both instructors and students—the CALL tool fulfills other needs than just communication, all accessible in a single, cohesive, easily-accessible place.

The CMC aspect of the technology in the study facilitates the coordinating element of convenience: students could engage in a variety of learning contexts without inhibitions such as

having to travel to a different university or other location to discuss a given topic; all they needed to do to change conversation contexts was simply select a different option from a drop-down menu and post in a discussion forum. To this multi-contextual engagement, Yang (2013) demonstrates correlation of “increased effectiveness and efficiency of developing students’ language awareness and problem solving abilities in different contexts” (p. 338). Indeed, the study showed that students pursued involvement in the contexts that aligned with their future goals and current language needs to fulfill those goals, and they also demonstrated statistically significant improvement in test scores after repeating attempts following feedback on their initial scores (Yang, 2013). Language awareness and problem solving in variable contexts are, of course, fundamental to pragmatic competence. Yang’s (2013) study in this way highlights how a CALL platform such as ESPcafe that utilizes CMC capabilities can facilitate convenient intercultural student discussion in terms of time and distance, students’ self-customized study, and teacher-regulated assessment and scaffolding to support growth in pragmatic competence.

With the heavy emphasis of CALL tools such as ESPcafe on text-based CMC for study and assessment, Kim’s (2017) study on learner language in text-based CMC versus oral language has great relevance. Logically, differences in the delivery of learning material and interpersonal interactions between text-based CMC and oral communication would result in different, though possibly comparable, results. Ideally, the alternate delivery methods would still guide learners towards fluency, which inherently involves intercultural communicative competence. So what differences might manifest, and how could they impact L2 fluency and pragmatic competence?

Kim (2017) points out similarities and differences between SCMC and oral communication, such as how “in its lack of paralinguistic cues, including intonation, pitch, and

tone, text-based SCMC resembles traditional writing, but in its capacity for instant interaction, text-based SCMC resembles F2F [face-to-face] oral conversation” (p. 222). Kim (2017) then asserts that such differences in modality could cause different learning patterns to emerge on the learner’s path to fluency. To support that assertion and discover specific examples, Kim (2017) arranged for L2 English learners to complete similar conversation-based tasks both in oral F2F communication and via the CMC tool Microsoft Windows Messenger. The results of the study showed that participants used far more low-level question forms in F2F communication than when using the messenger tool, relying on paralinguistic cues to help convey meaning instead of more complex or correct grammar (Kim, 2017). Those findings, in relation to the topic of improving pragmatic competence, suggest that implementing text-based CMC in students’ learning could encourage increased use of more complex (high stage) questions and response strategies.

By more regularly and frequently practicing high-stage questions through text-based CMC, L2 English learners might more easily implement the same or similar strategies in oral F2F interactions. As acknowledged by Kim (2017), even highly proficient speakers do use ungrammatical forms, but “regular production of lower-stage question forms is problematic, because learners may not have a chance to practice higher-stage questions and so, may fail to expand their interlanguage” (p. 231). Kim’s (2017) definition of interlanguage earlier in the article matches the term as introduced by Selinker (1972), and can be summarized as the transitional language that differs in linguistic patterns from both the learner’s L1 and L2. The instructor’s role in scaffolding for pragmatic development in question-response strategies, then, could focus on elevating low-stage questions to high-stage questions through practice activities

facilitated by text-based CMC tools. The results of those activities should result in personalized language production from each student that gives examples of speech patterns students can apply in their oral F2F communication to raise their pragmatic competence. Teachers could gauge progress in this regard by engaging students in pre- and post-CMC activity dialogues, analyzing the difference in their frequency and grammatical accuracy of low- and high-stage questions.

Text-based CMC can operate more effectively when supported by other CALL tools and purposeful guidance from the teacher. Teachers can utilize CALL options, such as aural texts, in accompaniment with CMC tools to their advantage in improving important skills vital to pragmatic competence, such as listening strategies. In this light, Lee (2015) identifies CALL's immense potential to support peer collaboration and continuity of learning by means of improving listening skills. Specifically, the author conducted a study on listening comprehension in a blended learning environment. While blended learning can incorporate a wide variety of CALL elements, this particular study included two noteworthy tools to support and facilitate students' online discussions: individualized and collaborative listening activities, and an SCMC chat program. The focus group of participants in the study took pre- and post-listening comprehension tests to evaluate the effects of the CALL elements and correlating pragmatic instruction. The discussion material for the students included an uploaded aural text, of which the students needed to identify portions they had trouble understanding. They then collaborated with each other via synchronous chat based on teacher-provided prompts for improvement of listening comprehension. Meanwhile, the control group did not receive prompting from the instructor directed towards listening comprehension. The learners in the focus group demonstrated significant improvement in listening comprehension over the control group who had no

particular guidance from the instructor (Lee, 2015). The study serves to demonstrate how including CMC tools alone likely will not lead to improvement, since both groups utilized the same SCMC chat medium. While including additional CALL resources can improve the depth of the exercise, a teacher's direct involvement in guiding students' interactions with CALL and CMC tools is fundamental to significant learner growth.

