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### Publication Date

2022

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

Implicit Instruction of Direct and Indirect Object Pronouns in Spanish through  
Technology-Mediated Task-Based Language Teaching

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor  
of Philosophy in Hispanic Languages and Literatures

by

Alexandra Lopez Vera

Committee in Charge:

Professor Viola G. Miglio, Co-Chair

Professor Dorothy M. Chun, Co-Chair

Professor Aline Ferreira

March 2022

The dissertation of Alexandra Lopez Vera is approved.

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Aline Ferreira

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Dorothy M. Chun, Committee Co-Chair

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Viola G. Miglio, Committee Co-Chair

January 2022

## **DEDICATION**

A mis padres, por ayudarme a construir todo lo que tengo y tendré.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank the members of my committee for their support throughout the process, for their timely and helpful feedback, and for their flexibility in supervising my dissertation despite the summer and winter breaks. Particular thanks go to my committee co-chairs: Dorothy Chun for her patience and knowledgeable guidance through all the process and Viola Miglio for her generous feedback and honest advice.

Many thanks also go to my teaching supervisor Laura Marques-Pascual for guiding me as an instructor and letting me implement the TBLT online module in my classroom. I also want to thank my peer Meagan Carter for being flexible and understanding while co-teaching together.

I am deeply indebted to all the members of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at UCSB, who not only gave me the opportunity to study my Ph.D., but also supported me by contributing financially to my research, including the Graduate Division Dissertation Fellowship, Tim McGovern Fellowship, Wofsy Award, and the Rosati Excellence and Innovation in Language Award. These funds enabled me to focus on my studies and research, which I am extremely thankful for.

I am also very grateful for the friends who contributed to my overall wellbeing during these four years, for the beautiful weather of Southern California which made everything more fun and comfortable, and for the love and support of my husband, Jared, who has also been my best friend and exceeded all my expectations.

Last but not least, I wish to extend my deepest gratitude to my family: to my parents, who gave me every advantage imaginable, and to my sister, Sara, who is not only my sister but also my best friend since I was one year old. I could never completely express with words what my family has done for me. I will summarize it by saying that I am who I am thanks to them, and I am inspired to become better every day because of them. Thank you infinitely for everything.

## VITA OF ALEXANDRA LOPEZ VERA

January 2022

### EDUCATION

**Bachelor of Arts** in Elementary Education, University of Murcia (Spain), June 2012

**Bachelor of Arts** in English Studies, University of Murcia (Spain), June 2016

**Master of Arts** in World Languages, Literature and Linguistics, West Virginia University, May 2018

**Doctor of Philosophy** in Hispanic Languages and Literature, University of California, Santa Barbara, March 2022 (expected)

### EMPLOYMENT

2018-22: **Teaching Assistant**, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, University of California, Santa Barbara

2020-22: Engaging Humanities **Mentor**, University of California, Santa Barbara

2020-22: Graduate Scholar Program **Mentor**, University of California, Santa Barbara

2020-21: **Lead Teaching Assistant**, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, University of California, Santa Barbara

2016-18: **Teaching Assistant**, Department of World Languages, West Virginia University

### PUBLICATIONS

**Lopez Vera**, “The vowel nasalization found in Murcia, Spain: A case study of this phenomenon”. 2019, *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 146(4):3012-3012

Carter, De Frutos, **Lopez Vera**, Ferreira, Barbosa, Guerra, Ornelas, “Translating the Violent Content of Grimm Brothers’ Fairy Tales: An Eye-Tracker Experiment”. 2020, *Cadernos de Tradução* 40(1):17-33

**Lopez Vera**, “Implicit Instruction of Direct and Indirect Object Pronouns in Spanish through Technology-Mediated TBLT,” Unpublished thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Hispanic Languages and Literatures, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2022

### AWARDS

Graduate Dissertation Fellowship Award, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2021

Excellence in Teaching Award: Honorable Mention, UCSB Graduate Student Association, 2020

Engaging Humanities Fellowship Recipient University of California, Santa Barbara, 2020

Tim McGovern Research and Professional Fellowship, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2020

Wofsy Award - Travel Grant, Spanish and Portuguese, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2020

### FIELDS OF STUDY

Second Language Acquisition

Applied Linguistics

Medical Spanish

Technological Tools for Language Teaching and Learning

## ABSTRACT

### Implicit Instruction of Direct and Indirect Object Pronouns in Spanish through Technology-Mediated TBLT

by

Alexandra Lopez Vera

Technology-Mediated Task-Based Language Teaching is the combination of technology with Task-Based Language Teaching (González-Lloret & Ortega, 2014) and emphasizes authentic communication and holistic language learning opportunities in Second Language Acquisition. Since its introduction almost thirty-five years ago, Task-Based Language Teaching has received widespread attention from researchers in the fields of Second Language education due to its collaborative nature and the interaction and negotiation of meaning that result from its implementation (Robinson, 2011). Task-Based Language Teaching represents a paradigm shift of mainstream views about language teaching from a focus on ‘knowledge of language’ to a pragmatic and experiential focus on ‘achiev[ing] communicative purposes’ (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009, p. 45). Still, relatively few studies have addressed grammar acquisition in online courses from a Task-Based perspective.

The present study sought to examine the effects of an online Task-Based Language Teaching module on the acquisition of direct and indirect object pronouns in Spanish. These grammatical structures are used very frequently by native Spanish speakers, but are less used by Spanish learners because of their difficulty. The main problem is that object clitics in Spanish normally create a structure that appears to be (Subject)-Object-Verb.



This can be especially difficult for native speakers of English since these speakers are accustomed to Subject-Verb-Object. Furthermore, Spanish indirect object pronouns look exactly like direct object pronouns except for the third person singular and plural. Hence, learning how to use and distinguish between the direct object and indirect object pronouns is challenging.

The results of this study demonstrate the benefits of using an online Task-Based Language Teaching module specially designed for the acquisition of direct and indirect object pronouns in Spanish. Participants in the experimental group used the target structures on many occasions, and their results exceeded those of the control group—the mean of the experimental group was 7.50, whereas the mean of the control group was 1.23. Similarly, students in the experimental group also produced five times more instances of the target structures than students in the control group in an identical final exam activity that both groups had to complete—3.22 vs 0.64, respectively. Thus, the data obtained in this study manifest that technology-mediated TBLT can be particularly valuable in the acquisition of L2 grammar.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

#### **I. GENERAL BACKGROUND**

The importance of integrating computers and other technological tools in education is unquestionable nowadays. This has been motivated by the globalized society, in which we currently live, and emphasized by the educational changes brought by the pandemic crisis in 2020. Due to the latter, instructors were pushed towards teaching their courses online. Many of these instructors had never taught technology-mediated (TM) courses before it was mandatory and often/typically opted to simply implement the same approach used in the physical classroom. Despite the initial intuitions of many instructors to use traditional classroom scenarios, implementing online courses is fundamentally different from the traditional classroom context. A shift to remote instruction is a potential opportunity to implement new ideas about teaching and learning. This change, however, is also an opportunity to rethink traditional classroom roles and relationships. TM courses can be much more cognitively demanding on teachers than face-to-face teaching because instructors tend to find it more challenging to foster interaction among students and to keep them both engaged and motivated (Godev, 2014; Tomei, 2006; Worley & Tesdell, 2009).

As the demand for TM courses increases, new forms of communication continue bringing the world closer together, and language remains the means by which people are able to interact and build understanding. For that reason, learning a second language (L2) becomes a crucial part of formal education and makes individuals more functional in modern society. According to a 2015 report by the Instituto Cervantes, which is a Spanish public institution devoted to the teaching of Spanish and Spain's vernacular languages,

the United States has the second-highest concentration of Spanish speakers in the world after Mexico. Roughly 53 million people, 41 million native Spanish speakers, and approximately 11.6 million bilingual Spanish speakers lived in the United States in 2015. This number continues to increase every year. In addition, many Americans who do not already speak Spanish try to learn the language. Spanish is the second-most spoken language in the United States and it is also the most studied foreign language within the United States by far. However, despite Spanish having been solidly established in the United States' educational system for many years, many students that graduate from high school, thus completing US compulsory education, continue to have serious difficulties in terms of L2 comprehension and production. One could, in fact, say that many of them can hardly speak their studied L2 at all. Furthermore, despite the evolution of the different methodologies that are applied to L2 learning, we still see today that some grammatical structures are difficult to acquire for the L2 learner. This happens both in traditional face-to-face and online courses. Moreover, when using an online platform, the student's attention seems to be dispersed more easily, and, therefore, it may result in a reduced acquisition of L2 proficiency (Stickler & Shi, 2015).

## II. TECHNOLOGY-MEDIATED LANGUAGE TEACHING

Technology-mediated language teaching (TMLT) offers myriad potential benefits to learners. Some of these benefits are related to a wider exposure to the target language; this includes both authentic and instructional materials. In addition, another positive effect of this modality is that L2 learners have many opportunities to read, write, listen, and speak to oral and written texts conveyed in a variety of ways online. Thus, TM activities for language learning offer capabilities that cannot be easily replaced by any other language teaching procedure within a traditional face-to-face classroom

environment. This includes the integration of the four skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) within the same activity and the rapid access to the internet to find important facts or information (Kern and Warschauer, 2000). More specifically, Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) enables flexible learning because students can learn in their own time and at their own pace. Additionally, interactional features found to be beneficial to L2 development, such as negotiation for meaning and modified output, are easily found in CALL (González-Lloret, 2016; Iwasaki & Oliver, 2003, Lee, 2003).

Another aspect to keep in mind is that TMLT, in general, and CALL, in particular, encourage more active learning for students because the typical archetype for the role of students changes. Students are now more in control of their learning process and, thus, also of the outcomes of this process. In fact, through TMLT, learners have a greater level of autonomy and can decide what they want to learn and how to learn it. This leads to stress-reduced learning environments and higher levels of engagement in the L2 classroom (Baralt, Gurzynski-Weiss, & Kim, 2016; Hampel & Stickler, 2005). However, there are still many TMLT instructors that complain about the lack of student participation in their online courses. In order to maximize the engagement of the students in active learning and participation, many L2 researchers have carried out different projects to study the effectiveness of their online courses.

Dooly and Sadler (2016) outlined research into innovative language teaching practices that make optimal use of TM education. This study focuses on data compiled during a 10-week project that used video conferencing through a virtual medium to introduce L2 learners to cultural concepts related to personal care, sports, and food. The innovative concept of this project is that they included telecollaborative partners for the acquisition of L2 grammar. The goal was to foster negotiation for meaning and information gap activities that would lead to an incidental acquisition of the target grammatical structures.

The project was considered very successful by its authors. Some Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research states that, in order to consider a TMLT unit effective, students must participate actively and have enough opportunities for negotiation of meaning. The study carried out by Dooly and Sadler had both of these essential components (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001; Lee & VanPatten, 2003).

Since its introduction almost thirty-five years ago, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has received widespread attention from researchers in the fields of SLA and language education due to its collaborative nature and the interactions that result from it and lead to negotiation for meaning (Robinson, 2011). TBLT represents a paradigm shift of mainstream views about language teaching from a focus on ‘knowledge of language’ to a pragmatic and experiential focus on ‘achiev[ing] communicative purposes’ (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009, p. 45). Nevertheless, relatively few studies in the field have addressed the problem of effective grammar acquisition in online courses from a task-based perspective. More particularly, we know very little about targeting a specific L2 grammar structure that may result problematic to L2 learners (such as Spanish direct and indirect object pronouns) and presenting it to the L2 students embedded in an online TBLT environment. This state of affairs, therefore, requires the completion of many more case studies on different L2s, as well as on separate grammatical structures within them. This dissertation aims to address these serious gaps in the existing literature on how best to teach grammar in online L2 courses.

### III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OVERVIEW

The overarching purpose of this study is to investigate each following research question (RQ) stated below:



**RQ 1:** What are the characteristics that an online TBLT module needs to have in order to promote the acquisition of specific L2 grammatical structures?

**RQ 2:** How frequently are problematic grammatical structures, such as direct and indirect object pronouns, used by L2 learners of Spanish in an online TBLT module?

**RQ 3:** How frequently do the students in the experimental group use the target grammatical structures as compared to the students in the control group?

The remainder of this dissertation will be organized into five chapters. Chapter 2 explores the literature about the teaching of grammar in SLA, TBLT, and CALL that is most relevant for this study. It will also focus on the previous research that was carried out on the acquisition of the specific L2 grammatical structure for this study, i.e. acquisition of direct and indirect object clitics in Spanish. It also indicates the gap in the literature that this study aims to fill. Chapter 3 discusses the experimental design used to investigate the research questions presented above. This includes the methodology of the study, the development of the online teaching module, the participants in the experiment, the context of how this module was tested with students, and a discussion of how the data will be analyzed. Chapter 4 analyzes the data acquired in the experiment, including a discussion of how the data answers the research questions. Chapter 5 concludes the dissertation, relating the results of Chapter 4 back to the study's research questions, discussing its limitations, as well as the directions for future research. Finally, the Appendices provide the task instruments and other relevant figures and tables.

## Chapter II

### L2 Grammar Teaching

#### I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores existing research in the teaching of grammar in SLA, benefits, and potential challenges of TBLT and CALL, followed by the concept that TBLT combined with CALL could achieve good results in TM L2 education.

While research on TBLT combined with CALL is still lacking, quite a large number of studies have investigated the acquisition of direct and indirect object pronouns in Spanish by L2 learners. An overview of this literature will be provided as well, both in order to showcase the relevance of this dissertation's research questions, as well as to capitalize on the potential of previous work to offer insight on this. In particular, many of the studies in Spanish direct and indirect object pronouns demonstrate the complexity of such grammatical structures for L2 speakers. This review will conclude with a summary of the chapter's findings, as well as a justification of this dissertation's investigation.

#### II. LITERATURE REVIEW

##### 1. The Teaching of Grammar in SLA

Grammar is such a fundamental part of the language system and a key component for language communication. Language instructors have approached the teaching of grammar in the L2 classroom in different ways, and in the last few decades, as globalization has increased the importance of language teaching, the underlying methodology implemented in the classroom has become a priority for L2 researchers and language instructors.

One of the current prevailing methodologies in L2 teaching is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). CLT originated in the 1970s with the aim of developing procedures with varying degrees of emphasis on grammar learning and also practices for the teaching of the four skills (speaking, listening, writing, and reading) that embody the interdependence of language and communication (Howatt, 1985). With CLT, traditional lesson formats where the focus was on acquiring accurate grammar through excessively controlling activities that contained repetitive drills were disregarded, and a cooperative, interactive approach to learning was favored (Harmer, 2012). Authentic, real-world scenarios where grammar appears in natural communicative contexts are the focus of CLT lesson plans to foster communicative competence.

It is paramount to mention that Howatt (1985) distinguishes between the “strong” and the “weak” versions of CLT. In the latter, explicit grammar instruction is accepted. However, in the strong version, the most naturalistic one, the explicit instruction of grammar is rejected in favor of an implicit, deductive method.

Nevertheless, despite having CLT as the underlying methodology of language in most L2 classrooms, the approach to the teaching of L2 grammar is still a concerning issue. Cadierno (1992), Ellis (2002), and Robinson (1996), in their studies, claim that, independently of what the strong version of CLT states, the explicit teaching of grammar should be implemented in every language classroom since it speeds up the learning process and improves accuracy. Along the same lines, Dewaele (2007) concludes that a lack of formal instruction affects morphosyntactic accuracy in interlanguage, which triggers incorrect language production. Selinker (1972) coined the term ‘interlanguage’ to refer to the actual level of the language developed by second language learners, a language between the TL and the learner’s first language, constantly changing and improving as the learners’ competence in the target language (TL) grows. What is not

clear yet is if the explicitness when teaching grammar should be embedded in communicative contexts, Focus on Form (FonF) or outside of any communicative context, Focus on Forms (FonFs). Hence, it is necessary to analyze some CLT principles and to find out which one of the two foci, either FonF or FonFs, seems to work better in the L2 classroom.

The main principles that better summarize CLT approach are, among others, the following ones, according to Richards and Rodgers (2001):

1) Make communication found in real-world situations the focus of language learning. As Larsen-Freeman (2001) states, the inclusion of real-world functions of language, which include grammar, and notions, which include vocabulary, is necessary to prepare students for situations that they will encounter in the real world outside the classroom.

2) Provide opportunities for students to develop both grammar accuracy, which focuses on creating correct examples of grammar production, and oral grammar fluency, and on speaking with ease and without communication breakdowns. Larsen-Freeman considers that the CLT approach should pay more attention to fluency rather than accuracy since the goal is to communicate and communication is sometimes possible with the lack of grammar accuracy. Allen and Maxim (2011) defend the idea that grammatical errors which do not cause communication breakdowns should not be the focus of concern until the moment when students reach a high-intermediate level in the TL. Thus, when a certain level of proficiency in the foreign language has been achieved, students should be able to distinguish grammatical from ungrammatical sequences and use adequate vocabulary in full correct grammar sentences.

3) Let students discover grammar rules preferably in an inductive rather than a deductive way through activities that foster both declarative, explicit, and procedural, implicit, knowledge. Anderson (1982) defined these two types of knowledge regarding

the way in which information is stored in our brains. Declarative knowledge refers to the knowledge of factual information and, on the other hand, procedural knowledge refers to the knowledge of how to perform or act. DeKeyser (1998) defines the inductive way of learning in contrast to the deductive way of learning as the type of learning which occurs without the intention to learn and without awareness of what has been learned.

Under the influence of CLT and its principles stated above, Norris and Ortega (2000) point out that the role of grammar instruction positively impacts SLA and the teaching strategies of L2 implementation. The finding in their study “Effectiveness of L2 Instruction: A Research Synthesis and Quantitative Meta-analysis” serves as a guide to take into account when effective instructional practices are needed. Norris and Ortega explore that explicit teaching of FonF, when grammar teaching is embedded in communicative contexts where the focal point is on meaning, is more effective than explicit teaching of FonFs, when the teaching of grammar is not embedded in meaning or context.

In their detailed research synthesis and quantitative meta-analysis, the authors reach the conclusion that the FonF results in better learning outcomes than the FonFs in the explicit instruction of grammar. Incidentally, this is also where they create the aforementioned labels of ‘FonF’ and ‘FonFs’, which unfortunately can be quite confusing because of their excessive similarity.

Celce (2012) stresses the importance of Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence, which views grammatical competence as an essential element to achieve full communicative competence in the L2. In fact, the study defends the importance of grammar instruction in the form of FonF, since grammar always interacts with meaning, social function, discourse, or a combination of those. It is never an autonomous system to be learned on its own, but it is rather always embedded in

communicative contexts. Celce also includes several practical ideas for the implementation of grammar teaching in communicative contexts in the L2 classroom.

Some language teachers, nevertheless, still believe that form-focused instruction and meaning-focused communicative activities or tasks should be done separately. The idea that they defend is that making students focus on grammar, while they are engaged in meaning, may be counter-productive (Lightbown, 1998). It is paramount to highlight, however, that most scholars believe that form-focused instruction and communicative activities or tasks work better together. The reason lies in the fact that students make long-lasting connections by paying more attention to target forms, and the forms become more memorable if students learn them in context (Fotos, 1993; Lightbown, 1998 and Nassaji, 2000). Currently, the most popular approaches in grammar teaching are 1) one based on so-called structured input activities (Lee & VanPatten, 2003) and 2) Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) (Prabhu, 1987). These approaches direct learners' attention to the TL in a guided yet communicative way that provides good results in students' performance (Falchikov, 1986; Stefani, 1992).

## **2. FonF vs FonFs, relations with other theories**

In order to explore the different categorizations in the teaching of L2 grammar, it is important to highlight that the concept of 'FonF' was first introduced by Michael Long (1991) to refer to an approach where the learners' observation of linguistic structures is only as a side effect of their engagement in language communication. Following Long's original concept of 'FonF', the pedagogical approach to the teaching of grammar is incidental and unplanned rather than planned and arising out of meaningful contexts. Nevertheless, since Long introduced the concept of 'FonF', the term at stake has undergone a high number of significant redefinitions. In fact, it has gradually shifted from

‘incidental’ (Williams, 1994) to something more akin to ‘monitored and directed by the teacher’ (Doughty & Williams, 1998). Moreover, Long’s definition of ‘FonF’ as something incidental entailed that it never interfered with actual interaction. This aspect of its meaning was later also subverted by Ellis (2002), who conceived of a *planned FonF*, designed to elicit specific linguistic forms during a communicative activity.

The term ‘form’ itself is problematic, as it can denote both an actual morpheme (*-ed*, as in answering the question ‘What is the form of the regular past tense in English?’) and its function (*past tense*, as in answering the question ‘What tense form is *walked* in English?’). For example, attention to the form *-ed* implies the realization that *-ed* conveys an action performed in the past. The multiple interpretations of the concept of ‘FonF’, as well as the different levels of actual explicit instruction implemented in the classroom by the teacher, have contributed to the confusion regarding these two concepts (‘FonF’ and ‘FonFs’). A good starting point to understand the roots of the two distinctions coined by Long is Krashen’s (1982, 1985) hypothesis of acquisition vs learning since it shares some noticeable similarities with the notions of *FonF* and *FonFs* respectively. According to Krashen, focusing solely on meaning is sufficient for SLA. In his hypothesis, Krashen claims that there is a clear difference between the concept of ‘acquisition’ and the concept of ‘learning’. More concretely, he claims that the process of acquisition of the TL happens naturally and spontaneously, as long as learners receive sufficient amounts of comprehensible communicative input. This contributed to the development of his well-known Input Hypothesis, which maintains that comprehensible input rich in grammar structures and vocabulary should be presented in meaningful contexts to L2 students, in order for them to acquire the TL.

