

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION AND SPANISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: METALINGUISTIC REFLECTION, INTERCULTURALITY AND PRAGMATIC DISCOURSE COMPETENCE IN MOBILE STUDENTS

**CONSTRUCCIÓN SOCIAL Y ELE: REFLEXIÓN METALINGÜÍSTICA,
INTERCULTURALIDAD Y COMPETENCIA PRAGMÁTICA-DISCURSIVA
EN ESTUDIANTES DE MOVILIDAD**

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study is to seek to improve the Spanish as a foreign language teaching/learning process through linguistic and multidisciplinary research, interrelating the theoretical foundations of text linguistics, gender discourse analysis, intercultural pragmatics and social pedagogy. The theoretical framework warranted experimentation with an action research proposal carried out with mobile Italian students during the 2016/2017 academic year. The aim of the study was to develop a meaningful learning process to Spanish as a foreign language at beginner levels, in which social construction, grammatical learning and the development of intercultural pragmatic discourse competence adapted to the communicative needs of the learner are integrated holistically. From the treatment of gender stereotypes through the grammatical phenomenon of the feminisation of professions in Spanish, a didactic proposal was articulated that emphasised the importance of promoting, at beginner levels, critical intercultural communication competence (ICC) using online journalistic texts that enable the learner to observe and learn to analyse elaborated linguistic schemas that are fostered in the sociocultural environment of communicative interaction and determine linguistic use.

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<p>PALABRAS CLAVE: ELE aprendizaje significativo competencia intercultural literacidad digital Erasmus</p>	<p>RESUMEN: El presente estudio nace con el propósito de mejorar el proceso de enseñanza/aprendizaje de Español Lengua Extranjera (ELE) desde la investigación lingüística y multidisciplinar interrelacionando fundamentos teóricos de la Lingüística del Texto, el Análisis del Discurso de Géneros, la pragmática intercultural y la Pedagogía Social aplicados a ELE. El marco teórico justifica la experimentación de una propuesta de investigación-acción en estudiantes italianos de movilidad, durante el año académico 2016/2017. El objetivo del estudio ha sido desarrollar un proceso de aprendizaje significativo de ELE en niveles iniciales, donde se integran de forma holística la construcción social, el aprendizaje gramatical y el desarrollo de una competencia pragmático discursiva intercultural adaptada a las necesidades comunicativas del aprendiente. Desde el tratamiento de estereotipos de género a través del fenómeno gramatical de la feminización de las profesiones en español se articula una propuesta didáctica que subraya la importancia de fomentar desde los niveles iniciales una Competencia Comunicativa Intercultural Crítica (CCIC) a partir de textos periodísticos en línea que permiten al aprendiente observar y aprender a analizar esquemas lingüísticos elaborados que se propician en el entorno sociocultural de la interacción comunicativa y que condicionan el uso lingüístico.</p>
<p>PALAVRAS-CHAVE: ELE aprendizagem significativa competência intercultural alfabetização digital Erasmus</p>	<p>RESUMO: O objetivo deste estudo é melhorar o processo de ensino e aprendizagem do espanhol como língua estrangeira (ELE) com base nos fundamentos teóricos interdisciplinares da Linguística do Texto, de Análise de Discurso de Gênero, da Pragmática Intercultural e da Pedagogia Social aplicada à ELE.</p> <p>O referencial teórico justifica a experimentação de uma proposta durante o ano acadêmico 2016/2017 em estudantes italianos de mobilidade de domínio básico para desenvolver, dentro do curso de preparação de espanhol, um processo de aprendizagem holística da linguagem focada na construção social através de aprendizagem gramatical e competência pragmático-discursiva intercultural.</p> <p>Conteúdo e abordagens fundamentais para a proposta de ensino (nível A2, QECR) têm vindo a tratar os estereótipos de gênero, o fenômeno da feminização da profissão em espanhol, o gênero e discurso jornalístico em rede para promover a competência comunicativa crítica Intercultural (CCIC), permitindo observar e analisar estruturas linguísticas e ambiente cultural que determinam o uso das mesmas.</p>

1. Introduction

From my own experience as teacher of Spanish as a foreign language for specific purposes in a university context and against a backdrop of great sociocultural, economic and professional transformation, we constantly question whether our method of learning is appropriate. Whether the strategies, content, materials and proposals used in and outside the classroom (in digital environments) are up to scratch to meet the needs of academic education and professional expectations. Linguistic research, didactic experimentation and the sharing of experiences with other teachers lead us to believe that we are on a sound path but it is difficult to improve our chances as teachers and those of our students.