SCMC tools continue to rise in prevalence, both within and without the classroom setting, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of F2F interaction ability. Cunningham (2017) examines pragmatic appropriateness in telecollaboration, an SCMC environment involving video-enabled dialogue "where many speakers must simultaneously negotiate turn taking and attend to the discussion so that their contributions are logical from both a content and language perspective" (p. 56). Specifically, the study analyzes ratings of high- and low-imposition requests by participants, much like the Ajabshir (2018) study, though the target language is German rather than English. The study found the majority of requests produced to be good or excellent, but pointed out that they produced solely low-imposition requests, and that high-imposition requests could have led to different results (Cunningham, 2017). The study's analysis—stemming from the approximately one quarter of requests rated less than "good"—suggests a need for pragmatic instruction specifically in the vein of three aspects related to SCMC: taking the floor, nominating others to take the floor, and developing and sustaining topics (Cunningham, 2017). The study asserts that SCMC tools can deprive students of paralinguistic strategies they might otherwise rely on in a F2F communication setting, forcing them to rely on linguistic strategies to compensate. While this limitation poses a difficulty for using SCMC tools, it also serves as an additional opportunity for learner development of

alternate pragmatic functions. The previously-discussed Lee (2015) article suggests offering direct guidance to learners, so pairing that idea with the SCMC-related findings from Cunningham's (2017) study, language teachers could use SCMC tools to encourage students to use compensatory pragmatic strategies, providing instruction on alternatives and common strategies L1 speakers might use in the target language.

A CMC-centered classroom might also use synchronous telecollaboration as a tool for facilitating social contact—exposure to the target culture/language through social interaction—between students and highly proficient speakers of the target language. Avgousti (2018) proposes using CMC tools in this way to “combat stereotypical attitudes and misconceptions of a national identity” (p. 841). An L2 classroom geographically distanced from the target language may result in personal unfamiliarity with highly proficient speakers of that language among learners, but telecollaborative CMC tools offer a means of circumventing geographical limitations and establishing social contact. Avgousti's (2018) study also highlights how “telecollaboration provides learners with a different kind of learning that is not found in traditional textbooks, and most importantly, the information they receive is multidimensional and subjective” (p. 843).

The results of using a synchronous telecollaborative component (Skype) in the Thomé-Williams (2016) study, aligned with Avgousti's (2018) assertions regarding the benefits of telecollaboration. Learners in the Thomé-Williams (2016) study found the telecollaborative conversations helpful in developing aspects of their ICC, such as “revealing areas in their language skills requiring more attention” and “more meaningfulness by learning about their partners and the conditions of living” (p. 228). Avgousti (2018) suggested other CMC tools that

offer similar benefits, such as text chats, and deemed synchronous tools “a more appropriate mode when interacting with intercultural interlocutors due to their instant nature feedback” as opposed to asynchronous tools, instead deemed “best suited for grammar instruction” (p. 843). However, Thomé-Williams (2016) found learners’ asynchronous use of Facebook “extremely enriching...students from both sides would initiate conversations, ask about more information on topics that would interest them or they were learning in class, talk about their weekends, sports, general activities, etc.” (p. 226). The highlighted conversation topics demonstrate the potential of ACMC tools to emulate social contact, not merely serve as a basis for grammar instruction. So, telecollaboration and ACMC can both demonstrably provide opportunity for social contact and subsequent development of learners’ language pragmatics.

In line with Thomé-Williams’ (2016) findings, Maíz-Arévalo (2017) provides an example of development of pragmatic skills through an e-forum tool called Moodle in spite of text-based CMC limitations (such as lack of facial expressions, body language, and other communicative cues). Specifically, the study analyzes the phatic communication (i.e. small talk) of multicultural graduate students during a collaborative assignment that required online discussion using English as a lingua franca. Summarily, the author defines phatic communication as language intended solely for social exchange, not delivery of informative content, to build relational connections and rapport with other interlocutors (Maíz-Arévalo, 2017). The author collected over one hundred forum posts and found phatic communication not only prior to and after transactional conversation, but in the middle of such conversation as well. The small talk included neutral phatic discourse (like conversation about the weather) as well as personal phatic talk in both its subsets of self-oriented and other-oriented utterances (Maíz-Arévalo, 2017). The

author notes how participants engaged in communication accommodation, where they changed their initially formal language to match the informal language of other participants. As an example from the study, participants adjusted greetings and closings to increasingly include emoticons, onomatopoeic renderings of laughter, and expressive punctuation such as exclamation marks (Maíz-Arévalo, 2017). Thus, text-based CMC may support learners' recognition of pragmatic differences by providing clear, referenceable evidence and examples, helping students learn and adapt their language use to others in their communication context.

Additionally, since students lacked certain means of establishing camaraderie and solidarity such as body language and facial expressions, "students seem to resort to phatic talk as a means to boost collaboration and the successful completion of the task" (Maíz-Arévalo, 2017, p. 442). This suggests that teachers could design assignments that rely on text-based CMC to encourage practice with phatic talk precisely because it limits many nonverbal means of communication. By practicing in such a focused CMC setting, students could by extension strengthen their F2F small talk pragmatic proficiency.

