SELECTED PAPERS FROM THE JOHN LACKSTROM LINGUISTICS SYMPOSIUM
VOLUME 2

Perspectives on Effective Teaching in DLI and Foreign Language Classrooms

Edited by KARIN DEJONGE-KANNAN
MARIA LUISA SPICER-ESCALANTE
ELIZABETH ABEll
AARON SALGADO
Perspectives on Effective Teaching in Dual Language Immersion and Foreign Language Classrooms

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Preface

John Lackstom was one of the founders of the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program, which enrolled its first cohort in 1998 at Utah State University. Upon Dr. Lackstrom’s retirement in 2011, we began organizing an annual student research symposium in his honor. In connection with this symposium, we published the first volume of selected student papers on the university’s Digital Commons, which is an open-access repository. Since its publication in 2015, this volume has been accessed free of charge by many readers in dozens of countries. Thus, Dr. Lackstrom’s influence continues around the world.

John Lackstrom was born in Seattle, Washington, and received his Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Washington in 1971. He joined the faculty of Utah State University as a professor of linguistics and Spanish. He retired in 2011 after a forty-year career. Having worked closely with John, we count it a great privilege to have been mentored by him. John modeled the art of polite persistence to accomplish one’s goals and always seemed to know just the right resource for information—whether that be a person, a text, or an online resource. Most importantly, John was the champion of giving students a chance. He worked tirelessly to secure funding for our students in the form of tuition awards and stipends for instructor positions. He was an exemplary model of how to mentor students and how to collaborate with colleagues.
We are now working with students who never knew Dr. Lackstrom. Yet his name remains important in our department. The annual symposium in his honor is a frequent reminder of Dr. Lackstrom’s contribution to the program, which has ripple effects in the lives of our students and their students. As MSLT graduates go out to teach and mentor in many parts of the world, Dr. Lackstrom’s influence continues on a global scale. It is an honor to pay tribute to our friend and colleague with this second volume of the Selected Papers of the Lackstrom Linguistics Symposium.

Karin deJonge-Kannan
and María Luisa Spicer-Escalante
Logan, UT
PART 1

Dual-Language Immersion
Introduction to Dual Language Immersion

Utah’s Experience

María Luisa Spicer-Escalante

Une langue qu’on n’enseigne pas est une langue qu’on tue.

—Camille Jullian (1859-1933),
member of the Académie Française

The State of Utah holds a leading position worldwide in implementing dual language immersion (DLI) programs (Gándara, 2016a). As of the academic year 2016-2017, the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) offers 162 DLI programs, 87 of which are in Spanish, 47 in Chinese, 20 in French, 6 in Portuguese, and 2 in German. These programs currently serve over 32,000 students at the elementary and high school levels. All programs begin in first grade. The longest running programs are Spanish, which is now offered in 16 secondary schools, while Chinese counts for 6 and French for 5 high schools across the state (Leite & Watzinger-Tharp, 2016; Utah State Office of Education, 2016). After defining dual language immersion, its principles, and its benefits, this paper will summarize the history of DLI in Utah and introduce the key people whose vision, continual efforts, and commitment to education have made possible the current situation of DLI in the state, where “2016-17 marks the first academic year for the new Bridge Courses for advanced language study in Utah” (Landes-Lee, 2016), which enable high school students in DLI programs to leverage their proficiency for college credit.

WHAT IS DUAL LANGUAGE IMMERSION?
Dual language immersion (DLI) refers to the integration of literacy and curriculum content instruction in two languages (Cloud et al., 2000; Genesee, 2008; Howard et al., 2007; May, 2008, 2013). The main goal of
DLI is proficiency in two languages. One of these languages is the mainstream or dominant language, i.e., English in the United States and Canada, while the other language is the partner, minority or second language, such as French in Canada or Chinese in the US (Genesee, 2008; Howard et al., 2007; Swain & Lapkin, 2005). Lyster defines DLI as:

a form of bilingual education that aims for additive bilingualism by providing students with a sheltered classroom environment in which they receive at least half of their subject-matter instruction through the medium of a language that they are learning as a second, foreign, heritage, or indigenous language. In addition, they receive some instruction through the medium of a shared primary language, which normally has majority status in their community. (Lyster, 2007, p. 8)

In the same vein, Lightbown and Spada (2013) emphasize that immersion programs “give learners two for one” (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 171). Additionally, Met and Livaccari (2012) state that the main objective of a language immersion program is to develop a “student’s (1) proficiency in English; (2) proficiency in a second language; (3) intercultural competence; and (4) academic performance in the content area, at or above expectations” (Met & Livaccari, 2012, p. 16). Offering a useful mnemonic, Fortune (2013) states that the ABC’s of DLI are: Academic Achievement, Bilingualism and Biliteracy, and Cultural Competence for all students. Thus, by integrating curriculum content, language, and culture, DLI programs prepare students for the opportunities and challenges of the global world. Several models of DLI have been developed; their chief differences are found in the amount of time of instruction in the target language, the student population in the classroom, and the research parameters that are followed by specific authors. The research literature considers the following models:

- Developmental immersion, in which all students are native speakers of the partner language, second language or minority language.
- Two-way immersion, which refers to the student population in the classroom. In these programs, approximately 50% of the students are speakers of the partner or minority language. Collier and Thomas (2004) state that at least 30% of the student population needs to be speakers of the minority language “as the minimum balance required to have enough L2 peers in a class to stimulate the natural second language acquisition process” (Collier & Thomas, 2004, p. 3).
- One-way programs, also referred to as a foreign language immersion, are designed for students who are native speakers of the majority language. For example, English speakers in one-way immersion in the US are taught
Introduction to dual language immersion

Among these models, several differences can be found with respect to the use of the target language as a medium of instruction. Some programs are 90-10; 80-20 or 50-50, corresponding to the percentage of instructional time teachers spend teaching in the target language (Christian, 2011; Cloud et al., 2000; Fortune & Tedick, 2008; Genesee, 2008; Howard et al., 2007).

BENEFITS OF DLI

Research on the teaching of academic subjects and literacy skills in two languages has demonstrated great benefits (e.g., Christian, 2011; Gándara, 2016a; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Swain & Lapkin, 2005). In fact, Thomas and Collier (2012), having collected data for 28 years through longitudinal studies in 35 school districts with over 42,000 students, found that DLI programs have the potential to close the achievement gap for English Language Learners (ELL). This gap has been reported for decades as being pervasive and persistent, despite many endeavors by districts to narrow or close it (Johnson & Swain, 1994; Lindholm-Leary, 2005; Lindholm-Leary & Howard, 2008; Thomas & Collier 2003). Thomas and Collier have found consistent results that DLI programs “lead to grade-level and above-grade-level achievement in second language, the only programs that fully close the gap” (Thomas & Collier, 2012, p. 11). Research in the field has also highlighted the academic, cognitive, sociocultural, and economic benefits that the DLI programs entail. Table 1 summarizes some of the studies that have been conducted in these different areas.

As Genesee (1994) concludes, “there is no doubt that immersion programs are the most effective approach available to second language teaching in school settings” (Genesee, 1994, p. 9). In addition to these benefits, these programs “result in high levels of proficiency at relatively low cost” (Met, 2012, p. 5), since every DLI faculty member is in charge of teaching both language and content. Specifically, in DLI programs there is no need for additional expenses to hire a language teacher, unlike in regular foreign language programs. Moreover, due to the fact that “immersion programs usually start in kinder-garden or first grade, they provide ample time within a student’s academic career for the development of oral and written proficiency...” (Met, 2012, p. 5). In the specific case of the state of Utah,
the DLI program “has become extremely cost effective with a yearly cost of approximately $100 per student above traditional instruction”. (Roberts et al., 2016, p. 2). In sum, DLI programs are not only effective and beneficial; they are economically feasible as well.

Table 1. Benefits of dual language immersion Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Same or higher academic achievement as monolinguals, plus a language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High English proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No gap in achievement for English Language Learners (ELLs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloud et al. 2000; Collier &amp; Thomas, 2004; Fortune &amp; Tedick, 2008; John-</td>
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<td>son &amp; Swain, 1994 Leite &amp; Watzinger-Tharp, 2016; Lindholm-Leary, 2005;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindholm-Leary &amp; Howard, 2008; Thomas &amp; Collier, 2003; Watzinger-</td>
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<td>Tharp et al., 2016</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Cognitive</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Struggling learners benefit from DLI environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bilinguals manifest better problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, ability to focus, and metalinguistic awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Onset of age-related disorders such as dementia and Alzheimer’s is about 5-8 years later in bilinguals than in monolinguals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bialystok, 2016; Bialystok et al., 2004; Bialystok &amp; Viswanathan, 2009; Cloud et al., 2000; Collier &amp; Thomas, 2004; Fortune, 2012; Fortune &amp; Menke, 2010; Stewart, 2012; Yang et al., 2011</td>
</tr>
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<table>
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<th>Sociocultural</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Learn about different cultures, and understand own culture better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to develop friendships across cultures, and interact in culturally appropriate ways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More positive and confident attitudes towards school, college, and the learning of two languages, with a lower likelihood of dropping out of school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloud et al., 2000; Collier &amp; Thomas, 2004; Lindholm-Leary, 2007;</td>
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<td>Stewart, 2012; Thomas &amp; Collier, 2012</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Economic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunity to earn 5% to 20% more than monolingual counterparts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Advantage in the workplace where 31% of executives speak two languages or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Better preparation for the global workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Callahan &amp; Gándara, 2014; Gándara, 2016b; Genesee, 2008; Roberts et</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al., 2016</td>
</tr>
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</table>
BRIEF HISTORY OF DLI IN UTAH

The roots of DLI in Utah go back to the fall of 1979, when Alpine School District launched the first Spanish immersion program at Cherry Hill Elementary school in Orem. Following this first effort, additional programs arose across the state, including the Spanish immersion program at Orchard Elementary in Alpine School District, the two-way Timpanogos Elementary Spanish program in Provo School District, and the Spanish immersion programs at Jackson Elementary and Emerson Elementary in Salt Lake School District (Leite, 2013). These programs varied in terms of duration, success, failure, and student attrition. Then, in the early 2000s, several events aligned and key experts in the field joined their efforts to make the implementation of DLI possible on a larger scale in Utah.

In 2002, Gregg Roberts, a former French instructor and an expert on the advantages of being bilingual, was appointed as World Language Specialist in the Granite School District. In this position, he began his mission to improve language education in Utah. With this objective in mind, he created a network of language teachers and advisors from other states, who worked together towards the accomplishment of this goal.

Meanwhile, in 2005, Ofelia Wade, principal at Eagle Bay Elementary School, launched one of two 50/50 Spanish immersion programs in Davis School District. As a former Spanish DLI student in Miami, Wade’s expertise, thorough research on the different immersion models, and years of planning lead her to implement a 50/50 two-teacher model, which she saw as the best option for Utah students and for the Spanish immersion program. In this model, which begins in first grade, schools have three first-grade classes. One class is for students whose parents decide not to enroll their children in the DLI program. The remaining two classes follow the DLI program, which means they switch classrooms during the school day. That is, immersion students spend half of the day in an English classroom with an English instructor and half of the day in a Spanish class with a Spanish instructor. While one group is in the English classroom, the other group is in the Spanish classroom, and students switch after lunch.

In 2007, Roberts and Wade—who both grew up bilingual and both had a deep interest in improving language education in the state of Utah—began to collaborate and expand their efforts. As an outcome of this cooperation, Granite and Salt Lake School Districts started a Spanish pilot immersion program in fall 2007 in two schools based on the academic, linguistic, and cultural successes that Wade had established at Eagle Bay
Elementary. As Leite (2013) states, “neither school district had any idea that the model that they were implementing would be replicated throughout the state within a few short years” (Leite, 2013, p. 55).

A year later, in 2008, “under the visionary leadership of former Governor John Huntsman and the sponsorship of Senator Howard Stephenson” (Roberts & Wade, 2012, p. 10), the Utah legislature approved Senate Bill 41, which provided funding for the implementation of DLI programs across the state and charged the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) with creating a world-class language program (Roberts et al, 2016). This bill was the catalyst that allowed Roberts and Wade to start the 50/50 model on a state-wide basis in Utah with two-way and one-way programs (see Figure 1 below). Utah’s model has already become a benchmark at the national level. This program has been made possible and successful as a result of the collective and continual efforts of key educators and consultants committed to improving education for all students. According to Roberts and Wade (2012), the creation of state-wide DLI programs aims to fulfill Utah’s mission in education. More precisely, DLI programs provide all of Utah’s students “with the opportunity to become linguistically proficient and culturally competent by mainstreaming dual

![Figure 1. Dual language immersion](image)

language immersion programs for students of diverse abilities across all socioeconomic, ethnic, rural, urban, large and small school communities throughout the state”. (Roberts & Wade, 2012, p. 9).

One of the key features of the Utah DLI program is that the model can be replicated and that schools implementing the state’s model receive support from the USOE in the form of teacher training, materials development, and more. Figure 2 shows the DLI instructional time in grades 1-3 and the way in which the different subjects are divided over the two
languages. The USOE’s website provides further details on instructional time in other grades (https://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/dualimmersion). In 2009, the second year of the initiative, 25 additional Utah schools began offering one of the state’s DLI programs in Spanish, French or Chinese (Roberts et al., 2016; Wade et al, 2015).

Following widespread success of the 50/50 model in Spanish, French, and Chinese programs, two Utah schools began offering Portuguese DLI in 2012. Two years later, German was added as well, bringing the total number of languages offered to five. By that time, the number of DLI programs across the state had risen to 118 (Roberts et al 2016; Wade et al, 2015).

As students continued in the DLI programs and the first cohorts reached secondary school in the Fall of 2013, middle schools offered them the opportunity to continue their education in their respective languages. The target-language courses for grades 7-9 focus on “critical thinking, analysis, and academic speaking and writing skills that ready [students] for university study career pathways” (Roberts et al., 2016, p. 3).

By 2015, Utah had 138 DLI schools, far surpassing the goal set up in 2010 by Governor Herbert of having 100 schools in Utah by 2015 (Roberts et al, 2016). And more programs are being added each year. Today, Utah

Figure 2. Instructional time. Adapted from http://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/dualimmersion/
has 162 DLI programs in five different languages, with more programs in other languages expected in the future. Figure 3 shows the current programs that are offered in the state of Utah as of 2016-2017 academic year.

Figure 3. DLI Schools in Utah (2016-2017 school year)

This series of events has facilitated further actions in the state of Utah that are worth mentioning. For example, to better prepare pre-service and in-service teachers, a common course on Foundations of DLI was developed collaboratively by a team of faculty members from universities around the state. This course, one of the five courses required for the DLI Endorsement, was created to provide future and current DLI teachers with “well-designed opportunities to gain a strong theoretical and practical background about DLI education as a rapidly growing educational sector, as well as how DLI is being implemented in the Utah context” (Spicer-Escalante et al, 2014). The Foundations of DLI course has now been taught for four consecutive years in all seven of the state’s four-year teacher preparation programs.

Additional teacher preparation efforts include the Annual Utah Dual Immersion Institute (AUDII), which has been held for six consecutive years now, and where DLI teachers, differentiated by language, grade, and years of teaching experience in the program, receive targeted training for their specific needs. AUDII also includes special sessions for both new and international guest teachers. In addition to the training delivered at AUDII, the USOE holds several professional development sessions throughout the academic
Introduction to dual language immersion

year, following the same differentiation premises (Wade et al., 2015).

Utah also hosted the 5th International Conference on Language Immersion Education in 2014. DLI leaders from school districts, the State Office of Education, and several of Utah’s universities collaborated in organizing this event, which was attended by close to 600 participants from over 20 countries.

While the above events target schools and teachers, the state recently took an action that directly benefits specific individuals. In 2015, with a 15-0 vote, the Utah State School Board established the Utah Seal of Biliteracy, which “will be awarded to a student who is proficient in English and one or more World Languages or the Indigenous Languages of Navajo or Ute” (http://sealofbiliteracy.org/utah). This seal will first become available at the end of the 2016-17 school year.

Additional action directly benefitting students is seen in the development of the Bridge Program. In the 2016-217 academic year, Utah became a national leader in the K-16 DLI pathways by launching the first Spanish Bridge Program, which is offered through Weber State University and the University of Utah (Landes-Lee, 2016; Landes-Lee et al., 2016). The Bridge program has developed ‘thanks to a unique partnership between Utah’s seven four-year institutions of higher education … and the USOE” (Roberts et al., 2016, p. 3). Through this program, high school students who pass the Advanced Placement (AP) language and culture test are eligible to enroll in a series of upper-division university courses. Thus, these courses “fill the “gap” between students completing a World Language AP exam and the study of language in college” (Landes-Lee, 2016, p. 3). Moreover, these courses, taken while students are still in high school, count towards a university minor or major in the respective language of study. In 2018, French and Chinese will be added to the Bridge Programs. (http://l2trec.utah.edu/)

As the 50/50 Utah DLI model evolves, new challenges arise such as the development of appropriate materials specifically designed for DLI students as they reach higher educational and linguistic levels, teacher preparation, and teachers’ level of language proficiency, among others. However, the collaboration among teachers, school administrators, parents, and USOE’s leadership is making possible the continuation and expansion of this program. Utah’s DLI program was firmly established by Gregg Roberts and Ofelia Wade, with the support of numerous educators, school principals, teachers, parents and students in the state of Utah. All these
participants are commendable for the success of DLI in Utah. Likewise, they will all continue to work on the opportunities and the new challenges that the growth of the DLI program will experience. As mentioned by Wade et al (2015), the state of Utah recognizes “DLI as the most effective pathway to prepare students for the 21st century, while honoring multilingualism and multiculturalism as assets” (Wade et al., 2015).

§

The articles that follow contain Utah State University students’ research projects. They were written for the Foundations of DLI course at USU and presented at the John Lackstrom Linguistics Symposium in 2016. These articles address diverse aspects of DLI programs such as the development of literacy, the teaching of culture, and the use of code-switching in the classroom.

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speakers without incurring extra costs. *Educational Leadership, 61*(2), 61–64
Utah Seal of Biliteracy. n/d. Retrieved on October 14, 2016 from: http://sealofbiliteracy.org/utah
Code-Switching in the DLI Classroom

Considering Alternatives to Target-Language-Only Instruction

Michael Spooner
Isabel Arias Olsen

ABSTRACT

A review of the research establishes that code-switching is practiced by multilingual speakers at all levels of proficiency, and that it can be a useful aid to novice speakers of an L2, providing cognitive, communicative, and affective value. Although how much to allow in the classroom remains a question for us, we argue that code-switching should not be completely banned from DLI curricula. We recommend that this matter be framed as a teacher preparation issue, and suggest that pedagogical techniques based in solid bilingual education research can be developed to guide teachers in appropriate and effective uses of codeswitching in L2 classrooms.

Keywords: bilingual education, code-switching, dual language immersion, DLI, multilingual, teacher preparation, teaching, translingual

INTRODUCTION

Works in communicative language pedagogy (CLT) generally argue that the target language should be the only language used in an L2 classroom (e.g., Lee & Van Patten, 2003; Shrum & Glisan, 2010). This approach—essentially contriving a monolingual experience in the target language classroom—has been dominant since the late 1800s (Butzkamm, 2003; Dodson, 1972) and continues to dominate foreign language and second language teaching. The commonsense rationale is that the L2 is best taught exclusively through L2, just as formal instruction in the L1 is
conducted solely in L1. The foundations of this commonsense practice are not systematically presented and defended in the current literature, though the doctrine itself is diffused throughout the lore of L2 pedagogy. Auerbach (1993) informally surveyed American ESL teachers at a statewide conference, and found that the overwhelming majority (80%) of respondents maintained an L1-only policy in their classrooms, on logic articulated roughly as “the only way they will learn it is if they’re forced to use it” (Auerbach, 1993, p. 15). Further, she found that “There seems to be an all or nothing view: . . . no alternative except the complete exclusion of L1 is seen as valid” and that teachers “assign a negative value to ‘lapses’ into the L1, seeing them as failures or aberrations, a cause for guilt” (Auerbach, 1993, p. 14). These teacher views may be related to earlier doctrines, from a time when a target-language-only classroom was felt to prevent corruption of the standard dialect or fossilization of incorrect forms in the learner, which, it was feared, could lead to eccentric (nonstandard) language development. For example, Phillipson (1992) infers five principles of monolingual ESL pedagogy in former British colonies from the post-WWII period. The last of these was “if other languages are used too much [in the classroom], standards of English will drop” (Phillipson, 1992, p. 185). He calls this the subtractive fallacy. Butzkamm points out how convenient this kind of argument is for the army of international EFL teachers, “who find absolution in the dogma of monolingualism when they cannot understand the language of their pupils” (Butzkamm, 2003, p. 30), yet still it dominates. DLI educators, likewise, are commonly required not to employ code-switching in the classroom on linguistic grounds like this, and are taught that, in practice, code-switching by the teacher will actually motivate students not to learn L2 but to “wait for the translation” (Roberts, 2016). Even students themselves sometimes read the situation through a deficit model, as if code-switching indicates either a failure to learn the target language or some form of avoidance (Martinez, 2016).

These beliefs are not grounded in the current research we will review below, but they appear instead to emerge from the lore of a monolingual teaching culture. In the state of Utah, for example, the DLI program in the public schools, without offering a rationale, formally requires the monolingual approach in both sides of its immersion program. “All state-sponsored schools with dual language immersion programs are required to implement the 50/50 model and use two teachers, one who instructs exclusively in the target language for half of the day and a second who teaches in English for the remainder of the day” (Utah State Office of Education, 2012).
Compounding the issue is scholarship by some sociocultural theorists who posit that a learner may never use the L2 to mediate higher mental processes—those processes that might handle cultural meanings or enable advanced work in academic subjects (Lantolf, 2011). This argument is derived from Vygotsky’s psychological research with infants and children. “When learning a second language, one does not return to the immediate world of objects and does not repeat past linguistic developments, but uses instead the native language as a mediator between the world of objects and the new language” (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 161).

The logical implication of theory like this is that L1 conceptual material so regulates cognition that one’s first access to it essentially becomes one’s only access; one cannot mediate higher mental processes through any other language. By this logic, two or more languages cannot be equally available to the speaker in a sort of cognitive repertoire, nor would two languages mutually integrate, building a single competence that is qualitatively different from competence in two languages separately. It is as if cognition exists within finite boundaries: once established in the L1, cognitive space for mediation is fully occupied.

If this psycholinguistic hypothesis is correct, it creates a pedagogical impasse for the DLI teacher. That is, in the classroom, the teacher is forbidden by policy from using L1 to convey L2 language, literacy, or culture, yet sociocultural theorists argue that students simply cannot integrate these without mediating via (“thinking in”) their L1.

Swain suggests that at least the strong version of this hypothesis is not correct. As far as L1 learning is concerned, she is in accord with it, but Swain argues that “languaging” (her term for self-talk to mediate higher mental functions) does in fact shift from L1 to L2 as the learner advances in his or her grasp of L2 (Swain, 2012). Interestingly, both the more purist sociocultural position of Lantolf and the more moderate position of Swain suggest that code-switching into L1 during L2 immersion instruction—especially during instruction in complex academic subjects—would be of pedagogical use.

In fact, a tradition of bilingual pedagogy—i.e., using both L1 and L2 in instruction—does exist, championed in the past by Dodson and others (Butzkamm, 2003; Dodson, 1983), though it seems to be ignored in many quarters. Recently, however, in scholarship on code-switching and translilingualism new support is offered for bilingual teaching. Between the neglected work in bilingual pedagogy and current research in code-switching, there may be space to explore the value of switching codes in the DLI classroom.
UNDERSTANDING CODE-SWITCHING

It is well-established that code-switching is driven by sociolinguistic functions (e.g., Albirini, 2011; Fishman, 1972). Recent work on translingualism (Canagarajah, 2010a; Horner, Lu, & Matsuda, 2010) further theorizes that a “multilingual competence” enables deliberate importing of discoursal tropes mutually between L1 and L2—a speaker practice that Canagarajah calls “shuttling between languages” (Canagarajah, 2010b). Both the tradition of bilingual pedagogy and the leading edge of translingual theory pose challenging questions to the common sense of teaching L2 on the model of L1 instruction. Jaipal argues that such a pedagogy perpetuates a “monolingual fallacy” (Phillipson, 1992) in second language acquisition, and that a ban on code-switching in the classroom can in fact damage fluency in the target language: “Students in the Indian classrooms were handicapped [by such a ban] in point of not being able to use language in a natural setting. . . The result was that their speech was stilted, halting, and impoverished in terms of vocabulary and usage” (Jaipal, 2016, p. 6).

Swain adds more detail to the context of student use of L1 in L2 classroom situations. She reports that students in her studies (with Lapkin [Swain & Lapkin, 2000]) were more likely to use L1 when talking to peers than to teachers, when socializing than when doing academic work, when subjects are more abstract, and when the purpose was social or to express feelings. “Importantly,” she says, “as L2 proficiency increased across grade levels and within grade levels, L1 languaging decreased and L2 languaging increased” (Swain, 2012, [33:25]). This result is significant in two respects. First, it undermines a common position of sociocultural theory, insofar as it gives evidence that learners actually can and do perform higher cognitive process in L2. (Remember that “languaging” is Swain’s term for self-talk, a primary means of mediation in sociocultural theory.) Secondly, and consequently, this result addresses a major concern of educators in their resistance to code-switching in the classroom. The students in this study did not become dependent on L1, but became increasingly proficient in L2—even to the point where they were using the L2 for talking to themselves.