On the other hand, Krashen’s later Monitor Hypothesis proposes that explicit language instruction, a concept similar to FonFs, is only useful as a specific tool for monitoring the

learners' language learning process. His idea is that L2 learners only learn grammatical structures consciously in order to monitor the accuracy of their language input, which is an external component of their language acquisition. This is not equivalent to advocating for explicit grammar instruction in SLA, since those proponents, it is inadequate to try to acquire an L2 by making meaning (FonF) the only focus of L2 instruction.

To complete the Input Hypothesis, Swain developed the Output Hypothesis, which stated that L2 output is also necessary, along with L2 input, for language acquisition as a driver of full grammar processing and hypothesis-testing. Swain based her hypothesis on the analysis of students in an immersion program in Canada, where she could provide important evidence that explicit FonFs instruction was the most appropriate in a learning context (Swain, 1985).

By closely analyzing Long's distinctions of FonF and FonFs, one could infer that FonF is somehow related to the concept of 'acquisition' in Krashen's theory, which does not encompass extensive use of conscious grammatical rules, but, in fact, Long still favors the explicit teaching of structures, although he suggests doing so only when they appear *incidentally* in communicative contexts. On the other hand, Krashen never favored explicit grammar instruction, even when this took place in communicative contexts. He pointed out, instead, that the structures should always be acquired incidentally, without any mediation through explicit grammar teaching. The concept of 'FonFs', in fact, seems more related to Krashen's concept of 'learning' in his monitor model, since attention to conscious grammatical structures is required for learning, even when only metalinguistic explanations are expected. However, the problem with Krashen's acquisition vs. learning theory is that there is no empirical way to demonstrate the actual difference between the two.



Additionally, other concepts and theories somehow related to FonF, are the noticing hypothesis (Schmidt, 1994) and limited processing capacity (VanPatten, 1990). According to these two perspectives, language learners should overtly notice both form and meaning that these forms embody by making connections, and, therefore, convert the input into intake (acquired knowledge). The connection with FonF comes from the belief that learners have a limited processing capacity. Hence, if they are faced with both meaning and form, they will naturally attend to meaning, rather than to form, while they are engaged in communication. If the language instructor wants to draw attention to form, he or she can do it in an implicit way according to these hypotheses.

On the other hand, the approach of FonFs could be related to *skill acquisition theory*, which consists of three different stages: the first one is declarative/factual knowledge. The second stage is related to procedural knowledge, which refers to the kind of knowledge acquired after a lot of repetition. The third stage is automatization of procedural knowledge, which deals with using the TL according to the target grammar rules without thinking about them (Anderson, 1982; Bley-Vroman, 1988; DeKeyser, 1998).

The FonF approach has more proponents in the SLA field than FonFs which has been described by most as an old-fashioned, unnecessary, and useless approach to L2 grammar. Sheen (1996, 2005), however, in his studies comparing FonF and FonFs instruction of specific grammar structures, found that the latter triggered better results. He admits that a single study cannot prove the superiority of FonFs, but also points out the effectiveness that it can have. Still, other FonFs defenders claim that some aspects of the L2 are acquired mainly through meaning-centered instruction. ‘It is rather uncontroversial that pronunciation is relatively immune to all but the most intensive forms-focused treatment,

whereas large amounts of vocabulary can be acquired with very little focus on form' (DeKeyser, 1998, p. 43).

### 3. FonF vs FonFs and accuracy

The FonF approach to grammar teaching is preferred by many SLA scholars and language teachers, thus, aims at achieving accurate grammar by providing the rules embedded in communicative contexts. The process is considered satisfactory when the learner is able to understand and produce the TL structures while engaging in communication. Nevertheless, if the focus is to teach grammar in communication, why is the focus still on accurate forms when communication can also succeed with inaccurate ones? To answer that question, one needs to consider different types of L2 learning modalities, as well as different levels of proficiency. A focus on accuracy seems counterproductive in immersion contexts, when the fast acquisition of fluency is necessary, as well as in lower levels of proficiency, where it may inhibit or demoralize learners. FonF, however, may not be satisfactory in other cases. Williams (1994), for instance, observes that, despite their exposure to a large amount of input and many opportunities for different kinds of interaction, the output of students in some French immersion programs he analyzed was surprisingly inaccurate. For Williams, communication with inaccurate grammar is not 'real communication', and he adds that these students' failure to achieve accuracy could have been avoided by paying more attention to *forms*. *These* he defines in contrast to *meaning*, and concludes that the exclusive focus on meaning ultimately causes learners to fail. Johns (1997) also found that it was not uncommon that L2 learners at universities abroad failed to recognize and appropriately produce the L2 structures in speaking and writing. Thus, many researchers now recognize the necessity of explicit FonFs for advanced language learners and claim

that grammar instruction is essential if learners are to achieve their educational and professional goals (Celce- Murcia 1991; Schmidt 1994; Shaw & Liu 1998). Celce-Murcia (1991).

The tide, therefore, seems to have turned, nowadays, and a lot of attention is being paid to the teaching of grammar in the L2 classroom. The underlying methodology implemented in the classroom has become a priority for language researchers and instructors. The two major trends in the field have mostly been FonF and FonFs. FonF still has more adepts in SLA than its counterpart. However, one needs to carry out a more fine-grained analysis, separating different levels of proficiency and different learning contexts. There is evidence, as mentioned above, that focusing solely on meaning is to be considered against the loss of accuracy it may entail. While it has been difficult in the past to find a balance between FonF and FonFs, Task-Based Language Learning, which joins elements from both, provides a better model to teach L2 grammar. TBLT relies on students' being involved in real communication in which they use the TL in a meaningful and communicative way but retains room to focus on accuracy at the end of each task.

#### **4. TBLT**

The concept of TBLT was developed in the 1980s by SLA researchers and language instructors who pursued a change in language education by flipping the teacher-centered classroom scenarios and form-oriented language teaching practices. These researchers and language instructors favored a holistic rather than analytic language approach (Samuda & Bygate, 2008). The efficacy of TBLT lies in more general theories of education which underline the importance of experiential or 'hands-on' learning (Thomas, 2013).

The TBLT approach is closely related to the CLT approach. One of the key terms when talking about communicative approaches to L2 teaching is “communicative competence.” This term was coined by Hymes in 1972, and it reflects the belief that language is always used in a social context or situation. Communicative approaches provide students with enough opportunities to actively engage in real-world communication by developing the students’ interlanguage through a task or activity that triggers the use of the TL in order to successfully complete the task.

TBLT, in the same way as CLT, is based on the idea that the four language skills, listening, reading, speaking, and writing should never be targeted in isolation. Instead, teachers, as mediators between the L2 and the students, must integrate all of them along with the tasks. Swain (1985) claimed that to acquire a language, learners need not only comprehensible input (reading and listening) but also need to be encouraged to produce comprehensible output (writing and speaking) in order to effectively acquire the L2. Therefore, in Swain’s view, learners need not only exposure to the TL (which is ubiquitous in most modern communicative methods), but also engage with it: they need to use the TL not only in a receptive-interpretative way but also in a productive way.

TBLT is currently one of the most widely researched L2 teaching approaches. In this approach, the task is at the center of class activity, where learners need to use the FonF approach effectively, instead of FonFs. Prabhu (1987), the creator of this approach, defined ‘task’ as a type of activity that requires learners to reach an outcome from given information through some process of thought. The tasks also allow teachers to control and regulate the learning process by preparing the students to engage in the tasks. Blake (2013) also consciously uses the word ‘task’ as different from the word ‘activity’. Definitions of the word ‘task’ have differed greatly in scope, making it difficult for language instructors to use the term consistently. Harmer (2007) stated that TBLT makes

the performance of meaningful tasks (FonF) central to the learning process. Instead of a language structure or function to be learned, students are presented with a task they have to perform or a problem they have to solve. Tasks have the quality of providing enough opportunities to communicate in the TL without focusing on FonFs. This is something that authors such as Willis (1996) consider essential in order to master the L2. Similarly, Nunan (1989) defined a communicative task as a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the TL focusing their attention on meaning rather than form. Thus, tasks favor opportunities for communication and noticing form, meaning, and function relationships, which are the essential ingredients for the development of communicative competence in an L2 (Willis & Willis, 2007). In fact, tasks (in contrast to activities) involve real communication, which is essential for language learning. Moreover, the goal of each task is communication *and* meaning; the focus is on the process rather than on the product. Hence, students experience less anxiety about the final product and about accuracy in general.

Willis (1996) proposed a task-based language framework. With it, he reversed the traditional presentation, practice, and production (PPP) framework. According to Willis, a TBLT lesson consists of three major stages: 1) the pre-task, 2) the task cycle and 3) the post-task or language focus:

- The pre-task gives a quick introduction to the topic, which is to be explored by the students. It usually includes a short task-based warm-up activity. The teacher helps the students to understand the theme and objectives of the task. Some vocabulary may also be presented through schemata activation. The pre-task is followed by the task itself, also known as the task cycle (Willis, 1996).

- The task cycle can be seen as the main task and consists of the execution phase, which entails planning, and the actual report phase. Most importantly, it contains a learning process of planning, drafting, and rehearsing (Willis, 1996: 58). During the planning phase, each participant in the task should discuss and work together to prepare their presentation. During the report phase, students present their findings, exchange written reports or discuss reports verbally, and compare their results (Willis, 1996).
- After students present their outcome, the post-task phase is when some feedback should be given by the instructor (considered a facilitator or a mediator between the content in the target language and the student). This part of the task can be used as language focus and understood as some sort of FonFs. Students will have the opportunity to analyze what they said, and practice their skills. By analyzing their use of language, students will be able to repeat their performance, reflect on it, and pay attention to form (Ellis, 2009).

All this will lead to students paying attention to both form and function, and, consequently, achieving further development of their L2 (Schmidt, 1990). Swan (2005) maintains that there is general agreement among SLA researchers regarding the characteristics of a ‘good task’:

- Tasks should mainly contain natural or naturalistic language use, and they should be FonF rather than FonFs.
- Instruction of the tasks should support learner-centeredness rather than teacher-centeredness.
- Tasks should foster students’ engagement in order to promote the internalization of formal linguistic elements.

- After the task, students should be offered opportunities to consider and discuss FonFs, which at this point will attract their attention to linguistic components and forms.

Other authors detail more features that should be present in every TBLT task (Samuda & Bygate, 2008):

- The inclusion of a clear goal: the task must trigger a clear communicative purpose that must be fulfilled through some gap in information, reason, and/or personal opinion. Afterward, an outcome must result from the task completion. The outcome can be the successful completion of the task or a piece of information that results from the task (such as an oral or written composition or dialogue).
- The learner's interest must be placed in the center: the learners' interests must be addressed by the task. Students need to feel interested in the task at stake. To achieve that, instructors need to analyze the needs of each student in the role assignment, and they should reject the use of general and uninformed tasks.
- A holistic approach should be selected: a task reflects real-world processes of language use, which are characterized by integrating form, function, and meaning together. Hence, these elements should not be presented in an isolated form.
- Reflective learning: While a task must offer learning by doing, it must also involve opportunities for reflecting and ordering ideas.

According to Ellis (2003), all of the critical features above are common among the tasks, but the most important factor in determining whether or not an activity is, in fact, a task is the primary FonF. L2 education is centered around tasks to give L2 learners an innovative experiential educative process, so that they are able to use the L2 to produce

meaning and, accordingly, the negotiation of meaning will further stimulate the learners' progress (Samuda & Bygate, 2008). When students engage in tasks that require negotiation of meaning, they incorporate comprehension checks, confirmation checks, and clarification requests that are critical elements of SLA (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001; Lee & VanPatten, 2003). Thus, all these features must be taken into account in the design of a TBLT unit.

Although few SLA researchers and language teachers would question the pedagogical benefits of implementing tasks as the means to foster real-world communication and authentic language use in the L2 classroom, the TBLT approach has its own challenges. Long and Crookes (2009) defend that some tasks may never be done outside the classroom. If so, these pedagogical tasks could not be considered true tasks. In fact, many activities that are introduced as tasks in textbooks are not real tasks seeking to “achieve an interactional authenticity” (Ellis, 2003, p. 8). Furthermore, L2 teachers usually lack an institutionally supportive (online) environment (materials, assistance, or enough time) to develop and carry out new teaching approaches (Adams & Nik, 2014). Additionally, another factor that can hinder the TBLT success in the L2 classroom is the students' use of their L1. Lastly, Long (2016) defends that teacher education for TBLT is one of the crucial factors to decide whether TBLT is successfully implemented or not. Long claims that the role of the teacher in TBLT is essential for the effective deployment of this approach.

In regards to the teacher role in TBLT, Izadinia (2009) states that “years ago, teachers were considered unquestioned authorities who were only responsible for delivering knowledge to students, and students, in turn, were doomed to listening meekly” (p. 7). Hence, it is important to keep in mind that the role of the teacher in TBLT differs from the role that instructors have in other L2 teaching methodologies. In online education,



teachers should try to stay in the TL as much as they can, according to Baralt & Morcillo (2017). In addition, the online L2 classroom must “build a sense of community and as a safe space for learners to share about themselves in the target language” (Baralt & Morcillo, 2017, p.42).

Richards & Rodgers (2002) suggest three particular requirements of a TBLT teacher- 1) selecting and sequencing of tasks, 2) preparing learners for tasks, and 3) consciousness-raising. In fact, the teacher should start by giving clear instructions to the students about the topic of the task. Subsequently, the teacher also helps students with words, phrases, and sentences related to the topic at stake that can be difficult or confusing. When the students start to work in their groups, the teacher is available as a facilitator between the content and the students to assist with any questions or issues that may come up in the groups. Finally, when the task is over, the instructor provides good quality feedback to the students about their performance. In addition to active participation, students are expected to help and monitor each other’s work during the task completion phase.

All things considered, the aim of TBLT is to help learners develop their knowledge of the TL, as they participate easily and naturally in communication. The learners acquire the form and use of the L2 without being explicitly taught. The role of the teacher is to design tasks by creating realistic conditions, either online or in-person, for communication that is found in real-world scenarios outside the confines of the classroom.

## **5. CALL**

The ubiquitous presence of technology in today’s society has made it exceedingly difficult for L2 researchers to ignore the impact that technology has on L2 grammar

learning. Through streaming online, watching videos, listening to podcasts, reading different types of articles or news, and chatting with native speakers, L2 learners have complete access to a wide variety of online resources that allow them to connect with others anytime and anywhere.

Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) was defined by Levy in 1997 as “the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning.” Chapelle (2001) states that “this term is widely used to refer to the area of technology and second language teaching and learning.” Along with flexibility and autonomy, major advantages of CALL include collaborative learning, individualized attention, and instant feedback (e.g., Guth & Helm, 2010; Lai, 2013).

CALL is both exciting and frustrating as a means of acquiring an L2. It is exciting because it is innovative, dynamic, and quickly changing– and it is frustrating for the exact same reasons (Hubbard, 2009). Contrary to technology that can be seen as a key motivator for L2 students, grammar is usually not considered to be an exciting aspect of L2 learning. Unfortunately, most L2 language grammar classes can be uninteresting and make students quickly lose interest. Thus, integrating technology in grammar learning can improve learners’ motivation, which in turn can have a noticeable positive effect on their progress. There are many benefits in using CALL for grammar instruction, e.g., students could decide when to focus on grammar learning on their own, instead of being forced to do it as tends to happen in traditional classroom scenarios. In addition, CALL can provide students with rich input and explicit grammar explanations through integrated multimedia programs that facilitate its learning. In fact, online teaching modules “enhance learner motivation, promote autonomy and social presence in a 3D environment [which] can be beneficial for students who have problems with grammar and those who are not motivated to learn it” (Kruk, 2014: 63).

Yun-Hong (2009, p. 32) stated that “in theory, computers or modern technology can help enhance students’ interest, better the foreign language learning environment, and therefore elevate foreign language teaching quality.” Furthermore, other authors such as Warschauer & Healey (1998) defended that CALL exposes the students to large amounts of linguistic data, practice with immediate feedback, the “fun factor,” and the possibility of finding and sharing online information with native and non-native speakers of the L2 (p.60). All of these benefits have been accepted by the majority of CALL researchers.

Abu Naba’h et al. (2009) are some of the authors who have investigated the effect of CALL on grammar learning. Their study indicates that those students who took technology-mediated courses used grammar structures more accurately than students who learned the same content using more traditional methods. This is attributed to the dynamic and flexible nature of CALL. Kruk (2014) also defended that the use of technology in the teaching of grammar had a long-term impact as it benefited students not only immediately after the lesson but also in the weeks that followed. Furthermore, Ilin, Kutlu & Kutluay (2013) drew the same conclusion regarding the use of technology in online courses or modules. They stated that using audiovisuals in L2 grammar teaching, apart from motivating and engaging learners, can “lead to more permanent learning” (p. 279).

Another study conducted by Nutta (2013) analyzed the effect of computer-based L2 grammar instruction versus teacher-directed L2 grammar instruction. Two experiments were conducted based on learners’ proficiency levels. Participants in this study were students enrolled in an intensive academic course at a university in Florida. The study consisted of one hour of instruction per day for a total of seven days. Participants in the teacher-directed L2 grammar instruction group were taught without the use of technology. On the other hand, participants in the computer-based L2 grammar instruction group used a learning software that included audio and video. Students had to learn grammar through

audio explanations and activities that included audios and/or videos. The results of this study indicated that computer-based instruction was more effective than teacher-directed grammar instruction.

It is clear that widespread Internet use has led to collaborative and cooperative CALL environments that favor L2 acquisition. In collaborative learning, students can work in pairs or groups on a joint project. This collaborative learning process is considered an integral component in the learning of an L2. In other words, learners acquire a language by using the language in social interaction with speakers of that language or more advanced learners.

Although several published studies prove the effectiveness of integrating CALL in the teaching of L2 grammar through interaction-oriented Web sites that facilitate language L2 grammar acquisition or tutorial CALL, a concept that implies that computers can function as language tutors to enhance grammar acquisition with little or no real language instructor present (e.g., Blake, 2013; Golonka et al. 2014), this should not be understood as saying that any L2 teaching practice would be effective as long as technology plays an important role in it. Chun (2016) stated that seeing technology as a panacea is a deceptive idea. In fact, to achieve effective and successful implementation of CALL, it is essential to consider the role of the teacher, among other factors (Arnold & Ducate, 2015).

In 2016, Godwin-Jones claimed, “Language teachers play a vital role in both encouraging our students to explore extramural learning activities and finding ways to assist and assess the learning achieved” (p. 6). It is abundantly clear that the role of the teacher is crucial, not only in CALL but also in all educational contexts (Kumaravadivelu, 2002). Teachers must consciously select the communicative tasks and activities they implement in the L2 classroom in order to induce the use of the target grammatical forms that they want their students to develop. At the same time, an effective task should be a

good representation of situations that L2 learners could encounter in their daily life. As Crystal (2016: 29) points out, “The more we know about grammar, the more we’ll be able to carry out these tasks well”.

As Chun (2016) states, nowadays language acquisition and technology go beyond the classroom boundaries, and the scope of L2 learning goes beyond communicative competence. This is relevant to CALL since L2 teachers are encouraged to use more interaction-oriented technological tools or Web sites to facilitate language acquisition (Blake, 2013).

Although online education has attempted to follow the patterns of on-ground educational practices of teaching, many authors have highlighted a number of reasons why online education cannot follow the traditional patterns found in face-to-face instruction (Neely & Tucker, 2010; Sonwalkar, 2008). Students expect their online instructor to be reliable, quick to respond, have a positive attitude, be a good communicator, mentor, facilitator, encourager, flexible, and, above all, be someone who offers good feedback and personal attention when it is needed (Hislop & Ellis, 2004). Moore & Kearsley (2012) developed the following traits that an effective online instructor should have:

- Ability to identify emotions of dependency and counter-dependency of students and everything in-between and how to address them effectively.
- Ability to provide emotional support, if needed
- Ability to lead all students to independence.
- Ability to identify conflict in groups of students and intervene.
- Ability to motivate students to become engaged in learning.

- Ability to find or create ways to engage students in discussion, analysis and producing knowledge.
- Ability to establish the environment of autonomous learning relevant to students' personal knowledge and situation.
- Ability to offer personal feedback with analogies, questions provoking critical thinking, suggesting supplemental resources or applications to real-life.
- Ability to create an interaction between students and assignments.
- Ability to monitor the students' skills to apply ideas and manipulation of information in the course and then assess it.
- Ability to formally, and informally, assess how the student is progressing, and if not progressing, to offer the needed assistance.
- Ability to gain personal knowledge of each student to apply to the learning process through support and encouragement.

We can summarize these characteristics from three perspectives: (1) the teacher's role as mediator of the students' language development; (2) the teacher as a key figure in the correct implementation and development of the online content; and (3) the teacher as a good provider of feedback.

