Colloquium #2
Pragmatics and Technology-Mediated Environments
Organizers: Marta González-Lloret, (University of Hawaiʻi) & Julie Sykes (University of Oregon)
Saturday, November 2, 2024
10:30am - 12:30pm
Dogwood Room

Introduction: Pragmatics & technology-mediated environments 20 min
Presenters: Julie Sykes (University of Oregon & LingroLearning) & Marta González-Lloret (University of Hawaiʻi)
Abstract: Sykes and González-Lloret (2020) proposed that the field of L2 pragmatics should study "technologies which are in development (e.g., virtual reality, personalized mobile systems, augmented reality, real time translation), rather than those that are proven in the marketplace" (p. xi). This colloquium is such an attempt to bring to the PLL community emergent tools that are now just started to be investigated for their potential to aid with L 2 pragmatic learning. In the introduction to the colloquium, we will present a summary of the field of technology-mediated pragmatics, highlighting some of the key knowledge that can benefit the field of L2 pragmatics in general.

Paper 1: 20 min
Presenter: Emilia Gracia, Arizona State University (Emilia.Gracia@asu.edu)
Title: Teaching L2 Speech Act Sequences with Immersive Virtual Reality
Abstract: Second-language educators may assume that learners in Study Abroad (SA) contexts do not need instruction in L2 pragmatics because they will learn L2 pragmatics in the wild as they interact with speakers of the target language. However, research has shown that SA contexts alone cannot promise the acquisition of L2 pragmatics (DuFon, 1999; Vidal & Shively, 2019), and that explicit L2 pragmatics instruction renders higher learning outcomes when compared to no instruction or implicit instruction (Plonsky & Zhuang, 2019, Norris & Ortega, 2001;Taguchi, 2015; Taguchi, 2011; Takahashi, 2010). Hence, learners can benefit from explicit instruction in L2 pragmatics, especially in an SA context where they are required to interact with speakers of the target language in socioculturally appropriate ways. Nonetheless, L2 pragmatics are not commonly taught in classroom settings in spite of being as necessary for SLA as other language domains. Difficulty in teaching and learning L2 pragmatics in a classroom setting is often attributed to lack of instructional materials and authentic practice in context. Immersive Virtual Reality offers a solution to this problem as it provides learners with realistic oral communication practice and feedback in a simulated environment. In this session, the presenter will describe a pedagogical model for L2 pragmatics instruction with Virtual Reality (VR), explain how it was used in the   study, and share the

results. First, the presenter will summarize a review of literature on L2 pragmatics instruction and VR in L2 teaching contexts. Second, she will describe the design of the study and the methodology she used to test the effectiveness of using VR to teach speech act sequences. Then, the presenter will share the results of the study and discuss the significance of the findings. Last, she will discuss the pedagogical implications and recommendations for using VR as a tool in a classroom setting.

References

DuFon, M. A. (1999). *The acquisition of linguistic politeness in Indonesian as a second language by sojourners in naturalistic interactions* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Hawai'i at Manoa).

Norris, J. M., & Ortega, L. (2001). Does type of instruction make a difference? Substantive findings from a meta-analytic review. *Language Learning*, *51*(s1), 157–213.

Plonsky, L., & Zhuang, J. (2019). A meta-analysis of second language pragmatics instruction. In N. Taguchi (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of second language acquisition and pragmatics* (pp. 287–307). Routledge.

Takahashi, S. (2010). Assessing learnability in second language pragmatics. In A. Trosborg (Ed.), *Handbook of pragmatics* (pp. 391-421). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Taguchi, N. (2011). Teaching pragmatics: Trends and issues. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *31*, 289–310.

Taguchi, N. (2015). Instructed pragmatics at a glance: Where instructional studies were, are, and should be going. Language Teaching, 48(1), 1–50.

Vidal, C. P., & Shively, R. L. (2019). L2 pragmatic development in study abroad Settings. In *the Routledge handbook of second language acquisition and pragmatics* (1st ed., pp. 355–371). Routledge.