In a brief reference to code-switching, Cloud, Genesee, and Hamayan suggest that it is a rule-governed language behavior (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000, p. 63). It is used “to convey subtle meanings” or nuances that might be more available in one language than another; “to show identification” with other speakers or listeners; to indicate a dual identity a la Canagarajah or Albirini; and to express “linguistic creativity and sophistication” (Cloud,
Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000, p. 65). All these writers, and others, make it clear that code-switching in the classroom is no cause for alarm.

Observing that bilinguals have an extensive repertoire, Martinez notes that in a classroom he studied, “Spanglish functioned as a semiotic tool that enabled students to accomplish important conversational work” (Martinez, 2010, p. 131), and that speakers used it only where juxtaposition of elements from the inserted language to the matrix language “does not violate a syntactic rule of either language” (Martinez, 2010, p. 126). This finding, like that of Swain and Lapkin above, should alleviate some of the concern of educators that to allow code-switching may inhibit the growth of proficiency in L2; that is, to switch codes without committing syntactic errors shows that learners are exercising remarkable conscious or intuitive control over their emerging second language.

Toribio (2002) states this even more clearly. She concludes that code-switching is very much a rule-governed sociolinguistic practice, not the symptom of a haphazard or lazy speaker, and points out that “With respect to its linguistic form, code-switching is systematic and orderly, reflecting underlying syntactic principles” (Toribio, 2002, p. 93). Her study affirms that bilinguals when code-switching operate from a sense of what would be appropriate and grammatical. Studies like these of L2 classrooms do suggest, as sociocultural theory would predict, that students use L1 to mediate and scaffold their understanding in L2 settings. Yet, contrary to Lantolf’s prediction above, it is evident that, as time goes on, L2 speakers do indeed make a transition to mediating in their L2.

Looking further at pedagogical concerns, Sampson implies that teachers and program planners are mistaken to believe that code-switching is a marker of a poor student simply avoiding the work of speaking L2. And conversely, Sampson’s findings suggest that more advanced learners do not switch codes less frequently on average than less advanced learners (Sampson, 2012, p. 296). Switching, Sampson says, serves communicative objectives at all proficiency levels, and he identifies six different functions of code-switching among his participants. Sampson’s six functions extend the three major forms of code-switching (tag, intersentential, and intra-sentential) identified by Poplack over 30 years earlier (Poplack, 1979). We list Sampson’s functions below, with our own glosses in parentheses. In descending order of frequency, Sampson’s functions were the following:

1. equivalence (supply or discussion of an item in L1; this is essential and efficient where the L2 lexical item does not exist in the learner’s interlanguage, as well as for contrastive analysis)
2. *metalanguage* (language related to classroom procedures, etc., as opposed to language practice itself)

3. *floor-holding* (functions to aid fluency and communication by moving the speaker forward without hesitation while mentally searching for a word or phrase in L2)

4. *reiteration* (to clarify or emphasize something already expressed in L2)

5. *socializing* (for group identity/solidarity, humor, gossip, etc.)

6. *L2 avoidance* (when the learner does have the L2 resources, but chooses L1; often this takes the form of distracting oneself or others)

It is worth emphasizing that avoidance is the least frequent of the functions identified by Sampson. To reconcile Sampson with Swain, this implies that we must carefully distinguish between code-switching and languaging—which Swain connects clearly to mediating higher mental functions. Mediation in L1 may be the reason for a certain amount of code-switching, but code-switching is a much larger phenomenon, with many more functions than mediation alone.

But if code-switching is a rule-governed, functional resource available to L2 learners, what does this imply for its use—or banning its use—in the DLI classroom? One wonders with Phillipson (1992) and with Sampson (2012) whether the prohibition against code-switching exists only because it feels right to monolingual stakeholders. Discussing the origins of English-only classroom policies, Sampson observes that, “L2-only . . . has conveniently met the needs of the increasing numbers of native English-speaking teachers seeking work abroad, with their often limited command of learners’ L1, . . . and those of ELT publishers mass-producing English-only coursebooks for use in a range of international contexts” (Sampson, 2012, p. 293).

Should a DLI teacher who is *not* monolingual ignore, discourage, or even punish students for using the semiotic resources available in their L1? If not, then what principles should guide the teacher or the DLI program in sanctioning an amount of code-switching in the classroom? And what amount would be appropriate to allow?

**CODE-SWITCHING AND THE DLI CLASSROOM**

Among the most automatic traditional objections to code-switching in the classroom is the following: It demotivates the learners from advancing in L2; they will simply “wait for the translation” (Roberts, 2016). This is a common-sense argument, but it proceeds from a monolingual perspective, which is problematic in the first place.
The monolingual assumption about language acquisition is that an L2 is best learned in the same way that an L1 is learned—*tabula rasa*, isolated from prior linguistic knowledge. It is thought that L1 knowledge will confuse the learner, demotivate the learner, or cognitively conflict with L2 acquisition. This monolingual perspective runs counter to sociocultural theory, which suggests that use of L1 for mediation is inevitable; as Vygotsky says, when learning an L2 “one does not return to the immediate world of objects” where one first learned languaging (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 161). And the monolingual idea is also fundamentally challenged by current work in second language acquisition, in code-switching, and in translingualism. Even at early stages of learning an L2, this body of work implies, we must see the learner as a developing bilingual and the learner’s L1 as a knowledge resource capable of enhancing the acquisition of L2. As Canagarajah puts it, “A bilingual person’s competence is not simply two discrete monolingual competencies added together. Instead, bilingual competence integrates knowledge of two languages and thus is qualitatively different from monolingual competence” (Canagarajah, 2010b, p. 158). We would argue that the use of code-switching in the classroom likewise proceeds from this bilingual perspective that L1 and L2 interact to build an integrated and metalinguistic knowledge resource.

There are three additional problems with the common-sense argument.

First of all, it posits a “straw man.” That is, it misrepresents code-switching by reducing it to something it is not—simple translation—and then opposes that false representation. Code-switching in natural language, as we have shown above, includes far more than simple translation. To employ it effectively in the classroom also involves far more than translation. For example, in Sampson’s study, although the most common function for code-switching is *equivalence*—which is to supply from L1 a lexical item that does not yet exist in the learner’s interlanguage—this equivalence function represented no more than one-third of all code-switching occurrences observed. In addition, every occurrence of equivalence also served an additional function—for example, a reiteration or socialization function.

Further emphasizing that translation does not dominate a code-switching pedagogy, Schwartz and Asli find that, in fact, when code-switching is not prohibited in the classroom, teachers generally see translation as inefficient (Schwartz & Asli, 2014). Other, richer equivalence strategies—such as providing bilingual literacy resources, such as books in parallel translation, or teaching cognate awareness—allow students to compare meanings and structures across languages and build parallel literacies. Schwartz and
Asli, in their study of bilingual education in an Arab-Hebrew language context, explore a number of strategies that emerge from translanguage pedagogy—an approach that not only would employ code-switching but would even teach L1 and L2 in tandem within the same classroom.

A second clear problem with the traditional prohibition against code-switching in the classroom is that it undermines communicative approaches to language teaching (CLT). Sampson illustrates this concern in his warning that where code-switching is prohibited, communication is stifled. While he advocates a balanced approach, he also suggests that “any attempt to ban L1 in the classroom would be detrimental to the amount of communication and learning taking place” (Sampson, 2012, p. 302). It seems obvious that if a lexical item is missing from a learner’s interlanguage, the communication available to that learner is limited. Thus, to deny a developing bilingual access to his or her L1, where an equivalent item does exist, is to suspend CLT’s commitment to meaningful exchange. In a code-switching-permitted classroom, on the other hand, if a learner needs to request the missing lexical item in L1, it can be supplied by a peer or the teacher, so that communication and biliteracy are both advanced and the classroom replicates an authentic exchange between speakers. As Tian and Macaro put it, “in naturalistic contexts where participants in the discourse have unequal proficiency in one of their two languages, some code-switching occurs for the purpose of linguistic advancement as well as for communication” (Tian & Macaro, 2012, p. 369). Their study offers initial evidence that, at least for vocabulary learning, teacher code-switching actually achieves better results than a target-language-only approach.

Third, to ban code-switching in the classroom on the logic that it is “only translation” ignores and inhibits a range of positive cognitive, affective, and social effects. Even simply teaching cognate awareness, for example, develops linguistic knowledge and facilitates “known-to-new” schema building—a clear cognitive benefit. If, as translingual theorists argue, bilingual cognitive processing is qualitatively different from that of monolinguals (Canagarajah, 2010b), then an anti-code-switching policy creates an obstacle to cognitive development among incipient bilinguals. More practically stating it, Butzkamm writes, “Monolingual learning [of a second language] is an intrinsic impossibility. No one can simply turn off what they already know. We postulate that the mother tongue is ‘silently’ present in beginners, even when lessons are kept monolingual” (Butzkamm, 2003, p. 31). Further, in their study of Arab-Hebrew two-way DLI classrooms, Schwartz and Asli find that deliberate switching to the non-prestige
language can give minority language students the message that their home language is valuable on a par with the target language. This enhancement of identity affirmation among students is a clear affective benefit, and is congruent with both the ACTFL standards of L2 teaching and the APA report of essential principles of learning theory (American Psychological Association, Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education, 2015).

Ultimately, the question of code-switching in the DLI classroom should not be one of whether to allow it, but how to use it most effectively. Swain argues that because L1 has an important mediating and scaffolding role, “students should be permitted to use their L1 for the purpose of working through complex ideas” especially in academic content (Swain, 2012, [42:30]). In fact, she goes on to suggest that it is futile to forbid languaging in L1, because it is so important to knowledge building and transfer when the material is complex; the mind must use L1 for this, and students will do it covertly in any case (Swain, 2012, [42:50]).

If this is so, then appropriate pedagogies need to be developed that can, in Tian and Macaro’s words, “offer formal classrooms a hook on which to hang principled rather than ad hoc L1 use” (Tian & Macaro, 2012, p. 369). Here, Tian and Macaro allude to what is an open secret in target-language-only DLI programs: that teachers do in fact use code-switching—whether accidentally or subversively. But because it is a banned practice, their code-switching is ad hoc and not guided by principles for effective use. To switch or not to switch, in other words, is a question of teacher preparation. If code-switching is no cause for alarm, then the question becomes not one of prohibition, but of balance.

**FINDING A BALANCE**

Principles for the use of code-switching will not be found by pursuing a monolingual ideal, based on generic learning conditions. However, Swain proposes three general principles that can be applied in the classroom. The first of these is that students should be permitted to use L1 for languaging (thinking aloud together through complex material); secondly, teachers should make their expectations clear that L1 use must give way to L2; and third, for teachers, the target language should be very clearly primary, and L1 should be used with clear purpose and in limited situations (Swain, 2012, [45:00–59:50]).

In Schwartz and Asli’s (2014) research, effective code-switching pedagogy is related to a teacher’s judgment of concrete social realities that exist
inside and outside the school. Because Hebrew is the prestige language in Jerusalem where their study was conducted, Arab children are exposed to Hebrew even at home and are well-motivated to improve their grasp of it. On the other hand, L1 Hebrew speakers are not so well motivated to learn Arabic. Teachers in the study accordingly made it a point to emphasize Arabic for certain common and important functions within the classroom, in order to tip the balance toward exposure to Arabic, where the need was greater. “In summary, it was clear to us that the teachers attempted to speak more Arabic with both the Hebrew-speaking children and the Arabic-speaking children, especially commonly used sentences, for two reasons: to advance and strengthen Arabic among the Hebrew (L1) speaking children, and to preserve the Arabic (L1) of the Arabic-speaking children” (Schwartz & Asli, 2014, p. 27).

Useful techniques

It is beyond the scope of this paper to propose the sort of framework of principled “hooks” that Tian and Macaro call for. However, within the literature studied here, certain teacherly techniques of code-switching appear to be useful. Butzkamm offers this maxim: “[Mother tongue] aids make it easier to conduct whole lessons in the foreign language. Pupils gain in confidence, and, paradoxically, become less dependent on their mother tongue” (Butzkamm, 2003, p. 31). Here are three of those techniques.

1. **Sandwiching.** This is an equivalence technique that can be used to supply a vocabulary word or a longer lexical item when it is missing from the learner’s interlanguage. While simple translation should never be the primary form of teacher code-switching, the technique of sandwiching can be useful and quick. In this technique, the teacher inserts an L1 equivalent between two iterations of a word or phrase in the target language. For a Spanish DLI classroom of L1 English speakers, a simple first-day example of sandwiching might be: “Sientense todos, por favor. Sit down, please. Sientense todos.”

2. **Procedural language.** Code-switching for routine classroom procedures can be useful to ensure comprehension and can signal a clear change from one activity to another. “Bueno. Time to line up for recess!”

3. **Identity affirmation.** Affirming student cultural identity can be an especially important for affective reasons. When the teacher code-switches into the minority language, he or she conveys an affirmation of the value of that language, and expresses respect for minority students’ cultural identity. In an EFL classroom of Spanish speakers, for example, this technique might take the form of: “You like Shakira, too? Ay! Me encanta!”
The problem with proficiency

It is likewise beyond the scope of this paper to address fully the question of what level of proficiency a teacher needs in the student’s mother tongue before he or she can use code-switching effectively. However, we do want to reflect on this question briefly.

First of all, we take it as a given that in order to teach any language effectively, it is both necessary and reasonable for a teacher to meet a standard of skill established by a credible process (e.g., an OPI assessment). To teach L2 or even L1 effectively, a teacher must be qualified in the target language. But where a qualified teacher of a target language has learners from different language background, we would not require an advanced level of proficiency in the students’ L1 before encouraging the teacher to code-switch. For example, a teacher of English need not be advanced in Spanish to code-switch effectively for the benefit of her or his Spanish-speaking EFL students. The research reviewed above suggests that any signal at all from the teacher that she or he respects the students’ home language will reap rewards for the student. Code-switching carries a strong signal of solidarity, especially where the home language represents a minority culture. Of course, a greater proficiency in the student’s home language will open greater opportunities for pedagogical code-switching. But the more important proficiency for the teacher is in the language of instruction.

Second, we would make an observation. The proficiency of an L2 speaker always seems to be of interest, yet proficiency itself is a problematic construct. We say this because to speak of proficiency presumes a notion like terminal achievement. That is, “proficient” depends on the idea of full competence. But no speaker ever reaches a stage where potential development ceases, even in L1. One can always learn more vocabulary, deepen one’s grasp of syntax, advance in one’s control of nuance, and so forth.

Paradoxically, all speakers are deemed proficient or expert when using their L1. In fact, “full proficiency” is a common equivalent for “native-like proficiency”; a native speaker is fully proficient by virtue of being a native speaker. The circular logic here obscures the fact that native speakers produce their language with wildly different levels of control. Again, language, even one’s native language, is not a finite distance to be covered, a summit to be conquered, a process to “master.” Language is dynamic, continuous, and therefore always emergent. If it were otherwise, all native speakers would speak with equal facility. We would point out what we are sure is
obvious to linguists and other professionals who study language: to speak like a native is not a guarantee of any sort of competence.

Finally, we would offer the same logic in regard to second (or further) languages. Proficiencies in L2 are different from one speaker to the next because there is no positive finish line marked “fully bilingual.” All L2 speakers are always emergent, always learners—just as native speakers are. But to us, this does not imply that no one can be called bilingual. On the contrary, we would argue that it is useful pedagogically for a teacher to consider all L2 students to be bilinguals—at least developing bilinguals. What is important to bilingualism, we would suggest, is not whether they speak with native-like proficiency, but that they have made a step into a new cognitive territory. In this new territory, they are actively building a bilingual or translingual competence—something qualitatively different from monolingualism. This emergent cognitive state, not their proficiency, is what makes them bilingual.

CONCLUSION

Code-switching is an authentic, natural language process and a dynamic verbal strategy used by multilingual speakers around the world for myriad communicative functions. Research has established that it is practiced by speakers at all levels of proficiency across all contexts, that it does not inhibit language learning, and that it can be a crucial aid to novice speakers of an L2, with cognitive, communicative, and affective value. Studies reviewed here indicate that bilingual L2 teachers employ code-switching for a range of pedagogical reasons—ones that go far beyond simple translation for lazy or resistant students.

We would argue that a target-language-only policy in the DLI classroom is both needless and out of step with the research. Given the benefits for L2 learners, plus the simple reality that code-switching certainly does occur in every language classroom (whether systematically or randomly), it behooves DLI programs to reconsider the ban on pedagogical code-switching. Code-switching in the classroom would be better framed as a teacher preparation issue, and should be not only permitted, but even recommended, to teachers who are L2 speakers or learners themselves. Como bilingües emergentes ourselves, we suggest that pedagogical techniques based in solid bilingual education research can be developed to guide DLI teachers in appropriate and effective uses of code-switching with L2 students.
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Culture Teaching in a DLI Classroom

Multiple Perspectives

Ana Navarro
Katie Marín

ABSTRACT

This paper begins by presenting the process by which dual language immersion (DLI) programs came to Cache Valley. DLI programs have three main objectives: academic achievement, bilingualism/biliteracy, and cultural competence (Christian, 2010; Fortune & Tedick, 2008; Spicer-Escalante, Leite, & Wade, 2015). Cultural competence is acquired both implicitly through language learning and explicitly through teaching practices aimed at building cultural knowledge. Therefore, this paper focuses on teacher practices by presenting three perspectives on culture teaching. The first perspective is given by a DLI teacher who reflects upon current practices of teaching culture and presents ideas for improvement. The second perspective is of a parent of a DLI student who presents some benefits of the program and possible improvements for implementing cultural perspectives in the classroom and school. Finally, the perspective of a university supervisor is presented based on observations of a DLI student teacher and a DLI cooperating teacher. These three perspectives provide insight into the complexity of teaching culture and the possibility of improving teaching practices to make cultural aspects more salient to students.

GRASSROOTS STARTUP

During the 2011–2012 school year, a group of parents approached one of the elementary school principals, expressing interest in bringing dual language immersion schools to Cache Valley, which is comprised of two districts, Logan City School District and Cache County School District. This principal responded by creating a committee of 20 parents, administrators, and teachers to explore the possibility of starting a DLI program at
Culture teaching in a DLI classroom

his school and another school in the Logan City School District (Cannon, 2012). The committee started meeting in the spring of 2012. Although all members of the committee were optimistic about the possibility of success of these programs, they did face opposition from teachers in the district who feared that DLI programs would displace teachers without proficiency in a second language. This fear was addressed by Gregg Roberts, Utah Dual Immersion Specialist, who assured the committee that although reassignment is occasionally necessary, teachers will not lose their jobs because of DLI programs.

IMPLEMENTATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

The committee presented its proposition to the Board of Education of Logan City School District on the 11th of December, 2012. The proposal included a Spanish DLI program to be implemented for first grade at Bridger Elementary School and a Portuguese program to be implemented for first and second grade at Hillcrest Elementary School for the school year 2013–2014. The committee again faced opposition as community members expressed concern that creating a DLI program would make class sizes small and would not allow students enough variety of class composition. After considering both sides, the Board of Education voted for implementation of DLI programs (Cannon, 2012).

Cache County School District, which surrounds Logan District on all sides, also voted for implementation of DLI programs at four elementary schools. This decision brought the total to 6 programs throughout Cache Valley in the languages of Chinese, French, Portuguese, and Spanish (USOE, n.d.). Table 1 shows the current distribution of programs in Cache Valley.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School District</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cache</td>
<td>North Park Elementary</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>1–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cache</td>
<td>Providence Elementary</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>1–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cache</td>
<td>Sunrise Elementary</td>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>1–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cache</td>
<td>Heritage Elementary</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>1–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logan</td>
<td>Bridger Elementary</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>1–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logan</td>
<td>Hillcrest Elementary</td>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>1–5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of DLI programs in Cache Valley is likely to grow. According to Gregg Roberts (2016), the number of parents who are interested in
placing their children in DLI programs in Cache Valley is currently more than can be met by the existing DLI programs. He also reports that Utah will begin offering DLI programs in two more languages, Russian and Arabic, which could possibly come to Cache Valley as well.

EXPLORING PERSPECTIVES: REFLECTING ON CURRENT PROGRAMS

Dual language immersion programs in Cache Valley are still in the early implementation period. It takes five school years to fully develop the program, but once it is fully staffed and the curriculum has been put into effect, the program can be evaluated and potentially improved. Building cultural competence, as one of the objectives of DLI (Christian, 2010; Fortune & Tedick, 2008; Spicer-Escalante, Leite, & Wade, 2015), is one area that can be targeted and expanded. This paper examines the role of culture teaching in light of the perspectives of a second grade DLI Spanish teacher, the observations of a parent of a student in the same program, and the experience of a university supervisor who worked with student-teachers in a DLI program. These stakeholders' perspectives were gathered through open-ended interviews.

PERSPECTIVES OF A TEACHER: ADDING MORE CULTURAL CONTENT TO THE CURRICULUM

In her second year of teaching Spanish in the DLI program, Ms. Fuentes [pseudonym], a second grade teacher, was able to evaluate the success of her first year and look towards improving her teaching practices as a DLI teacher. When asked about the role of teaching culture in the DLI classroom, Ms. Fuentes reports that she believes that culture teaching is extremely important because of the relationship between language and culture (Byram, 2015; DeCapua, 2004; Fishman, 1996; Kohler, 2015; Moran, 2001). In her classroom, she tells stories about her own childhood and about cultural practices familiar to her; for example, each December she teaches a lesson about Las Posadas, a Christmas procession recreating the journey of Mary and Joseph that culminates in a stable. Ms. Fuentes would like to add more from her personal experience including the following:

- Respect for the Elderly: uses of usted and other ways to honor the elderly
- Quinceañeras: a party celebrating the right of passage for a girl on her 15th birthday
• *Día de los muertos*: a day of remembrance for relatives that have died and a way to support their spiritual journey

• Mexican School Culture: the education system and the challenges it faces

• Pasaportes: Using passports to ‘visit’ a Spanish speaking country each day, highlighting a cultural event or artifact from that country

Also, when asked if there is anything specific that she believes is important for students to learn because the language they are learning is Spanish, Ms. Fuentes mentions immigration and its multi-faceted nature. According to current statistics, the documented Hispanic population comprises 17.3% of the total U.S. population. Moreover, according to the latest projections, by 2060 this population is expected to reach 28.6% of the total population (Stepler & Brown, 2016). Ms. Fuentes says that because of the increase in numbers of Spanish-speaking immigrants, it is important for her students to understand the different backgrounds of these immigrants in order to interact with and embrace them in society (Swain & Lapkin, 2005).

After reflecting on ideas for adding more cultural content to lesson plans, Ms. Fuentes mentions the possibility of training sessions for DLI teachers. She says that it would be great if teachers had access to a series of trainings to introduce them to cultural aspects from various countries that they could bring back into the classroom. Ms. Fuentes remembers a time during her youth when she attended a cultural event with booths representing many Spanish speaking countries. Each booth shared an artifact, music, or art from a different country. Ms. Fuentes remembers the value of that experience and would like to attend a similar event that focuses on teaching culture. Given the importance of the role of teaching culture in DLI programs (Fortune & Tedick, 2008; Hamayan, Genesee, & Cloud, 2013), Ms. Fuentes believes this would allow her to offer a wider range of perspectives to her students.

An additional idea offered by Ms. Fuentes is an exchange program with schools in Spanish speaking countries. A DLI teacher could exchange jobs with a teacher from a Spanish speaking country for a year. This would allow the DLI teacher to have a deeply engaging cultural experience and learn about the education system and society of the country. An added benefit would be that teachers at the US school would also be able to interact with the exchange teacher and learn about culture this way. If each DLI teacher participated at least once, and each went to a different part of the Spanish speaking world, this would bring an increased diversity of perspectives into the school.
For now, Ms. Fuentes has a practical plan of action to incorporate more culture into the curriculum. She plans to host classroom guests from various Spanish speaking countries to interact with students. Ms. Fuentes recognizes that she has only one perspective and would like to learn more about other Spanish speaking countries so she could bring that learning to her class. Table 2 illustrates a plan of action to incorporate her cultural experience into the classroom and include other perspectives as well.

### Table 2: Goals for Teaching Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short-Term Goals</th>
<th>Mid-Term Goals</th>
<th>Long-Term Goals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alter the class-room environment with posters and artifacts</td>
<td>Highlight cultural themes such as <em>Las Posadas, Quinceañera,</em> and <em>Día de los Muertos</em></td>
<td>Collaborate with co-teacher to incorporate culture in the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Invite parents to the classroom to show pictures and share stories from their cultural backgrounds</td>
<td>Highlight cultural themes throughout school including all school activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This plan of action created by Ms. Fuentes moves from smaller goals, which can be accomplished by the teacher alone, to goals that require cooperation from other teachers. Her long-term goals aim to target the entire school, which will give all students the opportunity to expand their cultural knowledge and will even extend to include parents.

**PERSPECTIVES OF A PARENT: A LOOK AT SCHOOL CULTURE**

After her child had participated for two years in the DLI program, one of the parents, Ms. Roman [pseudonym], was able to observe the value of this program when she travelled to Spain with her child and watched his interaction with Spanish children there. When he made quick friends with two brothers who had studied English for many years, their mother saw the opportunity for English practice with Ms. Roman’s child. Despite constant nagging from their mother to speak English, the children used little English in their interactions. One day, Ms. Roman was chatting with the mother of the children about what motivates Ms. Roman’s child to speak Spanish. During their conversation Ms. Roman lost track of her son, Samuel [pseudonym], and asked, “¿Dónde está Samuel?” From across the garden Samuel shouted out “¡en el arbol!” The mother and Ms. Roman
exchanged a glance and knew Ms. Roman’s child was using Spanish because it was useful to him, not because he was nagged by his mother to do so. This reinforced Ms. Roman’s personal reason for supporting bilingual programs, in addition to her recognition of the benefits for her child and community.

