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COACHING A SECOND LANGUAGE

Master of Second Language Teaching Portfolio

by

Kyle Asa Hatch

A portfolio submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Logan, Utah

2014

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**Abstract**

Coaching a Second Language

By

Kyle Asa Hatch, Master of Second Language Teaching

Utah State University, 2014

Committee Chair: Dr. Maria Luisa Spicer-Escalante

Department: Languages, Philosophy and Communication Studies

In this portfolio the author expresses his views of successful second language teaching. The author's beliefs are centered on the teacher's responsibility to provide an atmosphere in which students are presented material in an effective way, to offer students opportunities to engage with the language, and to understand the learners' unique needs and interests. Also included in the portfolio are three artifacts which illustrate various teaching strategies the author has used to help create this atmosphere. The Culture Artifact explains the use of multimedia authentic texts to teach language and culture. The Language Artifact gives examples of how I have used sociocultural theory to teach abstract concepts, such as reflexive verbs and formal and informal pronoun use in an L2 class. The Literacy Artifact describes a proposed study to research how graphic novels impact internalization of the L2 in a Spanish as a foreign language class. The annotated bibliography covers the topics of culture, motivation, and feedback, which are running themes throughout the portfolio.

(161 pages)

### **Acknowledgments**

I would like to express my gratitude and my appreciation to my Heavenly Father for blessings, assistance, and guidance I have received throughout my education, but especially during my studies in the MSLT. During the times that I thought I didn't measure up to the challenge or that there wouldn't be enough time or money, somehow doors were opened that made it possible. Thank you for placing the wonderful people I have had an opportunity to work with in my path.

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Thank you Dr. Rogers for practicing what you teach. As I reflect back on our interactions your dedication to practicing SCT is what made me first see the possibilities and begin to believe in its practice. Also, I am extremely grateful for your voice in the creation of the portfolio and the positivity, confidence, and time you gave to me.

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## **Introduction**

This portfolio exemplifies what I have learned through study in the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program at Utah State University. My views have been strongly influenced by personal experience, extensive study, research, experimentation with various teaching practices, and my observations of other teachers. A running theme in my portfolio is the effective application of theories and strategies to benefit students in the learning process.

The Teaching Philosophy Statement section of this portfolio is a combination of my personal beliefs and extensive research into second language instruction. I have carefully implemented, experimented with, and reflected on the effectiveness of the material presented in this portfolio. Along with my own attempts to use these teaching strategies, I have observed other teachers and sought to understand what made their teaching successful or unsuccessful. Most importantly to me, I observed how teachers used these strategies to reach specific students in their classes.

The creation of this portfolio has also offered many opportunities for me to observe my own teaching and become more aware of my strengths and weaknesses. This pattern of self-reflection and evaluation has become, and will continue to be, an essential part of my teaching. These self-evaluations combined with valuable instruction and study have resulted in this portfolio, which expresses my current beliefs on what constitutes successful and effective second language teaching.

### **Apprenticeship of Observation**

I come from a monolingual home, in what was a mostly monolingual culture and society in northwestern Montana. The only person I knew who had a language other than English as their first language was a Russian immigrant named Igor who worked in a plant that my dad owned. This lack of linguistic variety negatively influenced my desire to learn a language as a youth, causing me to view language learning as just another hoop I had to jump through to get to college. Igor wasn't much of a talker and Russian was not offered at my high school, so I signed up for Spanish I. I had the attitude that it would be a waste of my time and effort, seeing as how there were no meaningful contexts for me to use the language I would be learning.

I enjoyed my time in my Spanish classes, because the class was set up for coverage not comprehension. That allowed me to complete the bare minimum amount of work so I could receive the bare minimum grade I wanted. I was a Senior in a freshman class and an unspoken deal was quickly formed between the teacher and myself: In exchange for completing work the work on time with the minimum amount of effort required while also intimidating the younger students into acting appropriately in class, I would receive a grade that would be satisfactory to the colleges I was applying to.

As I remember, the activities were mostly quizzes or worksheets with few communicative activities. I quickly developed a system that involved transferring information from the textbook to the worksheet without actually learning, a sort of mental cut and paste. Between these assignments I either worked on Spanish crossword puzzles or coloring worksheets in the back corner of class. The few other memories I have of

Spanish class were of watching/sleeping through Spanish versions of American English movies such as “Men in Black” and “Shrek.”

At the completion of high school I had exactly what I had hoped for; six language credits on my transcript and no actual skill in the language (with the exception of the essential Spanish skill of being able to describe who likes banana bread). Two months after graduation I volunteered to serve as a representative for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and offered to serve anywhere they chose to send me. I was asked to serve in Mexico and would need to learn Spanish.

I was sent to a training center for nine weeks to take a brief course on Spanish. It was there that I began to be motivated to understand such things as verb conjugations or what a verb even was. The focus was a balance between grammar instruction and communication skills. There was a stark difference when compared with my high school education, notably in terms of the presentation of the material, the resources available, and my attitude. There was meaning behind everything we were learning, everything had a context that we were imagining and I was motivated to learn the language so I would survive in a foreign country.

There was much role-playing involved, including situations that allowed me to practice speaking with native Spanish speakers. These opportunities allowed me to assess my abilities and motivated me to improve areas that I had never before thought of as parts of speech: asking questions, using the correct conjugations, figuring out where to put adjectives, etc. Even with these opportunities, I still found it difficult to practice my Spanish with English speakers, when it was so much easier to speak in our native language.

Upon arriving in Mexico I quickly found that my level of Spanish fluency was even below my already low expectations I found this to be true, as that fear of getting lost and dying in a foreign country became more and more real. I soon realized that no one understood me, and I didn't understand anyone else. I also realized that answering "sí" to every question is not an effective way to communicate. The thought crossed my mind many times that I was living some comedic version of *The Truman Show* and that the world was watching me through hidden cameras as people around me made strange noises that weren't even really a language.

Loneliness began to sink in as I wandered in an unknown town listening to everyone converse in some secret code around or at me. I quickly learned that, as Ludwig Wittgenstein said "the limits of my language are the limits of my world" (Wittgenstein, n.d.). This began my thirst for learning the language. Throughout the next two years I was motivated to do anything I could to analyze what people were saying and what was going on. Slowly I began to go from not understanding what was being said, to being able to understand with focus, to understanding and finally speaking an understandable form of Spanish.

Upon my return from Mexico, I enrolled at Utah State University and studied Spanish with a secondary teaching emphasis. It was while studying at USU that I began to more fully see the benefits of learning another language. Johann Wolfgang van Goethe said "Those who know nothing of foreign languages know nothing of their own." (Columbia University Language Resource Center, 2008). As I began to make connections between English and Spanish I found that my vocabulary expanded, my

understanding of grammar improved, and my understanding of social norms and customs was sharpened.

At USU I took a variety of Spanish classes in which students were immersed in the language in the classroom, the professor spoke only Spanish, and the readings also were in Spanish. I began to learn about a variety of topics all in the second language. I worked with students who learned the language in different countries and tried to make connections between cultural and linguistic experiences that each brought to class.

Near the completion of my degree I began my teaching experience as a student teacher at Logan High School. Upon graduation I accepted a position as a Spanish teacher and athletic coach at Rawlins Middle School. I quickly became aware of my weaknesses as a teacher; weaknesses I felt would fix themselves with experience. I also found students with motivations similar to the ones I had while in high school. I saw students who would rather do bookwork than have actual meaningful conversations in Spanish because the bookwork was easier and required much less energy.

After two years of teaching in Rawlins Wyoming I came to USU and began the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program. Here I realized that many of my weaknesses would not have fixed themselves because “experience is insufficient as a basis for development... Experience is the starting point for teacher development, but in order for experience to play a productive role, it is necessary to examine such experience systematically.” (Richards & Lockhart, 1994, p. 4). My time in the MSLT program, along with the job I accepted near the end of the program, teaching at North Davis Jr. High, has allowed me to re-evaluate the way I teach and what makes a great teacher.

These reflections and values have led to the teaching philosophy and artifacts included in this portfolio.



## **Professional Environment**

I teach Spanish as a foreign language, at the secondary level during the school year. I would also like to teach English as a foreign language. Due to my background as a Spanish teacher, my first choice would be to work in a Spanish speaking country. I hope to travel to these foreign countries as a way to (1) benefit the EFL students in those countries, (2) be a lifelong learner and better educate myself about the different cultures and linguistic differences throughout the Spanish speaking world and (3) to bring the cultures of various countries into my classroom to better impact the learning and motivation of my students.

It was traveling to Mexico that caused me to garner a passion for Spanish. As I traveled, I enjoyed the architecture, the culture, and the lifestyle that was quite different from my own. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe allegedly said that “he who speaks only one language sees the world with only one eye,” and my experience living abroad has proven this to be true as it changed the way I see the world. I want to help students see the world with two eyes by building a desire for and confidence in language learning, so that they also can feel comfortable and capable in foreign cultures and languages.

I believe that opening students’ eyes to the various cultures, opportunities and adventures that come from language learning will lead to improved motivation to learn and apply Spanish communicative skills. As their ability and confidence grows, students will see the benefits to knowing a second language and come to see that “one language sets you in a corridor for life. Two languages open every door along the way” (Smith, n.d.). Because the “world is becoming more interdependent, and part of the process of America's continued leadership in the world is going to be our capacity to communicate

across boundaries, across borders,” students can use these open doors to benefit themselves and others in the future and be better equipped to assist the needs of their communities, their nation, and the world.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

## **Introduction**

Numerous factors have impacted my teaching philosophy throughout my life. From my educational background to professional experiences to everyday life teaching opportunities, I have found teaching to be a nearly universal responsibility and opportunity. Through interactions with and observations of successful teachers (and some less successful teachers), I have shaped my teaching philosophy into something to guide me to success.

While teaching at the middle school level, I was jokingly asked by our athletic director if I was a Spanish teacher who coached, or a coach who taught Spanish. I quickly responded that I was a Spanish teacher first and coach second, not wanting to fall into the stereotype that exists of coaches getting teaching jobs and not the other way around. Having studied and analyzed second language acquisition, however, I have found that the methods that are most effective in teaching second languages are similar to the methods coaches use. If I were to repeat that conversation with that athletic director today, I would tell him that I am a Spanish coach.

Early on in the MSLT program I began to see connections between the way I trained athletes on the field and the way students should be trained in the classroom. Many studies have been conducted analyzing the teaching strategies and pedagogies of successful coaches and how those strategies and pedagogies can be integrated in a traditional classroom (For a few examples see: Gallimore & Tharp, 2004; Bloom, Crumpton & Anderson, 1999; Lacy & Darst, 1989). I have reflected on the things I believe to be the basis of successful coaching and combined them with the theories and methods I have learned in the MSLT to formulate my teaching philosophy. There are

three essential things successful coaches and teachers do: 1) Teach comprehensibly; 2) provide meaningful scenarios to practice; and 3) understand learners' needs for success.

### **Teaching Comprehensibly**

In the sports realm, coaches are teachers. Successful coaches teach essential techniques, fundamentals, rules and plays to their athletes. Coaches provide instruction and keys to help athletes stay fundamentally sound and remember responsibilities. This is similar to what teachers do in an L2 classroom. Just as the coach teaches his players the essentials, L2 teachers instruct their students the vocabulary, grammar, and culture so that students can learn how to speak, understand, read and write the language. Good L2 teachers teach students by providing comprehensible input along with tools to help their students work engage with the language.

For input to be comprehensible, “the learner must be able to understand most of what the speaker (or writer) is saying” (Lee & VanPatten, 2003, p. 26). There are many ways that a teacher can help students understand what is being said, such as using familiar vocabulary or gestures to key into a student’s background knowledge (Long, 1983). This allows students to apply their background knowledge so they will be able to understand more of the input (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). To effectively use background knowledge, teachers must also be aware of what background knowledge a student possesses. Instruction that does not connect with background knowledge keeps students from making the connections that are vital to learning. Instruction lacking in background knowledge will also lead to student frustration.

To counter frustration when using the target language in class, teachers should model the language simply. This makes the instruction comprehensible, so students are more comfortable, which helps alleviate student stress. I simplify my use of the target language by using familiar grammar and vocabulary, cognates, connecting with background knowledge, speaking at a slower rate, using short simple syntax, giving the learner a choice of responses, and repeating scenarios (Shrum & Glisan, 2010; Lee & VanPatten, 2003). By using words like cognates that are more familiar to students, I tap into their background knowledge and enforce vocabulary growth in both languages. I try to use the target language in a way that students can connect their background knowledge of English and what we have previously learned in class.

The most successful coaches adapt to their team, trying to magnify strengths and improve weaknesses. I need to do the same and adapt my plans and methodologies to the needs of my students. In the MSLT program, I have studied three language instruction methods that have been used to teach second languages: 1) The Audio-lingual method, 2) Sociocultural Theory, and 3) Communicative Language Teaching. Each method has strengths and weaknesses in its application in a public school classroom. Each method has strategies that, if used appropriately to meet the needs of the students, can give variety to instruction and help each unique student.

In the Audio-lingual method, or ALM, the teacher models the material and focuses on student drills and memorization activities. The perceived positive of this method is the complete control which the teacher can use to avoid student errors (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). Teachers who wish to avoid these errors do not understand that making errors can be a positive thing (as will be discussed later), that errors can be signs

that students are experimenting with the language. Another positive of ALM is that by maintaining control, a teacher can avoid some classroom management issues that can arise with other method.

There are also negatives to ALM. The first negative is that in ALM teachers follow the Atlas model. In the Atlas model, teachers place complete responsibility of language modeling on themselves. They act as the lone transmitter of knowledge, while students are receptors that receive the knowledge broadcasted. While it is true that “students rely on the instructor’s use of language to learn how to process and produce [the target language]” (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro & Mandell, 2001, p. 63), an effective teacher is not the only model of the target language. Effective teachers design activities that allow students to work together and model the language for their classmates. A common saying in education is, “He who does the work, does the learning.” A teacher using ALM is depriving the students of essential opportunities to work and experiment with the target language.

Another negative to ALM is that students focus more on memorizing phrases to be used in specific scenarios not, on the tools they need to create their own unique sentences in a variety of situations. In ALM, students imitate models and complete drills allowing for little originality or experimentation with the language (Ballman et al., 2001). Imitating can lead students to perform without actually thinking of what is being said, they parrot sounds, rather than learning language.

For students to truly understand the target language they must work with language that is meaning bearing, or contains “some message to which the learner is supposed to attend” (Lee & VanPatten, 2003, p. 27). While students are responding and participating

in ALM drills, they are not necessarily interacting or attending to any message, because they can mimic sounds without any mental effort. Research has found that learners under the ALM often struggle to read, write or translate and have tested lower in speaking when compared to other L2 teaching practices (Ellis, 2012). ALM students are more likely to respond with correct sounds but not understand the meaning behind their own utterances because they have not been communicating as they learn the target language, only mimicking the teacher.

Legendary Coach John Wooden was “unabashedly an advocate of drill when it is used properly within a balanced approach that also attends to developing understanding and initiative, and, as recent work suggests, attentional processes,” but Coach Wooden also saw drills as “a means to an end, not an end in itself” (Gallimore & Tharp, 2004, p. 132). ALM drills often fail to develop understanding, initiative, or attentional processes, as students often only mimic without deeper thought about the language being produced.

Students depend on the teacher for modeling. Meaningless modeling is “depriving [students] of that vital element [i.e., meaningful modeling of the language,] in essence starving their language system” (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro & Mandell, 2001, p. 63). ALM, with its unrealistic and overly focused application, forces students to subsist on a restricted linguistic diet that causes their language system to become malnourished and ineffective. Without the needed variety in their linguistic diet and true exercise of their skills, students will struggle to gain the linguistic ability necessary to succeed in a real scenario in the target language.

Current research attempts to solve the problems of ALM with Sociocultural Theory (SCT) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Both of these scenarios



call for a much more social approach to language instruction because “Social interaction is the key to second language acquisition” (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 23). Social scenarios provide unique opportunities for students to communicate in the L2, in a way that allows students to communicate rather than mimic.

CLT argues that a teacher must provide the student comprehensible input for the student to acquire the language. According to Krashen’s Input Hypothesis, the input should be slightly beyond what the learner understands (Krashen, 1982). This allows students to use the comprehensible input to understand the meaning of any gaps in their understanding. “If messages are comprehensible and there are enough of them, grammar is acquired subconsciously . . . and fluency will develop” (Balogh, 2012, p. 48). This subconscious acquisition comes as students subconsciously use their background knowledge and analyze the context of the utterance. Consistent use of the language in the classroom through teacher modeling, allows students more opportunities for incidental learning (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001; Paribakht, & Wesche, 1999). As students begin to understand what is being said through the context of the teachers input, teachers don’t need to spend as much time in explicit instruction, as students subconsciously acquire the language.