One of the most interesting linguistic learner profiles in the university environment is the mobile student. The great success of the Erasmus programme since its beginnings in 1987 is a reality and a well-established academic opportunity. Firstly, it should be noted that the increased numbers of mobile Italian students coming to Spain (from 9,034 in 2014/2015 to 10,889 in 2016/2017) confirm a Europe-wide growth trend in this type of student (from 31,079 in 2014/2015 to 36,040 in 2016/2017) according to sources from the Erasmus+ website.

The current Erasmus+ project (2014-2020) retains the principles, purposes and educational aims of the earlier *Lifelong Learning Programme* (2007-2014), defined and instituted by Decision No 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006. A document of significance for our study because it defines the principles for raising awareness about linguistic diversity and fostering tolerance and feelings of citizenship through a process of lifelong learning and languages. This document also highlights the need to organise 'preparation or refresher courses in the host or working language' as the universities that take part in the mobility programme increasingly require mobile students to have high levels of linguistic knowledge to ensure a satisfactory academic experience. The Erasmus+ programme has recently a free online language learning platform (*Online Linguistic Support*) designed to enable Erasmus students, before their stay, to improve the language in which they will have to study, work and live every day.

In terms of specific materials for this profile and specifically for Spanish as a foreign language, in Italy, we find that the textbooks that are most used in preparation courses for Erasmus students are *Destino Erasmus* and *Un año en España* (Ed. SGEL), along with other more generic textbooks

such as *Vía Rápida* (Editorial Difusion) for levels A1-B1 (according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, CEFR). Without wishing to disparage the functionality of these communication-orientated textbooks that help to promote communicative interaction in Spanish, they do not use a functional learning approach based on reflecting on the language to illustrate the social uses that determine the linguistic system. Nor do these prepared materials propose a systematic approach to the linguistic and cultural diversity of Spanish to enable effective, meaningful and integrated linguistic and intercultural learning, fundamental for a mobile Spanish as a foreign language learner whose period of immersion will not only require adequate linguistic instruction but also, above all, an effective ability to interact in academic and everyday environments with a language spoken by 500 million people, a fact that in itself represents real cultural diversity.

Although the *Curriculum Plan of the Cervantes Institute* describes the three dimensions of the Spanish as a foreign language learner (social, cultural and autonomous) at each of its levels, the reality is that it does not provide guidance on their methodological embodiment, when what is necessary is a reflection of these dimensions where social, attitudinal and critical competencies are also integrated to enable the development of a competent and responsible intercultural speaker.

The purpose of this study was to research and experience an eclectic and holistic methodological approach that could provide an effective response to adequate instruments, resources and effective materials for non-native Erasmus students in a non-immersion context with the aim of improving their intercultural communicative competence and promote, at the same time, a social construction dimension within the linguistic learning process.

To this end, we began with a contrastive analysis of two questionnaires completed by two different groups of non-native Italian-speaking mobile students of Spanish as a foreign language from the University of Naples Federico II. One group, called *Erasmus Returned* (ER), consisted of students with Erasmus experience in Spain during the 2015/2016 academic year, while the other group, known as *Erasmus Outgoing* (EO), was made up of students who had enrolled on an Erasmus Spanish course for the 2016/2017 academic year. With this last group, a didactic proposal was experienced as a result of the study presented in this paper, whose written discourse samples of students are currently being analysed to study the impact and results of the proposal created for mobile students of Spanish as a foreign language.

From the data resulting from the contrastive analysis of both questionnaires, the following research questions emerged:

- What strategies and resources to introduce at beginner levels to foster a process of critical learning of Spanish as a foreign language centred on the development of pragmatic/discourse competence and intercultural communicative competence, in both everyday and academic environments.
- How to integrate at Spanish as a foreign language beginner levels, and with which tools, a process of linguistic reflection that allows better understanding of the social uses of the language and improves oral and written interaction skills from a pragmatic perspective of the discourse.
- How to develop social learning in Spanish as a foreign language from the treatment of cultural stereotypes that also allows development of better intercultural communicative competence at beginner levels.
- How to develop integrated digital literacy in the Spanish as a foreign language learning process in and out of the classroom.

Based on my own teaching experience with groups of mobile students, we designed an *ad hoc* proposal adapted from the action research model to enable us to check the development of intercultural communicative competence and pragmatic/discourse competence at beginner levels using authentic samples that reflect the linguistic and cultural reality of the destination country. In order to foster ICC and DC, it is important to activate both previous knowledge and a reflexive process in relation to the intercultural reality that allows the development of attitudes and values towards a social construction from the learning of Spanish as a foreign language and from a social pedagogy approach.