As a parent of children who share citizenship with two countries, the USA and Spain, Ms. Roman reports that she often thought about how to give her children enough exposure to both languages and both cultures so that they can effectively participate in both societies. She says that she was very aware of the fact that they would learn US culture in a US school, so a DLI program has been a good option for them. It gives them the advantages offered by the US school system while simultaneously providing them with Spanish language proficiency and academic learning. Students’ home languages and diverse backgrounds should be viewed as a resource and not as a hindrance of learning (Genesee, 2008; Swain & Lapkin, 2005).

Prior to enrolling her children in the Spanish DLI program, Ms. Roman considered homeschooling her children. While researching the requirements and logistics of homeschooling, she became aware that homeschooling is not legal in Spain. Discussing this with a friend who is an elementary teacher in Spain, she learned that the Spanish teacher had a negative view of homeschooling. During their conversation they talked about several typical problems associated with it such as reduced socialization compared to children who go to school, the idea that one parent cannot give a child the same range of education as many different teachers throughout their education, and more. The Spanish teacher brought up a point that Ms. Roman didn’t understand at first. She said, “El colegio une mucho”. Ms. Roman reports that this comment stuck with her though she did not understand it fully at the time.

Ms. Roman, who is also a Spanish instructor at a US University, states that years later, she was working on a lesson plan for her own university students. She regularly teaches a lesson on la solidaridad, a term that refers to social ties that unite a group or society, because it is an important value in parts of the Spanish speaking world (De Dios Martín Velasco, 1998; Definición de Solidaridad, n.d.). It is often mentioned in politics in these countries and usually Ms. Roman’s students have no awareness of the concept. While preparing she remembered what her friend had said about el colegio. She was talking about el compañeroismo, a strong relationship between classmates based on mutual respect and trust (Definición de Compañerismo, n.d.). It hadn’t occurred to her before because she didn’t
experience this in her own US education so she didn’t know to what her friend was referring.

After this realization, Ms. Roman noticed the lack of *compañerismo* right away in her children’s school. In fact, the opposite value is taught and reinforced through the “Leader in Me” program in which the entire school participates. The “Leader in Me” program has many valuable attributes to help US students become successful participants in US society. It helps children focus on how to become independent, self-confident, and self-sufficient. For those in English-speaking parts of the USA, it is a great program; however, Ms. Roman does not believe it should be emphasized in the Spanish classroom. Children learning Spanish must also learn how to function in a Spanish-speaking society.

Ms. Roman reports that she thinks *el compañerismo* has a place in the Spanish DLI classroom. To begin, students should be made aware of the concept. Teachers should introduce and define the concept as something that is important in the classroom and reinforce it whenever an example arises. When students help each other, the teacher can say “¡Gracias por ser buenos compañeros!” If a student takes something from another student the teacher can say, “Eso no es compañerismo”. This is just one small but valuable way to bring culture into the classroom.

**PERSPECTIVES OF A UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR:**
**INTEGRATING CULTURE INTO THE LESSON**

The DLI endorsement was created as a university program to prepare future teachers for teaching in a DLI classroom. Ms. Miller [pseudonym] had the opportunity to work as a University Supervisor with a college student, which meant overseeing the college student’s interactions with a first grade DLI Spanish teacher as part of the student teaching experience.

During Ms. Miller’s observations she reports noticing an opportunity to bring explicit cultural content into the classroom. One of the features of successful DLI programs is the integration of language, culture, and content (Fortune & Tedick, 2008). The exploration of cross-cultural dimensions is part of unit preparation in the DLI classroom (Hamayan, Genesee, & Cloud, 2013). For example, when preparing a unit on metamorphosis, common symbolic meanings such as good luck for ladybug and change for butterfly are introduced as well as common phrases such as social butterfly. Scientists from around the world can be studied in relation to their influence on the understanding of metamorphosis. Local beliefs and ways
of understanding science can also be explored in relation to the topic (Hamayan, Marler, Sanchez-Lopez, & Damico, 2013).

The observed lesson in the DLI classroom presented the topic of the life cycle of a plant. First students were introduced to vocabulary terms by labeling parts of a flower including el pétalo, la flor, el tallo, la hoja, la tierra, la raíz, etc. Next, the teacher read a story about the growth of a plant, and finally students were allowed to plant grass seeds working in pairs.

There are many opportunities to incorporate cultural topics into this lesson plan. For example, instead of a flower, the teacher can introduce the life cycle of a plant using a peanut plant. The teacher can present the cultivation of the peanut in the pre-Columbian Andes and its journey to become the world product it is today. When the peanut is ready to be harvested the teacher can hold a class party much in the way that Spain celebrates the vendimia to show gratitude for the harvest. Understanding the importance and reverence for crops provides a unique image of the target culture (Eames-Sheavly, 1994). In this way, students are introduced to cultural topics within their science lesson without the need for additional lessons focused on culture alone.

CONCLUSIONS

The benefits of bilingual programs are clear (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000) and the programs are widely supported by professionals, teachers, and parents alike (Collier & Thomas, 2004; Roberts & Wade, 2012). Dual language immersion programs are the best way for the community to see value in its diversity and allow for cross-cultural growth as the community becomes more diverse. It is also the best model for language learning because it gives the second language real meaning for the students, which is essential for language acquisition (Christian, 2010).

As dual language immersion programs have become more widely accepted, the skeptics have become more open and now embrace the possibilities. Even though there is still room for program improvement, it continues to be viewed as a highly effective educational program (Collier & Thomas, 2004; Watzinger-Tharp, Swenson, & Mayne, 2016). Genesee (2008) argues that all students should be given the opportunity to learn a new language. Immersion education is the best way to offer a valid education as well as preparing all children for the global world of today (Fortune & Tedick, 2008).
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Culture Bags and Latin@ Popular Culture

Integrating Funds of Knowledge in a Dual Language Immersion Setting

Marialuisa Di Stefano

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the development of two classroom instruction strategies in the context of a study that took place in Utah in a first grade Spanish classroom. Data were gathered in the form of ethnographic observations of the classroom, open-ended interviews with the teacher, collection of students' artifacts, and researcher's journals. The study was conducted in a school that follows the Utah 50/50 two-way dual language immersion (DLI) model. The findings show that through the interview process, the teacher began to consider her role as a cultural worker (Freire, 2008). Consequently, the teacher implemented classroom instruction that contributed to integration of students' funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) in the curriculum.

Keywords: funds of knowledge, dual language immersion, Latin@ students

INTRODUCTION

Evaluating the role of education in light of my experiences as graduate student and teacher, I have learned that the languages I speak are not just a vehicle of communication but also carry my cultural identity (Hall, 1990). I understand my positionality is culturally and politically defined and is embedded in my teaching and researching style. I recognize that “in every classroom, each student and teacher has a unique positionality” (Camicia & Di Stefano, 2015, p. 282). Seeing students as producers of knowledge and active participants of the bilingual classroom means shifting to a broader interpretation of bilingual programs. Instead of being viewed as individuals who are trying to become two competent monolinguals in one person and
who belong to two separate and often conflictual communities (Dagenais, 2003; Kanno, 2003; Pavlenko, 2003), students in bilingual programs should be viewed as individuals who can function in more than one language and are “part of an imagined community of worthy multilingual speakers” (Baker, 2011, p.135). These multilingual speakers practice languages in contexts that have been created for them—the classroom—or that they will encounter in a multilingual society.

As part of my personal journey as a graduate student and a teacher in the United States, I conducted an ethnographic study to identify whether a DLI class setting would contribute to the construction of a third space and connect the transnational experiences of students with their hybridized local and global world. This article, in particular, refers to two interrelated classroom activities I observed during my study and which arose from the interviews I conducted with the teacher. These two activities are the culture bags assignment and the Latin@ popular culture activity. For the culture bags assignment, the teacher asked the students to fill a brown paper bag with three cultural artifacts (e.g., newspaper, photos, postcards, toys, nonperishable food, religious items, etc.) that represent the students’ cultures. The teacher modeled the activity before asking the students to bring their bags, and offered her personal interpretation of the sample cultural artifacts that she had brought. The students presented the content of their bags to the rest of the class, thus building background knowledge to support literacy skills and developing their ability to generalize concepts to different content areas. After all the students shared their culture bags with the class, the teacher moved to the second segment of the classroom activities.

Once the students were introduced to key concepts related to cultures and identity formation through the culture bags assignment, the teacher engaged Latin@ parents and community members to provide examples of popular culture (e.g., songs, cartoons, fairy tales, etc.) which are relevant in their tradition. The teacher organized a workshop for the students during their regular class time, and selected five crafts and popular culture activities for Latin@ parents and community members to teach the students. Students learned to create Guatemalan dolls, make Mexican tortillas, craft Argentinian mate gourds and straws, play Dominican streets games, and dance to Caribbean music. The teacher used these texts as an attempt to integrate culturally relevant materials in the Language Arts and the Social Studies curriculum.

The artifacts produced and the experiences developed through these classroom activities are different types of texts that contribute to the
expansion of students’ multimodal literacy (Unsworth & Bush, 2010). Allowing students to work with different types of texts affirms that images are key meaning-making elements in multimodal texts and that personal cultural backgrounds affect the way students interpret images and texts (Unsworth & Bush, 2010). In fact, “cultural ‘norms’ about how texts are constructed affect the way a person reads an image/text” (Unsworth & Bush, 2010, p. 59), which makes images culturally relevant texts. It is valuable to incorporate them in the bilingual classroom and to develop activities that engage the students as active participants in the meaning-making process.

BACKGROUND AND APPROACH

Depending on the make-up of the student populations, DLI programs can be classified in different categories. One-way DLI started in Canada in 1960s, involving English native speaker students who wanted to learn French. The two-way model was started in Florida in the 1960s and requires that “approximately half of the students are native speakers of the minority language and half are native speakers of the majority language, and all receive instruction through, and learn, both languages” (Christian, 2011, p. 4). Two-way DLI programs are said to offer an opportunity to “transform the experience of teachers, administrators, and parents into an inclusive and supportive school community for all” (Collier & Thomas, 2004, p. 1). In this way, it is possible to lead students to the development of cross-cultural relationships and friendships with a global and international view. Languages, in fact, can be considered an essential element in developing individual and collective identity in DLI settings (Potowski, 2007).

Two-way DLI programs cast the acquisition of biliteracy as more than just being able to read and write in two languages: teachers can create opportunities for students to acquire the ability to “read the word and the world” (Freire & Macedo, 2013). That is, reading, as an act of knowledge, should be built upon the text and its background context, effectively blending the word and the world. Thus, a two-way DLI model could encourage students to bring to class the experiences and funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) that they develop in unofficial spaces.

The study presented here took place in a Spanish first grade section of a two-way DLI classroom. After one year of ethnographic observations, I discussed with the teacher, Ms. Jensen [pseudonym], how she would envision classroom instruction based on the integration of students’ funds of knowledge. In my previous observations of DLI class settings, I often observed teachers referring to foreign cultures, and in particular
Latin@ culture, through stereotypical victory stories, in which transnational students are described only in terms of their successful integration into mainstream US culture (Gans, 1997; Massey & Denton, 1993; Nelson & Hiemstra, 2008; Olsen, 1997). In contrast, Kasun and Saavedra (2014) advocate for reframing immigrant youth as transnational, considering that “transnational youth may physically cross borders to sending countries, but they may also figuratively cross them through communication with families and communities as well as through the consumption of media, from social media to music to film” (Kasun & Saavedra, 2014, p. 202).

Instead of imposing a simplistic image of transnational students in the US, Ms. Jensen reflected on the possibility of having the students, and above all transnational students, work on their personal narratives—also known as testimonios (Kasun & Saavedra, 2014; Saavedra, 2011)—using the culture bag activity and sharing them with their peers. Rather than being merely students’ stories, testimonios are counter-narrative products against adult-western hegemony (Gutierrez, 2015). Using testimonios, students can negotiate meaning in their lives and share the skills they learned from their families and communities. The practice of testimonios empowers students because it is a political act of remembering (Gutierrez, 2015; Kasun & Saavedra, 2014; Saavedra, 2011). This approach increases transnational students’ understanding of the world they inhabit. It deconstructs the traditional dichotomy between colonizers and colonized, in which border crossers and transnational students are usually depicted either from a deficit point of view or from a flat and common victory perspective (Beverley, 2005; Gutierrez, 2015; Kasun & Saavedra, 2014; Saavedra, 2011).

The use of testimonios also implies reconciliation between the teacher and the student, developing a relationship in which both of them are simultaneously teachers and students (Freire, 2000). Students who are encouraged to bring their funds of knowledge to the classroom can transform the teacher–student dichotomy, in which traditionally only the teacher has the power and the authority to teach, into a relationship in which they are both teaching and learning at the same time. This is a process that teachers and students do together, co-constructing meanings and practicing freedom. Both the teacher and the student become critical thinkers, invalidating the logic of the oppressor versus the oppressed (Freire, 2000).

**METHODS**

The ethnographic approach I used in this study involved “an ongoing attempt to place specific encounters, events and understanding into a
fuller, more meaningful context” (Tedlock, 2000, p. 455). In this sense, I approached the field of study from both the insider (a second language learner) and the outsider (a researcher from a state university) perspective, in order to observe the classroom environment and identify the moments in which cultures meet in hybrid spaces.

I gathered data for one year in a first grade DLI class in Utah, which is a theoretical or purposeful sample (Glesne, 2011). To determine the validity and the completeness of the study, I pursued triangulation through multiple data collection sources and I sought confirmation of apparent findings (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I collected data through participant observations (Spradley, 1980), teachers’ interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), document collection in the form of students’ work (Braswell, 2015), and researcher’s reflective journals (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 2013).

I acknowledge that the interviews I conducted with the teacher were not a “neutral exchange of asking questions and getting answers” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 116). Indeed, I recognize that our own cultural assumptions—both the teacher’s and mine—influenced our conversations (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). I used unstructured interview questions as “attempts to understand the complex behavior of members of society without imposing any a priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 129). In the interviews with the teacher, I attempted mainly to discuss how educators can challenge the privilege of the Western discourse and hegemony, recognized as “commonsensical” (Kumashiro, 2009). To challenge the so-called common sense that is often imposed on the students and makes them a sort of mono-dimensional person, the teacher and I discussed how educators could develop a better understanding of both students’ household and classroom experience (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). This perspective promoted the development of classroom instruction that the teacher implemented in her class for the first time while I was conducting my study. When I initially proposed this study, the teacher was not using such classroom instruction.

Following the technique presented in Meyer and Avery (2009), I organized the data and I developed analytical codes. I transcribed teachers’ interviews and looked for emerging themes. Once I completed the analysis of the data collected through teachers’ interviews, I followed the same analysis procedure with the students’ work and the researcher’s reflective journals. I noticed that common themes appeared and were reinforced by several data sources.
RESULTS

Students’ involvement in the activity was high: fifty students out of the total fifty-seven students brought their culture bags to class and shared the content. According to the classification of students’ artifacts, the most popular items were toys (34) (e.g., building blocks, marbles, miniature cars and trucks, dolls, etc.), family pictures (18), stuffed animals (17), cultural artifacts from Native American Latin American, and Asian cultures (9), and cultural artifacts recognized as reflecting aspects of the U.S. Western culture (5). Some examples of non-US culture artifacts were: two small dragon statues, one music CD with songs in Spanish, a portable videogame with foreign language learning software, a soccer t-shirt from Argentina, two flags from Mexico and Canada, a pair of Native American moccasins, a handmade bag and a pullover from Peru. Some examples of artifacts reflecting influence of the U.S. Western culture were: a message from the tooth fairy, a picture of religious significance, three small statues and symbols related to Thanksgiving, a Halloween Jack-o’-lantern, and a book with traditional fairy tales. The high number of toys and stuffed animals brought by the students—especially during the first step of the project—led the teacher to reconsider her directions. In fact, the first attempt with this activity didn’t specify clearly enough that the students were supposed to brainstorm ideas about cultures with their families, in order to connect school and home cultures and identify what distinguishes their family culture from other cultures.

Reflecting back on the previous classroom instruction, Ms. Jensen realized she emphasized students had to think about something “important and special for them.” I interpret that as Ms. Jensen involuntarily turning the culture bags activity into an individual “all about me” show-and-tell activity, with the risk of rewriting White mainstream culture on transnational students. In the interview we had after the first step of the culture bags assignment, Ms. Jensen and I discussed how she could reinforce her instruction, adding more examples of the diverse meanings of “culture” and asking for more involvement from the parents. Ms. Jensen decided to circle in red the word “culture” on the paper bags and to provide more practical examples of the meaning of culture. The following transcript is an example of how Ms. Jensen facilitated the conversation about cultures.

_ms. Jensen: ¿Que comida viene de Italia? [What is the typical Italian food?]
Lucas: La sopa [Soup]
Andrea: La pasta [Pasta]
Ms. Jensen: ¿Y a quién le gusta comer la comida China? ¿Así con los palitos? [Who does like Chinese food? Like this, with chopsticks?]
Jonathan: ¡A mí! [Me!]
Ms. Jensen: ¿Eso es cultura? [Is this culture?]
Todos los estudiantes: Sí [Yes!]
Ms. Jensen: ¿Y la música? Yo traje un disco. ¿Y es importante para mí? Sí, porque está en español, y esto ya es parte de mi cultura, porque soy maestra de español y a mí me gusta escuchar la música en español. Eso es parte de la cultura: música—repitan música—comida, los baile también, o . . . a ver, ¿a quién les gusta ver la televisión? Por ejemplo, ¿algunos pueden ver los programas en español? [And what about music? I brought a CD. Is this important for me? Yes, because it is in Spanish and this is already part of my culture, because I am a Spanish teacher and I like listening to music in Spanish. This is part of culture: music—repeat with me ‘music’—food, dancing and . . . what else . . . let’s see, who does like watching TV? For example, is there anybody who can watch TV programs in Spanish?]
Alberto: Yo sí, mi abuelo mira la televisión, las noticias, en español, e inglés también. [Yes, I do. My grandpa watches TV, the news, in Spanish, and in English as well]
Ms. Jensen: Ah entonces probablemente lo que está mirando en la televisión es parte de la cultura hispana. No es de aquí de los Estados Unidos. ¿Tenemos cultura en los Estados Unidos? Por ejemplo, el helado, jugar a béisbol, el baloncesto . . . ¿Y qué tal el fútbol? Es un deporte ¿de dónde? ¿De América? Bueno también, pero mucho de España, de México, de Argentina, de Brasil. Fútbol así normal viene del mundo. [Well, probably what he is watching on TV is part of the Hispanic culture. It is not from the US. Do we have culture in the US? For example, ice-cream, playing baseball, basketball . . . and what about soccer? Is it a sport . . . From where? The US? Well, yes, but a lot from Spain, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil. Normal soccer like this comes from the world]
Luana: A mí me gusta ver las novelas con mi mamá, se llama “Mi corazón es tuyo”. [I like watching soap opera with my mom; it is called ‘My heart is yours’].

(Field notes)

The passage above is related to the second group of culture bags activities. In this second session, students’ responses changed. As the passage shows, students’ class participation moved toward more authentic cultural themes. Even if the number of toys and stuffed animals didn’t decrease significantly, students moved from simplistic answers such as “Traje este crayon porque me gusta pintar” [I brought this crayon because I like coloring] (field notes); to “Traje estos colores porque lo usé para pintar con mi abuela cuando vino a visitarme de Perú” [I brought these colored pencils because I used them to paint with my grandma when she visited us from
Perú] (field notes).

Moreover, Ms. Jensen tried to engage the students in more culturally relevant conversations, eliciting their contributions instead of simply presenting a set of predetermined options. The different spin she gave to classroom instruction helped her to begin connecting with the students’ funds of knowledge in the classroom, even if this connection worked at a preliminary and broader anthropological level (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992).

With the culture bags activities, Ms. Jensen introduced the students to the basic perception of cultures, trying to build at least a preliminary connection between their home and their school experiences. After the mixed results obtained in the project, Ms. Jensen shared with me in an interview her desire to build on this experience. Ms. Jensen wanted to embed cultural activities during regular school hours. We discussed the possibility of involving Latin@ parents and community members and asking for their help. At first, Ms. Jensen was reluctant. She believed that she already knew what kind of handicraft activities the students would appreciate and she didn’t need further confirmation. We further discussed how this type of attitude may indirectly impose the teacher’s ideas on the students, instead of asking for students’ contribution, empowering them in the learning process. Despite her initial reluctance, Ms. Jensen decided to reach out to ask for parents’ support with the activity. She organized the workshop day with the help of Latin@ parents and community members, who were proud and pleased to share their knowledge and felt empowered from working with first graders. Students rotated in groups of ten around the various activity tables. They learned to create Guatemalan dolls, make Mexican tortillas, craft Argentinian mate gourds and straws, play Dominican streets games, and dance to Caribbean music.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings show that the interview process contributed to: (a) help the teacher to begin to consider her role as a “cultural worker” (Freire, 2008); and (b) explore possibilities with the teacher to creatively integrate students’ funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). The teacher began to understand the impact that she can have when students share the cultural artifacts in their bags. As the students presented their bags, they developed literacy skills, such as asking questions and making connections and observations related to the texts. The artifacts became a new form of literacy based on students’ funds of knowledge, emphasizing the “strategic
knowledge and related activities essential in households’ functioning, developing and well-being” (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992, p. 139). Through this classroom activity and the workshop, the teacher attempted to socially transform the classroom environment and have a long-lasting effect on the students, who can recognize that their heritage experiences are valued in both their school and home settings.

A limitation of this study can be found in the strategies used during the classroom interventions, which cannot be generalizable to a regular foreign language classroom. In fact, this study is specific of a two-way immersion program in Spanish and English, which targeted the Latin@ population in an urbanized area. Hence, the interventions illustrated are the result of the interactions between the teacher and Latin@ students, families, and community members. This specific example of classroom instruction can be implemented only on the strict condition that the activities are in line with the generally accepted values of the targeted linguistic and cultural group.

In conclusion, the knowledge gained about the students, their families, and the school setting could create the basis for a future, more transformative intervention. Thus, I invite future researchers to look at the different ways in which home and school cultures can be bridged in a DLI setting. I aim to continue my role of facilitator with teachers, promoting a reciprocal learning process with the goal of understanding how we can enact social transformation in dual-language immersion settings.

REFERENCES


Chinese is one of six languages offered by the Utah DLI program. This paper examines the development of biliteracy in the Chinese/English context. The authors discuss the areas of emergent biliteracy, linguistic transfer between Chinese and English, and the influence of home and school environments. Research shows that bilingual children at an early age become aware of the differences between English and Chinese. Linguistic transfer has been found to take place between the two languages in the areas of phonological, orthographic, and morphological awareness. Home and school environments play a crucial role in students’ biliteracy development and can affect their attitudes toward the minority language. The paper concludes that overall the evidence supports the continuation of dual language programs.

**Keywords:** dual language immersion, bilingual education, biliteracy, home environment, linguistic transfer, emergent biliteracy

Chinese is one of five languages currently offered in the Utah dual language immersion program. According to Li (2006a), Chinese has become the third most prominent language in both Canada and the United States. As significant of a development as this is, Chinese/English bilingual literacy development has not been extensively researched. As Chinese is being added to dual language immersion programs across the nation, the topic of Chinese-English biliteracy will become increasingly important. This paper will discuss emergent literacy among Chinese/English bilingual children, the stages of emergent biliteracy, linguistic transfer between Chinese and English, and the role of home and school environments in the development of children’s literacy in both languages.
EMERGENT BILITERACY

The Chinese language differs from English in many respects. One of the basic differences is the writing systems, which make Chinese and English “typologically distant languages” (Lu & Koda, 2011, p. 199). Graphic symbols in Chinese correspond to morphological components at the level of the syllable, whereas English letters correspond to individual phonemes. To compare, English has 26 letters, while “the size of the Chinese lexicon, about 3000 characters, account for 99% of the total frequency of Chinese words in modern books and newspapers in mainland Chinese . . . in Taiwan, there are about 4500 characters and about 40,000 words in daily use” (Chan, Cheng, & Chan, 2010, p. 136).

Even children raised monolingually can grasp the understanding that print exists for a purpose when they are exposed to print in the home and in their everyday lives by billboards, street signs, etc. They are aware that meaning is conveyed through print. When young children see pictures in books, they can differentiate that it is the print that tells the precise meanings of the story (Buckwalter & Lo, 2002). They understand that pictures convey messages too but are supportive and supplementary to the actual print that tells the story.

In the case of young children learning both English and Chinese, it is observed that when reading Chinese, children understand that the printed characters convey meaning (Buckwalter & Lo, 2002). Children raised with both Chinese and English demonstrate an understanding that printed text has meaning in natural speech (Buckwalter & Lo, 2002), and that the written word and the spoken word correlate. In biliterate children, this correlation of the written word and the spoken word is observed in a one to one correspondence in both English and Chinese. Figure 1 illustrates the difference between foundational emergent literacy awareness on the left, and surface-level emergent biliteracy on the right.

