



Pragmática del español: contexto, uso y variación

J. César Félix-Brasdefer. London and New York: Routledge, 2019, 350 pp., ISBN 9781138215801

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To cite this article: Jeff Michno (2021): Pragmática del español: contexto, uso y variación, Journal of Spanish Language Teaching, DOI: [10.1080/23247797.2021.1941609](https://doi.org/10.1080/23247797.2021.1941609)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23247797.2021.1941609>



Published online: 28 Jun 2021.



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BOOK REVIEW

J. César Félix-Brasdefer. *Pragmática del español: contexto, uso y variación*. London and New York: Routledge, 2019, 350 pp., ISBN 9781138215801

J. César Félix-Brasdefer provides instructors and students with a current and comprehensive introduction to the field of Spanish pragmatics, replete with online resources and interactional data. The text is impressive in its theoretical breadth and depth while maintaining a focus on bringing concepts to life using naturalistic data. In addition to illustrating core concepts of pragmatics, the text introduces students to pragmatic variation in its many forms, primarily, and quite effectively, through a look at speech acts in different regional, sociocultural, and linguistic contexts. A central feature of the book is its accompanying website, which elaborates on content and provides resources in both Spanish and English, particularly helpful for L2 Spanish students engaging with new theoretical concepts. In addition, the website connects students to multimedia resources to enhance their understanding and application of the material. Transcripts of role-plays and naturally-occurring interactions, some with accompanying video and audio, serve as relatable “real-life” data for analysis during class or in independent assignments. True to its hands-on approach, the book also provides a full chapter dedicated to the design and implementation of pragmatics research projects. It is an excellent tool, which can be incorporated into the curriculum throughout the semester to provide a framework that yields well-planned high-quality final projects. The book is ideal for undergraduate and graduate students specializing in linguistics as well as advanced L2 Spanish language students interested in pragmatics.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the fundamental concepts of pragmatics, giving students a firm base on which to build. The text identifies key terms and clearly distinguishes between concepts that often confuse novice students, such as: grammar and pragmatics; sentence and utterance; and different notions of context, such as linguistic, cognitive, situational, and sociocultural. Once the centrality of context in pragmatics is established, students are introduced to social and contextual factors that bear on speech, including power, distance, and imposition. Through a variety of examples, students begin to see how speech can vary according to these factors, as they examine different registers and frames of speech and associated contextualization cues. Finally, students develop an understanding of the difference between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge.

Chapters 2-4 offer students a more in-depth look at core themes in pragmatics, including deixis, speech acts, and inferences. Through the use of accessible examples, the author effectively bridges the gap between theory and practice, clearly illustrating concepts that can challenge students. Online resources include supplemental explanations in English, often in video format, to help students with some of the more difficult content. While this theoretical material is inherently dense and may prove challenging for undergraduate Spanish majors, the theoretical base is ideal for graduate students or undergraduate students specializing in linguistics. Furthermore, instructors can choose to provide an overview or dive deep into theory, depending on course objectives.

Chapters 5-7 excel in allowing students to apply their new knowledge base to relatable real-world contexts. The text abounds with conversational data to introduce students to discourse-level analysis of speech. Students begin to understand speech acts as they occur in turn-taking sequences, while they simultaneously consider deixis, implicatures, and other core concepts. I discovered that my upper-level Spanish students were particularly intrigued by the clearly presented differences between oral and written speech, as well as the nuances of computer-mediated communication

detailed in Chapter 5. They enthusiastically applied the book's analytical framework to their own naturally-occurring data.

In Chapter 6, which deals with politeness and impoliteness in the Spanish-speaking world, the book begins to shift its focus to different types of pragmatic variation. I found that politeness theory offered my students an intuitive introduction to the nature of variation alongside its potential consequences across languages and cultures. Chapter 7 expands on students' understanding of variation by allowing them to analyze four different types of speech acts—requests, refusals, apologies, and compliments—from a cross-regional perspective. In Chapter 8, students explore variation in forms of address throughout the Spanish-speaking world. Aside from enhancing their understanding of regional differences, the author uses his own research to introduce students to the pragmatic functions of moment-to-moment pronoun switching. The examples and suggested research activities help students to better understand these functions by providing an analytical model that incorporates key concepts they've studied, such as (im)politeness, (in)directness, power, solidarity, and respect. Combined, Chapters 6-8 enable students to consider how both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic resources vary throughout the Spanish-speaking world and beyond, while they also reflect on their own resources and perspectives.

Chapters 9 and 10 mark a transition to the application of pragmatics theory to pedagogical and research contexts. I found that introducing several of the concepts from Chapter 9 early in the semester, such as pragmatic competence, positive and negative pragmatic transfer, and pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failures, helped my students to gain quick and intuitive entry into the field. The chapter also provides resources for learning and teaching pragmatics in informal and formal contexts, including classroom and study abroad settings, while giving much-needed attention to heritage language learners. The sections on teaching pragmatics have value for both instructors and students. Aside from enhancing students' ability to identify and acquire pragmatic norms on their own, the material provides frameworks and research extracts that can inform course and activity design, useful to instructors and students specializing in education.

Finally, Chapter 10 offers a comprehensive and practical guide to conducting pragmatics research. It covers the wide variety of data types and collection methods, while touching on ethical concerns, and culminates with a step-by-step guide to designing and reporting on an academic research project. I found that integrating the chapter throughout the semester greatly enhanced student autonomy and the quality of final projects.

In sum, Félix-Brasdefer succeeds in providing a comprehensive introduction to Spanish pragmatics that strikes a balance between theory and application. It is ideal for courses with undergraduate and graduate linguistics students, as well as advanced L2 Spanish students.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/23247797.2021.1941609>