According to Krashen’s Monitor Hypothesis students analyze these gaps in understanding by taking the input and running it through an internal “monitor” or editor. “Learning has only one function, and that is as a Monitor, or editor. Learning comes into play only to make changes in the form of our utterance, after it has been "produced" by the acquired system” (Krashen, 1982, p. 18). What a student understands after monitoring the input is intake, or the “language the learner actually attends to and that

gets processed in working memory in some way.” (Lee & VanPatten, 2003, p. 31). As students analyze the input, their intake and the gaps in their knowledge they can begin to fill those gaps as well as create their own utterances, or output.

This process leads students to acquire the language. “Acquisition is defined as a subconscious ‘picking up’ of rules characteristic of the L1 acquisition process. Learning, by contrast, is a conscious focus on knowing and applying rules. Acquisition, not learning, leads to spontaneous, unplanned communication” (Shrum & Glisan 2010, p. 15). For students to acquire the language the target language must be modeled and students must practice the target language in meaning-bearing, contextualized situations. One way that teachers can provide meaning-bearing environments is through the use of Task Based Activities (TBA), which is discussed in the Meaningful Scenarios section of the Teaching Philosophy.

Through the process of receiving comprehensible input and using their intake to create output, the students will acquire the language. For example, students could perform an interview with classmates. As students use the language, they will hear each other use different vocabulary, in a unique context, which gives students opportunities to create output and receive input.

Krashen describes language acquisition as “a subconscious process . . . We are generally not consciously aware of the rules of the languages we have acquired. Instead, we have a ‘feel’ for correctness” (Krashen 1982, p. 8). When teachers model the language, provide comprehensible instruction, and offer opportunities to create output, students are able to fill in the gaps of their leaning and develop their linguistics skills.

An essential part of CLT is that “the teacher uses the target language as the principal means for giving instructions and directions, modeling target language patterns, and giving feedback on student performance. The students likewise learn language both to negotiate classroom interaction with the teacher and other students, and to complete the demands of classroom work” (Richards & Lockhart, 1996, p. 182). One of the benefits of CLT is that it “creates a context in which the foreign language is used to transmit information in real communicative situations and therefore language learning takes place in a more meaningful and efficient way” (Lasagabaster, 2011, p. 7), which provides ample modeling necessary for students. Modeling of the target language by the teacher allows students to process and interact with the language in a variety of scenarios which allows more opportunities for students to acquire the language..

To effectively use this methodology a teacher must be dedicated to its application, carefully modify their input, and be a master motivator. Many beginning students become frustrated when they understand little of what is being said in the class. While it is difficult, teachers must remain dedicated to the use of the target language. Teachers, like coaches are “trying to create . . . a culture. Every time you make an exception, you're breaking that down” (Buha, J, 2013). To overcome this problem, teachers must make their input comprehensible through simplification of the input. As time progresses I also make sure to ask students to reflect on how far they have progressed in the language. This allows students opportunities to see that they are making great strides, even when the day to day grind of language learning makes it seem like they are not progressing.

SCT involves students using physical or psychological tools to mediate their learning and to achieve an objective. Examples of physical tools in an L2 classroom are

pencils, paper, iPads, etc. Examples of psychological tools are symbols, gestures, signs, formula, graphic organizers, etc. Via tools people are able to alter their environment or, in the case of L2 education, the linguistic scenario. As students use these tools they are capable of completing a larger spectrum of objectives (Vygotsky, 1978). As students use these tools to complete these objectives they change their environment, for example many students have come to me and explained how they were able to better navigate a problem faced at a restaurant, on a family trip, etc. Students are able to change the environment and overcome obstacles through the use of the L2 learned in class. These tools and signs are “aimed at mastering, and triumphing over, nature . . . and mastering oneself” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 55). In an SCT classroom, the students use signs and tools to master their environment and themselves through language.

An important aspect of SCT is having students work together in a social setting. The use of tools in social situations allows students to work intermentally and intramentally with the language. Intermental learning involves what is learned from outward social contexts, i.e., activities, practice, etc. These examples allow students the opportunity to engage with the language and accomplish objectives via the tools in various social scenarios. Intramental learning involves taking the experience from the intermental learning and self-regulating the use of the tool. The tool is “turned inward” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 27). This “turning inward” leads to the mastery of the objective via tools and mastering oneself through the ability to appropriately engage with the tools through self-regulation to master the environment.

While working intermentally, the student has the opportunity to work with other students, which can provide opportunities to work in the Zone of Proximal Development

(ZPD). The ZPD involves students reaching their Actual Developmental Level i.e., their level of mastery of a tool or what they can accomplish alone in a critical thinking task (Vygotsky, 1978). This social aspect enables the first student to work beyond the actual developmental level, due to the assistance of the more capable peer. For example, in my Spanish 1 classes we learned about our families. Students were asked to create an imaginary family as a group and give a description of the family members to another group to draw. Each group of students knew more vocabulary than a single student. When the new family description arrived from another group, students were more able to use the vocabulary discussed in the group to accurately illustrate their assigned family member beyond what they could have originally done alone.

Beyond the actual developmental level, the student can no longer self-regulate the tools they are using to achieve the objective. If a student who has reached their Actual Development Level is then assisted by a more capable peer, who can assist in the mediation and regulation of the tools being used, the initial student will be able to perform beyond his/her Actual Developmental Level and work in the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978).

It is important for teachers to observe students working in the ZPD because “the zone of proximal development defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature in an embryonic state” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 87). Working in the ZPD leads students to master the tools needed to reach an objective. As students observe the more capable peer the less capable student can mimic what they see the more capable peer, working intermentally. As the less capable peer mediates the activity, they begin to work intramentally, leading to internalization and

achievement of the desired objective. When students work in the ZPD teachers can observe the fruits of internalization, as students achieve the objectives and master their environment.

Internalization is the “full mastery of a concept . . . through a process of concrete activities” (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008, p. 13). Internalization comes when learners begin to self-regulate the use of tools and can reach the objective through the mastery of these tools. To continue with the example from the family activity above, self-regulation comes as a student recognizes the new vocabulary, uses it to accomplish the task, but also self-regulates its use by imagining how the vocabulary could describe his family/friends. Soon, the student can comfortably use that vocabulary to describe his family/friends without being reminded of the meaning by more capable peers.

When physical and/or psychological tools are mastered through these concrete activities they become a part of the learner (Vygotsky, 1978). A difficulty in the translation of languages is the difficulty to maintain the pragmatic, emotional and multiplicity of meanings in words and phrases. When a student has internalized these words or phrases they not only understand these different meanings, but they feel those differences as well. Thus, as the learner changes their environment through the use of tools, the internalization of those tools changes the nature of the learner.

Observant teachers can gauge the speed at which a student is learning, as well as the direction his/her learning is taking. The ZPD forecasts future student achievement. “What a [learner] can do with assistance today she will be able to do by herself tomorrow” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 87). Teachers who know their students’ Actual Developmental Level can observe what a student can do with assistance in the ZPD and

plan more effective lessons by analyzing student potential, i.e., what they will be able to do tomorrow.

SCT in a language classroom involves teachers assisting students' use of physical and psychological tools, while also creating opportunities for students to socially experiment with the L2 with few teacher-imposed constraints. This freedom to direct learning increases motivation because "the desire to be self-initiating and self-regulating is a prerequisite for any behavior to be intrinsically rewarding, and therefore the essence of motivated action is a sense of autonomy" (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998, p. 44). This freedom for students also places demands on the teacher. SCT allows learners to take their learning in a variety of directions and the teacher must actively adapt to effectively mediate the students' learning, depending on the direction in which students direct their learning.

A common struggle of teachers is that public education demands that teachers state and direct students to reach specific standards and benchmarks. The time constraints and specific goals imposed by state or school district mandates force teachers to try to guide students in a specific direction. It is unfortunate that "educational settings differ from many achievement situations in that most of the decisions and goals are not really the learners' own products but are imposed on them by the system, thus limiting the importance of the 'choice' aspect of motivation" (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998, p. 45). As a teacher, I struggle to motivate myself to teach a state or school district goal when I feel something else is more important. Not surprisingly, students feel frustration and a lack of motivation when they want to direct their learning in a certain direction but are redirected to another focus.

In my classes I try to give students necessary objectives, while also allowing students freedom to direct the activity. For example, students could be asked to design an invitation describing a party celebrating a holiday. Students would be given the requirement to describe what will happen at the party. Students who are interested in singing could describe singing songs at a Christmas party; students who enjoy sports could describe playing football on Thanksgiving. Students meet the requirements by describing the activities, but have the freedom to choose what to describe.

Public education makes it difficult to give students the freedom to explore topics that is necessary for the complete integration of SCT in the classroom. SCT states that “development . . . never follows school learning the way a shadow follows the object that casts it” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 91). To fully apply SCT in a public classroom a teacher has the impossible task of guiding student learning to a target demanded by the state and school district, while also allowing students freedom to pursue their learning in the direction they choose.

Another reason I have found the integration of SCT in the classroom to be difficult is the classroom management issues that arise from large class sizes. This has been made very clear to me as I compare my experience in Wyoming (where class sizes were limited to sixteen) to my experience in Utah (where a class could consist of up to forty students). As students worked together in Wyoming, my focus was more on what pairings/groupings would allow students to grow the most. By designing group activities an student and pairing students based on their strengths and weaknesses, and environment is fostered where students learn from one another, in a cooperative fashion. In Utah, my



focus has been on making pairings that will keep students on task and will facilitate classroom management.

Because of the individual needs of each learner I believe SCT and CLT and to be complimentary theories in teaching a second language and that each has a place in teaching the L2. For the majority of this paper I will use SCT phrases and vocabulary, as I believe that SCT more accurately describes my personal experience in learning a language. A statement made by Nelson Mandela accurately describes my belief in the difference between acquisition and internalization. He said “If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language that goes to his heart” (Mandela, 2008). To me, the CLT idea of acquisition and intake describes a speaker who comprehends what is being said, but SCT’s internalization is something that is not only comprehended, but also felt. It becomes a part of the learner and they understand the language not only on a cognitive level, but feel the meaning of the language at an emotional level.

Though I will use SCT terminology, the strategies used in the other theories are valuable and helpful to students. I do this because “conformity to a method discourages teachers from theorizing their own practice and from experimenting with new possibilities. . . . However, teachers can never just ‘perform’ a method; they must necessarily interpret any externally defined specifications when taking the myriad online decisions that are part and parcel of the process of teaching” (Ellis, 2012, p. 52). Each theory can and should be used in class to adapt to the needs of the students. For example, I believe that CLT should be practiced by the teacher, allowing students to see a model of the language, but I also think it is important to allow students some flexibility to use the

L1, if a question or topic is beyond their developmental level. “Environment and methodology. . . are important factors in determining [student ] attitudes in the FL” (Lasgabaster & Sierra, 2009, p.15). Each theory provides elements a teacher can use to assist students in mediating their learning.

As the teacher it is essential that I model the language while setting the example of expected language use in the classroom (ACTFL 2010). “Teachers need to be explicit about the expected use of Spanish in the classroom and must also set the example” (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001, p. 64), so as the language instructor, I must take the lead in speaking the language. Using the target language to perform the necessary tasks in class provides students a model and helps them understand my dedication and the importance I place on using the language in class.

Using Spanish in class immediately gives purpose to the language, as students will need to speak and understand to communicate with me in the classroom. My use of the language is similar to the conditioning athletes do during practice. The best conditioning practices are used throughout a practice session. My use of the language throughout the class period gives students the linguistic conditioning they need to build up the mental stamina needed for learning a language. Because “creating and sustaining meaning over several sentences requires so much mental and linguistic energy that learners do not have enough left over to monitor the language that they produce” (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001, p. 13), it is essential that teachers help their students get the “linguistic conditioning” necessary to be successful.

The ability to see the printed word is beneficial to many language learners. Along with the printed word, research has shown benefits to using visual images to work with

L2 reading and writing, especially with adolescents (Edwards, 2009). Combining the written word with the physical tool of illustrations assists students to internalize vocabulary and grammar and other aspects of the language, both cultural and linguistic. These tools can be offered by the teacher or developed by the student in the form of graphic novels or other similarly illustrated materials. Research has shown that student creation of graphic novels aids student writing (Carter, 2007). Illustrated material can also be created by students and, though they may be extremely simple, can be shared with other students to help internalize vocabulary and grammar and show the use of culturally appropriate actions (Vassilikopoulou, Retalis, Nezi & Boloudakis, 2010). Students can present and discuss their created material, which creates opportunities for students to work in the ZPD. It has also been recognized that exposing students to print and providing opportunities to interact with the two languages increases biliteracy development (Igoa, 1995; Reyes, Kenner, Moll & Orellana, 2012).

I have enjoyed using graphic novels and other illustrated materials because they are a quick way to check comprehension for two or more students once the graphic novel has been shared and it allows students to correct each other. For example, if a student writes that the character in their graphic novel has long hair, but then draws short hair, the reader will often recognize the error and help correct their classmate. These situations have happened multiple times in my classes, and allow for students to review many parts of the second language, both linguistic and cultural. In the Literacy Artifact of this Portfolio I have further developed my ideas about the use of graphic novels.

There are many other tools I can provide students to help them engage with the language, for example movement from abstract to concrete (MAC) pedagogy and tool-for

result pedagogy, which are discussed more in depth in the Language Artifact of this portfolio. In these pedagogies students work with physical or visual models to help students materialize and verbalize different tools. This helps students learn abstract concepts in a language (such as grammar rules) and apply them in concrete situations (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008). Students use “theoretical concepts as symbolic tools for carrying out concrete practical activities” (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008, p. 286). Students create their own visual representations of the theoretical concepts in the language using the physical/visual models. As students refer back to the models for assistance, the tools mediate their learning and assist their use of the target language in activities. These pedagogies are discussed more in detail in the Language Artifact of this Portfolio

### **Providing Meaningful Scenarios**

Teachers need to be sure the students have meaningful opportunities to use physical and psychological tools to mediate their learning. For instruction to be meaningful there must be some message or task that students must engage in (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). Teachers sometimes get caught up in having students work for the sake of keeping students busy. Meaningful activities are always a focus for coaches. To prepare athletes for the next game coaches focus on making practices as realistic and meaningful as possible. Players perform drills, walk through plays, etc., but the end goal is always focused on a “live” session of practice, where players go full speed and try to implement the plays, drills, and skills learned in a realistic game scenario. I try to teach with the same mentality.

A similar teaching method to the coaching example above is using Task Based Activities (TBA) (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001). In TBA the teacher guides the class through small activities that build to a greater, all-encompassing activity. When using TBA the teacher explicitly states the end goal of the activities, and then breaks that end goal into small manageable tasks (Ballman et al., 2001). The students then practice these communicative tasks building in complexity until they are able to complete the end task which incorporates the tools practiced into a final cumulative activity.

When teachers utilize TBAs, they become less of a lecturer and more of an architect. Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell (2001), explain the role of a teacher as an architect when they state, “The role of the teacher is not to do the actual construction – that is the students’ job – but rather to design the meticulous, multifaceted plans that will guide the construction work. . . The responsibility of the students is to participate fully in the activities. This includes being aware of the goals and objectives that underlie each activity and actively trying to learn as much as possible while engaging in the activities” (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001, p. 8). An example of a TBA could involve the preparatory activities of paying a bill, learning cultural eating customs, and making requests that lead into a larger restaurant activity where the skills learned from these smaller activities are combined and used in a larger, more realistic scenario.

TBA has many benefits. One is that when “students find the course interesting and relevant to their needs and if they experience success and satisfaction in that success, they are motivated to participate and to persist” (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001, p. 15). TBAs are also helpful as they keep students from losing sight of the true

purpose behind the smaller, preparatory activities. By designing TBAs teachers keep students constantly focused on the end goal, which helps other activities and tasks that they perform stay meaningful. TBA creates a scenario for which teachers can give clear goals to the students and those goals are exciting and real, not just a grade in a grade book. These meaningful goals increase student motivation. (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998).

A task should be prepared so there is not one specific way to complete the task. This affords students more freedom to direct their learning in the way they prefer, which is essential in SCT. The idea of giving the learner more control and say is also important in motivational theory. “Goal theories propose that human action is spurred by purpose, and for action to take place, goals have to be set and pursued by choice” (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998, p. 44). When students make their own choices their commitment to achieving those goals will be greater than when goals are assigned by a teacher.