Challenges

As demonstrated by previously discussed limitations, CALL and CMC don't inherently solve all challenges faced in a language learning classroom. In a study on 16 pairs of one L1 English speaker and one L2 English speaker per pair, van der Zwaard and Bannink (2016) investigated the occurrence (or lack thereof) of meaning negotiation, which represents a fundamental pre-condition for the development of pragmatic competence. The research compares native and non-native speakers' performance of tasks (joke-telling and discussion) using two primary CMC tools: videoconferencing, similar to the Cunningham (2017) study, and

typed chat. The study focuses on instances of meaning negotiation when discussing jokes together in the target language, and finds a high frequency of instances where nonunderstanding did not result in repair, which the authors attribute primarily to the fear of losing face (van der Zwaard & Bannink, 2016). The authors draw attention to the framework of the tasks as a possible factor, in that “initiating negotiation of meaning, is dispreferred both within and after the joke” (p. 636). However, the frequency of nonoccurrence of meaning negotiation was higher when videoconferencing versus communicating over chat, suggesting that the participants found negotiating meaning easier over the medium of chat, which the authors propose could correlate with the anonymity of participants not seeing each other while communicating (van der Zwaard & Bannink, 2016). That correlation shows an example of how CMC tools themselves could help or hinder students’ development of pragmatic competence; one tool might discourage meaning negotiation while another is more conducive to meaning negotiation. Language teachers thus face the challenge of deciphering what impact using a given CMC tool will have on students’ fear of losing face and subsequent willingness to negotiate meaning, and that impact likely varies from class to class, requiring constant re-evaluation of CMC tool implementation in a given course.

With that challenge in mind, the article by Tayebnik & Puteh (2013) addresses the role of ambiguity in online EFL courses, specifically its effect on conversational participation. In this context, the authors define participation as “communication in the classroom by answering and asking questions, giving comments and joining in discussions” (p. 207). In the CMC setting of an online course, such participation could involve oral discourse with or without video, typed chat, email, etc. Ambiguity, or lack of clear meaning which occurs when communicated intent is

indirectly expressed to some degree, can require learners to navigate unfamiliar language pragmatics to clarify understanding, hence its relevance to the aforementioned challenge of meaning negotiation. The study differentiated tolerant and intolerant participants by means of an Ambiguity Tolerance Scale, and the researchers then tracked students' participation in the course (Tayebinik & Puteh, 2013); the resultant findings revealed a significant participatory difference between the two categories of students, which showed that tolerant students exhibited more qualities of participation in the online course. In keeping with those findings, language teachers may need to exercise caution in utilizing CMC tools in teaching environments where students have low ambiguity tolerance, such as cultures where the students' L1 involves a low degree of ambiguity in typical conversation. By scaling the use of CMC tools in a classroom according to the ambiguity tolerance of the learners, teachers may notice an increase in participation.

Sevilla-Pavón (2019) provides insight on a factor that can help determine the impact of online intercultural exchanges and telecollaboration on aspects of language learning, including aspects of pragmatics: the differences between L1 and L2 configurations. The author designates L1 configurations as those in which a participant speaks the target language of the other participant as an L1; by extension, L2 configurations entail participants who all speak the target language as an L2. In Sevilla-Pavón's (2019) study, students received different telecollaborative task assignments each week for 14 weeks, during which their interactions included APMC (email, GoogleDocs comments) and SCMC (Google Hangouts for videoconferencing and text and voice chat) modes of collaboration. The author's analysis of perceived learning gains found that the L2 configuration supported intercultural communication and competence development better than the L1 configuration. However, the L1 configuration proved more productive in

perceived learning gains in the categories of teamwork, language for specific purposes, learner autonomy, and linguistic competence. Sevilla-Pavón (2019) notes that students experienced partner fluency frustrations in the L2 configuration, while students did not express similar frustrations about the L1 configuration, which the author attributes to how “in L1 exchanges the direction of the [proficiency] mismatch changes when the participants change language,” (p. 787)—such a change does not occur in L2 configurations, potentially resulting in a perpetual imbalance of fluency levels between interlocutors. The author notes that teachers might ameliorate such frustrations by partnering L2 speakers with relatively equal levels of fluency, but acknowledges the difficulty of doing so in telecollaboration. The author also admits the difficulty of finding foreign partners that speak a learner’s target language as an L1 and the learner’s L1 as an L2. Thus, though ideal configurations of telecollaboration and online intercultural exchanges can provide significant benefits to multiple aspects of language learning, teachers face a complex challenge in arranging interactions that fulfill those ideals.

Conclusion

CMC demonstrably has a great deal to offer in terms of potential to positively influence teaching and learning L2 pragmatic competence. Among those benefits, the examined studies have shown CMC methods as an effective means of accessing a wider variety of task types, enhancing pragmatic learning in making polite requests, improving language awareness and contextual problem solving, enabling more convenient intercultural interactions in terms of time and distance, elevating question-response strategy levels, bettering listening comprehension, encouraging the use of alternate pragmatic strategies than those typically relied upon in F2F communication, and emphasizing the practice of phatic talk to support relational development. In

all such applications of CMC, direct teacher guidance on the students' learning process is fundamental for the tools' success in positively impacting student learning.

Teachers do face challenges to successfully implement CMC in their classrooms, including factors like exacerbated fear of losing face that inhibits willingness to negotiate meaning, low ambiguity tolerance in an online setting leading to disengagement from dialogues, and differences in fluency between conversation partners leading to frustration instead of satisfaction with configurations. In response, teachers may need to give special attention to balancing the CMC tools available with the cultural backgrounds of their students and the comparability of students' proficiency levels.