Buckwalter and Lo (2002) give an example of a young biliterate learner, whom researchers asked to identify a specific word even though the child had not yet developed the skills to identify words. The child had not yet learned to read or write and yet the child was able to correctly identify the word based on the order of the words that were spoken in the sentence by the researcher. The child in this study was able to understand that by counting the order of the words presented he was able to identify certain words. This was evident in both English and in Chinese demonstrating word recognition, despite the fact that words in Chinese do not have boundaries and are not divided by spaces like in English.
STAGES OF EMERGENT BILITERACY

In the case of emergent biliteracy, children are not yet able to write words or characters in Chinese or in English. In this stage, children often attempt to write and produce something known as pseudo-writing. Pseudo-writing “can be drawing, scribbling or invented characters” (Chan, Cheng, & Chan, 2010, p. 139). This made-up writing demonstrates that children have an understanding of the correspondence between written symbols and spoken words. When prompted to write a sentence, the child in Buckwalter and Lo’s study “was then able to reread what he had written by pointing to each invented character and reciting the words in the sentence” (2002, p. 278–279). Figure 2 shows examples of pseudo-writing that demonstrate a bilingual child’s emergent writing.

Figure 2. Samples of emergent writing from a bilingual 3-year-old child (private collection)

Even children who are unable to write specific Chinese characters correctly are able to write pseudo-characters corresponding to the correct
number of actual characters that would be required if the child were writing properly. For example, the Chinese equivalent of *gingerbread man* is written with three distinct characters (Buckwalter & Lo, 2002). A child demonstrating knowledge of the morphosyllabic orthography will pretend-write three characters for this word in Chinese.

Stroke order is a key foundational concept in Chinese writing. Children learn from an early stage that there is a correct order to writing the strokes that compose a character. In emergent literacy, Chinese learners demonstrate their understanding for the need to write with a certain stroke order (Chan, Cheng, & Chan, 2010). With assistance, children are able to copy written characters in the emergent stages of literacy development.

Chinese speaking children are able to recognize the morphosyllabic orthography that is represented by Chinese characters. Each character represents both a morpheme and a spoken form. In the case of Ming, a child studied by Buckwalter and Lo (2002), Ming demonstrated his understanding of the morphosyllabic nature of Chinese writing by matching the English word *frog* with its possible Chinese equivalent. Ming knew that the Chinese word for *frog* contained two syllables, which he demonstrated to the researchers, and from which he concluded that the equivalent in Chinese had to be something with two characters. Although Ming could not yet read the characters for *frog*, he correctly chose the Chinese match for *frog* from a set of possible alternatives.

The researchers were able to probe Ming’s understanding of English in relation to Chinese. They asked him how he knew the difference between the two scripts and he responded that English contained a, b, c’s and that it was different from Chinese. Ming understood that letters in English formed words. At the stage of emergent literacy, a child is able to write several letters and can make groups of letters to signify words. Although the child can group letters together to create ‘words’ the letters may be incorrectly put together and no coherent words may actually be formed.

**Linguistic Transfer**

When a child is acquiring two languages at the same time, it may reasonably be assumed that the languages influence one another in the child’s mind. Such influence between languages is sometimes referred to as transfer. “The term transfer can be used to describe ‘cross language relationships found in structures that belong exclusively to the linguistic domain (e.g. phonology), as well as skills that involve cognitive and language abilities (e.g. reading comprehension)” (Genesee, Geva, Dressler, & Kamil, 2006, p.6).
We know that linguistic transfer takes place in bilingual education involving typologically similar languages, such as English/Spanish, English/French, etc. (Genesee, 2008; Marian & Kaushansky, 2007; Melby-Lervag & Lervag, 2011; Swain & Lapkin, 2005; Zaretsky, 2014), but what about languages that have completely different writing systems, such as English and Chinese? When it comes to literacy, does any type of linguistic transfer take place in students who are learning to read and write in English and Chinese simultaneously?

While few studies on early Chinese/English biliteracy have been conducted, there is some evidence that the two languages can complement each other's development in children (Ke & Xiao, 2015; Wang & Liu, 2004; Wang et al. 2009). Ke and Xiao (2015), in a synthesis of eight studies conducted on the transfer of morphological awareness, found that transfer can occur between two typologically distinct languages. Furthermore, the study “found that the direction of transfer was not limited to being from L1 to L2. Unidirectional transfer from L2 to L1 or bidirectional transfer occurred when the L2 was dominant in Chinese-English bilingual learners who were still developing skills in two languages concurrently” (Ke & Xiao, 2015, p. 375). In other words, either language can support development of the other.

Wang, Yang, and Cheng (2009) documented instances of linguistic transfer among grade 1 Chinese-English bilingual children in the areas of phonological awareness, orthographic awareness, and morphological awareness. Phonological awareness is “the ability to perceive and manipulate sound units of a spoken language” (Wang et al., 2009, p. 292), orthographic awareness is “understanding of the conventions used in the writing system of a language.” (Wang et al., 2009, p. 292), and morphological awareness is “understanding of the morphemic structure of words and their ability to perceive and manipulate that structure” (Wang et al., 2009, p. 292). Wang et al. (2009) report specific instances of all three types of linguistic transfer between Chinese and English among the grade 1 participants in their study.

Also in the area of morphological awareness, Wang, Cheng, and Chen (2006) found that English compound awareness makes a contribution to students’ ability to read Chinese characters and overall Chinese reading comprehension. Similar to Wang, Cheng, and Chen’s (2006) findings, Wang, Yang, and Cheng (2009) found that for grade 1 Chinese-English bilingual students “English compound structure awareness contributed to Chinese character reading . . . suggesting that cross-language facilitation in
bilingual reading acquisition can occur not only at the phonological processing level (surface form) but also at the meaning processing level (function)” (Wang et al., 2009, p. 309). For example, in English the words back and pack are combined to give us the word backpack. Similarly, in Chinese the characters 背 (bèi/back) and 包 (bāo/package) are combined to make 背包 (bèibāo/backpack). Understanding how words are combined to form other words is an essential skill in both languages and knowing how to do this in one language can contribute to understanding how to do the same in the other language.

Another important aspect of linguistic transfer is phonological awareness, or understanding what sounds are possible in a language and how they are used to represent different words. In Chinese, one part of phonological awareness is tone skill which is the ability to make the correct pitch out of four different tones that are possible in a syllable. In English, part of phonological awareness is English phonemic processing skill which is knowing what sounds are created by individual letters or combined letters and the ability to read pseudo-words which are non-words that appear to be real words but have no meaning. Wang, Yang, and Cheng (2009), note that “Chinese tone skill predicted English pseudo word reading over and above English phonemic processing skill” (Wang et al., 2009, p. 295), suggesting that there is a degree of phonological transfer even when learning to read in two very different writing systems. Wang, Yang, and Cheng (2009) found a correlation between Chinese onset awareness (knowing how syllables are formed and represented in Chinese characters) and English real word and pseudo-word reading tasks. They also found that Chinese tone skill and onset awareness predicted English real word reading (Wang et al. 2009).

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL AND HOME ENVIRONMENTS

Bilingual students will benefit most from the effects of linguistic transfer if they are in an environment that encourages them to develop their skills in not just one, but both languages. Both home and school environments play a role in whether a child’s biliteracy development will be successful (Li, 2006a; Pu, 2010). In a case study on the experiences of three Chinese heritage language speakers in Canada, Li concluded that “the home context is a crucial environment for the success or failure of biliteracy development” (Li, 2006a, p. 374). Even when children are in a community where the heritage language is highly valued, their experiences of becoming biliterate can vary greatly, depending on the degree of support and direction
they receive from parents at home (Li, 2006b). In *The role of parents in heritage language maintenance and development* Li notes that “more and more researchers have come to realize that the homes, not government policies or laws, are the key to minority/heritage language preservation” (Li, 2006b, p. 16). Parents can play a major role in helping their children to develop positive attitudes toward the heritage language and decrease the risk of language loss. Specifically, parents can teach bilingual children at home how to read and write while also providing opportunities to interact with texts written in the heritage language (Li, 2006b).

The degree to which schools validate students’ first language and culture can also have an impact on the students’ attitudes towards learning their heritage language and culture (Christian, 2010; Li, 2006a). Schools that enforce an ‘English-Only’ policy can lead students to have a negative view toward their first language, resulting in a language shift and the loss of the heritage language. On the other hand, “positive attitudes can also be shaped by non-heritage communities when public schools value and validate minority cultures and languages in their instructional practices” (Li, 2006b).

The role that teachers play on a personal level, even if they are not bilingual/biliterate themselves, can also be crucial to children’s biliteracy development. Pu (2010) gives an example of a very supportive teacher whom she refers to as Ms. Flower.

Ms. Flower validated language minority students’ heritage languages, encouraging students to use their heritage languages and cultures as resources to negotiate meaning in literacy practices. As a result, May . . . felt free to display her knowledge of Chinese language and culture in Ms. Flower’s class (Pu, 2010, p. 159).

This type of support in the classroom allows students to draw on their experiences and background knowledge when engaged with literacy activities. Pu (2010) also notes that two teachers at the Chinese heritage language schools, which the children in her study attended on the weekend, also allowed students to draw on their English experiences and knowledge to help them in their Chinese literacy development.

The English skills that children learn in U.S. public school environments also have a tendency to carry over into learning to write in Chinese. In Pu (2010)’s case study, children were found to be taking skills that they had learned in their English classroom at the public school and applying those skills to writing assignments they were given in their Chinese heritage language classes. “In their Chinese writing samples, May, Xing, and
Eric demonstrated their understanding of parts of writing (i.e. beginning, middle, and end) and components of narratives (i.e. time, character, setting, problem, and solution)” (Pu, 2010, p. 161). The transfer of skills, such as how to organize writing, is very beneficial in obtaining literacy in both languages.

CONCLUSION

Children who are learning two typologically distinct writing systems develop an early awareness of the differences between them. This can be an advantage in that it raises their linguistic awareness at an early stage which enables language learners to deepen their understanding of how the two languages work. There is also evidence that some form of linguistic transfer takes place among Chinese/English bilingual speaking children (Ke & Xiao, 2015; Wang & Liu, 2004; Wang et al. 2007) and this has potential to contribute to the development of their literacy skills. However, whether this advantage is fully utilized depends upon the environments in which the children are raised. The school and home play a crucial role in how students perceive the value of both languages. If one is preferred or seen as superior to the other this will diminish students’ motivation to study the less valued language (Christian, 2010; Li, 2006a; Li, 2006b).

The studies cited in this paper were mostly conducted with children who spoke Chinese as a heritage language. These children were in English-only schools and some attended Chinese heritage language schools on the weekend, while others received Chinese instruction solely at home from parents. Research on biliteracy development of children in dual language immersion schools, involving students from English speaking backgrounds as well as students from Chinese speaking backgrounds, would be very beneficial to our understanding of biliteracy development in the Chinese-English context. More research is needed on how children learning these two typologically different writing systems simultaneously develop literacy in both languages, what types of linguistic transfer take place, and what strategies can be used to help learners maximize the benefits of these transfers.

Research has revealed many benefits of dual language immersion programs. Some of these benefits include “enhanced levels of metalinguistic awareness” (Cloud et al. 2000, p. 3), better performance “on tasks that call for divergent thinking, pattern recognition, and problem solving” (Cloud et al. 2000, p. 3), the opportunity for minority language students to catch up to their majority language speaking peers (Collier & Thomas, 2004), and advancing “academically at the same rate and levels as children educated in
monolingual programs at the same time, as they maintain age-appropriate levels of native language proficiency and acquire advanced levels of functional proficiency in a second language” (Genesee, 2008, p. 24).

Chinese–English dual language immersion programs could be very beneficial to Chinese heritage language speaking students. For one, they would provide an environment where the status of Chinese is raised due to it being one of the languages used for learning content which could promote positive attitudes toward learning Chinese. In a dual language immersion program, students would also receive formal Chinese writing instruction and be exposed to Chinese texts on a daily basis which would contribute to their Chinese literacy development. The dual language immersion environment would also give students ample opportunities to make connections between the two the languages. More research is needed to further understand the specific benefits of dual language immersion programs in promoting students’ Chinese–English biliteracy. However, the numerous benefits found in these programs in general, as mentioned previously, support the continuation of dual language immersion programs.

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Developing Literacy Skills in the Chinese Dual Language Immersion Classroom

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ABSTRACT

In Utah dual language immersion (DLI) programs, multiple languages are being taught. As Spanish was the first and is still (2016–17) the largest program in DLI, much of the curriculum and training programs are taken from research on Spanish classes. While this may be valid for French, Portuguese and German – languages which, like Spanish, utilize an alphabetic script – this is problematic for Chinese which uses a script drastically different from that used for European languages.

This problem is not overtly obvious in the earlier elementary grades; however, once the content courses switch to more abstract science concepts and social studies in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, learners are expected to read and write more in the target language. Instruction methods for Chinese in the lower elementary grades must be sufficient to prepare learners for the literacy demands at the upper-elementary and secondary level. This paper will examine research on DLI education and how it relates to literacy instruction in the Chinese classroom. In our conclusion, we will provide suggestions for coordinators and instructors in the Chinese DLI programs.

Keywords: dual language immersion, Chinese, literacy

The goal of dual language immersion (DLI) programs is to foster academic achievement, bilingualism/biliteracy, and cultural competence, otherwise known as the ABC’s of DLI (Christian, 2011; Fortune & Tedick, 2008; Spicer-Escalante, Leite, & Wade, 2015). Furthermore, Cloud, Genesee, and Hamayan (2000) point out that students who are proficient in two languages enjoy educational, cognitive, socio-cultural, and economic advantages over their monolingual counterparts. Indeed, much of the research has shown that DLI students tend to outperform students in
traditional, monolingual classes. For example, Thomas and Collier (2002) conducted a longitudinal study in the Houston Independent School District in Texas and found that students in DLI programs performed at the same level as or better than the monolingual students in the L1 when tested after being in the DLI program for five years, but the students were also proficient in a second language.

As Collier and Thomas (2004) claim, “the astounding effectiveness of DLI programs extends beyond the students’ outcomes, influencing the school experience of all participants” (p. 11). DLI programs have benefited teachers, parents, and administrators as well. All stakeholders sense the change in the school system as they become aware of this special reform in education: teachers gain more support from students and parents; administrators are fully committed to making DLI work for the community; and parents tend to participate more actively in school affairs because they feel welcomed, valued, and respected. Although DLI programs have been shown to be highly effective educational environments, they present educators and researchers with a unique set of challenges.

CHALLENGES WITH DUAL LANGUAGE IMMERSION

In many of the empirical studies on DLI programs, researchers have described areas that need to be studied further. For example, Genesee (2008) mentions several critical issues to be considered for DLI programs, such as age of introduction, length of exposure to the target language, and methodology regarding the integration of content and language instruction. A critical matter is the time allotted to instruction in the target language and the L1. Utah follows the 50/50 model, which divides instructional time in the two languages in half, while other programs offer as much as 90% of instruction in the L2. More research is needed to determine which ratios lead to better gains in both the learners’ L1 and L2.

In addition, the changing demographics of many cities is another potential problem in DLI programs. For example, Swain and Lapkin (2005) found that the student population in Canada’s immersion programs had changed dramatically, which created new semantic and pedagogical issues in DLI programs. Thus, new questions emerged, such as “Can we really call a program ‘dual’ language immersion if we have five different L1’s in the same classroom?”, and “How do we develop five different L1’s in the same classroom?”
Finally, there is still the challenge of investigating teacher practices and their long-term effects on student learning. Although DLI programs are by no means new to the academic realm, there is a dearth of research on teacher practices in DLI programs and how they impact student learning. Investigating these practices has become even more imperative since states such as Utah have adopted state-wide DLI programs. Such programs have the potential to affect thousands of children. This is in stark contrast to DLI programs of the past, which were isolated in private institutions or maverick public schools. Successes and failures in the isolated DLI programs were, for lack of a better word, isolated. However, with a large-scale approach, these successes and failures will be replicated across school districts and echoed throughout the K–12 school system. In the following section we expand on the need for a focus on the development of literacy skills in the Chinese DLI program, since developing or failing to develop literacy skills at the early elementary level will have a significant impact on the future of Chinese DLI students.

The need for literacy skills in Utah’s Chinese DLI program

In order to follow the Utah core curriculum, students in the DLI programs in first through third grade learn math and basic science concepts in the target language. Then they move on to more abstract science concepts in the target language in fourth and fifth grade, and to social studies in the target language in sixth grade. Due to the shift of the academic content in the later elementary grades to more abstract and thus more difficult concepts, the demand for higher literacy skills increases significantly during the later primary school years. This demand intensifies as students continue their bilingual education in the secondary grades. The focus of this paper is on the importance of developing literacy skills in early primary school DLI classrooms, with a special focus on the Chinese DLI classroom. We focus on the Chinese DLI classroom specifically because the orthographic nature of Chinese characters makes learning to read Chinese especially difficult.

DEVELOPING LITERACY IN DLI

Literacy has been defined in many studies as one’s ability to read and write, and the ability to interpret a printed text including the visual aids in the text (Allen & Paesani, 2010; Kern, 2001). In the DLI classroom, the development of literacy is considered one of the most pivotal aspects of the
program (Fisher & Stoner, 2004), since students will rely on their literacy skills in the L2 to learn academic content, such as math, science, and social studies (Spicer-Escalante, Leite, & Wade, 2015).

It has been shown that the DLI approach is the most efficient way to build foreign language literacy skills (Berens, Kovelman, & Petitto, 2013; Collier & Thomas, 2004; Fortune & Tedick, 2008; Genesee, 2008). However, in order to support the learning of academic content in later elementary and secondary grades in the target language, strong literacy skills need to be effectively acquired in the lower elementary grades of the DLI programs (Fisher & Stoner, 2004). Acquiring literacy in the early elementary DLI classroom is a complicated task (Koda, 2007). When second language readers first begin to read, they usually have limited oral proficiency to support their understanding of the text. The success of L2 reading depends on learners’ sensitivities to the similarities between their L1 and L2 and their current oral proficiency in the L2 (Fortune & Tedick, 2008; Koda, 2007). This must be accounted for when DLI instructors focus on literacy skills in the early elementary DLI classrooms.

Literacy instruction for L2 learners should consider the learners’ L1 and their L1 reading skills that may transfer to the L2. However, bearing in mind that some writing systems, such as those used in Japanese and Chinese, are very different from the English alphabet, the possibility of transfer may be significantly less than when English speakers learn to read in Spanish, French, or other languages that use an alphabet similar to the one used in English (Koda, 2007).

In addition to the nature of the writing system, another important determinant in developing the learners’ literacy in the L2 is the learners’ current vocabulary level (Fisher & Stoner, 2004; Fortune & Tedick, 2008; Koda, 2007). According to several studies, learners must know at least 97% or more of the L2 vocabulary to read an L2 text without support (Fortune & Tedick, 2008; Koda, 2007). To support DLI literacy skills in the L2, instructors should place a heavier emphasis on vocabulary development.

As part of vocabulary development, learners need to develop their phonetic and phonemic awareness in the L2 to facilitate L2 reading comprehension (Castro, Páez, Dickinson, & Frede, 2011; Culatta, Reese, & Setzer, 2006; Koda, 2007). However, Castro, et al. point out that again the learners’ L1 may also affect the level of difficulty experienced when learning the phonetic properties of the L2. In other words, the further the distance between the languages and their writing systems, whether structurally or orthographically
Developing literacy skills in the Chinese DLI classroom (Elder & Davies, 1998; Odlin, 1989), the more learners are likely to struggle.

Given the potential difficulty that will hinder DLI learners from developing literacy skills in the target language in the lower grades, some researchers have provided a set of strategies that instructors can use to help develop these skills. First, Fisher and Stoner (2004) remind instructors to use age-appropriate materials in the DLI classroom for reading. Furthermore, they emphasize the importance of visuals, such as pictures and/or cartoon comics, to facilitate comprehension and trigger learners’ motivation in further learning the content. They also suggest pairing the students in groups to read together.

Second, pre-reading practice before the reading is also recommended (Fisher & Stoner, 2004; Fortune & Tedick, 2008). High-frequency vocabulary in the text should be taught and practiced before students are exposed to those words in the text. In addition, some background information about the text should be provided to help learners overcome culturally dense aspects of the text. Also recommended is the language experience approach (Beeman & Urow, 2013), in which the teacher reads aloud a story book to the students and then asks them to take notes and make summaries of the story. In this way, the teacher can use the summaries to assess to what extent the students interpreted the text appropriately.

Furthermore, Beeman and Urow (2013) recommend the use of more engaging strategies for comprehensive reading in the class, such as sentence prompts and partner talk. Sentence prompts include guiding questions such as predicting the story, analyzing the character’s personality, describing the background and environment, or giving the text another ending. The purpose of the sentence prompt is to help students better understand the text from a variety of perspectives and to create opportunities for the students to think and say more about the text. In addition, talking with a partner involves the negotiation of meaning, thus greatly increasing the interaction between learners and fostering peer scaffolding while reading.

Although researchers have shown several methods for teaching literacy in DLI programs, many of their strategies assume that learners are reading texts with alphabetic scripts such as Spanish and French. Researchers suggest read-along techniques in which the learner can hear the sound of a word, and then deduce the sounds that the letters represent, or note taking strategies when learners have already mastered an alphabet. However, with writing systems that are phonetically opaque such as Chinese, these techniques are not as effective. In the next section, we will look at the
unique aspects of the Chinese logographic writing system that make literacy acquisition challenging for L2 learners.

**DEVELOPING CHINESE LITERACY SKILLS**

It has been argued that since L1 readers rely on their oral abilities when learning to read, L2 readers should also first develop their oral skills before learning to read (Dew, 1994, Koda, 2007). Shu and Anderson (1999) state that “learning to read requires becoming aware of the basic units of spoken language, the basic units of the writing system, and the mapping of the two” (p. 1). By teaching basic math skills, which do not rely much on the written language, in the target language in grades one through three, the Utah DLI model seems to follow the concept that oral skills should be taught first to facilitate the development of literacy skills.

However, when learners have developed oral proficiency in Chinese, mapping their oral knowledge onto the logographic script of Chinese can be difficult, especially for learners with no previous experience with logographic scripts (Everson, 1998). In fact, due to the difficulty of learning the Chinese script, the Foreign Service Institute ranks Chinese as one of the most difficult languages to learn for L1 speakers of English. The latter require almost four times as much classroom instruction to achieve the same proficiency level as learners studying a language that is closer to English, such as Spanish or French (Language Learning Difficulty for English Speakers, n.d.).

The first hurdle in learning to read L2 Chinese is recognizing and retaining characters efficiently. The Chinese script is particularly difficult because there is no clear connection between the visual form of characters and the pronunciation. It has been estimated that around 90% of the most common characters can be categorized as compound characters, which means they contain a phonetic radical and a semantic radical (Wang et. al, 1986). These radicals are often utilized by L1 speakers and proficient L2 readers to guess the semantic and phonetic properties of the characters (Feldman & Siok, 1999; Hayes, 1988). However, instructors cannot simply teach the sound and meaning of these radicals, as they are not always reliable. In fact, only 26% of the phonetic radicals provide the reader with the exact phonetic representation of the character (Fan, Gao, & Ao, 1984). Therefore, readers must learn to use these radicals as simply cues or hints for the semantic and phonetic properties of the character. Several studies have shown that radical knowledge is positively correlated with character recognition (Chen, et. al., 2013; Shen, 2000; Shen & Ke, 2007).
Not only do learners have to recognize and retain large numbers of characters but they also must learn to segment characters to form words at a rapid speed (Shen & Jiang, 2013). Generally, two Chinese characters combine to form a word, however there are one, three, and four-character words as well. One of the unique aspects of the Chinese script is that unlike languages with alphabetic scripts, Chinese does not have a space between words (e.g., see Figure 1). Therefore, learners must be able to correctly parse the characters to form words. Furthermore, they must do this quickly. Everson (1994) points out that many L2 readers of Chinese often spend so much time decoding and segmenting characters that they struggle with global comprehension of the text. In agreement with Everson’s claim, Shen and Jiang state that once learners are able to read fluently, they are able to spend less of their cognitive resources on decoding and thus lend more attention to the actual text. This is particularly important for elementary readers in the DLI programs once they enter the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, as much of their content learning will come through reading Chinese text.

In this section, we have highlighted some of the difficulties that second language learners face when reading Chinese. In addition, we have pointed out the skills that proficient readers of Chinese possess. If the Chinese DLI program is to be successful in Utah, learners must be able to comprehend and learn academic content from texts as they approach the secondary grades. In the following section we will provide recommendations to teachers and administrators to prepare their learners for the rigors of reading to learn, rather than learning to read, in the DLI classes.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHINESE DLI TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

Character Recognition Skills

As the previous research shows, radical knowledge is important for developing character recognition skills. In an analysis and review of Chinese character teaching strategies, Lam (2011) recommends having
learners draw character component trees to break down complex characters into their radicals. In a similar manner, teachers could make use of graphic organizers (see Figure 2) to help learners visualize how multiple characters share the same phonetic radical.

Learners cannot simply be shown radicals and told the function they serve, they must see the radicals used in a variety of characters and be allowed to deduce the function. For example, although the radical 丁 carries the phonetic property /ding/, it is pronounced differently in the following characters: 打 /da/, 厅 /ting/, 订 /ding/. To help develop this skill, learners could be asked to locate and circle a certain radical as a pre-reading activity. After the radicals have been located, the instructor could ask the students to color-code the characters with similar sounds while the teacher reads the text aloud. The students could then work in pairs to compare and contrast the function of the radicals in each of the characters. Instructors could also color-code phonetic and semantic radicals when presenting new vocabulary to help learners visualize the location and function of each type of radical. Finally, instructors can give students a ‘Chinese radical book’ in which they record the semantic radicals that they learn in class by drawing a picture that resembles the meaning, and then write several characters that contain the semantic radical.