The process of learning a language is difficult, and many students may struggle and lose the desire to continue to expend the mental energy necessary to mediate the use of tools. Teachers using TBA must be creative and come up with activities and topics that increase student interest and motivation. In my experience creative TBAs result in higher levels of engagement by students throughout a unit. I believe this to be because “students who regularly engage in carefully constructed task-based activities learn how to listen, to trust their ability to extrapolate and form hypotheses, and to use what they know in novel and creative ways” (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001, p. 15). These skills and scenarios help students to work together intermentally, mediating their language use via each other, while also providing a good foundation for intermental activity, which leads to self-regulation and development. As these tools become

internalized, students can take those tools and use them in the cumulative scenario. These cumulative scenarios also help motivate students because they know there will be a concrete situation needing an application to the material they are learning in the preparatory activities.

I want all the activities I am doing in the classroom to be as meaningful as possible because meaningful scenarios increase the value students put on the material, which improves student motivation (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998). While creating realistic scenarios can be difficult, if not impossible to do every day in a second language classroom, teaching without some semblance of a real situation is meaningless and ineffective.

The most important way to create a realistic, meaningful environment is to incorporate culture. “Foreign language learning is foreign culture learning, and, in one form or another, culture has, even implicitly, been taught in the foreign language classroom” (Thanasoulas, 2001, p. 2). Language and culture are intertwined in a way that makes teaching the one without the other hollow instruction. Attempting to separate culture from language instruction robs language of its life. Learners have an innate understanding of this concept because “for foreign language students, language study seems senseless if they know nothing about the people who speak it or the country in which it is spoken. Language learning should be more than the manipulation of syntax and lexicon” (Peck, 1978, p. 3). If teachers separate or ignore culture in the classroom, they teach their students code, not language.

Culture has been defined in many ways. Today, culture is viewed as having two parts: *Capital C* culture (art, architecture, literature, etc) and *small c* culture (everyday

living and interactions) (LoCastro, 2012). When culture is explicitly taught in a L2 class, it has historically been the *Capital C* variety. It is often easier to integrate through pictures, books, etc., whereas *small c* culture, the “patterns of living and total way of life” (Brooks, 1968, p. 204) is more difficult to introduce to students. Researchers have expressed the need for more *small c* culture as it is the culture that novice students first interact with, for example culturally acceptable greetings, compliment responses, etc.

“Beginning foreign language students want to feel, touch, smell, and see the foreign peoples and not just hear their language” (Peck, 1978, p. 11). Students seem to gravitate toward cultural differences, and those cultural elements make the scenarios authentic and meaningful. Without meaningful and authentic scenarios, instruction provides an inaccurate fool’s-gold version, of the language. “The traditional teaching of foreign languages has been criticized for not providing sufficient input, an input that in addition is too often inauthentic, functionally restricted and therefore lacking a real communicative function. This obviously may have an impact on students’ motivation, especially in the long run” (Lasagabaster, 2011). While it is impossible for students to truly bring the target culture into their classroom daily, teachers must find ways to provide meaning and culture in their classroom.

Because language and culture are so intertwined, the use of the language in the classroom can lead to opportunities to teach culture. In my Spanish classes the simple question of “how do you spell..?” has often led to the instruction on the Spanish phrase “*b de burro ó v de vaca.*” My students are often interested in why that is said, why it needs to be said, and how frequently it is used. This is a basic example of everyday sayings that students would not understand if culture was ignored in class.



This example also illustrates what Krashen proposes as the best and most enjoyable method to acquire a language: Students using the language as it is meant to be used, for communication (Krashen, 1982). When we teach the L2 in the classroom, the focus must always be that students have ample opportunities to use and experiment with the language. “Learning to communicate is recognized as a principal goal of language learning and, at the same time, by communicating students learn the language” (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001, p. 8). These social interactions provide opportunities for students to work with other students and engage with the language.

When students use the target language, teachers must lead students in the ZPD. When students try to work beyond their Actual Developmental Level they need assistance to master the new tools. In these instances, students can “use [the] mediator as a resource” (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008, 44). Use of the mediator as a resource helps because “the mediator’s responsibility for interpreting a learner’s behavior in order to provide appropriate mediation is distributed between the mediator and the learner (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008, 44). One way I apply this is through negotiation of meaning. Negotiation of meaning involves “exchanges between learners and their interlocutors as they attempt to resolve communication breakdown and to work toward mutual comprehension” (Shrum & Glisan 2012, p. 21). To effectively negotiate the meaning with a student I avoid the natural urge to give students the answer and try to negotiate the meaning with the student. Other tools, such as visual aids, gestures, or any other means of communication can be integrated, with the exception of giving the learner a translation of the needed word or phrase. Through use of the mediator as a resource strategies, I can

provide an activity where students can mediate and self-regulate, which are essential for internalization and development in the L2.

It is important to avoid giving students the answer because “L2 speakers also need to develop their ability to solve communication problems during an interaction. When they ask the other person to repeat an utterance, say it more slowly, or to express it in a different way, they are engaging in negotiation of meaning” (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001, p. 5). These are skills that students need to navigate a conversation in the target language. Negotiation of meaning and using the mediator as a resource also allows students to engage with other aspects of the language they have already internalized. As students work together, I observe students and provide assistance as needed. I also take mental notes about student needs and make plans to help meet those needs.

Another means to engage my students in the language meaningfully is authentic text. Authentic texts are “written and oral communications produced *by* members of a language and culture group *for* the members of the same language and culture group” (Shrum & Glisan 2010, p. 85). Authentic texts come in varying formats, and so there are many options to choose from for meeting a specific lesson goal. Whatever the chosen objective is when using authentic texts students understand that the material they are reading is meaningful and real, not something fake and created solely for them to fill in a blank with an answer. They recognize the validity of the source.

I begin class by having authentic music from the target culture playing in the background as students come into class. A teacher can begin class with a short exercise for which students describe the music and discuss where they think it is from. In my

experience these brief exercises discussing the music are not planned or led by me. It seems that while students can see the connection with the music and the class, they do not view the discussion as another boring L2 exercise. Students describe the mood of the song and often ask about what is being said. As a teacher I guide the discussion so students explain how the music makes them feel, to imagine how people would move if they were dancing, or to imagine what the song is about. This then allows me to expand on the cultural element in a meaningful way that students are motivated to learn about because it is something real.

Another authentic text I use as a physical tool is multimedia. Multimedia has many benefits for students and teachers. Multimedia allows students to see realistic conversations and cultural customs performed by native speakers. Teachers can focus on a specific cultural or linguistic element and use the multimedia as a model so students can see examples at real speed and with real accents. The medium of multimedia I prefer is commercials because their short duration works well for all age groups, their basic purpose is to engage the viewer and they are often infused with humor which can engage students who struggle with the daily grind of speaking a second language and keep students motivated (Chen & Oller, 2005; Skirble, 1977).

A benefit teachers have from multimedia is that its digital nature makes it quick and easy to use in class. With a little preparation teachers no longer have to waste class time trying to find the exact spot they want to show the class as was needed with previous tapes and other materials. Due to technological advances, finding authentic multimedia is becoming easier and easier through the internet using sites such as YouTube. In the

Culture Artifact of this Portfolio I have further explained my ideas about the use of multimedia.

### **Learners Needs for Success**

While “the responsibility for learning lies with the students” (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001, p. 8), it is my job to observe what students need to be confident and motivated to put in the needed work to be successful. Successful teachers inspire confidence *from* their students as well as *in* their students. My students need to believe that I am a capable instructor and that my goal is for them to be successful. The fastest way to prove my capability as an L2 speaker is by using the target language close to 100% of the time in class. To prove my capability as a teacher, I need to coach my class in a way that meets my students’ learning needs.

Teachers should foster an environment where students expect to be successful because expectancy of success in a task increases motivation (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998; Dörnyei, 2002). One obstacle to this in a second language classroom is fear of errors. As students experiment with the language, errors will happen. It is the job of the teacher to help students understand that errors are normal, inevitable, expected and more importantly, “a sign that learning is taking place right before their eyes” (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 23). When students understand that errors do not mean they are unsuccessful, they will be less afraid to experiment, which will lead to higher levels of motivation and learning. Mike Krzyzewski said, “I had a coach who told me I was much better than I thought I was, and would make me do more in a positive sense. He was the first person who taught me not to be afraid of failure . . . he kept pushing me to be better. If success or talent were on floors, maybe I saw myself on the fifth floor. He always saw

me on the twentieth floor. As a result, I climbed more floors when I was with him” (Krzyszewski, 1997, p. 9). By helping students understand that errors are a normal part of learning, students will be more willing to experiment with the language, which leads to more internalization of the language.

Use of TBA is beneficial in alleviating the fear of errors because they “have a purpose over and above the pedagogical goal of practicing particular linguistic forms,” and student “attention during the activities is focused primarily on precision of meaning, rather than on accuracy of form” (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001, p. 7). This allows teachers to focus on the meaning of what is being said and ignore their own fear of student errors, while students can focus less on their errors and be more accepting of feedback from their instructors.

When errors are accepted as students experiment with the language, students must still receive effective feedback. One benefit to collaborating with fellow students is that feedback can come from fellow students. This is beneficial, as students may assume that feedback from a teacher is a sort of negative grade, but feedback from a peer can be viewed as friendly assistance. Student to student feedback can be incorporated in the presentational, interpersonal and presentational modes. It can also be received during oral tasks (conversations, presentations, etc.) and written tasks (letters, blogs, etc.) (Read, 2013).

The focus for teachers should be on supportive, meaning-focused feedback, not correction. In fact, “error correction should be minimal in the classroom” (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 15). Error correction, the teacher providing the right answer, is a quick fix. It is similar to feeding quarters into a parking meter. It is quick and buys a teacher a

little more time before more is needed. Feedback on the other hand “is intended to modify [the student’s] thinking or behavior for the purpose of improving learning” (Shute, 2008, p. 154). While it is a natural reaction for teachers and some students to want immediate and explicit correction, this can be harmful to the learning process. Instead of providing answers, teachers should provide feedback “which provides comments and suggestions to help guide students in their own revision and conceptualization” (Shute, 2008, p. 157). Teacher feedback does not result in the teacher regulating a student’s language; it results in providing more opportunities for students to engage with tools

To provide effective feedback and allow the student to work in the ZPD, the teacher (as the more capable peer) must identify where the error is coming from. Then they assist the student to mediate the needed tools. Errors may happen because there is a gap in a student’s understanding, if a student is overwhelmed with the task, or the student may be using the physical or psychological tools ineffectively (Shute, 2008). If a teacher does not take time to accurately identify the problem, feedback may result in providing students with the incorrect tool. As teachers take time to recognize the problem and provide effective feedback, students can use the feedback as a tool to properly mediate their learning.

Effective feedback also involves the teacher asking follow-up questions. Asking for more information or details allows the students to push themselves as far as they can regulating their language and then begin to work in the ZPD with the teacher. This method turns what could be a quick, question-response interaction into one through which the student mediates and self regulates their language, which leads to development.

It also leads to increased language use by the learner, more negotiation of meaning, and better understanding by the learner that the teacher is invested in their learning.

Teachers must not forget that they teach students, not classes or subjects. Teachers must be cognizant of their students' individual needs. But how do teachers recognize what individual students need to succeed? In my experience the best way to understand a student's needs is to know that student.

Vince Lombardi said, "Coaches who can outline plays on a black board are a dime a dozen. The ones who win get inside their player and motivate" (Hutchinson & Lawrence, 2011, p. 72). This applies equally to teaching. A teacher is not someone who can stand up in front of a group and recite grammar rules or has vocabulary words memorized. A teacher who truly teaches is someone who provides the necessary tools and opportunities to experiment for students to internalize tools. How can I truly get "inside ... and motivate" if I don't truly know who my students are?

Because emotions are an often overlooked part of learning it is essential for teachers to understand what forces are at play in students' lives, both inside as well as outside the classroom (Swain, 2013). Research has found that "students' subjective ZPDs at any particular time are affected by many different positive and negative factors: 1) Physical and emotional – Hunger, anxiety, fear, confidence, among many; 2) consequences of living in a loving home as opposed to not; 3) recent interactions with peers; and 4) the way that interactions in sociocultural environments are appropriated and internalized" (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008, p. 117). Because this list cannot be all inclusive, effective teachers prepare themselves for the realities students face by developing an understanding of what challenges are common in the community. A problem such as the

death of a family member or friend, domestic violence, or malnutrition will always take precedence over the target language. If situations outside of the classroom hinder learning or lead to a discipline problem, it is doubtful a trip to the office or any of my language teaching theories or strategies will resolve the issue.

“When students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, struggles and growth, teachers come to understand them more profoundly as writers and human beings with different experiences, interests, learning styles, systems of meaning and ZPDs and can, therefore, help them succeed academically and socially” (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008, p. 125). To help students feel comfortable, I establish open lines of communication between my students and me so that students can come to me and express ideas, experiences, concerns or problems. This communication builds the foundation of relationships. Through communication I show an interest in who my students are. This includes their names, their personalities, interests out of class, what is happening in their lives, and showing genuine concern, etc. I have found that patiently withholding judgment of adolescent behaviors and focusing on the student as a person has afforded good relationships that initially seemed unlikely, if not impossible.

I get to know my students by showing support and attending outside events, such as plays, athletic events, choir or band concerts, club activities, dances, or possibly religious or community events that students are involved in. “Self-worth theory claims that the highest human priority is the need for self-acceptance and to maintain a positive face” (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998, p. 44). When teachers then take the time to mention to students at a later time that they appreciated what the students did in their activities, this helps create a bond of respect and trust between students and teacher that quickly carries



over to the classroom and greatly influences students' in-class motivation. I have worked at a school where I have been extremely involved in students' extra-curricular activities and a school where I have not. Between the two experiences I have noticed that the relationships I had with students was much better when I was more involved.

These extracurricular activities also help teachers understand who their students are, their goals, their interests, and their beliefs. This helps a teacher focus their teaching method because, "Just as teachers' belief systems influence how they go about teaching, so learners' belief systems influence how they conceptualize learning and the way their interpret learning within the classroom context" (Richards & Lockhart, 1996, p. 58). When we understand exactly what motivates our students, we can plan in a way that makes our instruction and class time more effective.

I have found it useful to ask for student input on what they would like to learn in the target language. Motivation will increase when students feel they have a say in what they are learning, as it gives them a chance to mold the class to meet their specific needs (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998). "If the teacher fosters interest and perception of relevance by assuming a collaborative (rather than authoritative) stance and fosters success by presenting and modeling tasks well and giving ample feedback, then students again are motivated to participate fully and to continue language study" (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001, p. 15). This collaborative stance requires flexibility by teachers in planning, especially in public schools with a set curriculum. I strive to adapt the curriculum to integrate student interests as much as possible.

To have time to cover diverse student interests, teachers need to be efficient in their instruction. To help students understand the material that needs to be covered,

teachers need to state goals. Every successful coach has a game plan before every game. In these game plans, coaches focus on aspects of the game they believe are critical for winning the game. Coaches will spend all week reminding players of the importance of succeeding in battles such as turnovers, rebounds, free throws, and penalties. The coach makes absolutely sure that the players are aware of the goals, understand their importance, and believe in the goals. Likewise, teachers should have a goal before every lesson. Unlike coaches, teachers are not always direct with their students in explaining the class or activity goals. If goals are not expressly stated, students might know what to do, but they may have a different goal from what the teacher has (Richards & Lockhart, 1994).

One of the largest differences between a coach and a teacher is that coaches are almost guaranteed to have the same goal as their athletes. The goal is to win, and any other goals the coach has should be directed toward that overarching goal. Teachers on the other hand teach students who may not have similar goals. One of the most overlooked aspects of goal setting as a teacher is getting students to believe in the stated goals. “Goals . . . do not directly determine action but are an indispensable step in the motivated behavioral sequence” (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998, p. 49). A goal is just a piece of the motivational puzzle. A student who is not committed to the goal will not put in the required effort to reach the goal.

How can a teacher set goals that meet state/school district demands and still allow for a variety of student interests? One way is to have goals that are more general and overarching. This allows students the freedom to direct their learning in a way that interests them, an important part of SCT as well as motivational theory (Dörnyei. & Ottó

1998). Research has also found greater student achievement when students set and monitor their own goals (Wilson, 2011). For example instead of stating the goal as, “you will know how to introduce yourself in 3 different ways,” a teacher could state that the goal is to “be able to introduce yourself.” The teacher could then teach three different styles of introductions and provide opportunities in class for students to introduce themselves. This goal and course of action focuses more on the skill and less on specifics and more on the knowledge and skills students possess (Bergman, 2010). This would allow students the freedom to choose and focus on one form of greeting, but become familiarized with other forms as well.