The addressed research collectively encourages perpetual experimentation with additional CALL resources and strategies for their use. While this annotated bibliography is by no means exhaustive in presentation of the benefits and challenges to using CMC to positively influence L2 pragmatic competence, it lays a reliable foundation for continued, evolving implementation of CMC tools in the language learning classroom.

LOOKING FORWARD

In considering the future of my professional development, two general categories encompass the primary areas in which I wish to grow: second language (L2) teaching and L2 research. By continuing to invest time and effort into deepening my experience, knowledge, skills, and attitudes in those categories, I will enhance my ability to positively impact the lives of other people, such as my peers/coworkers and students.

Thus far, teaching and learning account for the majority of my experience in the realm of L2 education. This experience lays a reliable foundation upon which to continue teaching, and by so doing, my involvement will help me learn more about areas with which I have less experience. For example, much of my teaching experience has centered on developing learners' speaking skills. By also teaching reading-focused classes in the future, I will be able to apply what I have learned about the subject during my studies, thereby developing a more complete understanding of L2 teaching based not only on theoretical concepts, but also personal experience. My teaching will also benefit from my involvement with research, which will inform my perspectives and approaches.

At this point, my experience with L2 research has come mostly from studying, analyzing, and applying the research of others, as well as creating proposals for potential future research. That experience gives me both the basis and desire for the opportunity to add my own contributions, particularly on the topics addressed in the Research Perspectives and Annotated Bibliography of this portfolio. I plan to eventually develop my research skills over the course of a doctorate degree, which will lend me the skills, experience, and qualifications necessary to actively contribute as a fuller participant in the L2 research community.

REFERENCES

- Ahn, S.-Y. (2016). Exploring language awareness through students' engagement in language play. *Language Awareness*, 25(1/2), 40–54. DOI: 10.1080/09658416.2015.1122020
- Ajabshir, Z. F. (2018). The effect of synchronous and asynchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC) on EFL learners' pragmatic competence. *Computers in Human Behavior* 92, 169-177. DOI: 10.1016/j.chb.2018.11.015
- Ali, S. S., Iqbal, M., Ali, A., Uddin, R., & Rahman, G. (2015). Appropriate use of humor in English language teaching: A case study of KUST (Kohat University of Science and Technology). *Abasyn University Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(1), 127–142.
- Alsawaier, R. (2018). The effect of gamification on motivation and engagement. *The International Journal of Information and Learning Technology* 35(1), 56-79.
- Avgousti, M. (2018). Intercultural communicative competence and online exchanges: a systematic review. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 31(8), 819-853. DOI: 10.1080/09588221.2018.1455713
- Bardovi-Harlig, K. (2013). Developing L2 Pragmatics. *Language Learning*, 63(s1), 68-86.
- Bateman, B. (2002). Promoting openness toward culture learning: Ethnographic interviews for students of Spanish. *The Modern Language Journal*, 86(3), 318-331.
- Bell, N. (2005). Exploring L2 language play as an aid to SLL: A case study of humour in NS–NNS interaction. *Applied Linguistics*, 26(2), 192–218. DOI: 10.1093/applin/amh043
- Bell, N. (2012). Comparing playful and nonplayful incidental attention to form. *Language Learning*, 62(1), 236–265. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9922.2011.00630.x

- Byram, P. M. (2020). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence: Revisited* (2nd ed.). Multilingual Matters.
- Canagarajah, A. S. (2004). Subversive identities, pedagogical safe houses, and critical learning. In B. Norton & K. Toohy (Eds.), *Critical pedagogies and language learning* (pp. 116–137). Cambridge University Press.
- Cook, G. (1997). Language play, language learning. *ELT Journal* 51(3), 224-231.
- Carless, D. (2011). *From testing to productive student learning: Implementing formative assessment in Confucian–heritage settings*. Routledge.
- Cunningham, D. J. (2017). Second language pragmatic appropriateness in telecollaboration: The influence of discourse management and grammaticality. *System*, 64, 46-57. DOI: 10.1016/j.system.2016.12.006
- Davies, C. E. (2003). How English-learners joke with native speakers: An interactional sociolinguistic perspective on humor as collaborative discourse across cultures. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 35(9), 13-61. DOI: 10.1016/S0378-2166(02)00181-9
- Diana, S. (2019). Learning Romanian is fun: The use of jokes and anecdotes in teaching Romanian as a foreign language. *International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on Social Sciences & Arts SGEM 6*, 697-703. DOI: 10.5593/SWS.ISCAH.2019.1
- Dubreil, S. (2020). Using games for language learning in the age of social distancing. *Foreign Language Annals*, 53, 250-259. DOI: 10.1111/flan.12465
- Edstrom, A. (2015). Triads in the L2 classroom: Interaction patterns and engagement during a collaborative task. *System*, 52, 26-37. DOI: 10.1016/j.system.2015.04.014