**Segmentation Skills**

As was mentioned previously, segmenting or parsing Chinese characters to form words can be difficult as there is no space between words; therefore, the learner must memorize which characters combine to form a word. Making this task even more difficult is that at times a series of characters can be segmented in more than one way, depending on the context. For example, 非常吃, could be segmented as 很和很难吃, which would
mean “disgusting,” or it could be segmented as 很 and 难 and 吃, which would mean “very difficult to eat.” Thus, learners must have the opportunity to see vocabulary words in context rather than in a list. To help learners develop segmenting skills, students can be given tasks in which they circle key vocabulary in a text.

Another useful exercise is reorganizing scrambled sentences. The teacher can adjust the difficulty of this activity by either providing the learners with words to reorganize, or characters. Finally, activities in which the learners are asked to make verb-object associations can also benefit their segmentation skills as the learners will become more familiar with the multiple functions of some words. For example, the word 工作, which means “work” can function as a verb or a noun. One can say, “I have 工作,” meaning “I have a job”, or “I 工作 today,” meaning “I work today.” Understanding whether words function as verbs or nouns can help learners segment characters properly.

Reading Fluency

To develop reading fluency, Shen and Jiang (2013) recommend that learners engage in reading aloud and repeated reading activities. They argue that reading aloud will help learners increase their character phonological awareness as well as character naming accuracy. In addition, they claim that repeated reading, in which learners read a text two or three times, each time increasing their speed, can also help learners develop character recognition speed. Shen and Jiang support repeated reading because it provides the reader multiple exposures to high-frequency characters. In our view, however, elementary learners are not able to engage in the monotonous task of re-reading a text multiple times and thus graded readers would be a better solution. Graded readers, which are defined as “books which are specially written or adapted for second language learners” (Nation & Ming-Tzu, 1999, p. 356), can be used to help learners build vocabulary, gain radical knowledge, develop segmentation skills, and increase reading speeds. Nation and Ming-Tzu explain that because graded readers are often designed specifically for L2 learners, vocabulary, grammar, and length of texts are tightly controlled. In these texts, learners are exposed to high-frequency vocabulary multiple times, but in different contexts, thus developing reading fluency in a less monotonous manner.

Time Allotted to Literacy

Finally, we believe that due to the importance of developing literacy skills in the DLI classroom, more time should be allotted for this skill in
Chinese in the early elementary grades. In the Utah DLI model, all languages follow a similar instructional ratio for content instruction in the target language and English. While allocating 15% of instructional time for language arts in Spanish, French, German, and Portuguese may be enough to develop literacy skills in these languages, the complex writing system of Chinese demands more time than currently given.

CONCLUSION

One of the major goals of the current Utah DLI model is to cultivate learners who are not only bilingual but also bi-literate. This goal is especially important, as the learners in DLI programs will eventually learn content, which will be the foundation of their future learning, in the target language. If the learners are not bi-literate once they reach the late elementary and secondary grades, their development of academic knowledge will be hindered. We have demonstrated that current research and practices regarding literacy instruction in bilingual programs tend to focus on languages with alphabetic scripts. This research, however valid, is not applicable to logographic writing systems such as the one used for Chinese. Finally, we provide suggestions for literacy instruction in Chinese, and conclude that instructors of Chinese in DLI programs in the early elementary grades need more time dedicated to literacy instruction.

REFERENCES


PART 2

Effective Practice in Foreign and Second Language Teaching
In the second part of this volume of selected papers, the authors have examined specific aspects of effective L2 teaching practice in the light of recent literature published in this field. For foreign language education to be comprehensive, many aspects of effective practice must be considered (Brandl, 2008; Ellis, 2012; Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Scrivener, 2011; Shrum & Glisan, 2015). As the authors of the chapters that follow examined specific elements of effective L2 teaching, they explored aspects that range from promoting student motivation to using authentic materials, from the teaching of linguistic skills to the teaching of pragmatics, and from the respective roles of students’ first language (L1) and the target language (L2) to the role of teacher reflection and self-assessment. They first carried out their investigations as part of their coursework in the Master of Second Language Teaching program, then presented their findings in front of an audience at a Lackstrom Linguistics Symposium, and finally revised and fine-tuned their paper for inclusion in this volume. These chapters offer a sample of the broad range of topics currently under discussion in the field of second and foreign language instruction.

Among the many factors playing an important role in the outcome of learning efforts, student motivation is often viewed as being one of the top factors (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Dörnyei, 2012). After all, not much learning can happen when a learner is unmotivated to learn. In chapter 8, Ali Adair takes a 21st-century approach to motivation by examining it through the lens of online games and gaming. In a world where more people begin using the internet every day, teachers determined to engage their students are strategically incorporating online platforms into the curriculum.
However, games and gaming are not the only way to engage learners. In addition, authentic materials—whether in print, e-text, audio, or video format—have also been shown to play an important role (Akbari & Razavi, 2015; Gillmore, 2007; Rogers & Medley, 1988). In chapter 9, Nadiya Gifford and Tarin Griswold review the research evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of authentic materials in foreign-language learning. Authentic materials are effective not only because their real-world relevance is engaging and thus motivating for learners but also because they foster the development of linguistic skills and cultural awareness.

Building linguistic skills requires, among other things, a focus on vocabulary. However, as generations of foreign-language learners can attest, memorizing lists of isolated words is an ineffective strategy with little long-term benefit. Learners need to encounter the target words multiple times in varying contexts in order to acquire the words, which includes their meanings, their pronunciations, and their spellings. In chapter 10, Elizabeth Abell and Yasmine Kataw explore the use of specific writing tasks and their effect on vocabulary development. Their views are framed in terms of the Involvement Load Hypothesis (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001), which is built on the claim that greater requirements on cognitive processing result in deeper learning. Abell and Kataw propose a study to investigate whether the outcome of a certain writing task for the foreign language classroom will vary depending on the target language in question and its writing system.

While linguistic skills are certainly an important component of communicative competence, they are not the only component (Celce-Murcia, 2007). Sociocultural competence also plays a key role in learners’ ability to interact effectively with target-language speakers (Celce-Murcia, 2007; Gesuato, Bianchi, & Cheng, 2017; LoCastro, 2012). Without sociocultural competence, L2 users run the risk of miscommunicating or being perceived as rude or hostile. Convinced that the teaching of pragmatics is a crucial element of effective foreign-language instruction, Aaron Salgado in chapter 11 offers his recommendations for the teaching of a specific speech act, refusals. Salgado’s central claim, that people learn foreign languages so that they can connect with the speakers of those languages, offers a perspective for analyzing how people “do things with words” (Austin, 1957).

In the foreign-language classroom, doing things with words is presumably carried out in the target language. However, some learners’ proficiency levels may not allow adequate comprehension when instruction is carried out entirely in the target language (Edstrom, 2006). At times,
learners may lack the knowledge or skills to carry out a task entirely in the L2 (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003). In chapter 12 of this volume, Michael Spooner reflects on his tutoring experience with an ESL learner faced with a task he could not manage in the L2. Spooner analyzes why and how learner and tutor used the learner’s L1 and L2 to complete the task at hand. He concludes that, despite the prevailing dogma of teaching only in the target language, sometimes the use of the L1 can be justified on theoretical, pedagogical grounds (Ellis, 2012).

Following Spooner’s reflection in chapter 12, we reach the final chapter in this volume, in which reflection also plays a main role. In teaching as in other endeavors, “reflection is an extremely complex and demanding process that requires a lifetime of dedication” (Kottler, Zehm, & Kottler, 2005, p. 136). Reflective practice is the focus of chapter 13 in this volume, in which Tempe Mabe Willey discusses the use of self-assessment and peer assessment to improve teachers’ classroom practice (Spicer-Escalante & deJonge-Kannan, 2016). Putting the responsibility for improvement of teaching squarely on the shoulders of teachers themselves, Willey explains the benefits of a carefully designed approach to teacher development which combines self- and peer assessment. The approach she advocates is designed to make observations less threatening, more useful, and more meaningful to teachers.

The success of L2 teaching in the classroom depends on many factors. The student authors of the following chapters articulate their understanding of L2 teaching topics that hold their interest. As they offer their perspectives, it is their sincere desire that their work—rooted in the research literature—be of use to colleagues in the field of L2 teaching. When reflective practitioners integrate research findings in their teaching, L2 instruction can be improved.

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Gaming and Motivation in the L2 Classroom

Alexandria Adair

ABSTRACT

Research has generally shown a positive correlation between games and student motivation. Digital Game-Based Language Learning (DGBLL) is becoming increasingly popular and effective, as teachers are adapting their curriculum for the ‘digital natives’ in their classrooms. This paper explores recent research on digital games and their influence on language learning, focusing in particular on specific types of video/online games such as Synthetic Immersive Environments (SIEs), Second Life, and Massive Multiplayer Online Role Play Games (MMORPGs). In addition, the efficacy of gaming and myths surrounding video games are addressed.

Keywords: digital natives, digital immigrants, gaming, Second Life, SIEs, DGBLL, MMORPGs

INTRODUCTION

Although many factors play a role in determining the success of an individual in learning a second language, motivation is one of the most important. Oxford and Shearin (1994) and Reinders and Wattana (2014) state that motivation and willingness to communicate are integral to learners’ success. These researchers have shown that motivation has a significant effect on the amount of second language (L2) use by language learners, how willing they are to interact with fluent speakers of the target language, how well they perform on tests of achievement, what ultimate level of proficiency they attain, and how well they maintain their L2 proficiency after language instruction ends (Buckingham, 2007; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Reinders & Wattana, 2014; Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004). These combined factors determine why a motivated learner will make greater progress in an L2 course than an unmotivated learner. As
motivation is well recognized as a deciding factor in FL student success, teachers must become increasingly more effective in promoting learner motivation (Buckingham, 2007).

Recent years have seen a greater inclusion of technological applications in L2 classrooms (Neville, 2010; Reinders & Wattana, 2014; Reinhardt, Warner, & Lange, 2014; Sykes, 2014; Sykes, Oskoz, & Thorne, 2008), which has allowed learners greater access to authentic materials (i.e., materials created for fluent speakers of the TL). Internet-based information and communication tools have afforded students more ways to interact with audio, video, and written texts, with each other, with teachers, and with individuals outside of their classrooms (Holden & Sykes, 2011; Neville, 2010; Reinders & Wattana, 2014; Reinhardt, Warner, & Lange et al., 2014; Sykes, 2014; Sykes, Oskoz, & Thorne, 2008). These advances in technology also aid teachers in meeting the ever-increasing demand to engage students (Holden & Sykes, 2011). Many students today are so accustomed to digital media that they are easily bored when not interacting with such media; therefore, using games in the FL classroom can be a way to appeal to even the most ‘detached’ learners (Buckingham, 2007).

Achievement of proficiency in a language requires a significant amount of time on task, and teachers are using technological tools to connect with more students than otherwise achievable (Cornillie, Thorne, & Desmet, 2012). These tools also make the time students spend practicing the language as efficient as possible.

For these reasons, recent research in L2 acquisition has begun to evaluate the usefulness of digital game-based language learning (DGBLL), which can use either commercially produced or made-for-education video games for students to practice their language skills. Given the benefits of play in language learning (Cornillie et al., 2012; Holden & Sykes, 2011; Reinders & Wattana, 2014; Reinhardt, 2013; Sykes, 2014), the fact that newer generations of language learners are ‘digital natives’ (Prensky, 2001), and the awareness that language proficiency can only be attained through practice (Ellis, 2000; Lee & Van Patten, 2003), video games are currently being experimented with both inside and outside formal language learning programs. While there will naturally be a considerable number of skeptics among current language teachers (many of whom could be considered ‘digital immigrants’) (Neville, 2010), recent publications on the young field of DGBLL hold persuasive arguments on the general utility of video games for language learning, especially the ability of video games to lower learner anxiety and increase learner motivation (Buckingham, 2007;
LITERATURE REVIEW

For video games to assist teachers in meeting the goals for their classes, it is important that teachers understand what kinds of games are available, why they are useful to learners, and what preconceived notions about video games may or may not be valid. Although the use of digital gaming is rather new in L2 acquisition research (Buckingham, 2007; Thorne, Black & Sykes, 2009), video games themselves have existed for decades. While few video games have been developed specifically for the purpose of language practice, teachers are incorporating a number of commercially produced games into language learning programs and they are reporting success (Gee, 2003; Hitosugi, Schmidt, & Hayashi, 2014; Holden & Sykes, 2011; Peterson, 2010; Reinders & Wattana, 2014; Reinhardt, 2013).

Online games have great potential for learners to participate in authentic interactions in an open-ended format (Gee, 2003). They can be put into three categories (Thorne et al., 2009): social virtualities, massive multiplayer online games, and synthetic immersive environments. Social virtualities, such as Second Life, allow users to interact in an artificial world through avatars they create. Although no pre-set objectives appear in these formats, users can create virtual spaces based on interests and ideas and interact with other users online.

Massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs) and massively multiplayer online role-play games (MMORPGs) are similar to social virtualities in that a large number of users can interact online; however, they differ in that users work together to achieve a specific objective. The most popular MMORPG currently is World of Warcraft (WoW), which classifies users into teams, who then compete with each other. Users can communicate with each other either through text-based chat or orally with microphones and speakers. Several realms in WoW are language-specific (e.g., English or Mandarin Chinese) (Cornillie, Thorne, & Desmet, 2012).

Finally, synthetic immersive environments (SIEs), such as Croquelandia and Digibahn (Neville, 2010; Sykes et al., 2008) are predesigned virtual worlds that allow users to navigate freely through goals determined by instructors. Because gaming is so new in the field of second language acquisition, few SIE games exist for the sole purpose of learning a second language. SIE games specifically designed for L2 acquisition may not
become available to FL teachers because of the time it takes to develop the games and because the potential market might not be broad enough for developers and producers of SIEs to invest their resources in creating language-specific SIE games (Neville, 2010; Reinhardt, Warner, & Lange, 2014).

Teachers must become aware of how video games may be useful, and in some cases, teachers may have to evaluate the prejudices they hold concerning video games (Buckingham, 2007; Gee, 2003; Reinhardt, 2013). As video games are typically used as recreation (Holden & Sykes, 2011), it can be difficult to conceive of their practical application in L2 learning because the L2 learning process would typically be considered work (Holden & Sykes, 2011), rather than play.

To assuage the concerns of many L2 teachers, who tend to be ‘digital immigrants’, Reinhardt addresses four myths concerning the use of video games in language curricula (2013):

“Myth #1: Digital games are played only by small subcultures” (p. 164). In reality, video game use is widespread and rapidly growing (Blake, 2013; Peterson, 2010). As video games have expanded across genres and formats (i.e., consoles, computer games, handheld devices, smartphone apps), participation in digital gaming has become more common and participants are increasingly diverse (Hitosugi et al., 2014; Neville, 2010; Reinhardt, 2013; Sykes, 2014).

“Myth #2: Digital gaming is addictive, violent, and anti-social” (p. 164). While some video games are known to contain excessive violence for which they have received public criticism (Buckingham, 2007), research shows that the majority of video game releases are not given “mature” content ratings for violence (Reinhardt, 2013, p. 164). Research also shows that the majority of video game users are able to manage their normal-life duties with their video game use in a way that is healthy and non-addictive (Peterson, 2010; Reinhardt, 2013; Reinhardt, Warner, & Lange, 2014).

“Myth #3: Digital games only reflect American and Japanese culture” (p. 165). As teachers strive to provide their students with cultural training as part of an L2 curriculum, the question of whether a video game can provide useful cultural knowledge across multiple languages is a valid concern (Buckingham, 2007; Reinders & Wattana, 2014; Thorne, et al., 2009). Although it is true that the largest video game producers are North American and Japanese, it is also true—especially due to the rapid expansion of the industry—that influential video games are being produced in multiple nations these days (Cornillie, Thorne, & Desmet, 2012;
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Reinhardt, Warner, & Lange, 2014). Additionally, as video game producers try to target a more global market, the settings of video games are frequently designed to be of a hybrid nature (e.g., users can set their avatars to use more than one language, and those languages can come from almost any nation or culture in the world) (Cornillie, Thorne, & Desmet, 2012; Reinhardt, 2013).

“Myth #4: Digital gaming is not work and so cannot possibly involve learning” (p. 165). Play has historically been considered an unproductive activity (Cornillie, Thorne, & Desmet, 2012). However, the characteristics of games allow participants to assume roles in altered realities in a way that is entertaining, non-threatening, and open-ended (Blake, 2013). Advances in technology, especially in the era of Web 2.0, allow a greater possibility for play to be productive (i.e., play that accomplishes a task, but does not feel like work) (Reinhardt, 2013; Sykes, Oskoz, & Thorne, 2008).

More than just understanding what video games are and are not, teachers must implement video games only if they show clear benefits to the L2 acquisition process. Teachers can only understand these benefits if they use the games themselves as a part of their research and put themselves in their students’ place, playing the games as if they were using them to learn the FL (Blake, 2013; Sykes, Oskoz, & Thorne, 2008). Teachers also need to remember that, just as with other technological applications, the technology itself is not a pedagogy. Digital games, when used effectively in a language learning program, will allow learners to role-play with a certain amount of assumed agency (Blake, 2013). A well-designed game allows users to feel as though the setting is real enough that they can imagine themselves in the roles that are set by the parameters of the game. Similarly, games should allow users to feel as though they are independently choosing how to achieve their goals, even though most games have a general pathway that users follow (Gee, 2003; Holden & Sykes, 2011).

While the characteristics of video games may be promising to teachers and appealing to students, teachers must still choose games that will help students achieve the communicative goals of modern language pedagogies (Reinhardt, Warner, & Lange, 2014). Certain skeptics may be concerned that learners using video games as language practice will not get as much human interaction as needed in order to develop language proficiency or that the interactions in which learners engage won’t simulate real-life situations. While these are valid concerns, early studies show that students who participate in regular collaborative gaming sessions as a part of their language practice experience an increase in confidence, a decrease
in anxiety, and an increase in willingness to communicate (Peterson, 2010; Reinders & Wattana, 2014; Sykes, Oskoz, & Thorne, 2008).

Reinders and Wattana (2014) also found that as learners progressed through a unit that employed a digital game for out-of-class tasks requiring them to independently engage in communication with others in the class, the learners did so more willingly and with much more confidence than their counterparts who received a traditional language learning approach. Reinders and Wattana also found that the game-based learners’ communicative self-confidence increased by playing games.

Although the large majority of studies on DGBLL is mostly descriptive and exploratory, a few articles have been published that show positive effects of video games on certain aspects of the L2 acquisition process. For example, in Hitosugi, Schmidt, and Hayashi’s (2014) study, a control group was taught a language unit conventionally with a text book, while an experimental group was taught using a commercially produced off-the-shelf video game called *Food Force* (2014). The point of the study was to determine the effect of the use of the game on learner affect and vocabulary retention. Learner affect was measured by administering questionnaires to students before and after use of the game. Vocabulary retention was measured by administering vocabulary pre-tests before the unit, post-tests directly after the unit, and delayed post-tests five weeks after the unit had been completed.

The study showed not only that the use of the video game lowered the affective filter by decreasing anxiety and increasing willingness to communicate (Hitosugi, Schmidt, & Hayashi, 2014), but also that the group using the video game for practice acquired vocabulary and retained vocabulary significantly better than the control group. Although more research is needed to determine all of the possible benefits of video game use in language curricula, early studies indicate that DGBLL can offer learners useful ways to practice grammar and vocabulary, to lower anxiety associated with language learning, to find ways to guide their language practice toward areas in which they are personally interested, and to learn culture and pragmatics (Blake, 2013; Hitosugi, Schmidt, & Hayashi, 2014; Holden & Sykes, 2011; Reinders & Wattana, 2014; Reinhardt 2013; Sykes, Oskoz, & Thorne, 2008).

Furthermore, Thorne, Black, and Sykes (2009) also argue that DGBLL extends beyond the classroom and into real life. By giving students opportunities to play in synthetic immersive environments for language practice, teachers facilitate language learning that goes far beyond
what can be taught in the classroom. Thorne et al. (2009) state, “what occurs online, and often outside of instructed educational settings, involves extended periods of language socialization, adaptations, and creative semiotic work that illustrate vibrant communicative practices” (p. 815). Though some teachers may have reservations, others may perceive the possibility of helping students develop their L2 outside of class as exciting and productive. The fact that games can teach different, or even more, material than what is taught in a traditional classroom may give teachers an incentive to incorporate synthetic immersive environments or other digital games into their curriculum.

A common thread in the literature reviewed is that DGBLL is quite new (Buckingham, 2007; Cornillie, Thorne, & Desmet, 2012; Gee, 2003; Holden & Sykes, 2011; Neville, 2010; Reinders & Wattana, 2014; Reinhardt, Warner, & Lange, 2014; Sykes, 2014; Sykes, Oskoz, & Thorne, 2008). Few games have been published for the purpose of language learning, and the majority of game-based language learning is done using games developed for other purposes (Holden & Sykes, 2011; Reinhardt, Warner, & Lange, 2014). However, researchers, teachers, game designers, and publishers are on the cusp of developing games that are inventive, accessible, and effective for second language acquisition (Hitosugi, Schmidt, & Hayashi, 2014). Therefore, to use them appropriately, it is imperative that foreign language teachers are informed about new technological advances (specifically digital games) that have been designed to enhance language learning.

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Considering the Efficacy of Authentic Materials in Foreign Language Teaching

Nadiya Gifford and Tarin Griswold

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the research literature on the effectiveness of using authentic target language materials in promoting second language (L2) learning, through comparing and contrasting learning outcomes with two target languages (TLs): Japanese and Russian. This paper defines authentic materials as items developed by first language (L1) speakers for consumption by other L1 speakers, and intended to fulfill a social or societal purpose. Examples include but are not limited to: newspapers, television broadcasts, story books, poems, songs, etc. The difficulties associated with Russian and Japanese language learning for L1 English speakers are articulated. A review of scholarly literature is presented and evidence which describes the potential benefits of authentic materials in L2 learning is analyzed. The authors contend that sufficient evidence exists to support the claim that using authentic materials (including modified authentic texts) in foreign language classrooms promotes literacy, fluency, and overall cross-cultural competence.

Keywords: authentic materials; authentic texts; Japanese as a foreign language (JFL); literacy; multi-literacies; Russian as a foreign language (RFL); sociocultural awareness; transcultural competence.

INTRODUCTION

This literature review focuses on the importance of using authentic target language (TL) materials (i.e., materials made by L1 speakers for L1 users) as a primary source for developing literacy, fluency, and cultural competence. We explore various aspects of authentic materials as pedagogical tools for teaching and learning foreign languages. Our focus is on L1 English students’ L2 acquisition of Japanese and Russian.

In this paper we frequently use the terms authentic materials and authentic texts. The former is a more inclusive term which refers to both
written and non-written materials, such as video news programs, radio broadcasts, or song lyrics. According to Crossley, Louwerse, McCarthy, and McNamara (2007), authentic texts are written materials “originally created to fulfill a social purpose” (p. 17) in the TL environment. Therefore, we characterize anything containing written language for consumption by L1 speakers of the TL as authentic texts. Some examples include: poems, advertisements, comic books, magazines, newspapers, and even scholarly journals.

We also refer to adapted authentic text which denotes that some type of modification has been performed on an original text to enhance readability, accessibility, and comprehension. We categorize simplified texts as modified. Simensen (1987, as cited in Crossley et al., 2007), stipulates that simplified texts illustrate “a specific language feature, such as the use of modals or the third-person singular verb form” (p. 16). We believe that authentic texts can be used for teaching L2 students of various proficiency levels. Authentic materials (whether original or adapted) are an ideal source for comprehensible input, which Krashen (1982) claims is “the true cause of second language acquisition” (p. 34).

However, in our view, Krashen’s concept by itself falls short of fully articulating the case for authentic materials. Thus, we turn to the multi-literacies approach which expands the definition of literacy from simple reading and writing capability toward “dynamic, culturally and historically situated practices of using and interpreting diverse written and spoken texts to fulfill particular social purposes” (Kern, 2000, p. 6). Willis and Paesani (2010) claim that the potential benefits of a multi-literacies approach in college-level foreign language (FL) teaching are so great that multi-literacies pedagogy ought to be implemented even in “introductory FL instruction” (p. 122).

We share the sentiment of Allen and Paesani (2010) relating to pedagogical instruction for college-level FL learning, particularly that “multi-literacies instruction is not just feasible but essential to the relevance and intellectual rigor of undergraduate FL programs” (p. 137). To us, this means that FL programs ought to be less compartmentalized, i.e., they should eliminate separations between grammar and structural aspects of L2 learning from real-world or content-based aspects. Relatedly, Kern (2005) emphasizes the importance of learning the “sociocultural and political contexts in which texts are situated” (p. 384). This type of learning naturally emanates from the consumption of authentic materials, as questions about the sociocultural and political realms smoothly emerge from the topics and ideas contained in such materials.
It is our view that authentic materials not only facilitate language acquisition but, in the context of a multi-literacies framework, also expand knowledge of related cultures and societies. Therefore, we argue that authentic materials promote “trans-lingual and transcultural competence” (Geisler et al., 2007, p. 3) and provide cultural context for linguistic constructs otherwise often taught in isolation.

BACKGROUND

Japanese and Russian are very difficult languages for L1 English learners, according to various United States Government agencies that rate and categorize foreign language difficulty for native English speakers. The Defense Language Institute (DLI), which rates difficulty from Category I (easiest) through Category IV (hardest), ranks Russian as a Category III language and Japanese as a Category IV language (DLI language categories, 2015). In a similar vein, the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) classifies languages in five categories (I to V). FSI rates Russian as a Category IV, and Japanese as the most difficult Category V language (FSI language difficulty ranking, 2015). Different methodologies may create variant labels or may split hairs. Needless to say, Japanese and Russian are undeniably challenging languages for L1 English speakers.