To summarize these points, research has shown that CALL can be as good, if not better than, face-to-face instruction, but only if it is implemented correctly. The best online L2 learning combines elements of students learning at their own pace, working in their own time, abundant guidance by a good online instructor, and a good underlying theoretical approach to L2 teaching such as TBLT. Hence, the opportunity of joining CALL and TBLT together should be seriously considered because of their capacity to promote highly successful and more permanent learning of the L2 language.

## 6. Combination of CALL and TBLT

González-Lloret and Ortega (2014) addressed the need for a new conceptualization of TBLT in computer-assisted settings, where tasks were integrated into technology, not only as a medium but also as an opportunity for learning the L2 ‘by doing.’ In the technology-mediated TBLT framework proposed by González- Lloret, and Ortega, technology is necessarily integrated within tasks. There are three requirements that need to be met:

- A clear definition of the task that guides its design and the selection of technology.
- Implications of integrating technology in L2 educational settings.
- Integration of tasks and technology in the L2 teaching curriculum (González-Lloret and Ortega, 2014).

Regarding the first requirement, Wang’s study (2014) found that L2 learners needed to be trained to effectively use technology before working on tasks. As for the second requirement, teaching an L2 with the aid of technology requires both teachers and students to be able to learn in different ways. Finally, the third requirement, according to González-Lloret (2016), involves the relationships between technology and tasks in the teaching curriculum, because technology directly affects the design, implementation, and assessment of the curriculum itself.

Recent research emphasizes that technology-mediated TBLT has positive effects in L2 development (Xue, 2020; Chen, 2019; Chen & Lin, 2018; Ziegler, 2016). Chapelle (2001, 2003), stated that anyone dealing with L2 teaching and learning needs to grasp the beneficial nature of CALL and TBLT tasks in which learners can immerse themselves in

and have noticeable effects on L2 development. Nielson (2014), Stockwell (2010), and Wang (2014) have implemented technology in TBLT and have examined its effectiveness in different studies. Their results show that some tools have a good impact on implementing authentic tasks and, therefore, improving specific language skills.

There is extensive literature that highlights the effectiveness of CALL and TBLT. Most of that literature includes specific guidelines regarding how to proceed in technology-mediated TBLT classroom scenarios (i.e., Baralt, 2014; González-Lloret, 2016; González-Lloret & Ortega, 2014). However, there are not many manuals that contain consciously-developed online tasks that are ready to be implemented in the L2 online classroom and that foster grammar development. When developing TBLT tasks, instructors should foster tasks that promote knowledge construction (Gleason, 2013). However, this requires a cognitive effort from the teacher's part since these tasks also need to be interesting for students, and help them stay engaged and motivated. TBLT has its foundation in theory, education philosophy, and psycholinguistics research (Long, 2015). Hence, it is not one-size-fits-all. Something that is clear, however, is that TBLT tasks that work well in person do not always work well online (Baralt, 2013).

Canals and Mor (2020) wrote an article titled, 'Towards a Signature Pedagogy for Task-Based Technology-Enhanced Language Learning,' which aimed to describe a 'signature pedagogy' for CALL that is also closely related to TBLT. In this study, the authors identified the following set of pedagogical principles and practices as being distinctive of successful TBLT online programs:

- Autonomy of the learners: L2 education should be learner-centered.
- Authenticity of the materials: the language should reflect the cultures of the people who use it.



- Empowerment of the learners: learners should be enabled to use the L2 in a conscious and confident way.
- Effectiveness of theoretical underpinnings: L2 education should be based on state-of-the-art psycholinguistic, pedagogical, and techno-pedagogical science.

Some of the suggestions that Canals and Mor included in their study is that learners should take on different roles when managing group work, although this usually means that there will be learners who tend to lead and others who are less involved. In addition, there should be a leader or spokesperson in each group, who will be in charge of communicating with the teacher and monitoring communication among group members. The authors also state that instructors need to assess the whole process of carrying out a collaborative task and not only the final product (Canals & Mor, 2020). Regarding the use of synchronous (e.g., video conferences) or asynchronous (e.g., discussion forums) modes of communication, Brandl (2012) determines that they play a minor role in language output. Thus, both modes can be combined indiscriminately.

All in all, TBLT promotes a learning process that is embedded in a socio-cultural context which favors interactions between a learner and a more advanced learner, a learner, and a native speaker, or among learners in general. During these interactions, meaning is co-constructed through the negotiation of meaning. Furthermore, TBLT in computer-assisted settings seems to be an excellent potential option for the teaching of difficult L2 grammar structures. Essentially, this provides the rationale of this dissertation, which analyzes the outcomes of the deployment of an online TBLT module to teach complicated Spanish grammar structure, which is known to cause a lot of difficulties to L2 learners.

### III. DIRECT AND INDIRECT OBJECT PRONOUNS IN SPANISH

#### 1. Acquisition of Spanish direct and indirect object pronouns

Previous research in the L2 acquisition of Spanish has convincingly documented the non-nativelike use of object pronouns (Liceras et al., 1997; Sanchez and Al-Kasey, 1999; VanPatten and Sanz, 1995). It is assumed that native-like variation is an essential part of Communicative Competence (Canale & Swain, 1980) and that grammar structures can vary in how difficult they are to master. According to Spada, Lightbown & White (2005), direct and indirect object pronouns are grammatical elements that have a strong link between form and meaning. Despite this fact, how to use direct and indirect object pronouns in Spanish creates many difficulties for L2 learners. The reason can be attributed to the fact that object clitics in Spanish normally create a structure that appears to be (Subject) Object Verb, ((S)OV) or OVS. This can be especially difficult for English native speakers since they are used to the SVO order from their own L1, which by and large is also true of Spanish. Furthermore, in sentences with two or more verbs, such as a conjugated verb and an infinitive the pronominal direct object may precede the finite verb (*le tuve que comprar leche* ‘I had to buy him milk’, (S)OV) or be enclitic (*tuve que comprarle leche* ‘I had to buy him milk’). In the enclitic case, it still does not follow standard (S)V(O) because the clitic no longer stands alone as a single word (*comprarle* in the example above). Additionally, the Spanish clitics must account for gender, number, and in some instances, cases, in agreement with their respective antecedent. Considering these factors, Spanish clitics have a high level of difficulty for L2 learners. Even when a student has extensive Spanish vocabulary and grammar experience, knowing how to use direct and indirect object pronouns can still be challenging.

Spanish object pronouns can be categorized as follows: **me** (sing., 1st pers., dir./ind.), **te** (sing., 2nd pers, dir./ind.), **le** (sing., 3rd pers., ind., masc./fem.), **lo** (sing., 3rd pers., dir.,

masc.), **la** (sing., 3rd pers., dir., fem.), **nos** (pl., 1st pers., dir./ind.), **os** (pl., 2nd pers., dir./ind.), **les** (pl., 3rd pers., ind., masc./fem.), **los** (pl., 3rd pers., dir., masc.), and **las** (pl., 3rd pers., dir., fem.).

Additionally, there is another issue that complicates the acquisition of this structure: the linguistic phenomenon known in Spain as *leísmo*. This phenomenon is closely related to *loísmo*, and *laísmo*: all of them are variations from standard Spanish and only affect the third person object pronouns. *Le* (sg.) and *les* (pl.) function both as the masculine and feminine indirect object in a sentence. In *Le di una manzana*. ('I gave her an apple'), the pronoun can refer either to a man or a woman in Spanish. However, in some cases, you can find sentences such as: *Visité a Juan. Le visité*. ('I visited Juan. I visited him') or *María no le he visitado nunca* ('I have never visited María'). This is what it is known as *leísmo*: when the indirect object pronoun *le/les* is used as a direct object. From a prescriptive grammar viewpoint, it is incorrect in all cases since the Spanish Royal Academy (R.A.E) only records the possibility of *le* as direct object only if the referent of the pronoun is [+masculine, +human], never for a female.

On the other hand, *la* and *las* are the feminine direct object pronouns: *Veo a María. La veo*. ('I see Maria. I see her'). However, in some Spanish-speaking regions, the direct object pronouns can be used as indirect objects. Hence, we can find structures such as *las dije mi dirección* ('I told them my address'), which is grammatically incorrect in standard Spanish. Furthermore, *lo* and *los*, the masculine direct object pronouns, are sometimes incorrectly used instead of *le* and *les* respectively. Thus, a sentence such as *Lo di un regalo* ('I gave him a present') is an example of how this structure can be used 'incorrectly' (from a prescriptive point of view) even by some native speakers of Spanish..

Finally, when both direct and indirect object pronouns appear together in the same sentence in Spanish, there are two possibilities:

a) Speakers can put the indirect object pronoun, followed by the direct object pronoun, as two separate words before the verb. An example of this is, *Te lo voy a decir*. ‘I am going to say it to you’.

b) Speakers can attach the indirect object pronoun and the direct object pronoun onto the end of an infinitive. - such as, *Voy a decirtelo*. ‘I am going to say it to you’.

Hence, when L2 learners of Spanish face direct and indirect object pronouns, it is necessary that they acknowledge the correct use, since this specific structure frequently leads to misunderstandings. In fact, most of the Spanish indirect object pronouns look exactly like direct object pronouns except for the third person singular and plural. Furthermore, there is no differentiation between the masculine and the feminine indirect object pronoun. Hence, since the pronoun ‘le’ has several meanings, a clarification should be placed either at the beginning of the sentence or after the verb to indicate the gender to which it refers. The pronoun ‘les’ has the same problem. As a result, the structure becomes a challenge for L2 learners.

Collentine (1998) argues that one of the reasons why the acquisition of some target structures becomes difficult is that students must learn to interpret and produce the structure, while attending to numerous morphosyntactic relationships. For example, in order to produce a sentence such as: *La veo comer carne* (‘I see her eat meat’) learners must be able to determine the object which is substituted by the direct pronoun (ella), and process the (S)OV long-distance syntactic relationships. VanPatten (1984) presented around sixty L2 students’ sentences that followed the order OVS and that contained either Spanish direct or indirect object pronouns. Each participant was given four options, subsequently, they had to hear a target sentence, then they had to match the appropriate

option to the sentence they had just heard. The results of his study revealed that the subjects interpreted the OVS sentences as if they were SVO sentences between 35% and 70% of the time.

Research has examined the acquisition sequence of the Spanish clitic (direct/indirect object) pronouns according to their features. Malovrh and Lee (2013) examined the production and processing of these structures at four different proficiency levels and the results of their study suggested that Spanish indirect object pronouns were acquired before the direct ones. In addition, first-person clitic pronouns were acquired before third-person pronouns; singular clitic pronouns were acquired before the plurals, and masculine forms were acquired before the feminine forms. Thus, first-person pronouns > third-person pronouns, singular > plural, masculine > feminine. Other studies have corroborated these findings. For example, Andersen (1984) found that the first person was produced earlier than the third person in beginning level learners' oral productions. Rossi, Kroll and Dussias (2014) stated that Spanish learners' acquisition of number and gender agreement appeared at a later developmental stage when the students' first language lacked the number and gender feature.

D'Amico (2013) investigated if there was a more effective approach between FonF and FonFs to teach the direct object pronouns to beginning students of Spanish. The participants of her study were 51 beginning-level students, who had had 3 years of Spanish instruction at high school level and were native speakers of English. While results showed a more positive impact for FonF instruction over the more traditional FonFs approach, additional research on FonF was suggested. Hence, there is an agreement among researchers in this specific area that more case studies in this field are needed.

## 2. Summary and Justification for Current Study

In sum, an engaging and effective online TBLT module is one that requires active participation in meaningful and communicative group tasks. The module should provide opportunities for the negotiation of meaning to occur (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001; Lee & VanPatten, 2003). When students engage in FonF tasks that require negotiation for meaning, as well as in tasks that include reasoning gap and opinion gap, they incorporate comprehension checks, confirmation checks, and clarification requests that are critical elements of SLA (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001; Lee & VanPatten, 2003).

Thus, to understand how we can help learners make form-meaning connections with complex grammar structures such as the Spanish direct and indirect object pronouns, learners need to do something meaningful with the structure (Leow, 2007). Harley and Swain (1984) and Swain (1985), found that in a solely communicative learning environment, L2 learners developed strong communication skills and fluid speech, but lacked certain grammatical understanding and accuracy. Given the considerable research invested in exploring the acquisition of the Spanish direct and indirect object pronouns and the lack of conclusive evidence about how to teach it effectively, it seems worthwhile to add one more study to the debate.

The present study seeks to do exactly that, i.e. provide an investigation specifically dedicated to the effectiveness of an online TBLT module designed to help with the acquisition of direct and indirect object pronouns. The research questions it addresses are as follows:

**RQ 1:** What are the characteristics that an online TBLT module needs to have in order to promote the acquisition of specific L2 grammatical structures?

**RQ 2:** How frequently are problematic grammatical structures, such as direct and indirect object pronouns, used by L2 learners of Spanish in an online TBLT module?

**RQ 3:** How frequently do the students in the experimental group use the target grammatical structures as compared to the students in the control group?

The next chapter on the implemented methodology will start to address and answer these questions.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter details the experimental design employed in the investigation of the research questions outlined at the end of the previous chapter, and are re-stated below:

**RQ 1:** What are the characteristics that an online TBLT module needs to have in order to promote the acquisition of specific L2 grammatical structures?

**RQ 2:** How frequently are problematic grammatical structures, such as direct and indirect object pronouns, used by L2 learners of Spanish in an online TBLT module?

**RQ 3:** How frequently do the students in the experimental group use the target grammatical structures as compared to the students in the control group?

This study will explore the impact that an online TBLT module has on the acquisition of direct and indirect object pronouns in Spanish. The first part of this chapter will describe how the answers to RQ #1 were derived, namely, how the TBLT modules were constructed, based on a pilot study that was conducted before the development of the modules. The six modules/tasks are described in detail, including how they will elicit the target structures in an implicit way. In the second part of the chapter, in order to answer RQ #2 and #3, a mixed methods research design was employed. The participants who took part in the study are first described (a control and an experimental group), followed by an explanation of the procedures employed by each of the groups, the data collected from each group, and the measures used to assess how much learning had taken place



(e.g., final exam activity). Through the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, the analysis of this study provides a more comprehensive examination of research questions #2 and #3 than any of the two methods could yield individually (Creswell, 2014). The use of measured data (quantitative) and observational data (qualitative) can complement and expand on each other to produce a more accurate overall picture of the obtained results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

## II. DEVELOPMENT OF TBLT MODULE TO ANSWER RQ #1

### 1. Pilot Study

Nine Spanish 2 students at UCSB (3 males and 6 females), average age: 19 years old, completed the Pilot Study. These participants were personal contacts of the researcher (former students) and were treated in accordance with Human Subjects guidelines. They completed the pre-questionnaire and volunteered their participation. While the number of participants in the present pilot study was small, participants' L2 outputs generally verified that the experimental design was an effective way to address the research questions of this study.

#### **Pilot Study : Nuestras Vacaciones Ideales** (*Our ideal holidays*)

**Type of Task:** Opinion task.

**Focus:** FonF. The focus is on meaning, communicating in a real-life-like task.

**Implicit target structure:** Spanish third person masculine direct object pronoun.

**Objective:** To reach an agreement on some travel destinations.

**Interaction Pattern:** *Pre-task:* individual and in groups; *Task cycle:* in groups.

Before the pre-task, participants had to read the grammar explanations on direct object pronouns, in the same way as it is normally addressed in any Spanish 2 course at UCSB. This Spanish course follows a communicative and flipped classroom approach. Grammar is not taught explicitly, but students are expected to study and interact with the online textbook materials.

During the pre-task phase, participants were asked to watch three short videos, and give answers to some questions in a Google document afterward. The videos presented three different places in Mexico that the students had to rank from #1 to #3 according to their personal preferences. The three different locations were: 1) Cancun, 2) Teotihuacan, and 3) Mercado de Artesanías de La Ciudadela. Some follow-up questions were asked at the end of each video to support their decisions (i.e. ‘Do you want to visit Cancún?’, ‘Would you recommend to your classmates to visit Teohituacán’, etc.). Students needed to answer these questions before meeting with their groups.

Image 1: Pre-task Pilot Study

**2. Piensa una respuesta a estas preguntas sobre los videos para contestar en Zoom.**

*Think about an answer to this questions to answer in the Zoom meeting*

**A) CANCUN**

- ¿Conoces Cancún?
- ¿Quieres visitar Cancún?
- ¿Qué caracteriza a Cancún?
- ¿Recomiendas a tus compañeros que visiten Cancún?

**B) TEOTIHUACAN**

- ¿Conoces Teotihuacán?
- ¿Quieres visitar Teotihuacán?
- ¿Qué caracteriza Teotihuacán?
- ¿Recomiendas a tus compañeros que visiten Teotihuacán?

**C) MERCADO DE ARTESANÍAS DE LA CIUDADELA**

- ¿Conoces Mercado de Artesanías de la Ciudadela?
- ¿Quieres visitar Mercado de Artesanías de la Ciudadela?
- ¿Qué caracteriza Mercado de Artesanías de la Ciudadela?
- ¿Recomiendas a tus compañeros que visiten Mercado de Artesanías de la Ciudadela?

Image 2: Task cycle Pilot Study

**Nuestras Vacaciones Ideales *Our Ideal Holidays***

1. Por favor, mira estos tres videos. Los videos presentan tres lugares diferentes de México. Haz un ranking del 1 al 3 desde tu más favorito (1) al menos favorito (3). *Please, watch these three videos, they introduce three different places of Mexico. Rank them from 1 to 3 according to your level of preference (where 1 is your most favorite and 3 your least favorite).*

2.

1. Cancún: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OqGWYn0G8o>
2. Teotihuacán: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5xCCWMVbK4&t=3s>
3. Mercado de la Ciudadela: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xWBLw0RHUAW&t=2s>

The task cycle was planned to take place during an online Zoom meeting with the researcher of this study. When the task cycle started, the instructor went over some of the questions included in the pre-task portion as a way to help students warm-up before working in their groups. The goal of the task cycle was established at the beginning: students had to reach an agreement and decide what destination was their favorite to go on vacation and why.

Next, students were divided into groups of three. Every group was assigned a leader within the group and added to a specific breakout room in Zoom. The leader was the person in charge to make sure that the rest of the group completed the task, and also assigned the rest of the roles within the group. There was a scribe, who was the person in charge of writing the most important ideas and contributions of the group in a report. There was also a spokesperson, who had to communicate the group ideas and decisions to the whole class.

The first thing that participants had to do within the group was to review the answers that they had given in the pre-task phase and share those with their group. The last part of the task cycle consisted of working cooperatively to develop a small report that the spokesperson had to present to the whole class. The task concluded with all groups taking turns to present their reports to the class.

The target structure, third-person masculine object pronoun, was expected to come naturally from the students' part during the task since students were required to give arguments to support their decision for choosing a place over the others. The verbs needed to reach an agreement were expected to trigger the target structure. In addition,

the output in students' reports would become very repetitive if students did not use the target structure.

After closely analyzing the number of times that participants of the pilot study produced the target structure in their outputs, it can be determined that students used the third person masculine object pronoun a total of twenty-two times: five times group 1, ten times group 2, and seven times group 3, as shown on the table below:

Table 1: Pilot study result

	# of uses of the target structure
<b>Group 1</b>	5
<b>Group 2</b>	10
<b>Group 3</b>	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>

It is essential to highlight that the target structure was only once used in the wrong context by the students. Furthermore, there were only two occasions where students could have used the target structure, but they did not use it. It is also noteworthy to mention that although students made many different grammatical mistakes, there were almost no errors related to the target structure.

In the post-task portion, the instructor determined that no explicit explanation was needed for the third-person singular direct object structure. The students were expected to use the target structure correctly in context through the task in order to be positively assessed, which was supported by the result.

The pilot study, however, left significant room for improvement. The most important issue was the fact that formulaic expressions containing the target structure had not been separated from those instances of actual use of the target structure in context. A formulaic expression refers to a fixed linguistic formulation that is learned as a chunk (i.e., *lo siento*). This should be a matter of concern in the actual study since out of those 22 instances of the target structure, 12 were formulaic expressions such as: *lo siento*, *no lo sé*, or *me gusta* ('I am sorry', 'I do not know', and 'I like it respectively').

Table 2: Difference between formulaic expressions that contain the target structure and actual use of the target structure

	# of formulaic expressions that contain the target structure	# Actual use of the target structure
Group 1	3	2
Group 2	4	6
Group 3	5	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>

In addition, students did not have enough independence during the post-task phase since the instructor sometimes modeled the use of the target structure for the students in the questions that were asked. Therefore, it was not surprising that students answered using the model that was just provided.

Hence, in the actual study, a distinction between formulaic chunks and actual use of the target language should be made, and students should be expected to produce language spontaneously (without prompting or answering guided questions by the instructor).

With the pilot having confirmed the feasibility of the experimental design, some changes and adaptations were made to the actual study, and a considerably larger participant group was selected for the full-scale study.

## **2. TBLT modules**

Taking all the literature review and the pilot study into account, the experimental study will consist of a total of 6 modules/tasks that will be embedded in the online TBLT module along with some cultural information related to the topic of each task. The more important tenets considered in the creation of the tasks and that can be considered as the answer to RQ #1 are the following (See Norris 2009; Samuda & Bygate 2008; Van den Branden 2006):

1. Focus is always on meaning: even if the goal is the development and acquisition of the direct and indirect object pronouns, the learning must occur in an incidental way, and the target structures must be elicited implicitly, and as a consequence of working on a task.

