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THE MODERN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM:

INDIVIDUALITY, TECHNOLOGY, AND CONTEXT

by

Eric Sims

A portfolio submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

Approved:

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

Logan, Utah

2013

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ABSTRACT

The Modern Language Classroom:

Individuality, Technology, and Context

by

Eric Sims: Master of Second Language Teaching
Utah State University, 2013

Major Professor: Dr. Joshua J. Thoms
Department: Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies

This portfolio is a compilation of the author's research-supported ideas on what good language teaching looks like. The central component is the teaching philosophy, in which the author explains that respect for individuality, use of technology, and use of culture as context for learning are the three elements seen as most important for successful language learning.

The teaching philosophy is supported by artifacts about peer feedback in language learning, literacy in adult English as a Second Language learners, and autonomy in culture learning. Finally, in three annotations the author branches out from the pillars of the teaching philosophy and examines place-based education, portfolio-based language assessment, and game-based learning and their relationships with the teaching philosophy.

(143 pages)

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I would like to acknowledge and thank those who have helped me get here. First, I am grateful to Dr. Joshua Thoms, Dr. Karin deJonge-Kannan, and Dr. JP Spicer-Escalante for their guidance in the process of crafting my ideas about language teaching. I have grown considerably throughout the portfolio development process and could not have done so without their help.

I would also like to thank my teachers and fellow MSLT-ers. Coming from a non-humanities background, I sincerely appreciated their accepting attitudes and patience as I became acquainted with the world of language teaching.

Most importantly, I thank my wife, Sylvia. She is the best thing that ever happened to me.

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INTRODUCTION

This portfolio is a product of my learning experience over the past two years in the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program. The central component is my teaching philosophy, which includes a brief explanation of my own language learning experience, a summary of the language teaching environment I plan to work in, and my personal teaching philosophy, in which I support my views on the most important components of language teaching.

The central pillars of my teaching philosophy are found in the title of this portfolio. They are individuality, technology, and context. As students are treated as individuals and are able to learn according to their own learning styles, they become more motivated and learn better. Technology should be used to provide adequate resources to students. It is an incredible tool for connecting today's digital natives with the wealth of information surrounding them. However, if technology is employed without direction, then it may not be used effectively. Context, which in this portfolio largely refers to project-based learning, provides direction to learners and helps them focus on topics, ideas, and activities that are most interesting and useful to them.

As a teacher, I see myself as a facilitator of learning, with the student as the center of attention. My students will flourish in the language learning process as I recognize their individuality, use resources available through technology, and contextualize learning.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Apprenticeship of Observation

The responsibilities of teachers are many, but the broadest and most important of all is to guide the students on their way to acquisition of skills and a broader world perspective. If a teacher is behind on grading papers and hasn't written up the next test but has students enthused and conversing, then that teacher is succeeding. It is important for teachers to guide the students in a way that creates a need and encourages discovery and learning. During my undergraduate studies, I worked in a biology lab and took three semesters of personal research. After working together to formulate questions, my mentor and her graduate students helped me by providing me with a pile of research papers that would allow me to find answers to my questions. They could easily have told me their ideas, but after taking time to read and learn for myself, discussing my proposed hypothesis and finding out that I had learned something was much more rewarding.

The same is true with language teaching. If teachers expect their students to be successful, they must outline the basic questions and then facilitate answer finding. As a junior high and high school Spanish student, I knew nothing of my full potential as a language learner. I can honestly say I did not even understand the importance of knowing more than one tense. Unfortunately, my junior high Spanish teacher, Mrs. T, did not seem to believe that verb tenses were important either. By the end of Spanish I, we had heard all three of her stories from living in Argentina multiple times and had only learned the present tense and names of all the objects in my backpack and on a restaurant menu. I had no idea what questions to ask and, since I never had homework, I did not learn outside of class other than repeating the order of verb conjugations to myself while I got ready for

school some days. In high school, Mr. C spoke endlessly of our potential to be fluent by the time we graduated if we would just listen to music and watch television in Spanish at every possible moment. He would spend the rest of the class time lecturing about the importance of being culturally tolerant or having us do a cloze worksheet in groups while we listened to Michael Jackson. These examples of a teacher-centered classroom taught me what I should avoid to promote learning in my classroom.

Fortunately, I have been blessed with excellent teachers and mentors here at Utah State University. Tom Schroeder, who was my mentor and example longer than anyone else, lead a conversation class that focused on the students and their goals for learning. At the beginning of each of the semesters that I was in his class as a classroom assistant, he had each member of the class fill out a quick questionnaire about themselves, their interests, and their plans for the future. If a large majority of the class was interested in a certain topic, such as sports, then he would begin class each day by talking a bit about the most recent happenings in the world of sports, or he would dedicate half of the class on the Friday before the Super Bowl to learning the rules of American football. He was also open to new ideas for class projects. Although the final project was supposed to be a serious one, if a group could convincingly present on “2012 – The End of the World” or “Cartoons of the World,” he would allow it, understanding that they were learning by doing something they loved. These traits have inspired me to create a student-centered environment in my classroom.

Another teacher of mine, Dr. P, has been a kind mentor and enthusiastic example of a student-centered teacher. From our first class discussion of *Nuestra América* by José Martí, each of the students in the class knew that our opinion mattered and would be

respected and heard. Because of his initiation, response, feedback (IRF) style of teaching, each class, rather than being a lecture, truly was a literary salon, or tertulia. He succeeded in making me feel like I was going to an intellectual discussion even though I knew no more about Latin-American literature than anyone else. Dr. P's class has shown me that it is possible to create an environment in which each student feels that his or her opinion is valued in a way that is rarely found in other classrooms.

I am grateful for the teachers that I have had, both the excellent and the lackluster ones, because they have taught me much more than language. They have shown me that the role of a teacher is to instill in students the confidence that they can reach a potential that they do not yet understand. This can only be accomplished when the teacher puts aside his or her own agenda and focuses on the desires and needs of the students. Once students have that confidence, they will be ready to set their own goals and take on language learning with more independence.

For me, independent language learning came when I served a religious mission to Spain. As part of my language preparation I was sent with a companion into a city park in Madrid each Saturday with pamphlets, a smile, and a few freshly learned phrases to meet new people and practice my Spanish. Always having believed that necessity facilitates learning, I was able to experience it there firsthand. As I progressed in my language learning, I began to ask the questions that had never before occurred to me regarding words, ideas, and grammatical structures. This brought me to two realizations: first, I found that although metalanguage did not appeal to me in English, it was an invaluable component of my second language learning process. Second, I discovered that most of my companions did not share that same enthusiasm for pronouns and direct and indirect

objects. These two lessons taught me that I was free to discover in whatever way best suited me and that if I was going to share with anyone, I would need to understand them and meet them at that level. Both of these lessons will help me guide my students towards independent learning.

Living abroad taught me that I could survive or I could thrive. An independent learner should monitor his or her own progression towards goals. I enjoyed paying attention to my own changing language skills because it was something that I could both measure and influence if I felt it needed work. When language learning became a personal goal rather than a burdensome duty, I wanted to put forth the effort to excel.

As a product of my own independent learning and the input from my teachers throughout the years, I want to create a student-centered classroom filled with resources that students need to fulfill their language learning needs. I want to gain the trust of my students by accepting them as they are and then be a dependable mentor that will orient them on the path to their personal potentials.

Professional Environment

The ideal teaching setting for me is at the university level. Students have usually reached a more mature level of critical thought by the time they reach college and realize, or begin realizing, the importance of developing skills such as academic writing and the coherent presentation of ideas and goals. International students at American universities, my target demographic, are here to improve their ability to use these skills in English. Having worked with both undergraduate and graduate international students for some time now, I have begun to see what their strengths are as well as their needs. I have enjoyed helping international graduate students improve their teaching skills and connect with the American undergraduates they interact with. I look forward to continuing to help these students prepare themselves for success by teaching academic writing, presentation, and conversation skills. I am also specifically interested in teaching how to synthesize and properly write research papers and grant proposals. This will increase students' chances of getting research published and save their major professors, editors, and research consumers the work of trying to decipher poorly written papers.

I also want to be involved with short-term intensive language programs and international student hosting opportunities. Such programs offer unique opportunities to both local and foreign students. Local students are exposed to cultures and ideas that they may not encounter otherwise, and international students become familiar with local culture before making the commitment to complete a four-year degree program. Thus, by combining my interests in teaching academic English at the university level with the

opportunities for cultural exchange available through short-term and hosting programs, I will be able to perpetuate language learning and promote cross-cultural awareness and acceptance wherever I go.

Personal Teaching Philosophy

Students should be recognized as individual and unique. I realize that they are composites of their cultures, families, traditions, etc., and that many of those factors may be shared among groups of students. However, every student is different. The traditional classroom treats every student the same, which is not necessarily the best thing to do. I plan to work with international students learning English throughout my career, so I will be exposed to a wide range of individuals and experiences.

For me, the 'modern language classroom' is a place where students are seen as individuals who have their own interests and needs. In this type of classroom, technology is an integral tool for learning because it connects students with authentic material, bringing everything they are learning into a meaningful context. Individuality, technology, and context are central components of my personal teaching philosophy that also reflect, in my view, the modern language classroom.

Language teaching is about so much more than providing verb conjugation trees in an easy-to-remember package for an important test someday. It is about preparing students to become critical, open-minded thinkers and wise decision makers because they will be faced with multifaceted, complex decisions as they live and work in a global society (Chen, 2010; Kohn, 2011). Drills, verb trees, and worksheets will never create the kind of in-depth language learning that will be necessary for students to make meaningful contributions in a multilingual, multicultural, and interconnected world.

Communicative language teaching (CLT) encourages students to speak, even though they are sure to make mistakes. In its infancy, CLT was only a slightly modified

version of the rote, drill-oriented audiolingual methodology, its immediate precursor, only rather than having students mechanically repeat what the teacher was saying, they would ask each other mechanically repeated questions and provide mechanically practiced responses (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). In CLT, grammar is used "*in support of* communication," rather than as a central component of classroom instruction (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001, p. 34, italics added).

CLT contextualizes classroom communication through meaningful, task-based activities. These tasks create real-life situations in the classroom so students can learn by doing (Savignon, 1991). Contextualized classroom communication involves the exchange, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning (Savignon, 1998). Negotiation of meaning occurs when a speaker stops the flow of a conversation to ask for clarification, such as saying 'Excuse me?' (Lee & VanPatten, 2003; Long, 1996). This type of classroom communication is set apart from its predecessors in that the activities are carefully designed by the teacher but responsibility for communication rests upon the students (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001).

With the teacher assuming the role of an architect, rather than a micro-manager, students are able to actively discuss their own ideas and interpretations of the tasks set before them. Then, if students have questions or concerns, they are free to consult the teacher for clarification. Ballman et al. (2001) claim that this sort of classroom communication is inherently motivating for students because they see the real-world application of their language learning efforts and enjoy the autonomy of personalizing their learning. Once students realize that what they are learning in the classroom is applicable outside the classroom, and if they feel they are adequately prepared to use that

language, then the perceived isolation of the classroom itself can dissipate and give way to a much more authentic and lasting learning experience.

Even with communicative activities, if I only focus on the well-being of my students' language skills, I will be neglecting an important part of the students and the places in which they live - culture. According to Deardorff, “intercultural competence is and will play an ever greater role in the future given the growing diversity of American society and within the workplace” (2006, p. 9). That competence includes knowing what to say and how to say it (pragmatics), customs, societal perceptions of social issues, etc. Understanding culture and having the opportunity to see it in action in the classroom during language learning activities will deepen students’ understanding of the people who speak their new language and give them a reason to communicate in a foreign environment (Belz & Kinginger, 2002, 2003). That intercultural competence will remain in a language learner’s mind after detailed memories of specific task-based activities have faded.

That said, how can I create the proper environment for such learning? First, I must respect the individuality of my students. Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences (1983) states that learners are varied but that they do share certain characteristics, or ways of being smart. Second, I should provide ample opportunity for students to engage with native speakers and authentic cultural materials through technology. Finally, having provided these resources, I should use project-based learning to allow students to tailor the curriculum (within certain parameters) to their own interests as well as guide them in critical thinking activities so that they can achieve cultural and academic as well as linguistic progress by learning in context.

Individuality: Multiple Intelligences

To understand why Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (MI) is different from other schools of thought, one must examine the origins of the theory. Gardner (1983) explains that as a youth he was a musician and that he became troubled as he grew older at the absence of artistic expression in psychology, his chosen field of study. He was affected most profoundly as his studies progressed and he dealt with people who had suffered brain damage and whose learning abilities were in some way hampered. He noticed patterns and developed criteria of what constitutes a personal style of learning, eventually articulating his original seven intelligences in his book *Frames of Mind* (1983).

For me, the first example is the most powerful. There are undoubtedly many talented artists, musicians, and naturalists in language classrooms today, but sometimes the teaching is focused so much on creating realistic conversation or processing input that students are not able to express themselves and learn in the style that is most productive for them. The theory of MI espouses no particular style of teaching, so it can be varied according to the needs of students instead of forcing all students to fit uniformly into a single system (Gardner, 1999). This thought is also supported by Sugata Mitra, who explained that the industrial model of education that was established and perpetuated throughout the British Empire is no longer valid or needed (2013). The industrial model was created to make sure that every student in the Empire would receive the same education as every other student in the Empire which stretched across the entire globe. It consists of rigid curricula, teacher-centered instruction, and students sitting in rows and mechanically receiving information. That model is, unfortunately and unnecessarily, still

in practice today in some parts of the world. If industrial education is no longer relevant, then it makes perfect sense to allow students to learn material in the way that is most suited to their learning styles, or intelligences.

The seven intelligences as originally proposed by Gardner (1983) are verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Those with a verbal/linguistic aptitude tend to be keen on word usage and the 'feel' of speech or text. Logical/mathematical minds readily recognize patterns and systems. Visual/spatial people are able to picture items and places in their minds with greater accuracy and detail than those whose visual/spatial intelligence is not as developed. Bodily/kinesthetic learners are those who learn by doing. The musical intelligence, obviously, is best seen in those who compose, perform, and enjoy music. Interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences are the abilities to relate to and communicate with others and to reflect upon one's own thoughts and actions, respectively.

Since the recognition of seven original intelligences, there has been some debate about other possible intelligences, including naturalist, existentialist, and spiritual intelligences (Gardner, 1999). I will not go into detail of the debate here, but suffice it to say that Gardner officially recognizes a naturalist intelligence, permits the idea of an existentialist intelligence, and rejects the idea of a spiritual intelligence as being too narrow (it is therefore included in the scope of the existentialist intelligence). For the sake of this portfolio, I will discuss only the original seven intelligences and the recently added naturalist intelligence.

As mentioned previously, MI can be appreciated across many teaching methodologies. Two teaching approaches that I am most interested in are layered curriculum as proposed by Nunley (2003) and the flipped classroom concept (Hamdan, McKnight, McKnight, & Arfstrom, 2013). Both of these approaches provide students with greater responsibility and flexibility in their learning while also encouraging students to learn the same material in diverse ways.

In a layered curriculum, larger units or modules are subdivided into various tasks for students to engage in. Those tasks are then categorized according to their learning goals. The most basic level is comprised of activities related to becoming familiar with new material on a superficial level. In the intermediate level, students should apply material learned in the basic levels to their own lives. Finally, as in Bloom's taxonomy (Krathwohl, 2002), the most advanced level of the curriculum requires students to analyze and evaluate. Here they will create or do something, likely with a partner, key pal, or group, that will give them some sort of a result from which they can form an opinion. Central to this curriculum design is the idea that many possible activities are provided in each category so that students have a variety to choose from. They are required to complete only a certain number of points, so they have flexibility and control over their studies.

In the language learning environment, a layered curriculum can be used to respond to the needs of learners with varying intelligence proficiencies. The basic level would include learning new vocabulary by reading an article or listening to a song and taking notes or watching a video and recording dates and specific traditions associated with a festival in a country where the target language is spoken. For the intermediate

level, students could create short surveys for classmates or people outside the classroom related to the article that was read, or they could compare and contrast common practices such as how the elderly are cared for or gender-based responsibilities across cultures. These activities encourage students to examine their own ideas and practices and compare them to other practices. In the advanced level, students could write a song, make a video, hold a debate, or plan a service project related to the topic they have been focusing on in the unit. All of these activities engage different intelligences while gradually increasing the complexity of learning that is occurring. I will examine this type of curriculum design in more detail in my Culture Artifact.