EVIDENCE FOR AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

We begin by looking at evidence that supports claims of better learning outcomes from authentic materials. In the Russian L2 learning context, Sharoff, Kurella and Harley (2008) assert that authentic texts help students more effectively learn grammar and achieve better use of Russian cases. Such positive learning outcomes might stem from a heightened sense of connectedness to topics obtained by listening to real-life interviews of first language (L1) speakers, or when exposed to authentic audio or video content that is related to the lesson.

In the context of L2 Japanese pedagogy, Kondo-Brown (2006) compared the effectiveness of using authentic materials to learn kanji in context with rote memorization of decontextualized kanji in isolation. Kondo-Brown reports that: “English L1 nonnative readers of Japanese in advanced-level Japanese courses can identify the meanings of advanced-level kanji words appearing in an authentic narrative text significantly better than when the same words are tested in isolation” (p. 130). Kondo-Brown’s research bolsters the case for authentic materials by demonstrating
that *kanji* characters are more readily absorbed when learned in their relevant and authentic contexts. Thus, it can be concluded that authentic texts can be an effective tool in promoting L2 Japanese literacy.

By contrast, Gilmore (2011) compares the effectiveness of standard textbooks to authentic materials for L1 Japanese ESL learners at the University of Tokyo. This study involved a “ten-month longitudinal investigation, exploring the potential of authentic materials to develop Japanese learners’ communicative competence in English” (p. 786). The results indicate that students using authentic texts “did far better than the control group on five out of eight posttest exams” (p. 786). In this study authentic materials were not modified.

L1 Japanese ESL learners face challenges of commensurate difficulty to L1 English JFL learners. The use of authentic materials has resulted in positive learning outcomes for both groups. Gilmore’s (2011) study is particularly insightful when overlaid on Kondo-Brown’s (2006) study. When combined with the Russian FL learning context provided above, these examples triangulate findings and solidify the case for authentic materials in L2 pedagogy.

**Adapted Authentic Texts**

Next, we examine evidence that shows authentic texts can be made more comprehensible for L2 users by some type of modification. In this realm, Sandom (2013) examines the role that modification can play in making authentic materials more readable and accessible for L1 English learners of Japanese. Sandom summarizes the “authenticity debate” by stating two sides of the argument; “one favors the predominant use of unmodified texts while the other promotes the efficacy of modified texts” (p. iii). Additionally, Sandom defines modified texts for L2 learners as being “re-written with the aim of reducing the difficulty of the original” (p. 289). Sandom concludes that modified texts play an important role in paving “a way for developing such learners’ reading fluency,” while providing “learners an authentic reading experience” (p. 298). These definitions and distinctions effectively characterize potential benefits of authentic text modification for novice and intermediate learners.

Various ways of modifying texts can make them more accessible to language learners. Crossley et al. (2007) focus on differences between the linguistic structures of authentic texts and modified or simplified authentic texts. The authors analyze supporters’ and critics’ theoretical points of view about the use of simplified and authentic texts in L2 teaching and learning.
For example, critics of modified texts in L2 teaching argue that the simplification of texts may create unnatural discourse. By contrast, supporters of simplified texts argue that L2 beginners “benefit from texts that are lexically, syntactically, and rhetorically less dense than authentic texts” (p. 18). According to Crossley et al., neither side can provide sufficient evidence to decisively settle arguments. Their study clarifies the distinct roles of simplified texts and authentic texts in L2 teaching and learning, and how each type may benefit students at different levels.

Employing the use of authentic materials and texts is not simply a bimodal endeavor involving unmodified and modified content. Leveling of texts does not inherently involve modification per se, yet does involve a system of categorization according to level of difficulty, with the goal of pairing texts with students according to their proficiency levels. Fisher and Frey (2012) investigate L2 teaching through leveled texts, which are categorized according to syntactic and lexical complexity. Reviewing studies on the teaching of reading through leveled texts, they found evidence that learners “learn more when taught with texts that were above their instructional level” (p. 348). The authors describe various ways of working with complex informational texts to support learners and utilizing small group work to facilitate comprehension and critical thinking. Their study helps clarify how the use of texts of various difficulty levels can promote proficiency development.

Skills Development from Authentic Texts

Computer-assisted text input refers to the ability to use a keyboard with Roman letters assisted by computer software that allows the user to create any variety of Japanese writing. Dixon (2010) opines that “computer-assisted text input” might have significant implications in that it “could be of benefit to the field of literacy in Japanese as well as the field of JFL pedagogy” (p. 34). While computer-assisted text input is more of an output tool, Dixon (2010) advocates for its value in promoting literacy for L2 Japanese leaners and describes potential benefits of computer-assisted text input for L2 learners of Japanese, such as: “the ability to produce text without having to memorize the orthography;” “greater exposure to the written system as a whole;” and “more incidental vocabulary and kanji learning” (p. 33). Dixon's study is interesting because it examines the emerging field of computer-based technology and its effect on communication in the target language (both reading and writing). Computer-assisted text input allows L2 learners of Japanese to engage in blogs and various social networking forums with L1 Japanese-speakers.
On one side of the technological coin is computer-assisted text input, which allows the user to write and recreate complex kanji characters with ease using alphabetic keys on a keyboard. On the other side of the coin are computer-based tools such as Google’s ‘rikaikun’ (Google rikaikun, 2015), which allows users to get an instant reading and translation by simply placing the pointer icon over characters. Another tool, called ‘furigana inserter’, inserts phonetic furigana (ふりがな) over the top of every kanji character on a webpage, which allows users to instantly insert the phonetic reading of characters for an entire webpage (Google furigana inserter, 2015). These tools dramatically increase the readability of online media.

By emphasizing the use of texts which are connected to students’ background knowledge, Comer (2012) focuses on developing L2 Russian students’ reading skills in meaningful ways. Using relatively short authentic texts, Comer selected four texts on two topics; “each topic was represented by one text drawn from a school-age children’s book” (p. 235) and another one “was drawn from adult encyclopedia entries” (p. 235). The results indicate that participants “learned some information from the text and all but one recalled more correct ideas than incorrect ones” (p. 236). This study analyzes how students of different levels can learn various grammar features (nominal case, passive constructions, third-person plurals, reflexive verbs, etc.) through texts that connect to their background knowledge. Indeed, the research literature has shown that reading multiple sources on the same topic builds students’ background knowledge and is beneficial for learners’ linguistic development (Comer, 2012).

In the digital age, foreign-language learners have tremendous access to a vast array of web-based content. In this domain, Gruba (2006) studies the role of authentic videotexts and digital media as pedagogical tools to enhance JFL students’ media literacy, and argues that, “adopting a literacy perspective towards student interactions with digital media can extend and develop views of second language (L2) listening comprehension” (p. 77). Gruba contends that “Bringing in a literacy perspective (or, indeed, literacies), the classroom opens up refreshing possibilities for teaching and research with video-mediated L2 listening” (p. 88). Gruba’s concept of media literacy aligns with the multi-literacies concept which helps move the emphasis beyond mere authentic materials toward an expanded definition of literacy. A media literacy approach offers an array of visual and auditory input with applicable sociocultural contexts. Therefore, the importance of media literacy in FL learning will likely increase, especially in light of the continuous proliferation of information technology.
which makes an enormous assortment of authentic TL media increasingly accessible.

Using authentic texts in L2 teaching may develop multiple competencies simultaneously, such as sharpening critical thinking and literacy skills in tandem with promoting sociocultural awareness. A study by Flint and Laman (2012) demonstrates that teaching through authentic poems as part of the curriculum makes meaningful connections between content and literacy development. The authors discuss using poetry that relates to social justice as a means of promoting literacy among elementary school students. They analyzed student materials in order to evaluate how content-based thematic texts affect students’ literacy development. According to Flint and Laman, an authentic approach in teaching poetry and writing helps students reflect on language, culture, and their background knowledge. Poetry is a great tool “for developing language and literacy skills because of unique qualities: brevity, rhythm, focused content, strong emotional connection, and powerful imagery” (p. 14). Consequently, this study illustrates the effect of poetry on the development of critical thinking.

Cultural Benefits of Authentic Materials

Next, we explore the cultural insights that might be gleaned from authentic materials. We also examine whether authentic materials may increase motivation by making learning engaging and enjoyable. In this regard, Armour (2011) focuses on JFL teaching and learning through the use of ‘manga’ (Jpn. 漫画), i.e., Japanese comic books. Armour touts his extensive background as a JFL teacher since 1980, and cites the following as an example of manga as an effective tool for Japanese learning: “more recently I have had students who, though they have only formally studied Japanese language for two or three weeks, come out with some pretty impressive Japanese” acquired from comic books (p. 128). Moreover, manga appears to stimulate TL learning by resonating with learners in meaningful ways. Armour implies that manga allows learners to not only develop linguistic proficiency, but also heighten “cultural and communicative competence” (p. 132). These assertions appear to advocate for reaching beyond the mere mechanical aspects of JFL learning toward opening a larger gate to Japanese society and culture. Armour’s study demonstrates the effectiveness of non-traditional authentic material in JFL pedagogy.

In the L2 Russian context, Novoselova (2012) writes about teaching learners’ everyday Russian vocabulary and terminology. Novoselova examines students during exchange programs designed to develop expertise in
modern Russian speaking and listening skills. Students build knowledge by reading together with teachers “documentary works connected with complex and therefore contradictory history pages” (p. 120), then work with dictionaries and books on the internet to learn various word combinations relating to cultural context. The students in this program appeared successful in learning the language and developing cultural knowledge through authentic materials such as diaries and memorials of historically popular writers of Russian works, including Dostoevsky, Chekhov, and Gorky.

Similarly, Dykstra (2012) investigates the impact of video clips from Russian and Soviet films on students’ ability to understand the sociocultural use of two personal pronouns for ‘you,’ ‘ty’ as more informal or intimate, and ‘vy’ as more formal and polite. The results of this study demonstrate that novices and advanced students displayed the same abilities in understanding the use of the pronouns. In addition, the study shows a way of teaching and learning grammar constructs and the pragmatically appropriate use of personal pronouns.

CONCLUSION

We believe that the ultimate goal of an effective FL program (i.e., a four-year college program) is to promote advanced proficiency characteristics in terms of functional literacy and conversational competency in the context of authentic and naturalistic target language environments. The main objective of L2 teachers should be to promote actual communicative competence for students, not merely passing a course with a respectable grade. We do not imply that authentic material pedagogy will mass-produce native-level speakers. Nevertheless, we do contend that at some point in the advanced stages of FL programs, student proficiency should be assessed by measuring ability with unmodified authentic texts. Periodic performance assessments will help the instructor determine the appropriate level of modification students need at that point. We are intrigued by the potential findings and implications of future research which examines the use of authentic materials in foreign-language teaching programs.

We do not advocate a total abandonment of traditional textbook-based approaches to language teaching, particularly in the beginning phase of learning. Similarly, we favor neither an ‘all or nothing,’ nor an ‘either or’ approach to using non-authentic materials, authentic materials or modified authentic materials. Instead, the evidence leads us to the conclusion that authentic materials are indeed a valuable resource that should be employed
with all its modalities, and should be readily employed in tandem with the full spectrum of FL teaching materials and methods.

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Writing Tasks for Vocabulary Acquisition in the Foreign Language Classroom

Elizabeth Abell & Yasmine Kataw

Abstract: In this paper, the authors begin with a review of recent studies that compare the effectiveness of various writing tasks in promoting incidental vocabulary acquisition in the foreign language (FL) classroom. The second section of the paper outlines studies comparing writing to non-writing tasks and studies comparing different writing tasks. The works discussed are framed within the construct of Laufer and Hulstijn’s (2001) Involvement Load Hypothesis. The authors conclude this review with a proposal for future research which would examine the effects of a single writing task on incidental vocabulary acquisition in two languages with different scripts, Arabic and French.

Keywords: vocabulary acquisition, writing activities, involvement load hypothesis

INTRODUCTION

This literature review focuses on writing as a means for vocabulary acquisition. The authors have observed that relegating writing tasks to out-of-class time can lead to students’ over-reliance on dictionaries and sluggish vocabulary acquisition, whereas the research outlined in this review suggests that carefully constructed in-class activities could enhance lexicon development for foreign language learners. We begin by briefly outlining the main theoretical framework in which several of the examined studies are based: Laufer and Hulstijn’s (2001) Involvement Load Hypothesis (ILH). In the second part, findings of recent research in comparing writing tasks to both non-writing tasks and other writing tasks will be discussed. In the conclusion, an outline of a possible research study is offered, which will compare the effectiveness of a writing task on incidental vocabulary
acquisition across two languages with different writing systems, as this is one area of potential growth related to this topic.

**IN Volvement LOAD Hypothesis**

Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) use Craik and Lockhart’s (1972) Levels of Processing (LOP) framework as a point of departure for their Involvement Load Hypothesis. In the LOP framework, Craik and Lockhart posit that information processed beyond the sensory level, that is, at the semantic level, would be retained better than information processed only at the sensory level, i.e., seen or heard (1972). Laufer and Hulstijn separate the ‘depth of processing’ required by a L2 task into three identifiable and measurable components: need, search, and evaluation. Need refers to the “drive to comply with the task requirements [which] . . . can be either externally imposed or self-imposed” (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001, p. 14). This need can be moderate in its overall effect on the task’s involvement load (IL), such as when it is externally imposed, or it can be strong in its effect, such as when it comes from the learner. An example of these two levels of need could be two composition tasks, one in which the student is required by the teacher to include certain new vocabulary words and one in which the student wishes to include new vocabulary words because they express what the student wants to write. The first scenario is an example of moderate need, since it is coming from the task requirements and the second is an example of strong need, since it is derived from the student’s own wish to express a certain idea in the composition.

Search refers to “the attempt to find the meaning of an unknown L2 word or trying to find the L2 word form expressing a concept . . . by consulting a dictionary or another authority” (p. 14). Evaluation refers to comparing the found words to one another, comparing the multiple meanings of a single word, “or combining the word with other words in order to assess whether a word (i.e. a form-meaning pair) does or does not fit the context” (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001, p. 14). An example of this evaluation could be a student deciding between different words expressing the word boy in French (gars, gamin, and garçon) while writing a composition.

The ILH posits that incidental word retention through tasks will depend on the presence and degree of the three components of involvement in the task (together termed the ‘involvement load’) and that “words processed with higher involvement load will be retained better than words which are processed with lower involvement load” (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001, p. 15). Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) extend this to apply to tasks,
putting forth that “other factors being equal, teacher/researcher-designed tasks with a higher involvement load will be more effective for vocabulary retention than tasks with lower involvement load” (p. 17).

Hulstijn and Laufer (2001) found evidence for the ILH in their study with advanced English as a foreign language (EFL) students in Israel and the Netherlands when they compared the effects of a reading task (low IL), a reading task plus a fill-in task (mid-range IL), and a composition task (high IL) on incidental vocabulary acquisition. As predicted by the hypothesis, the task with the heaviest IL, the composition, resulted in the highest incidence of vocabulary acquisition. In replication studies, Keating (2008) and Kim (2008) report results that support this hypothesis.

When comparing different writing tasks as well as writing and non-writing tasks, this framework allows researchers and teachers to identify why certain tasks might be more effective for vocabulary acquisition, but it does not account for a possible upper limit on the benefit of increased IL, as is shown in the studies by Barcroft (2004), Folse (2006), Lu (2013), and Wong and Pyun (2012). From this theoretical point of departure, the various empirical studies which compare writing tasks to non-writing tasks will now be discussed.

WRITING VERSUS NON-WRITING TASKS

Researchers have compared writing and non-writing tasks, such as reading, and have illustrated the potential of writing tasks in vocabulary acquisition. Pichette, De Serres, and Lafontaine (2012) asked the following question: “Which individual activity is more likely to promote the retention of a new word by the learner: Is it reading a word in context or writing that word in a sentence?” (p. 66). This question connects their work to Swain’s Output hypothesis (1985), which asserts that second language (L2) production leads to more L2 development than L2 reception alone. Since writing is a productive task, writing should foster more vocabulary acquisition than reading alone. Pichette, De Serres, and Lafontaine (2012) hypothesized that writing tasks better promote vocabulary acquisition. They tested for incidental acquisition of new vocabulary words and the retention of recently encountered words through immediate and delayed recall tests after reading sentences and writing sentences with intermediate French ESL learners. The writing task chosen for this study was sentence writing to better facilitate making form-meaning connections through context, which cannot be done through writing isolated words. The authors concluded that writing the new words in sentences lead to higher recall than
merely reading the words in context. The sentence writing task was more effective because of the “greater cognitive demands” (Pichette et al., 2012, p.4) of writing. That is, writing demands a deeper processing of the new word, or a higher IL, than reading alone. As a result, the students retain the target words better after the writing task. Furthermore, the authors point out that “writing necessarily involves a certain amount of reading” (p. 69). They call this ‘task-overlap’, which L2 teachers can take into consideration when choosing writing tasks for vocabulary learning. In addition, they mention that the more time given to students to complete the sentence writing task, the more words students will retain in the long term.

Time is also an important factor in the effect of writing on vocabulary acquisition. Webb (2005) investigated the effects of receptive word knowledge through reading tasks and productive word knowledge through writing tasks. Webb conducted two experiments with first-year university-level Japanese ESL learners, both testing five aspects of vocabulary knowledge. He explained that testing word knowledge merely based on meaning and form is not an appropriate measure, and expanded the aspects tested to include orthography, syntax, association, and grammatical functions. Both experiments were necessary because the first measured the five aspects through reading and writing tasks with limited time, whereas, the second with unlimited time, showing opposite results. With limited time, the reading task was more effective and with unlimited time, the writing task was more effective; reading tasks promoted more receptive knowledge and writing tasks more productive knowledge. Since tasks requiring production are more effective in the long run for both productive and receptive proficiency (Swain, 1985), Webb hypothesizes that writing tasks with unlimited time are more effective for gaining word knowledge. Webb (2005) concludes by stating that “[i]f we consider the time spent on the tasks to be a function of the tasks and consider the results to be ecologically valid, then writing a sentence may be a more effective method of gaining vocabulary knowledge than reading three sentences” (p. 50). Thus, according to Webb, time is an important factor when implementing writing tasks to enhance vocabulary knowledge.

In addition to considering the time allotted for the task, Barcroft (2004) and Wong and Pyun (2012) show that when comparing writing to a non-writing task, intended use of the target words must also be taken into account; that is, whether the demands of the task will be syntactically or semantically focused. In Barcroft’s study, 44 second-semester university-level L2 learners of Spanish were shown 24 vocabulary words with pictures
indicating their meanings. For half of the words, students learned them through writing a sentence using the word while shown the picture and for the other half of the words, the students learned the words only through four different viewings of the pictures. In the testing phase, the students were again shown the pictures and directed to write the target word in Spanish. The results showed that the words learned during the non-sentence-writing learning condition were better retained and written than those learned through the sentence-writing condition. Barcroft (2004) hypothesized this outcome in light of his ‘type of processing-resource allocation’ or ‘TOPRA’ model, which posits that high semantic processing demands during a task can decrease a learner’s capacity to process both the meaning and the form of the word, only allowing them to focus on the semantic dimension of a word.

In a replication study, Wong and Pyun (2012) employed the same learning and testing design as Barcroft (2004) but with first-year university-level L2 learners of French and Korean, all of whom were highly familiar with English; adding an additional research question concerning the effect of orthographical distance between the learner’s first language (L1) and L2 on vocabulary acquisition. Wong and Pyun’s findings echoed those of Barcroft. The students exposed to the new vocabulary words through the non-sentence-writing condition scored almost twice as high as the sentence-writing group on the immediate and delayed post-tests during which the students had to write the target words after being shown the corresponding images. As Wong and Pyun point out at the end of their study, these findings do not contradict Laufer and Hulstijn’s (2001) ILH, but they highlight its limitations in explaining incidental vocabulary acquisition at the form level through the performance of semantically-focused tasks.

COMPARING DIFFERENT TYPES OF WRITING TASKS

While writing has been recognized as a productive task that can facilitate L2 vocabulary acquisition and retention (Pichette, De Serres, & Lafontaine, 2012; Walters & Bozkurt, 2009; Webb, 2005), other research has claimed that this is not always the case and highlights factors that affect how certain types of writing tasks may or may not lead to vocabulary acquisition and retention (Barcroft, 2007; Folse, 2006). These factors include the type of writing task, the vocabulary words chosen, and the amount of time given for completion. The different types of writing tasks mentioned in various studies include fill-in the blank, composition, cloze-tests, sentence-level
writing, and word-level writing. The factors mentioned above and these different types of writing tasks will be discussed in this section.

Time-on-task is an important factor when comparing the efficacy of certain writing tasks. Lu (2013) investigated the effect of several types of writing tasks when paired with a reading task on vocabulary learning by conducting a study with 10th and 11th grade ESL learners, who had been studying English for about seven years. The researcher gave them four tasks: single blank filling (used target words to complete nine unconnected sentences), triple blank filling (completed three sets of nine unconnected sentences), blank filling of a summary (filled in words missing from a summary of the reading passage), and summary writing (produced own summary of the reading passage using the target words). Since many L2 learners face difficulties in completing writing tasks during limited classroom time, Lu also probed the factor of time allowed for completion and its effect on the students’ ability to recall meaning and form of new vocabulary items. The results showed that the composition task was less beneficial than the triple blank task and unsuitable under classroom time constraints.

In contrast, Talebzadeh and Bagheri (2012) found that for EFL learners in Iran, the composition task was the most beneficial to vocabulary acquisition, when compared with sentence writing and cloze tests, given that the students had unlimited time to complete the composition. The authors concluded that the composition was most effective because learners were able to use the words in meaningful contexts in addition to using their higher level cognitive functions, while the lack of time constraints allowed them to do this slowly and deliberately. The conclusions of both Lu (2013) and Talebzadeh and Bagheri support the ILH in that students who are given sufficient time are able to better engage with the higher IL of a composition task, resulting in the acquisition of L2 vocabulary.

Some teachers may resort to having students write single vocabulary words to practice the new vocabulary and save time. Yet, Barcroft (2007) asks the following question “Does copying a word while attempting to learn it constitute a compatible dual task that improves the ability to learn new words, or is it an incompatible task that decreases the ability to learn new words?” (p. 714). He claims that asking L2 learners to copy down words without associating the form with meaning actually exhausts processing resources that otherwise could be used to make form-meaning connections that result in vocabulary acquisition and retention. The study was conducted with first-semester university-level Spanish students learning new words through word writing, fragment writing, and no writing
while seeing the words and pictures of the words. ‘No writing’, during which students simply learned the target words by seeing them on the screen with pictures, resulted in the highest level of vocabulary acquisition. The conclusion was that teachers should avoid directing L2 learners to write down isolated words in order to remember them, and that output associated with meaning is more effective when vocabulary is tested on the semantic level. The final study examined in this section shows, however, that even when students are not writing whole sentences, they can still make apparent vocabulary gains.

Folse (2006) focuses his study on the semantic acquisition of vocabulary items by intermediate EFL learners. The students were given 24 vocabulary words to learn through completing a practice booklet containing a mini-dictionary of the words and three different types of written practice exercises: a single fill-in-the-blank exercise, three fill-in exercises and a composition task. The 24 words were divided into groups which were learned through the written exercises in varying orders, with 36 different practice booklets total. In the immediate and delayed post-tests, the students had to demonstrate their knowledge of the vocabulary words by providing L2 synonyms or L1 equivalents as well as L2 sentences that used the words in context. Results showed that the students best retained and produced synonyms for the words learned through the three fill-in exercises. Folse (2006) dismisses the effect of processing depth or IL in light of these results, and attributes the retention to number of exposures. However, closer examination of this study’s design would suggest that ILH actually did play a role. Doing three different fill-in exercises would necessitate three times the searching (in the mini-dictionary) and evaluation (comparing the possible words) to place the target words correctly in the exercises, thereby increasing the IL of the task considerably in comparison to the other two tasks.

The literature review above shows a clear connection between writing activities and L2 vocabulary acquisition, which can be explained to a certain extent with the ILH. However, areas for further exploration abound. In the final section of this paper, we will propose a research project to help answer one of these remaining questions.

CONCLUSION AND PROPOSAL FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As the previously discussed studies have shown, many factors can affect L2 vocabulary acquisition during classroom writing tasks, such as time-on-task, the amount of IL associated with a task, and the students’ level of
engagement or motivation in relation to the task. Many questions remain unanswered in this field, and many variables remain untested, so this review will conclude with a brief outline for a study that would answer one of these questions: does a sentence writing task enhance incidental vocabulary acquisition to the same extent in a language with a non-Latin-based script such as Arabic, as it does in a language with a Latin-based script such as French for English speaking learners of these languages? The study outlined below attempts to answer this question.

This study would be conducted in two second-year university-level French and Arabic courses, where the majority of the language learners are native speakers of English and the students of both languages have the same amount of class time per week. The study would be carried out during the regular class time of two consecutive class periods.

On the first day, the students in both languages would be given a brief pre-test during which they would write the English equivalents of the same lists of target words, such as the list found below in Table 1. These words would be specifically chosen to avoid cognates between the English and French words that might give the French class an advantage. After the pre-test, students would be given the English equivalents of the words and directed to write one sentence per word for up to twenty minutes. After the exposure part of the study, the two classes would proceed as normal, without any additional repetition or use of the target words in the class by the teachers, or indication to the students that they will be tested on the words.