2. Learning/acquisition of Spanish as a foreign language by mobile Italian students: analysis of motivational factors

This study starts from an analysis of mobile learners' motivations for choosing a destination to enrich their academic and/or professional education. Proficiency in the FL is of course one of the determining factors for this decision. The contrastive analysis of the questionnaires completed by the mobile Italian students reflected some affective factors in relation to learning foreign languages (González Peiteado, M. & Rodríguez López, B., 2017). The choice of Spain as the main destination of choice for mobile Italian university students

applying for Erasmus was undoubtedly due to motivations of an emotional nature, not so much because Spanish is one of the most spoken languages in the world (although in the questionnaires it appeared as an important factor), but because of its geographical proximity. Another reason that stands out for both groups surveyed was cultural affinity and the belief that they would be able to learn the language and study subjects in Spanish more easily. Indeed, both groups, before carrying out their educational exchange, considered Spanish and Italian to be very similar languages, and this motivated them to start learning the language before the immersion period. As learning content during the pre-immersion period, what predominated was subject matter that gave priority to everyday communication. The belief among mobile students that there was a cultural and linguistic affinity between Spanish and Italian relegated to secondary importance the actual difficulties of communication in Spanish that they would encounter in everyday and academic discourse contexts, as highlighted by the Erasmus Returned students. The academic reality that they would encounter during the exchange modified what would have been the linguistic learning priorities *a posteriori*, highlighting the need to address certain cognitive skills in Spanish as a foreign language above those of basic communication. In this regard, Cummins (2000), in his studies on bilingual children, refers to the dichotomy between basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) and how the CALP level of an L1 positively influences the CALP of L2/FL, as long as the appropriate variables exist to develop them. Considering the notable differential variables between the profile of a bilingual child, like the one proposed by Cummins, and an Erasmus student outside an immersion context, the truth is that this learner profile is in a situation of development of cognitive skills for linguistic learning 'similar' to that of the bilingual child. That is to say, however, that the Erasmus learner possesses basic competencies (BICS) in Spanish as a foreign language before immersion during the Erasmus experience abroad, develops certain complex cognitive skills (CALP) necessary to perform satisfactorily. In pre-immersion Spanish as a foreign language courses, it is important for these CALP competencies to be made possible with the development of strategies and cognitive skills that help to improve practical discourse competence at beginner levels and adapt to specific everyday communicative needs but, above all, to academic and professional contexts (Leal Rivas, 2018). Because of this, we try to reduce the level of demotivation (Dörnyei, 2001:

63) among mobile Italian students on Spanish as a foreign language pre-immersion courses. The imminent experience of mobility often generates the false expectation that immersion involves effective learning of the language.

3. Principles of social pedagogy applied to the acquisition/teaching of languages: reflections to activate a process of meaningful linguistic learning and social construction in Spanish as a foreign language

Any students of Spanish, are potential members of the host society, either for academic or professional purposes, and this means that we have to integrate pedagogical constructs into our teaching practice of Spanish as a foreign language that provide us with the knowledge and tools to educate with values and provide meaningful and real learning.

In recent decades, social pedagogy has been establishing new theoretical approaches, projects and initiatives that consider education not as a space for applying the theoretical reflection of pedagogy, but 'as a relational and intentional dimension among individuals within which present modifications and future projections of cultural education are linked to the construction and growth of the personality of the educator as transmitter of cultural heritage' (own translation; Trama, 2010). Paradigmatically, this definition links the constructs of social pedagogy and those of the teaching/learning of languages from the conception of a functional and social dimension of language. In both constructs, the educational and language learning process is based on three cornerstones: the promoter agent (Spanish as a foreign language teacher), the subject and the active agent in the educational and linguistic learning process (Spanish as a foreign language learner). And finally, the subject matter for social education, which, in Spanish as a foreign language, we recognise as the set of linguistic learning strategies, resources and content necessary to also promote education in values.

Today, the role of the Spanish as a foreign language teacher has been broadly defined (Sánchez Lobato and Gargallo, 2004) as an active agent within the learning process in constant educational transformation, capable of positively assessing new proposals and producing learning solutions, not only related to the teaching of the language, but also aimed at constructing an intercultural society in which Spanish as a foreign language learners have to be instructed. Their professional profile is closely linked to the facet of educator,

capable of showing their own cognitive competence, emotional maturity, mental openness and possibilities of interaction and effective communication in the classroom (Gómez, 2000). Professional competencies that predispose an adequate pedagogical framework to assess learners in terms of language skills and as individuals endowed with equal rights but different needs in today's society.

Moreover, responsibility within the social training and education process also lies with the subject who learns – the active agent, highlighting two aspects of social pedagogy. On the one hand, 'conceptual learning occupies a less significant place than that of procedural or skills learning, and that of learning values and attitudes' (Parcerisa, 1999: 43-44). On the other, priority must be given to 'learning that is directly related to everyday life, with social relations and, ultimately, with elements that can help improve quality of life and social participation' (Caride, 2015: 9).