A relatively new approach to teaching that is growing in popularity in the field of language teaching is called ‘flipping the classroom’. According to Hamdan, McKnight, McKnight, and Arfstrom (2013), flipped learning means that “teachers shift direct learning out of the large group learning space and move it into the individual learning space” (p. 4). In this way, the responsibility of learning is flipped from the teacher over to the students, giving students more control over their learning. This certainly does not mean a vacation for the teacher. On the contrary; in a flipped class, students are expected to be first exposed to new material outside the classroom. This is often accomplished through video presentations, which can be very time consuming for teachers to produce or gather. But it is important not to get lost in the video part of flipped classes. The exciting thing about students being exposed to material at home is that they can use their normal class time to work together on projects that help them engage the material in new ways under the watchful eye of a facilitating teacher. At this point, the classroom becomes much like a classroom that uses a layered curriculum because students can work

through activities and create things that they are interested in which are relevant to material.

Another area in which MI can be addressed is assessment. Christison (1996) explains that teachers who understand their students' MI profile can develop tasks and assessments of different intelligence styles. She also gives an example of a time when she asked students to complete a reading (linguistic intelligence) task and then show her in any way they liked what they had learned. This yielded a variety of interesting, personalized results. Hall Haley (2004) has demonstrated that students receiving MI-based language instruction can perform better than students receiving traditional instruction.

The language classroom offers an exciting opportunity for engaging students of all learning styles. Language is used in every intelligence, whether one is debating an idea, giving directions, singing a song, categorizing types of tools or instruments, or writing in a personal journal. Layered curriculum and the flipped classroom are exciting venues to examine multiple intelligences more closely. With increasing access to technology and constant improvements in hardware and software available to students, flipping the classroom and giving students more responsibility for their own learning will undoubtedly become more common in the coming years.

It is important to consider MI in language teaching because activities that recognize and tap into MI reach every type of learner. Catering to students' varied needs and multiple intelligences in a language classroom can be daunting for the teacher. However, recent advances in technology have helped to make the language learning experience more meaningful and engaging for students and teachers alike.

Technology: Authentic Resources in the Language Classroom

Since the invention of the telegraph, communication speed has increased drastically, and the media carrying messages have become more technologically complex. The content of the messages has not changed; we are still asking about each other's families, selling things, expressing love, apologizing, etc. However, we are doing all of the aforementioned differently than before. For many years we wrote long letters or sent brief telegrams; then we started making phone calls and sending e-mails; and today, along with e-mails and phone calls, we use phones and the internet to send text, Facebook, and other messages and hold video, Twitter, and other live chats via social media.

In the above cases, letters, e-mails, and text messages can be considered asynchronous forms of communication, meaning the writer should not necessarily expect the receiver of the message to respond immediately. However, the receiver should not assume that he or she can respond whenever is most convenient. Taylor and Harper (2003) show that youths often expect reciprocity of text messages, even at odd times of the day/night and feel ostracized or disliked if their messages are not returned promptly. Thus we see that the expected wait times of asynchronous communications are being pushed to the point of nearly becoming synchronous. For this reason, I will focus here on synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC) as a tool for language learning.

SCMC is an important application of technology in the language classroom. It allows students to connect to members of other cultures in real time through media they can use once they leave the classroom. It also encourages them to invest emotionally in

learning the target language because they are making connections with real people (Belz & Kinginger, 2002).

The first topic I will address here is how students connect with people outside the traditional, physical classroom. The term ‘computer’ can no longer be used to refer to desktop computers that were once found only in a school computer lab. Today the term can include phones, tablets, and other electronic devices. Because there is such a wide range of devices, operating systems, and memory capabilities, developers have created device-independent applications. A device-independent application is a program that is not specific to a certain kind of device or operating system (Worldwide Web Consortium, 2003). A good example of this is Skype. It is possible to download Skype onto any device that has the internet or a mobile data connection. FaceTime, on the other hand, is not completely device-independent because it is available exclusively to Apple/Mac product users.

Another important distinction to make among applications is the modality of communication. A single mode of communication is voice or text. Therefore, a bimodal application allows for both voice and text exchange. Examples of bimodal applications include Skype, Google Hangouts, and Facebook. They also support video communication, which I like to make use of whenever possible because in my own second language learning experience it is much easier for me to talk to someone face-to-face than over the phone because I can observe paralinguistic cues.

Assuming the tools discussed above are available to all parties involved in SCMC for language learning, the next question is why the connection is even important. It requires a great deal of preparation to make sure that all the devices are working correctly

and that students across time zones can connect, so the benefits must be measurable to defend such a language learning and teaching endeavor.

I will base my ideas on some of the 21st century skills surveyed in a Microsoft Partners in Learning and Pearson Foundation study (Gallup, 2013). Investigators examined the use of 21st century skills in the workplace and the preparation that students received during school in those skills, which included technology, real-world problem solving, collaboration (in-class and in virtual contexts), and global awareness.

Collaboration, both in-class and online, is becoming an everyday phenomenon and will be an important part of current students' careers (Wagner, 2010). Crowdsourcing sites and social media-based personal learning networks (PLNs), informal groups of people in similar occupational situations, are emerging online as a way for professionals to work together to solve problems and disseminate knowledge. These groups cross language barriers to share best practices and support each other's efforts.

A language classroom can support this kind of lifelong learning by creating similar opportunities during class through projects and other long-term collaborative efforts. Such collaborations will encourage language learning as expected under the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996), which is that learners may find themselves in a situation (by accident or by design) that requires them to negotiate meaning. This authentic communication requires comprehensible output by the language learner and provides the learner with quality input from his or her online conversation partner (Zhao, 2003). I have seen this in my own work when I have held Google Hangouts with groups of international students before they arrive at Utah State University for their summer English program. Google Hangouts are video chats that can be broadcast live on a

website or YouTube channel. We connect using SCMC (Google Hangouts) so I can provide information about the program and students can ask questions and get to know each other before arriving on campus. Their input and output directed to me and one another, along with my native-speaker input, satisfies Zhao's requirements for authentic interpersonal communication.

This sort of work as a group is important because language learning is a social act. Resta and Laferrière (2007) show that computer-supported group learning has yielded better results than computer-supported individual learning and that students feel more satisfied when they are working together. The language classroom should be a learning community, which is a place where students engage in collaborative inquiry and take control of their learning (Hewitt, 2002). In this sort of a classroom, the teacher takes on the role of a facilitator or architect and only guides the class and coaches students when difficulties arise (Lee & VanPatten, 2003).

Kirschner (2001) defines cooperative/collaborative learning to include active learning (as opposed to passive reception of information), a facilitating teacher, small groups, reflection, student responsibility, and social/team skills. Resta and Laferrière (2007) emphasize the importance of a facilitating teacher assisting the students in goal setting and recognize the delicate balance that exists when scripting student actions. Students should not be left alone to learn language, but they need to be given enough space to think and grow on their own. It is not the students that need to be 'planned out', it is the structure of the classes and the resources to which students will have access. It is especially important to plan carefully when orchestrating online collaboration because of the complexity of organizing such collaborations. Goals should be measurable and work

toward real-world problem solving and global awareness, but they should allow students the flexibility to investigate the things that are interesting to them. A fascinating example of this is seen in a class taught by Jamie Buchanan-Dunlop, a teacher at Eastbury Comprehensive School in the United Kingdom and founder of web-based education organization Digital Explorer. In his project, he required students to identify an issue at their school then work together to develop a campaign to remedy the issue (Digital Explorer). While Dunlop's class was not a foreign language classroom, the components of this task, including team collaboration, argument development, and interviewing skills, would be useful to college-age and adult language learners, which is where I plan to be involved.

SCMC has also been shown to increase students' linguistic output. Abrams (2003) has shown increased language production from students involved in synchronous online conversations versus face-to-face contexts. Groups using written SCMC have also shown significantly higher levels of oral proficiency than non-SCMC groups, showing that SCMC can even work across modalities (Payne & Whitney, 2002).

Besides linguistic benefits, SCMC also encourages emotional connections between language learners and their partners. Belz and Kinginger (2002, 2003) show that significant development of relationships leads to development of intercultural pragmatic competence. In their 2002 study, an English-speaking student of French and another student of German used both written and video chat to collaborate with native French and German speakers for 50 and 60 days, respectively. From the beginning of their interactions the French and German native speakers used informal (T) pronouns to address their partners. They even told their partners from the beginning to address them

in the T form. The English-speaking students continued to use the incorrect form for some time, with the T form gradually becoming more familiar to them through the interactions. Belz and Kinginger explain that it is not the perfect use of the T/V forms that is most important here, rather it is the awareness of the pragmatic complexity of the situation, which the students seemed to have begun to grasp by the end of the study.

SCMC also provides a more real sense of audience (Zhao, 2003). I experienced this during my internship at a local English school. I used Skype, a free, device-independent videoconferencing platform, while teaching a class of adult ESL students. The class (as a group) had two Skype conversations during the quarter with Ryan (a pseudonym), who is a relative of an instructor at the school and who lives in a different state. Each student was able to speak individually with Ryan while the rest of the group looked on. The conversations were an excellent opportunity for the students to connect with a native speaker of English (besides the teachers) and build a relationship. The students felt comfortable enough during the conversations with Ryan to call him by his first name and recognize him as a familiar face when they saw him again. The activities were good opportunities to get immediate feedback from a native speaker of English on the intelligibility of their speech in the safe environment of the classroom. If I had been given more time with the students, I would have liked to make Skype conversations and similar interactions an integral part of some kind of portfolio or project.

It is my goal to help students see that they can use SCMC and other technological tools to connect to people who speak the target language in the real world instead of just for school. Collaboration and social contact via the worldwide web is becoming more common each day. When students go above and beyond emoticons and cute kitten

videos, technology can be used to solve real-world problems. Through project-based learning, students can identify issues of personal interest, collaborate using technology to investigate those issues, and bring context and depth to their language learning. As a result, project-based learning is another central component of my teaching philosophy.

Context: Project-based Learning

Project-based learning (PBL) has been called a "learner-centered teaching strategy" (Hou, Chang, & Sung, 2007, p. 237) and a "student-driven, teacher-facilitated approach to learning" (Bell, 2010, p. 39). With this approach, students are more responsible for their learning than in traditional teaching methods. The degree of responsibility that is given to the students depends on the judgment of the teacher, but the basic process includes information-gathering, collaboration to organize information, and then some form of reporting. Beckett (2002) defined a project as

> a long-term activity that involves a variety of individual or cooperative tasks such as developing a research plan and questions, and implementing the plan through empirical or document research that includes collecting, analyzing, and reporting data orally and/or in writing (p. 54).

This definition makes it clear that students cannot just read from a book and copy down facts, nor can they practice rote, uninteresting conversations and call it language practice. In a project-based classroom, students engage with language through investigation of content that interests them (Bell, 2010).

Despite research demonstrating that PBL is as effective or more effective at educating students (Bell, 2010; Geier, Blumenfeld, Marx, Krajcik, Soloway, & Clay-Chambers, 2008; Gultekin, 2005), there are still some concerns regarding the

implementation of PBL in the language classroom. PBL was originally introduced as a general teaching style, not being necessarily applied to languages.

Languages add a second layer of learning that must occur in order for students to be successful in their projects. As a remedy, Eyring (1989) allowed students to create their curriculum as a class so they would be learning about topics that were interesting to them. This idea is also supported by Gedera (2011), who explained that choice fosters language awareness. Unfortunately, some students did not appreciate being given so much freedom. They felt that giving such authority to students was not appropriate, and others felt uncomfortable creating their own curriculum. I can understand the stress of responsibility that would come with creating one's own course of study, but I can also see the satisfaction they would enjoy upon completing comprehensive projects that they had designed to challenge and teach themselves. Debski and Gruba (1999) also reported that it is difficult for a teacher to find topics that appeal to a wide range of students. Students should be able to select a topic that is interesting to them, but their selections should be confined to a certain field of study, such as human rights or current world or local issues.

I was fortunate to see a good example of this when I worked as a classroom assistant in an intensive English program. In the class I worked in, the final project was a critical report on a current world issue. One-sided topics, like wedding or holiday traditions, were not allowed because they required no critical thinking or evaluation. The main difficulty encountered was getting students to understand the issue, take a position, and then defend it. Another example that I have of this sort of freedom within the bounds of curriculum is in the Global Academy program that I have been a part of for a few years now at Utah State University. The Global Academy is a summer English and cultural

immersion program. International students stay at the university campus for four to eight weeks and are enrolled in English classes. During the program they also take part in cultural activities and excursions. The English curriculum is based on the central topic of human rights. After spending weeks discussing this topic, students make a capstone group project that requires a significant amount of out-of-classroom collaborative effort and then share it with the rest of the program participants. This is generally seen as a rewarding process by most students; however, I understand how it could be a daunting task for students not used to such pedagogical techniques.

Students in Beckett's (2002) class who did not like PBL said it was because it was too hard. Beckett elaborated to say that students struggle with projects because they have not been shown how to do research properly previous to taking that class. Wagner (2010) made the same observation and found that it made them more resistant to investigation. To compensate for the resistance that followed the initial PBL with students, Beckett added some traditional, teacher-led activities to the lessons so that students would feel more comfortable with what they were used to. When dealing with students who are new to carrying out a collaborative project, such measures may be necessary. If students are coming into a class without any project experience, they cannot be expected to deliver high-quality products on the first attempt. Depending on the class, the teacher should either discuss proper practices first, completing small tasks along the way in different fields, or have less stringent rubrics for the first project(s).

Other concerns expressed by Beckett's (2002) students were that they were not able to focus on language learning because they had to pay so much attention to the projects. This is a common concern in the Global Academy program as well. Students

who are accustomed to direct instruction and feedback do not immediately recognize the growth in language skill that they are experiencing in an immersion environment. This will not be so much of a problem for me because I want to be in a college environment where students must have some knowledge of English and have the need to learn proper research skills for their academic careers.

Once they have attained a level of English that enables them to collaborate on research, it becomes the teacher's responsibility to connect them with resources to learn. Beckett (2002) explains that the central benefit of PBL is that it provides opportunities for output. By applying technology to PBL, learners can connect to resources such as other learners, native speakers, and their teachers (Blake, 2013; Debski & Gruba, 1999). Using technology, students can complete projects using various media and share their products with a wider audience. An example of this would be creating a video or audio clip of a news broadcast about a topic they have researched as opposed to writing a summary paper about what they have learned. They could include clips of people interviewed and still shots (in video) whereas a research paper would include only written quotes and pictures.

One of the main concerns I had when reviewing the research on PBL was that it was never made clear whether the students were told from the beginning of the class that they would be doing projects during the class. Activities like making video and audio clips take time and significant preparation for teachers and students alike, so students should be prepared and trained to engage in such projects. Just as modeling is important before a single task, a thorough explanation of the ‘road map’ of the class is also important. Beckett and Slater's (2005) Project Framework mediates this situation. One of

the central reasons they introduced the Framework was because previous research had shown a conflict between expectations and priorities of language teachers and their students. The Framework is based on Mohan's (1986) Knowledge Framework, which states that students construct knowledge by drawing upon previous experience. When present experience conflicts with previous experience, frustrations occur.

The Project Framework consists of two central parts: the "planning graphic" and the "project diary" (Beckett & Slater, 2005, p. 110). At the outset of the project, the teacher presents the graphic, which suggests elements of language, academic content, and study/research skills that can be learned through PBL. Whether constructed ahead of time by the teacher or together as a class, the graphic should be completed for each project so as to provide an overall blueprint of the project that the students will construct together. This is an example of the architect role of a teacher at its best (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). The project diary is completed over the course of the project and details activities, content learned, and goals, both achieved and pending.

Using the Project Framework, Beckett and Slater (2005) received more positive feedback from students than before on the utility and level of interest in PBL. As I implement projects with my learners, I will use a structure similar to the Framework, especially the planning graphic because I am a visual learner. I also recognize that these researchers had been investigating PBL for years when they introduced the Project Framework in their classes. As such, one must remember that a first-time teacher should be patient if not every student is able to understand the Framework.

Most of my students will be intermediate to advanced speakers of English preparing for university studies. Through questioning and critical inquiry, PBL provides

opportunities for students to practice and learn how to think critically and express their thoughts in their target language.