When course and activity goals are expressly described, students see how smaller goals build to the larger goals. This gives purpose and importance behind daily goals and the material being taught. The use of other tools such as rubrics, stamp sheets (a list of goals that students can mark when they believe they have mastered a goal) and similar materials help learners understand the class goals as well as track their progress. These materials assist students’ learning because they “show learners what good performance ‘looks like’ even before they perform an assessment task (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 412). Expressing these goals also allows students to self reflect on their own learning and take increased ownership and responsibility for their learning.

Goals also help teachers teach for comprehension of the target language, not coverage. Teachers see the timeline provided by the state/school district/textbook and sometimes allow that to dictate their teaching more than the needs of their students (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). The moment teachers begin to say, “even though you don’t understand this, we have to move on,” they begin setting their students up for failure.

When teachers move too quickly they do, not allow sufficient time for students to work in the ZPD and internalize tools. Teachers are essentially withholding future background knowledge a student will need to accomplish tasks and internalize future material.

The politics of schools, such as “pay for performance” measures and high-stakes testing, typically motivate teachers to teach to the test and cover the material that their students will be tested on, while hoping that their students can leave their classroom having some ability to comprehend the language (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001). If teachers can organize the curriculum appropriately, set goals, model the target language and create effective opportunities for students to mediate tools, they do not need to worry about what their students will be tested on, because students will have familiarity with a variety of skills and topics and will be prepared for the test.

### **Conclusion**

As a coach, it is easy to evaluate how the team did during the games. Coaches see a scoreboard; they are given statistics, film and rankings. Coaches meet with their assistant coaches and discuss adjustments that need to be made based on their observations. For L2 teachers, there is no real scoreboard. The statistics teachers use are very generalized, similar to a game score, not nearly as specific as the statistics of yards, turnovers, free throw percentage, etc., that coaches have access to. And while an L2 teacher could discuss their classes with other teachers and gain valuable insight on the students and general teaching methods, my experience has been that I am the only language teacher. This does not provide me with many “assistant coaches,” or true peers to share L2 teaching ideas with. The reality for me is that the only people who truly know if I am a successful teacher are the students and I.

My goal as an L2 coach is to assist my students to grow in their ability to use the L2 through teaching comprehensibly, providing meaningful scenarios, and understanding student needs. To teach comprehensibly I must model the language simply, allowing students opportunity to integrate their background knowledge. I also need to research and experiment with different ways that students can create and use physical tools, such as graphic organizers, models, gestures, etc. By effectively doing this, students have the physical and psychological tools they need to mediate and dictate the direction of their learning.

Meaningful scenarios give the class more meaning, context, and help students use the language realistically, which provides purpose and direction for students. By providing meaningful scenarios for students through negotiation of meaning and authentic texts, students will be exposed to the target culture. This provides the life and soul to the language, which will help motivate students. By coupling this cultural knowledge with TBA, students have more effective opportunities to properly mediate and self regulate their learning by working in the ZPD. The internalization that comes from these opportunities will benefit students not only in the classroom but in the opportunities that arise to use the target language outside of the classroom.

By learning and remembering my students' individual needs for success I earn their confidence as a teacher. Through this we become partners in the learning process. As I help students understand errors are a part of the process of learning a second language their courage and desire to engage with the language will increase. By providing instructive feedback, I keep student morale and motivation high, while also providing a more capable peer for students to work with.

As a teacher I have high expectations for myself as well as my students. As I wrestle with the challenges that come in integrating these pieces of my teaching philosophy, students will recognize my commitment and dedication to them and their learning. By implementing these three points of my teaching philosophy in the classes I teach, I can do my part to coach my students to success.

## REFLECTIONS ON TEACHING OBSERVATIONS

My TPS states that the three aspects of teaching I view to be critical are teaching comprehensibly; providing meaningful scenarios; and understanding learners' needs for success. I have had the opportunity to formally observe six classes taught for fifty minutes each in the target languages of Spanish, Arabic, and Portuguese.

The makeup of these classes was that the majority of these teachers were MSLT students who had been teaching for three years or less. I observed teachers who were native speakers of the target language, as well as teachers who were teaching their second language. The majority of the students attending the classes were young, college age adults.

In my observations I saw many excellent examples of these principles in action, which have strengthened my belief in their importance. I have also observed classes where these practices were half-heartedly implemented, oftentimes providing none of the benefits which these practices can provide.

### **Teaching Comprehensibly**

Teaching comprehensibly was the area in which I was most impressed with the teachers I observed. I witnessed many opportunities to interact with the language, through illustrated visuals, physical action and through the effective use of CLT. I was most impressed by teachers' abilities to provide scaffolding by adapting and simplifying their language through gestures, visuals, and whatever other means were available. The teachers I observed seemed well prepared and ready to adapt their instruction as needed to benefit the students.

The one negative I saw to teaching comprehensively was the repetitive nature of what I observed in many classes. In many classes I observed, students were shown a



PowerPoint slideshow that had vocabulary or grammatical structures on it for students to learn. In some classes, especially when I visited near the end of the term, my observation of the students told me that this practice had grown stale with many of them. I attribute this mostly to the inexperience of many teachers, combined with the many things asked of them in their academic and personal lives.

I think this is one of the great strengths of my TPS. I have researched and experimented with multiple ways to present the material comprehensibly, whether through 3D modeling, graphic novels, creating their own tools, commercials, etc. These all provide opportunities for students to engage with the material in a way that is different from a PowerPoint presentation day after day. My TPS demands that teachers look for unique and varying ways to present the material to reach all students as well as keep them engaged.

### **Providing Meaningful Scenarios**

As I observed classes I saw many attempts to integrate what was learned in graduate courses to provide meaningful scenarios for learners to engage with the language. Nearly all the teachers observed used information gap activities to allow students to practice what had been taught. Again, teachers were well prepared and obviously spent the necessary time preparing these activities. I was impressed with the creativity teachers were able to integrate into these activities to keep them fresh.

Unfortunately this was the area of my observation I felt was most lacking. I never once observed the use of authentic texts in a classroom. The lack of creative activities I feel really impeded the classroom dynamic the teachers were trying to create. For

example, in one class I noticed that while one teacher was trying to use CLT by speaking the language throughout class, the class did not feel like a CLT class. In this class, the teacher provided the material and students were expected to receive the knowledge. The activities were lacking in creativity and opportunities for students to creatively engage with the language. I later observed this teacher's preparation for class and identified it as one of the biggest problems, as they began preparing for class only a half an hour before class. I believe this lack of preparation was observed by the students and carried over to their in class attitude. In fact the husband of one of the students pulled me aside and confided to me her unhappiness in the class because she was learning the language, but not how to *use* the language.

Again, I feel my teaching philosophy provides multiple strategies to help students engage with the language in creative ways (creation of tools, authentic texts, etc.). After observing information gap activities in so many of the classes I observed, the need to constantly be seeking creative activities for students to interact with the language. When the activities become repetitive students lose interest.

### **Learners Needs for Success**

Another area that impressed me from my observations was the teachers' interest in their students as people. Most teachers seemed to have very professional, yet friendly relationships with their students which led to a positive atmosphere in the class and an atmosphere where students believed they could succeed. Teachers knew students' names, and I observed multiple conversations about more personal details about a students' life. I also observed teachers understanding which students needed more

personal, individual instruction as they worked to assist specific students while they worked on classroom activities. I was impressed in nearly all the classes I observed with the positive atmosphere teachers had cultivated in their classrooms.

The one negative experience I observed with students' needs for success happened while students were practicing written work. While the students worked the teacher wandered around class making unrelated comments, many of them negative in nature. As this was happening I began to observe the students in the room. There were many scowls, clenched jaws, comments muttered under their breath, etc. I was surprised to see a teacher act in such a way in class and also be so clueless to the influence it was having on the class' performance and the relationship students had with the teacher. One student later confided to me that they felt their L2 ability dropped when talking with this teacher because of the fear they felt when interacting with this specific teacher.

Understanding individual student needs is an essential piece of my TPS because my TPS emphasizes that teachers and students need to be teammates and work together towards similar goals. There must be a mutual respect between teacher and student for any teaching method or classroom activity to reach its full potential. The last example given is a stark contrast to the values and techniques my TPS espouses. Maybe the teacher was having a bad day or having personal problems outside of the classroom. One of the most difficult things a teacher faces is sometimes separating classes and the outside world. Teachers must work to make sure that a negative experience in one class does not carry over in the teacher's attitude with another.

In general, the successful classes I observed integrated aspects of my TPS. Some teachers integrated aspects of my TPS far more effectively than I myself do. The classes that seemed least successful were lacking in many of the aspects discussed in the TPS. My observations have strengthened my belief that my TPS focuses on some of the most fundamental tenants to second language teaching.

## TEACHING VIDEO REFLECTION

## **Introduction**

I recorded a fifty minute Spanish 1010 class that met on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The class was composed of mostly freshman and sophomores from different backgrounds and Spanish proficiency levels. Most students had taken Spanish in high school and there were even a few who had opportunities to use the language more frequently others due to their background and previous/current opportunities for interaction with Spanish speakers.

As I reviewed my teaching video, I observed good examples of my Teaching Philosophy in action. I also observed areas where I strayed from doing the things I believe will bring me success. This was an effective exercise for me to reflect my dedication to my Teaching Philosophy. I believe it strengthened my resolve to apply the points made in my Teaching Philosophy, as the aspects of the lesson I was most disappointed with were times that I abandoned my Teaching Philosophy. I came to see the pieces of my philosophy as ingredients in a recipe. While each was important, if they are not used together properly, the result is not something students want to eat/internalize. The three main ingredients of my Teaching Philosophy are: 1) Teach comprehensibly; 2) provide meaningful scenarios to practice; and 3) understand learners' needs for success.

## **Teaching Comprehensibly**

My presentation of the material I felt was average. I effectively simplified my modeling of the language and students were able to understand and complete tasks without excessively struggling to understand the activity or the material being taught.

The class showed that I had set the expectation and example that the target language would be used in class by myself and the students. As I broke down the video, I approximated that students were using the language with each other for twenty nine minutes (64% of class time), while I explicitly taught new material for twelve minutes (27% of class time). The rest of class time (5 minutes or 9% of class time) was spent with administrative tasks, modeling activities, answering questions, etc. The activities provided students with opportunities to experiment with the language and freedom to pursue their own interests within the activity, which is essential in SCT and CLT theory.

While I presented the material comprehensibly, it lacked culture and real context. There was no use of graphic novels, multimedia, or any other kind of hands on learning. I feel like my presentation of the material was more focused on acquisition than internalization. My goal was for students to understand the concept, but my lifeless presentation of the material did not provide a tool that students would willingly internalize and make a part of themselves. The result was instruction and a class that was average, lifeless even.

### **Provide Meaningful Scenarios**

The most positive aspect of my teaching that I observed was that I provided students with opportunities to use the language. In the lesson I provided opportunities for students to interview one another so they could later introduce one another to their class mates. As I worked with students, I pushed them to negotiate the meaning with each other to make the activity a little more realistic.

This was the section of my lesson I was most disappointed in. As was previously mentioned, there were no multimedia, graphic novels, or anything else to provide culture to attach to the language. I fell into the trap of assigning activities without a real purpose or goal in mind. I convinced myself before class that the plan followed a TBA model, with the presentation of their partner as the culminating activity. In reality, the class did not have the real direction that TBAs provide and the activities ended as a series of hoops students jumped through.

I believe the class' reliance on the textbook for vocabulary, and homework, coupled with inexperience with such reliance on the textbook led me to depend too much on the textbook. In my previous and current teaching experiences, the textbook has been used as a resource for organizing vocabulary, but not its presentation. The students I teach do not have textbooks or homework. This class was organized in a way that students had to complete a large number of exercises in the book for homework and to help them feel prepared for that I drifted from TBA and focused more on the completion of homework tasks. This is unfortunate, as I believe it draws the attention of the teacher and the class away from using the language in meaningful interactions and more towards task completion in the homework.

### **Learners Needs for Success**

This was the most successful part of the lesson. Watching the video I could see that students understood that I was there for them and the relationship we fostered really shone through. Upon reviewing the video, I can remember different student personalities, needs, and problems outside of class. That is what was most gratifying to



me. I can look at the video months later and describe personal problems, goals, and other personal details about my students.

The negative I did observe of this section of my Teaching Philosophy again played a part in my lifeless instruction, my lack of an objective. Observing the video, I'm not sure what my specific goal was for the class. If I was to interview students as they left and asked them to name a goal, I would have received many different results. I am sure they could describe what they did, but I am not sure they could describe their progress to a goal. To fix this, I need to continue my practice of stating my goal to myself and my students, and then planning activities to accomplish that goal, not to fill class time.

### **Conclusion**

Again, as I observed the video there were highlights and lowlights. While I did follow the theories and practices that I mention in my Teaching Philosophy, it was clear to me that I was going through the motions. I was successful in modeling my expectations of language usage in the class and the students followed my example. Unfortunately, the class followed my example of attitude and preparation. While teaching in my current position, I have not had a prep hour to prepare my classes, and that has also helped me understand how essential preparation is to creating a successful lesson. When teachers do not adequately prepare for class they often lack a clear goal for the lesson. Teachers who do not effectively prepare for class can easily slip into routines that can become dull, are activities for activities sake, and may not allow students to engage with the language in a variety of ways. I have experienced this in my own

teaching, even though I try to integrate communicative activities in my teaching. If I have not spent the adequate time preparing unit and lesson goals, students quickly realize that the real goal of the activity is to fill time, not to increase their ability to use the target language.

My take away from this lesson is that I need to follow my Teaching Philosophy and provide materials that allow students to interact with the culture and life of the language. As I currently teach and utilize multimedia and TBA, I see students are more engaged in the classroom and more willing to seek out opportunities to use the language outside of the classroom. I believe the entire attitude and dynamic of this lesson would have improved had I better integrated these pieces of my Teaching Philosophy in the lesson.

CULTURE ARTIFACT

Using authentic texts to enhance cultural connections in the Spanish classroom

## **Introduction**

This paper was written for Dr. Maria Luisa Spicer-Escalante's Spanish 6200 course, *Spanish Linguistics*. I originally wrote this paper with my classmate Martin Briggs, but since then I have incorporated some changes as I prepared it for my portfolio. I chose to include this paper as the cultural artifact in my portfolio because of its focus on using authentic texts and technology in the FL classroom to enhance cultural instruction and background knowledge while establishing and maintaining a solid connection between the target culture and language. While the paper focuses on teaching Spanish, the principles can be applied in ESL and other FL contexts.

The Spanish language is currently the third most widely spoken language in the world, with more than 52 million people of Hispanic origin (16.3% of the total population) in the U.S. alone in 2011 (United States Census Bureau, 2013). Naturally, many additional people are studying the Spanish language. However, with this increase in teaching Spanish as a foreign language, it can be difficult for teachers to create a classroom environment where students have opportunities to interact with the language in authentic settings. The use of various forms of authentic text, including multimedia such as commercials and short video clips (e.g., Hispanic soap operas) is an effective way to bring the Spanish language and its various cultures into the classroom. These methods will increase student motivation, willingness to communicate (WTC) (MacIntyre, 2007), cultural awareness, and linguistic/cultural understanding of the Spanish language.

## **Background**

The Spanish language, currently spoken by over 495 million native and nonnative speakers (Fernández & Vitores, 2012) in at least 47 different countries (Ethnologue, 2013) across four<sup>1</sup> continents (Hualde, Olarrea, Escobar, & Travis, 2010), is the third most widely spoken language in the world. Its use throughout the world along with the globalization of the world's economy make a high level of Spanish proficiency a beneficial, if not essential ability for students to develop for their futures. Furthermore, with the rapid improvements in technology and communication, learners of Spanish as a second language can be exposed to many varieties of Spanish that differ both linguistically and culturally.

While it is difficult to introduce students to all the different varieties of Spanish, there are numerous linguistic, cultural, and other advantages to using authentic texts in their various written and digital forms to teach Spanish as a foreign language. Authentic texts are materials “produced by members of a language and culture group for members of the same language and culture group” (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 85). The advantages of authentic texts include enhanced student interaction, cultural competence, and linguistic proficiency in the Spanish language.

