**Interactive Tutorials on the** **Gender and Number of Spanish Nouns**

**Donna Chambers**

**Design: Spring 2016- Spring 2017**

**Implementation: Spring 2017**

**Final Report: April 2017**

**Introduction**

A major instructional challenge that affects the teaching of a foreign language is providing students with sufficient practice to accommodate their individual skill levels. When total immersion is not possible, most students need relevant practice well beyond the classroom in order to grasp and master various grammatical concepts and to achieve the level of proficiency expected of them by the end of their course.

The Spanish professors at PSU Berks, in close collaboration with the PSU Berks CLT team, met that challenge by creating the Tutorials and Practices Website (<http://berks.psu.edu/spanish-tutorials-and-practice-exercises>). The Interactive web based activities on the site provided students that which paper textbooks could not- oral/aural practice that offered immediate feedback. Students could now practice all four areas of language learning at once: reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

 Originally intended for students at PSU Berks, the website grew in popularity and is now used by students and teachers in a variety Spanish classes across the nation. As traffic to the site increased, so did requests to add more grammatical concepts. Thus, this project was created in response those requests. Noticing that students at all levels of Spanish benefit from continuous assistance with gender and number agreement in Spanish, I felt that tutorials on those concepts would address the most immediate and ongoing needs of students working toward proficiency.

The idea of the tutorials was to offer students a fun and comprehensible way to resolve the intrigues of gender agreement that do not exist in English. As a natural complement to the gender tutorial, the number tutorial was also created. The intended impact of the tutorials is for students to reduce the number of agreement errors they make when producing Spanish phrases and sentences. The tutorials present the rules of gender and number in their entirety rather than the traditional manner of being spread out over several chapters in a book or books.

**Project Design Timeline**

**Fall 2015 –** A call for TLI Grants was proposed for instructors interested in creating technology based learning. Realizing how much technology enhances my teaching and how much it is a part student life, I applied for The TLI Grant to build on The PSU Berks Spanish Tutorials Website.

**February 2016:**

I received a letter in February of 2106 notifying me that I was awarded the TLI Grant. Excited at the prospect of creating a project that would be of real value and service to a wide audience, I immediately began to research the concepts of grammatical gender and number to discover just how and when these concepts were typically taught to L2 learners of Spanish. After consulting with Spanish colleagues at Penn State and other universities, I designed a plan of what I felt would be most beneficial to be included on the tutorials. By the end of the month, I had written the script for the gender tutorial.

**March–May, 2016:**

Upon completion of the script, I received training form Mary Ann Mengel on how to select illustrations for the power point that were copy right free, how to properly attribute the photos I used, and most importantly, how to make my choice of design accessible to students of all abilities.

**June – August 2016:**

Having populated a power point with symbols, words and pictures, I sent it to Mary Ann so that she could transform the static power point into an animated tutorial. I learned how to perform certain tasks using Adobe Presenter of which I was previously unaware but Mary Ann was really the one who created the animated version. We passed the tutorial back and forth a few times to check on the accuracy of the rules, questions, and answers as well as the functionality of the tutorial. Once we felt it was ready, I sent it to my colleagues Belén Rodríguez-Mourelo and Rosario Torres for review. They pointed out a few errors that I had overlooked and gave me their approval.

**August 2016- November 2106**

With the gender tutorial fairly well completed, I repeated the entire process described above to create the number tutorial. Mary Ann was once again instrumental in bringing the tutorial to life. She also helped me tremendously by offering perspectives on how non-speakers of Spanish would receive and interact with the items I had chosen.

**December 2016 – January 2017**

Once both tutorials were in their final stage, it was time to record the voice to accompany them. Once again, Mary Ann guided me into creating an audio portion that was user friendly, fun and interesting rather in “lecture” mode. I was amazed at her expertise in cleaning up the voice over. I was astounded to watch her manipulate my recorded voice so that it matched perfectly to what users would be seeing. It was very technological and I do not think I could attempt such a feat on my own yet, but I did acquire a general understanding of what and how this can be done.

**February 2017- March 2017**

Now that the tutorials were ready to go live, it was time to assess their effectiveness.

Mary Ann trained me on making a general survey concerning Spanish grammatical gender and number, a pre-quiz, and a post quiz. The assessment tools were uploaded to Canvas where I asked my Spanish 2 classes to provide me with assessment feedback.