Conclusion

I recognize that teaching is an iterative process. Each semester is an opportunity to build onto what has been learned previously. While students will not change drastically from year to year, my ability to create an environment conducive to language learning will increase as I become better able to provide students with opportunities that are suited to their learning styles. As a ‘guide on the side’, my role as an instructor is to serve as a bridge to resources for students. I want to teach them how to use the tools all around them, especially web-based resources, to connect with authentic material and engage with native speakers as they construct meaningful projects with their fellow language learners. As we work toward those goals together, I will be an effective teacher for my students.

TEACHING OBSERVATION REFLECTION

During my time in the MSLT program, I have been fortunate to observe my colleagues working to apply their studies to the various language classes they have taught. For my observations, I chose to observe classes whose target languages (TL) I could not understand with the idea that it would encourage me to focus on the mechanics of good teaching, such as the amount of teacher talk, retaining student interest, and student engagement in communication during activity.

Whereas I expect to be teaching intensive English to students who already have a basic/intermediate language skill level, the classes I observed were 1010-level (i.e., first semester) classes where most of the students had only been exposed to the TL for 4–6 weeks at the time of observation. For that reason, some of the things that occurred in the classes supported the central beliefs I shared in my teaching philosophy, but often to a lesser extent because the teachers needed to focus more on developing basic language skills than helping students grow their TL critical thinking skills. In any case, I recognize that every observation is a learning opportunity, and I have enjoyed growing through observing my peers at work.

The first thing that struck me in my observations were the classroom management styles of the teachers. Each teacher was different, but they all lead the class very well and tended to keep students' attention. One teacher who was normally quiet and reserved outside the classroom displayed a much more outward personality in the class. She managed the class with authority and energy that I had never seen from her. I believe that

her personality in the classroom affected the way her students participated and talked during the activities.

Another component of classroom management was keeping the students' attention even though they did not always understand what was going on or being said. All three of the instructors used the TL almost 100% of the time in the classroom. This was especially impressive in the case of the teacher whom I happened to observe on the day the class switched completely over to a new alphabet. Previously the TL alphabet had been mixed in with the native language, but I happened to come on the day when the class moved on. The students seemed totally bewildered at this new development, but the instructor did a good job of staying in the TL and just slowing down the pace of the class. Another teacher that I observed used the TL creatively while calling role. Instead of just calling out names, she called out the physical descriptions of the students that they had submitted as homework the day before. It was a great way to review content and take care of necessary housekeeping tasks.

Of the three pillars of my teaching philosophy (i.e., individuality, technology, and context), the one I most noticed during my observations was meeting individual needs by recognizing multiple intelligences. There were a few 'hot potato'-style games that could be classified as bodily/kinesthetic activities, but overall the activities were overwhelmingly interpersonal. Students were almost always split into small groups where they asked each other questions and/or filled information gaps. An example of this occurred in an Arabic class where students practiced gathering personal information about fictitious characters, including names, ages, and phone numbers. I felt like going from learning basic numbers to asking to put long strings of numbers together on the

same day they had changed from the Roman alphabet to the Arabic alphabet was probably too much material. I would have liked to have seen them do an activity that focused on numbers, like a competition, just to get them familiar with saying the numbers. Then they could have practiced gathering personal information with a bit more confidence.

Adding more activities to allow students to learn using various intelligences would probably not be much extra work for the instructors, it would just require more flexibility. For example, one of the teachers played music twice during the class I observed, but they never discussed the lyrics or referenced the singer during class. The teacher could let the students choose the songs or find songs with lyrics that were applicable to the topics of the day (e.g., colors and opposites). Those topics also lend themselves well to the Naturalist type who likes to categorize things (Gardner, 1999). I believe that our focus on the communicative approach has led us to think that the best way to practice language is to talk to each other. However, it is true that communication is more than just speech. If students are creating something using the TL without talking, whether it be composing rhyming sentences or drawing a picture related to a cultural issue in a country where the TL is spoken, they can be learning and communicating through language.

The main lesson I have taken away from this observation experience is that even students with a very low proficiency level can be engaged in the TL. While I plan to work with intermediate-level students, where project-based inquiry and synchronous computer mediated communication are more feasible teaching styles, it is possible that I will find

myself with lower proficiency learners that will need activities such as those I have observed and built upon.

ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION OF TEACHING VIDEO

My adventure of recording myself teaching has been long and sometimes frustrating. I recorded myself no fewer than five times before I was able to get the technology to cooperate. From sound not recording to the camera quitting just a few minutes into the lesson, it has been quite a journey. Despite those obstacles, during my last summer in the MSLT program (i.e., summer, 2013) I was able to record myself teaching a class about idioms in the Global Academy English and cultural immersion program. The Global Academy is an eight-week summer program hosted at Utah State University each year with just over 100 students of intermediate English skills.

The first activity of the day was a presentation of a new group of idioms. I believe that students should guide much of their own learning, so I let them do most of the talking during the first activity. The students loved the pop culture references in the slideshow and were eager to guess the meaning of idioms such as ‘keep your shirt on’ and ‘ants in your pants’. During all of the guessing, I did not have to provide much input, I just led the discussion. Two moments that I particularly liked were when we discussed the idiom ‘to lose one’s shirt’. I gave an example of a movie that failed miserably in the box office that one of the students had seen. She didn’t like the movie, and she explained that it had cost a lot of money and had been a total failure for the director. She had taken care of telling most of the story, and I just connected it to the idiom. After that I asked if any of the students had ever lost their shirt, and one student told a story of how she had tried to start a jewelry business when she was a teenager but just ended up keeping all the

jewelry for herself and had to pay for it. That connection to the students' real lives is what will help them remember the meaning of the idioms now that the class has ended.

In another activity, students used the idioms they had just learned to explain scenarios shown to them in pictures on the screen. I floated around the room and answered questions while they worked in pairs or small groups to come up with answers. After the planning portion of the activity was finished, students shared the scenes they had invented. They were very creative in their usage of the idioms. I believe that is partly because they were bringing their own understanding of similar idioms in their native languages into the activity. One important thing I have learned by being in language classes is that there are many possible ways to interpret language, and I do not need to stop and correct people if the meaning is preserved. Students did not need rote exercises to learn what the phrases meant, they just needed to put them into action.

One of the first things I noticed about the video overall was that the classroom atmosphere was very relaxed. The students made jokes and had fun working with idioms. I want my students to feel like they can talk to me and be themselves while still respecting my authority. This was a bit more complicated in this class because I was also coordinating the program in which they were participating. It was also a good environment because the students never criticized each other for hazarding a guess that was completely wrong. In fact, when a guess was wrong, we often used humor to help students save face. Humor is a good source of authentic language and is also a good tool for helping students feel at ease. I will always foster an environment of humor and acceptance in my classroom.

After watching my teaching and seeing the things to which students reacted positively and the things they did not seem to notice, I have made some goals for myself. There were several little things that I did while teaching that I need to avoid in the future, like forgetting a clicker to change my slides or needing to step out for a short moment during an activity on a work-related matter. Those sorts of improvements will avoid distraction, but the two goals I have in mind are more about stage presence and presentation.

First, I need to improve my posture. Sometimes watching myself teach makes my neck hurt. I think it also detracts from my presence and could give a less friendly class the idea that my authority could be challenged. I commented on that once before in my microteaching video for my LING 6400 – Second Language Teaching: Theory and Practice class, but I still need to work on it.

The other goal I have is related to both idioms and the recent readings I have done on multiple intelligences. I would like to work on pantomime. It sounds silly, but as I watched myself explain idioms like ‘ring a bell’ and ‘a hole in the wall’, I realized that the ability to help students ‘see’ something that is not there would be very useful. Gardner (1983) used the example of world-renowned mime Marcel Marceau to illustrate how kinesthetic learners engage with new material. Kinesthetic learning is often one of the most challenging intelligences for me to create material for, so I believe that paying more attention to small details such as shaping a pin and using it to ‘pin something down’ could help kinesthetic and visual learners grasp material with greater facility.

I was not able to use technology or project-based learning to any great degree on the day that I taught, but if I had been in a more long-term teaching situation, I would

have made two changes to reflect my personal beliefs in the importance of technology and context in language teaching. I would have used technology to find more authentic uses of idioms in movies and other media. The class I taught used a platform which creates dialogues from entered text, but the dialogues are not inflected properly and there is not very much emotion in the characters' speech either. While that is a good way to use many idioms at the same time, it would have been more engaging to the students to see and hear idioms being used in a more natural way. I would have liked to have connected them with Americans, either in or outside of Logan, while in the classroom environment so they could demonstrate their dialogues and get feedback from native speakers. In this way, technology would help create a more real sense of audience (Zhao, 2003).

At the beginning of the idioms class, each student received a booklet of all the idioms/slides that would be used in the class during the semester. Such a booklet could be turned into a project-based experience by using the Project Framework (Beckett & Slater, 2005). I would start the class out by working on a planning graphic and then used a modified version of the booklet provided to the students as a project diary. In this way, students would still be exposed to many idioms, but they would have decided ahead of time which topics were most interesting and would have more control over their learning.

Taking the time to reflect on my teaching practice has helped me recognize the things that I do well and also shown areas in which I need to improve. I will become a better teacher as I remain conscious of my strengths and weaknesses and keep a positive attitude about my professional development. Just as I believe students should take control of their learning, the key to growing as a teacher will be to make goals for myself and look for ways to guide my own learning and progress.

LANGUAGE ARTIFACT

Students Preference – Writing Feedback From Known vs. Anonymous Reviewers

INTRODUCTION

This paper represents my first foray into the world of second language acquisition (SLA) research literature. I wrote this paper for Dr. Karin DeJonge-Kannan's LING 6010 research methods class. Being brand new to the field of SLA, I really had no idea what topic I could study deeply enough to create a research proposal around it. As I reflected upon the experiences that I had recently gone through while finishing my undergraduate degree, one area in which I had grown substantially was writing. I had recently written a paper about the FOXP2 gene and its connection to human language ability and had received substantial feedback from a peer reviewer that greatly helped me improve the quality of my paper. I realized that such experiences deeply affected me in my writing and helped me become a better writer.

Another thing I noticed about my writing was that it was exhilarating to write about things that I was interested in and could defend through research. I enjoyed having control over how I would cast my ideas so I could convince my readers of my point. The control I had over my writing was part of what made those assignments interesting.

By combining my enjoyment of individual control over my learning with the benefits of peer review, I decided that I wanted to learn more about the benefits/drawbacks of peer review in language classes. The following artifact is a proposed research study that would examine students' feedback from known vs. identified viewers through face-to-face and electronic feedback media.

Abstract

The benefits of both teacher and peer feedback on writing have been illuminated in research conducted over the last 20 years (Paulus, 1999; Yang, 2011). However, due to expanding international program opportunities and new technologies, such as online classroom learning, opportunities for further research are available. The outcome of this study will increase understanding of students' thoughts on the usefulness and reliability of peer feedback as opposed to teacher feedback. Using online peer review, the effect of anonymity on peer review quality, quantity, and use in draft revision will also be measured. Two classes of students of approximately the same proficiency level will write two-draft composition assignments, submitting each draft for either face-to-face, identified reviewer feedback or anonymous online feedback. When final drafts are submitted, each feedback item and revision will be classified. Results will reveal whether there is a significant difference in changes made with respect to the review source (peer or teacher) and reviewer identity (identified or anonymous). Participants will also complete a survey at the end of the course in which they will describe their perceptions of peer versus teacher review. It is expected that participants will tend to value teacher feedback over that of their peers and that anonymous review will generate more feedback than face-to-face review.

Literature Review

Over the past few decades, peer review has gradually been integrated in first language (L1) and second language (L2) writing classes. Studies have yielded conflicting results as to students' preference between peer and teacher feedback (Jacobs, Curtis,

Braine & Huang, 1998; Saito & Fujita, 2004; Zhang, 1995). However, constant innovation, such as online classroom learning, has created new areas to be investigated. The two main areas I will examine here are cultural differences among students and teachers and the medium of feedback delivery. I will also briefly discuss other considerations which are necessary when planning feedback activities in a language classroom.

Cultural Differences

Many previous studies have looked at the role of cultural differences on written feedback and have primarily focused on Asian cultures, such as Hong Kong Chinese and Taiwanese (Jacobs et al., 1998), mainland Chinese (Hu, 2005), and Japanese (Guardado & Shi, 2007; Paulus, 1999). While these are valid groups for study, Nelson and Carson (1998) argue that power distance relationships affect student perceptions of peer feedback value. Power distance is defined by Brockner et al. (2001) as “the extent to which inequality among persons in different positions of formal power is viewed as a natural (and even desirable) aspect of the social order” (p. 302). This means that in cultures with a large power distance (e.g., Mexico), teachers are looked to as the source of knowledge and are not questioned. Importantly, other students are viewed as equals, not as resources or sounding boards for ideas. Students agree that they should not correct other students' papers because they are on their same level. In cultures expressing shorter power distances (e.g., Argentina), a person in a position of authority is only seen as a necessary part of organization, rather than an existential truth that one person is somehow different than others (Hofstede, 2001).

Another important concern related to cultural differences is the tendency to directly or indirectly criticize. Nelson (1997) explains that Asian students may avoid commenting in a group or will offer only indirect feedback because they are concerned with maintaining good internal group relations. Because of this, students' writing suffers for lack of direct, personalized feedback. This tendency is common in collectivist societies. According to Hofstede (2011), a collectivist society is one “in which individuals from birth onwards are part of strong in-groups that last a lifetime” (video file). This in-group relationship discourages criticism in exchange for loyalty (Hofstede, 1991). Guardado and Shi (2007) showed that students from collectivist societies are conscientious of their decisions to withhold criticism for the sake of group cohesiveness. However, in the end, peer feedback is not just about improving the group, it is about improving the individual's composition (Guardado & Shi, 2007).

Nelson (1997) explains that in certain cultures, there is not a clear definition of constructive criticism, leading students to feel that all criticism is negative. Nelson and Carson (1998) analyzed the behavior of Chinese speakers and Spanish speakers in peer review groups and found that while the students agree that negative feedback is more important than positive feedback due to the fact that it encourages writing improvement, the two groups make decisions involving revisions differently. In Nelson and Carson's study, Chinese speakers valued group agreement, arguing that if the group cannot agree on a single solution to a perceived problem in the writing, then none of the proposed revisions are likely to help. On the other hand, the Spanish-speaking students (one from Mexico, one from Argentina) expressed less concern with group cohesiveness and focused more on task completion. This is an interesting finding because according to

Hofstede (2001), Mexico is a high power distance country (ranked 5th out of 50 countries studied) and Argentina has a considerably lower power distance (ranked 35/36th out of 50). In other words, people are more likely to expect and accept power hierarchy in Mexico, a country with a greater power distance, than in Argentina, where the power distance is considerably shorter (Brockner et al., 2001). Due to the small sample size (n = 2), it is not possible to draw conclusions from this study regarding the relationship of power distance and native Spanish speakers. The present study seeks to expand the base of investigated cultures by examining peer feedback in a summer intensive English program in the United States predominantly attended by students from the Dominican Republic, a country not included in Hofstede's 50-country power distance analysis.

Feedback Delivery

One important dimension of peer review is the method in which it is delivered. There are three important components in feedback delivery: source (teacher vs. peer), medium (online vs. face-to-face), and identity (anonymous vs. identified). This study will enhance current knowledge about each of these factors.

Today, the source of feedback is the least controversial of the three components of delivery mentioned. Zhang (1995) clearly demonstrated that, given the choice, students overwhelmingly prefer teacher feedback over peer feedback. In Paulus' 1999 study, 87% of teacher comments were incorporated into subsequent drafts, whereas only 51% of peer comments led to changes in subsequent composition drafts. Recognizing the importance of grades in the eyes of students but also seeing the benefits of peer review for both

reviewers and writers, Jacobs et al. (1998) recommend a “middle path” (p. 307) or balance of the two feedback sources.

While it is typical for teacher feedback to receive more attention during the revision process, peer feedback is not without its merits. Tsui and Ng (2000) identified four benefits of peer feedback: (1) learners have an enhanced sense of audience; (2) learners obtain a raised awareness of their strengths and weaknesses; (3) collaboration is encouraged; and (4) writers feel more ownership over their paper. Silver and Coomber (2010) also pointed out that peer feedback in general relieves teacher workload and gives students an opportunity to learn by reading their peers' compositions. In a study of 111 students, Jacobs et al. (1998) showed that 93% of students believed that peer review was a desirable part of the feedback to their writing. These results suggest that a blend of teacher and peer feedback is most likely to help students improve their writing.