### **Authentic versus Adapted Texts for Second Language Teaching**

Before explaining the use of authentic texts in the Spanish classroom, it is important to address an issue concerning what is considered the proper use of authentic texts to teach foreign languages. While some claim that authentic materials must be used in their original form, without any alterations or simplifications, to increase student

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<sup>1</sup> According to Hualde, Olarrea, Escobar, and Travis (2010), these four continents include the Americas (including North and South America), Africa, Europe, and Asia. Thus, many people consider them to be five continents.

comprehension and retention of the texts and concepts, Crossley, Louwerse, McCarthy, and McNamara (2007) point out that each type provides certain linguistic, cultural, and motivational advantages in the second language classroom. For the purpose of this artifact, I refer to authentic texts (in this case, multimedia-based materials) as their original, unaltered form. The exceptions to this rule are explicitly stated.

### **The Use of Technology and Authentic Texts**

In the past, many disadvantages were associated with using multimedia such as video and music clips in the second language (L2) classroom, including lack of selection, low accessibility of authentic multimedia, and the amount of time needed to prepare the material. With current technological innovations and increased access to this technology in the classroom, the use of short multimedia can now be a highly effective teaching tool, easily accessible to both students and teachers. There are several linguistic, cultural, and affective advantages of using authentic texts in the classroom. As multimedia such as television and the internet play an integral role in the lives of today's students (Blake, 2013), they can be used in many innovative ways to increase student motivation and help them acquire a better understanding of the target language and culture (see, for example, Shrum & Glisam, 1994). Multimedia can also be used as a bridge to introduce students to other forms of literature in the L2 (Etienne & Vanbaelen, 2006). This advantage, along with the ability of multimedia "to present the audio, visual and cultural aspects of communication" (Skirble, 1977, p. 518), should drive teachers to find effective ways to use these tools in the classroom.

### *Linguistic Advantages*

As most people's goal in taking a Spanish class is to ultimately be able to communicate with native Spanish speakers (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro & Mandell, 2001), it is important to first discuss the linguistic advantages of using authentic texts as part of Spanish lessons. While most Spanish classes in the United States currently teach what is referred to as the standard variety of Spanish (Hualde et al., 2010), one must remember that there are other distinct varieties spoken around the world. Although there are numerous dialects throughout the world, depending on one's region, socioeconomic status, education, religion, and countless other aspects that influence the dialect of Spanish speakers, the main dialects can be divided into two categories—Spain and Hispanic America—within each of which there are several dialects. In Spain, there is the *castellano* (Castilian) dialect, as well as the Andalusian, Canarian, and Sefardi dialects. In Hispanic America, the Caribbean, Mexican/Central American (including the southwestern US), Andinan, Southern Cone, Paraguayan, *porteño* (of Uruguay and Buenos Aires, Argentina), and Chilean dialects (Hualde et al., 2010) are spoken.

Through the use of authentic texts such as commercials, Spanish teachers can display an accurate, authentic sample of the various Spanish dialects throughout the world. Many worldwide companies have produced slightly different commercials for the same product, varying the words, phrases, and accents, depending on the region in which the commercial is shown. Thus, teachers can use two very similar commercials that are rich in linguistic differences, to compare different accents or idiomatic expressions, among other aspects. Multimedia offer students diverse opportunities to observe people using the language in a realistic setting, and these settings provide context which students

can use with their background knowledge to understand cultural and linguistic differences (Martinez-Gibson, 1998; Skirble, 1977; Tschirner, 2001).

In my teaching I have found that students who have some familiarity with a certain variety of the language may view that variety to be “correct Spanish.” Showing students evidences of multimillion dollar companies adapting their commercials several varieties of cultures and linguistic variations will help legitimize these dialects and help students understand that other dialects are just as legitimate as their own.

In my experience, students who have a Spanish background tend to be of Mexican heritage. This can lead to concerns by parents of students who come from other countries and dialects. For example, one of the concerns a parent originally from Argentina addressed to me was, “Will you teach that my daughter’s Spanish is wrong?” I was able to explain my acceptance of the different dialects of Spanish, while also having physical evidence in the form of commercials from Chile and Argentina to help assuage that parent’s fears.

Teachers are able to choose and adapt multimedia to fit many lesson plans and objectives. Because multimedia dialogue is natural and unforced, teachers can focus student attention on a particular feature (e.g., a speech act or grammar principle) so that students can see the language modeled in a realistic scenario. Students can observe phonological, grammatical, lexical, morphological, and syntactic examples and more (Chen, 2005; Etienne & Vanbaelen, 2006; Tschirner, 2001). For example, if teachers wanted to introduce morphology, they could use a commercial that utilizes vocabulary that is familiar to the students, but has been changed morphologically to become a different grammatical form, (i.e., *descanso* to *descansar*, or *gota* to *gotear*, etc.).



Teachers could adapt the lesson to meet a variety of linguistic needs by discussing with students how the words were used in the commercials and applying it to how students could use them.

Teachers have often used pictures and other visual aides to assist in the learning process, but multimedia provides additional benefits as well. For example, Tschirner (2001) writes: “Video has the added advantage of providing models and examples on how to deal with the subject [being taught] linguistically” (p. 310). Multimedia provide visual and aural examples of many kinds of linguistic/cultural subjects a teacher may be teaching. If teachers are focused on a particular grammar principle, they can find a commercial in which the grammar principle is used in authentic communication. If they are teaching a cultural aspect, such as greetings or compliment responses, they can search for multimedia where they are easily apparent. Multimedia does not need to be used as only supplemental pieces in a lesson plan, but can also be the focal point. Not only do multimedia provide authentic, meaningful input to students, they also make the input comprehensible by providing non-verbal hints and cues. These cues help comprehension of the material and vocabulary growth. Multimedia provide an opportunity for the L2 to be acquired more quickly and more meaningfully because of the cultural background knowledge they provide and because “linguistic knowledge can only be used in authentic communicative situations if it has been acquired in such situations” (Tschirner, 2010, p. 309).

### *Cultural Advantages*

It is essential for students to receive some instruction about the target culture because culture and language are inseparable (Agar, 1994). Martinez-Gibson (1998)

even argues that “language is communication, but not without an understanding of its culture” (p. 115). Culture and language are intertwined and each impacts the other. Historically, languages change as the people who use them change, and cultural barriers and pragmatic differences sometimes develop. Pragmatics involves the meaning behind what is said. For example, there are multiple ways to say ‘Hello’ in English, but it can be tinged with sarcasm to denote frustration, or said in a lilting fashion to denote physical attraction. Without knowledge of the cultural and pragmatic differences, the term ‘hello’ could be seen as only a greeting, causing the L2 speaker to miss the intended meaning.

For many students learning the Spanish language, their first significant exposure to the language occurs in the Spanish class. Many of them also come with various (accurate and inaccurate) stereotypes of the culture of Spanish speakers. Thus, “the foreign language classroom is where students begin to acquire some awareness of people who not only speak differently but also act, react, and live differently. This cultural knowledge leads to a [greater] acceptance of the world’s variation” (Martinez-Gibson, 1998, p. 115). By teaching culture in the L2 classroom, teachers encourage students to notice these cultural differences, as well as give them more self-confidence as they monitor their speech in Spanish. Also, due to the visual component of digital authentic texts, there is an increase in motivation (Chen & Oller, 2005; Vassilikopoulou, Retalis, Nezi, & Boloudakis, 2011) and subtle, unplanned learning that happens when students are presented with target culture through multimedia. It follows that students gain a better cultural awareness from multimedia than from interactions with printed text (Martinez-Gibson, 1998).

Teaching Spanish through multimedia exposes students to the target culture while also giving context and other visual cues. This is one reason why multimedia is so effective in increasing “incidental vocabulary” (Gass, 1999). Incidental vocabulary is “the vocabulary we acquire when we are doing something other than formal learning” (Schwarzer, 2009, p. 26). When students realize they are increasing their L2 vocabulary through something they view as enjoyable, such as multimedia, students avoid feeling overwhelmed by all of the new grammar and vocabulary. The visual component of learning allows students to actively focus on the language while more passively becoming aware of vocabulary and certain customs or actions in common scenarios. Students are quick to notice cultural differences and are often interested in why people interact in a way that is foreign to the students.

Cultural awareness assists learners in better understanding cultural actions and reactions. Human actions such as gestures, body movements, expressions, and other social functions of interaction are more quickly observed and understood through multimedia (Chen, 2005; Skirble, 1977; Tschirner, 2001). Teachers are able to pause the multimedia to address questions or concerns that students have about either linguistic or cultural issues, such as pragmatics or idioms. This is because “cultural knowledge, in a broad sense is indispensable for pragmatic competence since interpretations, schemata and scripts are often grounded in a particular culture” (Tschirner, 2001, p. 312). These pragmatic and idiomatic issues are often better noticed and understood with the visual component that multimedia provides.

To teach culture effectively, a teacher needs enough multimedia to provide variety for students to select the common threads and identify them as being unique to a culture

(Martinez-Gibson, 1998). By amassing a collection of multimedia, teachers can be prepared with the selection of multimedia that they believe would be most effective for a class or student. Compiling this collection was once one of the difficulties in utilizing multimedia in the classroom, but today digital multimedia is much more easily stored and retrieved. It is also much more easily presented today, as teachers can project images or video clips from YouTube and other sources onto a screen for the class to see.

Multimedia-based materials can communicate cultural values because, much like authentic literature, TV commercials and similar multimedia are cultural artifacts (Etienne & Vanbaelen, 2006). These materials naturally portray transmit, emphasize, and promote cultural values, as they are used to sell products (Brennen, 1988; Lo, 1993). Thus, teachers who would like to focus on a specific aspect of Hispanic culture can find commercials that emphasize a specific value as clearly or subtly as they believe would be in the best interests of the students. As mentioned in my teaching philosophy, cultural values can fall into the categories of ‘big *C* culture’ or ‘little *c* culture.’ LoCastro (2012) defines the differences between these terms as follows:

Culture with a small *c* refers to aspects of everyday life, such as the food served at holiday time and the elaborate ceremonies for coming of age in Hispanic and Jewish communities. Culture with a big *C* includes art, music, literature, and architecture, among other forms (p. 41).

Commercials and other multimedia-based materials can be effective tools for helping students distinguish between the culture typically displayed on television and the everyday-life type of culture that plays an integral role in the lives of native speakers of Spanish (Etienne & Vanbaelen, 2006).

### *Motivational Advantages*

In his affective filter hypothesis, Krashen (1982) mentions three factors that influence student success: motivation; self-confidence; and anxiety. When teaching a foreign language such as Spanish, maintaining these three factors can be difficult because when students do not understand what is being said, it can affect their motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. Multimedia-based projects could be used in the classroom to boost motivation and self confidence while reducing anxiety because the purpose of most multimedia-delivered materials is to engage the viewer. Multimedia can also be tailored to provide humor to increase student participation and/or comfort level.

Because today's students are familiar with technology, seeing multimedia in Spanish and thus being able to utilize the visual cues from the multimedia can lower their anxiety. Etienne and Vanbaelen (2006) state: "Equipping students with decoding tools and letting students use them with texts that they will find engaging and nonthreatening is a priority. TV commercials fit this profile" (p. 88). Not only can television commercials work, but edited clips from soap operas, television programs or movies can also be engaging and comprehensible to students, while reinforcing vocabulary (Schwarzer, 2009). Many of these programs use a neutral form (i.e., one not aligned with a specific region) of Spanish, which is helpful to novice language learners. This neutral form focuses on using Spanish that avoids the differences in dialects and focuses on using a form of the language that is more easily understood across cultural, linguistic, and regional variances in the Spanish language.

Teachers should preview commercials and make sure they provide enough cues so students can understand the essentials. This essential information, likely received

through language and visual cues, can increase student self-confidence. Through opportunities to listen to video clips, students can focus on what interests them and have an idea of what gaps they have in their understanding to fill. The teacher can then emphasize a particular linguistic or cultural concept. Multimedia is dynamic and “not only [displays] affect, (i.e., emotions, feelings, and reactions) more vividly than written texts can but, as a result, can also help to motivate and engage language learners affectively as well as cognitively” (Chen & Oller, 2005, p. 264). Much of this motivation is brought about by the use of technology such as the Internet, which is becoming increasingly accessible to students throughout the world (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2012).

Authentic texts can positively influence motivation since commercials, soap operas, movies, and other multimedia are “primarily made and marketed as entertainment, [and thus] the address to the audience is primarily oriented around the production of pleasure” (Bignell, 2002, p. 128). The material presented is specifically created to engage, interest, and appeal to the viewer, in many cases specifically youth (Skirble, 1977). As students focus on the particular commercial, the language will seem less intimidating, even though students are likely receiving far more than they can understand or would feel comfortable with if it were presented via other methods.

As teachers use authentic texts, they should look for items that would be of interest to the students in their class, such as the activities in the background, the dress of the people, cultural customs, among other characteristics. Although material presented in the L2 may initially seem daunting, students will use the visual, aural, and other clues to make sense of the material. “High-frequency language can often be found in material

laced with humour, surprise, and pathos; entertainment value, especially unexpected surprises, can dramatically enhance memorability” (Chen & Oller, 2005, p. 267). When we search for new, modern modes of technology-based authentic texts to share with the students, “we are demonstrating an interest in their esthetic preferences, instead of devaluing or rejecting them” (p. 267). As students recognize the effort that teachers put into making their learning experience enjoyable, meaningful, and rewarding, students’ motivation will increase.

Ideally, when students are learning a language, they are provided physical and psychological tools, and allowed freedom and opportunity to experiment with those tools in a social setting (Vygotsky, 1978). Tschirner (2001) argues that:

Learners need to be part of a community of speakers and they have to be able to plunge into and participate in the world of native speakers. The digital classroom [i.e., one that uses the internet and other authentic texts] meets these requirements in a learner friendly way and it marks an important step towards making language acquisition possible in the classroom (p. 305).

By using authentic texts, teachers can provide students with more meaningful tools and realistic opportunities to use the language, thereby helping learners ‘plunge’ into the native speakers’ world.

Multimedia-delivered materials create many opportunities for students to interact with the language and culture. Through their visual components, students are bombarded with “visual clues that facilitate interpretation so that students do not have to rely only on their knowledge of the foreign language to understand” (Etienne & Vanbaelen, 2006, p. 89). In this way, commercials facilitate interaction with a member of the target language

and culture by offering context, which allows students to subconsciously analyze mannerisms and other cultural nuances while also focusing on the form and meaning of the language being studied.

### **Effectively Using Authentic Texts in the Spanish Classroom**

Authentic texts lend themselves to a number of useful, not necessarily linguistically-focused, activities in the second language classroom, since they provide an opportunity for students to discuss an artifact that becomes the focus, while the language becomes a secondary focus. Martinez-Gibson (1998) found that the use of multimedia-based materials was most beneficial in teaching students about the target culture, when it was combined with pre- and post-viewing activities. For example, teachers can allow students to discuss the target culture and the cultural differences that students are aware of or have heard of before viewing the commercial or other authentic text. As a post-viewing activity, teachers can encourage students to describe how their ideas have changed through viewing the material, emphasizing differences students were not aware of, or correcting any misconceptions. Although these are culturally focused activities, they can be performed in the target language, thereby meshing culture and language learning.

Authentic texts should be used to stimulate communication in the L2 classroom. Research has shown that students' basic goal in a language classroom is to gain the ability to communicate (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001; Etienne & Vanbaelen, 2006). To help students achieve this, teachers must plan activities that address these desires directly and facilitate communication. Teachers should then develop activities that provide learners with opportunities to discover and engage with the



language in a meaningful context, while using the multimedia-delivered materials as tools to provide context and background information (Chen, 2005).

To engage students in the discovery phase, teachers can first choose authentic texts in which the content, storyline, subject matter and entertainment value match students' interests, age level, and life experiences (Chen, 2005). Following these suggestions will engage students and can lead to unplanned discussions on topics that interest the students, which can result in valuable learning experiences. Video clips can be chosen to provide students opportunities to see the language used in a realistic, cultural context, which allows students to observe the language in an 'authentic' setting in which they are acquiring the same language abilities used by speakers of the target culture (Tschirner, 2001).

After viewing the video clip, commercial, or other form of multimedia-based material, students can be paired to engage in a number of activities that allow them to experiment with the language. The focus of the activities should be on communication to meet students' needs, goals, and expectations. Activities can focus on certain differences in the language, such as colloquial expressions or idioms. Students can also use the guidance of multimedia-based materials to imitate intonation patterns (Etienne & Vanbaelen, 2006). For more advanced students, the activities could afford more agency and allow students to ask questions about the video, comment on cultural practices or differences, or discuss the product being sold in the case of a commercial (Yang, 1995). Another example of activities using authentic texts involves the creation of students' own commercials/soap operas. These activities could focus on a wide range of classroom

goals, cultural aspects, or linguistic elements that engage the students, while also providing necessary context for the skill being studied.