- Forman, R. (2011). Humorous language play in a Thai EFL classroom. *Applied Linguistics*, 32(5), 541–565. DOI: 10.1093/applin/amr022
- Frumușelu, A. (2020). Bringing humour and emotive language from sitcoms into the EFL classroom. *Interstudia*, 27, 125-134.
- Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In: P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Speech acts* (pp. 41–58). Academic Press.
- Guerreiro, M., & Nordengren, C. (2018). “No fun games:” Engagement effects of two gameful assessment prototypes. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 50(2), 134-148. DOI: 10.1080/15391523.2018.1426063
- Hanson-Smith, E. (2016). Games, gaming, and gamification: Some aspects of motivation. *TESOL Journal*, 7(1), 227-232.
- Hodson, R. (2008). Challenges for EFL learners in understanding English humour: A pilot study. *Journal of the Faculty of Global Communication*, 9, 25–36.
- Hřebačková, M. (2019). Teaching intercultural communicative competence through virtual exchange. *Training, Language and Culture*, 3(4), 8-17. DOI: 10.29366/2019tlc.3.4.1
- Kim, H. Y. (2017). Effect of modality and task type on interlanguage variation. *ReCALL*, 29(2), 219–236. DOI: 10.1017/S0958344017000015
- Kim, Y., & Taguchi, N. (2015). Promoting task-based pragmatics instruction in EFL classroom contexts: The role of task complexity. *The Modern Language Journal*, 99(4), 656-677. DOI: 10.1111/modl.12273
- Krashen, S. (1987). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Prentice Hall.

- Larson, J., Morris, T., & Shaw, K. (2019). Sarcasm as a pedagogy of love: Exploring ironic speech acts in an urban high school English classroom. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 63(2), 169-177.
- Lee, J. (2015). The impact of metacognitive instruction in blended learning on L2 listeners' metacognitive awareness and comprehension. *Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning*, 18(4), 70–98. DOI: 10.15702/mall.2015.18.4.70
- Leslie, C. (2015). Humour in peer interaction in the L2 classroom. *E-Teals: An e-Journal of Teacher Education & Applied Language Studies*, 6, 51–67.
- Lin, H. (2014). Computer-mediated communication (CMC) in L2 oral proficiency development: A meta-analysis. *ReCALL*, 27(3), 261–287. DOI: 10.1017/S095834401400041X
- Lin, Y., Wang, H. (2018). Using enhanced OER videos to facilitate English L2 learners' multicultural competence. *Computers & Education* 125, 74-85. DOI: 10.1016/j.compedu.2018.06.005
- Liu, M. (2012). An empirical research on the application of humor in college English teaching. *Revista Academiei Fortelor Terestre*, 17(4), 396–407.
- MacIntyre, P. D., Clément, R., Dörnyei, Z., & Noels, K. A. (1998). Conceptualizing willingness to communicate in a L2: A situational model of L2 confidence and affiliation. *The Modern Language Journal* 82(4), 545-562. DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-4781.1998.tb05543.x
- Maíz-Arévalo, C. (2017). 'Small talk is not cheap': Phatic computer-mediated communication in intercultural classes. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 30(5), 432-446, DOI: 10.1080/09588221.2017.1304423

- Malone, T., & Lepper, M. (1987). Making learning fun: A taxonomy of intrinsic motivations for learning. In R. Snow & M. Farr (Eds.), *Aptitude, learning, and instruction: Conative and affective process analyses* (Vol. 3) (pp. 223-253). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Matsumoto, Y., Lee, J. J., & Kim, E. (2021). “Laughing moments:” The complex negotiation of laughing acts among students and teachers in an English as a second language classroom. *Classroom Discourse*. DOI: 10.1080/19463014.2020.1808494
- Miller, J. L., Wilson, K., Miller, J., & Enomoto, K. (2017). Humorous materials to enhance active learning. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 36(4), 791-806. DOI: 10.1080/07294360.2016.1238883
- Mohamad, S., Sazali, N., & Salleh, M. (2018). Gamification approach in education to increase learning engagement. *International Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 4(1), 22-32. DOI: 10.20469/ijhss.4.10003-1
- Mulligan, D., & Kirkpatrick, A. (2000). How much do they understand? Lectures, students and comprehension. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 19(3), 311–335. DOI: 10.1080/758484352
- Mystkowska-Wiertelak, A. (2021). Fluctuations in willingness to communicate during a semester: A case study. *The Language Learning Journal*, 49(1), 1-12. DOI: 10.1080/09571736.2018.1469660
- Nakamura, S., Darasawang, P., & Reinders, H. (2021). The antecedents of boredom in L2 classroom learning. *System*, 98, 1-15. DOI: 10.1016/j.system.2021.102469

- Nesi, H. (2012). Laughter in university lectures. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 11, 79–89. DOI:10.1016/j.jeap.2011.12.003
- Nistor, G., & Iacob, A. (2018). The advantages of gamification and game-based learning and their benefits in the development of education. *Advanced Distributed Learning Association 1*, 308-312. DOI: 10.12753/2066-026X-18-042
- Nunan, D. (2003). The impact of English as a global language on educational policies and practices in the Asia-Pacific region. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37(4), 589–613. DOI: 10.2307/3588214
- Pomerantz, A., & Bell, N. (2011). Humor as a safe house in the foreign language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal* 95, 148-161. DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-4781.2011.01274.x
- Pratt, M. L. (1991). Arts of the contact zone. *Profession*, 91, 33–40.
- Richards, J. C. (2006). *Communicative language teaching today*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sato, M., & Lam, C. (2021). Metacognitive instruction with young learners: A case of willingness to communicate, L2 use, and metacognition of oral communication. *Language Teaching Research*, 25 (6), 899-921. DOI: 10.1177/13621688211004639
- Selinker, L. (1972). Interlanguage. *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, 10, 209–241.
- Sevilla-Pavón, A. (2019). L1 versus L2 online intercultural exchanges for the development of 21st century competences: The students' perspective. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 50(2), 779-805. DOI: 10.1111/bjet.12602
- Skalicky, S., Berger, C. M., & Bell, N. D. (2015). The functions of “just kidding” in American English. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 85, 18–31. DOI: 10.1016/j.pragma.2015.05.024

