



# Technologies for Teaching and Learning Intercultural Competence and Interlanguage Pragmatics in L2 Italian. Experiences of implementing an online language course on Moodle platform

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# Goal of the presentation

- To describe the experiences in creating an Italian online language course at the University for Foreigners of Perugia, focusing on the tools available through the Moodle e-learning platform, selected to enhance the learning of pragmatic and intercultural competence in language learners.



# Outline

1. Teaching pragmatics in the context of Italian as a foreign language
2. Moodle as an online learning platform
3. Some examples of learning resources in our B1 online Italian course
4. Future directions



# 1. Teaching pragmatics in the context of Italian as a foreign language

- What is pragmatic competence and why we need to teach it?
  - It is well known that learning the grammar and the vocabulary of a second language (L2) is not a sufficient condition to use it effectively in a variety of contexts.
  - Pragmatic competence is the ability to use language effectively in a contextually appropriate way, given specific situations, speakers, and content.





# 1. Teaching pragmatics in the context of Italian as a foreign language: speech acts

greeting



apologizing



complaining



complimenting



requesting



inviting



# 1. Teaching pragmatics in the context of Italian as a foreign language: speech acts



**Apologizing  
effectively in a  
foreign language**



Linguistic expressions:  
*Scusi* 'sorry'; *Sono mortificato* 'I am devastated'



Rules of proper social behavior, social perception and values attributed to certain expressions



# 1. Teaching pragmatics in the context of Italian as a foreign language: speech acts

- Specific communicative acts, such as greetings, requests, offers, invitations, refusal, apologies are available in any community, however their realization varies across cultures.
- For ex. comparing Italian and American and Australian English apology strategies: Italians are more sensitive to differences of status, authority and social roles of participants, while American and Australian English egalitarian culture is reflected in avoiding displays of power through language.



# 1. Teaching pragmatics in the context of Italian as a foreign language

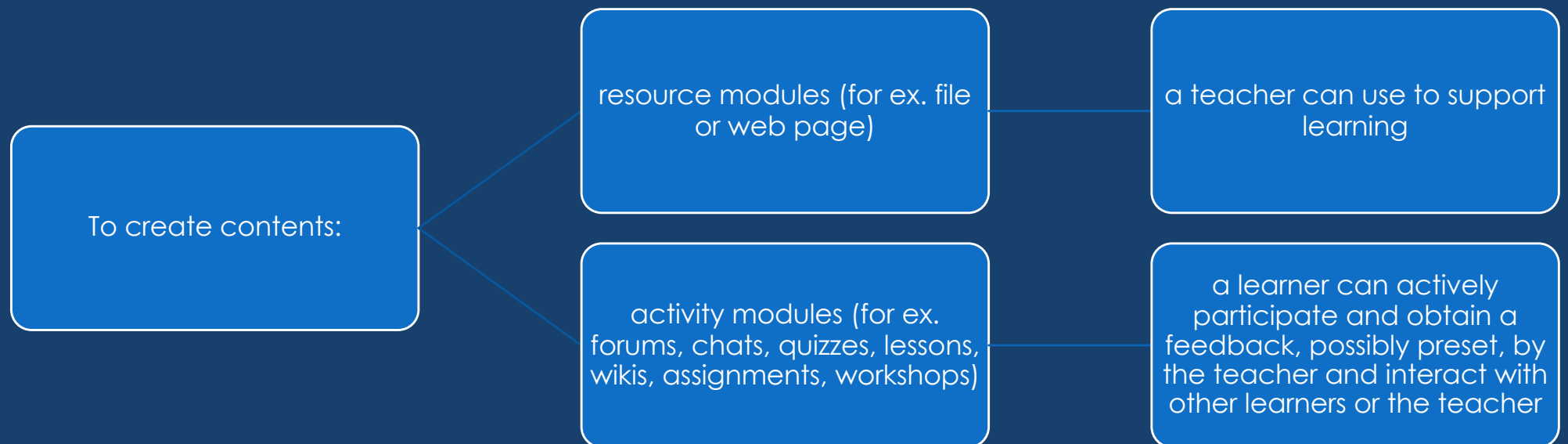
- “many aspects of L2 pragmatics are not acquired without the benefit of instruction, or they are learned more slowly. There is thus a strong indication that instructional intervention may be facilitative to, or even necessary for, the acquisition of L2 pragmatic ability” (Kasper & Rose 2011).
- Conditions for the acquisition of pragmatic knowledge: the pertinent input, noticing of the input and the opportunity to develop a high level of control (Kasper 1996)

## 2. Moodle as an online learning platform



- is the worldwide most used learning management system
- covers the whole lifecycle of a course and all the aspects of a learning path
- is responsive (accessible by a variety of devices like e.g. smartphones, notebooks, tablets, ...)
- is digitally secure (https connection, constantly updated by the community)

## 2. Moodle as an online learning platform





## 2. Moodle as an online learning platform

### Forum and chat

- allow asynchronous and synchronous communication among learners and with the teacher
- for ex. a teacher may create a collaborative exercise about “how to apologize”



### Quiz

- allows the teacher to understand the progress of the learners
- important for learners' self-evaluation
- Moodle allows to preset some feedback comments



## 2. Moodle as an online learning platform

### Wiki

- useful activity to co-construct pragmatic knowledge
- the teacher can preset the format of a wiki page by providing some guidelines



### Lessons

- allow to build a series of multimedia pages, possibly interleaved by questions
- the learner can choose its navigation path



## 2. Moodle as an online learning platform

### Assignments

- can be used, among others, to ask the students to record (on the fly) video or audio clips for answering a given assignment (which can be itself an audio or video clip)



### Workshop

- allows peer evaluation among the learners





## 2. Moodle as an online learning platform

- All the activities and resources allow to set completion criteria and conditions for accessing them
- Completion criteria and access conditions can be combined together
- For example: a learner may be forbidden to advance to the next didactic unit until she has posted a given number of discussions/replies in the forum of the current unit, or until she has obtained a sufficient grade in a quiz, etc.

### 3. Some examples of learning resources in our B1 online Italian course

- Pertinent input
  - Texts often consist in videos that are also used for developing sensitivity to meaning expressed by tone and words' choice, followed by activities where students are guided to discover social perception and values attributed to certain expressions and to understand in which pragmatic errors could potentially cause miscommunication.

### 3. Some examples of learning resources in our B1 online Italian course

- Noticing of the input
  - In order to focus the attention of the student on the relevant parts of the didactic content of the video-lessons we have used the functionalities offered by the H5P plugin.



### 3. Some examples of learning resources in our B1 online Italian course

- Develop control by practicing
  - individual activities are accompanied by interaction on discussion boards, through which students negotiate significates, compare opinions
  - forums provide learners with possibility to learn from others' experiences and to create shared knowledge
  - they notice that they may misunderstand or be misunderstood
  - due to the asynchronous nature of communication, learners can spend more time reflecting on the connections between forms and functions

### 3. Some examples of learning resources in our B1 online Italian course

- Moodle offers the variety of tools
  - to raise socio-pragmatic and pragmalinguistic competence providing new communicative contexts and enhancing the co-construction of knowledge

## 4. Future directions

- Evaluation of pragmatic competence: multiple choice quizzes in which students are called upon to identify the most effective strategy in the given context, avoiding miscommunication and effectively achieving the communicative goals
- Learning analytics' tools: detailed indications on possible intervention methods to make improvements, in order to understand and optimize both learning and the environments in which it takes place



# Thank you for your attention

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