### **Conclusion**

Technological advances through digitalization of materials and better access through the Internet have enhanced teachers' ability to efficiently use multimedia-delivered materials in the L2 classroom. The use of this type of authentic texts provides students with a wide range of opportunities to use the target language and better understand the target culture. It also enables teachers to present nearly any scenario, which gives the teacher increased freedom to inspire students to feel more comfortable testing their linguistic limits, due to the context provided through multimedia. A teacher can construct various activities to emphasize a certain skill students are working on. The material provided by the multimedia will provide students with extra context and tools to use when engaging with the language.

The teacher can also tailor the material to expound on a particular linguistic focus by showing authentic examples of differing accents, target culture pragmatics, and cultural practices. Multimedia can provide aural and visual examples of these concepts, creating more concrete examples that students can use to mediate their language use. Teachers can focus on cultural differences by exposing students to commercials in which these differences are used in a contextualized setting. Different commercials could be used to compare and contrast the different accents and cultural practices so students can observe these differences and not only hear about them.

In the Spanish classroom, these linguistic and cultural points are strengthened by the natural cues and background knowledge provided through visual and verbal elements

that multimedia-based materials provide. Multimedia allows students to engage with the culture and language with the additional assistance context that is often missing in language classes. The struggle to provide students authentic opportunities to engage with the language is one foreign language teachers grapple with daily. While multimedia does not allow students to be physically present in the target culture, it does provide a higher measure of authenticity than many other classroom activities.

Use of multimedia in the target language will help increased student motivation while providing greater exposure to language use in authentic settings. Students interact with the language through a medium whose main purpose is to entertain and engage the viewer. Today's students are more likely to engage with material that is presented to them in a way that is technologically comfortable to them. Multimedia can be presented to students through any number of digital devices, while covering a broader scope of the target language, and can be geared toward student interest in a way many other L2 resources cannot.

In summary, by using authentic texts to teach Spanish as a foreign language, teachers can not only help students increase their linguistic abilities, but also help expose them to the cultural richness of the various Spanish speaking cultures throughout the world in a way that is familiar and enjoyable to them. Multimedia also allows students to engage with the language in a more meaningful way as the multimedia elicits student emotional response. As students interact with the language visually and aurally through multimedia, they will become more engaged and motivated to seek opportunities to engage with the Spanish language, both inside and outside of the classroom.

LANGUAGE ARTIFACT

Modeling Abstract Concepts in the L2 Classroom

## **Introduction**

This paper was written for Dr. Jim Rogers' LING 6900 course, *Topics in Second Language Acquisition: Sociocultural Theory*. I include this paper as the Language artifact in my portfolio because of it demonstrates how students can work with tools to mediate their learning of abstract concepts. It also provides examples of students mastering abstract concepts and then using them concretely. While the artifact was written from my experience as a Spanish as a foreign language teacher, the methods described here are applicable for all L2 teachers.

As a teacher I observed students struggling to learn grammatical rules, and then trying to master the exceptions to those rules. The paper explains that through the instruction of the abstract concepts, students will understand the reason behind the rule and be better able to navigate its use through their mediation of physical tools. Through the application of these methodologies I came to a better understanding of what mediation is and the importance of providing students ample time and opportunities to engage with tools to mediate learning. The idea of students creating their own tools has fundamentally changed the way I prepare for class. By allowing students to create the tools (stories, games, illustrations) needed for more advanced activities, students bring a deeper level of background knowledge to the activity. This deeper understanding is gained from the previous mediation and internalization that came from the creation of the tools.

In the classes I teach, students are no longer provided materials such as a list of questions to ask a friend. I allow students to create their own questions which, when shared with others, provide students with many variations of the language. Some tools

are created after I explain a concept to the class. Students are then allowed to think, create, and evaluate the tools. This allows students to engage with the language in a number of ways that would be impossible for myself to create. This also allows for increased student creativity and affords students more agency in the direction they choose to focus their learning.

## **Abstract**

A crucial goal of teaching a second language should be to effectively and efficiently engage students with the language and to help students internalize tools they can use in various linguistic scenarios. Theoretical learning strategies (Karpov & Bransford, 1995) are excellent ways for teachers to do this. Theoretical learning strategies provide psychological tools that help mediate student engagement with the second language and create learning that will lead to internalization, learning and student development.

Theoretical learning pedagogies include tool-and-result, movement from the abstract to the concrete (MAC) (Lantolf, & Poehner, 2008) and the creation of 3D models. Theoretical learning strategies afford students agency in two ways. They allow students to create and manipulate psychological tools to meet their individual needs, and they also allow students to pursue a variety of learning objectives that are interesting and meaningful to the individual student. The act of creation of tools follows the tools-and-result pedagogy which leads to less superficial learning and deeper internalization of the concepts.

## **Theoretical Learning and SCT**

Effective language teachers look for effective ways to engage their students with the language. The use of sociocultural theory (SCT) in class creates an atmosphere where students engage in learning in a wide variety of meaningful, social settings. SCT is based on the necessity of mediation of physical and psychological tools to attain an objective. As students achieve the objectives, or goals, they can change their

environment through the mastery of the internalized tools (Vygotsky, 1978). Any objective that a student would like to attain must come through mediation, or the use of physical or psychological tools to act with or upon to engage in the physical and social world to achieve an objective (Vygotsky, 1978). These tools must be provided in appropriate settings and conditions because, as Hedegaard stated, “To learn to use tools as practitioners use them, a student like an apprentice, must enter that community and its culture” (Hedegaard, 1998, p. 115). Entering into a community and culture allows students a context rich environment which they need to observe and engage with tools appropriately. This environment allows students to appropriately mediate their language use via the use of tools in a realistic setting. Mediation via tools involves the students engaging with the tools in ways that assist learners to that accomplish their objective and leads to internalization.

As learners engage with tools learners use the tools first intermentally. Intermental learning involves what is learned from outward social contexts, i.e. observations, practice, etc. Later, the learner begins to apply the tool intramentally. Intramental learning involves applying the intermental learning and applying it to oneself; the tool is “turned inward” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 27). Once a student has worked with a tool intermentally that tool, through activity and use, becomes internalized. Internalization is the objective of teaching. When students have truly internalized psychological tools they become a part of the student’s being. Students who have internalized the tools can self-regulate the use of those tools, which allows the tools to be used to complete other objectives without needing mediation from outside influences.



If the instruction has been organized effectively, learning will lead to development (Karpov & Bradford, 1995). It is the teacher's responsibility to afford students the autonomy and freedom to use the tools. Teachers can also provide scaffolding when students are engaged in an activity. Scaffolding is "supportive conditions in which the novice can participate in, and extend, current skills and knowledge to higher levels of competence." Effective scaffolding also requires "the experts active stance toward continual revisions of the scaffold in response to the emerging capabilities of the novice" (Donato, 1994, p. 40-41). The students' responsibility is to fully engage in the activity.

How can teachers perform these responsibilities, while also affording students the agency to choose and pursue objectives that are meaningful to them? One way SCT assists teachers in doing this is through theoretical learning. Theoretical learning is the act of assisting students to develop psychological tools that they can mediate to reach concrete objectives. For example, teachers could teach the history and linguistic roots behind masculine and feminine articles in Spanish instead of giving students an incorrect rule that words which end in -a are feminine and words ending in -o are masculine. This could help students understand why words such as *sistema*, which is of Greek, not Latin, origin are masculine. Theoretical learning is "based on a process of supplying the student with general and optimal methods for dealing with certain classes of problems that direct him or her toward essential (not simply common) characteristics of the problems in each class" (Karpov & Bransford, 1995, p. 61). By teaching students abstract concepts first, students can use these concepts to reach whatever objective they choose.

Theoretical learning should be used to teach a second language because it leads to deeper understanding of the language. Students understand the why behind the language, not only the how. This allows for the language to be used more effectively in meaningful, less teacher mediated scenarios. “Knowledge is acquired in and for action and not simply for show; the criterion of success is not the reproduction of information in response to questions on a test but the ability to use what has been learned to find effective solutions to problems encountered in situations beyond the classroom” (Wells, 1994, p. 14). When students use theoretical learning strategies, they stop looking for what rule applies in a given situation and focus more on what they are trying to express and how to use the language to meet that objective (Lantolf, 2008). When a student understands the abstract concepts behind a learning objective, and not only superficial characteristics, he or she can become “an independent master craftsmen, who creates new artifacts and adds to the cultural resources of skill and knowledge” (Wells, 1994, p. 14). By focusing on theoretical learning, teachers facilitate internalization and development in the learner.

For theoretical learning strategies to be effectively used by students, basic tenants of SCT must be followed. The content and concepts being taught must be viewed by the students as being essential to their accomplishment of the objective. The objective must be attainable in the Zone of Proximal Development, beyond the student’s actual developmental level. The ZPD involves students working on critical thinking problems, with more capable peers. As these more capable peers personally mediate tools to accomplish the objectives, the less capable peer can observe and analyze the other student’s actions. As students follow this example, they mediate their own personal usage of the tools. This process of following other mediation allows the student to

achieve objectives that are beyond their actual developmental level (Vygotsky, 1978). The actual developmental level is “the level of development of a child’s mental functions that has been established as a result of certain already completed developmental cycles” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 85). This means that the actual developmental level is what a student is capable of doing on their own, without assistance from more capable peers. Students must also be afforded agency to mediate physical and/or psychological tools to accomplish an objective that is valued by the learner. Students must also be placed in social situations where they can interact with others, as this allows students more opportunities to observe ways to mediate tools.

The ZPD also can be used to predict future student development because the ZPD “defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state. These functions could be termed the ‘buds’ or ‘flowers’ of development rather than the ‘fruits’ of development” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). If teachers are aware of these buds, they can adapt their teaching to better mediate student learning. Students may be at the same actual developmental level, but when provided assistance, one student may be able to reach far more objectives than their peer. Although they are at the same actual developmental level, one student is clearly more capable when allowed some assistance from a more capable peer.

The importance of understanding the path a student’s learning may take is essential because, as Vygotsky stated, “what a child can do with assistance today she will be able to do by herself tomorrow” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 87). By observing student work in the ZPD teachers can adapt their lessons to follow the direction the students are taking

their learning. They will see the direction the student is taking their language and can adapt the lesson to help students overcome gaps in student knowledge. Through mediation students will internalize the concepts and be able to self-regulate their actions and achieve the objective on their own.

“Full internalization of conceptual knowledge is preceded by two stages: materialization and verbalization” (Serrano-Lopez & Poehner, 2008, p. 324). Materialization involves providing students opportunities to physically manipulate representations of conceptual knowledge or some sort of symbolic tool such as a graphic organizer. As students work through tasks, they use these tools to mediate and evaluate their performance. As students internalize the conceptual knowledge, they become less dependent on the physical model and begin to self-regulate. Students self-mediate verbalizing private speech to talk themselves through problems. Once the process can be carried out internally, this private speech is no longer needed (Vygotsky, 1978). This idea leads to the question, “How can teachers provide activities that allow students opportunities to work with materialization and verbalization, particularly with abstract concepts?” One way for teachers to help students mediate abstract concepts is to follow *tools-and-result* pedagogy.

### ***Tools-and-Result Pedagogy***

*Tools-and-result* pedagogy is when tools “are constructed and used as part of the results. The tool maker’s tools are both tools and the results of tool making.” (Negueruela, 2008, p. 191). This is opposed to the *tools-for-results* pedagogy where “tools are constructed with a specific purpose and functionality in mind – the goal of the

tool meets the reason for doing something” (Negueruela, 2008, p. 191). The distinction between these two pedagogies can be small, but it is my belief that when teachers use tools-*and*-result by focusing instruction and students’ attention to the building of tools, students will work intramentally at a higher rate and internalization will increase. As teachers use tools-*and*-result, students will focus less on how what is being taught applies to a test or a worksheet and begin to understand the tool is an essential part in the learning process.

Some researchers argue that the ZPD depends on students working and using tools-*and*-result methodology.

This notion of the ZPD strongly suggests that development depends on the continuous practice of tool-*and*-result methodology, on the creative process of tool-*making*. We could never develop if we only employed tool for result methodology, if we were only tool-users (Holzman, 1995, p. 201).

Teachers’ goals should follow this idea of development. They must allow students to develop their own tools and not just provide tools. Doing so robs the student of the development that comes from the creation of the tool, adding necessary background knowledge to more fully understand how and why the tool works.

When students follow tools-*and*-results pedagogy they work with the abstract concepts from the beginning, constructing tools such as by creating unique, graphic organizers and/or models. The background knowledge provided through this process allows students to more effectively self-regulate their language use because the tool is

more understandable to them because it was created by them. The creation of these tools also provides students with agency to direct their learning and design a tool that best suits their needs and strengths. For this to lead to internalization students must be provided opportunities to physically manipulate representations of conceptual knowledge or the symbolic tool.

Because in the process of internalization the language becomes part of the learner, I believe that internalization has a much larger emotional component than Krashen's intake theory. By creating tools, instead of giving students lists of rules to memorize (which I believe will lead to intake), students work intermentally with the activity, followed by interamental self regulation (which I believe leads to internalization). As students work intermentally they can begin to analyze how mood and other pragmatic factors impact the rule or way that they speak the language. The ability to create tools is essential to this process because it allows students to design tools to achieve the objective dedicated language learners ultimately desire: The ability to express themselves in the way they want (Lessa & Liberali, 2012).

The ability to create tools comes through the mastery of previous tools which can lead to more understanding of an abstract concept. Concepts are more readily adapted to a social communicative situation than an unbending rule that a student has learned but does not comprehend the concept behind it. Therefore, tools-and-result pedagogy allows learners to avoid many of the pitfalls that come from the grammatical mechanisms and rules that learners fixate on when they follow a tool-*for*-result pedagogy.

One of the difficulties I have found using tools-*and*-result pedagogy is that I personally learned many concepts as grammatical rules. My past learning has made it difficult for myself to view the concept and not just the rules. As I prepare lessons with tool-*and*-result pedagogy in mind, I often find myself trying to consciously grasp the concepts for the first time. This necessitates time and materials teachers sometimes do not have. It can also lead to insecurity by the teacher if they are unsure they have completely grasped a concept. In these cases teachers may fall back into teaching grammatical rules, allowing teachers to stay in their comfort zone.

To avoid this problem myself, I am currently reviewing the units I will be teaching and looking to see what linguistic skills students will need to master. As I develop my curriculum calendar, I contemplate what abstract concepts need to be taught and how they can be presented to students, not as a rule, but as a concept. This has involved my own personal ideas, but also study and research of academic journals and other L2 teachers.

### **MAC Pedagogy**

One of the pedagogies that can help teachers integrate theoretical learning by using tools-*and*-result is to teach using MAC, or “movement from the abstract to the concrete” (Ferreira & Lantolf, 2008, p. 285) pedagogy. This pedagogy focuses on the initial instruction of abstract concepts through the materialization and verbalization of different tools and then applying these tools and concepts to accomplish various objectives. This pedagogy is useful as it helps students avoid hang-ups that may occur when different linguistic scenarios allow for characteristic differences that superficial

learning would not account for. As students internalize the concept through the creation and use of the psychological tools, they understand how to use the concept across a variety of situations. This deepened understanding will help students use the concept even when characteristics of the scenario change.

These changes often confuse learners who have a superficial understanding of the concept, for example number agreement rules in Spanish. I have worked with a L2 learner who was sure that the Spanish word *gente* (people) should be used as “los gentes.” This student was attached to the rule they had previously learned that when speaking about a group of people one uses the masculine plural form of the word and the conjunction. This student was so attached to a grammar rule they had been taught, they could not understand the more abstract concept that the word *gente* is referring to a single group of people, and that the word is feminine in its origin.

The **first step** to the effective use of MAC pedagogy is that students must first “be exposed to problems that they cannot solve without first receiving instruction in the relevant content” (Ferreira & Lantolf, 2008, p. 294). Along with this problem, the teacher should pose questions that allow students to think about the theoretical concept in context. The students then work together with the teacher to answer these questions, and to receive instruction of the abstract concept needed to reach the objective.

**Second**, students model the concept in some way (Ferreira & Lantolf, 2008). Commonly in L2 classrooms, this results in an activity where students practice the appropriate usage of the concept in concrete situations. MAC pedagogy prefers students to model the concept visually. This is because “visual depictions are material and as such



have more permanence than verbal representations of the concept” and “if done properly they are more concise and coherent than written linguistic representations and therefore more easily used by students” (Ferreira & Lantolf, 2008, p. 294). Teachers should allow students the opportunity to create their own visual models. In this way, the abstract concept is taken, and created into a concrete, physical representation of the concept. This allows students to use these physical representations to assist themselves to self-regulate the concept’s use in a variety of concrete situations.