Table 1. Target words for the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>drinking glass</td>
<td>koob</td>
<td>une verre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plate</td>
<td>sahin</td>
<td>une assiette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spoon</td>
<td>mila’qa</td>
<td>une cuillère</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fork</td>
<td>shoka</td>
<td>une fourchette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knife</td>
<td>sakeeneh</td>
<td>un couteau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>napkin</td>
<td>mendeel</td>
<td>une serviette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coffee mug</td>
<td>funjan qahweh</td>
<td>une tasse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frying pan</td>
<td>miqlah</td>
<td>une poêle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pot</td>
<td>tanjareh</td>
<td>une casserole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oven</td>
<td>furun</td>
<td>un four</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following day, the two class periods would both begin with the testing phase of the study, which would be the administration of a cloze test. The students would have to produce the target words and correctly place them in a paragraph, with no word bank— they would be encouraged to show what they know, even if they may not be 100% correct. They would be given up to 20 minutes for this task as well. The class would then proceed as normal, without the intentional use or repetition of the target words in the class by the teachers, or indication to the students that they will be tested again on the words. An identical delayed post-test would be administered one week later and students would be asked if they had encountered or studied the target words in the interim.

Both post-tests would be evaluated for two signs of vocabulary acquisition (correct spelling of the words and correct semantic use of the words) and the results compared between the two languages. We hypothesize that for this particular set of words, the two groups would have comparable gains in vocabulary acquisition when pushed to produce the words in the cloze test, with the Arabic group possibly doing better in acquiring the meaning of the words and the French students doing better in producing the correct forms of the words, with a possible significant difference between the groups in this respect. These particular outcomes are likely for two reasons. First, all of the forms of the Arabic words are distinct from one another, whereas there are three French words that end in –ette, as well as a few ambiguous or quasi-cognate words, such as ‘casserole’ and ‘serviette’, which might lead some students to mix up the meanings of these words. Second, despite the fact that Arabic uses a phonetic script, several of the sounds of these words do not exist in English and may cause Anglophone students to spell them wrong when producing them from memory. Besides these differences, we believe the students’ vocabulary acquisition as a result of this task would be about the same, with no significant difference between their levels of vocabulary acquisition. We came to this hypothesis in light of the ILH, because for both groups, the search and need components of the task and test are moderate or low but the evaluation component, comparing the words when making sentences and putting them in the cloze test, is relatively strong. It would then be possible to see the differences (if any) in vocabulary acquisition that arise as a result of the choice of language being studied, and hypothesize further about how to facilitate vocabulary acquisition in the specific languages.

This study would compare writing task efficacy for vocabulary acquisition across languages with two different scripts, in a similar way that Wong
and Pyun (2012) did in their replication of Barcroft (2004). It would also provide insight into the viability of the ILH when students are exposed to and tested on both form and meaning of words, instead of meaning or form alone. By the nature of the post-tests (cloze tests) it would be possible to examine the students’ knowledge of both form and meaning of the words, since they would be producing the words from memory. For example, a student may remember that “fourchette” means fork and be able to recognize it, but unable to spell it correctly– they could approximate the spelling on the test, and it would be clear that this student retained the meaning of the word, but not the form. By not divorcing form and meaning in the structure of the test, a more accurate picture of the students’ vocabulary acquisition (or lack thereof) could be obtained.

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Teaching Second Language Pragmatics

Refusals

Aaron Salgado

ABSTRACT

Language acquisition is dynamic and involves many dimensions. Language learners cannot hope to make meaningful connections with target language speakers without obeying pragmatic expectations of discourse. Learning to navigate the expectations that vary by culture and even by personality should happen in the earliest stages of language learning. Putting off, or ignoring the cultural rules of interpersonal communication easily results in perceptions of undesirable personality traits. Among the most difficult of interpersonal speech acts is the act of refusal. While refusals might merely communicate a preference, they may also convey more serious matters such as health concerns, safety, obligations, and at all times, relationships. A refusal is, by nature, a response to a previous turn in which an offer was made or an invitation extended. In order to prepare language learners to appropriately refuse an offer or decline an invitation, specific attention must be paid to pragmatic instruction in the classroom. The focus of this paper will be on Spanish refusals.

Keywords: Refusal, Spanish Language Learners, Pragmatic Teaching

SPANISH PRAGMATICS

Learners of Spanish as a second language (L2) or foreign language (FL) often desire to become competent users of the target language (Harlow & Muyskens, 1994). To achieve their goal, L2/FL learners commonly approach language learning by following rigid grammar-based lessons (often provided by language teachers) that aim to build up linguistic proficiency that will somehow turn into communicative competence. However, while dissecting grammatical concepts and memorizing
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vocabulary are common practice, “language proficiency is an additional issue” (Yates, 2010, p.288). Developing full proficiency, or communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia, 2007; Savignon 1997) involves grasping not just the form of the language, but along with it the corresponding cultural norms. According to Cuesta and Ainciburu (2015) “culture is a determinant factor in encoding and decoding utterances” (p. 208). If only the words are interpreted, the meaning and intent may be lost.

If students have the desire to build communicative competence, all facets of communication should be practiced in the classroom. Félix-Brasdefer (2006) reinforces the need for pragmatic instruction by stating that “the consensus among researchers is that an instructional component in pragmatics and relevant pragmatic input is necessary to foster pragmatic competence in both the L2 and FL classrooms” (p. 168). Even when a language teacher is convinced of the merits of pragmatic instruction, the learners still need to be convinced of the value of pragmatic competence. “They need to see that miscommunications can sometimes lead to serious problems” (Lauper, 1997, p. 31). In a communicative teaching model, even novice-level students are prepared for communication with fluent target language speakers. This is great for language acquisition, but poses an early threat to language learners who likely are not familiar with the pragmatic rules of engagement. Luckily “pragmatics can be taught from beginning levels of language instruction” (Félix-Brasdefer & Cohen, 2012, p. 665) and in fact should be taught as early as communication is expected.

When pragmatics instruction is saved for a later course, immediate “miscommunications are not only possible but also potentially damaging” when students use the language before such instruction is provided (Yates, 2010, p. 288). These miscommunications can range from silly and harmless to rude and offensive. Lauper (1997) comments on the high stakes of pragmatics in language use by noting that “although native speakers attribute grammatical errors to a lack of knowledge of the target language, sociolinguistic errors are often attributed to the personality of the speaker” (p. 4). Perhaps the level of priority for language use outside of a classroom can be indicated by the level of focus on pragmatic instruction. Félix-Brasdefer and Cohen (2012) add that “like phonology, morphology, and syntax, which are necessary for learning a L2, pragmatics should be integrated into the language curriculum from the beginning levels of language instruction” (p. 650).

Emphasizing early pragmatic instruction enables language learners to communicate with reduced risk of losing face. “Various acts can differ
in the amount of threat to different face needs” (Park & Guan, 2009, p. 245) and in particular a refusal act threatens face in differing ways across cultures. Therefore “teachers need to become aware of the pragmatics of a language, such as how language is used in socially appropriate” ways in particular situations (Félix-Brasdefer & Cohen, 2012, p. 654). Unfortunately, “Spanish learners are still memorizing grammatical forms without necessarily having control over the pragmatic functions of these forms in discourse” (Félix-Brasdefer & Cohen, 2012, p. 665). Grammar is a tool for communication, it is not communication itself. Cultural norms have great influence in our communication as it extends beyond words and grammar. Pragmatics is an essential component of language use.

To highlight the complexity of L2 communication and the necessity for pragmatic competence among L2 learners, this literature review addresses the speech act of refusals. This paper will establish the need for target-language pragmatics research, present examples of the do’s and don’ts, explain the methods used to understand refusals, and highlight some classroom-applicable teaching methods.

The wide and innumerable cultures within the Spanish world might be seen as an indication that pragmatic studies are destined to never reach a comprehensive conclusion. Regardless, studying language-specific refusals will inevitably cross cultures and situations. Appropriate and accepted “pragmatic language use is a very complex phenomenon with a lot of contextual factors influencing its actual performance” (Flor & Juan, 2011, p. 49).

Despite the seemingly insurmountable task, “for some years now research findings on L2 pragmatics have been accumulating” (Félix-Brasdefer & Cohen, 2012, p. 665). Through that research, the speech act of refusing has shown to change in its execution due to factors such as social status and social distance, the setting, the culture and so forth (Cuesta & Ainciburu, 2015; Flor & Juan, 2011). Félix-Brasdefer and Cohen (2012) gathered specific responses from native Spanish speakers, being careful to indicate identifying factors in order to highlight the relevant variances in refusal situations. The reason for refusal, the gender, and the specific cultural setting have an impact on how much explanation is given or expected. This implies that a class should not necessarily arrive to one unified pragmatic conclusion in studying cultural differences.

THE DO’S AND DON’TS

Grammar is an integral part of languages, but insufficient on its own to describe the intricate details of human verbal interactions. According to
Lauper (1997), “in order to become competent in a second language it is important for second language learners to know how to recognize and perform speech acts” (p. 3). Due to the complexities of verbal interaction, learners often experience trepidation when venturing into the realm of second language communication. Yates (2010) adds another dimension to L2 interaction by noting that “not only speaking, but also listening can be perilous for learners” (p. 296). Therefore, L2 educators should help students navigate the do’s and don’ts of the target culture’s accepted pragmatic rules. Learners do not need to approach L2 pragmatics as if they will become nativelike, rather they should try to map out do’s and don’ts in order to make conscious choices of how to present themselves within the new cultural context (Félix-Brasdefer, 2006).

Acknowledging the great range of situations, researchers focus on one specific speech act at a time in order to make contributions to the grand mosaic of interpersonal communications. “Refusals function as a second pair part in response to other speech acts such as requests, suggestions, invitations and offers” (Flor & Juan, 2011, p. 58). This implies that a great deal of competence is required: listening comprehension, grammatical structures, deciphering intentions, accounting for social factors, and strategic competence just to start a reply that may take several exchanges to politely accomplish.

Lauper provides a detailed analysis of the intricacies of Spanish refusal acts, concluding that native speakers “varied their refusal strategies according to the reason for refusing” (Lauper, 1997, p. 29). The issue of properly refusing some offer can present potentially high risks to a relation; “performing that refusal in an appropriate way would require a good level of pragmatic competence in order not to offend the speaker’s request” (Flor & Juan, 2011, p. 58). Lauper details refusals based on moral, financial, educational, physical, and social reasons and provides the following observations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grounds for refusal</th>
<th>Results from data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>Subjects refused more directly, e.g., “I cannot go with you, I am going to Christmas Mass with my family that night.” Direct rejections based on moral grounds are much less of a threat to a relationship.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
More tact and supplementary reasons are required; “[E]ducational reasons may not be as valid or acceptable as other reasons . . . so the refuser provides even more explanations” (Lauper, 1997, p. 18). E.g., “I would love to, but I can’t with the math class’ midterm coming up. If I fail another test in my math class my grade will be sunk for good.”

Commonly the “dispreferred response” (Félix-Brasdefer, 2006, p. 174).

More likely to threaten a relationship.

Likely to be easily accepted.

Most likely to use “statements of regret” (Lauper, 1997, p. 19), e.g., ‘I would love to go to the rock concert with you, but I can’t afford the ticket. I can’t believe that I will miss out!’

Often lead to further conversation about financial restrictions.

“[I]n refusals for physical reasons, subjects also used gratitude frequently” (Lauper, 1997, p. 17), e.g., ‘thank you, but I am full, maybe I will eat more in a few hours.’ Readily accepted in general but comprise variety of severity, e.g., food allergies versus taste preference, ‘I cannot go surfing because of my back’ versus ‘my toe is sore.’

Requires careful explanation “to ensure that the requester didn’t take the refusal “personally”’ (Lauper, 1997, p. 17). E.g., “That sounds great, but I am so sorry that I won’t be able to go with you this time. I normally would jump on such an opportunity except that I will be out of town, visiting my grandmother. I’m sorry, maybe next time ok?”

Often characterized by lengthy lists of excuses and many turns taken, the ‘social dance.’

The do’s and don’ts are all situational and can vary by personality along with the many other factors but those who refuse or decline mainly wish to be seen as polite. Deciding “the appropriate forms of refusals for the given situations” is both formulaic and largely unconscious for most fluent speakers, yet that competence does not necessarily translate cleanly across cultural norms (Eslami, 2010, p. 230). In order “to avoid learners being perceived as rude, demanding or even offensive, there is a need to make them aware” of general do’s and don’ts (Flor & Juan, 2011, p. 56). Gass and Neu (2006) describe the risks involved in how the language learner is perceived by noting that “[i]t is one thing to formulate a refusal on paper; it is quite another to deliver that refusal to a person who will respond to it” (p. 52).
Teachers should help L2 learners compare the methods of refusal from the learners’ native culture with those of the target language, while pointing out “commonalities and differences in speech acts by emphasizing gender differences and degrees of (im)politeness or (in)directness among different varieties of” the target language’s cultures (Félix-Brasdefer, 2006, p. 189). This is an important part of defining the do’s and don'ts and should not be discouraged. After an understanding of refusals is reached, the L2 learners can then choose how they will be perceived by target language speakers.

The grammatical forms employed in the act of refusing may contribute to or contradict the intentions of the L2 speaker. Félix-Brasdefer and Cohen (2012) offer further insights to refusal patterns on a grammatical level. The way the sentence is formed has a strong impact on how the intention is perceived. The use of a statement of disbelief communicates something different than a passive construction, or than a conditional conjugation. When students take into account more than grammar-level factors, a simple and common question like “How do you say ‘no’ in Spanish?” becomes “How do I refuse the offer while maintaining our relationship?” or “How can I communicate my intention to value the offer, even though I must refuse it?”

The studies outlined above help to define the do’s and don'ts but “also help in the creation of materials and textbooks that incorporate socio-cultural contents in order to develop the intercultural competence of the learners of a foreign language” (Cuesta & Ainciburu, 2015, p. 213). The question of ‘How to teach the do’s and don'ts?’ should be addressed next.

**DISCOVERING THE DIFFERENCES FOR PEDAGOGICAL APPLICATION**

Context is as a good first step to consider due to the changing results of the studies in relation to the many variations of context. Defining the context can be facilitated by a survey given to students to find their ambitions and existing ties to the target language. With Spanish as a posterchild of diversity, narrowing the contexts to the extent possible is helpful to avoid throwing pedagogical darts in the dark. Since the variety of pragmatic norms is overwhelming, “the role of teachers is to customize the speech act learning strategies to specific languages and student populations” (Félix-Brasdefer, 2006, p. 175). The study of relevant pragmatics is compelling and useful, the study of irrelevant pragmatics is commonly not more than interesting for a short while. With the survey results, instruction can be aimed to the most likely target language populations that are currently in contact with
the learners and that are likely to come their way.

With a context, details start to become clear. Patterns of grammar formulations, colloquialisms, actions, and other details paint an engaging and colorful picture. Taking in the big picture, teachers “emphasize consciousness-raising, teaching grammar in context for communicative purposes, regional variation, and practicing speech acts at the discourse level” (Félix-Brasdefer & Cohen, 2012, p. 654). Means of written and oral input are blank canvases for the educator’s imagination. Written input can come by books, magazines, love notes, pamphlets, blogs, articles, text messages, e-mails, advertisements, and much more. Teachers can capitalize on this variety to pique an interest among L2 learners. Oral input includes “selected conversational sequences taken from television shows, film, or debates on the radio, focusing attention on the dynamic aspects of the interaction” (Félix-Brasdefer, 2006, p. 176). A healthy dose of imagination in lesson planning with the learners’ interests as a guide can elicit interest in pragmatic differences and similarities.

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

The purpose of communication is to make connections. The purpose of learning a new language is to make new connections. When we lose sight of the original purpose, language instruction shows it. To put it simply, “pragmatics is teachable in the FL classroom with some kind of guided instruction” (Félix-Brasdefer & Cohen, 2012, p. 654). The specific example of refusing an offer serves as one insight of many into the pragmatics of language learning. Interpersonal communication is dynamic and always changing with the tide of cultural context. “The ‘secret’, largely unconscious, nature of the pragmatic norms that guide the way we make and interpret interpersonal meaning in interaction will ensure that learner pragmatics will continue to be an area of great relevance” (Yates, 2010, p. 301).

As language learners begin to navigate their new world of potential connections, they should be taught to love and embrace the complexities that come along the way. The realm of pragmatics is inseparably tied to all languages and should not be ignored in any language learning setting. When language learners understand and appreciate the beauteous variety of a given language, they start the process of making new connections, which is the very purpose of communication.
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When Negotiation of Meaning is Subversion of the Assignment

Michael Spooner

ABSTRACT

In this critical reflection, I explore a volunteer experience as a classroom aide in an adult ESL program. In this classroom, a particular interaction with a novice ELL brings me to reconsider the “target-language only” doctrine espoused by the program, as the learner with whom I worked negotiates a writing assignment that takes him well beyond his ZPD. Looking to recent scholarship in code-switching and code-meshing, I look for room in L2 pedagogy for the use of a broker language (e.g., the learner’s L1) to mediate learning. The reflection explores how such a position complicates orthodox “English-Only” practice in ESL, and it concludes by advocating the use of strategic code-switching as both a theory-based tutoring technique and a realistic, respectful acknowledgement of an ELL’s multilingual competence.

Keywords: ESL, code-switching, code-meshing, pedagogy

INTRODUCTION

When James Lantolf reports that sociocultural theory (SCT) suggests that “L2 learners are unlikely to develop the capacity to use the L2 to mediate mental functioning, even when they can use it in social situations” (Lantolf, 2011, p. 28), he does so in the context of reinforcing the argument that language is both culturally bound and the primary vehicle for higher mental processes. Because higher mental processes construct the screen through which human beings filter perception, and because language encodes cultural understandings even as it mediates meaning for us, Lantolf implies that our mental functioning faces a fundamental constraint in the cultural meanings carried through our L1. This is so fundamental a constraint, in
theory, that we find it impossible to appropriate the cultural meanings of an L2 and to use them to mediate our higher mental processes.

One might infer from this view that a sort of economy of mediation exists in higher mental processes. That is, the theory implies that cognition exists within finite boundaries: once established in the L1, cognitive space for mediation is fully and permanently occupied, and is therefore inaccessible to an L2. Two or more languages cannot exist in parallel for mediational purpose, equally available to the speaker in a sort of repertoire model.

Lantolf may be right. But this view offers a disappointingly fatalistic—perhaps even hopeless—prospect for learners of second languages. L2 learners and teachers understand that acquiring a second language is a long, complicated, and imperfect process, and that few L2 learners achieve superior proficiency in their L2. Although proficiency itself is a contested term, it does remain the ideal, a hypothetical, to which learners and teachers aspire. Were they to adopt Lantolf’s dictum as operational, L2 learning might look very different.

In this paper, I want to explore an experience that illustrated this fundamental SCT precept in action and at the same time raised questions for me about the conventional practice of using only the target language in the L2 classroom.

WRITING AND NOT WRITING

As a farewell exercise on the last day of the term in the “level 3” ESL classroom where I have been volunteering, the teacher assigned her students to write thank-you letters to the donors that make the grant-supported school possible. This was the first and only time during the quarter that I had seen students asked to create a meaningful piece of writing for an authentic audience. There had been brief occasions in every class period when they were asked to converse with each other, to make meaning together in spoken English. But I had not seen any writing beyond workbook exercises.

In this last assignment of the quarter, the teacher appeared to believe that, as adults, her students would be familiar with the thank-you letter. She did not introduce it as a genre with its own purpose, form, or function. She did not model it or scaffold it or offer examples of the genre from other sources; nor was there time in the last 20 minutes of the term for the students to draft, seek feedback, revise, and so on. The teacher was asking them to perform a simple but culturally encoded communicative task on the spur of the moment, and it was no surprise to find that they were at a
loss. They asked for a great deal of guidance: Who are we writing to? What should we say? How do we begin? Shall we write it to you? What's this for? “Just make it ‘To whom it may concern,’” she suggested. “And just say in your own words how much you appreciate the school, and how it has helped you accomplish your goals.”

Simple. Except that several students, whether from genre confusion or just difficulty with English, did not understand at all what the teacher intended, and they only grasped the assignment after conferring with other students, most of them in Spanish. Once they comprehended her request—and even if they didn’t—they willingly engaged the assignment. However, at the same time, they badgered the teacher until she offered some specific possible phrasings to use in their letters. Formula phrases, one could say. Interestingly, the students seemed to have an intuitive sense of genre *theory*, though they were not prepared for the *particular* genre assigned, and they could see that they needed more information to produce a good example of it.

Having got the teacher to model some appropriate thank-you-letter phrases on the SmartBoard, many students copied these directly into their own letters. “The school has helped me to accomplish my goals,” began to appear in the papers around me. “I appreciate ELC so much.” As students recopied their work onto clean sheets of paper and handed them to the teacher, they said goodbye.

I don’t mean this narrative to sound judgmental of the teacher. Quite likely, the thank-you letter is a useful gesture for the school as an institution to make, and it’s a courteous one, and I imagine that the school asks all teachers to have each of their students produce one at the end of each term. In other words, I’m guessing that the task seemed (to me) non-integrated with the curriculum because it was so—through no fault of the teacher’s. Even so, as an assignment presented by her, I don’t think it went the way the teacher had expected. She was thinking it would be a quick piece for students to write from background knowledge of a more-or-less universal convention—showing thanks. That’s not unreasonable. But what struck me was that, background knowledge or not, the students had an intuition of genre, and of what Marianne Celce-Murcia calls formulaic competence (Celce-Murcia, 2007).

As teachers of second language introduce culture-bound protocols (speech acts and other routines), Celce-Murcia argues, they need to teach relevant formulae of target-language communication as well. Students in this class were looking intuitively for appropriate chunks of language that...
speakers native to Anglo American culture might use in the genre of a thank-you letter or the rhetorical situation of addressing unknown benefactors. They knew they must attend to this kind of competence in English, because otherwise they risked social dysfunction even if their spelling and grammar were correct.

I worked with one student, JR, for a few minutes as most of the class was departing. JR had suffered a major illness earlier in the term, and he had missed many classes as a result. It didn’t take a formal assessment to see that this assignment was asking more of him than he was ready for. In terms of sociocultural theory, dynamic assessment explains what occurred between us as we interacted to locate JR within his zone of proximal development. But, in practical terms, JR and I simply discussed the assignment in a mix of English and Spanish, and we agreed that he would not be able to compose successfully in English within the time allowed. He was ready to give up.

**SOLAMENTE INGLÉS**

In the orientation I was given on my first day at the school, I had been told that is the policy of the school to speak only English with the students. Yet JR was perhaps the student closest to what ACTFL would call novice level, and the parameters of this assignment had pushed him to where he was nearly unable to produce any English at all. He was not anxious or afraid or angry. He understood the task and the concept of a formal note of gratitude; he simply didn’t have words for the rhetorical situation of this particular task. It was a teachable moment, in a way. Had there been time—like a full class period with multiple activities—one would have been able to introduce JR to a range of practical and conceptual knowledge related to letter writing in English, or at least to pass along useful knowledge of English formulae à la Celce-Murcia. But there was no time.

*Bueno,* I said. *Dime en español lo que quiere escribir, y voy a traducirlo en inglés.* (“Tell me in Spanish what you want to say, and I will translate it into English.”)

Sitting near us, JR’s wife smothered a giggle with her hand—a giggle either at my Spanish or at the idea of cheating on the assignment. But JR spoke quickly to me under his breath. In less than two minutes, we had a workable thank-you note, and JR was copying it onto a fresh sheet of paper as if nothing unorthodox had happened.

I was ambivalent about working with JR in this way, of course. Although I truly doubt that the teacher or the school directors would have
been alarmed about it, what we did in fact subverted both the assignment and the teaching philosophy of the school. The ideal at the school, as at most ESL/EFL programs of which I am aware, is to work only in the target language. Target language dominance in the classroom is an obvious and worthy instructional practice that needs no defense, especially where communicative language teaching is the philosophy. I have no quarrel with this. All the same, in working with JR, I came to what seemed like a limit of the philosophy.

Negotiation of meaning, of course, is a fundamental not only of communicative language teaching but of communication itself. James F. Lee and Bill Van Patten offer an especially clear example of learners not having the resources to express themselves easily or to interpret what they were hearing in the second language. In their example, they point out, “both [the learner] and the instructor demonstrate a certain strategic competence: Instead of abandoning the idea, they attempt to get it across in another way” (Lee & Van Patten, 2003, p. 52). Although Lee and Van Patten don’t take this position, it seems to me that where the learner and instructor share a broker language, even though they might prefer not to use it, strategic competence must include negotiating meaning via that language. In our situation, JR and I had exhausted the resources available in English. I could have supplied words, phrases, formulae, as the teacher had done, but JR was not comprehending what the teacher had already written on the SmartBoard; he had copied one short phrase with much difficulty and did not understand what he had “written.” My assessment was that were I to dictate more language, it would get JR no closer to understanding, nor would it help him finish the task—writing in English was that labored and confusing for him. In short, the situation had ceased being a functional writing assignment. Moving to JR’s L1 became the channel through which we could negotiate both the meaning of the assignment and his actual composing of it. When he understood the task, he was able to dictate quite quickly a more-than-acceptable note of thanks for the occasion.