2. Inclusion of a clear goal: each task must trigger a clear communicative purpose that must be fulfilled through some gap in information, reason, and/or personal opinion. An outcome must result from the task completion. The outcome can be the successful completion of the task (such as an application to a Spanish-speaking university, a dentist's appointment, etc.) or a piece of information that results from the task (such as an oral or written composition or dialogue).

3. The learner must be placed at the center of the learning process: the learners' interests must be addressed by the task. Students need to feel interested in the task at

stake because they can relate to it somehow. To achieve that, the instructor will reject general and uninformed tasks that are not useful in the students' life.

4. A holistic approach should be selected: a task reflects real-world processes of language use, which are characterized by integrating form, function, and meaning altogether. Hence, these elements should not be presented in an isolated form, but organically combined instead.

5. Reflective learning: while a task must offer learning *by doing*, it must also involve opportunities for reflecting, ordering ideas, and/or reaching a consensus. Each task will include, at least, one of the following options: a) information-gap, b) reasoning gap, and/or c) opinion gap.

Information gap activities within a task deal with requesting information, asking for clarification, and negotiating for meaning. Reasoning gap activities within a task require using reason and logic to decide what information to convey and what resolution to make for the problem at stake. Finally, opinion gap activities within a task deal with discussing, defending, and reaching an agreement among the participants in the task.

This study will also adopt the task-based-language framework proposed by Willis (1996): the pre-task, the task cycle, and the post-task (or language focus). The pre-task gives a quick introduction to the topic, which is to be explored by the students. It usually includes a short warm-up activity. The teacher helps the students to understand the theme and objectives of the task. Some vocabulary may also be presented through schemata activation. The pre-task is followed by the task itself, also known as the task cycle (Willis, 1996).



The task cycle can be seen as the main task and consists of the execution phase, which entails planning, and the actual report phase. Most importantly, it contains a learning process of planning, drafting, and rehearsing (Willis, 1996: 58). During the planning phase, each participant in the task should discuss and work together to prepare their presentation. During the report phase, students present their findings, exchange written reports or discuss, and ultimately compare their outcomes (Willis, 1996).

After students present their outcomes, some feedback may be given in the post-task phase. This part of the task can be used as language focus and it is optional depending on the needs of students. If necessary, students will have the opportunity to analyze what they said, and practice their skills. By analyzing their use of language, students will be able to repeat their performance, reflect on their progress, and pay attention to form (Ellis, 2009). All of these things will lead to *noticing*, and, consequently, language development (Schmidt, 1990).

The 6 tasks included in this study will be part of the online TBLT module called *Tarea Viva* (“task alive”) that was created by the researcher of this study. The topics of each task are in line with the contents of the textbook that is used in each Spanish 2 course at UCSB (Lopez-Burton, N; Marques Pascual, L.; Pardo Ballester, C; 2019). Before each task, students will have read and studied the grammatical explanation of the underlying implicit target structure of the task. Additionally, the instructor will explain the dynamics of the tasks beforehand.

Students will work in small groups of 4-5 students. Participants will take on different roles when managing group work. There will be a leader in each group, who will be in

charge of communicating with the teacher and monitoring communication among group members.

The whole group needs to determine the time when they will meet to complete each task, which will allow students to have autonomy on an optimal schedule to complete the task. This should facilitate the progress of the task itself since students would strive to find an hour when every member of the group is available. Students will notify the instructor of the times in which they will meet so that the instructor can make herself available for students who may request her help during the task. The post-task phase, however, will potentially take place in the established set time for the online class with the instructor.

Below, a description of each one of the 6 tasks can be found:

**Task 1: En el dentista** (*In the dentist's office*)

**Type of Task:** Information gap and opinion task.

**Focus:** FonF. The focus is on meaning, communicating in a real-life-like task.

**Implicit target structure:** First, second, and third direct object pronouns.

**Objective:** To recreate a real-world dentist appointment in Spanish.

**Interaction Pattern:** *Pre-task:* individual and in groups; *Task cycle:* in groups.

The day before Task 1 takes place, students will have studied the target grammar structures: first, second, and third-person direct object pronouns at home. They will have read the grammar information in the online textbook for this target structure and

completed some interactive online activities, following the normal sequence of the Spanish 2 course at UCSB.

The pre-task of Task 1 will consist of, first, a dialogue between a dentist and a patient that students will need to listen to individually. Then students will think of possible issues that may arise in a dentist appointment and write them down in the Google document. Students are allowed to use the dictionary for this portion.

When students meet in their groups, they will have to do the pre-task again, this time in collaboration. The goal to have them do the pre-task on their own previously has to do with activating their schemata and letting them think before they work in their groups. This way, they are more prepared to have an informed discussion and solve the activity when they are with their groups.

Image 3: Pre-task Task 1

**Tarea 1: En el dentista**

**Pre-Tarea**  
El dentista es necesario para cuidar la salud de nuestros dientes. Escucha este dialogo de un ejemplo de una cita en el dentista. Después piensa en problemas que pueden ocurrir cuando una persona va al dentista. Escribe en el documento de Google varios problemas. Puedes buscar las traducciones al español en wordreference.

**Cultura Viva:**  
Los hispanos visitan al dentista menos que cualquier otro grupo étnico. Algunas de las barreras que enfrentan incluyen tasas más bajas de cobertura de seguro médico, alto costo del tratamiento dental, largos tiempos de espera y barreras idiomáticas

The task cycle of Task 1 will involve the recreation of a dentist appointment. In each group, the leader will assign different roles to each participant. There will be a receptionist, a dental patient, a dentist, and a scribe. The receptionist will be given a calendar with the available slots for clients and the dental patient will also be given an agenda with his/her availability and a list of dental problems he can pretend to have. Hence, the task cycle has an information gap component. This is why this task is considered an information gap task.

Through online collaboration, students need to represent a Spanish dentist office setting where the dialogue between a patient and a receptionist will take place. Then, students will also represent a real-world dialogue between the dental patient and the dentist. The scribe will be in charge of taking notes of both dialogues and suggesting ideas.

The third step of Task 1 will be implemented in the established Zoom class with the instructor. Each group will represent their task for the whole class. Each group will meet after all the representations and decide what group they think did the best representation, give their reasons, and vote for them. This is why this task is also an opinion task, apart from an information-gap task. The instructor will give a symbolic prize to the winning group.

The target structure is expected to come naturally from the students' part since the verbs normally used in this kind of setting tend to be transitive verbs that will trigger the use of the target structure, such as: *Tener un día disponible/ocupado* ('To have an available/busy day'); *Visitar a un dentista* ('To visit a dentist'); etc.

Image 4: Task cycle Task 1



**Tarea Paso 1**

En cada grupo, tienen que imaginar lo que un paciente puede decir al dentista, al recepcionista y estos al paciente:  
 1) empecien por la llamada para concertar la cita. Un estudiante debe ser el recepcionista y el otro el paciente. Deben ponerse de acuerdo para encontrar una cita disponible. Otro miembro del grupo será el escritor y debe escribir lo que pase en la interacción.  
**El líder must record the planning and conversations.**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

**Paso 2:** Piensen en el encuentro en la consulta. Un estudiante es el paciente, otro estudiante es el dentista. Deben planear y reproducir la conversación entre ellos. Otro miembro del grupo será el escritor y debe escribir lo que pase en la interacción.  
**El líder must record the planning and conversations.**

**Paso 3:** La clase debe ver una de las interacciones entre dentista o recepcionista y cliente. Todos los estudiantes deben evaluar la interacción de cada grupo y elegir al dentista/ recepcionista y cliente perfectos. Los ganadores del grupo van a recibir *gift cards*.

## Task 2: Entrevista de trabajo (*Job interview*)

**Type of Task:** Reasoning and opinion task.

**Focus:** FonF. The focus is on meaning, communicating in a real-life-like task.

**Implicit target structure:** First, second, and third direct object pronouns.

**Objective:** To find an ideal boss or job candidate in Spanish.

**Interaction Pattern:** *Pre-task:* individual and in groups; *Task cycle:* in groups.

The day before Task 2 takes place, students will have re-read the target grammar structures: *first, second, and third person direct object pronouns* and completed some interactive online activities, following the normal sequence of the Spanish 2 course at UCSB.

The pre-task of Task 2 will include some preparation beforehand from the instructor's part since students will be assigned a role: bosses and/or job seekers. Those with the role of boss will have to think individually about their ideal job candidate to work for their potential business, the income that they offer for that position, the job schedule for the candidate, the responsibilities of the position, and the experience needed to be hired. On the other hand, those with the role of job seekers will have to think about their ideal job, their best traits as a job candidate, their education/experience, and the reasons why they deserve to be hired. All students will take note of these ideas before the task cycle takes place.

Image 5: Pre-task Task 2

**Tarea 2: Entrevista de trabajo (tarea)**

**Pre-Tarea**  
La mitad del grupo son jefes y la otra mitad buscan trabajo. Deben trabajar en las siguientes cuestiones en su cuaderno dependiendo de si son jefes o buscadores de trabajo.

**Cultura Viva:**  
Errores comunes en las entrevistas de trabajo en el mundo hispano:  
**Inquietud en la silla:** mantén la calma, sin moverte.  
**Sonrisa:** es bueno sonreír si la situación lo requiere.  
**Contacto visual:** Mira a tu interlocutor.  
**Mirar el móvil:** no mires tu teléfono.

**JEFES**

1. Inventa un negocio
2. Piensa que tipo de candidato necesitas para tu negocio
3. Qué sueldo ofreces
4. Horario del trabajo
5. Responsabilidades del trabajo
6. Experiencia necesaria

**BUSCADOR TRABAJO**

1. Tu trabajo ideal
2. Tus mejores características
3. Tu experiencia
4. Tus estudios
5. Por qué mereces (deserve) el trabajo

You will need to work with your group over Zoom. There will be 2 jefes and 2 buscadores the trabajo in each group. Each jefe needs to find their ideal candidate. There will be a leader. The leader of each group should create a Zoom/Skype with ALL the members of the group and complete this activity. The Zoom must be recorded (maximum 20 min meeting).

The task cycle of Task 2 will involve the recreation of real-world job interviews. Some ideas for the questions that bosses should ask job seekers and vice versa will be facilitated by the instructor as a guide, but students are free to ask whatever they want when they are engaged in conversation.

The second and third steps of the task cycle will require students to decide who was their ideal boss or job candidate and they will write a report giving the specific reasons and their opinions for taking that decision. This is considered a reasoning and opinion task because students will use reason, logic and opinion to make a decision. Then, they will have to read other group members' reports and react to them.

The target structure, Spanish direct object pronouns, is not stated anywhere but it is expected to be triggered naturally since most of the verbs asked in a job interview are transitive verbs, for example: *¿Eres un jefe razonable?* ('Are you a reasonable boss?'), in Spanish, this may be answered with a direct object pronoun: *Sí lo soy*); *¿Pagas un buen sueldo?* ('Do you offer good money for this position?'); *¿Aceptas trabajar en el fin de semana?* ('Do you accept working on weekends?').

Image 6: Task cycle Task 2

**Tarea Paso 1**

Dos Jefes y dos buscadores de trabajo deben tener entrevistas. En el Zoom, deberán preguntarse las siguientes preguntas. Ejemplo: - ¿Tienen permiso (permit) de trabajo?



JEFES should ask...	Buscadores should ask...
1. ¿Tienes permiso de trabajo en los Estados Unidos?	1. ¿Eres un jefe razonable?
2. ¿Tienes licencia de conducir?	2. ¿Pagas un buen sueldo?
3. ¿Qué estudios tienes?	3. ¿Exigies mucha experiencia previa?
4. ¿Qué experiencia laboral tienes?	4. ¿Necesito estudios universitarios?
5. ¿Aceptas trabajar fines de semana?	5. ¿Permites días libres (free days)?
6. ¿Abandonas tu trabajo cuando hay un problema?	6. ¿Demandas muchas horas de trabajo diario?
7. ¿Consideras que eres responsable?	7. ¿Festejas los días religiosos?
8. ¿Exigies un aumento de sueldo?	8. ¿Puedo vestir informal?
9. ¿Vistes ropa formal?	9. ¿Tienes buenas reseñas en Yelp?
10. ¿Por qué mereces el trabajo?	10. ¿Merezco (deserve) el trabajo?

**Paso 2:** En el Google doc, escribe un breve reporte explicando quién es tu jefe o buscador ideal de los dos de tu grupo y por qué lo es.



**Paso 3:** Lee todos los reportes de los otros grupos el Google doc y reacciona añadiendo *feedback* en comentarios.

Arriba

← Tarea previa      Siguiete tarea →

### Task 3: Un familiar lejano (*A extended family member*)

**Type of Task:** Opinion task.

**Focus:** FonF. The focus is on meaning, communicating in a real-life-like task.

**Implicit target structure:** First, second, and third direct object pronouns.

**Objective:** To write an email, and to find the most endearing family of each group.



**Interaction Pattern:** *Pre-task:* in groups; *Task cycle:* in groups.


By the time students have to complete Task 3, they will have already read about the target grammar structures: *first, second, and third person direct object pronouns* several times at home, and have completed several online activities following the normal sequence of the Spanish 2 course at UCSB.

The pre-task of Task 3 will require students to work in groups from the beginning phase. The prompt shows a letter from an extended family member, a secret sister of their grandmother. The letter gives information about this new family member and asks questions at the same time. Students need to work in their groups and come up with a fictional family that includes all the members of the group (including their relationship with each one of them and with other family members, etc.) Next, students will have to respond to the letter in the same way as they would do in real-life by reaching a consensus on what information to provide.

Image 7: pre-task Task 3

**Tarea 3: Un familiar lejano** (tarea)


**Pre-Tarea**  
Ana es una hermana secreta de tu abuela materna y encontró tu correo electrónico (email) y te escribió para saber más cosas sobre ti. Con la ayuda de tu grupo debes contestarle al correo electrónico respondiendo sus preguntas. Escribe tu respuesta en el documento de Google (Un correo electrónico por grupo).



**Cultura Viva:**  
La familia es muy importante en la cultura hispana. La mayoría de personas la ponen como su prioridad número 1.  
  
Las familias son generalmente más grandes que en los Estados Unidos, ya que los hispanos tienen relación con familiares lejanos, la familia extensa.

Hola prim@. Soy Ana, la hermana secreta de tu abuela. ¿Me conoces? Yo a ti te conocí hace mucho tiempo, cuando eras un niño. Te extraño. Quiero saber más de nuestra familia. Por favor, ¿me ayudas con estas preguntas?:  
¿Recuerdas a tu bisabuela Antonia? Soy su hermana secreta. Mis padres me abandonaron hace muchos años. ¿Tú tienes hermanos? ¿Ves al Tito Roberto frecuentemente? Yo no lo veo desde hace mucho tiempo, pero sé que vive en Texas con tu tía Adela. ¿Conoces al primo Raimundo? Es un famoso jugador de fútbol en Uruguay. Yo lo visité el verano pasado. Cuéntame cosas sobre ti y nos conocemos mejor.

**P.S. Te invito a mi fiesta de cumpleaños el viernes. ¿Quieres venir?**  
[Google document here](#)



The task cycle of Task 3 will invite students to talk about their own families in their groups (they can decide if they actually want to talk about their real-world family members or fictional family members that they may invent). Few questions will be facilitated by the instructor in order to get information from each group member about their family. However, students can feel free to ask any other questions and omit the ones facilitated by the instructor. Students will have a conversation about their own families at the same time that they pay close attention to what their classmates say about theirs.

The final step of the task cycle will ask students to reach an agreement within their group and decide what group member has the most endearing family. They will need to decide together by giving enough reasons with examples. Once they have reached an agreement, they will have to present their results to the whole class. The fact that students must deliberate over which family is the most endearing makes this an opinion task.

The target structure is expected to come naturally from the students' part since the verbs needed to ask about family members trigger the use of direct object pronouns. For example: *¿Tienes buena relación con tu familia?* ('Do you have a good relationship with your family?'; in Spanish this structure triggers a direct object pronoun: *Sí **la** tengo*; *¿Ves a tus padres recientemente?* ('Do you see your parents often?'). The answers to the questions would become excessively repetitive if students did not use the target structure.

Image 8: Task cycle Task 3



**Tarea Paso 1**

Prepara una pequeña composición (50-100 palabras) para presentar a los miembros de tu familia a tu grupo. Incluye detalles importantes de tu familia similares a los de la carta de Ana. Después, compartela [aquí](#).



**Paso 2:** Ahora es el momento de saber más sobre la vida de tu compañero/a. Deben contestar las siguientes preguntas todos los miembros de tu grupo en turnos en Zoom. El líder debe grabar la tarea entera (20 min approx):

**Preguntas**

1. ¿Ves a toda tu familia con frecuencia?
2. ¿Tienes buena relación con tus primos?
3. ¿Conoces a todos los miembros de tu familia extensa?
4. ¿Visitás a tus padres frecuentemente?
5. ¿Llamas a tus padres semanalmente?
6. ¿Demandas muchas horas de trabajo diario?

**Paso 3:** El grupo debe ponerse de acuerdo (reach an agreement) y elegir a la persona del grupo que tiene la familia más entrañable (*endearing*) en la reunión de Zoom.

#### **Task 4: La boda perfecta** (*The perfect wedding*)

**Type of Task:** Reasoning and opinion task.

**Focus:** FonF. The focus is on meaning, communicating in a real-life-like task.

**Implicit target structure:** First, second, and third indirect object pronouns.

**Objective:** To try to design the class's ideal wedding in Spanish.

**Interaction Pattern:** *Pre-task:* individual and in groups; *Task cycle:* in groups.

The day before Task 4 takes place, students will have studied the target grammar structures: *first, second, and third person indirect object pronouns* at home. They will have read the grammar information in the textbook for this target structure and completed some interactive online activities, following the normal sequence of the Spanish 2 course at UCSB, following the normal sequence of the Spanish 2 course at UCSB.

The Pre-task of Task 4 will first consist of an audio that students will need to listen to individually. The audio will be about a woman that is about to get married. She will provide some information about her upcoming wedding. The target structure will be present in the audio but no explicit reference to this structure will be made. Students will need to take notes of the elements of the wedding that they like and the ones they dislike.

When students meet in their groups, they will have to do the pre-task again. This time, cooperatively. This way, they will have ideas in mind to share with their peers.

**Tarea 4: La boda perfecta** *(en clase)*

**Pre-Tarea Paso 1:**  
Van a escuchar el audio sobre la boda de Sandra. Deben tomar notas sobre las cosas de la boda de Sandra que les gusta también para su boda y las que no.

**Cultura Viva:**  
Algo común en todos los países latinos es que el día de la boda, la novia utilice algo viejo, algo nuevo, algo usado y algo azul.

**Script:**  
Me caso con mi (futuro) esposo este sábado. ¡Estoy muy contenta! ¡Me han hecho muchos regalos! Mis suegros, los padres de mi esposo, nos pagan el banquete. Le han dicho a mi esposo que lo hacen por ser tan buen hijo. Mi esposo me pone el anillo de bodas este sábado. ¡Qué emoción! Mi mamá me ha dicho que en el banquete nos hace un brindis especial por nuestro amor. ¡Qué romántico! Toda mi familia está muy contenta y nos dicen "felicidades" todos los días. Yo les digo que muchas gracias. Ellos siempre nos ofrecen regalos para nuestra casa nueva.

**Paso 2:** Habla con tu grupo sobre qué piensas de la boda de Sandra.

The task cycle of Task 4 will require students to picture their ideal wedding. The leader will be in charge of assigning roles to each one of the participants. In this scenario, two people will get married, another student will be the scribe and will report significant discussion points in the planning of the wedding as well as making contributions to it. In addition, another student will be the wedding planner and, apart from contributing to the planning, will create a Powerpoint presentation with the wedding plan.

Students will be given a list of items that they might cover in a discussion such as wedding location, budget, guests, presents, and who does what in the celebration. However, they can feel free to omit some of these suggested items and include others. Students need to request information from each other, ask for clarification, and negotiate

for meaning in order to design the perfect wedding. This is considered a reasoning task because students need to use reason to design a wedding that goes in line with their ideal wedding and their classmates' ideal wedding.

The second and third steps of Task 4 will be implemented in the established Zoom class. Each group will have a written report and a Powerpoint presentation that they will share with the rest of the class. Each group will meet after all of the presentations and decide which wedding they thought was the best. This is what makes this task an opinion one (in addition to a reasoning task). The best wedding will be recognized.

The target structure is expected to come naturally during the task because some of the verbs that may appear in conversation should trigger the indirect object pronouns. For example: *¿Quién les paga el banquete a los novios?*; ('Who pays the celebration (for them)?'); *¿Quién les saca las fotos?* (*who takes the pictures for them?*).

Image 10: Task cycle Task 4

**Tarea Paso 1:**  
Imaginen que dos de ustedes se casan ¿cómo quieren su boda?. Con su grupo tienen que crear su boda ideal. Deben pensar en todos los detalles. Deben escribir un reporte de cómo es la boda ideal para ustedes. Recuerden contestar a estas preguntas:

- 1) ¿De quién es la boda?
- 2) ¿Dónde es la boda?
- 3) ¿Quién va a la boda?
- 4) ¿Quién paga el banquete? ¿Qué comida hay?
- 5) ¿Quién saca las fotos?
- 6) ¿Quién pone el anillo de bodas?
- 7) ¿Quién viste a la novia? ¿Cómo van vestidos?
- 8) ¿Quién besa a la novia?