Research in the mid to late 20th century focused heavily on hand-written and face-to-face feedback, but recent studies have begun to take advantage of computer and online classroom technology to facilitate feedback. While written feedback has nearly always been conducted in groups involving face-to-face feedback and discussion (Rollinson, 2005), internet-based feedback has often been used to maintain the anonymity of the reviewer and/or the reviewed (Guardado & Shi, 2007; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). In addition to the logistical and economic relief of not having to haul and distribute large quantities of paper, online feedback has been successful in engaging reticent students more than face-to-face interaction sessions (Mabrito, 1991, as cited in Jones et al., 2006). Silver and Coomber (2010) found that students provided more useful constructive feedback anonymously than face-to-face. However, the anonymity of online feedback

concerned Bump (1999), who explained that it may detract from the aforementioned sense of audience. In concurrence with Jacobs et al. (1998), Guardado and Shi (2007) advocate a more balanced approach to online and face-to-face feedback, which could include anonymous chat through an online discussion board, either in real-time or delayed, or could involve a teacher-led classroom discussion on the most common errors seen during the review process.

Other Considerations

It is possible that students highly value teacher feedback because it comes from the person who is ultimately in charge of evaluating their papers. This study will be carried out in a non-credit bearing program that issues no grades to students, only a certificate of completion. In this unique context, it is possible to control for the almost ubiquitous extrinsic motivation of final grades.

Another important part of peer feedback is “pre-training” (Rollinson, 2005, p. 27). This study will follow the methods suggested by Rollinson (2005) for pre-training students on both the mindset needed for giving feedback as well as the specific items to look for when doing so. The goals of pre-training activities are to show students what to look for during the review process, how to tactfully deliver constructive criticism, and how to effectively incorporate received feedback into their own revisions.

The actual feedback given to students will differ between classes, so different schemes of preparation will be employed for training students. During face-to-face feedback sessions, the teacher will provide “intervention training” (Rollinson, 2005, p. 28) by circulating about the room and providing informal feedback and guidance as

needed. This will not be possible in the online feedback class, so general in-class feedback sessions will be held as needed to encourage communication and address common points of confusion or difficulty. The researcher will create a training protocol for the online feedback class based on Kastman Breuch and Racine's (2000) study and the online writing tutoring guidelines proposed by Rilling (2005). Given the necessary differences in preparation of the classes, one may worry about the equality of preparation and the resulting outcomes. However, Kastman Breuch and Racine have stated that "although procedures … may differ in face-to-face and online settings, the goals underlying writing tutoring should remain the same" (p. 246). It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that if the student learning goals and uniform test procedures are priority, then differences in protocol will not significantly alter the study results.

Research Questions

The present knowledge explained in the literature review has led to the following research questions:

1. How does anonymity affect students' attitudes towards giving feedback to their peers?
2. In a fully anonymous environment, do students tend to incorporate more teacher-based or more peer-based feedback?

Methods

Sample

This study will be conducted during a summer intensive English program for students who are between the ages of 18–28 years old. Participants will take a placement test at the beginning of the program and be grouped according to their individual writing

skills. Consenting students in the two most advanced classes will participate in the study. The two most advanced classes will be selected because their proficiency level will allow them to give feedback that is linguistically most similar to their instructors'.

Research Design

In each class, students will learn about writing five-paragraph essays and will complete two over the course of the eight-week program. These essays will consist of two drafts: a rough draft which will receive peer and teacher feedback and a final draft which will receive a mark of completion and more teacher feedback. Before submitting the rough drafts for peer review, students will be trained in the process of giving useful peer feedback based on the objectives and activities explained by Rollinson (2005). The utility of feedback given will be measured by the appropriateness or correctness of the proposed change and also its incorporation into the reviewed student's subsequent draft.

One of the essays will receive written and face-to-face peer feedback, with students working in pairs, followed by written teacher feedback. After revisions have been made, the final draft will be submitted for grading by the teacher. The other essay will be submitted electronically to the teacher and then uploaded to Google Docs. Again, students will review only one other student’s essay, but anonymously. The instructor will e-mail a link to another student's composition along with instructions for giving adequate peer review. The teacher will also provide anonymous review on each essay. After the review process has ended, the teacher will conduct a general in-class feedback session where students can comment and expound on the most important issues they felt they encountered in the paper they reviewed.

To account for the familiarity with peer review gained in writing and reviewing the first essay and how that may affect reviewer comments on the second essay, one class will conduct face-to-face review first and anonymous second, with the other class following the opposite order.

Data Collection

Data will be collected from the essays and peer review comments made by both students and the instructors. A modified version of Silver and Coomber's (2010) scheme of classification of feedback and revision will be used to categorize feedback by type, focus, utility, and use in revisions. The amount of incorporated and ignored feedback will also be quantified. Finally, the difference in number of comments provided in face-to-face versus anonymous feedback environments will be measured. A questionnaire surveying students' opinions on peer and teacher feedback as well as face-to-face and anonymous feedback will also be administered.

Implications

In a broader scope than simply understanding the effect of anonymity on feedback, this study will influence the way teachers view feedback delivery as well as the way in which they use technology in their classrooms. From the provided options, students' preferred feedback source, medium, and identity will be clearly identified. In light of those findings, classroom practices can be evaluated to ensure they are in harmony with the needs and preferences of the students. It is also likely that novel

cultural differences will be encountered, contributing to the base of knowledge teachers can draw from in preparing lessons for culturally diverse classrooms.

Future Directions

Further research will be necessary to validate whatever results are found here. Future investigations may delve into students' willingness to provide optional online feedback and its correlation with identification and anonymity. The relation between feedback and uptake, defined here as corrections incorporated into subsequent drafts, should also be investigated. Preference for peer or teacher feedback could be examined at a higher level of proficiency, thus reducing the possibility of students distinguishing between anonymous feedback sources. A quantitative examination of the effect of the non-graded program context on power distance would contribute both to our understanding of power distance relationships as well as generate discussion with respect to the effect of grades and students' willingness to communicate and contribute in the classroom.

LITERACY ARTIFACT

Reading Habits and Attitudes in Adult ESL Students:

A Research-Informed Treatment

INTRODUCTION

One of the few teaching experiences I have been privileged to have during my time in the MSLT program came at the English Language Center of Cache Valley. I volunteered as an intern there for LING 6940 credits in the Spring 2013 semester. It was a very rewarding experience, and I would like to have been able to stay longer.

At the beginning of the semester I decided to look for an opportunity to learn about literacy during my internship because I had not studied it in any great depth during my first year as a graduate student. The environment of the ELC proved to be a very interesting one because my students were adults who were typically coming to class after a hard day's work. Needless to say, they did not take much time to just sit down and read novels during what little leisure time they had. In my mind, I have always seen literacy as something that happens with books, but as I saw the students in my class reading and going about their lives without being fluent enough to read many books in English, I began to see more concretely how literacy encompasses other media as well, such as websites, newspapers, magazines, etc.

The following artifact is a pilot study I conducted with my students to gain insight into their reading habits and attitudes. The investigation is followed by a proposed treatment which could help students be more consistently engaged with relevant written content in English, thereby exposing them to more comprehensible input and encouraging interlanguage development.

Literature Review

Introduction

Language instruction should meet students' needs and help students progress toward proficiency. Grabe and Stoller (2002) have argued that improved literacy is a requirement of good citizenship in this century. There are many people who are working in and contributing to society every day but are still unable to read and write adequately. It is important to help them acquire those vital skills. ELLs comprise a large portion of that demographic. While children and university students are commonly investigated ELL groups, adult ELLs are far less studied (Adams & Burt, 2002). In the following pilot study, the author has surveyed and interviewed a group of adult ELLs to better understand their native language (L1) and second language (L2) reading habits and attitudes. It is hypothesized that if ELLs' L2 reading attitudes are positive, they will spend more time reading and thereby improve their L2 literacy skills. Based on the findings of the pilot study, the author proposes a treatment to improve L2 reading attitudes and literacy skills through student-directed reading about events and news in the local community.

Proficiency, Attitude, and L2 Reading

The effect of L1 reading habits and attitudes and L2 speaking proficiency on L2 literacy habits and attitudes is still unclear. Burt, Peyton, and Adams (2003) show that L2 proficiency may affect L2 literacy more than L1 reading habits, but Yamashita (2004) shows that L1 reading attitudes affect L2 reading more than L2 speaking proficiency

does. Similarly, Crawford Camiciottoli (2001) reports that taking time to read in the L1 positively affects L2 reading frequency and attitude.

The results of the present study will reveal L1 and L2 reading attitudes and habits in adult ELLs in northern Utah. The basic information sought in this study is whether the adult ELLs surveyed read outside of class, what materials they read if they read outside of class, their attitudes toward L2 reading, and what attitudes they perceive in those around them with respect to reading in the L2.

The proposed follow-up treatment will build upon the pilot data to obtain more detailed information about reading attitudes and habits as well as increase L2 literacy and self-directed reading through reading local newspapers, which will be a suitable medium for adult ELLs because newspapers contain articles of varying lengths which cover multiple topics as well as announcements related to local culture and events (Grabe & Stoller, 1997). Crawford Camiciottoli (2001) hypothesizes that increased access to English reading material would increase reading frequency because her students frequently cited logistical concerns as keeping them from reading in English. Lao and Krashen (2000) report that students who participated in an extensive reading program were more interested in reading for pleasure in English and felt that reading for pleasure was a better way to learn English than formal instruction. These studies suggest that reading attitudes and habits will improve as access to English reading material increases and students are allowed to direct their own reading.

Learner Goals

In order to understand what sorts of materials will be interesting to students and encourage self-directed reading, learners' purposes for reading should be examined. The

survey administered in this pilot study will provide data that can be used to infer common learner goals, such as finding a better job or helping a child with his/her homework. Learner goals are one of the factors that Burt and Peyton (2003) cite as affecting literacy development in adult ELLs. Some common learner goals include being successful at work, participating in their children's education, obtaining citizenship, and pursuing further education (Burt, Peyton, & Adams, 2003). Using tasks and materials that are relevant and interesting to students will help them become engaged and apply the tasks to their goals, rather than seeing English-learning as being separate from their other interests and needs (Fredricks, 2012). Some of the ways this can be accomplished are allowing students to work autonomously (Kohn, 2011), working together to develop goals (Comings, Parella, & Soricone, 2000) and being flexible with curriculum to allow students to direct their learning (Schwarzer, 2009). Answers to the research questions of the present study will help local instructors understand what materials are relevant and frequently used and how students view English in terms of utility/necessity.

Research Questions

- Do adult ESL students read (in either their native or second language) outside the classroom?
- If participants do read outside the classroom, what do they read and why do they do so?
- What are some commonly held attitudes of students' family and friends toward reading outside the classroom?

Methods

Participants in this study were adult ELLs enrolled in an intermediate-low level English course at a local English language school. During the last week of the 11-week quarter, students (N=7) were asked to complete a short, anonymous survey regarding their reading habits outside of class and general attitude toward reading both in the L1 and L2. Because of the variety of L1s in the class, the survey was administered in English. The survey consisted of two parts: a matrix indicating the reading frequency of six types of materials and three questions about the importance/utility of reading in English (see Appendix A for reading habits survey). The reading frequencies were assigned numeric values to determine which items are most commonly read and which are least read by the students in the class.

After the survey was conducted, and independent of survey responses, volunteers were solicited for follow-up interviews. Three volunteers participated in a short, semi-structured interview with the researcher in which they answered questions about their reading habits and attitudes. The interviews took place at the English school. (See Appendix B for reading habits interview questions.)

Results

Two parts of this investigation stood out above others. The first is that there was not an obvious middle ground for the amount of time spent reading. Students either read English materials frequently (i.e., at least once each day for most materials surveyed) or not very often (i.e., once per week or less for most materials surveyed). A surprising

result which will be discussed later in this paper was the importance placed on learning English by family and friends of the students interviewed.

Survey

Survey results show definite trends in the amount of English reading done by students as well as the materials that were most often read. The most- and least-read materials were determined by assigning a frequency value (FV) to each frequency level. The FVs were assigned as follows: 1=Less than once a month, 2=Once a month, 3=Once a week, 4=Once a day, 5=More than once a day. Using this system, the two most-read materials were websites and homework. The least-read item was newspaper. Table 1 below displays participant responses regarding their reading habits.

Table 1 – Numbers in the matrix represent the number of students who read the material at that frequency level. Those numbers are multiplied by the frequency point values in that column to obtain the total frequency value (FV).

Reading Materials in English	More than once a day (5 points)	Once a day (4 points)	Once a week (3 points)	Once a month (2 points)	Less than once a month (1 point)	**Total Frequency Value**
Websites	2	2	2	0	1	**25**
Homework	1	2	4	0		**25**
Signs by the Road	3	1	0	2	1	**24**
Products at the Store	2	1	2	1	1	**23**
Child's Homework	1	3	1		2	**22**
Newspaper	1	0	3	1	2	**18**

Table 2 shows detailed results of the three survey questions. Nearly all students said they enjoyed reading in English outside of class. No one disagreed with the

statements that reading in English could help them improve their English skills or find a better job.

Table 2 – Results of the survey questions show that students enjoy and value reading in English.

	Yes	Neutral	No
Do you enjoy reading English outside of class?	6	1	0
Do you feel like reading helps you improve your English skills?	6	1	0
Do you feel like reading in English can help you get a better job?	6	1	0

Semi-Structured Interviews

Three students were interviewed, two from Mexico (Jorge[1] and Virginia[1]) and one from Turkey (Mahmud[1]). All were 25-35 years old. Jorge is a local shop owner and has been in the United States for 12 years. Virginia has been in the United States for less than 10 years and works in hospitality. Due to visa restrictions, Mahmud is not currently employed; however, he holds a government position in his home country. They all reported being literate in their L1.

When asked about reading in the L1, Jorge said that he enjoys reading in Spanish and also that it helps him to maintain his language skills, which have diminished during the 12 years that he has been in the United States. Virginia and Mahmud said that they enjoy reading in the L1 because they comprehend the text well. When asked about reading for pleasure in either the L1 or English, all said they enjoy reading in the L1 more

[1] Names have been changed.

than in English; however, Mahmud reported that he enjoys reading in English and that he typically reads in English now rather than in Turkish.

Two of the interview questions dealt with reading in English and improving their skills and job marketability. All three students agreed that reading in English helps them improve their English skills and that it can help them get a better job. Virginia has worked her way up to a supervisory position in her job and credits a significant portion of that to her knowledge of English. Jorge said that he uses English all day every day in his shop. He also said that he used to use an online translator to translate work-related documents but that sometimes the translator would be wrong. He has found that it is much faster and more accurate to read in English. Mahmud explained that reading novels in English helps him understand idioms and American culture.

In contrast with the other questions, which were about the interviewees' habits and attitudes, the last question was whether people *around* them felt that reading was important. They all said that their friends and family feel that reading is important. Jorge said that Spanish-speaking customers at his shop even ask him to speak to them in English because they are trying to learn so they can get a job.

Analysis

According to Table 1, the three most-read materials were websites (FV=25), homework (25), and signs by the road (24). It is no surprise that websites were one of the most commonly read materials. They were possibly the most common because students use them to learn the news in their home countries, connect with family all over the world, shop, and accomplish other daily activities. Homework was likely a common

reading material because the students read during the week for class. Students who are enrolled in two classes, one in the morning and one in the evening, would have even more reading homework.

The three least read items were products at the store (23), children's homework (22), and the newspaper (18). Possible reasons for a lower FV for products at the store could be because students generally shop at local ethnic markets instead of larger grocery stores or that they are not the person in their family who does the grocery shopping. As for children's homework, two possibilities are that students' children did not need help/did not have homework or that the adults' English skills were not sufficiently developed to understand the questions being asked on their children's homework assignments. Finally, the newspaper was the least read of all the materials presented in the survey. This could be because students feel intimidated by the amount of text in a newspaper, but Grabe and Stoller (1997) found that newspaper reading was easier than reading novels or even short stories due to its story continuity and connection with television and L1 sources of information. However, their case study did not compare newspaper reading to shorter readings like homework or websites. Other possibilities could be that the ELLs surveyed in the present study read the news online and indicated websites instead of newspapers or that access to newspapers is limited or that they are not interested in the local culture because of acculturative stress, as indicated by Seo and Moon (2013). In light of the more detailed responses given in the interviews, it is the author's opinion that students either do not have access to or interest in reading local news or possibly that they indicated websites instead of newspapers on the survey.