- Tayebinik, M., & Puteh, M. (2013). The role of ambiguity tolerance in participation in online EFL courses. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 44(6), E207–E208. DOI: 10.1111/bjet.12087
- Thomé-Williams, A. (2016). Developing intercultural communicative competence in Portuguese through Skype and Facebook. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 25(1), 213-233.
- Victoria, M. (2019). Use of humour in the off-task spaces of the language classroom. *ELT Journal: English Language Teaching Journal*, 73(2), 186–196. DOI: 10.1093/elt/ccy054
- Wang, H. (2020). Facilitating English L2 learners' intercultural competence and learning of English in a Taiwanese university. *Language Teaching Research*, 00(0), 1-17. DOI: 10.1177/1362168820969359
- Waring, H. (2013). Doing being playful in the second language classroom. *Applied Linguistics* 34(2), 191-210. DOI: 10.1093/applin/ams047
- Yang, Y.-F. (2013). Exploring students' language awareness through intercultural communication in computer-supported collaborative learning. *Educational Technology & Society*, 16(2). 325-342.
- van Compernelle, R. (2011). Developing second language sociopragmatic knowledge through concept-based instruction: A microgenetic case study. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 29, 3267-3283. DOI: 10.1016/j.pragma.2011.06.009
- van Compernelle, R., & Kinginger, C. (2013). Promoting metapragmatic development through assessment in the zone of proximal development. *Language Teaching Research*, 17(3), 282-302. DOI: 10.1177/1362168813482917

- Van Der Zwaard, R., & Bannink, A. (2016). Nonoccurrence of negotiation of meaning in task-based synchronous computer-mediated communication. *Modern Language Journal*, *100*(3), 625–640. DOI: 10.1111/modl.12341
- VanPatten, B., Keating, G. D., & Wulff, S. (2020). *Theories in second language acquisition: An introduction* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher mental processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Youn, S. (2015). Validity argument for assessing L2 pragmatics in interaction using mixed methods. *Language Testing* *32*(2), 199-225.
- Yung, K. (2020). Using public exam questions in fishbowl debate to engage exam-oriented students in communicative language teaching. *RELC Journal*, *51*(3), 440-447. DOI: 10.1177/0033688219888055
- Zainuddin, Z., Shujahat, M., Haruna, H., & Chu, S. (2020). The role of gamified e-quizzes on student learning and engagement: An interactive gamification solution for a formative assessment system. *Computers and Education*, *145*, 1-15. DOI: 10.1016/j.compedu.2019.103729
- Zhang, Q. (2005). Immediacy, humor, power distance and classroom communication apprehension in Chinese college classrooms. *Communication Quarterly*, *53*(1), 109–124. DOI:10.1080/01463370500056150

APPENDICES

Appendix A. GCA Lesson Plan: Questions Fuel Conversation

The following Can-Do statements represent the goals of this lesson plan for students' development of intercultural communicative competence through an interactive gamified communicative activity:

- Students can maintain a small talk conversation on a single topic for two minutes, utilizing appropriate topical vocabulary.
- Students can use questions during small talk to demonstrate interest in the other speaker.
- Students can appropriately respond to questions posed to them during small talk.

The lesson plan outlined below is designed for a single 50-minute class of L2 English learners of intermediate or higher proficiency. However, prior to the lesson the students should understand the definition and role of small talk in American culture, such as when and between whom it is used, and what topics are generally appropriate or inappropriate. Doing so should help establish the relevancy of the in-class activity. Discussions could include comparing the students' L1 cultures to American English by vocalizing what small talk sounds like in their L1, who uses it, and where it takes place (if it occurs at all). It would also be most effective to prepare students with common phrases and vocabulary used in small talk settings prior to this lesson; in regards to a classroom focused on exam preparation, consider preparing students with grammatical structures and vocabulary drawn from exam content that simultaneously could be incorporated in a small talk setting.

As the lesson title suggests, this lesson focuses on using questions to develop and maintain conversation, specifically in a small talk setting, though the principle has broader application in other conversation settings as well.

First, encourage student participation by presenting the class with the following question: in a conversation context, what are some benefits of asking questions? If their answers do not include the following points, be sure to highlight them before moving on:

- It's easier to listen than to speak
- You can learn something new
- Questions help avoid awkward silence
- Questions help fill time
- It shows you're not just focused on yourself

Next, as a class review which topics are generally appropriate for small talk regardless of the speakers' relationship by asking the following question: what are some safe topics to ask questions about with almost anyone? In addition to any others the students may recall from a prior lesson, be sure to emphasize the six topics below, as they are included in this lesson's activity:

- Weather
- Sports
- Food
- Hobbies
- Recommendations (local restaurants, entertainment, etc.)
- Work/school

The opening questions and discussions should take between 5 and 10 minutes. Make sure the students can all see the list of the six safe small talk topics. On the list, associate each topic with a particular location, such as these examples:

- Weather (at a community picnic in a park)
- Sports (on a bus)
- Food (in line at a grocery store)
- Hobbies (at a mutual friend's party)
- Recommendations (waiting for a traffic light to change at a crosswalk)
- Work/school (waiting for first day of in-person class to start)

If preferred, the teacher can provide a unique speaker relationship with each topic/location pair as well; otherwise, tell students to assume that the speakers are strangers to one another. Students should now take 5-10 minutes of preparation time to individually create two questions that they could use in a small talk conversation about each topic in its associated setting.