Añade más detalles.  
Completa la tarea en el documento de Google [aquí](#).

**Paso 2:** Cada grupo debe presentar el reporte a la clase con todos los detalles de la boda. Deben escuchar atentamente las bodas ideales de los demás grupos.

**Paso 3:** Cada grupo votará la boda que le guste más de sus compañeros. Deben ponerse de acuerdo en qué boda es la mejor.

Arriba

### **Task 5: Universidad en España** (*University in Spain*)

**Type of Task:** Reasoning and opinion task.

**Focus:** FonF. The focus is on meaning, communicating through a real-life-like task.

**Implicit target structure:** First, second, and third indirect object pronouns.

**Objective:** To be able to write a statement of purpose and cover letter in Spanish.

**Interaction Pattern:** *Pre-task:* individual and in groups; *Task cycle:* in groups.

The day before Task 5 takes place, students will have reread the target grammar structures: *first, second, and third person indirect object pronouns* at home. The students will read the grammar information in the textbook for this target structure and complete online activities that also cover it, following the normal sequence of the Spanish 2 course at UCSB.

The pre-task of Task 5 will require students to research graduate programs of a Spanish masters' degree that five different universities in Spain offer. Students will need to explore the graduate programs in depth (including the list of courses, the faculty in the Spanish departments, duration of the program, etc.), and rank the five universities from best to worst (where #1 is their most favorite and #5 the least favorite). When students meet in their groups, they will have to talk about their personal ranking and thoughts about each program and university.

Image 11: Pre-task Task 5

**Tarea 5: Universidad en España**

**Pre-Tarea (Individual)**  
Abajo tienes una lista de 5 universidades españolas donde puedes estudiar un máster de español. Lee bien los programas de cada universidad, anota cosas que te parecen interesantes y haz un ranking del 1 al 5, donde 1 es tu universidad favorita, y 5 es la universidad que menos te gusta.



**Máster de Español**

- Universidad de Salamanca
- Universidad de Alicante
- Universidad de Valencia
- Universidad de Madrid
- Universidad de Barcelona

During the task cycle of Task 5 students will be given extra information about the cities where each university is (location, major tourist attractions, etc.). Students will need to converse in their groups and attempt to decide together which program is the best by considering all the factors together: graduate program, faculty, location, attractions of each city, etc. This is considered an opinion task because students need to reach a consensus.

Next, the whole group will write a statement of purpose and a cover letter to apply to the graduate program that they have chosen. The leader will make sure that everyone in the group contributes to develop a strong statement of purpose and good cover letter.

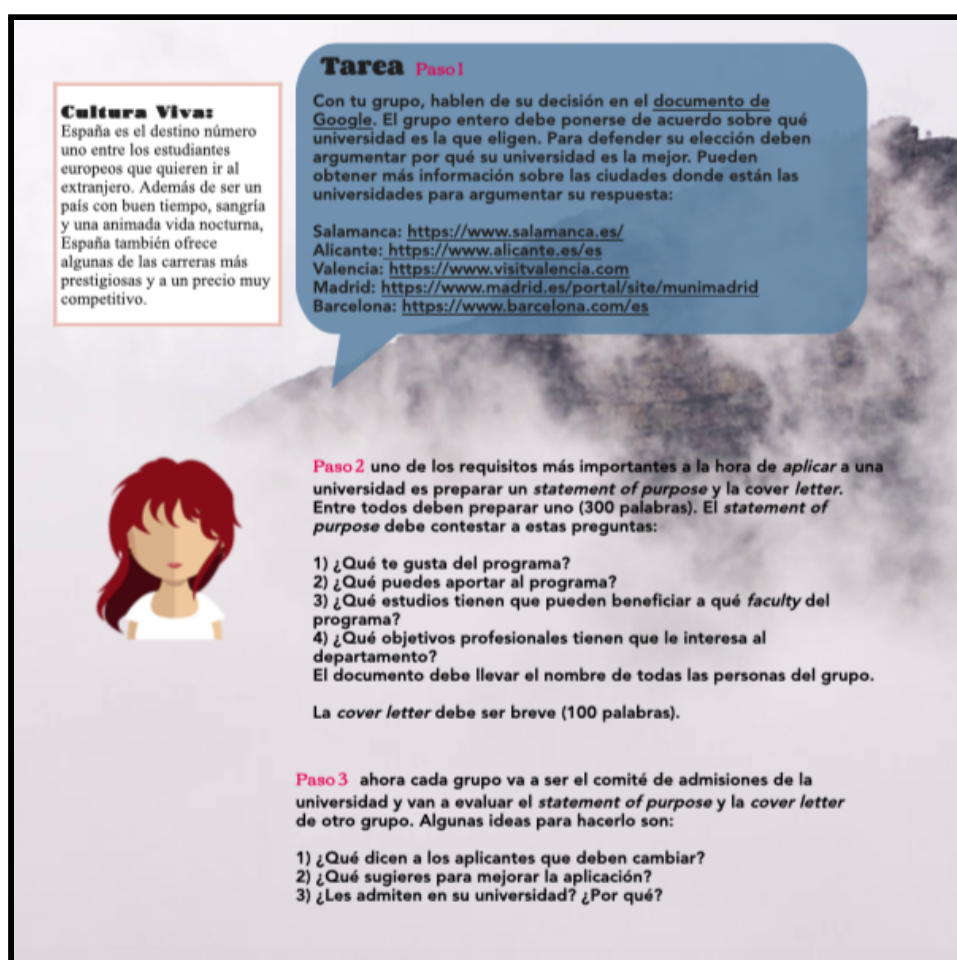
The third step of the task cycle of Task 5 will require each group to act as the committee of a graduate program and read the statement of purposes and cover letters of the rest of the groups in the class. Each group will need to reach a decision and decide which group



statement of purpose and cover letter are their favorites and, as a result, accept them into their graduate program. Some ideas to be considered will be suggested, but students can decide the criteria they will use to make their decisions. Students should use reason to navigate which applicants are the best. That is why this task is also a reasoning task.

The target structure is expected to come naturally during the task because some of the verbs that may be involved when students have to reach a consensus need the indirect object pronoun. For example: *Decirle algo a alguien* ('To say something to someone'); *Sugerirle algo a alguien* ('To suggest something to someone'); or *Contribuir al programa* ('To contribute to the program').

Image 12: Task cycle Task 5



**Cultura Viva:**  
España es el destino número uno entre los estudiantes europeos que quieren ir al extranjero. Además de ser un país con buen tiempo, sangría y una animada vida nocturna, España también ofrece algunas de las carreras más prestigiosas y a un precio muy competitivo.

**Tarea Paso 1**  
Con tu grupo, hablen de su decisión en el documento de Google. El grupo entero debe ponerse de acuerdo sobre qué universidad es la que eligen. Para defender su elección deben argumentar por qué su universidad es la mejor. Pueden obtener más información sobre las ciudades donde están las universidades para argumentar su respuesta:  
Salamanca: <https://www.salamanca.es/>  
Alicante: <https://www.alicante.es/es>  
Valencia: <https://www.visitvalencia.com>  
Madrid: <https://www.madrid.es/portal/site/munimadrid>  
Barcelona: <https://www.barcelona.com/es>

**Paso 2** uno de los requisitos más importantes a la hora de *aplicar* a una universidad es preparar un *statement of purpose* y la *cover letter*. Entre todos deben preparar uno (300 palabras). El *statement of purpose* debe contestar a estas preguntas:

- 1) ¿Qué te gusta del programa?
- 2) ¿Qué puedes aportar al programa?
- 3) ¿Qué estudios tienen que pueden beneficiar a qué *faculty* del programa?
- 4) ¿Qué objetivos profesionales tienen que le interesa al departamento?

El documento debe llevar el nombre de todas las personas del grupo.  
La *cover letter* debe ser breve (100 palabras).

**Paso 3** ahora cada grupo va a ser el comité de admisiones de la universidad y van a evaluar el *statement of purpose* y la *cover letter* de otro grupo. Algunas ideas para hacerlo son:

- 1) ¿Qué dicen a los aplicantes que deben cambiar?
- 2) ¿Qué sugieres para mejorar la aplicación?
- 3) ¿Les admiten en su universidad? ¿Por qué?

### **Task 6: Fiesta para la clase** (*Class party*)

**Type of Task:** Information-gap and opinion task.

**Focus:** FonF. The focus is on meaning, communicating in a real-life task.

**Implicit target structure:** First, second, and third indirect object pronouns.

**Objective:** To design the best class party in Spanish.

**Interaction Pattern:** *Pre-task:* individual and in groups; *Task cycle:* in groups.

By the time students have to complete Task 6, they will have already read about the target grammar structures: *first, second, and third person indirect object pronouns* several times and completed several online activities, following the normal sequence of the Spanish 2 course.

The pre-task of Task 6 will first consist of an audio that students will need to listen to individually. The audio will be about the instructor's wish to have a class party. She will provide some information about what she likes to find in a party. The target structure will be present in the audio but no explicit reference to it will be made. Students will need to take notes of the information given in the audio and think of, at least, three characteristics that they would want the party to have. When students meet in their groups, they will have to do the pre-task again, and share their thoughts in their groups.

Image 13: Pre-task Task 6

The image shows a digital task interface for 'Tarea 6: Fiesta para la Clase'. At the top, a blue banner contains the title. Below it, there are two images: a woman in a graduation gown and a string of colorful triangular bunting. A blue speech bubble labeled 'Pre-Tarea' contains instructions in Spanish. To the left of the speech bubble is a cartoon illustration of a woman with red hair. Below the illustration is a white box with the heading 'Cultura Vivas' and a paragraph of text. To the right of the speech bubble is a pink box with the heading 'La fiesta debe tener:' and a list of items. Below that is a yellow box with the heading 'Grupos de trabajo' and four lines of text, each with a link.

**Tarea 6: Fiesta para la Clase** (tarea)

**Pre-Tarea**  
La instructora Alexandra quiere celebrar una fiesta de graduación para todos los estudiantes. Escucha el audio donde Alexandra habla de la fiesta. Después, piensa dónde quieres celebrar la fiesta y qué elementos debe tener para ser divertida. Escribe al menos 3 cosas como:

**Cultura Vivas:**  
La fiesta de graduación es muy importante en la cultura hispana. Es el momento en el que los estudiantes graduados y sus amigos festejan juntos. La comida típica es hispana y la bebida común es la sangría.

**La fiesta debe tener:**  
música,  
comida,  
juegos de mesa...

**Grupos de trabajo**  
Grupo A: [Pre-Task here](#)  
Grupo B: [Pre-Task here](#)  
Grupo C: [Pre-Task here](#)  
Grupo D: [Pre-Task here](#)

The task-cycle of Task 6 will require students to try to plan the best class party. Students will be given a list of elements that they can address (time, location, party assignments, etc.). However, these elements are only suggestions and students can be creative with other ideas. The students need to work together and think of what components of the party will feature and assign members to coordinate these roles. This is an information gap task because students need to request information from each other (i.e. ‘what do you like doing the most?’), ask for clarification, and negotiate for meaning.

The second and third steps of Task 6 will be implemented in the normal Zoom class with the instructor. Each group will have a Powerpoint presentation that they will show to the rest of the class with the description of the party that they have designed. Each group

will meet after all the representations and decide what party they think is the best and vote for them. This is why this task is an opinion task (rather than an information gap task). The best party of the class will be recognized as the winner.

The target structure is expected to come naturally during the task. Some of the verbs that may be involved when students decide what tasks will be assigned to each of them may require the target structure. For example: *Quien le sirve la comida a quien* ('Who serves the food to whom'); *Quien ofrece bebida* ('Who offers drinks to whom'); or *Quien da regalos a quien* ('Who gives presents to whom').

Image 14: Task cycle Task 6



Con tu grupo planea la fiesta de graduación para la clase. Deben ponerse de acuerdo en el lugar y pensar en qué elementos son importantes en la fiesta y en la repartición de tareas. Para ello, deben reunirse en Zoom. El líder debe grabar la tarea entera (20 min apr y contestar estas preguntas:

- 1) Día, mes y hora de la fiesta. ¿Dónde es la fiesta?
- 2) ¿A quién envían las invitaciones de la fiesta?
- 3) ¿Quién da las instrucciones de la fiesta? ¿A quién damos las instrucciones de la fiesta?
- 4) ¿Hay que llevar regalos? ¿A quién hay que darle regalos?
- 5) ¿Hay comida? ¿Quién sirve la comida a los invitados?
- 6) ¿Hay bebida? ¿Quién ofrece la bebida a los invitados?

**Paso 2 (en clase):** Cada grupo va a crear una presentación Powerpoint con imágenes explicando los detalles de su fiesta.

Arriba

The slide features a light blue background with a boat at the bottom. On the left, there is a cartoon illustration of a woman with red hair and a circular inset photo of a woman with dark hair. On the right, there is a photograph of a social gathering with green lights. A speech bubble contains the main text and a list of six questions. A button labeled 'Arriba' is located at the bottom right.

### III. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO ANSWER RQ #2 & #3

#### 1. Sample

Before the study took place, students had to fill a pre-questionnaire that included demographic and linguistic questions such as age, gender, country of birth, first language (L1), their knowledge of other languages, and current level of Spanish, etc.

The study was performed with a total of 41 students enrolled in two different Spanish 2 classes in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at UCSB. The participant pool consisted of two different groups: out of those 41 participants, 19 were in the experimental group (Winter 2021), and 22 were in the control group (Spring 2021). 27 of these participants were female with 14 females in the experimental group and 13 in the control group. Out of those 41 participants, 13 were male with 5 males in the experimental group and 8 in the control group. The median age of the participants was 20 years old, and all of these participants considered English to be their native language. 1 participant in the experimental group listed English and French as their native languages. This participant's results were excluded from the data set since French and Spanish direct object pronouns share some similarities in the structure and use of the target structures of this study.

None of these students indicated that they had lived in a Spanish-speaking country before, although 4 of them had traveled to Spain or other Spanish-speaking countries as tourists on shorter trips. It was reasonable to assume that participants who had traveled to Spanish-speaking countries before, despite their short time in these countries, unlikely developed linguistic knowledge in such a complicated structure such as the Spanish direct and indirect object pronouns. Although these participants could potentially have heard the

target structures in context which could be studied separately from the main data set, they were still Spanish 2 students and their knowledge of the Spanish language was still at a fundamental level. None of the participants were heritage speakers of Spanish or had direct relatives whose first language was Spanish.

The majority of the participants (38) indicated that they did not speak any other language apart from English and basic Spanish. Without considering the excluded participant, there were other 2 students who had a basic knowledge of German and Irish respectively.

As for the instruction of Spanish that they had received in the past, all of the students claimed that they either took 2 to 3 years of basic Spanish in High School (34 students) and/or had taken Spanish 1 at UCSB (10 students). While the sample size of participants in both groups of this study is not large, they are a good representation of a sizable portion of the Spanish classes at UCSB.

## **2. Instruments**

To conduct this study, one experimental group and one control group of the same proficiency level and in the same course were chosen and exposed to the same instruction. Both groups were exposed to the exact same contents, same instructors, same activities, same online homework, etc.

The target grammatical structures were taught to the experimental group in the same way as they were taught to the control group. Both groups studied the target grammar structures on their own at home. No formal explicit explanation was provided in the online classroom. Participants of both groups read the grammar information in the

physical/online textbook for the target structures and completed some online activities, following the normal sequence of the Spanish 2 course at UCSB.

In the experimental group, the TBLT online module project presented in section II of this chapter was implemented. However, in the control group, a final project, normally implemented in any Spanish 2 course at UCSB, was chosen. Both projects required a similar amount of time. The purpose of this study was to find out whether there would be a significant difference in the use of the target grammar items between both groups.

The final project for the control group required students to create an account on *VoiceThread*, which is an interactive collaboration and sharing tool that enables students to build online presentations by adding images, documents, videos, and other media to which other users can add comments for discussion. Students in the control group created a *VoiceThread* presentation that included images, audio, text, and/or videos. Once students created the presentation and uploaded it to the learning management system for UCSB: *Gauchospace*, students were divided into groups of 4-5 students and had to add video comments to each slide of their group mates' presentations. The total length of their oral comments was around 3 minutes per slide. They were directed to never include their script in their slides. The order and organization of the information of each slide was up to each student. However, they were provided with the following guidelines in case they wanted to follow them:

- **SLIDE 1: *¿Quién eres y cuáles son tus intereses?***
- Introduce yourself (i.e. full name, age, nationality, etc.).
- Describe yourself and what are your interests.

- State your major, which classes you are taking, and your professional goals.
- Talk about what you want to do in the future.
- **SLIDE 2: *¿Cómo es tu ciudad?***
- Describe the city where you live, your neighborhood, and your house.
- Talk about directions, describe how you get from your house to places.
- Talk about the weather in your city, describe the seasons and the temperatures.
- **SLIDE 3: *¿Cómo se celebran las fiestas en tu familia?***
- Describe the type of music you like to listen to, and the dances you like.
- Talk about the parties and celebrations in your family, describe your traditions.
- Describe your favorite celebration, mentioning music, dance, food, and presents.
- **SLIDE 4: *¿Quién es tu instructor(a)?***
- Describe what your instructor is like.
- State the day and time when you typically have your classes.
- Say where your instructor is from, their nationality, and where they live.
- Describe your instructor's academic interests.
- Describe her hobbies, interests, and daily routine.
- **SLIDE 5: *¿Cómo es la ciudad de tu instructor(a)?***
- State where they are from, city and country.

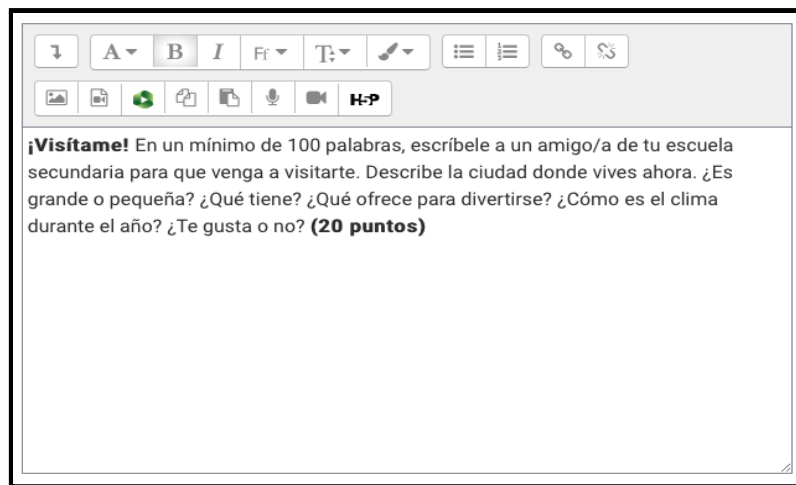


- What is their address?
- Describe their city and how it is different from yours.
- What are the most unique or popular places in their city?
- **SLIDE 6: *¿Cuáles son las fiestas favoritas de tu instructor(a)?***
- What kind of music does your instructor like? Do they like to dance?
- What are the typical styles of music and instruments from their country?
- What kind of holidays and traditions do they celebrate? What do they do on those?
- Are they married? Have they been to a wedding? How do they celebrate weddings?
- **SLIDE 7: *¿Cómo es el arte y la historia en tu país y el país de tu instructor(a)?***
- Describe what kind of art you prefer to see/hear/make.
- Does your instructor like art? Do they make any art?
- Are there any historical places in your city?
- Describe the historical sites in the city where your instructor lives.
- **SLIDE 8: *¿Quieres visitar? ¿Por qué?***
- Discuss if you want to visit your instructor and his/her city and country and why.
- Provide a reflection on your experience with your Spanish class.

In the same way that happened in the online TBLT module, some of the verbs used in the suggestions for the final project could potentially trigger the use of the direct and indirect object pronouns.

Apart from the online TBLT module (experimental group) and the final project (control group), there will be final exam activity that will serve to evaluate the use of direct and indirect object pronouns of both groups. The final exam activity will include a small composition of around 100 words. The prompt will ask students to write an email to an old friend who lives abroad. In the email, students will need to invite their friend to visit their respective cities. Students will need to provide a detailed description of their city such as its most interesting attractions, its dimensions, the fun things to do, the weather, etc. The goal of this activity is to see if students use the target structures, Spanish direct and indirect object pronouns, naturally without being directed to do it.