Some surprising comments came out of the interviews. Virginia said that she reads less now in English than when she first started learning because it is too difficult. This is similar to Crawford Camiciottoli's (2001) finding of a negative correlation between the number of years spent learning English and learner attitude toward reading English in Italian university students. On the contrary, Mahmud said that he was currently reading *Cinderella Man* and enjoys reading *Sherlock Holmes* and other police and adventure novels in English. Novels and other books were not included in the list of commonly read materials because most of the students in the class surveyed struggled to read page-long articles in class. This discrepancy in reading habits and attitudes supports Laufer's (1997) concept of a vicious cycle of reading, where students become discouraged when they understand very little of the reading, so they read slowly, which decreases the enjoyment of reading, leading them to read less, which is discouraging, etc. It is important to provide appropriate materials and encouragement to students to avoid this cycle. The gap between reading levels among those surveyed suggests that learners need a variety of texts available at differing levels of difficulty.

In answer to the pilot study research questions, students do read outside the classroom. English is usually read only for work or homework, with the native language being used more for pleasure. Participants read a variety of materials, but primarily websites and whatever homework is assigned to them. When they read in English it is because they are assigned to do so or because they are working to improve their English skills, often to obtain a better job.

The author's original expectation with respect to commonly held attitudes toward reading among friends and family of the survey participants would be that it was

unimportant or low priority. Therefore, it was surprising to hear how many of them are working hard to improve their English skills through reading. Jorge commented that people read in his shop and try to speak to him in English because they need to improve their language skills in order find a good job. The expectancy effect cannot be discounted in interview portion of this experiment; however, given the difficulty of finding work without speaking the local language, the situation he shared is likely true.

Discussion

In this pilot study, the survey instrument was useful for determining which items were most- and least-read by students. The newspaper was the least-read material. This is unfortunate because, as Grabe and Stoller (1997) point out, newspapers provide a diverse, continuous flow of information, much of which is culturally relevant. Some of the stories reported are parts of a dialogue that takes place over many days, providing chunks of English input to students as they piece together events going on around them. Due to its cultural relevance and the manageable size of articles for low proficiency English readers, the newspaper will be the focus of the treatment in this follow-up study.

Proposed Treatment- "NewsReels"

The NewsReels program as developed by the author is an extensive reading program which focuses on using local newspapers to practice reading and to make connections with local culture. It is a modified form of the *book wheels* activity described by Renandya, Sundara, and Jacobs (1999). To introduce the program, teachers will explain and show examples of what newsreels were in the first half of the 20th century and the cultural impact they had all over the world, and specifically in the United States.

Two classes will be subjects in this study. One class will participate in the NewsReels program, and a control class will follow the usual curriculum in the text/workbook provided to each student at the beginning of the quarter.

During the 11-12 week quarter, each student in the treatment class will read a news article of his/her choice as weekly homework and share it during the NewsReels activity. Because adult students are often taking English classes in addition to their regular work and family responsibilities, it is easy for them to forget homework assignments over the weekend. For this reason, the weekly NewsReels activity will take place on the second day of class during the week, giving the instructor an opportunity to remind students of the activity during the first class of the week. Students will be allowed to read a print or electronic copy of the news, whichever is most easily obtainable. To ensure that all students in the treatment group have access to newspaper articles, the school will make daily print copies available of at least one local newspaper for students to take. Students will also be shown and given the links to four local newspaper websites that they can use for free.

During the weekly NewsReels activity, as in *book wheels* (Renandya, Sundara, & Jacobs, 1999), the students will divide into pairs, with one student as the storyteller and one as the listener. The storyteller will summarize the news story that he/she has read and allow the listener to ask questions and take notes if he/she wishes, knowing that he/she will be retelling the story to another member of the class shortly.

After hearing the story and having time to ask questions and take notes, the groups will break up and those who were listeners will find someone else who was a storyteller in a different group and retell the story that they just heard. After retelling the

first story, students will go back to their original pairs, and those who were originally storytellers will become listeners and vice-versa. The telling, note-taking, and retelling will be repeated. These opportunities for retelling stories encourage quieter students to speak up and generally produce longer-than-average utterances than when students have to generate their own statements without the support of a previously read story (Romeo, Gentile, & Bernhardt, 2007).

One important constraint on this activity is that the class size must be such that the teacher can move about the room to the different pairs to monitor progress, answer questions, and facilitate pair-level discussion. This will help students stay on task as well as prepare them for class discussions. It is important that students actively participate in telling and retelling the stories. Those are the moments in which common beliefs can be shared and compared (Fredricks, 2012; Kim, 2004). Kim points out that students can use discussion time to help each other grow linguistically because some students may be better at using context for understanding or can explain things in terms that are easy to understand and from an ELL perspective.

After the retellings, there will be a class discussion led by the teacher to talk about the articles read and to make cultural connections explicit to the students. Examples could include recent events affecting the local economy, immigrant communities, or social issues. A teacher could ask if any of the students had experienced situations similar to those read about and let them share their own stories. This would help the students connect the reading and local culture to their own lives. It also presents a second, teacher-led opportunity for sharing ideas and synthesizing opinions, in case the student pairs do not discuss their stories in much depth. Another unlikely scenario could be that the

articles read by the students are not widely applicable for a whole-class discussion. In order to avoid a lack of material, the instructor should also be prepared to introduce and share an article.

It should be noted at this point that the aim of this activity is to increase students' reading habits and help them become more familiar with local culture, not just to do reading for homework. The NewsReels post-reading activities are about sharing opinions and retelling the story rather than answering questions and taking quizzes. Post-reading activities should not detract from the low-anxiety, flexible nature of the extensive reading program (Grellet, 1981; Haider & Akhter, 2012; Renandya, Sundara, & Jacobs, 1999).

At the beginning and end of the quarter, a survey will be administered to participating students in both the treatment and control groups. This survey will be based on the survey conducted in the pilot study. It will be modified to collect more detailed demographic information, which was omitted in the pilot study because of the limited sample size (participants could have been identified fairly easily by their demographic information in a diverse group, which could have affected the likelihood of answering questions honestly). The purpose of the survey will be to see if attitudes toward reading the newspaper, self-reported level of local culture knowledge, and English reading/speaking confidence have changed while taking part in the NewsReels program.

Based on the information in the literature, it is expected that, after actively participating in NewsReels, students will report more positive attitudes toward reading in English, more frequent reading in English, and greater connectedness to local culture and events.

Conclusion

Implications

English literacy is one of the most important skills for ELLs to develop if they are to be productive and content in society. By encouraging extensive reading and local cultural connection through reading authentic materials such as local newspapers, I hope that students will feel more comfortable in what still is for many of them a foreign environment.

One goal for the NewsReels program that falls outside the scope of the current study is that it will encourage adult ELLs to share the local newspaper with their family and friends who are not enrolled in classes so they can be exposed to the L2 in an authentic context as well. This would be an exciting development because the population of adult ELLs enrolled in English classes in northern Utah (and in most places) is much smaller than the population that is not enrolled.

Future Research

Possibilities for expanding this study include surveying local adult ELLs who are not enrolled in classes to learn about their reading habits and attitudes. The scope could be expanded to study the ways adult ELLs work to improve their overall English proficiency. In his interview, Jorge said that people in his shop are frequently trying to learn English and ask him for help. It would be interesting to investigate their study habits and measure their success in learning and in securing work.

The NewsReels program could be modified to fit time or distance constraints by having students submit a short summary of their story through an audio microblogging

platform such as Voice Board. To deepen the cultural connection created during the initial presentation of the NewsReels program (showing original newsreels) students could record videos of themselves in small groups doing a news update. Those videos could be posted online and shared with other classes during the semester.

CULTURE ARTIFACT

Autonomy and Cultural Experiences

INTRODUCTION

As a language learner, I always knew culture was important, but I also thought it was boring. That all changed when I attended Noah Geisel's "24/7 Culture" presentation at the 2013 Southwest Conference on Language Teaching. One of my favorite activities that he mentioned was having his students listen to the Billboard Top 10 songs (in Spanish) and make a video of themselves reviewing them. I realized then that culture was so much more (and so much more interesting) than just discussing holidays and foods and that students could access a wealth of material on their own. I decided that I wanted to apply this newfound understanding to the Global Academy summer English program that I am involved in.

Every year that the Global Academy program is held, students seem to come away with increased cultural understanding and deep bonds with each other. While I was sure that some of that bonding was happening in the classroom, I expected that a lot of it was happening day-to-day as they lived together on campus. However, I had no way of knowing.

I designed the *Passport to the World* project after one of those "though-of-it-in-the-shower" epiphanies that we all have from time to time. I had the idea to use a passport because USU had recently started a program for new first-year students that used a passport for on-campus activity participation. The passport program I developed gave us a way to measure progress without evaluating students' work and it encouraged students to get out and explore on their own and document their experiences.

While my passport project was a non-instructed program, it was still based on sound pedagogy. The tasks were designed with an understanding of Gardner's (1983, 1999) theory of Multiple Intelligences and structured according to Nunley's (2003) model of layered curriculum. In this research study I examine the students' response to this optional, non-instructed, culture-learning project.

Motivation in Culture Learning

Dörnyei (2003) indicates that language learning is “a deeply social event that requires the incorporation of a wide range of elements of the L2 culture” (p. 4). As a language teacher, it is my responsibility to provide opportunities for cultural exposure to my students. Once I have provided that context, students need to take some responsibility and decide whether they will act. Their decision is highly based on their motivation. As with many constructs in the fields of second language learning and teaching, various definitions exist regarding how and why learners are motivated to learn about the second language and the culture in which it is embedded. I now provide an overview of some of the more common definitions of motivation currently found in the literature.

One of the most popular ways of categorizing language learner motivation is as being instrumental or integrative. Instrumental orientation includes learning to accomplish something else, such as getting a better job (Dörnyei, 2009; Noels, Pelletier, Clement, & Vallerand, 2003). Integrative orientation reflects a desire to learn to identify with the culture that uses the target language, sometimes even at the expense of one’s native culture (Dörnyei, 2003; Noels, Pelletier, Clement, & Vallerand, 2003). The definition of integrative motivation has become problematic in recent years due to internationalization and is becoming less popular as a term. This is particularly visible in the case of English language learners. Because English is the lingua franca in many parts of the world and because so many regional variations exist, it is difficult to classify a learner’s motivation as integrative because it is impossible to match English to any specific culture (Dörnyei, 2009). One variation on motivation research has suggested that an extrinsic/intrinsic spectrum can help measure motivation. Another, self-determination

theory, has almost completely removed the integrative orientation and created new categorizations which differentiate more exactly between motivations (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Extrinsic motivation is similar to an instrumental orientation of motivation, but it is broader. Learners with an instrumental orientation plan to use their language skills to accomplish a goal. Extrinsically motivated learners may plan to use their skills for something, or they may just be learning because they need language credits and really have no intention of mastering the language or even using it once the class is over (Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford, 2003). Intrinsic language learning motivation, on the other hand, refers to student learning where the objective is simply to learn a new language (Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford, 2003).

Intrinsic motivation is fascinating because it is highly sensitive to outside stimuli. A helpful construct for measuring this sensitivity is the perceived locus of causality, which defines a direction in which regulation flows, either externally toward the learner or internally from the learner (deCharms, 1968; Gagné & Deci, 2005). Tangible rewards, surveillance, evaluation, and deadlines have all been shown to shift the perceived locus of causality to an external source and thereby decrease intrinsic motivation in learners (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Choice and personalization (Cordova & Lepper, 1996; Gagné & Deci, 2005) have been shown to help students feel more internally directed, thereby increasing intrinsic motivation.

Besides the obvious examples of motivation, such as punishment or monetary reward, there are also sources of language learning motivation which are difficult to categorize, such as travel, knowledge, and friendship (Noels, Pelletier, Clement, &

Vallerand, 2003). They could be intrinsically motivating if a learner sees them as valuable and aligned with his/her beliefs, or they could be extrinsically motivating if the learner believes it is important to have international friends to be a cultured member of society. Ryan and Deci (2000) have proposed self-determination theory as a way to further differentiate motivation by breaking down extrinsic motivation according to the way it is regulated and by the perceived locus of causality, moving from external to internal. The four types of regulation are external, introjected, identified, and integrated (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

External regulation is the easiest to define. It is regulation which is passed down to learners by an outside source and is associated with rewards and punishments (Ryan & Deci, 2000). An example of this type of regulation would include offering candy as a reward to students who volunteer to demonstrate a newly learned language form in front of the class. The student is volunteering, but he/she is doing so with the externally regulating promise of candy from the teacher. Introjected regulation is somewhat more internalized. It involves accepting regulation but not necessarily viewing it as important to oneself. Examples of this include performing tasks to avoid guilt or to build one's ego or show off. Identified regulation is more internalized than introjected. When a learner identifies with an extrinsic motivator, he or she shows "a conscious valuing of a behavioral goal or regulation, such that the action is accepted or owned as personally important" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 72). Finally, integrated regulation is the most internalized form of regulating extrinsic motivation. Internalization happens when a learner evaluates an extrinsic motivator as being aligned with his or her own goals and takes it on with the same acceptance as if it had been his or her idea in the first place. The

only major difference that exists between integrated regulation and fully intrinsic regulation is that for the first, the motivators originated externally and for the second, internally.

According to self-determination theory, learners are, for the most part, extrinsically motivated, but they can internalize those motivators to give themselves varying degrees of intrinsic regulation. The types of motivation and regulation experienced by students change with time. Dörnyei (2003) proposed the task processing system to model the stages through which a language learner passes while evaluating the tasks at hand. The three steps in the system are execution (task completion efforts), appraisal (constant task completion evaluation), and action control (compensatory actions if the execution is not proceeding as planned). A learner's task processing system evaluates the major concerns of motivation as expressed by Ryan and Deci (2000), which are energy, direction, persistence, and equifinality (i.e., the understanding that there are various means to achieve the same end), and adjusts actions according to the level/type of motivation the learner is experiencing.

A final component of motivation is learning strategies, which are ways of allocating resources to tasks. The needed and allocated resources will vary depending upon the necessary strategies and the type of learner engagement and motivation regulation, as discussed previously. Biggs, Kember, and Leung (2001) group learning strategies according to their purposes: surface learning, achievement, and deep learning. Surface learning strategies require minimal effort and yield less retention because there is less time and emotional investment in learning. Achievement strategies are based on succeeding, winning, and getting good grades. Finally, deep learning strategies involve

making associations, drawing parallels, connecting to personal experience, and considering alternatives.

Oxford and Shearin (1994) have shown that motivation changes with time, which that is why a variety of strategies and activities are needed to keep learners' attention. This includes surface strategies, which Ehrman, Leaver, and Oxford (2003) look down upon as if they are not as valuable as achievement and deep strategies. The following example illustrates the changing motivations of language learners: a learner who starts out in a language class because it is a requirement may decide after a study abroad experience that he or she wants to move to that area and be part of the culture. At that point, learning the language is still a requirement, but the perceived locus of causality, regulation, and learning strategies used will all change. Motivations can even change on a day-to-day basis. Some days a student may be genuinely interested in learning more about culture, but other days the same student may just want to check something off the to-do list to feel like something has been accomplished. Both kinds of motivation have been taken into account in the study presented here, but of particular interest is the kind of motivation that encourages a student to act autonomously.

Autonomy

Whether a language learner's motivation is external or fully intrinsically regulated, I believe it is important for him or her to take autonomous action at some point because in real language situations nobody is going to do the talking for them. Dörnyei and Csizer (1998) felt autonomy was so important that they included it in their 10 commandments for motivating learners. Holec's (1981) longstanding definition of

autonomy is “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (p. 3). Benson (2006) supports this definition by reiterating that autonomy is a characteristic of learners, and not simply a result of the situation. Students need to be free to take charge of their learning so they can develop a sense of personal control over the direction of their learning. That sense of autonomy is very important in developing intrinsic motivation (Deci & Flaste, 1995).

Autonomy can and should be supported in the language- and culture-learning classroom. As stated earlier, tangible rewards, surveillance, evaluation, and deadlines diminish autonomy (and intrinsic motivation), and choice enhances feelings of autonomy. For that reason, it is crucial that students have choices about how to use the language skills they are developing in the classroom. This can even be accomplished with newer learners because autonomy does not require high proficiency, it only requires willingness to communicate (Dörnyei, 2003; Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Willingness to communicate is defined as “readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2” (MacIntyre, Clement, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998, p. 547).

