

Keywords: pragmatics, spoken interaction, corpora, TBLT, Italian L1, L2

Exploring Pragmatics in Spoken Italian: A Task-based corpus for Teachers

In the field of second language teaching, growing attention is being paid to the pragmatic dimension of spoken communication and to the development of learners' interactional competence. Despite their central role in communicative practices, pragmatics and interaction remain underrepresented in classroom teaching and assessment, partly due to the lack of pedagogical resources that reflect authentic language use (Bardovi-Harlig Mossman 2023).

The PrACSi prototype (Castagneto, Ferrari 2024; De Marco, Ferrari, submitted) represents a preliminary attempt to develop a resource for teachers interested in the pragmatic and interactional aspects of spoken language. The corpus is organized around task as the basic corpus collection unit and includes a multi-layered annotation system that tracks dialogic moves throughout interaction fragments and within each task.

The PrACSi corpus is designed to provide teachers with language samples representative of the pragmatic dimension of spoken communication. It approaches the communicative event as a holistic unit, enabling the exploration of how language use in task-based service encounters – such as “eating at a restaurant” – varies according to extralinguistic contextual factors, the relationship between interlocutors, and the interactional structures shaped by the sequential organization of the task. This dual perspective supports two complementary approaches to corpus exploration: one starting from specific functions, such as task openings or closings, or task oriented actions, such as *selecting* or *serving*, and traces the variety of linguistic forms and interactional strategies used to realise them; and another that starts with formal features, such as the discourse marker *allora*, examining its range of functions within both discourse structuring and task sequential organization and management.

The presentation will highlight the potential of this resource for designing targeted classroom activities that foster learners' pragmatic and interactional competence. This will be illustrated through two case studies. Firstly, a function-to-form exploration of task and microtask openings and closings, revealing a variety of interactional strategies shaped by situational and conversational variables such as the restaurant menu or the micro-task's position within the

interaction. Secondly, a form-to-function analysis focused on the discourse marker *allora*, examining its role in discourse organization (e.g., topic shift, resumption) and in task-related coordination (e.g., phase transitions, shared agenda management, grounding moves).

Central to the presentation is the perspective of the language teacher, viewed as an active interpreter and designer of pedagogical activities that translate interactional phenomena into meaningful learning experiences.

References

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