Image 15: Final exam activity for experimental and control groups



The image shows a digital writing interface with a toolbar at the top containing icons for undo, font color, bold, italic, font face, font size, text color, background color, bulleted list, numbered list, link, and unlink. Below the toolbar is a second row of icons for image, document, refresh, copy, paste, microphone, video, and a redaction tool. The main text area contains the following prompt: **¡Visítame!** En un mínimo de 100 palabras, escríbele a un amigo/a de tu escuela secundaria para que venga a visitarte. Describe la ciudad donde vives ahora. ¿Es grande o pequeña? ¿Qué tiene? ¿Qué ofrece para divertirse? ¿Cómo es el clima durante el año? ¿Te gusta o no? **(20 puntos)**

### 3. Data Collection

Participants were informed that they were participating in a study regarding their learning of some Spanish 2 content, but the specific target structures were not stated and

no explicit references to them were made. All subjects gave their informed consent to participate in the study in accordance with the Human Subjects guidelines at UCSB. The consent form (appendix....) explained the pertinent details of the project, its duration, and how data will be collected (by recording Zoom audio and video and retaining Google docs, final projects and final exam activities). The language used in the consent form was English since all participants of this research study were native English speakers. Participants were not compensated for their time since it was a component of the Spanish 2 course that they were already taking. Participants filled the pre-questionnaire, and those in the experimental group proceeded in small groups of 4-5 participants at their own pace throughout the experimental study. Participants were consistently given more time to complete the tasks than the expected time needed. On average the participants in the experimental group spent 45 minutes in each task, four hours and thirty minutes in the whole TBLT module. On the other hand, students in the control group spent an average of four hours and fifty minutes in completing the final project. Finally, participants in both groups, experimental and control, completed the final exam activity on *GauchosSpace*.

#### IV. HOW DATA WILL BE ANALYZED

As for the tasks/modules (experimental group), observations and analyses of the Zoom recordings, and google documents of students undertaking tasks will be used as the primary source or data within this thesis to identify the number of times that the target structure appears in the students' output. A very close repeated observation of each one of the Zoom meetings will be required in order to have an exact number of instances of the use of the target structures.

In the exact same way, repeated observations and analyses of the final project presentations (control group) will be conducted to have an exact number of the use of the target structures by each participant. By using observations of the students during online meetings, the data could show what students actually did, rather than relying on only what they said they did (Dörnyei, 2007). When the data is analyzed, the number of target structures, direct and indirect object pronouns in Spanish, will be divided into formulaic expressions/structures and actual 'free' uses. The instructor/researcher of this study will remain neutral throughout the whole process, and that data will be analyzed only after the final grades for the quarter have been submitted.

Statistical techniques such as mean, frequencies, percentage, one-way ANOVA variance analysis, and T-tests will also be used to analyze the statistical data. "SPSS 26.0" data analysis program will be used to make the calculations. While conducting statistical analyses, the cut-off value for significance will be accepted as  $p < 0.05$ .

As for the final exam activity, analyses of the number of times that the target structure appears in the students' written responses will be conducted and compared between both groups. Statistical techniques such as mean, standard deviation, and paired samples T-tests will also be used to analyze the statistical data. In the same way as before, "SPSS 26.0" data analysis program will be used to make the calculations. While conducting statistical analyses, the cut-off value for significance will be accepted as  $p < 0.05$ .

## V. CHAPTER SUMMARY

In Section II of this chapter, an answer to RQ 1, What are the characteristics that an online TBLT module needs to have in order to promote the acquisition of specific L2

grammatical structures?, was provided based on the tenets developed by Norris, 2009; Samuda & Bygate, 2008; Van den Branden, 2006; and the task-based language framework proposed by Willis (1996).

In order to provide an answer for RQ 2, How frequently are problematic grammatical structures, such as direct and indirect object pronouns, used by L2 learners of Spanish in an online TBLT module?, and 3, How frequently do the students in the experimental group use the target grammatical structures as compared to the students in the control group?, the following sequence was followed: upon completing the administration of the pre-questionnaire and subsequent implementation of the TBLT online module (experimental group) or final project (control group), tasks responses, final project presentations, and final exam activity responses were carefully analyzed for the number of times the target structures were identified in (1) formulaic utterances and (2) actual “free” usage by the learners. Once all the data was extracted, some statistical analysis was carried out with SPSS 26.0”. The results of this analysis are presented in Chapter 4.

## Chapter IV

### Results

#### I. INTRODUCTION

The fourth chapter of this dissertation provides answers to RQ 2 and 3: How frequently are problematic grammatical structures, such as direct and indirect object pronouns, used by L2 learners of Spanish in an online TBLT module? How frequently do the students in the experimental group use the target grammatical structures compared to the students in the control group? The first part of Section II answers RQ 2 through an analysis of the language production of the students in the experimental group during each of the six TBLT modules in the experimental study. The goal is to detect the number of times each participant produced the implicit target structures selected for each task: direct object pronouns for Tasks 1, 2, and 3 and indirect object pronouns for Tasks 4, 5, and 6. The second part of Section II answers RQ 3 by comparing the number of uses of the target structures produced by the students in the control group during the final project with the results of the experimental group. Similarly, the final exam activity responses of both experimental and control groups are analyzed to determine whether the students in the experimental group used the direct and indirect object pronouns in Spanish more or less than the students in the control group. The use of observational data (qualitative) enables the researcher to detect whether the uses of the target structures are pertinent in the context in which they were said or are a consequence of priming or imitation. Furthermore, all the analyses distinguish between the production of formulaic expressions that include the Spanish direct or indirect object pronouns, such as *lo siento* (“I am

sorry”) and *me gusta* (“I like it”), and free uses of the target structures. The reason for that distinction is that students could have already learned the formulaic expressions before performing the tasks. Section III briefly discusses what to consider when examining the data. Finally, Section IV summarizes the results.

## II. FINDINGS

In this study, six online TBLT tasks (detailed in Chapter III) were implemented in the Spanish 2 course assigned to the experimental group. Instead of the online TBLT tasks, a final project (detailed in Chapter III) was assigned to the control group. Subsequently, both the experimental and control groups undertook a final exam activity (also detailed in Chapter III). The participants in the experimental study were divided into four groups: A, B, C, and D at random. However, the number of participants varied between groups: Groups A and B had four students each, and Groups C and D had five students each. When the quarter had ended and grades were released, the performance of students in the experimental group was analyzed by identifying the number of times each participant had produced the Spanish direct and indirect object pronouns. A few months later, the outputs of the tasks were analyzed on two additional occasions to corroborate the results previously obtained. In the same way, the outputs of the final project the students in the control group submitted were analyzed on three occasions after the quarter had ended to detect instances of the target structures. Finally, the responses of the experimental and control groups in the final exam activity were analyzed by identifying the number of instances of the direct and indirect object pronouns for each participant.

## 1. Findings for RQ 2

The first part of this section presents the statistical results obtained regarding the use of Spanish direct and indirect object pronouns by the experimental group in each one of the six tasks of the online TBLT module. The results are reported below.

Table 1: Uses of the target structures in each task by each subgroup in the experimental group

<b>Group</b>	<b>Task 1</b> uses of <b><i>D.O</i></b> <b><i>pronoun</i></b>	<b>Task 2</b> uses of <b><i>D.O</i></b> <b><i>Pronoun</i></b>	<b>Task 3</b> uses of <b><i>D.O</i></b> <b><i>Pronoun</i></b>	<b>Task 4</b> uses of <b><i>I.O</i></b> <b><i>Pronoun</i></b>	<b>Task 5</b> uses of <b><i>I.O</i></b> <b><i>Pronoun</i></b>	<b>Task 6</b> uses of <b><i>I.O</i></b> <b><i>Pronoun</i></b>
<b>A</b>	8	9	16	4	5	5
<b>B</b>	6	17	14	9	9	7
<b>C</b>	12	5	9	15	11	4
<b>D</b>	9	8	15	14	7	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>25</b>

Table 2: Uses of the target structures in formulaic expressions in each task by each subgroup in the experimental group

<b>Group</b>	<b>Task 1</b> uses of <b><i>F. E D.O</i></b> <b><i>pron.</i></b>	<b>Task 2</b> uses of <b><i>F. E</i></b> <b><i>D.O pron.</i></b>	<b>Task 3</b> uses of <b><i>F. E D.O</i></b> <b><i>pron.</i></b>	<b>Task 4</b> uses of <b><i>F. E</i></b> <b><i>I.O pron.</i></b>	<b>Task 5</b> uses of <b><i>F. E I.O</i></b> <b><i>pron.</i></b>	<b>Task 6</b> uses of <b><i>F. E I.O</i></b> <b><i>pron.</i></b>
<b>A</b>	3	2	4	1	2	2
<b>B</b>	3	4	9	4	3	3
<b>C</b>	7	1	4	7	5	1
<b>D</b>	4	3	6	6	3	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>



Table 3: Free uses of the target structures in each task by each group in the experimental group

<b>Group</b>	<b>Task 1</b> Free uses <i>D.O pron.</i>	<b>Task 2</b> Free uses <i>D.O pron.</i>	<b>Task 3</b> Free uses <i>D.O pron.</i>	<b>Task 4</b> Free uses <i>I.O pron.</i>	<b>Task 5</b> Free Uses <i>I.O pron.</i>	<b>Task 6</b> Free uses <i>I.O pron.</i>
<b>A</b>	5	7	12	3	3	3
<b>B</b>	3	13	5	5	6	4
<b>C</b>	5	4	5	8	6	3
<b>D</b>	5	5	9	8	4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>14</b>

As Table 1 reflects, during Task 1, students in Group A produced the target structure eight times. Of those, three were uses of formulaic expressions that contained the target structure, such as *lo siento* (“I am sorry”) and *lo sé* (“I know it”). Group B produced the target structure six times. Similarly to Group A, three of those were uses of formulaic expressions that contained direct object pronouns. Group C, however, produced more direct object pronouns during the first task than the previous two groups. Specifically, they produced the target structure twelve times in their output; seven of those were uses of formulaic expressions that contained the grammatical structure. Finally, Group D produced the target structure nine times. Of those, only five were free uses of direct object pronouns and not part of formulaic expressions.

In Task 2, Group A produced the target structure nine times, but only two were uses of formulaic expressions containing the target structure. Group B included direct object pronouns in their outputs seventeen times, and those included only four uses of the structure as a part of a formulaic expression. In contrast to Group B, Group C produced the target structure only five times, with only one instance of a formulaic expression

containing the structure. Finally, Group D produced the target structure eight times, with five free uses of direct object pronouns.

In Task 3, Group A used the target structure sixteen times; four of those were uses of the target structure as a part of a formulaic expression, and twelve were free uses of direct object pronouns. Group B produced the target structure fourteen times; nine (more than half) were uses of formulaic expressions containing direct object pronouns. Group C produced the target structure nine times, of which four were formulaic expressions and five were free uses of direct object pronouns. Finally, Group D produced the target structure fifteen times, with nine free uses and only six uses of the target structure included in formulaic expressions.

Task 3 was the last task with an implicit focus on direct object pronouns in Spanish. Some instances of this structure found in the first three tasks were *tengo que sacarlo* (“I have to take it out”), *lo veo bien* (“I find it correct”), *necesito visitarte* (“I need to visit you”), *lo puedes hacer gratis* (“you can do it for free”), *puedo enseñarla* (“I can show it”), *los tienes* (“you have them”), and *yo te llamo* (“I will call you”). In the first three tasks, participants in the experimental group produced the target structure one hundred twenty-eight times; fifty were uses of formulaic expressions containing direct object pronouns and seventy-eight were free uses of the target structure. Appendix A shows all free uses of the direct object pronoun produced by the experimental group in Tasks 1, 2, and 3.

Throughout Task 4, Group A produced indirect object pronouns four times. One of those four uses was a formulaic expression that contained the target structure, that is, *me gusta* (“I like it”), and three were free uses of indirect object pronouns. Group B produced indirect object pronouns nine times; four of those were formulaic expressions that

contained the target grammatical structure. Group C produced the indirect object pronouns fifteen times in Task 4; eight were free instances of the grammatical structure. Finally, Group D's results were similar to Group C's: they produced indirect object pronouns fourteen times; in six of those, the target structure was part of a formulaic expression, and eight instances were free uses of it.

In Task 5, Group A produced indirect object pronouns five times; two were uses of formulaic expressions that contained the target structure. Group B produced indirect object pronouns nine times; the majority of those instances, six, were free uses of the target structure. Group C produced indirect object pronouns eleven times, of which five were formulaic expressions and six were free instances of the structure. Finally, Group D produced indirect object pronouns seven times in context; three of those times were formulaic expressions containing the structure.

In Task 6, the last task of the experimental study, Group A produced indirect object pronouns five times, with only two instances of formulaic expressions and three free uses of the target structure. Group B produced indirect object pronouns seven times, including the use of three formulaic expressions and four free uses of indirect object pronouns. Group C produced the target structure four times; three were free instances of indirect object pronouns. Lastly, Group D was the group that produced more indirect object pronouns in the sixth task, with nine instances. However, five of those were formulaic expressions.

Some examples of indirect object pronouns produced by the experimental group are *les gusta* ("they like it"), *les pregunto eso* ("I ask them about it"), *les pagamos* ("we pay them for it"),

*les debo dinero* ("I owe them money"), *te pongo un anillo* ("I put a ring on you"), and

*le damos un regalo* (“we give a present to her”). Students produced indirect object pronouns in context a total of ninety-nine times, including forty-two uses of formulaic expressions and fifty-seven free uses of the target structure. Appendix B shows all free uses of the indirect object pronoun produced by the experimental group in Tasks 4, 5, and 6.

The first part of the results, which was concerned with the experimental group’s production of direct and indirect object pronouns in Spanish, required the use of descriptives using the data analysis program SPSS 26.0 to determine which tasks were most and least effective at triggering the use of the target structures and to find differences between groups. While conducting statistical analyses, the cutoff value for significance was accepted as  $p < .05$ . Additionally, only free uses of the target structure were considered in the analysis because students likely learned formulaic expressions such as *lo siento* (“I am sorry”) or *me gusta* (“I like it”) before taking this Spanish course; therefore, the use of formulaic expressions did not actually demonstrate the effectiveness of the experimental study.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of the six tasks

Descriptive Statistics									
	N Statistic	Sum Statistic	Mean Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic	Variance Statistic	Skewness		Kurtosis	
						Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Group	18	47	2.61	1.145	1.310	-.174	.536	-1.356	1.038
Task1	18	18	1.00	.767	.588	.880	.536	1.717	1.038
Task2	18	29	1.61	1.243	1.546	.438	.536	-.226	1.038
Task3	18	31	1.72	.826	.683	.593	.536	-1.251	1.038
Task4	18	24	1.33	.686	.471	.683	.536	.930	1.038
Task5	18	19	1.06	.639	.408	-.041	.536	-.143	1.038
Task6	17	14	.82	.529	.279	-.259	.550	.737	1.063
Valid N (listwise)	17								

As evidenced above in Table 4, the descriptive statistics indicate that Tasks 2 and 3 were the most effective at triggering the target structure. The means of free uses of the target structure in those tasks were 1.61 and 1.72, respectively. On the other hand, the least effective task was Task 6, with a mean of less than one use per participant (0.82). The distribution of data in all the tasks was normal since the degree of skewness and kurtosis were between  $-2$  and  $+2$  in the six tasks.

Due to the different numbers of participants in the four subgroups of the experimental group, the use of ANOVA was necessary to determine whether one subgroup was generally better than the others at producing the target structures. As before, only free uses of the target structure were considered for this analysis.

Table 5: ANOVA t results for six tasks for the experimental group

		ANOVA				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Task1	Between Groups	.500	3	.167	.246	.863
	Within Groups	9.500	14	.679		
	Total	10.000	17			
Task2	Between Groups	15.978	3	5.326	7.239	.004
	Within Groups	10.300	14	.736		
	Total	26.278	17			
Task3	Between Groups	10.061	3	3.354	30.292	.000
	Within Groups	1.550	14	.111		
	Total	11.611	17			
Task4	Between Groups	2.100	3	.700	1.661	.221
	Within Groups	5.900	14	.421		
	Total	8.000	17			
Task5	Between Groups	1.594	3	.531	1.391	.287
	Within Groups	5.350	14	.382		
	Total	6.944	17			
Task6	Between Groups	.521	3	.174	.571	.644
	Within Groups	3.950	13	.304		
	Total	4.471	16			

Table 6: Tukey test results for Tasks 2 and 3

**Multiple Comparisons**

Tukey HSD

Dependent Variable	(i) Group	(j) Group	Mean Difference (i-j)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Task2	A	B	-1.500	.607	.108	-3.26	.26
		C	.950	.575	.384	-.72	2.62
		D	.750	.575	.576	-.92	2.42
	B	A	1.500	.607	.108	-.26	3.26
		C	2.450*	.575	.004	.78	4.12
		D	2.250*	.575	.008	.58	3.92
	C	A	-.950	.575	.384	-2.62	.72
		B	-2.450*	.575	.004	-4.12	-.78
		D	-.200	.542	.982	-1.78	1.38
	D	A	-.750	.575	.576	-2.42	.92
		B	-2.250*	.575	.008	-3.92	-.58
		C	.200	.542	.982	-1.38	1.78
Task3	A	B	1.750*	.235	.000	1.07	2.43
		C	2.000*	.223	.000	1.35	2.65
		D	1.200*	.223	.001	.55	1.85
	B	A	-1.750*	.235	.000	-2.43	-1.07
		C	.250	.223	.684	-.40	.90
		D	-.550	.223	.110	-1.20	.10
	C	A	-2.000*	.223	.000	-2.65	-1.35
		B	-.250	.223	.684	-.90	.40
		D	-.800*	.210	.009	-1.41	-.19
	D	A	-1.200*	.223	.001	-1.85	-.55
		B	.550	.223	.110	-.10	1.20
		C	.800*	.210	.009	.19	1.41

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 5 shows that there were no statistically significant differences among groups in Tasks 1, 4, 5, and 6, as demonstrated by the one-way ANOVA,  $F(0.246, 1.661, 1.391, 0.571)$ ,  $p = .863, .221, .287, \text{ and } .644$ , respectively. However, there was a statistically significant difference among groups in Tasks 2 and 3,  $F(7.239, 30.292)$ ,  $p = .004$  and  $.000$ , respectively. A Tukey post-hoc test for these specific tasks was necessary to see the precise differences. The Tukey post-hoc test results in Table 6 show that in Task 2, Group B was able to use the target structure statistically significantly more times than Groups C and D ( $p = .004$ , and  $.008$ , respectively). Furthermore, Group A used the target structure significantly more times than the other groups in Task 3 ( $p = .000, .000, \text{ and } .001$ ,

respectively). Finally, in Task 3, Group D also used Spanish direct object pronouns statistically significantly more than Group C ( $p = .009$ ).

## **2. Findings for RQ 3**

The second part of this section is divided into two subsections. Subsection A presents the results regarding the control group's production of direct and indirect object pronouns in Spanish during the final project. It then compares those results with those of the experimental group in the online TBLT module, presented in the previous section. Subsection B presents the results of the experimental and control groups in the final exam activity to determine differences in the number of instances of the target structures.

### **A) TBLT Modules vs Final Project Results**

As Table 7 shows, during the course of the final project, students in the control group produced Spanish direct and indirect object pronouns fifty-seven times. Of those, twenty were uses of formulaic expressions that contained the target structure, such as *lo siento* ("I am sorry") and *lo sé* ("I know it"), and twenty-seven were free uses of the target structure, such as *la llamo* ("I call her"), *los escucho* ("I listen to them"), *la quiero* ("I love her"), *te da mucho* ("it gives you a lot"), and *le doy todo* ("I give everything to him"). Appendix C shows all free uses of the direct and indirect object pronouns produced by the control group in the Final Project.

Table 7: Uses of the target structures in the final project by the control group

	<b>Final Project</b> uses <i>Formulaic</i> <i>expression</i> <b>D.O</b> <i>pronoun</i>	<b>Final Project</b> Free uses <i>D.O</i> <b>pronoun</b>	<b>Final Project</b> uses <i>Formulaic</i> <i>expression</i> <b>I.O</b> <b>pronoun</b>	<b>Final</b> <b>Project</b> Free uses <b>I.O</b> <b>pronoun</b>	<b>TOTAL:</b> <b>Final</b> <b>Project</b> Free uses <b>D.O &amp; I.O</b> <b>pronoun</b>
<b>Contro</b> <b>l group</b>	12	16	18	11	27

As Table 8, below, shows, the descriptive statistics indicate that the mean of free uses of the target structures were 7.50 for the experimental group in the online TBLT tasks and 1.23 for the control group in the final project. Additionally, the distribution of data was normal since the degree of skewness and kurtosis were between  $-2$  and  $+2$  for the two groups.

Table 8: Descriptive statistics of free uses of the target structures by the experimental and control groups

<b>Descriptive Statistics</b>									
	N	Sum	Mean	Std.	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Deviation	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Tasks	18	135	7.50	2.706	7.324	.080	.536	.384	1.038
Finalproject	22	27	1.23	1.066	1.136	.280	.491	-1.141	.953
Valid N (listwise)	0								

To determine the degree of significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the production of direct and indirect object pronouns in Spanish, the researcher



used an independent sample *t*-test. As before, the interest was only in free uses of the target structures and not in formulaic expressions.

Table 9 shows that the *t*-value was 9.264 and the *p*-value .000. Hence, based on this, there is significant evidence that the TBLT module had a positive impact on the experimental group's use of direct and indirect object pronouns in Spanish.