Lan Wang (Wang, 2012, p. 31ff) identifies ten tenets of standard research-based instruction in university writing centers, where many international students seek help with their writing assignments in English. Wang’s Tenet Ten is “[The client] should think and write only in English” (Wang, 2012, p. 38). That is, even if they know the home language of their client student, American writing center tutors are taught to speak only in English when working with English language learners (ELLs)—just as they do with L1 English students. Wang writes:
In writing centers, monolingual English tutors are qualified and perceived to be appropriate to work with ELLs. It is believed that English-only enables ELLs to think in the target language with minimal interference from their L1 (see Cummins, 2007). Since students’ native languages are excluded, translation has no place . . . . English-only tutoring is the default in all tutorial conferences. An ELL’s L1 is not appropriate at any stage of writing. (Wang, 2012, p. 39)

This is orthodox practice, as Wang suggests, but it is contested by writing theorists who specialize in L2 writing. Suresh Canagarajah (2010), Bruce Horner, Min-Zhan Lu, and Paul Kei Matsuda (2010), as well as Wang herself, are concerned that the English-only convention may be alienating ELL students with its arguably imperialist presumption, and it may also be failing to exploit the cognitive advantages of multilingualism: “A bilingual1 person’s competence is not simply two discrete monolingual competencies added together,” writes Canagarajah; “instead, bilingual competence integrates knowledge of two languages and is thus qualitatively different from monolingual competence” (Canagarajah, 2010, p. 158). In arguing that pedagogy should understand even imperfect multilingualism as a cognitive advantage, interestingly, these researchers are in conflict not only with conventional practice, but also with Lantolf and the pure form of sociocultural theory that he represents. The sort of cognitive integration that Canagarajah posits is actually ruled out by a strict sociocultural theory (Lantolf, 2011, p. 28), just as the hope that drives the English-only pedagogy—that this practice encourages “thinking in the target language”—is also ruled out.

"FAILRE"

Arguably, then, my one-to-one pedagogy with JR fails on two counts. On the one hand, from the perspective of preferred practice (not to mention school policy), JR will learn the cognitive moves of English more effectively if I work with him in English only. On the other hand, sociocultural theory offers an impasse of near-theological proportion: that is, even if I do leverage his L1—in fact, no matter what I do—JR will never learn the language well enough to “think in it.”

Yet, here we can try Canagarajah’s concept of integrated bilingual competence as a resource in strategic competence. For Canagarajah,

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1. By “bilingual,” Canagarajah has in mind a proficiency short of the level that some linguists would define as such. He refers to international students whose L2 is in development at a level that allows them to succeed in university studies while still short of L1 comfort.
“shuttling between languages” represents a distinct advantage of multilingual language instruction. JR and I certainly found it so. What Canagarajah (Canagarajah, 2010, p. 159) calls an “inference model” of L2 instruction entails two theoretical problems. That is, by inferring an explanation of L2 usage via extrapolation from what is supposed about the speaker’s L1, this model suggests that the influence of L1 will so condition the learning process that L1 will displace the L2 from full integration—much as Lantolf predicts. This determinism is the first problem. Second, the inference model disregards the diversity of other mediations beyond L1 that also influence the production of L2; these would include especially rhetorical considerations such as purpose, audience, topic, rhetorical context, and genre. Canagarajah points out that we cannot “consider texts written in any genre, by any author, to any audience in [non-English] L1, as suitable to produce generalizations about language, and then apply them to explain . . . texts of any genre, author, audience, and proficiency level in English” (Canagarajah, 2010, p. 159). There are far too many variables at play in any act of language use for such an inference to be credible.

Canagarajah rejects the logic of the inference model as monolingual thinking. His study of a single writer shuttling strategically between discourse practices of English and Tamil in multiple pieces of writing gives us the conceptual tools to entertain the idea that multilingualism is indeed different in kind from monolingualism.

One of these tools is in his concept of multilingual competence. Canagarajah’s purpose is not to make this point, but it is easy to see that multilingual competence supports an alternative understanding of the interaction between L1 and L2 in ELL usage. If Canagarajah is right that multilingual competence is one integrated competence and not separable monolingual competencies, then we need to reconsider some of what is taken for granted especially in sociocultural theory. It opens the possibility that a repertoire model of acquisition actually is viable, as opposed to presuming the dominance of L1 in mediation no matter what. Furthermore, that repertoire is not additive—one language with its self-contained discourse, plus one more with its discourse similarly self-contained. Rather, the repertoire is cumulative and integrative, a single resource but double the size of either language.

Secondly, by setting his study in a sociolinguistic contact zone where Tamil and English have been influencing each other for two centuries, Canagarajah reminds us that language is not a static phenomenon—not even the Queen’s English is. Contact languages make it abundantly clear
that we cannot speak of English, or Tamil, or Spanish; we must speak of Englishes, Tamils, and Spanishes. LuMing Mao outlined the phenomenon of deliberate importation of Asian rhetorics to American English. He calls this a “togetherness in difference,” a gesture of resistance, in a way, that protects the purposes of the speaker as a member of a linguistic group that chooses not to leave behind identity in the process of assimilation (Mao, 2006, p. 3). The title of Mao’s book offers a quick example: *Reading Chinese Fortune Cookie*.

Vershawn Young’s work on code-meshing brings this home to America as he advocates a radical linguistic democracy. “[E]very native speaker of English and every English language learner . . . has a right to blend accents, dialects, and varieties of English with school-based, academic, professional, and public Englishes, in any and all formal and informal contexts.” Young calls for the day “when teaching English prescriptively (‘These are the rules; learn to follow them!’) is replaced with models of instruction for teaching English descriptively (‘These are rules from various language systems; learn to combine them effectively’)” (2011, p. xxi).

Thus, as we think about the ESL/EFL classroom, we have to ask ourselves whose proficiency is the goal and how we can know when a discoursal idiosyncrasy is an intrusion by an L1 and when it’s a strategic rhetorical decision on the part of the L2 speaker. Although, in local moments, we can make some judgments, we can’t know the answers to these questions with the certainty of theory. Multilingual competence and the material reality of language variation are simply at odds with idealistic pedagogical hopes and purist generalizations from theory. The stance of the classroom teacher or the language tutor needs to account for this.

**CONCLUSION**

Reflecting on my experience with JR, I am left to wonder: Was my resorting to L1 with him a failure of ESL pedagogy? JR was a novice speaker of English, and it’s clear he was not importing Latin American rhetorical tropes or discourse patterns into his English literacy to preserve a linguistic identity or to create a rhetorical effect. Quite possibly, my choice to mediate in his L1 simply retarded his growth in L2; this should be clear. Or should it?

I’m left with two interlocking questions, one pedagogical and the other theoretical. JR is a multilingual speaker, albeit still a novice in his L2. How does second language teaching express its respect for multilingual competence—at any moment of development—in terms that honor
what we learn from Canagarajah and other theorists? One way is to change how we understand the L1 in the L2-learning moment. We can elect to see it as a resource, a valuable fund of knowledge that is not simply additive or ancillary to the learner’s developing grasp of L2, but integral to his/her cognition. Constructed this way, multilingual competence is different in kind from how an English-Only pedagogy tends to envision it. We begin to see that to ignore L1 may in fact cut off the learner from a useful mediatory resource. From the learner’s point of view, to employ the first language in service of learning the second is merely a gesture of strategic competence. I can’t find fault with this, especially in the context of the sort of breakdown JR and I were experiencing in our particular situation, with its flawed assignment, its time pressure, and JR’s stalled mediation in L2.

Where a tutor has any competence in the learner’s L1, then, I would suggest that resorting to L1 occasionally to broker mediation represents not only a valid pedagogical move, but one that is supported by sociocultural theory (since SCT argues that mediation occurs primarily in L1) and at the same time by sociolinguistic work like that of Canagarajah, Young, and others. Given the vital point articulated by SCT (cf. Lantolf, above), that mediation in L2 is very difficult even for advanced speakers, the sort of conceptual and communicative breakdown JR experienced is absolutely predictable. When such a breakdown occurs, it would be an obvious pedagogical move to leverage the L1, where mediation primarily takes place.

Further, in spite of our pedagogical ideals, there is no doubt that experienced multilingual L2 teachers do deploy the student’s L1 quite commonly, perhaps especially in tutoring or small group pedagogy. Reflecting on my work with JR, I begin to see this not as a lapse in good L2 instruction, but as a truly strategic and pragmatic technique. Though used sparingly for obvious reasons, it reinforces an ethos of respectful acknowledgment of the ELL’s multilingual competence, honors a view of all the learner’s language (L1 and L2) as deeply integrated with cognition, and adopts a realistic, research-based stance vis a vis language change, language use, and student goals.

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Self-Assessment of Teaching

Benefits and Possibilities

Tempe Mabe Willey

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the research literature on self-assessment and peer assessment through observation. I specifically focus on the Self-Assessment of Teaching Statement (SATS) approach to observation. My review begins with definitions of key terms related to the field such as reflection, self-, and peer assessment. I next introduce the benefits of effective observation, mentioning also potential problems that may occur. This is followed by research that shows how the pre-observation meeting, a part of the SATS protocol, is particularly beneficial. I provide a suggested protocol for this meeting, including teaching standards to focus on and corresponding teaching goals, basic guidelines for writing feedback, a sample observation form with models of positive and negative feedback, and a review of the SATS protocol. Finally, I share personal impressions from implementing this protocol. I conclude with a summary of my findings and suggestions for future research.

Keywords: reflection, self-assessment, peer assessment, Self Assessment of Teaching Statement (SATS)

Teacher observation is a prominent practice in education for the purposes of both teaching evaluation and development (Okas, van der Schaaf, & Krull, 2014; Sheal, 1989). Observation is used to assess teacher performance for the purposes of quality control (Natriello, 1990) and promotion of continual growth to prevent complacency (Bengtsson, 1995; Dinkelman, 2003). Studies show that teachers believe such observations are necessary and that they feel undervalued when they are not frequently evaluated (Natriello, 1990).

Because teacher observation is common, it is essential to develop the most effective observational system possible. To meet this need,
Spicer-Escalante (2015) developed the Self-Assessment of Teaching Statement (SATS). The SATS approach has a series of specific steps, including a combination of peer assessment, self-assessment, and reflection. This approach has greatly benefited both novice and experienced teachers (Spicer-Escalante & deJonge-Kannan, 2016). I examine the SATS approach more fully by outlining key definitions, and reviewing both the benefits of teacher observation and some of the key problems of less-effective observational systems. I offer recommendations based on research and conclude with a summation of my findings and ideas for future research.

KEY CONCEPTS

Reflection

Reflection is a type of “self research” that occurs before, during, and/or after teaching (Bengtsson, 1995, p. 25). Frequent reflection enlightens and informs teachers, helping them develop their knowledge to the point where they act independently (Bengtsson, 1995). As such, reflection is prerequisite to a change in “understanding that can [then] lead to [a] change in thought or behavior” (Gay & Kirkland, 2003, p. 182). It often occurs as a reaction to a problem experienced during instruction (Okas, van der Schaaf, & Krull, 2014). While most teachers are at least somewhat reflective, deeper reflection requires teachers to distance themselves from the direct classroom experience and to analyze objectively what happened (Dinkelman, 2003). Such analysis enables teachers to learn things that they might otherwise not naturally learn (Dinkelman, 2003).

Self-Assessment, Peer Assessment, and Co-assessment

When teachers participate in self-assessment they are involved in both deciding the criteria of assessment and judging whether they have met those criteria (Kearney, 2013). This involves “being more self-conscious, critical, and analytical of one’s own teaching beliefs and behaviors” (Gay & Kirkland, 2003, p. 181). As teachers assess their actions they will begin to see what beliefs lie behind those actions. This is essential as “[t]eachers’ knowledge and beliefs about teaching, students, and the subject matter . . . [all] function as interpretative lenses through which teachers make sense of the situation” (Okas, van der Schaaf, & Krull, 2014, p. 330). Self-assessment not only helps teachers modify methods, but can help them understand the beliefs underlying those methods and whether those beliefs require modification.
Peer assessment is similar to self-assessment in that it requires peers to first help develop criteria for the assessment and then assess the teachers on those criteria (Kearney, 2013). In fact, Dochy, Segers, and Sluijsmans say “[p]eer assessment can be seen as a part of the self-assessment process and as informing self-assessment” (Dochy, Segers, & Sluijsmans, 1999, p. 338); however, observers must analyze and comment on teachers’ actions in such a way as to help them make the necessary modifications. Peer assessment should provide guidance and structure to self-assessment (Dochy, et al., 1999). This is why a combination of peer and self-assessment is often used with observations. Dochy et al. (1999) refer to this combination of peer and self-assessment as co-assessment.

BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF OBSERVATION AND CO-ASSESSMENT

Table 1 lists the potential benefits of co-assessment of classroom observation.

Table 1. Benefits of Co-Assessment of Classroom Observation

1. Teachers say they learn most from “observer training and subsequent observations” (Flanders, 1970, p. 179).
2. Teachers have to practice what they preach when being observed and become more accountable (Barber, 1990; Dinkelman, 2003; Topping, 2009).
3. Teachers serve as observers so they are able to more accurately assess both their teaching and the teaching of others (Dochy, Segers, & Sluijsmans, 1999; Kearney, 2013).
4. Teachers who are observed can distance themselves enough from their teaching to see their practice more clearly (Bengtsson, 1995).
5. Teachers improve their practice (Dinkelman, 2003; Topping, 2009).
6. Teachers learn about their own assumptions (Dinkelman, 2003).
7. Teachers become life-long learners (Barber, 1990; Dochy et al., 1999; Kearney, 2013).
8. Teachers become more autonomous and better critical thinkers (Kearney, 2013).
9. Teachers—both novice and experienced—gain new ideas or “fresh approaches” (Sheal, 1989, p. 92).

Co-assessment of classroom observation contributes to general teacher development, increased teacher autonomy, increased motivation for life-long learning, better critical thinking skills, and a mutual exchange of new teaching ideas and strategies. These benefits enable teachers to gain a more
accurate picture of their teaching, evaluate their own teaching, improve their teaching, and even teach about their teaching (Bengtsson, 1995). Co-assessment may avoid or mitigate challenges that often ensue from traditional classroom observations, which are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2. Challenges of traditional classroom observation**

1. Observers who are administrators often make value judgments, are untrained, are perceived as a threat, seem biased, don’t focus on teacher development, don’t collaborate, don’t specify the rating criteria, and seem not to value teachers’ opinions (Dinkelman, 2003; Dochy, Segers, & Sluijsmans, 1999; Hill, Charalambous, & Kraft, 2012; Kearney, 2013).

2. Teachers change their instruction temporarily to please the observer (Natriello, 1990).

3. Teachers are not given the time to “reflect on their activities” (Okas, van der Schaaf, & Krull, 2014).

4. Teachers and observers haven’t been instructed sufficiently on how the observationsystem works (Hill et al., 2012).

5. Teachers don’t trust peer observers (Barber 1990; Sengupta, 1998).

6. Teachers see “[i]nherent potential for self-incrimination if the results are used summatively” (Barber, 1990, p. 17)

7. Observers tend to write comments that are overly critical, judgmental, subjective, shallow, and, sometimes, inaccurate (Barber, 1990; Sheal, 1989).

8. Teachers are stressed during observations which doesn’t lead to improvement (Natriello, 1990).

9. It is difficult for the observer to give honest feedback because teachers don’t recognize their flaws (Barber, 1990).

10. Observers are not reflective in their comments, they just cite literature or describe what has happened without any commentary (Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

The common challenges of classroom observations listed in Table 2 can be grouped in three main types. The first type results when the observer is an administrator instead of peer; the administrator is often untrained and is evaluating more for summative purposes than for teacher development. The second type of challenge occurs when observers either lack investment in the observation or lack training on how to be objective, specific, and balanced when observing. The third type of challenge can be encountered when teachers being observed are not required to reflect sufficiently or play an active role in the observation process. As will be shown later, many of these challenges are addressed through the implementation of the SÁTS approach (Spicer-Escalante, 2015).
THE STEPS OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING STATEMENT APPROACH

The SATS system follows a specific protocol (Spicer-Escalante, 2015). First, the teacher sends the lesson plan and materials to the observer. Then, they meet to discuss specific aspects on which the teacher would like the observer to focus. While observing the class period, the observer writes feedback on the SATS observation form. Meanwhile, a third person video records the class. After the class is over, the teacher must first watch the video and write a reflection. Then, the teacher can request the notes from the observer and compare them to his/her own thoughts. The teacher uses the observer’s feedback to write the SATS, a statement that summarizes what the teacher has done well and how the teacher can improve based on reflection and observer feedback.

BENEFITS OF THE SATS APPROACH FOR TEACHERS AND OBSERVERS

The specific protocol of the SATS approach increases the likelihood of experiencing benefits from observation and decreases the chance of experiencing the typical challenges that occur with observational systems. For example, with the SATS approach, teachers being observed take an active role in their own evaluation. They must send the lesson plan and materials ahead of time, meet with the observer before teaching the lesson, observe a video of their class, write a reflection, read the observer’s feedback, and then write the SATS, blending reflection and observer feedback. Because the teachers are required to take an active role, they are invested in the process. Consequently, the SATS approach, which crucially does not require the observer to write a formal letter, has the additional benefit of making observations “less time-consuming” for observers (Kearney, 2013, p. 336).

The modified role of observers under the SATS approach has unique benefits. Observers in the SATS approach are often peers, a dynamic that further motivates teachers to do their best (Topping, 2009). The peer observers concentrate their feedback on “what they liked” and “what they would do differently” (Spicer-Escalante, 2015). Giving feedback in these two areas allows observers to hone in on both positive and problematic aspects of the lesson, giving specific ideas for techniques to help improve that lesson (Kearney, 2013; Ho & Kane, 2013; Topping, 2009). Teachers who are observed can apply this feedback both to that lesson and future lessons (Topping, 2009). In this sense, rather than being there to judge the
Self-assessment of teaching

THE PRE-OBSERVATION MEETING: AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE SATS PROTOCOL

While the SATS system is an effective observational system, I have experienced problems with feedback when the pre-observation meeting is not included in the protocol. In such cases, when peers give me feedback, it is sometimes not specific enough or is written as a value statement without any evidence to back it up (i.e., “good at engaging students” or “could work on creating more engaging activities”). When observers utilize the practice of the pre-observation meeting as part of the SATS protocol they are prepared to give effective feedback. I have looked for specific things that can be done in that meeting to enable observers to write feedback that is more specific, objective, and applicable. I discovered that when the pre-observation meeting includes a specific protocol, such as standards-based goal setting, this aids teachers in preparing observers to give more effective feedback.

The pre-observation meeting is a one-on-one meeting between the teacher and observer with the main purpose of preparing observers (Topping, 2009) and promoting mutual understanding through interpersonal communication (Sheal, 1989). I recommend the following protocol for this meeting. First teachers show observers a model observation sheet (see, for example, Sheal, 1989) to demonstrate how to write effective feedback. This model includes 1) writing down what has occurred in the class and 2) connecting that occurrence to either an encouraging compliment or a recommendation based on set teaching standards. Next teachers provide observers with specific teaching standards they want to work on and set standards-based goals that will give observers a focus for their feedback (Natriello, 1990; Okas, van der Schaaf, & Krull, 2014; Topping, 2009; Van Tassel-Baska, Quek, & Feng, 2006). Finally, teachers use the meeting to make sure that observers understand each step of the SATS process.

A lot of the challenges typically associated with observations are due to a lack of specific standards of measurement (Hill, Charalambous, & Kraft, 2012; Kearney, 2013; Sheal, 1989). Teachers often feel unsure what they will be judged on, and they feel worried about being assessed based on factors beyond their control, such as favoritism. Observers also feel unsure of how to evaluate teachers without more guidance; thus, they may hesitate to give specific feedback as they don’t know what the teachers expect.
To avoid these problems, the teacher should meet with the observer to decide which standards will form the basis of the observation. In foreign language observation, the first resource for standards is the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (ACTFL, 2015). Teachers can also use other reputable sources on general teaching standards such as those presented in *Enhancing professional practice: A framework for teaching* (Danielson, 2011). Teachers should choose 2 to 3 standards on which to focus (Spicer-Escalante, 2015).

After choosing standards, observer and teacher discuss appropriate goals to make based on these standards. For example, some teachers might want to work on an ACTFL standard related to interpersonal communication (ACTFL, 2015); consequently, they might set a goal that in that lesson they will resist the temptation to lecture so that students have enough time to focus on the interview activity at the end. Other teachers might already do well with designing activities that require students to “exchange information” but instead want to carry out an activity that also requires students to exchange “feelings” and “opinions” (ACTFL, 2015). Once goals are decided, observers can write them at the top of the observation sheet so that they will keep them in mind and focus on these goals in their feedback. They might even number the goals and refer to the goal number in each comment.

The next phase of the pre-observation meeting protocol involves the teacher showing the observer how to write objective, specific, and applicable observation feedback. Observers have a tendency to be critical, subjective, and vague in their feedback (Barber, 1990; Sheal, 1989). Much research has shown the benefits of preparing observers through modeling observation feedback and doing practice observation as part of a training or at least preparation (Dochy, Segers and Sluijsmans, 1999; Kearney, 2013; Natriello, 1990; Sheal, 1989; Topping, 2009). While the concept of a training workshop is out of the scope of this paper, I have adapted the practice of modeling observation feedback to the meeting protocol by having teachers show observers examples of effective and less effective feedback on a sample observation form.

The teachers and observers first read through brief instructions on writing feedback as well as positive examples of feedback. First, they read through the basic steps of writing feedback. In the *first step* of writing feedback, observers are supposed to write down what happened (or the evidence) (Okas, van der Schaaf, & Krull, 2014; Sheal, 1989). For example,
“Teacher used TPR to teach new vocabulary. All students participated actively and were then able to remember and reproduce the vocabulary meaningfully in the next speaking activity”. In the second step, the observer writes a comment to show the connection of what happened to one of the goals (Okas, van der Schaaf, & Krull, 2014) and whether the event did or didn’t lead to the achievement of that goal. For example, “This contributed to goal 3 (Use engaging activities to help students remember vocabulary and then be able to use it in meaningful communication.) Keep on using TPR, it engages this class well!”

For times when observers want to comment on something they would do differently, the form has an example written such as this:

Towards the end of the PowerPoint, some of the students were looking around the room, doodling, and not paying attention. This set you back on goal 2 (Engaging the students through fun, exciting images of the vocabulary.) I might have limited the PowerPoint activity to 5 minutes and then done another type of activity, like true or false, or circle the answer. This would help the students stay focused and require them to start recognizing the forms they have used without reproducing them yet.

Such comments provide specific ideas for improvement that relate to the teacher’s previously selected goals. Teachers and observers could also use the meeting to read and discuss examples of unhelpful feedback. Examples of this type are presented in the Table 3 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement type</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value judgements (Sheal, 1989)</td>
<td>“Teacher is good or bad at classroom management”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback on factors that are beyond teachers’ control (Natriello, 1990)</td>
<td>“You should use the L1 more! The students don’t understand!” (when the school has a strict no L1 policy.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback that doesn’t relate to the teachers’ goals (Okas, van der Schaaf, &amp; Krull, 2014)</td>
<td>“You should have included cultural information” (when this what not one of the teacher’s stated goals for the lesson)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback that is biased or objective (Barber, 1990)</td>
<td>“You still struggle with connecting with students” (Based more on a prior observation rather than the current classroom experience)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, teachers should also emphasize that observers are not obligated to write many comments. The goal of feedback is not to write as many comments as possible. The goal is to provide feedback that is
objective, specific, based on a specific occurrence in the classroom, and connected to teacher’s goals.

ASPECTS OF THE SATS PROCESS THAT MUST BE UNDERSTOOD

Finally, the last crucial component of the pre-observation meeting protocol is that both teachers and observers understand and follow the steps of the SATS process in order. One of the difficult steps can be waiting to receive feedback. The SATS approach system requires that teachers first observe their video and write a reflection before reading the feedback of observers. This step can be difficult to follow, as teachers may be eager to receive feedback immediately after the lesson; nonetheless, following the steps in order is a critical part of the system’s effectiveness. As teachers are required to first observe their own video and then assess it, they are able to critique themselves without the influence of the observer’s opinion (Dinkelman, 2003; Dochy, Segers, & Sluijsmans, 1999). This step, followed by the feedback of observers, allows teachers to gain the benefits of both self-assessment and peer assessment combined (Dochy, Segers, & Sluijsmans, 1999).

The main benefit of the pre-observation meeting is that it allows the proper preparation for self-assessment and peer observation. The meeting enables observers to know what kind of feedback to give, and it requires teachers to play an active role in asking for specific feedback. The meeting also serves as a reminder to follow the SATS steps for maximum effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

This paper has shown how the SATS approach enables teachers to experience benefits and avoid the problems typically associated with observation. It highlights the advantages of the pre-observation meeting and a possible protocol that can be followed during the meeting. As teachers are observed in this manner, they can apply observers’ feedback to a variety of future teaching situations (Dinkelman, 2003). Such observations can help create changes “in programs as well as changes in pedagogy” (Dinkelman, 2003).

While the SATS approach is supported by research, much additional research remains to be done. Studies on the SATS system should be done to show the possible benefits of having a variety of observers vs. the same observer several times (Ho & Kane, 2013; Topping, 2009). Additionally, the use of a post-observation meeting and its potential benefits should
be studied (Sheal, 1989; Topping, 2009). The long term benefits of the SATS system (Natriello, 1990), the length of classroom observations (Ho & Kane, 2013), the inclusion of a resources section (Natriello, 1990), and the effect of bias in observation (Flanders, 1970) are other subjects for future research. As the topic of observation protocol is expanded upon, the necessary improvements in the educational system will be within teachers’ grasps.

REFERENCES