If high proficiency is not required to act autonomously, then providing language learners with opportunities to learn culture should be a relatively simple process. Niemiec and Ryan (2009) provide the following guidelines for enhancing autonomy: provide choices and rationales, acknowledge student feelings about topics, and minimize pressure and external controls. Supporting autonomy leads to higher intrinsic motivation, which has been shown to lead to better creativity (Koestner, Ryan, Bernieri, & Holt, 1984) and L2 achievement (Pae, 2008). These two areas are particularly important in this study, in

which students participated in an optional culture learning project during an English immersion program.

Culture Learning Context

The main goals of the culture learning project examined here were to (a) increase student understanding of local culture, (b) encourage students to find their own opportunities to use their language skills, and (c) encourage creativity. The project was called the *Passport to the World* and was carried out during an eight-week summer English and cultural immersion program at Utah State University. Participants were primarily college-age international students of intermediate-low to advanced English language skills.

The project involved giving students choices as to which culture learning/sharing tasks they would complete and how they would complete them while studying and living in Utah. There was little surveillance, no evaluation for grades, and only one deadline, which was the end of the program. All of this was done to foster students' intrinsic motivation to learn culture during their time in the immersion environment. Importantly, the passport project was optional, extra-curricular, non-graded, and non-instructed. Completion was reported to members of program staff who were not instructors. This situation was important because, according to Ehrman, Leaver, and Oxford, (2003), little research has been done regarding learner autonomy in non-instructed contexts.

Research Question

Given the current state of understandings of language learner motivation and autonomy, this exploratory study examines the following research question:

- How do students participate in a non-instructed, optional culture-learning program?

Methods

Participants

The program took place at Utah State University and Utah State University - Eastern. One hundred fifty-four students from eight countries participated for the full eight-week program, 98 at the USU campus and 56 the USU Eastern campus. Most of the participants were students in their home countries, the average participant age being 22. All participants spoke some degree of English, however, the fluency ranged widely (institutional TOEFL scores ranged from 323–650).

Instruments

The passports that were issued to each student (see Figure 3 below) could be personalized like a government-issued document. The rest of the passport contained instructions on how to take part in the project and listed the possible tasks students could complete to earn Cultural Honors on their final program certificate of participation. Each task had a space next to it where a member of the program staff could sign or initial to mark tasks as complete.

Passport tasks were designed to be entertaining and accessible to different types of learners. They were also designed to be accomplished in a variety of ways and involve differing levels of time and emotional investment. The theoretical basis for this design was taken from Gardner's (1983, 1999) theory of multiple intelligences, Biggs, Kember,

and Leung's (2001) learning strategies, and Nunley's (2003) layered curriculum. The ideas were also motivated by ideals similar to Kolb and Kolb (2005) who indicate that students should take responsibility and 'self-author' their learning.

Figure 1 – Passports and one group of tasks used in study (Cover emblem displays the schools' respective mascots)

The project activities were designed so that many could be completed using different media, such as comparing and contrasting one's country with that of another student's by making a poster or video, writing an essay, or composing a song. Some activities were more involved than others, such as writing and distributing a survey about a world issue versus posting a picture of oneself at a local historic landmark. To compensate for some tasks being simpler than others, tasks were layered according to depth of understanding required or overall difficulty (Nunley, 2003). The three different layers were worth one, three, or five points. There were 92 points possible, and students needed to complete 30 only points (and 1 activity from each of the 3 sections) to receive a Cultural Honors distinction on their final program certificate of participation.

While not wanting to explicitly evaluate learner progress and track it with deadlines and grades, I wanted to give learners the opportunity to share their work with others in the program. It was decided that an online platform would be the best venue for this. I selected Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook as the platforms for sharing because they allow for varying content types (text, links, images, video) to be posted, accommodate real-time feedback from communities of followers and friends, and they encourage social interaction, criteria which were suggested by Lee, Cheung, and Chen (2005) and Stracke (2007).

Procedures (Project Presentation & Data Collection)

The *Passport to the World* culture-learning project actually began before the students arrived at Utah State University. Three weeks before the program began, the program administrators began holding Google Hangouts (live, video chat broadcasts) and sharing information about the program on Twitter. The passport project was introduced during one of the Hangouts, and it was explained to students that they could access a digital version of the passport online and use the program hashtag on Twitter to begin posting images, video, and text to complete activities even before arriving in the United States. These activities included posting pictures of family and friends, local markets, and favorite foods and music.

During orientation to the program, after students had arrived to their respective campuses, everyone received a project passport and instructions on how to complete the activities and report activity completion. It was made clear to the students that the project

was completely optional and that they would still receive a certificate of participation if they did not complete the activities necessary to earn the Cultural Honors distinction.

During the program, students who completed the passport tasks posted some sort of proof of their actions to Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook and then showed that to an assigned group leader who was one of the members of the program staff who acted in a kind of 'camp counselor' role. While those completed activities were tracked, individual progress was not shared with other students. However, students could check the program website to see their groups' overall points as compared to other groups. No reward was given to the group with the most overall points as participation was tracked only for students' information. Task completion data was collected until two days before the program was over to give students ample time to complete the activities they were interested in.

Results

Of the 154 students who participated in the program, 113 of them completed cultural honors (30 points), and 11 earned all 92 points possible. Campus-specific data are shown in Table 3. The mean number of points earned when combining students from both campuses was 42 with a median of 42.5 points. Upon calculating the mode I realized that the most common score was zero because, of course, everyone who did not participate in the project got the same score but those who did participate earned a range of scores. After removing the zero scores from the data pool, the new mean was 51 points with a median of 48. These data and the specific data for each campus are shown below in Table 4.

Table 3 – Participant, country, and completion data.

	Whole Group	USU Logan	USU Eastern
Number of Participants	154	98*	56
Number of Countries	8	1	1
Number of Students Earning Cultural Honors (and Percentages)	113 (73%)	71* (72%)	42 (75%)

* Note: 19 more students from 4 more countries participated in the program for 4 weeks, and two of those students also earned the Cultural Honors distinction.

Table 4 – Mean and median scores for all participants as well as campus-specific information.

	All Scores	Participating Scores (No Zeros)	USU Logan	USU Eastern
Mean	42	51	41	43
Median	42.5	48	41	44

Along with the project completion data, 14 interviews were conducted with students from both campuses. Questions addressed things students had learned about culture by participating in the passport project and their favorite activities. Antonio (a pseudonym) said that he had learned about culture because of all of the sharing required by the passport activities. He specifically mentioned a time when he and a student from Tajikistan had reviewed the CIA Factbook pages for their countries together. Marta described herself as ‘indoorsy’ and said that the passport activities had encouraged her to go out and meet people and get more involved. She also said that the activities helped her make comparisons of other customs to her own. Other students described the new things

they saw and the stereotypes they had in their minds that were challenged, including ideas that all Americans are ethnocentric and rude.

Of the activities that students enjoyed the most, planning an event and cooking with others stood out as being most liked. Some students invited people from outside the program to participate in meals, game nights, and other activities. Finally, one student interviewed said that he enjoyed visiting local festivities for the passport, especially on Pioneer Day because it helped him make connections between the local culture and his personal beliefs.

Discussion & Conclusion

In answer to the research question, in an optional, non-instructed culture learning program, students exceeded expectations of autonomous initiative. It was originally expected that 30–35 students total would earn the Cultural Honors distinction and that 1–3 would complete all 92 points, so actual results were a tremendous surprise.

Most students were probably not totally intrinsically motivated/regulated because that is very rare. It is also unlikely that their motivations were externally regulated because there was not evaluation and the designation of Cultural Honors had no material value. Therefore, it is possible that their motivation was extrinsic and was introjected, identified, or integrated. Students who were motivated because they felt like they would look foolish or would be excluded if they did not finish the project experienced introjected regulation. Students who accepted the passport activities and the ideas behind them as being important to them or relevant to their language and culture learning values or goals could have experienced integrated or identified regulation. Future studies and

interviews will provide more detailed insight into the specific regulations of extrinsic motivation.

One of the benefits of the organization and administration of this pilot project is that it was non-instructed and therefore did not require teacher support on its first run. As Lee, Cheung, and Chen (2005) have stated, it is difficult to secure teacher support of a program that has a significant online component when the platform has not been demonstrated to already work. That is not to say the teachers did not support the project; several activities were completed as or in conjunction with classroom activities. The large social media sites were obviously going to function properly, but there was no assurance that the students would know how to use them or that they would use them in the way required of them. The technology was an essential aspect of the program and part of what Benson (2006) pointed out as being a challenging of the boundaries between the classroom and the rest of the world.

It is possible that the students would have done some of the activities listed on their own, like visiting local landmarks and sharing pictures of their families and hometowns, but this program allowed program administrators to see that it was happening, with no pressure to actually make it happen. There were some things that students did that they would not likely have done on their own, such as surveying people about world issues or reviewing the CIA Factbook page and comparing their countries. Besides connecting students, which would have happened even without the project, the passport activities connected students with opportunities and resources that they may have not known were there or would not have accessed otherwise.

Limitations

The main limitation of this pilot study is that extrinsic and intrinsic motivation were not measured directly. However, informed by prior research, conditions were created that have been shown to support autonomy and intrinsic motivation. The data support the claim that choice supports autonomy, and there were no deadlines, evaluation, rewards, or surveillance mechanisms to detract from it. Another limitation was the lack of prior knowledge about students' experience with the social media platforms used to report activity completion. As these and other logistical concerns are worked out, future studies and interviews will provide more detailed insight into the specific regulations of extrinsic motivation.

Conclusion & Future Research

In conclusion, this pilot study shows indications that choice and lack of external controls encourage autonomy in culture learning. Now that it is clear that students do not mind putting forth autonomous effort to engage in cultural activities, future iterations of the *Passport to the World* project could be modified to support more detailed data collection regarding motivation regulation, including student interviews regarding motivations for completing activities. It would also be beneficial to survey the learning styles and strategies of the students so activities could be tailored to their interests. I look forward to continuing this investigation and encouraging students to investigate culture in ways that are most interesting to them.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Place-Based Education

The places we live in shape our physical lives each day. While we all have certain things in common, people who live in the Himalayas live differently than those who live on Caribbean islands. If we are paying attention, we can even learn from those differences. That is place-based education (PBE). PBE has been defined by Sobel (2004) as “the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and other subjects across the curriculum” (p. 6).

Unfortunately, place is one of the most easily overlooked aspects of our education, and current reforms in the United States’ education system are moving learning away from the places we live in and encouraging teachers to focus on standardized test results (Ardoin, 2006; Gruenewald, 2003). I had overlooked the value of place myself until I read Chen’s (2010) *Education Nation*, where the author discusses the importance of students learning language, among other things, by engaging with the physical space around them, whether it be in museums, libraries, or just a neighborhood park. Sobel (2004) elaborates on those activities by giving examples of visiting a lumber yard to learn about forestry needs and projects or helping design a landscape project for the school with local professionals. Through these two sources, especially through the specific examples from Sobel, I came to realize that what seemed like a lot of ‘tree hugging’ to me at first, is really a way to encourage individualized inquiry and connections with local culture in an educational system that is still very focused on facts and standardized tests.

Many international students come to the United States expecting to study their major, improve their English, spend time with friends, and return home with a degree in hand after four years. Unfortunately, this sort of education does not help students form a bond with local culture or traditions. PBE can help overcome this. Not only does PBE increase interest in the environment, according to McInerney, Smyth, and Down (2011) it revitalizes "the commons," (p. 6) which are defined as the physical surroundings and cultural elements that are used by all members of a community free of cost. Examples of this include the air or the tradition of celebrating the country's independence. Experiences with these commonly held elements help develop "place identity" (p. 115) and an understanding of "place dependence," (p. 115) which are defined respectively as the feeling of being connected by traditions to the land and it being connected to you and the understanding that without the specific piece of land involved in the experience, the traditions being observed would not be the same (Ardoin, 2006).

The various facets of place are all present in every location, so any student can relate something familiar to them to the lesson. This constant stream of teachable moments brought to us courtesy of our surroundings show that every community is organic and changing (Gruenewald, 2003). For example, over time the same stretch of land may have been a woodland, then plowed and made into a tenant's corn field, then repossessed by a bank during hard times, then sold to an investor, then subdivided and sold as lots to families, one of which may be related to the original tenant farmers who cleared the trees for the first corn planting.

As shown above, the story of a single piece of land in a city or town is filled with history and life that can be looked at from different perspectives. These different

perspectives can encourage students to think critically about how things have arrived at their current state, where they are going, and how they can change. As a teacher, I will provide my students with opportunities to meet community members who take an active role in the community. This creates an authentic environment for students to get to know the community and be exposed to natural, contextualized language.

Supported by the meetings with local community members, critical inquiry in PBE decentralizes change by planting ideas in students' minds that they have the power to affect their environment and take action in the community (Ardoin, 2006; Bishop, 2004; McInerney, Smyth, & Down, 2011). I appreciate McInerney, Smyth, and Down's statement that PBE should move beyond the celebratory view of culture and really dig in to critical inquiry and desire for change. As a teacher, I want to use that desire to act as a platform for learning activities, such as writing thoughts or preparing dialogues to defend a proposed solution to a local issue. Action will help students realize that what they are learning is practical and realistic. I hope that when they leave my class, they will take both improved English skills and a desire to be active, contributing citizens wherever they go.

Another thing that I would like to have happen in my diverse classroom is discussion of global issues. The language classroom is an excellent setting "to address geopolitical and environmental strife" (Goulah, 2006, p. 201). This will take critical thinking to a global level, which is becoming a crucial skill in today's connected world. Goulah (2006) also explained that understanding our differences will help us appreciate them. An excellent example of that was shared by Mark Gerzon in his book *American Citizen, Global Citizen* (2010). In it, he shared an example of a Singaporean government

official who declined a seemingly excellent business opportunity because it would eliminate a trade relationship with neighboring Malaysia. This understanding of what Gerzon calls “geopartnering” (p. 112) can and should be fostered in the classroom. In a future edition of Gerzon’s book, I would like to see more resources/example of geopartnering, especially examples that could be carried out on a small scale, like in a language classroom.

A practical language teaching application of PBE that I thought of would be to have students give reports or do a project about their country or the country of a classmate. In these reports, students would explain the strengths and weaknesses of the country, and after hearing multiple reports, students would be asked to think critically about possible solutions to these difficulties, paying special attention to how other countries could be of aid. This sort of activity supports Bishop’s (2004) idea that a sense of community can be applied anywhere a student may go. These solutions could be formed in groups and presented orally, written as paragraphs or essays, or presented in a video format to the class.

Another example of PBE in practice is service learning, or community-based learning (Boyle & Overfield, 1999). Hale (2005) called it “the union of community service with academic reflection and analysis” (p. 1). I prefer the community-based name to the more common term of service learning because, as Boyle and Overfield (1999) point out, it puts all participants in the activity on the same plane as coconstructors of the experience. Navarro (2012) showed this coconstruction of learning clearly in his study of Spanish learners who spent time talking with local senior citizens. He pointed out that the activity was useful because the authentic conversation positively stretched learners’

interlanguage capabilities because in real conversations, sometimes there are sudden changes in topic to which the speakers must adapt. Despite that difficulty, students said they felt like they learned and that the experience was a positive one. Moreover, Zapata (2011) demonstrates that students' attitudes toward the target language and culture improve when involved in community-based learning (as opposed to a researched culture presentation), a point which Navarro did not address in detail. One of the main reasons behind that improvement could be that the students were out of the classroom making connections with real people (Hale, 2005). As one of Hale's students put it, sometimes students "just can't handle sitting there anymore… [They] need to be using it, practicing it" (p. 5). Statements like that from students are powerful. If the students feel like they are ready to get out of the classroom and start using what they have learned, then we as teachers need to make that happen as quickly as possible, so students can get involved and grow their self-confidence.

Practical research regarding PBE is scarce, so I have developed a basic class project that I would like to implement. It satisfies many of the central goals of PBE, including revitalizing the commons, encouraging place identity, and supporting action for change. The central goal of the project will be for students to create a plan to improve the situation surrounding a local issue. To begin, students will work either alone or in pairs and use local news sources to identify some local issues. Later, students will brainstorm as a class and share the various social issues that they have seen either locally or in their home countries. Topic ideas could include drugs, littering, air/noise pollution, illiteracy rates, lack of green space, etc. After identifying various possible topics of interest, students will survey members of the community to find out which of the issues are most

relevant to them. Once relevant issues are identified, students will select one to focus on for the duration of the project.

