

Activity: English vs Spanish invitations and intro to pragmatic awareness

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This webpage is for teachers to administer the activity. Access the student packet [here](#).

Context

Although research shows that pragmatic skills are an essential feature of overall linguistic competence and that pragmatic practices vary widely between cultures, pragmatic skills are not widely taught in language classes. This is reflected in the lack of accurate pragmatic instruction in textbooks and in high proficiency students' lack of pragmatic knowledge in their L2 (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007; Pablos-Ortega, 2011; Usó-Juan, 2007). Using English and Spanish invitations as an example, this activity is designed to introduce learners to the idea of pragmatics and the idea that social norms surrounding language use vary by language and social context.

Spanish invitations differ significantly from English invitations in that Spanish invitations are hearer oriented, focus on building solidarity, and are less direct compared to English invitations, especially in situations where there is a power difference and social distance between conversation partners (Félix-Brasdefer, 2006; García, 2008; Hernández-Flores, 2001). This activity informs learners about the differences between English and Spanish invitations and gives learners strategies for how to make invitations. Additionally, this activity teaches students that there are pragmatic differences between English and Spanish and allows teachers an opportunity to introduce pragmatic lessons in the early stages of language learning.

IPIC objectives

Knowledge

- Understand the structure and strategies utilized in Spanish and English invitations
- Understand that speakers of different languages have different ideas of what is considered polite and use language differently to conform to different politeness norms.

Analysis

- Understand what strategies English and Spanish speakers use in situations where there is a difference in power and social distance between interlocutors.
- Understand what strategies English and Spanish speakers use to build solidarity.

Subjectivity

- Students will be able to articulate the differences between Spanish and English invitations
- Using knowledge about English and Spanish pragmatics, students will be able to articulate why English and Spanish speakers make certain pragmatic choices surrounding invitations

Awareness

- Students will be aware of possible responses to invitations in English and Spanish and appropriate discourse choices

Who is this activity suited to?

This activity is designed for native English speakers learning Spanish in an L2 setting who have taken at least one semester of Spanish or are beginner learners of Spanish. The materials for this activity require a high level of reading proficiency in English. Thus, this activity is best suited to beginner learners of Spanish in highschool or college. This activity is designed to take place over the course of one 50 minute class session. If you are unsure if your students have the Spanish proficiency to complete this packet, watch this video: [¿Te gustaría ir al cine? SMS](#). If your students can understand the Spanish in the video, they can complete this activity.

What does this lesson include?

1. **See, think, wonder (observe activity):** Students read two articles about English and Spanish invitations and fill in a see, think, wonder chart for each.
2. **Text message dialogues (analyze activity):** Students watch a video that contains an invitation over text message in Spanish and create their own text message dialogues in English.
3. **Venn diagram (extend activity):** Using the venn diagram students made in the second activity and what they learned from the articles in part 1, students complete a venn diagram detailing similarities and differences in English and Spanish invitations.

How do I conduct this lesson?

Before class

1. Read this page, the student packet, and read/watch the materials in the student packet.
2. Print out a student packet for each student or distribute the student packet electronically. Remember to ask students to bring a device (preferably a computer or tablet) to complete the activity and/or access materials needed for the activity.

During class

1. Distribute activity packets.
2. Tell students to follow the instructions in the packet. Students may work individually or in groups. Answer questions and provide guidance.
3. Make sure students are on track to complete the activity in 1 day. If the activity is taking longer than expected, allow students to take the activity home and turn it in at the next class meeting.
4. Collect the packets

After class

1. Scan though or read each student's packet.
2. Write notes to highlight learner successes and suggestions for improvement.
3. Assess learners' performance using the packet and return the packet to students.