**Step three** is the modification of models (Ferreira & Lantolf, 2008). This step works hand in hand with **step four**, applying the models. Students should be provided opportunities to apply their model in scenarios, making any adjustments to their model as they recognize are needed. Again, the teacher’s responsibilities are to create opportunities and support the process through effective scaffolding. Teachers also must remember to encourage students to apply their models of the concept in a wide variety of scenarios. These scenarios allow students to experiment with their models as tools to mediate their learning. As students modify and apply their models socially, they have opportunities to give and receive feedback from their peers to improve their models.

It is essential that teachers are creative when designing activities and avoid falling back on previous drills or routines. Karpov and Bransford stated that “because mechanical drill and memorization are much less necessary under theoretical learning, the process of learning becomes interesting for students” (Karpov & Bransford, 1995, p. 64). By observing the personalities and interests of their students, teachers can create activities that allow these personalities and interests to drive student engagement with the material. This is one way that teachers can support the learning process.

The **fifth step** of self-monitoring and the **sixth step** of evaluation are intertwined with step three (modification of models) and step four (application of the models) (Ferreira & Lantolf, 2008). The application of the models allow students to work intermentally with their models, while the monitoring and evaluation lead students to work intramentally. As students perfect their model, they are internalizing the abstract concepts needed to use the material in concrete scenarios. Students monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their model with their peers and with the teacher, allowing one another to work in the ZPD. The different scenarios also provide opportunities for students to engage with the language in ways that they find interesting and meaningful and are not consciously focused on grammar or other linguistic features.

I have experimented with MAC pedagogy in my teaching multiple times. I include two examples of my use of this tool in the classroom. These examples have helped me evaluate my own strengths and weaknesses at using this pedagogy, while also underscore the importance of the previously mentioned steps. The different results of my two experiences demonstrate the need for dedication to the process in MAC pedagogy.

In my Spanish 1010 class I decided to teach the grammatical concept of “*por* vs. *para*” by using MAC. The first step mentioned above is to teach the concept, so I proceeded to explain that *por* is used when describing the means of reaching a goal. I then also explained that *para* would be used when describing the goal at the end of the process. In doing this I deviated from step one and did not ask my students questions that would have allowed them to recognize the theoretical concept for themselves. I also eliminated the problem they needed to solve. Instead of allowing the students to

experiment with the tools, I kept them to myself and metaphorically asked them to watch by learning, not by doing. This goes against the most fundamental tenants of SCT.

I continued to break from the MAC pedagogy and provided the students with a model that I had created, without first allowing the students to think about and create their own unique model to illustrate the concept. I deviated from that because I was concerned about the time that would be needed to allow students time to create their model. In hindsight, it may not have mattered time-wise because students asked me to explain the model again the next class.

By giving the students the model, again they were not allowed to experiment with the models, which led to very superficial learning and not internalization. In the long run it likely would have actually saved time to allow students to create their own model. I believe the retention and comprehension of the concept would have been better internalized through students' creation of their own tools, as well as the use of those tools to mediate the activities, instead of my providing a tool for them.

In the activities that followed I asked students to keep a visual of the model with them so they could modify and evaluate the model as needed. It soon became apparent that because I provided students with the model, they saw no need to evaluate or to modify the model. Again the opportunity to effectively use the models was rendered superficial and meaningless.

My second experiment with MAC pedagogy came as a teacher at North Davis Jr. High teaching reflexive verbs to a Spanish 2 class. I resolved this time to increase my dedication to the MAC process. I followed the first step by presenting a basic problem,

showing different examples of what non-reflexive verbs meant. For example when talking about brushing teeth, I mimicked myself brushing a student's teeth, showing a visual example of our dilemma. This led to a class discussion about the need to change the verb in some way to show it is being reflected back to the student.

I concluded the discussion by summarizing what we had discussed and then I asked students to draw a model of what we had just discussed. I then provided students with time to show their model to other students and explain it while I evaluated the effectiveness of their models. I was pleased with how well the students were able to grasp and present the concept, and many of their models were better than anything I had thought of presenting. Students provided one another with effective feedback through questions and suggestions as each student brought their own unique background knowledge and perspective to their partners' model. The benefits of this were obvious in comparison to my SPAN 1010 class. The next day the students needed no review of the concept, a simple glance at their model was sufficient.

As we continued through the process, I noticed that I was not providing enough opportunities for students to monitor and evaluate their use of the models. This became apparent as students began either using reflexives with every verb, or never using reflexive verbs. While this is a normal process with reflexive verbs, I plan to provide more activities where students need to use both reflexive and non-reflexive verbs in a way that they can reexamine their model and put it to use to evaluate their use of the verbs.

### **Clay Modeling**

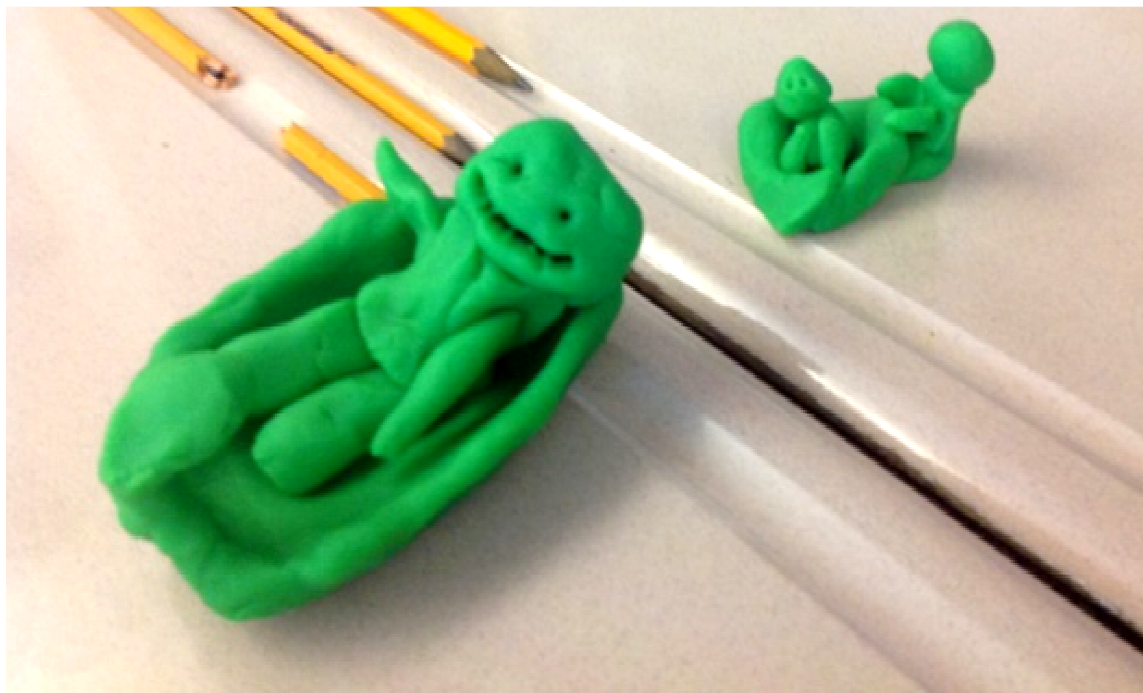
As mentioned earlier, internalization of a concept is preceded by materialization and verbalization. Research has also shown a relationship between the human motor system and the comprehension of abstract and concrete language (Glenberg, Sato & Cattaneo, 2008). In my classes I have experimented with clay modeling to allow students opportunities to work with abstract linguistic concepts and to materialize them. In clay modeling students are provided clay, which provides students with a physical representation of conceptual knowledge that learners can physically manipulate (Serrano-Lopez & Poehner, 2008). Students are then asked to create a representation of the concept using the clay.

As students work in groups to create a scenario, they work together, providing feedback to one another. In this way students decide whether situations are accurate, or what needs to be adjusted to accurately demonstrate the principle being taught. This is one way that I allow students to, as Serrano-Lopez & Poehner (2008) described, “talk to [the] clay” (p. 330). Discussing the deficiencies and strengths of their model with each other allows students to verbalize while they materialize the concept. “This process of external, physical modeling creation may serve as a focus, inspiration and reinforcement for the process of internal modeling that is necessary for learning the explicit knowledge of the [concept]” (Serrano-Lopez & Poehner, 2008, p. 329). As students physically model the clay, they are providing the foundation for work in the ZPD which comes as students discuss the merits and weaknesses of their model and work to adapt them.

After completing their model, I ask students to present and discuss their model with other groups. This allows students to see a variety of concrete examples of how the concept is used, while also providing an opportunity for students to work together to

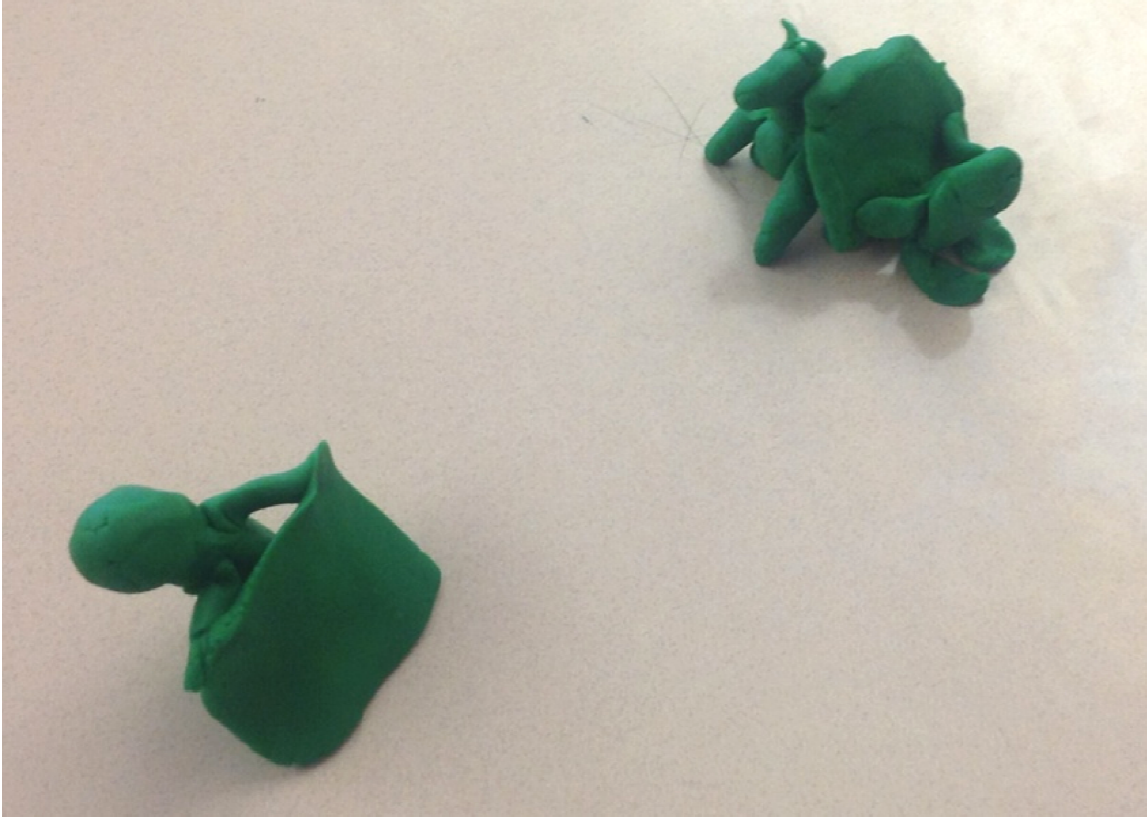
analyze the accuracy of the model and to provide any needed feedback for modifications. This allows for deeper discussion of the concept and not a discussion about a superficial grammatical rule, as well as providing opportunities for students to work in the ZPD as they problem solve.

In my class I have seen many other benefits beyond those described above. I appreciate that the activities can be differentiated to meet the needs of individual students. I have used clay modeling for students to represent the difference between reflexive verbs as well as between formal and informal pronouns in Spanish. In my use of clay modeling, I have also incorporated many of the previously mentioned steps in MAC pedagogy, specifically modification of the models and the evaluation of the models. I do this because “if the existing environment is not a ZPD (or stops being one), then children and adults must create it by continuously reshaping the existing environmental elements” (Holzman, 1995, p. 204).



**Fig 1.** A student's representation of the verb *bañarse* (foreground) and *bañar* (background)

When teaching my Spanish 2 students reflexive verbs, we used clay modeling to show the differences between verbs when they are reflexive or not. I first asked students to choose a reflexive verb we had learned and model it in clay. When students finished I asked them to create a new, modified example of the verb, only non reflexive. Fig 1 shows a student's representation of the reflexive verb *bañarse* and the non-reflexive verb *bañar*. The figure in the bathtub shows that the action of bathing is being reflected back to themselves, where the figure in the background (*bañar*) shows a person performing the action of bathing on a small child. Figure 1.2 represents the verb *secarse* vs. *secar* (to dry). The student showed the act of drying being reflected onto the speaker in the foreground while also showing the modification to *secar* in the background as a person dries their dog.



**Figure 2.** Example of *secarse* vs. *secar*

Once each student had created a model, students were asked to go to other groups' models and discuss which example was reflexive and which was not. The creators of the model would listen in on the discussion, and explain the application of the models if needed. Then each group evaluated the model's accuracy and mutually discussed any further modifications they felt were needed.

With my Spanish 1 class, we tried a similar experiment, one based on the use of the informal and formal pronouns *tú* and *usted*. Students were asked to model scenarios and describe how the informal and formal pronouns would be used. Students worked in small groups to decide which pronouns to use and what the scenario would be. When completed, students presented their model to other students and were evaluated on the accuracy of the model.





**Figure 3.** Example of showing respect to elders (as explained by the student).

Once students completed presenting and evaluating the models, I asked students to modify their model to show how similar people would use different pronouns in a different scenario. This asked students to make minimal modifications to the actual model, only enough to show the change in scenario. For example, the change between Figure 3 and Figure 4 involved moving the arm around the younger person to signify a close family relationship where the formal pronoun would not be used. These small modifications allow students to “continuously create the environment, even as [they] learn it” (Holzman, 1995, p. 204).

I include Figure 5 to explain more in detail how the evaluation process works. I was listening in on a group of four students as one explained how the gentlemen on the bench was romantically interested in the lady walking by. The student claimed that both people would use *usted*, but for different reasons. The man would use it to show respect

to the woman, while the woman would use it to show a lack of interest and social distance. The evaluating group argued that the man would use *tú* to show a closeness and interest in the woman. After some discussion, the modeling group agreed, and altered the scenario to be two strangers, who are showing both respect and social distance. This is an excellent example how students provided feedback to each other to work in the ZPD and better mediate their learning.



**Figure 4.** Example of how within family and other relationships the formal usted can be replaced with the informal tú (as explained by the student).

This scenario provided students an opportunity to apply the concept of formality in a way I would never have explained in class. My motivation for using clay modeling that students would not learn formality as unbending rules of respect, which are assigned based on age or station. Through this activity students modeled the emotional setting of

the people, providing more complex and interesting examples than I would have had time or the creativity to present to them in class.



**Figure 5.** Example of used to show social distance (as described by student).

### **Conclusion**

Theoretical learning has many practical applications inside the L2 classroom. The focus on the psychological tools that theoretical learning provides, along with the social atmosphere that students work in allow for concepts to be internalized in a way that reaches students with varying learning styles. Placing the focus on the concept instead of the concrete object allows for students to avoid confusion when they come across

“exceptions to the rule.” Abstract concept instruction also leads to deeper internalization and more effective concrete use of the concept being taught.

Through the construction of the tools, students become more familiarized with the reasons behind linguistic/cultural changes. Internalization can come by the creation of tools because through the creation of tools, students have opportunities to work intermentally and intramentally via the tools, and self regulate their use. By applying tool-and-result methods in the class, teachers also afford students more agency and autonomy to use the material in a form that is valuable to each individual student.

What stood out to me most in my experiments is how to make these pedagogies work in my classroom, I must go through the same process as my students to become an effective teacher. After I put these pedagogies into action, I evaluated and modified how I presented the tools to the students. As I moved around the room, I observed to see if it appeared students were working in the ZPD, by evaluating what they were able to do with the assistance of their peers. Group explanation of the models was a perfect time to see what each student could add to the discussion. I also plan to change how I present the tools, by modeling their use for the student to explain the different concepts.

This continuous act of modifying my instruction helped me understand how to better use these pedagogies and understand why pieces of each pedagogy are essential. My classroom instruction using these pedagogies has followed the tool-and-result model, which has deepened my understanding of how these pedagogies work to help my students. I have observed my students go through a similar process when I effectively used these strategies in class by allowing students to construct their tools instead of me

providing the tools. This simple act changed the students view from tools-for-result to a more tools-and-result focus.