The number of topics selected will depend on the size of the class, but for a small class a single topic of focus will be selected. Once students agree upon a topic, they will begin researching the topic as well as measures that have been taken to improve it, either locally or elsewhere. They will also research the local history of the problem to try to understand why it has persisted despite any efforts that may be have been implemented to curtail it. Local experts will be identified and contacted to come address the class or to host the class in a location relevant to the issue. Students will prepare interview questions as a class in order to gain insight from experts on how to fix the problem. Depending on time, students may also conduct another community member survey to learn how the general population feels about the issue. Where the first survey will be a simple quantitative comparison of interest in various issues, the second will be qualitative in nature and will require better communication skills. This will conclude the data collection portion of the project.

Once students have a firm understanding of the issue and have had multiple opportunities to connect with community members and learn about their feelings and needs, they will work together as a group to create an action plan to help solve the problem. Depending on the age and language skills of the class, this could even include activities like preparing a materials budget or press release. The ultimate goal of the project will be to prepare materials and statements that can be presented as a class in a city council meeting. A member of the council will visit the class before this presentation and discuss how the council works (e.g., elections, voting, community service), where

they meet, and answer students' questions. At the end of the project, the class will travel together to a city council meeting and have their item addressed on the agenda. It is expected that they will be able to speak about the issue and share their ideas about how to improve it. Depending on the size and scope of the project, a basic budget could be prepared and even submitted as a proposal for funding to a relevant local office.

This project would be classified as PBE because it connects students to the local community in an interactive, rather than receptive, way. It encourages students to become involved and also helps them become connected to the place itself. As research is done on the local history of the topic, that begins the process of revitalizing the commons. Sometimes an issue is historical and not as simple as cleaning up a rough area of town, so it is important to understand that background. It would also be classified as PBE because the ultimate goal would be to take what had been learned from community members and put it into practice by giving back to the community. Another goal of PBE is that students would learn from the experience and use the newly acquired skills to make changes upon returning to their home countries.

As you can see, PBE is a very broad concept which can be applied on local and global scales. I believe that as second language teachers begin to embrace the environment around them as a rich source of authentic materials and issues for critical inquiry, students will connect with the curriculum in new ways and learn the target language with more interest and confidence than through traditional pedagogy.

Game-Based Learning

Students today are different from previous generations of learners (Prensky, 2001). The greatest differences noted by Prensky are due to the presence/ubiquitous nature of the internet. He has called those who have grown up with the internet present in their lives ‘digital natives’ and those who have not ‘digital immigrants’. The differences between digital natives and digital immigrants are not a simple matter of choice or laziness; the brains of digital natives are actually ‘wired’ differently from those of digital immigrants because the brain shapes itself differently when different tasks are required of it over a long period of time (Maguire, Woollett, & Spiers, 2006; Prensky, 2001).

Because modern life is more fast-paced and digital natives are accustomed to instant gratification, Prensky (2001) believes that the exchange for a digitally oriented brain is reflection. Digital natives expect interaction, not reflection. Instead of reading non-interactive books, digital natives turn to interactive games for entertainment and even for learning (Becker, 2007). The following articles were instrumental in guiding my journey into and deepening my understanding of game-based language learning.

The first thing I wanted to know was what a good game looks like. As I read, I found that one of the best ways to know what a game is like is by knowing what a game is not. A game is not simply data presentations and drills on a computer (Kiili, 2005). Sorenson and Meyer (2007) have said that “games are not necessarily about memorizing or providing correct answers, but rather about the performance of skills within a specific system of thinking and acting” (p. 561). That quote also explains why multiple choice and electronic versions of card and board games are not learning games (Hirumi,

Appelman, Rieber, & Van Eck, 2010a). An area in which it is somewhat more difficult to discern the difference between learning games and non-learning games is mobile-assisted language learning. Mobile vocabulary/flash cards and mobile phone tutors can be helpful, but they are not games, they are electronic drills (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2007). In their study about mobile-assisted language learning, Kukulska-Hulme and Shield mentioned learners uploading material to a virtual environment, which could be a game-like environment. I would have liked more information to help me discern the nature of the platform because immersive virtual environments can be very good elements of a game.

After seeing what a game is not, I was better able to see what a game is. An excellent quality of games is that they should be learner-centered. They obviously cannot be teacher-centered, unless there is a teacher moving the game along (Peterson, 2010), in which case the game would be more of a digital tour. Still, the teacher is an essential part of game design and implementation.

Pedagogy is at the center of game design (Hirumi, Appelman, Rieber, & Van Eck, 2010c). A good game motivates, instructs, and assesses through the storyline and the gameplay. The story provides the objectives and guidance for the player, the actual play provides opportunities to discover and develop strategies (such as pragmatics), and the structure of the game itself is an assessment tool because unless certain strategies are mastered, the player should not be able to complete it successfully (Hirumi, Appelman, Rieber, & Van Eck, 2010c).

An example of a language and culture learning game is Tactical Iraqi (Johnson, 2007). Tactical Iraqi is used to train soldiers on how to engage local Iraqis in

conversation as well as perform military duties. The story is obviously realistic, given the specific reason for which the game was developed, and training and game play give the players ample opportunities to learn important phrases and cultural practices. Artificial intelligence and speech recognition are able to assess the speaking ability of soldiers. However, because of the complexities of culture, I would have liked a more detailed explanation of how the artificial intelligence was able to assess cultural training during game play.

Good games encourage critical thinking and the reflection that Prensky (2001) has noted as lacking in learners today. These can be achieved through what Hong (1998) calls ill-structured questions. Ill-structured questions can have more than one answer and certainly have more than one way of arriving at those different answers, as opposed to well-structured questions, which have only one correct answer. Kiili (2005) explains that games that encourage critical thinking require learners to set goals, gather information, and use that information to solve problems. Critical thinking is defined as “the art of analyzing and evaluating thinking with a view to improving it” (Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2009, p. 2) and can be accomplished in language learning games in a number of ways because language can be used in every sort of circumstance.

Critical thinking could be used to allow learners to meet historical characters. An example from my own experience would be to have students ‘meet’ and gather information from Iqbal Masih, an important historical figure in the fight against bonded child labor, and other important characters from their books. It could be very powerful to have students meet characters from their books and be able to learn from them. After the game ends, students could journal about the situation and form opinions which would be

shared either in class or electronically if students are separated by distance. In this way, gameplay can become very real for learners.

Realistic, immersive gameplay has been described by Csikszentmihalyi (1975) as an optimal learning state called ‘flow’. Kiili (2005) explained Csikszentmihalyi’s construct in three parts: flow antecedents, the flow experience, and consequences of flow. According to Kiili, flow antecedents include preparatory conditions such as focused attention, goals, perceived ability to complete challenges, and the potential for control over game elements. In the presence of the antecedents, learners can experience flow, which includes concentration, a sense of control, and telepresence (i.e., feeling immersed in the game). Learners may also lose track of time during flow. This immersive experience yields positive learning results as well as positive feelings toward the learning medium. Interestingly, Kiili also points out that one consequence of flow is increased perceived behavior control outside of the game. Given these benefits of flow in game-based learning, I was curious why games are not more widely used. I decided to compare teachers’ concerns as well as specific benefits of using games.

Becker (2007) provides a clear list of teacher concerns. Her study was conducted in a class for teachers interested in learning how to use technology, so it provided a good view into the minds of those who are willing but currently unable to apply new technology in the classroom. In my mind, that is the most important group because those who are willing and knowledgeable are already using technology and games in the classroom and those who are unwilling and unknowledgeable are not a high priority to train.

Becker's (2007) first point is that teachers should be adequately trained on how to use something before they can reasonably be expected to use it. Many teachers know about different aspects of technology, but often do not apply that knowledge in the classroom (Chen, 2008; Thoms, 2011). Given the nature of high-stakes testing, a technique must be demonstrated to be reliable or it will most likely be too much of a risk (Lee, Cheung, & Chen, 2005).

Becker's (2007) other concerns involve two powerful forces outside the classroom: negative public opinion of videogames and funding. The first concern cited is that there are many games that are not appropriate for the classroom (i.e., too graphic, adult topics, etc.), to which Becker responds that there are also many books and movies that are not appropriate for the classroom, but both media are still used regularly. Still, once that barrier has been crossed, there is the matter of upkeep of technology. Expensive games run on expensive machines, and funding does not typically allow for computer or game replacement every year. For this reason, Becker advocates for device-independent programs, which are programs that can be run on any device/operating system (Worldwide Web Consortium, 2003).

Lastly, there are two concerns which resolve one another: one is the phenomenon called 'toxic disinhibition' which occurs when people get online (Suler, 2004), and the other is that games will remove teachers from the classroom (Becker, 2007). Online anonymity is a double-edged sword. It can allow people with low self-confidence to express themselves more comfortably and openly (Peterson, 2010; Sorenson & Meyer, 2007) but some students take it as an opportunity to act out and/or bully others (Suler, 2004).

In a language learning environment, toxic disinhibition would be disastrous. Learners must feel comfortable to express themselves if they are going to engage in communicative tasks, whether it be in class or online. Teachers are essential because they can address this sort of disinhibition and explain what sorts of behaviors are appropriate and which ones are not. Suler (2004) did not address this sort of training, and I wish he would have because this training is especially important in a language classroom, where cultures are coming into contact and language skills are not fully developed. Students need to understand both that they need to be careful when they speak and that they should try to be understanding of other learners who may accidentally say or do something that is not pragmatically appropriate. As students act in and assume good faith they will be able to form a trusting learning community.

Where Becker (2007) provided a useful summary of teacher concerns regarding game-based learning, Godwin-Jones (2005) and Gee (2012) shared various benefits, including increased computer literacy and communication skills, experience in community building and identity creation, collaborative learning, strategic thinking, and the ability to simulate real-world situations that would otherwise be unavailable to learners. From my perspective as a language teacher, collaborative learning is the most interesting benefit. Obviously, communication skills are important to develop, but they can be developed outside the game environment. A quality language learning game that allows learners to engage in collaborative learning is excellent. Ang and Zaphiris (2007) found collaborative learning to occur most in network-based games, which makes sense because it allows for in-game collaboration instead of planning that must be completed beforehand. This in-game, real-time collaboration can be the type of interaction which

Long (1996) has said allows for negotiation of meaning and facilitates language learning. Gonzalez-Lloret (2003) demonstrated that in a language learning game where one person had all of the information necessary and had to convey it to another student in order to complete the game, the communication ratio was still about 50/50 because of requests for clarification and negotiation of meaning. That finding was particularly interesting to me because I expected that the student with the information would do nearly all of the talking.

As students collaborate, there will likely be some partnerships or groups in which certain students have a more developed interlanguage than others. According to Godwin-Jones (2005), this is an important mentoring opportunity. Kiili (2005) briefly touched upon the sociocultural aspects of gaming, such as the possibility for mentoring, but I would have liked a deeper discussion. Peterson (2010) provided the discussion that Kiili did not offer. Mentoring in game-based learning manifests two important constructs of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory: the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and scaffolding.

The ZPD is defined by Vygotsky (1978) as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). Gee (2003) explains that the abilities that learners bring into the gaming environment, as in the classroom, can be deeply affected by sociocultural affiliations, such as ethnicity. Scaffolding occurs as a teacher or capable peer provides support for the language learner so he/she can gradually come to an understanding of new content or language forms. In an adaptation of Csikszentmihalyi's

(1975) flow model, Kiili (2005) proposed a three-channel model to model the optimal balance of challenge and skill levels in learners. Kiili's important addition to the model is the inclusion of the ZPD, illustrating the increase in superable challenge level available to a learner when supported by a capable mentor.

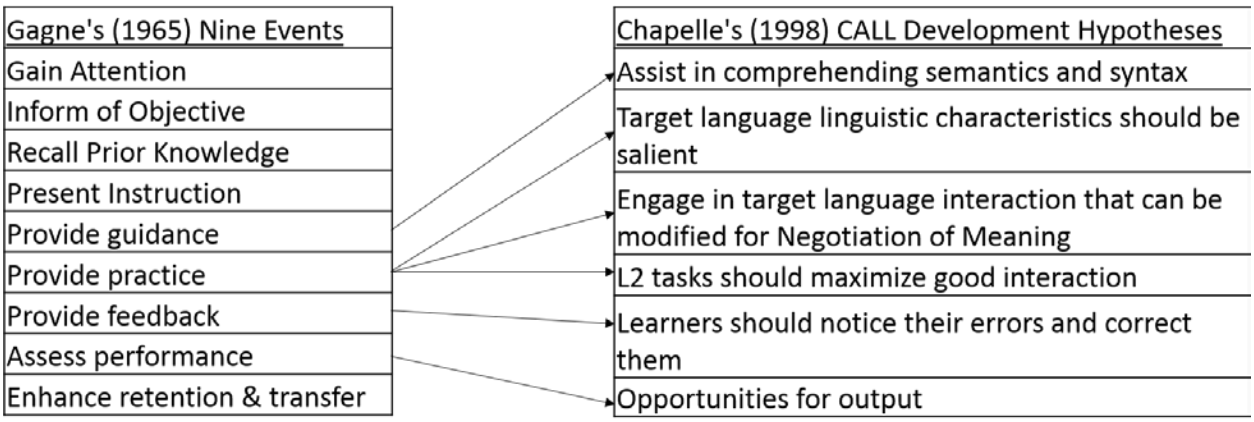
A benefit of game-based language learning not discussed by Godwin-Jones (2005) is the flexibility of an online environment. From a motivational perspective, the flexibility of the environment itself is a positive characteristic, including avatar personalization (Cordova & Lepper, 1996) and building construction (e.g., *Minecraft*) (Van Rosmalen, Wilson, & Hummel, 2013). That flexibility also helps close the gaming experience gap between boys and girls in which boys, on average, have spent more time in a gaming environment than girls by the time they are using games and computers in the classroom (Papastergiou, 2009). From a communicative perspective, students can recognize authentic communication and flexibility in grammatical rules during interaction with native speakers, as opposed to traditional rule-centered classroom practices (Bryant, 2006; Zheng, Young, Wagner, & Brewer, 2009). It seems paradoxical, but, given the benefits mentioned above, the authenticity available in an immersive online environment can rival and even surpass that of a traditional classroom.

Finally, after learning about the general appearance of a good game and the advantages and disadvantages to using games in the language classroom, I became very interested in learning how to create my own language-learning game. Of course, there is a great deal of computer programming knowledge that is necessary for creating even a basic computer game, but outside of that requirement I noticed two main areas which

must be considered in game development: pedagogy and game structure. Both elements are vital to the game's success, and they must be balanced to hold learner interest (Hirumi, Appelman, Rieber, & Van Eck, 2010c).

Many characteristics can be used when setting out the pedagogical aspects of a game. For me, the most applicable are Gagné's (1965) nine events of instruction and Chapelle's (1998) multimedia computer-assisted language learning (CALL) development hypotheses. Gagné's nine events concern the components of presentation, guidance, and assessment which are present during an activity, whereas Chapelle's hypotheses are principles related to the development of CALL technology. I believe they complement one another well, which is why I chose to focus on them here. Several of Gagné's (1965) events are related to instruction and do not correlate in any great degree with Chapelle's (1998) hypotheses. However, there are four events which correlate well with the hypotheses. That relation is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 – Relationships between Gagné's events of instruction and Chapelle's CALL development hypotheses.



Gagné's (1965) event of providing guidance is an opportunity to assist students in comprehending semantics and syntax (Chapelle, 1998). In this case, guidance refers to out-of-play explanations, such as in-game videos and cut-scenes during which non-playing characters converse. This is an excellent opportunity to introduce and reinforce semantics and syntax. Providing practice correlates with other hypotheses, namely the need to emphasize specific linguistic characteristics of the target language and creating and maximizing interaction opportunities which encourage negotiation of meaning. Appropriate and immediate feedback can help learners notice their errors and correct them. Correction is a necessary part of progression within games, and that progression is the main form of assessment within the game. In-game assessments provide important opportunities for output. The relation of Gagné's instructive events to Chapelle's CALL development hypotheses illustrates the fundamental necessity of proper pedagogy in game-based language learning.