Regarding the content for social education, it should be extracted from one's own reality, from materials and cultural resources that promote critical thinking and reflection towards the construction of a more supportive, civic and respectful society. How should these principles in the learning of Spanish as a foreign language be activated? Cultural stereotypes are undoubtedly an excellent basis from which to work on the intercultural competence, as they not only activate knowledge about cultural diversity in Spanish but can also promote social education in addition to effective learning of the language if we articulate the learning of Spanish as a foreign language from a discourse competence approach (Celce-Murcia, 1995).

Regarding to stereotypes in the Spanish foreign language, it is significant to note that many materials and textbooks continue to pay scant regard to aspects of Hispanic American culture (Barceló Morte, 2005: 21), notwithstanding the efforts of the Royal Spanish Academy (RAE) to expand the intercultural linguistic dimension of Spanish. The treatment of stereotypes has also highlighted issues related to the social dimension, such as occupational roles. In this regard, a good strategy for breaking with certain cultural stereotypes is to use a different iconic visual language, such as real materials that enable observation and analysis of how actual stereotypes work and not through generalisations (Barceló Morte, 2005: 91-95).

Of course, meaningful and effective learning in Spanish language that pursues a functional and interactive linguistic dimension prefers authentic, not adapted, materials, because, even though they lack pedagogical purpose (Guillén, Alario and Castro, 1994: 94), their incorporation and didactic

exploitation, even at beginner levels of Spanish as a foreign language, not only promote motivation and offer a broader vision of the language by opening up a social and cultural reality of the target language, but also enable, through the various discourse genres, observation and better understanding of the social uses of the language and its spontaneous and established patterns of communicative interaction.

In particular, the journalistic genre, widely used in the teaching/learning of languages, is an optimum resource for channelling linguistic learning content related to the socio-pragmatic context of the language. On the one hand, journalistic genres provide a real sample of language in use by natives and, therefore, show interactional aspects of language (Alfaro Logorio, 1997), enabling discovery of the processes and mechanisms of production and reception of a language. On the other, the presentation of a sociocultural, political and economic reality provides us with important aspects about the culture of an L2/FL that enable activation of strategies and cognitive skills to promote intercultural reflection, even with the L1, and, through the intercultural dimension, activation of processes of social reflection and intercultural linguistics that help to effectively develop a critical intercultural communicative competence from the analysis of the discourse. This procedural schema has been developed in the proposal presented by this study with the purpose of experiencing the learning at beginner levels in highly motivated learners to discover the functionality of the language and the social norms that determine its use.

At beginner levels of Spanish as a foreign language, however, understanding journalistic text can be difficult and cause a culture shock between the context of transmission and that of reception if one does not have an intercultural pragmatic knowledge of the target language, which has nothing to do with ignorance of the language (Sitman, 2003: 100). For this reason, it is important not to try to adapt or modify journalistic text at beginner levels but to carry out a process of selection based on the linguistic proficiency and cultural level of the learner to enable real learning of the language and the target culture.

Digital media is also accessible anytime and anywhere. It is curious that the *Curriculum Plan* does not consider it necessary to make a distinction between electronic and print media. In our opinion, this distinction is relevant to our study because electronic formats, such as the use of ICT, promotes digital literacy, meaningful learning and digital literacy in Spanish. In addition to the familiarity in the classroom of the digital environment and journalistic genre that motivates emotionally

and meaningfully towards new content (Bisquera, 2015; García Mata, 2003), digital media also offers three basic features that help motivation and critical understanding of any text and, therefore, promote a learning language based on the social approach of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 1982). Firstly, the value of hypertext that enables the contextualisation of information through links or suggested activities related to the text. Secondly, the hypermedia format improves comprehension of the text when it is combined with images (fixed or not) or sound (audio, video, etc.), and also when this format is suggested in relation to the text for activities within an online didactic proposal. Lastly, we reemphasise the value of interactivity because the learner can interact directly with the text and its author by, for example, leaving a comment or rating (Pinilla Gómez, 2007).

The main theoretical tenets and methodological principles presented have, on the one hand, sought to illustrate the importance of the social pedagogical construct for meaningful learning/teaching of Spanish language from intercultural critical communication competence and the construction of a critical literacy in Spanish through analysis of gender discourse in digital environments. These have been useful for the design of a didactic proposal that integrates the grammatical/linguistic dimension (feminisation of professions in Spanish) and social construction and values (the treatment of gender stereotypes in Spanish).

4. Methodology

The methodology of this study is based on an interpretative approach and is qualitative in nature by considering the analysis and interpretation of the data retrieved from two questionnaires to create the AN, which were fundamental for establishing criteria and learning objectives, as well as the purpose that justifies the practical proposal.