After the students have finished drafting their questions, explain the “Value of Questions” activity (detailed below) to the class. The activity should take 15-25 minutes, though the duration will vary depending on class size.

The Value of Questions

In pairs, students will simultaneously discuss one of the topics for which they prepared their questions—the teacher chooses the topics at random. Their goal is to discuss that topic (and only that topic) for 2 minutes, using their prepared questions to keep the conversation going.

Display a stopwatch tracking time somewhere where all the students can see it. Each pair scores points thus:

- 1 point for every second the conversation continues on-topic (maximum 120)
- 10 bonus points for each of the pair's 4 prepared questions used (max 40)
- 25 points for ending within 5 seconds of 2 minutes
- Lose 1 point for every second past the 2:05 mark

After the first conversation concludes, the pair tallies their points (both partners should score the same amount for the round). Now, students should rotate to new partners, though at the teacher's discretion they could also remain with the same partners for the activity's duration—the rotation adds a fun dimension of variety, which exposes each student to more diverse ideas and conversation patterns. Repeat this process until each of the six topics have been discussed, with students keeping a running total of the points they accrue. At the end, reconvene as a class, and the student(s) with the most points are declared victors.

Be sure to keep the rotations moving quickly, as that aspect has the most potential to increase the activity time. In a class with only a handful of students (4-12), rather than having conversations simultaneously, one pair could be spotlighted at a time while the others watch and wait until their turn. In such a format, students might not use all of their prepared questions since they might not participate in every topic conversation. This format follows a similar pattern to the fishbowl debate discussed in the Literature Review section.

If there is an odd number of students, one of the pairs could instead operate as a trio. The trio would score 10 points for each of the six questions used (still to a max of 40) with the

condition that to qualify for 40 points, each of the participants had to ask at least one of their prepared questions.

After the activity's conclusion, pose the following discussion questions to the class, which should take the remaining class time (5-10 minutes):

- Which topics were the easiest to talk about? Why?
- Which topics were the most difficult to talk about? Why?
- What new useful vocabulary or grammar did you learn from this activity?

*Note: We did not have time to complete the review portion before the end of our 50 minute session. Instead, we did so as a follow-up during the next class meeting. Part of this was due to the students needing more time than the allotted 5-10 minutes to prepare their questions for each of the small talk topics. To account for the possible variance in students' need for preparation time, teachers could assign the preparation as homework to be completed before the lesson; doing so could also allow for the inclusion of more small talk topics. Alternatively, the number of practiced small talk topics could be reduced to account for preparation time needed in class.

Appendix B. Learning Sarcasm

The selected texts contain concentrated examples of a common humor strategy (sarcasm) among American English speakers. However, while the practices are conversational, they are difficult for L2 English learners to recognize and analyze solely by listening/watching, especially when first learning about sarcasm. After listening, reading the texts allows learners time to break the dialogue into more manageable pieces and recognize specific structures and pragmatics.

Text #1

Before Reading

- Ask students as they arrive to class about an activity they did over the last weekend, or that they will do over the upcoming weekend. Respond to each answer with a sarcastic reply where possible.
 - Example:
 - Student: “I mostly just worked on homework.”
 - Teacher: “Ah, I’m sure you loved doing that over the weekend.”
- Explain the basic components of sarcasm.
 - A humor strategy in which a person says something, but means something different, often the opposite.
 - Speakers often show that they’re using sarcasm through changes in tone and gestures/facial expressions.
 - Ask the students to think about your responses when they shared their weekend activities; what did you say that was sarcastic?

- Outline some of the purposes of using sarcasm in American English. Elaborate on potentially unfamiliar terms, and provide examples where necessary.
 - Break expectations
 - Save face (recover from embarrassment)
 - Motivate
 - Example: A teacher says to students having a side conversation in class:
“Oh, I’m glad to see some of you have something more important to discuss.”
 - Build positive relationships
 - Reduce stress
 - Inflict harm (hurt someone’s feelings)
- Ask students whether they use sarcasm in their first language. For what purposes?
- Introduce new vocabulary from text #1 with definitions
 - Slob: someone who doesn’t clean
 - Klutz: someone who is extremely clumsy
 - Hate to break it to you: I’m sorry to say, I regret to tell you
 - Kick(ed) out: forcibly remove(d) from a place or activity
- Tell students that while they watch the upcoming video clip, they should give a thumbs-up each time they think a speaker uses sarcasm.
- Play the Office Clip #1: Jim and Pam
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78SgHHz6kuQ> [3:59-5:11])

- Use the volume and accuracy of the class' thumbs-ups to gauge their sarcasm recognition. It might be necessary to explain what a thumbs-up is.
- It may be helpful to the students to watch the clip more than once.