Once a game's pedagogical methods have been established, the 'look and feel' of the game must be created. The first decision which must be made is the type of learning environment that will be used. Hirumi, Appelman, Rieber, and Van Eck (2010b) provide a comprehensive list of learning environments which include, in order of increasing complexity, traditional classroom teaching, role plays, online instruction, online games, simulations, and augmented/mixed reality. A final environment called augmented virtuality also exists, but it can also be included in the category of mixed reality. I chose to combine the two styles of augmented reality because they are very similar. Augmented reality is the imposition of digital objects into real situations, and augmented virtuality is the inclusion of real-world objects in virtual environments. An obvious constraint on the

complexity of the game will be the time and resources available for game development, but some existing platforms can be used (either purchased or open source) to save time on the part of developers (Johnson, 2007). Once the platform has been chosen and the aesthetics of the game have been designed, then all that is left is to integrate both pedagogy and story and test the game.

It has been very interesting to study game-based language learning. Several things I learned surprised me. For example, I did not expect that massive multiplayer online games would be used so much for language learning. Yet, it makes perfect sense because the game networks are enormous communities spanning continents and demographics. I look forward to taking advantage of such communities and other interactive language learning games so I can connect my language students to communities that will engage their interests and support their learning in a way only other digital natives can.

Portfolio-Based Language Assessment

I have had only a few experiences with portfolios throughout my education. The first time I encountered portfolios was in first grade, where we had to put all of our work together in a unit and submit it to the teacher. I remember keeping that portfolio for a long time after I finished first grade because one of the units was about dinosaurs and I was particularly proud of one of the pictures I had drawn. That is the only experience I can remember with portfolios. At the other end of my schooling experience has come the MSLT portfolio. The MSLT portfolio has been very different from my first grade dinosaur portfolio in some very important ways. Besides a complete lack of dinosaurs in the MSLT portfolio, this latest portfolio has been more of an experience than simply a product. It has required a great deal of work, compilation, selection of texts, and reflection. These are all important characteristics of meaningful portfolios. As I have gone through the program I have wondered why students do not complete a thesis instead of a portfolio. I have wondered what benefit a portfolio would provide that a thesis or even just high-quality coursework and projects could not. To answer that question, I have sought out the purpose of portfolios as well as some benefits and concerns associated with implementation of portfolio-based language assessment (PBLA). After sharing that information, I will also give some specific examples of PBLA.

One of the central components of my teaching philosophy is individuality and the belief that students will be more engaged and more likely to learn if they are studying in a context which is interesting to them. Learning this way, students can practice real-world tasks and be active participants in their learning. As Ripley (2012) has said, task-based

learning is an essential pedagogical tool today, and PBLA is a corresponding tool for assessing that learning. Fehse, Friedrich, and Kühn (2011) add to that insight by suggesting that PBLA encourages constructivist learning. This is accomplished by shifting the focus and control of learning to the learner. In a constructivist environment, the teacher facilitates learning while the learner guides his/her own learning (Chanpet & Chomsuwan, 2013). One aim is that students will select and investigate topics they are interested in, which will encourage them to focus on learning rather than on grades. Ripley reported that mental transition as being difficult for students to incorporate. However, Ripley was also optimistic that if PBLA could be implemented on a larger scale, covering multiple proficiency levels, then students could eventually become accustomed to focusing on the process of learning and not just the product and subsequent grade. I completely agree. Implementing a portfolio program would be time-consuming and difficult, but a comprehensive implementation is more likely to lead to success than a short-term program. Ripley's explanations of the purposes of PBLA demonstrate that PBLA is not something that can be implemented without a great deal of preparation and care.

With the purposes of PBLA in mind, I began to investigate the characteristics of good portfolios. According to Baturay and Daloglu (2010), there are three different types of portfolios: working, showcase, and complete. Each is either a formative or summative assessment tool. Formative assessment tools are used to guide (or form) and track learning and progress over a period of time. Summative assessments are a snapshot of a current state of a person's skills or knowledge. Both formative and summative assessments can be useful in PBLA.

A working (or assessment) portfolio is a formative assessment tool, where a student gradually adds pieces of work which reflect his/her best work at that time (Baturay & Daloglu, 2010; Grant, 2010). In this way, the student and the teacher can examine the portfolio together to look for areas that have improved and those that are still in need of work. By the end of the academic period, the student will have a portfolio documenting the progress made during that period. Such a portfolio could be used when advancing to a new level in a language school to quickly and clearly demonstrate strengths and weaknesses to a new instructor.

A showcase portfolio is a summative compilation of a student's best work, regardless of when it was completed (Baturay & Daloglu, 2010; Grant, 2010).The MSLT portfolio is a showcase portfolio. In PBLA, this could be a collection of the best pieces of writing done during the academic term, such as two poems, a persuasive essay, and a résumé. It is possible that another essay and a cover letter were also written during the term, but the student may have a particular skill in poetry and be more interested in showcasing his/her achievement in that genre. A common example of showcase portfolio usage, both in language learning situations and elsewhere, is for marketing oneself when applying for a job or a degree program (INCA Project, 2004).

Finally, a documentation portfolio is a compilation of all the work done by a student over a given time period (Baturay & Daloglu, 2010). This type of portfolio is scarcely mentioned in the rest of the PBLA literature (Grant, 2010; Ripley, 2012). It is likely omitted because it does not necessitate any amount of reflection or portfolio-related thought on the part of the learner or the instructor. It is just a place where all completed assignments and projects go before they are graded. In my opinion, they are the ones that

are most likely to end up being thrown away or burned (see Barrett, 2007) because students will not be particularly attached to them or have any use for them once the class is over. Because I do not believe that documentation portfolios are valuable in PBLA, I will not consider them throughout the rest of this paper.

Another important characteristic of portfolios is reflection (Barrett, 2007; Chang & Tseng, 2011). One of the reasons the work is all brought together is so that the learner can observe his/her progress. The tangible result of building a portfolio during the process of learning can help students focus more on learning and less on grades (Fehse, Friedrich, & Kühn, 2011). The values of hard copy portfolios, such as tangibility and student buy-in, are currently being weighed against the value and convenience of mobility and versatility as e-portfolios are becoming more common (Chanpet & Chomsuwan, 2013). E-portfolios retain the valuable component of reflection but exchange the tangibility for the ability to incorporate multiple media (e.g., video and audio clips) into the portfolio. This is particularly important in language learning, allowing students to record communicative performances and include them in their best-work compilations.

Another benefit of e-portfolios is their portability (Hung, 2012). E-portfolios can easily be carried on a flash drive or delivered in an e-mail to a potential employer. If one is enjoying an intercultural experience abroad, adding an experience to an e-portfolio is as easy as making a note in an electronic form or typing out an e-mail to a friend. It would be very cumbersome to have to carry around a portfolio or even just a few sheets of paper because they would likely be damaged over the course of travel. My support for e-portfolios in PBLA has been strengthened since carrying out the *Passport to the World*

project in the Global Academy summer intensive English program as detailed in my Culture Artifact. In short, the students compiled small evidences of cultural experiences and shared them openly with their peers and others involved in the program. There are clear benefits to using PBLA for assessing language and culture learning.

As stated earlier, PBLA cannot be implemented without a great deal of care. Grant (2010) explains that there are three central requirements for PBLA to be successful: access to and competency in appropriate technology; appropriate course length and class sizes; and realistic learning goals. The first requirement is very clear to me. It is very frustrating to try to collaborate when one party in the project does not understand how the basic tools work. With regards to course length, Grant did not specify any ideal length of time for a class. It was only stated that one month would not likely be enough time to accomplish anything significant. I, like any educator, support appropriate class sizes for the work load. As a student, I felt like my education suffered at times due to large class sizes and unreasonable or ambiguous learning goals. I never felt like taking ownership or excelling on a project that my teacher would complain to us about, saying that he/she would be spending the whole weekend grading our projects. Because PBLA can be more labor-intensive for teachers, it is crucial that their classes be reasonably sized.

A concern mentioned by Fehse, Friedrich, and Kühn (2011) is peer feedback. As I have said in my language artifact, peer feedback is an excellent tool for learning, but it does require training. Fehse, Friedrich, and Kühn's focus involves the infrastructure of the learning management system (LMS) used to host the e-portfolios. I like their description of the LMS they were using because it allowed students to grant access to

other students in the same way they would grant review rights to a class tutor. That type of control is good. However, the authors noted that when many students are on the same program at the same time to give each other feedback, it can slow down the system. Finding an adequate platform is also sometimes difficult because it can be difficult to find something that is reasonably priced but still has multimedia integration, peer review capabilities, and robust infrastructure and user support.

The last major concern is language level (Fleming & Little, 2010). Fleming and Little have explained that post-primary instruction is decentralized and tends to be taught by experts, who sometimes find it difficult to lower their register when explaining their area of focus. This makes content-based language learning very difficult. While they did not address specific solutions, I believe that the difficulty can be remedied if instructors take the role of a facilitator and use a working portfolio as an assessment tool. Students can do written assignments and create dialogs about any subject across in any discipline. As a teacher facilitates learning and helps students to work in their Zones of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978), the language skills that are required to explain the topic will be developed.

After seeing the requirements, benefits, and concerns regarding PBLA in the classroom, I have sought out examples of portfolios in both conceptual and practical contexts. There is relatively little research in PBLA in the United States and Canada when compared to Europe, so the first example is the European Language Portfolio as developed by the Council of Europe to work with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF) (Council of Europe, 2001). The concept of the portfolio unifies language instruction across borders and helps to standardize the assessment and

demonstration system of language and intercultural competence in Europe. Not all portfolio systems are necessarily the same, but they follow the standards set forth in the CEF.

The Intercultural Competence Assessment (INCA) Portfolio of Intercultural Competence is an example of a portfolio used in Europe in conjunction with the CEF (INCA Project, 2004). It can be used primarily as a showcase portfolio and contains a record of both experiences and formal/informal studies of a student. It is hoped that by completing the three components of the portfolio, students will develop intercultural competence, which is defined by Byram (1997) and summarized Deardorff (2006) as "knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others' values, beliefs, and behaviors; and relativizing one's self. Linguistic competence plays a key role" (p. 248).

The INCA portfolio (2004) consists of three parts: the passport, the biography, and the dossier. The passport is a summary of formal assessment and training, including external assessments (e.g., end-of-course exams), online assessments which need not be from one's specific school, and self-assessment records, which are based on three characteristics of competence: openness, knowledge, and adaptability. Obviously, external assessments are more objective than others, but they do not provide as much insight into the whole learner as self-assessments can when used properly.

Whereas the passport is the record of formal assessments accomplished by the learner, the biography is more of a journal (INCA Project, 2004). In it, the learner describes the background and his/her thoughts on specific intercultural experiences. It requires self-reflection regarding the experiences and elements of other cultures to which

one may or may not be able to adapt. I like the biography because it is a very qualitative part of the INCA portfolio and helps the reader connect with the learner.

The final portion of the INCA portfolio (2004) is the dossier, which contains certificates, witness statements, written feedback, and audio or video recordings of intercultural/linguistic value. It is the most objective part of the portfolio because it does not require reflection on the part of the learner. It is simply a compilation of evidence that intercultural experiences have been sought out and competence has been developed. The dossier alone would not provide an adequate representation of a language learner, but combined with the passport and biography, the INCA portfolio is an excellent tool for PBLA.

Two other examples of portfolios stood out to me in my research efforts. Alone, they were not particularly noteworthy, but side by side they are very interesting. The first example is Baturay and Daloglu (2010), and the second is Chang and Tseng (2011). I will compare and contrast them here to illuminate the important similarities and differences I noted.

First, both studies were conducted using e-portfolios. Both recognized the utility of portfolios in demonstrating competencies outside of a single summative assessment. To facilitate the formative learning process, students were required to self-regulate and organize their own materials for review and evaluation. These are the main similarities that I noticed. Other components looked similar but were carried out differently.

The project carried out by Baturay and Daloglu (2010) contains various elements of traditional instruction. The instructor identified the topics that would be discussed in the portfolio and established a rubric without discussing it with students. Also, all

components of the portfolio were written. It was never explicitly stated that the class was a writing class, so I expected other media to be integrated into the e-portfolio. Once the portfolio was compiled, it was submitted to the instructor. The authors recognize the benefit of formative assessment, but submitting the entire portfolio at once for feedback is summative, even if the assignments have been compiled over time. Finally, the authors did not survey both control and treatment groups regarding their perceived learning. They reported no significant difference in learning but said that the students in the treatment group felt like they had learned and that they could achieve goals. There is no way of knowing if the control group felt the same way. The data of this study were interesting and unexpected, but I did not like the way the actual PBLA was executed.

On the other hand, Chang and Tseng (2011) used PBLA to assess results of project-based learning. The authors never identified what projects were selected or how the selection took place, which would have been helpful. They did, however, identify specific areas of interest which they were examining, including goal setting, reflection, and interaction with peers to assist with the review process. After modeling what was to be done and instructing students on how to use the e-portfolio system, students created learning goals, incorporated various media into their portfolios, and were free to act independently on their projects. They also reviewed one another's work throughout the portfolio development process, which surely reduced the load of grading which fell on the instructor at the end of the course.

Interestingly, and inexplicably, like Baturay and Daloglu (2010), Chang and Tseng (2011) found that both treatment and control groups showed similar learning gains, but the portfolio group had a higher amount of perceived learning. Everything about

Chang and Tseng's study is more aligned with my beliefs about teaching because it gave responsibility for learning and organization to the students, used technology to enhance learning, and it was all conducted in the context of project-based learning.

Portfolios are a way to engage students in a formative learning process that gives them a visible result as evidence of their work and learning. PBLA helps learners shift their focus from the final grade to the actual learning that occurs during portfolio development and gives learners more control over their learning than in the traditional classroom. This is an important step in moving towards Janne's (1977) powerful idea that one of the purposes of education is to help learners move away from seeing themselves as *products* of society and towards seeing themselves as *producers* of society.

LOOKING FORWARD

I came into the MSLT program after completing a Bachelor degree in a totally unrelated field. I came because I had worked in the Global Academy program as a classroom assistant that summer and wanted to learn how to make a living doing that sort of thing. This program has shown me how to do that.

I do not see myself spending the next 30–40 years in a classroom. I hope to have 'traditional' teaching opportunities, but I will mostly have to be in search of teachable moments all around me. However, just because I will not be in the classroom each day does not mean I cannot stay connected to new research and best practices. I am practical, so I realize I will probably not have the time or resources to regularly review new SLA literature. Instead, I will stay up-to-date by actively participating in my personal learning network (mostly professional contacts on social media) and by exploring the electronics section at the store.

So, what will I be doing if I am not teaching languages? I think a story will be most helpful in explaining that: I recently had the experience of developing from scratch a program which partners American students at USU with international students who are abroad and have not yet applied to USU. I presented the idea publicly, created a program website, worked with the international office and LPCS department to find American students to work as conversation partners, and got the program, in its most basic form, up and running. It has been very satisfying and fun to see that happen.

Since starting that program I have been working to improve on the basic model. I have been asked about the degree to which we will train conversation partners to teach English, like being able to answer grammatical questions. When asked about those

things, it is so satisfying to me to be able to explain that, according to SLA theory and my own personal teaching philosophy, if students with a conversational level of English work together and talk to each other about topics that they are interested in and engage in negotiation of meaning, they do not need explicit language instruction to improve their speaking proficiency. Moreover, the communicative competence they will gain by conversation experience with a native speaker is not something they could gain by explicit instruction. Rather, it just requires practice.

It was hugely rewarding to apply my knowledge in that way. I look forward to creating programs and moments like that for the rest of my life.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Reading Habits Survey

How often do you read the following items in English:

	More than once a day	Once a day	Once a week	Once a month	Less than once a month
1. Newspaper					
2. Websites					
3. Homework					
4. Child's Homework					
5. Signs by the Road					
6. Products at the Store					

Do you enjoy reading English outside of class?

-- Yes -- -- Neutral -- -- No --

Do you feel like reading helps you improve your English skills?

-- Yes -- -- Neutral -- -- No --

Do you feel like reading in English can help you get a better job?

-- Yes -- -- Neutral -- -- No --

Appendix B – Reading Habits Interview Questions

Can you read in your native language?

Do you enjoy reading in your native language? Why/why not?

Do you ever read for pleasure in either your native language or English? Why/why not?

Do you feel like reading in English helps you improve your English skills? Why/why not?

Do you feel like reading in English can help you get a better job? Why/why not?

What do you think people around you believe about reading? Is it good or bad? Is it useful or is it a waste of time?