Table 9: Independent sample use of target structures t-test between the control and experimental groups

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
Instances		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
	Equal variances assumed	7.731	.008	9.989	38	.000	6.273	.628	5.001	7.544
	Equal variances not assumed			9.264	21.312	.000	6.273	.677	4.886	7.680

## B) Final Exam Activity Results

Now, it is necessary to compare the production of Spanish direct and indirect object pronouns by the experimental and control groups respectively through a final exam activity. The results are stated below:

Table 10: Uses of the target structures in the final exam activity by the control and experimental groups

	Final Exam Uses of <i>Formulaic expression</i> Target structures	Final Exam 'Free' uses Target structures	Total:
<b>Experimental group</b>	30	58	88

<b>Control group</b>	14	14	28
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Table 11: Free uses of direct and indirect object pronouns in the final exam activity by the control and experimental groups

	<b>Final Exam 'Free' uses <i>D.O pronoun</i></b>	<b>Final Exam 'Free' uses <i>I.O pronoun</i></b>	<b>Total:</b>
<b>Experimental group</b>	33	25	58
<b>Control group</b>	9	5	14

As Tables 10 and 11 indicate, in the final exam activity, students in the experimental group produced direct and indirect object pronouns eighty-eight times. Of these occurrences, thirty were formulaic expressions that contained the target structures, such as *no lo sé* (“I do not know”) and *no me gusta* (“I do not like it”). Fifty-eight instances, however, were free uses of the target structures, such as *te espero* (“I wait for you”) and *la considero* (“I consider it”). Appendix D shows all free uses of the direct object pronoun produced by the experimental group in the final exam activity.

Considering only free uses of the target structures, the experimental group produced thirty-three direct object pronouns and twenty-five indirect object pronouns. On the other hand, students in the control group produced the target structure twenty-eight times, with only fourteen instances of free uses. Appendix D shows all free uses of the direct object

pronoun produced by the experimental group in the final exam activity. Considering only free uses of the target structures, the control group produced nine instances of direct object pronouns and five instances of indirect object pronouns.

Since there were different numbers of participants in the experimental and control groups, descriptives were used to compare the averages of the two groups and determine if there was a significant difference in the uses of the target structures in the final exam activity.

Table 12: Descriptive statistics of ‘free’ uses of the target structures in the final exam activity

<b>Group Statistics</b>					
	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
DO	Experimental	18	1.83	.857	.202
	Control	22	.41	.590	.126
IO	Experimental	18	1.39	.778	.183
	Control	22	.23	.528	.113

As Table 12, above, shows, the score analysis of the experimental group’s uses of direct and indirect object pronouns indicates that the means were 1.83 and 1.39, respectively. For the control group, however, the means were 0.41 for direct object pronouns and 0.23 for indirect object pronouns. Therefore, the combined mean of both direct and indirect object pronouns use was 3.22 for the experimental group and only 0.64 for the control group. This data implies there was a significant difference between experimental and control groups’ results. However, it was necessary to run a *t*-test to confirm or reject this.

Table 13: Independent sample *t*-test of free uses of the target structures in the final exam activity

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
DO	Equal variances assumed	1.370	.249	6.205	38	.000	1.424	.230	.960	1.889
	Equal variances not assumed			5.982	29.188	.000	1.424	.238	.937	1.911
IO	Equal variances assumed	5.565	.024	5.608	38	.000	1.162	.207	.742	1.581
	Equal variances not assumed			5.400	28.931	.000	1.162	.215	.722	1.602

As Table 13, above, shows, the independent sample test shows a significant difference between the two groups' uses of the target structures in the final exam activity ( $t = 5.400$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $p < \alpha$ ).

### III. DISCUSSION

This section discusses the findings of the study and addresses RQ 2 and 3: How frequently are problematic grammatical structures, such as direct and indirect object pronouns, used by L2 learners of Spanish in an online TBLT module? How frequently do the students in the experimental group use the target grammatical structures compared to the students in the control group? TBLT is a pervasive approach in L2 teaching. However, there is still little research to demonstrate its effectiveness in enhancing the acquisition of challenging grammatical structures in online settings. This study demonstrates the benefits of using an online TBLT module specially designed for the acquisition of direct and indirect object pronouns in Spanish. The current study showed that participants in the experimental group used the target structures on many occasions, and their results exceeded those of the control group (the mean of the experimental group was 7.50,

whereas the mean of the control group was 1.23). Similarly, students in the experimental group also produced five times more instances of the target structures than students in the control group in an identical final exam activity (3.22 vs 0.64, respectively). Thus, an online TBLT module designed for the teaching of difficult L2 grammatical structures can be a beneficial tool to enhance the learning of problematic L2 grammatical structures.

It is important to note that students in the experimental group produced more free uses of the target structures than formulaic expressions containing the target structures in every task of the experimental study and in the final exam activity. Students in the control group, however, produced more free instances of direct object pronouns, but not indirect object pronouns, than formulaic expressions in the final project. In the final exam activity, students in the control group produced equal numbers of instances of free uses of the target structures and formulaic expressions containing them.

Additionally, a close examination of the results reveals that the six modules involved in the experimental study yielded different numbers of free uses of the target structure. For example, Task 3 yielded thirty-one free uses of the target structures, followed by Tasks 2 and 4, with twenty-nine and twenty-four free uses of them, respectively. On the other end of the spectrum, the task that triggered the lowest number of uses of the target structures was Task 6, with only fourteen instances of indirect object pronouns, followed by Tasks 5 and 1, with nineteen and eighteen occurrences, respectively. The first three tasks, which were concerned with direct object pronouns, show a progression in the use of the grammatical structure, with the lowest number of free instances in Task 1 and the highest number of instances in Task 3. In the other three tasks, which focus on indirect object pronouns, the results are the opposite: The highest number of occurrences of the target grammatical structures occurred in the fourth task (the first one concerned with this

structure), and the lowest number of instances was found in the last task, Task 6. However, as Table 3 in the second section of this chapter shows, the results for indirect object pronouns show more homogeneity among subgroups than the results for direct object pronouns.

A qualitative approach to the analysis of the results was necessary due in part to the potential repetition of tokens of the target structure as a way of priming. It could be argued that during some tasks, participants could have mimicked or copied the use of the target structures after listening to another participant pronouncing them (e.g., *¿Lo tienes?* followed by *no lo tengo* (“Do you have it?” followed by “no, I do not have it”). For instance, it could seem unusual that Group B produced direct object pronouns thirteen times during Task 2, while Group C only had three occurrences of this usage during the same task. Additionally, Group A produced the target structure twelve times in Task 3, whereas Groups B and C only produced it on five occasions. After a qualitative analysis of the results, the researcher concluded that the use of the target structure during those tasks (and in every task) was not due to imitation. In fact, although some students started using direct object pronouns and other students followed, participants were able to attend to gender and number agreement differences. For example, during Task 2, the leader of Group B asked one of the students the following question: “*¿La tienes?*” (“Do you have it?”), referring to a driving license. The student replied, “*Sí, la tengo*” (“I have it”), and immediately asked another question that contained another instance of the direct object pronoun but, this time, in the opposite gender: *¿Eres un buen jefe? ¿Lo eres?* (“Are you a good boss? Are you?”). Hence, it can be assumed that students could encourage and elicit the use of the target structures in other participants, but the qualitative analysis component of this study ensures the validity of the results reported in this chapter.

Generally, there were no instances of repeated tokens without attention to agreement. There were, however, some incorrect uses of the target structures, such as the target structures wrongly placed in the sentence or used with incorrect gender or number agreement. Those cases could have been a result of imitating the output of peers. Therefore, they were excluded from the results presented in this section.

In applying TBLT instruction, Ellis (2003) maintains that learning takes place more effectively when students are exposed to natural use of the language. All tasks involved in the experimental study included listening or writing materials with natural use of the language (i.e., audio files, e-mails, webpages, etc.). Natural use of language not only leads to gaining input but also encourages students to notice gaps in the input (e.g., when someone does not use direct or indirect object pronouns when they could be used) and, consequently, fill these gaps.

Another aspect that may raise doubts regarding the homogeneity of the online TBLT module results is the length of each task meeting. To ensure the duration of each meeting was uniform, leaders in each group received instructions to make sure the duration was between 40 and 50 minutes. All groups met this requirement.

Finally, in the final exam activity, the results showed that the mean of the free uses of both direct and indirect object pronoun target structures was 3.22 for the experimental group and only 0.64 for the control group. The difference between these two numbers is significant. The independent *t*-test confirmed there was a significant difference between experimental and control group results. Thus, it can be concluded that the experimental group, which used the online TBLT module, produced more instances of the target structures, direct and indirect object pronouns, than the control group.

## **Chapter V**

### **Conclusions**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The final chapter discusses findings concerning the research questions outlined in Chapter I, their implications for L2 learners, pedagogical implications, limitations, and future directions for research. The central questions behind the research reported here are as follows: What are the characteristics that an online TBLT module needs to have to promote the acquisition of specific L2 grammatical structures? How frequently are problematic grammatical structures, such as direct and indirect object pronouns, used by L2 learners of Spanish in an online TBLT module? How frequently do the students in the experimental group use the target grammatical structures compared to the students in the control group? To investigate these issues, an online TBLT module was developed with the aim to implicitly elicit the aforementioned target structures in the experimental group. These subjects completed a total of six technology-mediated TBLT tasks, which covered direct object pronouns (Tasks 1, 2, and 3) and indirect object pronouns (Tasks 4, 5, and 6) in Spanish. Furthermore, there was a control group of students who, instead of the online TBLT module, had a final project assigned.

#### **II. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

**RQ 1: What are the characteristics that an online TBLT module needs to have to promote the acquisition of specific L2 grammatical structures?**



As Norris (2009), Samuda and Bygate (2008), and Van den Branden (2006) claim for TBLT, learning must occur in an incidental way, and the target structures must be elicited implicitly and as a consequence of working on a task. Even when the goal is the development and acquisition of specific grammatical structures, the task must focus on meaning. This is seen in all the tasks included in the TBLT module in this study. Each task aimed to elicit either the Spanish direct object pronouns (Tasks 1, 2, and 3) or the Spanish indirect object pronouns (Tasks 4, 5, and 6). However, the focus of each task was on communicating in a real-life situation. Task 1 focused on having a dentist appointment. The focus of Task 2 was on finding a suitable job or job candidate. Task 3 focused on reaching an agreement about which group member's family was the most endearing. The focus of Task 4 was on planning a wedding. Task 5 focused on finding a graduate program and university in Spain. Finally, Task 6 focused on organizing a farewell party for the Spanish class. The focus of each task had also a clear goal. Norris (2009), Samuda and Bygate (2008), and Van den Branden (2006) state that each task should trigger a clear communicative purpose that must be fulfilled through some gap in information, reason, or personal opinion. All the tasks included in the online TBLT module involved a gap in information, opinion, or reasoning that students had to overcome. Then, an outcome resulted from the completion of the task. The outcome could be the successful completion of the task, such as attending a dentist's appointment (Task 1), a piece of information that results from the task such as an oral or written composition or dialogue (Task 3), or completing an application to a Spanish-speaking university (Task 5).

Additionally, the learner should be at the center of the learning process. Samuda and Bygate (2008) argue that the task must always address the learners' interests. Students should feel interested in the task at hand because they can relate to it somehow. To

achieve that, the instructor needs to reject general and uninformed tasks that are not useful in the students' lives. In the six tasks involved in this study, the students' interests were considered. The instructor had been teaching Spanish to the experimental group for five weeks before the implementation of the online TBLT module in the class. During that time, students showed interest in study abroad programs (which was considered in the development of Task 5), job opportunities in Hispanic countries (which was considered in the development of Task 2), weddings (which was considered in the development of Task 4), and parties in general (which was considered in the development of Task 6). Additionally, the teacher decided that, since everyone in the class would need to go to a dentist at some point in their lives and since everyone had a family they cared for, a dentist visit (Task 1) and a task about their families (Task 3) would be interesting for this specific group of students.

Furthermore, Van den Branden (2006) contends that a holistic approach should always be selected when implementing tasks in the L2 classroom. A task should reflect real-world processes of language use, which are characterized by integrating form, function, and meaning. These elements should not be presented in isolation but organically combined instead. For that reason, students should engage in activities that help them focus on the communicative intent rather than on the forms that they use to communicate. Students tend to focus on meaning more easily when they feel motivated to convey their thoughts and ideas, as they did during the six tasks in this study. Students completed six tasks that covered topics they were interested in. Thus, knowing the students' interests before the implementation of the technology-mediated TBLT module was a crucial factor in favoring the holistic development of each task.

Norris (2009) and Samuda and Bygate (2008) also state that, while a task must offer learning by doing, it must also involve opportunities for reflecting, ordering ideas, or

reaching a consensus. That is why in each task of the TBLT online module, the students had to have a certain level of reflection on the language used. In Task 1, the students in each group needed to discuss each patient-dentist interaction and reach an agreement regarding which interaction they found to be the most satisfactory. In Task 2, participants had to read the reports written by each group and provide feedback regarding their choice of boss or job candidate. In Task 3, each group had to reach an agreement about which group member had the most endearing family and provide reasons for their decision. Task 4 required students to vote for their favorite wedding after seeing all the wedding presentations in the class. Task 5 required students to decide what feedback to provide to each graduate program applicant. Finally, students had to reflect on the most important aspects of the party they had planned and include them in a presentation.

The experimental study presented here followed the task-based language framework proposed by Willis (1996) regarding the stages of each task: the pre-task, task cycle, and post-task (or language focus) stages. The pre-task provided a brief introduction to the topic and normally included a warm-up activity. As an example, in the pre-task phase of Task 1, “A dentist appointment,” before the students started working in their groups, they had to watch a short video about a patient-dentist interaction and reflect on potential issues that can bring a patient to a dentist’s office. During this phase, the teacher guided the students to understand the topic by asking questions that activated their schemata. The pre-task was followed by the task itself, also known as the task cycle (Willis, 1996).

The task cycle could be seen as the main task and consisted of the execution phase, which entailed planning, and the report phase. Most importantly, it included a learning process of planning, drafting, and rehearsing (as stated by Willis, 1996). During the planning phase, the participants discussed the task and worked together to prepare their presentation. During the report phase, students presented their findings, exchanged

written reports, or discussed and ultimately compared their outcomes (as stated by Willis, 1996). Continuing with the example of Task 1, during the task cycle, students had to first make an appointment with the receptionist and decide when the patient would see the dentist. The instructor distributed two different schedules, one for the receptionist and the other for the dentist, so students had to communicate in Spanish to fill information gaps. Students would then decide when to meet and plan the actual dental visit. While students planned and performed the dental appointment, they also wrote a report to later present the same scenario to the whole class.

Willis (1996) states that, after students present their outcomes, some feedback may be given in the post-task phase. This part of the task can be used as the language focus, and it is optional depending on the needs of the students. If necessary, students can analyze what they said and practice their skills.

**Research Question 2: How frequently are problematic grammatical structures, such as direct and indirect object pronouns, used by L2 learners of Spanish in an online TBLT module?**

The quantitative analysis detailed in Chapter IV reveals that during the six TBLT tasks, participants in the experimental group produced the Spanish direct and indirect object pronouns a total of two hundred twenty-seven times. Of those, ninety-two were uses of formulaic expressions that contained the target structures and one hundred thirty-five were free uses of the direct and indirect object pronouns in Spanish.

Additionally, the researcher investigated the differences between the scores of each group of students in each of the six tasks. The goal was to determine whether there was a group of students who generally worked better than the others. Table 5 in Chapter IV shows that there was no statistically significant difference between groups in Tasks 1, 4,

5, and 6 as demonstrated by a one-way ANOVA ( $F(0.246, 1.661, 1.391, 0.571)$ ,  $p = .863, .221, .287, \text{ and } .644$ , respectively). However, there was a statistically significant difference between groups in Tasks 2 and 3 ( $F(7.239, 30.292)$ ,  $p = .004 \text{ and } .000$ , respectively). A Tukey post-hoc test for Tasks 2 and 3 was necessary. Table 6 in Chapter IV shows the Tukey post-hoc test results that show that Group B was able to use the target structure statistically significantly more times than Groups C and D in *Tarea 2* ( $p = .004 \text{ and } .008$ , respectively). Furthermore, in Task 3, Group A used the target structure significantly more times than the other groups ( $p = .000, .000, \text{ and } .001$ , respectively), and Group D also used the direct object pronoun in Spanish statistically significantly more than Group C ( $p = .009$ ).

Hence, since all the tasks were developed by considering the same principles, but not all of them reported similar results, it is necessary to determine the factor that impacted the higher use of the target structure in Task 2, “A job interview,” and Task 3, “An extended family member,” compared to the other tasks. Task 2 was a reasoning and opinion task, and Task 3 was an opinion task. Both had an opinion component like the rest of the tasks in the TBLT module. However, these two tasks, in contrast to the others, were more concerned with personal relationships. In Task 2, students had to choose their ideal boss or job candidate by considering their personal interaction with all bosses or job candidates during the pre-task and task cycle. Similarly, in Task 3, students had to choose the person who had the most endearing family after listening to all the group members talking about personal relationships. It is possible that talking about personal relationships may trigger more frequent use of the target structure. Furthermore, and most importantly, Tasks 2 and 3 included specific questions with specific verbs that triggered the use of direct object pronouns in Spanish such as *tener* (“to have”), *conocer* (“to know”), *llamar* (“to call”), *aceptar* (“to accept”), or *demandar* (“to demand”).

The takeaway of this is that in all tasks there were free uses of the target structure (ranging from 0.82 uses per person to 1.72 uses per person in each task). However, the number of uses increased in Tasks 2 and 3 (ranging from 1.61 to 1.72 uses per person) compared to Tasks 1, 4, 5, and 6 (ranging from 0.82 to 1.33 uses per person), and both Tasks 2 and 3 had similar components: They dealt with human relationships and included a set of questions that used specific verbs that required the use of the target structure.

In summary, problematic grammatical structures such as direct and indirect object pronouns in Spanish are frequently used by L2 learners of Spanish when they use an online TBLT module with consciously tailored tasks that trigger the target structures implicitly.

**Research Question 3: How frequently do the students in the experimental group use the target grammatical structures compared to the students in the control group?**

The study found that the statistical means of the experimental and control groups' free uses of the target structures were 7.50 and 1.23, respectively. Additionally, the distribution of data was normal since the degrees of skewness and kurtosis fell between -2 and +2 in both groups. The *t*-test results in Table 9 in Chapter IV indicated that there was significant evidence to support the positive impact the TBLT module had on the use of the target structures by students in the experimental group.

Regarding the results found in the final exam activity, students in the experimental group produced fifty-eight free uses of the target structures, direct and indirect object pronouns. On the other hand, students in the control group only produced fourteen free uses of the target structures. Furthermore, the results showed that the statistical means of actual uses of both direct and indirect object pronouns were 3.22 for the experimental group and only 0.64 for the control group. The difference between these results was

significant. The independent *t*-test results shown in Table 13 in Chapter IV revealed a significant difference between the results of the experimental and control groups.

In summary, the findings of this study indicate that implicit instruction in Spanish direct and indirect object pronouns through a technology-mediated TBLT module that has the characteristics outlined in Section II of this chapter elicits the use of these grammatical structures more often than other communicative activities such as the ones in the Final Project that students in the control group went through. As shown in Chapter III of this study, the final project aims at interpersonal communication by asking students to interact with other classmates' presentations. Participants in the control group were asked to create a series of presentation slides that answered some questions that could potentially elicit the target structures. However, the interaction among students was rather asynchronous, through a forum and instant direct messages, and provided few opportunities for negotiation for meaning.

### III. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Synthesizing the results of the research questions presented above provides insight into the central inquiry of this dissertation: How frequently are problematic grammatical structures, such as direct and indirect object pronouns, used by L2 learners of Spanish in an online TBLT module? Study participants who were instructed using the online TBLT module outperformed those in the final project group in the production of direct and indirect object pronouns in Spanish.

More concretely, the results reported in Chapter IV and outlined here suggest that the production of Spanish direct and indirect object pronouns is higher if L2 students work cooperatively through guided technology-mediated tasks whose focus is on meaning. Hence, one of the pedagogical implications of the current study is related to the benefits

of developing technology-mediated tasks that require synchronic group work since they foster real use of the TL and elicit the use of problematic grammatical structures that would not be elicited while working individually. However, these tasks could also be implemented in a face-to-face classroom setting and the results should not be much different. Moreover, another pedagogical implication is that tasks should have a clear goal that students must fulfill through filling a gap in information, through reasoning, or through personal opinion.

Additionally, the task must involve opportunities for reflecting, ordering ideas, or reaching a consensus, as seen in the last part of the task cycle in each of the six tasks in this study. Furthermore, a holistic approach should be used when creating tasks since each task should reflect real-world processes of language use, which are characterized by a holistic focus on meaning. Students should see the task as a whole and not as small chunks that are evaluated independently.

The role of the teacher is also an essential aspect to consider in the implementation of technology-mediated TBLT tasks. As Richards and Rodgers (2001) suggest, in the deployment of any TBLT task, the teacher should fulfill three particular requirements: to be in charge of consciously selecting and sequencing tasks; to prepare learners for tasks with a pre-task phase, as was done in each of the six tasks in this study; and to be available while students are engaged in the task as a facilitator between the content and the students. Teachers are expected to assist with any questions or issues that may arise in the groups in real-time.

Finally, another pedagogical implication of this study has to do with improving teachers' practice with technology. As Hubbard (2005) defends, many L2 instructors limit their experience with CALL and may be novices at using technology while teaching. L2



teachers should become familiar with computers and other technology-based instruments to employ effective technology-mediated tasks that favor implicit grammar learning.