During Reading

- Display the dialogue lines of the clip for the class to see, or distribute copies to the class.
- Divide the class into pairs/small groups and assign each pair/group a selection of lines from the clip.
- Ask the pairs/groups to decide whether their assigned lines are sarcastic or not. They should also identify what clues show which lines are sarcastic.
 - Note that a line might be partly sarcastic, partly sincere (for example, line 2, where Pam is sincere about not liking the place much, but is sarcastic about not caring).
- Reconvene as a class. Each pair/group should share their decisions and reasoning with the class.
 - Offer correction/clarification if the students misidentify a line.
 - Example:
 - Students: “We think line 10 is sincere because Pam wants to know the answer to her question.”
 - Teacher: “When Pam asks ‘Oh, right now?’ does she really expect Jim to actually propose while at work together? No, of course not—that would be extremely unlikely in American culture, where proposals often come in special settings. The meaning of her

question is instead that she doesn't believe Jim will propose.

Therefore, the line means something different than the question itself, so it is sarcastic.”

After Reading

- Review with the students. Ask them questions like these to check their understanding:
 - What is sarcasm?
 - What are some purposes for using sarcasm?
 - How can you tell when someone is being sarcastic?
 - What are some possible reactions to someone using sarcasm?
- Watch the clip with the students again. After doing so, ask questions like these to check their progress:
 - Do you notice the sarcasm more this time?
 - How does that change how you feel when watching the clip?
- Divide students into pairs/small groups again and give each pair/group a conversation topic. Example topics could include:
 - School
 - Traffic
 - Weather
 - Work
- Each pair should create a short dialogue based on the assigned topic that includes sarcasm. They should identify what purpose(s) their sarcasm has.
 - Example:

- Topic: school
 - Student 1: Man, I have so much homework this weekend.
 - Student 2: Oh I bet that's exactly what you wanted to do all Saturday.
 - Purpose(s): reduce stress, build positive relationship
- Each pair/group should share their dialogue with the class. The listening students should identify the instance(s) and purpose(s) of the sarcasm in each dialogue.

Text #2

This builds and reinforces the concepts from Text #1. Many of the annotations from Text #1 are also relevant for Text #2.

Before Reading

- Tell students that while they watch the upcoming video clip, they should give a thumbs-up each time they think a speaker uses sarcasm.
- Play the Office Clip #2: Jim and Ryan

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhUOb6AhH4s> [7:58-8:33])

- Use the volume and accuracy of the class' thumbs-ups to gauge their sarcasm recognition. Ideally, students will recognize sarcasm more while watching this clip for the first time compared to their first time watching Office Clip #1.

During Reading (Text #2)

- Display the dialogue lines of the clip for the class to see, or distribute copies to the class.
- Divide the class into pairs/small groups and assign each pair/group a selection of lines from the clip.

- Ask the pairs/groups to decide whether their assigned lines are sarcastic or not. They should also identify what clues show which lines are sarcastic.
- Reconvene as a class. Each pair/group should share their decisions and reasoning with the class.
 - Offer correction/clarification if the students misidentify a line.

After Reading (Text #2)

- Watch the clip with the students again. After doing so, ask questions like these to check their progress:
 - When did you laugh this time that you didn't the first time watching the clip?
- Divide students into pairs/small groups again and give each pair/group a different conversation topic from the Text #1 After Reading activity.
- Each pair should create a short dialogue based on the assigned topic that includes sarcasm. They should identify what purpose(s) their sarcasm has, with at least one purpose being different from that of their dialogue from the Text #1 After Reading activity.
- Each pair/group should share their dialogue with the class. The listening students should identify the instance(s) and purpose(s) of the sarcasm in each dialogue.

Text #1

- 1) Jim: You just got yourself kicked out of your apartment.
- 2) Pam: Oh, I don't care, I don't really like that place much anyway. I'll just move.
- 3) J: Oh really? Who's going to take you in? You're messy. You're a klutz, you spill everything, and you leave the volume on the TV way too down.
- 4) P: Yeah. Maybe I'll just move in with my boyfriend because he's kind of a slob too.
- 5) J: Okay. Let's do it.
- 6) P: No, I, um, I'm not gonna move in with anyone unless I'm engaged.
- 7) J: Have I not proposed to you yet?
- 8) P: I don't—no...
- 9) J: Oh. Well, that's coming.
- 10) P: Oh, right now?
- 11) J: No, I'm not gonna do it right here. That would be rather lame.
- 12) P: Okay, so then when?
- 13) J: Pam, I'm not gonna tell you. Hate to break it to you, but that's not how that works.
- 14) P: Oh, right. Yeah.
- 15) J: Wait, I'm serious. It's happening.
- 16) P: Okay!
- 17) J: And when it happens, it's going to kick your butt, Beesly. So stay sharp.
- 18) P: I've been warned.

Text #2

- 1) Jim: I just figured you needed a place where you could concentrate and not be bothered by...bothering people.
- 2) Ryan: Okay...
- 3) J: Let me show you what I mean. Your new office! How great is that, right? For a job well done. Well, not done.
- 4) R: I will, uh, I will do my work right now. I will stay late tonight.
- 5) J: Right.
- 6) R: Um, I'm very sorry about everything.
- 7) J: Good kid. You know what, it gets bigger once you're in there! Enjoy it!
- 8) R: Is there Internet?