Paper 2: 20 min

Presenter: Zohreh Eslami, Texas A&M University

Title: Exploring ChatGPT's Cognitive Understanding of Pragmatic Knowledge

Abstract: Acquiring pragmatic competence, the ability to use language properly in various social contexts, is vital for effective communication. Recent advancements in artificial intelligence (AI), particularly with language models like ChatGPT, have raised questions about AI and associated models cognitive understanding of pragmatic competence (Chen et al., 2024). Understanding ChatGPT's pragmatic competence is essential in improving communication between humans and AI systems and enhancing language education. Thus, this study endeavors to scrutinize ChatGPT's pragmatic competence by evaluating its ability to generate and comprehend contextually appropriate responses. Specifically, the study compares ChatGPT's responses and its ratings to those provided by human raters across refusal and request scenarios. The study adopted a total of 60 refusals and request scenarios and requested ChatGPT to generate responses. Both human raters and ChatGPT were required to provide scores based on the given response on dimensions including the degree of imposition, level of acquaintance, and social status (Cohen, 2004). Data analysis was

conducted using a linear mixed model. Results indicated that there was a significant difference between ChatGPT's ratings and those of human raters in regard to the degree of imposition, suggesting that ChatGPT leans towards an overpolite performance in generating and rating the speech acts. However, no significant difference was found in the realms of level of acquaintance and social status, indicating ChatGPT has a rather solid understanding of these two aspects. While improvements are needed, particularly in refining ChatGPT's understanding of the degree of imposition, the study highlights its potential as a tool for measuring pragmatic aspects of language use. Enhanced training across various language tasks and targets may improve ChatGPT's performance in pragmatic cognition and identification. Nonetheless, its ability to provide valuable feedback in pragmatic instruction underscores its usefulness in language education.

Paper 3: 20 min
Presenter: Stephanie Knight (University of Oregon & University of Tennessee)
Title: Co-Constructing with Machines?: Strategies for Negotiating a Dynamic Tech Landscape **Abstract:**
Though the scarcity of pragmatics-focused curricular infrastructures and teacher development are oft-noted (e.g, Kasper, 1997; Rose & Kasper, 2001; Taguchi & Roever, 2017), digital landscapes have proven to be a positive affordance for L2 pragmatics teaching (Sykes & González-Lloret, 2020). In part, this affordance is attributable to the reality that the Internet allows for autonomous publishing and the wide-spread documentation of once under-documented language varieties (McCulloch, 2019). Further, most digital platforms (e.g., massively multiplayer online games, social media platforms, and discussion boards) allow for co-constructive spaces to emerge in which language learners actively negotiate meaning. This collaborative negotiation is foundational to the development of pragmatic competence (Thomas, 1983; Sykes et al., 2020).

Given this reality, the widespread availability of artificial intelligence technologies sparks both excitement and trepidation. Anecdotally, language learners are excited to have a low-stakes space for practice; influencer Jerry Registre's over 37 thousand subscribers have watched his videos on using AI to hack language learning over 1 million times. However, machines cannot co-construct, and the algorithms presently used by large-scale models privilege standard language and dominant cultural frames. Learners remain likely to become frustrated by their lack of pragmatic awareness when attempting to co-construct with humans.

This session embraces this reality by offering concrete approaches to utilizing AI-generated spaces as a springboard for the meaningful study of L2 pragmatics. Specifically, the session will provide exemplar digital repositories that learners can utilize to verify whether AI-generated input has modeled typical pragmatic strategies. Additionally, the session will explore the positive affordances of mixed-reality gameplay experiences for pragmatics instruction and will offer strategies for using AI to support materials development while still protecting that learners gain

exposure to target language pragmatic norms. These strategies can be easily applied to other game development or materials development contexts.

4- Conclusions & Discussion: 10mim
The organizers will summarize main points from the presentations and suggest venues of research to move the field of technology-mediated L2 pragmatics forward.

5- Questions & Answers: 15 mim
We want to leave enough time for Q&A and discussion with the public. We will prepare some questions/activities to engage the public if there are no questions.