4.1. Participants

The sample consisted of two different groups of non-native Italian-speaking Erasmus students who, voluntarily and without a time limit, completed the two questionnaires, which were mainly focused on ethnolinguistic aspects and communicative needs. As has already been mentioned, there was one post-stay *Erasmus Returned* (ER) group, with 72 respondents, and one *Erasmus Outgoing*

(EO) group, with 57 respondents. Notable in both groups was a high incidence of females, a fact that justifies a proposal based on the treatment of gender stereotypes in the professions and the phenomenon of the grammaticalisation of the feminine in the Spanish language. The average age was 22.5 years and, regarding L2/FL knowledge, English predominated with an average level of B1, followed by level A in French and German. The ER group had good proficiency in Spanish that fluctuated between B1.4 and B2.5. by contrast, the EO group enrolled on the Erasmus Spanish course had little or no proficiency in Spanish, but over 75% had had contact with Spanish culture for personal reasons.

4.2. Results of the questionnaires

Some of the most significant results of the contrastive study of the questionnaires are summarised here, and these are undoubtedly approximate due to their interpretative nature.

Regarding the affinity between Spanish and Italian mentioned above, we had indicated that it was considered high in both groups. This perception, however, significantly changed after actual experience in a Spanish academic context, a fact that determined a structuring of the proposal towards stereotyped content of Spanish for an Italian learner.

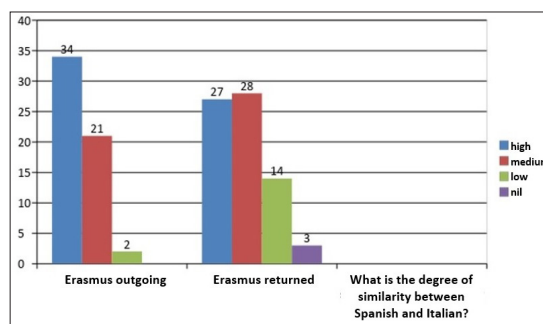


Chart 1. Contrastive data on the degree of affinity between Spanish and Italian of ER and EO

To establish the purpose and aims of this study, it was crucial to perform an analysis of the EO group's learning needs for communicative skills, in contrast to the difficulties that the ER post-immersion students had in Spain. Regarding this group, we also took into account what competencies they would have preferred to learn before their immersion stay.

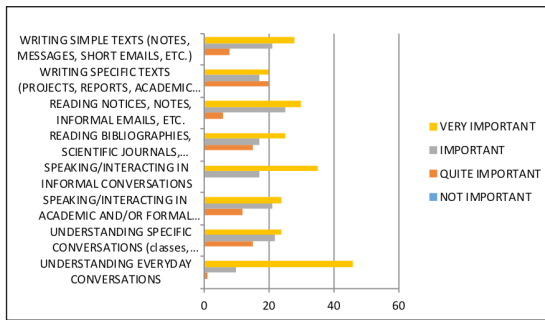


Chart 2. Erasmus Outgoing. Spanish learning needs. Oral and written competencies differentiated by register of use. Compiled by the author.

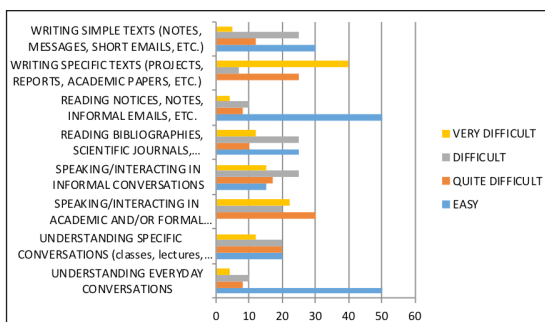


Chart 3. Erasmus Returned. Spanish learning difficulties in Spain. Oral and written competencies differentiated by register of use. Compiled by the author.

In the first place, the EO pre-immersion group attached slightly greater importance to meeting the needs of everyday communication with respect to competencies specific to the academic field. This consideration was identified with the high affinity that Italian students believe exists between Spanish and Italian, which led them to believe that the development of specific communication skills would not be of great difficulty.

By contrast, the ER group after their Erasmus stay highlighted that the skills with which they had the greatest difficulty were those related to academic discourse practices. This fact leads us to suppose that Erasmus preparation courses usually focus on communicative learning of Spanish without making the student aware of the need to master certain academic discourse practices (research reports, rapporteurships, business plans, preliminary oral presentations, preparation of papers, written exams, etc.) that postgraduate or undergraduate students will have to carry out in Spanish and where they find special difficulty. In other words, the ER group confirmed that their pre-immersion language preparation had not fully met real communication needs and, above all,

those of the academic field. This is the reason that explains why in the ER group questionnaire the perception of affinity between Spanish and Italian changed from high to medium.

Regarding everyday communication contexts, there was a generally high degree of oral and written comprehension, but it is significant that one of the difficulties in oral comprehension skills was in the colloquial register and in communicative contexts where cultural pragmatic competence was important for understanding.