While it is true that participants in the online TBLT module in this study produced significantly more instances of direct and indirect object pronouns, students in the control group still produced some instances of the target structures in a smaller proportion. For this reason, rather than encouraging L2 instructors to use this exact approach to the teaching of the TL, this study perhaps best provides some ideas about the essential aspects to be considered in the L2 teaching of problematic grammatical structures.

Overall, technology-mediated TBLT can be particularly valuable in the acquisition of L2 grammar since it requires learners to deal with real-life tasks that may trigger the use of specific grammatical structures.

#### IV. LIMITATIONS, FUTURE DIRECTIONS, AND CONCLUSION

In recent years, numerous investigations into the influence of TBLT on L2 learning, in general, have emerged, but very few studies have examined how technology-mediated TBLT can influence the use of specific difficult grammatical structures. This study addressed this gap by examining the effects of an online TBLT module on the acquisition of direct and indirect object pronouns in Spanish. The study participants were not only Spanish L2 learners aiming to improve their general language skills but, moreover, students in a beginner-level Spanish course whose curriculum included the aforementioned grammatical structures.

The study had a total of 40 participants, who were students in two independent Spanish 2 courses. There were 18 participants in the experimental group and 22 participants in the control group. One limitation of this study is the small number of total participants since it may be difficult to generalize the findings of this study to the general

population of elementary Spanish learners. In addition to that, the numbers of participants in the experimental and control groups were not identical. The reason they were not identical had to do with the fact that the numbers depended on the enrollment of the two Spanish 2 courses selected for this study.

Another limitation of this study could be the fact that the tasks were designed to elicit the two target grammatical structures separately in three different tasks each: Direct object pronouns were the implicit target structure of the first three tasks, and indirect object pronouns were the implicit target structure of the last three tasks. The tasks were designed this way because during the Spanish 2 course at UCSB, and generally, in any Spanish course, students learn direct object pronouns before indirect object pronouns. Furthermore, the two structures are never introduced to the students together due to the level of difficulty when the structures co-occur. In Spanish, the grammatical structure of a sentence changes when both direct and indirect object pronouns are used. Teaching this at the same time would have been too complicated for the level of interlanguage that students in an elementary Spanish 2 course have.

Hence, although students in the experimental group produced instances of direct object pronouns during the last three tasks, which were devoted to indirect object pronouns, these instances were not included in the results of this investigation. They were excluded because this study aimed to check the effectiveness of each task in eliciting a single target structure at a time, and the last three tasks were designed to elicit the use of indirect object pronouns implicitly. I carefully chose the topic for each task to elicit the use of the implicit target structure by considering the verbs expected to be used in that scenario. For future research, it would be interesting to explore the development of online tasks consciously designed to elicit direct and indirect object pronouns together or similarly problematic structures such as the subjunctive mood or hypothetical clauses.

A research topic of particular interest is the effects of a technology-mediated TBLT module on the use of direct and indirect object pronouns in Spanish in contrast to more traditional approaches to the teaching of grammar. Notably, this study was designed to be implemented in online settings before the educational changes prompted by the pandemic crisis in 2020. Hence, in the design of this study, the Spanish courses for both groups were designed to be taught fully remotely. The only difference was the use of the online TBLT module for the experimental group and the final project for the control group. The pedagogical support that was provided to the students for the final project was a set of directions (shown in Chapter III) that included what students should cover in each slide of their presentation.

It is interesting to note that, although both groups expressed in UCSB's Evaluation System for Courses and Instruction (ESCI) how much they liked the Spanish 2 course, several students in the experimental group expressed their positive opinions regarding the online TBLT module without being directed to do so. On the other hand, students in the control group made no references to the final project in their ESCI submissions.

All in all, this dissertation investigated the effects that an online TBLT module had on the use of direct and indirect object pronouns. The study found that students who completed the TBLT module produced more of the target grammatical structures than students who completed the final project.

The results presented in this chapter demonstrate the benefits of applying the task-based language framework that Willis (1996) proposed, which Chapter II of this dissertation details when designing tasks specifically for implicit L2 grammar acquisition. In short, effective TBLT tasks should have three phases, the pre-task, the task cycle, and the post-task (or language focus), and reflect the following tenets, developed by Norris

(2009), Samuda and Bygate (2008), and Van den Branden (2006) and stated in Chapter 2 of this dissertation:

1. The focus is always on meaning.
2. A clear goal is included.
3. The learner must be placed at the center of the learning process.
4. A holistic approach should be selected.
5. Reflective learning

Overall, online TBLT modules are a positive tool to promote the acquisition of problematic L2 grammatical structures such as direct and indirect object pronouns in Spanish.

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## Appendix

A:

Free Uses Direct Object Pronoun (Task 1, 2 and 3) Experimental Group

Pronoun	Literal use	Replaced noun/phrase/pronoun	Task	# of instances	Correct or incorrect
Lo	No lo creo	Que pueda ir ese día	1	3	Correct
Lo	Lo que pasa	Eso	1	2	Correct
Lo	Sacarlo	El diente	1	2	Correct
Lo	Lo necesita	El servicio	1	2	Correct
Te	No te creo	A ti	1	1	Correct
Lo	Puedo venderlo	El diente	1	1	Correct
Lo	Lo puedes hacer gratis	El servicio	1	1	Correct
Lo	Podemos hacerlo en calma	El servicio	1	1	Correct
La	Voy a mandarla	La cuenta	1	1	Correct
Lo	Trabajarlo	El día	1	1	Correct
Lo	Seguirlo	El mandato	1	1	Correct
Lo	Lo veo bien	Eso	1	1	Correct
Lo	Tengo que sacarlo	El diente	1	1	Correct
Lo	Lo tengo	El permiso de manejar	2	3	Correct
La	La tengo	La licencia de manejar	2	3	Correct
Lo	Lo acepto	Trabajar fines de semana	2	3	Correct
Lo	Lo pago	Un buen sueldo	2	2	Correct
Lo	Lo soy	Responsable	2	2	Correct
Lo	Lo considero	Que soy responsable	2	2	Correct
Lo	Lo tienes	El trabajo	2	1	Correct

Las	Las tengo	Buenas reseñas en Yelp	2	1	Correct
La	Puedo enseñarla	La experiencia	2	1	Correct
Lo	No lo abandono	El trabajo	2	1	Correct
Lo	No lo exijo	El conocimiento	2	1	Correct
Lo	No lo necesitas	Vestir formal	2	1	Correct
Te	No te ven	Los clientes	2	1	Correct
Los	Los tengo buenos	Los comentarios	2	1	Correct
Las	Quiero cocinarlas	Las galletas	2	1	Correct
Lo	Lo entrego	El documento	2	1	Correct
Los	Los tienes	Los atributos	2	1	Correct
Lo	Lo quiero mucho	El trabajo	2	1	Correct
Los	Los tienes	Los papeles	2	1	Correct
Los	Tienes que entregarlos	Los pasteles	2	1	Correct
Los	No los conozco	Los familiares	3	2	Correct
La	La veo	La familia	4	2	Correct
La	La tengo	Buena relación	3	2	Correct
Los	Los visito	Mis padres	3	2	Correct
Lo	Lo conozco	Mi primo	3	2	Correct
Los	Los veo	Mis abuelos	3	2	Correct
Los	Los llamo	Mis padres	3	2	Correct
Los	Los visito	Mis familiares	3	1	Correct
Los	Los veo	Mis sobrinos	3	1	Correct
La	La tengo	La conexión	3	1	Correct
Los	Los conozco	Los miembros	3	1	Correct
Lo	Lo llamo	Mi padre	3	1	Correct

<b>Lo</b>	Ponerlo en Google	El anuncio	3	1	Correct
<b>Te</b>	Te llamo	A ti	3	1	Correct
<b>Te</b>	Te conozco	A ti	3	1	Correct
<b>Te</b>	Si lo haces	Eso	3	1	Correct
<b>Lo</b>	Lo veo	A mi tío	3	1	Correct
<b>Lo</b>	Lo escucho	A mi sobrino	3	1	Correct
<b>Lo</b>	Lo compré	El regalo	3	1	Correct
<b>Las</b>	Las vas a querer	A mis gatas	3	1	Correct
<b>Las</b>	Las abandonaron	A mis hermanas	3	1	Correct
<b>Lo</b>	Tieneslo aqui	El diente	1	1	Incorrect
<b>La</b>	No exijo la	La experiencia	2	1	Incorrect
<b>La</b>	Tuvela	La oportunidad	2	1	Incorrect
<b>Lo</b>	Considero yo lo	Eso	2	1	Incorrect
<b>Lo</b>	Vas a lo quieres	Mi perro	3	1	Incorrect

B:

Free Uses Indirect Object Pronoun (Task 4, 5 and 6) Experimental Group

Pronoun	Literal use	Replaced noun/phrase/ pronoun	Task	# of instances	Correct or Incorrect
Les	Les gustaría	A nuestros invitados	4	1	Correct
Le	Le pediré	A Henry	4	1	Correct
Te	Te pongo el anillo	A ti	4	1	Correct
Le	Le pagan	Al novio	4	1	Correct
Les	Les pagamos	A los novios	4	1	Correct
Les	Les dicen felicidades	A los novios	4	1	Correct
Les	Les invitamos	A ustedes	4	1	Correct
Nos	Nos pagan el banquete	A nosotros	4	1	Correct
Les	Saca fotos un fotógrafo	A los novios	4	1	Correct
Les	Gusta	A ustedes			
Te	Te pone el anillo	A ti	4	1	Correct
Les	Les pregunta eso	A ellos	4	1	Correct
Les	Les debo dinero	A mis padres	4	1	Correct
Me	Me parece tradicional la boda	A mí	4	1	Correct
Les	Les doy una fiesta	A los novios	4	1	Correct
Les	Queremos agradecerles	A todos los invitados	4	1	Correct
Nos	Nos paga la boda la reina	A nosotros	4	1	Correct
Les	Les relajamos	A los invitados	4	1	Correct
Les	Les voy a invitar	A mis amigos	4	1	Correct
Les	Les vamos a pagar el viaje	A los novios	4	1	Correct
Nos	Nos van a dar regalos	A nosotros	4	1	Correct
Les	Les mandamos invitaciones	A los invitados	4	1	Correct
Nos	Nos dan regalos	A nosotros	4	1	Correct
Le	Le paga la boda su papá	A Diego	4	1	Correct
Nos	Nos gusta	A nosotros	5	2	Correct
Nos	Nos encanta	A nosotros	5	1	Correct

<b>Le</b>	Le podemos aportar	Al programa	5	1	Correct
<b>Le</b>	Le doy una perspectiva	A su universidad	5	1	Correct
<b>Le</b>	Le apporto cultura americana	A su universidad	5	1	Correct
<b>Te</b>	Te gusta la historia	A ti	5	1	Correct
<b>Les</b>	Les agradecemos	A ustedes	5	1	Correct
<b>Les</b>	Les damos mucho	A los profesores	5	1	Correct
<b>Les</b>	Les ayudamos	A los profesores	5	1	Correct
<b>Nos</b>	Nos puede ayudar	A nosotros	5	1	Correct
<b>Le</b>	Le gusta trabajar	Al decano	5	1	Correct
<b>Les</b>	Les gusta trabajar	A ellas	5	1	Correct
<b>Le</b>	Le preguntamos	A usted	5	1	Correct
<b>Le</b>	Le aportamos	Al programa	5	1	Correct
<b>Les</b>	Les enseñamos	A ustedes	5	1	Correct
<b>Le</b>	Le podemos enseñar	A usted	5	1	Correct
<b>Le</b>	Le puede interesar	Al profesor	5	1	Correct
<b>Nos</b>	Nos pueden ayudar	A nosotros	5	1	Correct
<b>Le</b>	Le puedo enviar las invitaciones	A ellos	6	1	Correct
<b>Les</b>	Voy a darles instrucciones	A los invitados	6	1	Correct
<b>Les</b>	Les damos invitaciones	A los invitados	6	1	Correct
<b>Le</b>	Le sirves la comida	A tu pareja	6	1	Correct
<b>Le</b>	Le damos un regalo	A usted	6	1	Correct
<b>Te</b>	Te doy las instrucciones	A ti	6	1	Correct
<b>Les</b>	Les llevamos sorpresas	A los invitados	6	1	Correct
<b>Les</b>	Les damos regalos	A los estudiantes	6	1	Correct
<b>Les</b>	Les sirve la comida	A los invitados	6	1	Correct
<b>Les</b>	Les ofrecemos bebidas	A ustedes	6	1	Correct
<b>Le</b>	Le invitamos	A Obama	6	1	Correct
<b>Le</b>	Le preparamos una sorpresa	A los invitados	6	1	Correct
<b>Le</b>	Le sirve la comida	A los invitados	6	1	Correct
<b>Me</b>	Me haces un favor	A mí	6	1	Correct
<b>Les</b>	Los das una sorpresa	A los invitados	6	1	Incorrect
<b>Les</b>	Los regalamos	A los invitados	6	1	Incorrect
<b>Le</b>	La damos el anillo	A la novia	6	1	Incorrect

C:

Free Uses Direct/Indirect Object Pronoun Final Project Control Group

Pronoun	Direct or Indirect	Literal use	Replaced noun/phrase/pronoun	# of instances	Correct or Incorrect
Lo	Direct	No lo he visitado	El lugar	3	Correct
Lo	Direct	Lo conozco	El lugar	2	Correct
Lo	Direct	Lo necesito	Eso	2	Correct
La	Direct	La miro	Mi profesora	1	Correct
La	Direct	La tiene	La nacionalidad	1	Correct
Lo	Direct	Lo compra	El carro	1	Correct
Te	Direct	Te mira	A ti	1	Correct
La	Direct	No la necesita	La visa	1	Correct
La	Direct	La quiero	La visita	1	Correct
Los	Direct	Los escucho	Los carros	1	Correct
La	Direct	La llamo	A ella	1	Correct
Los	Direct	No los conoce	Sus padres	1	Correct
Me	Indirect	Me gustaría conocer Uruguay	A mí	2	Correct
Le	Indirect	Le diré eso	A él	2	Correct
Le	Indirect	Le voy a comprar algo	A mi profesora	1	Correct
Le	Indirect	Le dije que sí	A mi profesora	1	Correct
Le	Indirect	Le deseo un buen viaje	A mi profesora	1	Correct
Nos	Indirect	Nos regalamos algo	A nosotros	1	Correct
Te	Indirect	Te da mucho amor	A ti	1	Correct
Nos	Indirect	Nos gusta vivir aquí	A nosotros	1	Correct
Le	Indirect	Le doy amor	A mi familia	1	Correct
Le	Indirect	La doy todo	A ella	1	Incorrect

D:

Free Uses Direct/Indirect Object Pronoun Final Exam Experimental Group

Pronoun	Direct or Indirect	Literal use	Replaced noun/phrase/pronoun	# of instances	Correct or Incorrect
Me	Direct	Visitarme	A mí	5	Correct
Te	Direct	Te veo	A ti	4	Correct
Te	Direct	Te extraño	A ti	3	Correct
Lo	Direct	No lo creo	Eso	2	Correct
La	Direct	La extraño	Mi madre	2	Correct
Lo	Direct	Lo quieres	Eso	2	Correct
La	Direct	Puedes visitarla	Mi ciudad	2	Correct
Lo	Direct	Lo visitas	El parque	2	Correct
Lo	Direct	Lo quiero	El restaurante	2	Correct
La	Direct	La considero	Mi ciudad	1	Correct
La	Direct	Cuidarla	La ciudad	1	Correct
La	Direct	Comprarla	La entrada	1	Correct
La	Direct	La ofrezco	La cena	1	Correct
Los	Direct	Tienes que verlos	Los parques	1	Correct
Los	Direct	Vamos a comprarlos	Los dulces	1	Correct
Los	Direct	Los puedes conocer	Mis padres	1	Correct
Te	Direct	Te espero	A ti	1	Correct
Lo	Direct	Lo admiras	El museo	1	Correct
Me	Indirect	Me gustaría ir	A mí	3	Correct
Te	Indirect	Te voy a mostrar...	A ti	3	Correct
Te	Indirect	Te va a gustar	A ti	2	Correct
Te	Indirect	Te permito dormir	A ti	1	Correct
Les	Indirect	Puedes comprarles regalos	A tu familia	1	Correct
Te	Indirect	Te dejo mi ropa	A ti	1	Correct
Le	Indirect	Vas a llevarle un recuerdo	A tu novio	1	Correct
Te	Indirect	Puedes regalarte algo	A ti	1	Correct
Me	Indirect	Me dice que eres como un hijo	A mí	1	Correct
Te	Indirect	Te pago la comida	A ti	1	Correct



<b>Te</b>	Indirect	Te pregunto dudas	A ti	1	Correct
<b>Me</b>	Indirect	Puedes invitarme	A mí	1	Correct
<b>Te</b>	Indirect	Te invito a un pretzel	A ti	1	Correct
<b>Le</b>	Indirect	Le gusta ese hotel	A mi familia	1	Correct
<b>Te</b>	Indirect	Te puedo mostrar tiendas	A ti	1	Correct
<b>Te</b>	Indirect	No te va a gustar	A ti	1	Correct
<b>Le</b>	Indirect	Le ayudas con la casa	A mi mamá	1	Correct
<b>Me</b>	Indirect	No me apetece caminar	A mí	1	Correct
<b>Te</b>	Indirect	Te deseo un buen viaje	A ti	1	Correct
<b>Te</b>	Indirect	Te doy un abrazo	A ti	1	Correct

E:

Free Uses Direct/Indirect Object Pronoun Final Exam Control Group

Pronoun	Direct or Indirect	Literal use	Replaced noun/phrase/pronoun	# of instances	Correct or Wrong
Me	Direct	Visitarme	A mí	2	Correct
Te	Direct	Te veo	A ti	2	Correct
Te	Direct	Te quiero	A ti	1	Correct
Te	Direct	Te extraño	A ti	1	Correct
La	Direct	La visito	La ciudad	1	Correct
Lo	Direct	Lo quieres	Eso	1	Correct
La	Direct	Puedes visitarla	La ciudad	1	Correct
Me	Indirect	Me encantaría	A mí	1	Correct
Nos	Indirect	Nos compramos regalos	A nosotros	1	Correct
Le	Indirect	Llevarle algo	A mi madre	1	Correct
Te	Indirect	Te va a gustar	A ti	1	Correct
Te	Indirect	Te deseo feliz verano	A ti	1	Correct

F:

#### Further discussion and analysis of the data

This study demonstrates the benefits of using an online TBLT module specially designed for the acquisition of direct and indirect object pronouns in Spanish. The results show that participants in the experimental group used the target structures on many occasions, and their productions exceeded those of the control group (as shown in Chapter IV of this dissertation). However, it is necessary to examine each instance of the target structures to find differences between categories such as correct vs. incorrect, masculine vs. feminine, and singular vs. plural.

The results for the experimental group in the TBLT module show that there were seventy-eight correct free uses of the direct object pronouns and fifty-seven correct free uses of the indirect object pronouns. The total was one hundred thirty-five correct free uses of direct and indirect object pronouns. However, there were only eight incorrect free uses of such structures. In the final exam activity, however, students in the experimental group produced fifty-eight correct free uses of the direct and indirect object pronouns and no incorrect instances of such structures.

On the other hand, the students in the control group produced twenty-seven correct free uses of direct and indirect object pronouns and only one incorrect free use. As in the experimental group, there were no incorrect free uses of the target structures in the control group's final exam activity. Thus, the experimental group produced both more correct and more incorrect instances of the target structures than the control group did, but the number of correct instances was much higher than the number of incorrect ones.

In contrast to Spanish indirect object pronouns, Spanish third-person direct object pronouns are either masculine or feminine. The results from the TBLT module

completed by the experimental group show that out of the seventy-eight direct object pronouns, seventy-three uses were third person. There were sixty-one free uses of the masculine third-person direct object pronoun and twelve free uses of the feminine one. Furthermore, in the final exam activity, the control group produced thirty-three instances of the direct object pronouns. Of those thirty-three uses, twenty were third-person pronouns, which included twelve instances of masculine object pronouns and eight instances of feminine object pronouns. The control group, however, produced sixteen instances of the direct object pronoun in the final project. Of those, ten were masculine uses and six were feminine. Additionally, the control group produced nine instances of the direct object pronoun in the final exam activity; of those, three were third person, with one masculine instance and two feminine instances of the direct object pronouns. Hence, the control group used the masculine object pronouns more frequently than the feminine ones, which is not surprising since the masculine gender is dominant in the Spanish language, and it is generally used more.

Both direct and indirect object pronouns in Spanish are either singular or plural. Of the one hundred thirty-five correct free uses of direct and indirect object pronouns the experimental group produced during the TBLT module, eighty-three were singular instances and fifty-two were plural ones. In the final exam activity, the experimental group produced fifty-eight correct instances of the direct and indirect object pronouns, with fifty-five singular instances and only three uses of the plural form. Additionally, of the twenty-seven uses of the direct and indirect object pronouns the control group produced in the final project, twenty-three were singular instances of the pronouns, and four were plural instances. Similarly, in the final exam activity, students in the control group produced fourteen free uses of the direct and indirect object pronouns, with thirteen uses of the singular form and one use of the plural form. Thus, the TBLT

module prompted a more balanced use of singular and plural direct and indirect object pronouns than either the final project or the final exam activity for both groups.