**Learning Outcomes - Assessment:**

Students were given a survey to complete concerning the overall experience with the tutorials. 49 students were asked to take the surveys. 47 responded as follows:

***How much knowledge did you have about the topics of grammatical Gender and Number in Spanish before taking this course?***

General knowledge 85%

Very little knowledge 15%

***Did you review the tutorials on Gender and Number created by Dr. Chambers?***

Yes 96%

No 4%

***Please rate the teaching effectiveness of the Gender tutorial.***

Excellent 19%

Very good 28%

Good 40%

Somewhat effective 9%

Poor 4%\*

***Please rate the teaching effectiveness of the Number tutorial.***

Excellent 19%

Very good 32%

Good 36%

Somewhat effective 9%

Poor 4%\*

*\*Interesting that the 2 scores of poor were noted by 2 students who did not watch the tutorials!*

***Did you watch either tutorial more than once?***

Yes 9%

No 91%

***Did you encounter any technical difficulties with the tutorials?***

Yes 13%

No 87%

***Would you recommend these tutorials to a friend who wanted to learn these topics?***

Yes 96%

No 4%

***Do you have any comments, feedback, or suggestions for improvement?***

In general, students provided positive feedback:

* *“The tutorials was very good I will use them to study for my final.”*
* *“I would love to see more of these videos in my next Spanish course.”*
* *“Overall the tutorials were amazing.”*
* *“I like the tutorials more than the animated guy on VHL.Â.”*

Approximately 6% of respondents felt that the tutorials were too lengthy.

Several students indicated they would have preferred to continuously play the tutorial rather than click to advance to the next portion of the presentation.

***A pre-quiz and a post quiz were also administered. Results were as follows:***

Pre-quiz average score 92% (scores ranged from 73-100)

Post –quiz average score 65% (scores ranged from 27 – 100)

The post-quiz average is slightly skewed by one respondent who scored 27%. However the primary contributing factor to seemingly unfavorable results is likely the difference in question type and difficulty between the pre-quiz and post-quiz. The pre-quiz was true/false and the post-quiz was multiple choice. The level of production requested in the post-quiz was much more complex than in the pre-quiz. To achieve a more accurate measure of student learning, in future pre- and post- assessments, I would make both assessments equal in their degree of difficulty.

**Discussion and future plans for enhancement**

The survey results indicate that, for the most part, the students enjoyed the tutorials and found them to be useful. Therefore I believe the goal of creating meaningful interactive activities was met. However, I am not sure that I accurately measured the learning outcomes intended from those activities.

In the future I will incorporate the culture of tutorials into the course in a more meaningful manner so that students approach the assessment more thoughtfully. Several students shared that they were not fully invested in taking the pre-test and post-test as summarized in this comment:

* *“I feel as though they were very well made, but i personally could of paid more attention to them and received a higher grade on my post quiz.”*

Since the completed tutorials became available during the current semester (spring 2017), timing did not allow for optimal alignment within the course. This mismatch may have contributed to unbalanced pre- and post- results.

I would also consider adding a survey for all users to the site in order to garner a broader sense of how well the tutorials enhance the learning of grammatical gender and number in Spanish.

Some survey respondents suggested that the tutorials should auto-play rather than require being advanced by the viewer. Although there is research that supports our strategy of giving the viewer control of the pace, this option could be discussed as a possible future enhancement.

**Scholarly Outcomes**

No publications or presentations resulted from this project

**Acknowledgements**

Mary Ann Mengel, Instructional Multimedia Designer, for her unwavering support, time, talent and expertise. She is extremely knowledgeable, kind and patient. The perspectives she offered helped me think out of the box to create a series of activities that will have a broad appeal for my students. This project would not have come to fruition without her.

Daonian Liu, Director, Center for Learning and Teaching and Instructor in Information Sciences & Technology, for her belief in this project. I am most grateful that Daonian and her team selected my project to receive the TLI Grant.

Belén Rodríguez Mourelo, Associate Professor, Spanish and HASS Division Head, along with Rosario Torres, Associate Professor of Spanish, for their time in reviewing and proofreading the tutorials several times!

My Spanish 2 Students – for being patient as we developed and implemented the tutorials and for the time they invested in the assessment process.