4.3. Experiential methodological approach: adapted PAR model for Spanish as a foreign language

Teaching a language from the perspective of respecting the 'diversity of its social uses' (CEFR) means consciously teaching the social uses of that language, teaching how to reflect on what grammar is and how to use it (Fontich, 2006) and doing so in different communicative but, above all, discourse contexts. This learning approach should be incorporated systematically into beginner levels of Spanish as a foreign language learning, levels that cannot dispense with the development of specific cognitive skills, especially in certain profiles of learners, such as mobile students. To achieve an effective result in the application of the aforementioned methodological approach, we consider that it is important to plan and individualise the necessary content, tools and resources to activate and enable meaningful learning of the language while the functioning of the sociocultural system in which the language is communicated is taught and learned. From this perspective, another fundamental aspect is considered: the use of samples of authentic texts that illustrate the real and functional use of the language. To this end, the planning of Spanish learning is 'adapted' to the specific discourse needs of the Italian Erasmus student (A1-A2), taking as a point of reference the schema of skills, competencies and skills divided by level proposed by the *Curriculum Plan of the Cervantes Institute*, but adjusting the communicative needs of the learner. In this regard, for curricular planning, it is very useful to develop a communicative discourse support resource that enables reduction of the difference in linguistic proficiency with the cognitive abilities that require some academic discourse typologies. A resource that, in the form of *linguistic scaffolding*, is developed on the basis of speech acts, and proposes real structures of pragmatic use in order for the learner to function effectively in a specific communicative situation (expressing opinions, qualifying opinions, introducing an argument,

counter-arguing, showing empathy with the same opinion, etc.).

To structure a didactic proposal at beginner levels that takes into account the development of specific discourse typologies inherent to higher levels of competence and proficiency, the development of an experiential methodology (Kolb, 1984) emerges as an appropriate methodology for Spanish as LSP, and, specifically, adaptation of the Participatory Action Research (PAR) model (Martí, J., 2002), which is usually applied to the field of language and literature teaching as L1 or L2 to meet Spanish as a foreign language student's educational requirements. This methodology helps us to build a conscious linguistic learning project from the perceptual dimension (development, reflection and conceptualisation of the use of language) and the procedural dimension (active experimentation) through certain specific oral and written discourse practices at beginner levels. The action research model undoubtedly involves teachers and learners in an active functional linguistic learning process, in addition to involving both active agents in the procedural assessment of learning that will take place especially in digital environments (Zapata Ros, 2005) to promote the development of digital literacy in Spanish as a foreign language also from basic levels.

4.4. Structural schema of the didactic proposal: The profession: a question of gender (A1/A2)
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/iKXTc5Wk-36DyMWu6sGr6GhniBRXC4BN/view>

The structure of PAR with its stages (Martí, 2005) will be adapted to a didactic sequencing

structure that aims to bring together, using a cultural theme (gender stereotypes in the professions), linguistic and grammatical content (the feminisation of the professions in Spanish) from an emotional and functional learning perspective of the language.

The justification of the proposal, a result of the AN carried out, motivation for the choice of the intercultural matrix theme (the treatment of gender stereotypes in the professions) and objectives, content and competencies appear at the end of the didactic proposal and can be accessed using the link indicated in the title of this section.

This didactic experimentation proposal is part of the Erasmus Spanish course for students of the University of Naples Federico II and is available from the Google Drive digital environment to which all students enrolled on combined classroom/distance courses have access.

Below, we present a schema that illustrates the adaptation of the PAR model and its stages, as well as the didactic sequencing design.

One of the foundations of the learning object (LO) is to link prior linguistic and cultural knowledge of Spanish as a foreign language, as well as the cognitive abilities of the L1 towards new content, linking the affective to the cognitive (Vicent Millán, R., 2011), in order to activate a unique process of linguistic conceptualisation and its social use.

Table 1. Descriptive schema of PAR stages, application of stages and their integration into the LO

PAR stages	Application of PAR stages	Description of didactic sequences, learning processes and type of learning object (LO) activities
Problem formulation	Research questions	
Search for possible solutions	Study purpose Questionnaires Needs analysis	
Planning of the intervention	Establish objectives, content and competencies. Search for online resources, tools and materials. Preparation of the LO (adaptation, reuse and creation of materials) Activation of the LO in digital environments	<i>Block 1</i> WE BEGIN. When I grow up, I want to be... (<i>AWARENESS-RAISING STAGE</i>) - emotional closeness - motivate learning - intercultural awareness. <i>Block 2</i> WE DISCOVER. The grammatical feminisation of the professions (<i>INSTRUCTIONAL STAGE</i>) - answer the questions posed

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provide tools for analysis of the grammatical phenomenon of the feminisation of professions. - promote functional language learning - strategies to effectively understand a text (critical reading) based on reading moments, types of reading (comprehensive, reflective) and textual typology. - develop digital <i>literacy</i> <p><i>Block 3</i> WE ACTIVATE. Discourse practices (ACTION STAGE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Action resulting from the process carried out. - summarise the information acquired and incorporate it into the discourse practice. - assess cultural and linguistic knowledge through practice.
Classroom intervention	Implementation of the OL in the digital environment and in the classroom.	<p>All of the sequences incorporate activities with hypertext and hypermedia format.</p> <p><i>Block 1</i> WE BEGIN. When I grow up, I want to be... (AWARENESS-RAISING STAGE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - introduce the learner to a specific intercultural situation: audio-visual materials, links and iconic images of gender in the cultural diversity of Spanish. <p><i>Block 2</i> WE DISCOVER. The grammatical feminisation of the professions (INSTRUCTIONAL STAGE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - actual sample of text: journalistic genre (subgenre: opinion article) - Digital format text. - Activities for critical reading based on discourse analysis of the text, focused on before, during and after reading. - organisation of discourse and discourse markers. <p><i>Block 3</i> WE ACTIVATE. Discourse practices (ACTION STAGE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - make a <i>summary</i> of the newspaper text (summarise main and secondary ideas, organise them with markers, express the opinion on the subject) - write a <i>comment</i> in the news section. - <i>describe</i> a significant female personality.
Observation of the intervention	OL development process with activities and discourse practices	<p>Reading and critical comprehension activities through the journalistic text: systemic functional linguistics applications</p> <p>Activities to encourage oral discourse practices (express opinion, argue, give value judgements, comment, etc..)</p> <p>Activities to encourage written discourse practices: (analyse, summarise, comment, etc.)</p>
Assessment (reflection and discussion)	<p>Learning assessment: by peers, collaborative and self-assessment of the content</p> <p>Teacher assessment: results of the process</p>	<p>Group, individual or pair activities freely chosen by the learner. Collaborative work always motivates.</p> <p>Analysis of learner textual samples in the digital environment or classroom.</p>
Dissemination, review and (possible) new implementation.	Study of proposed discourse practices. Analysis of the effective learning process	

It should be noted that, in all of its sequences, the proposal consciously incorporates content and materials that pursue an intercultural vision of Hispanic American reality and the inherent diversity of Spanish at beginner level.

The *WE BEGIN* block. *When I grow up, I want to be...* corresponds to the awareness-raising stage to emotionally prepare the Spanish learner and create meaningful learning based on the questioning of their own cultural system in order to get

closer to other realities through co-participation (*White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue*, 2008). All of the activities carried out in this sequence are linked to the next sequence as they use materials and content to facilitate linguistic and pragmatic cultural understanding of an actual sample of text at beginner levels.

The *WE DISCOVER* block. *The grammatical feminisation of the professions* specifically places the learner in the context of linguistic instruction. Journalistic texts are a source of transmission of values and ideologies that Spanish learners must be able to recognise and understand. Deciphering the linguistic and cultural code of these texts places learners on a plane of effective learning of the language where, if we also provide them in digital format, they can develop their *digital literacy*. For analysis and critical comprehension (Benavides & Sierra, 2013) of journalistic discourse, a social approach to language derived from systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1982) was chosen. This approach allows us, in the Spanish classroom, to apply an analysis of the text from the perspective of mechanisms of social interaction that activate this discourse typology in order to understand and decode the text critically using activities in which it is possible to discover the intentionality of the context of transmission and the transmitter of the text (the journalist) and the linguistic mechanisms that it activates so that they can be inferred accurately by its recipient/reader (Miramón, 2016).

In this sequence, special attention has been given to activities that enable strategies for critical reading and effective comprehension of the text at beginner levels. Before reading, an activity with some questions is proposed in order to define the purpose of the reading and activate prior knowledge. During reading, several activities are suggested for comprehension and deep analysis of the text. As comprehension activities, hyper-text linking to the dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy (RAE) and other internet tools useful for vocabulary are included. A global comprehension activity to understand the subject, arguments and intention of the text. In terms of textual organisation, an activity using the discourse markers present in the article is proposed. Lastly, for deep understanding of the text, textual analysis activities that reflect systemic functional linguistics principles are proposed. The journalistic text is analysed from an interactional dimension of the transmitter (author) and reader, emphasising the mechanisms of production and communicative inference so that the Spanish learner can acquire functional notions and structures of Spanish in a context of use. As post-reading activities, we try to develop the information in the journalistic text

so that it can be incorporated and assessed in the next block.

In the last *WE ACTIVATE* block. Three *discourse practices* are proposed (summary, written comment and description). The communicative aim of these practices is to enable the Erasmus students to be more active members in their destination. The practices are organised on the basis of the principles of constructivism (Savery & Duffy, 1996; Ordóñez, 2004, 2006b) to meet academic and personal communication needs, which require a greater cognitive and linguistic ability (Jorba, 2000). Describing, summarising, analysing, defining, condensing, interpreting, arguing, etc., are cognitive skills that are learned by beginner level learners who need conscious didactic planning by the teacher but, in addition, involve Spanish learners in the creation of discourse practices inherent to their academic and professional environment, facilitate their learning process and effectively develop their discourse competence (Cassany, Luna & Sanz, 2000).

The results of the didactic proposal followed the various assessment mechanisms: the initial AN to establish criteria and work objectives; continuous and instructional assessment during the learning process to follow the progression of the proposed objectives through techniques of direct observation of resources and intercultural reflection and language activities and, lastly, a final assessment through the discourse practices carried out by the learners and a self-assessment that learners make at the end of the LO with regard to knowledge and attitudes acquired.

5. Conclusions

This study and its participatory action research project for Spanish as a foreign language is an attempt to meet the instructional requirements that today's society demands for social construction and responsible instruction of our university students thanks to mobility programmes. Within this framework, an interdisciplinary pedagogical, linguistic and didactic study is warranted for the creation of a practical proposal that meets the needs of meaningful, competency-based linguistic learning for Spanish as a foreign language, as well as promoting the learning of values and social construction. In order to incorporate social construction into Spanish teaching, it is important for this disciplinary space to observe and be enriched by studies and proposals that focus on the teaching of language and literature together with an education in values. Social construction from the perspective of linguistic learning, as has been experienced in this study, can undoubtedly be

channelled through discourse analysis and knowing the mechanisms to build it responsibly. It is indeed not the case that discourse competence (Celce-Murcia, 1990) is the central competence together with strategic, linguistic and cultural competence in the most current model of communicative competence. A model that is included at theoretical level in the *Curriculum Plan* with special attention given to a systemic functional approach to Spanish. However, at beginner levels for mobile students, linguistic learning focused on a communicative approach that prioritises grammar and lexis is still proposed with very little attention to incorporating discourse and intercultural competence that meets the real needs of academic interaction and/or professionals.

In this study and proposal, we have tried to start from an analysis of strategic competence and mastery of cognitive skills and useful prior knowledge to activate the meaningful learning of Spanish as a foreign language at beginner levels. The experimentation of a proposal adapted from PAR with a model of instructional development by stages to develop strategies and competencies that promote the development of activities that foster critical literacy of texts with low proficiency in the language but that enable the linking of grammatical learning with the social norms of use both of spontaneous structures of the language and those established according to the speech acts most used in the communicative interaction generated by journalistic discourse (asking, qualifying, expressing opinions, describing, presenting, arguing, affirming, motivating, suggesting/proposing, etc.). For this purpose, the proposal presents, in special discourse competency, oral and/or written development tasks, a language discourse scaffolding tool that helps learners to channel their communicative intention and better understand the pragmatic production and reception schema of interaction.

Developing a critical intercultural communication competence at beginner levels, therefore, has been fundamental to filling a gap between linguistic proficiency in Spanish as a foreign language in mobile students and actual and specific learning needs for more complex communication skills demanded by academic, everyday and professional fields. Some of the basic tenets of

systemic functional linguistics applied to certain comprehension and discourse and journalistic text analysis activities have been crucial. Fundamental notions of genre and discourse analysis have been exploited didactically through prior transferable knowledge for an effective analysis of the discourse structure of the article or news item that enables activation of intercultural, metalinguistic and functional reflection from the text. Lastly, the critical reading/writing activities and strategies implemented in the proposal have enabled intercultural reflection on the breaking of gender stereotypes in the professions as a precursor to activating a metalinguistic reflection on the phenomenon in L1 (Italian) and Spanish as a foreign language of the feminisation of professions and the use and social acceptance of certain feminised forms. Knowing how to use the language from knowledge of social use and from attitudes of respect and understanding towards cultural diversity in order to be able to engage has been very positive from actual oral samples and hypermodality and hypertext resources on gender stereotypes to be able to act through oral and written discourse practice. Learning of Spanish as a foreign language that has also experienced the integration of the proposal in a digital environment to further promote digital literacy.

It is important that in the area of pedagogical research into Spanish as a foreign language, we continue above all in the field of practical experimentation of proposals and models that help to incorporate Spanish for LSP content in a practical way at beginner levels in profiles of learners with specific learning needs. Carrying out critical reading and discourse analysis of text, producing summaries, expressing opinions in a formal context, etc., are necessary communication skills that every mobile student in any FL must learn to use for their future academic experience abroad.

The University, especially as a space for linguistic instruction, must find adequate means and resources to continue promoting the learning of L2/FL, and in the same way, must continue to be a transmitter of certain existing values or a generator of changes that allow the transformation of these into others that are more in line with the academic and professional needs of the society of the future.

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