LITERACY ARTIFACT

Graphic Novels and the Three Communicative Modes in an L2 Classroom

## **Introduction**

This paper was written for Dr. Karin deJonge-Kannan's LING 6010 course, *Research in Second Language Learning*. I include this paper as the Literacy artifact in my portfolio because of its focus on using graphic novels in the L2 classroom to teach culture. The article also emphasizes the background knowledge that graphic novels provide. Another reason I value this artifact is because of the popularity of graphic novels among teenagers. This leads to classroom instruction that students find interesting and entertaining which can increase students' motivation.

This artifact expanded my understanding of graphic novels and their use in L2 classes. I was unaware of how popular graphic novels still are and after researching this topic I have become more aware of how frequently my students read this type of literature. It was surprising to me that graphic novels often contain more age appropriate themes than I originally expected, which helps it serve as a bridge to more advanced reading. I was surprised at the findings that students who read graphic novels were more likely to continue on to more advanced forms of literature. This surprise most likely comes from the stigma that surrounds graphic novels.

To most effectively use these materials, a teacher must work with their librarian to find suitable graphic novels. They also must stay abreast with student interests in graphic novels, not only from the students, but also the members of the target culture. Through the use of technology, teachers are more capable of providing students with graphic novels to read, as well as the means to create their original graphic novels.

## **Abstract**

Recent advances in technology have helped teachers find, afford and use illustrated literature in their classes. Illustrated literature has been shown to increase student motivation (Krashen, 2005; Vassilikopoulou, Retalis, & Boloudakis, 2011), reading comprehension (Ranker, 2007), and vocabulary acquisition (Edwards, 2009). A large part of the research involving L2 students has been centered on English Language Learners' (ELLs) use of American or Japanese graphic novels. These studies show that graphic novels assist L2 learners because the illustrations offer conceptual scaffolding which makes meaning more accessible to students (Pawan, 2008). The scaffolding is more accessible because it is used naturally by the learner in a way that is familiar to the reader (Frey & Fisher, 2004). This study seeks to find if these positive results carry over into a Spanish as a Foreign Language class. However, it is still unclear is the impact that graphic novels have on Spanish proficiency in the three communicative modes: Interpersonal, Interpretive and Presentational (ACTFL, 2012).

This study will take a qualitative approach to assess if graphic novels lead to greater improvements in the three communicative modes, compared to a curriculum that uses literature that is not illustrated. Students will take pre- and post-tests to assess baseline knowledge and to measure learning. Using rubrics emphasizing the communicative modes during activities, students will be assessed periodically. This research can help teachers provide more context to their instruction through the use of authentic texts. If the data shows that graphic novels lead to greater learning in a specific



communicative mode, then teachers can emphasize their use accordingly to better facilitate learning.

### **Literature Review**

Teachers are beginning to use graphic novels and other illustrated literature as an intriguing way to improve student literacy. The focus has now become how to best utilize graphic novels in the classroom. As studies show, graphic novels can be used in a variety of classroom settings to teach multiple skills and assist students, including reluctant readers, in different aspects of the subject they are studying (Chun, 2009; Frey & Fisher, 2004; Snowball, 2005). While the stigma towards graphic novels discourage more advanced reading, research has shown that these fears are unfounded (Krashen, 2005; Ujiie & Krashen, 1996). Research findings and technological advances have opened up opportunities to not only use graphic novels in the classroom, but more importantly to select age- and content-appropriate graphic novels that align with student interests (Bucher & Manning, 2004). This review will focus on benefits that graphic novels make available to second language learners and how to use graphic novels in the three communicative modes: Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational.

I expect to see positive results when judging the internalization of Spanish and students' ability to use Spanish in the three communicative modes: Interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational. The interpersonal mode involves two-way oral or written communication, the interpretive mode is the ability of students to interpret and understand oral and written messages, and presentational is a formal communication to a group of listeners or readers (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). I expect that as teachers creatively use graphic novels in ways that engage the students in the interpretative, interpersonal,

and presentational modes, students will increase their ability to use the L2 in these modes.

One of the more debated questions today on the subject of graphic novels is what exactly *is* a graphic novel? Yang defined a graphic novel as a “thick comic book” (Yang, 2008, p. 186). Others have described a graphic novel as a “dynamic format of image and word that delivers meaning and enjoyment” (Simmons, 2003, p. 12). I would also consider small comic strips or illustrated children’s books to be basic, simplified versions of graphic novels. These simple forms of illustrated literature can serve as precursors to the use of graphic novels in a L2 class because in picture books and comics, “the illustrations enrich and extend the text. However, in a graphic novel, readers must not only decode the words and the illustrations but must also identify events between the visual sequences” (Bucher & Manning, 2004, p. 67). I include illustrated literature in my definition because comic books and picture books can be found in a wide range of reading levels that teachers can match with student need (Igoa, 1995).

The acceptance of graphic novels has gained traction over the last two decades (Heaney, 2007; Weiner, 2012; Tychinski, 2004). Graphic novels are now seen less as glorified picture books and more as a legitimate genre and therefore a type of text useful for teaching (Downey, 2009). As graphic novels have become more accepted, schools have begun to make them more accessible to students, libraries have increased their graphic novel offerings, and some states are organizing initiatives to assist teachers in creating lesson plans involving graphic novels (Yang, 2008). Also, some national newspapers have begun reviewing graphic novels due to the increased popularity and acceptance of graphic novels (Yang, 2008).

Graphic novels assist students in the interpretive mode in many ways. Students are “provided a visual vocabulary of sorts for scaffolding writing techniques, particularly dialogue, tone, and mood” (Frey & Fisher, 2004, p. 24). From the pictures students may be able to pick up on meanings they might otherwise miss in a text, such as sarcasm, innuendo, irony, etc., while also being provided with explicit background information such as time and setting. Students can also use the illustrations to understand different registers that speakers use (Chun, 2009). Graphic novels can be useful to students due to the context provided by the illustrations as “cartoon pictures are universal and their texts easily translated. The procedures lend themselves to any language or any ethnic group” (Goldstein, 1986, p. 657). The context provided by the illustrations aids comprehension, allowing students to use the language more effectively outside of the classroom (Frey & Fisher, 2004; Ranker, 2007).

Research has shown that graphic novels are a medium that younger students read for pleasure. For example Edwards (2009) found that when reading in the native language “middle school students were freely choosing to read graphic novels and will read graphic novels when they will not read anything else” (Edwards, 2009, p. 56). Enjoyment, motivation, and fun were cited in multiple sources as a key reason to use graphic novels in the classroom (Carter, 2007; Crawford, 2004; Miller, 1998; Ranker, 2007; Snowball, 2005; Sperzel, 1948). “Research shows that those who have more access to books read more, and those who read more read better” (Krashen, 2005, p. 2). One could assume that not only access to books, but access to books that students can understand, would lead to higher levels of reading performance.

Graphic novels provide a resource that students can understand more easily than standard prose, as well as a source they are likely to use outside of the classroom (Mikulecky, 2010). By increasing student motivation to read, in and out of the classroom, graphic novels can play an important part in increasing student reading engagement. Assisting students to develop a desire to read should be a top priority for teachers because “students’ levels of reading engagement are more important than their socioeconomic backgrounds in predicting their literacy performance” (Chun, 2009, p. 145). Graphic novels serve as a medium that inspires students to read because they are comfortable with the format and receive much of the assistance they need in the interpretive mode from the illustrations provided in the graphic novel.

Any fear that comics will replace or inhibit other forms of “higher” literature is unfounded. In fact, studies have shown that “more comic book reading was associated with more book reading,” (Ujiie & Krashen, 1996, p. 1) and that comic book reading can lead to ‘heavier’ reading (Krashen, 2005, p. 2). As we foster improved reading skills in students, especially young students, they will have better experiences and attitudes toward reading, which will lead them to read more often, which improves their communicative and linguistic abilities, which increases their chances for success in the future.

One of the special difficulties foreign language teachers face in integrating graphic novels is finding graphic novels in the L2 that are appropriate for a school setting. The difficulty of this task varies from language to language. Instructors of Japanese have a plethora of manga graphic novels that they can choose from (Weiner, 2005). Instructors of Spanish, French or German may have a more difficult time finding

materials. Although Hispanics are a large ethnic group in the United States, Nathanson-Mejia and Escamilla (2010) found “a severe lack of Latino children’s literature in the libraries and classrooms of schools” (p. 106). Depending on the situation, graphic novels may be difficult for some teachers to obtain due to financial constraints. As librarians receive more and more training in the importance of graphic novels (such as the New York Department of Education began providing in 2008 (Karp, 2011)), L2 teachers should use their librarian as a valuable resource to help a teacher find other graphic novels geared towards learners of a foreign language (Peck, 2007). Librarians can also help teachers avoid violence and sexual images that can be common in some graphic novel genres (Frey & Fisher, 2004).

Recently, technological advances such as the internet have allowed teachers new opportunities to find, preview and choose graphic novels (Bucher & Manning, 2004). Teachers should search for graphic novels that are authentic and accurately portray the target culture. Teachers must also remember to ask students from the target culture, if they are available, what they read when living in the target culture. When these resources are not available, teachers can search for internet reviews by members of the target culture (Houston, 2012). If the main character is a member of the target culture that does not mean the graphic novel gives an accurate portrayal of the target culture. Michael Buono warns that “these portrayals can range from laughable to offensive” (Houston, 2012, p. 158).

Many countries have a long history of using graphic novels (Houston, 2012), and continue to use them today. The illustrations provided can help readers understand more advanced material in the interpretive mode. For example, the Mexican government for

example issued a graphic novel that “educated its citizens on methods to effectively border-cross into the United States” (Carter, 2007, p. 51). The Colegio de Mexico also published a graphic novel detailing Mexican history as a way to teach history to a wider range of readers. A teacher could use this authentic text as an effective instructional tool, emphasizing the built-in comprehension tools of the illustrations while also inviting discussion of more complex social or cultural issues.

Potential teaching strategies for using graphic novels are many and their effectiveness often depends on the personality of the class and the teacher. The following suggestions show how a teacher could use graphic novels in the classroom.

A teacher can use graphic novels to discuss cultural differences, similarities, or issues that students may not be aware of (Carter, 2007; Chun, 2009; Miller, 1998). Working in small groups, , students can discuss their thoughts on these topics, why these differences exist, why it is important to be aware of these differences, etc. As students discuss the material with each other they are using the material in the interpersonal mode. After discussion students could also present their ideas to another group, allowing students to engage with the language in the presentational mode.

In a foreign language classroom, students could be asked to discuss the graphic novel in the target language. Teachers could choose graphic novels that are rich in vocabulary being studied to allow students an opportunity to engage with the vocabulary in the interpersonal mode in a way in which the vocabulary is not the focus, the graphic novel is. This helps students practice the vocabulary while receiving any needed support from the graphic novel and coupling that support with the feedback students will receive from their peers in the discussion.

A teacher can use graphic novels to help students learn pragmatics, idioms, specific vocabulary, etc., in the L2 (Monnin, 2010). Mikulecky suggests multiple ways that a student could practice this material outside of the classroom using graphic novels:

- 1) Ask students with access to younger relatives to read and teach the [L2] stories to their younger relatives.
- 2) Ask students to keep a list of what they have read, with brief summaries of stories or chapters and new vocabulary learned.
- 3) Have students do presentations on stories to “sell” them to other students.
- 4) Have students create their own simple stories in the target language, possibly with illustrations (Mikulecky, 2010).

In this way students can apply the material they have learned in the classroom in an interesting fashion outside of the classroom. Any time a student proudly shows and explains to another student or family member, they have opportunities to engage with the language in the presentational mode.

Much research has been done in the field of student-created graphic novels. Research has found positive results when students create their own original comics (Chun, 2009; Igoa, 1995; Miller, 1998; Ranker, 2007). Creating original comics allows students to practice the material they are learning in a creative and enjoyable fashion. Computer programs have been developed that allow students to create their own digitally animated comics, which support students who are uncomfortable drawing (Vassilikopoulou, Retalis, Nezi & Boloudakis, 2011). At North Davis Jr. High, I am currently examining different apps my students could use on their iPads to create graphic novels. An added benefit of the digital format is that it helps disorganized students avoid losing the extra papers that a physical graphic novel demands.

Graphic novels can be used in the classroom in a variety of useful ways. Research has shown that when using graphic novels, students are more motivated, likely to use the material outside of class (leading to use of the language in the interpersonal or presentational modes), and receptive to the scaffolding they receive from the illustrations (Crawford, 2004; Lamanno, 2007; Smetana, Odelson, Burns & Grisham, 2009). Inverting the process and inviting students to create their own graphic novels based on the material covered in class allows students to grow and present their material in a way that is challenging, motivating, creative, and thus enjoyable to the student. These presentations also provide opportunities for students to peer-review the graphic novels and provide oral and written feedback to their classmates. I personally have seen an increase in student motivation when they are free to create their own graphic novels, and ask about vocabulary and grammar that they view as vital to their story.

While there has been much research into the use of graphic novels in the L1 for English speaking students and the L2 for ESL students, there is a lack of research into how Spanish graphic novels impact Spanish language learners. It is my belief that these benefits found in English graphic novels will carry over to Spanish language graphic novels.

## **Methods**

The purpose of the study is to discover to what extent instruction with graphic novels impacts student L2 vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension development in the interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational communicative modes. Similar studies have been done to analyze students' learning of vocabulary and reading comprehension



(Edwards, 2009; Sperzel, 1948) and analysis of plot through the use of graphic novels (Vassilikopoulou, 2011). Studies have also shown that the visual element has many benefits for second language learners (Frey & Fisher, 2004; Yang, 2008; Ranker, 2007).

The study will involve two classes of twenty-five 7<sup>th</sup> grade middle school students. These students will be second-year Spanish students. Data will be collected over six months, with the classes meeting 4 times a week for 45 minutes per class period, as well as one day a week for a 40 minute session, as is common in many US middle schools. Researchers will collect data every four weeks. Students will be informed that they will be using L2 literature, and they will take a pre- and post-test assessing changes in their L2 ability. Students will also be made aware that they will be involved in a short, ungraded presentation to small groups at the beginning and end of the study.

In late August, students will be provided a short Spanish story, “*Carlos y la Milpa de Maíz*” by Jan Romero Stevens, without illustrations. This will provide a baseline that will help the researchers better evaluate the growth of the students during the study. Students will read through the story individually and then complete a pretest which focuses on the interpretive mode. After completion of the pretest, students will have ten minutes to discuss the story in the L2 to prepare for their presentation. Researchers will observe this interpersonal communication using the in Table 2. At the end of the ten minutes, students will present their small groups to two researchers to describe the plot of the story, cultural elements, etc. This will give researchers a baseline to work from in the presentational mode. Students will be assessed using a rubric which is shown in Table 2.

Students in the treatment group (Class A) will work with three illustrated Spanish short stories entitled “La Mujer que Brillaba aun más que el Sol,” by Aleja Cruz Martinez, “El Tapiz de Abuela” by Omar S. Castañeda, Enrique O. Sánchez, and “El Camino de Amelia” by Linda Jacobs Altman and Enrique O. Sanchez. The control group (Class B) will work with the same stories, but without the illustrations. Throughout the term, students will perform similar classroom activities to increase their familiarity with the vocabulary, plot of the story, cultural elements, etc., of the story they are reading. Their work will involve small groups as well as individual tasks, as well as three take-home assignments to read part of the story to family members and explain the plot of the story to them.

Each class will engage in activities to based on the research of Meyers and Watzinger-Tharpe (2012) to work in the interpersonal and presentational modes with the material. Students will debate and interview one another about the literature to engage in the interpersonal mode. Students will have the stories with them to serve as a resource for information. Each class will also create an advertisement for one of the stories, which will serve as a presentational writing piece. Class B will write a short, creative story continuing the Amelia’s life from the end of the story “El Camino de Amelia.” Class A will also tell a story continuing Amelia’s life only they will create a graphic novel.

The post test will be administered eight days before the end of the semester in late October. The post test will be related to the three graphic novels students read over the semester, and follow the same procedures as the pretest when focusing on the interpersonal and interpretive modes. The following day, to focus on the presentational mode, classes A and B will pair up in groups of three and be assigned a story to present to

two classmates. Each student in the group will present a different story out of the three stories used in the study. Two researchers will observe these presentations while evaluating students on their skills in the presentational mode. I will then compare the evaluations to assure good inter rater reliability. Students will again be assessed using the rubric in Table 1. Also included in the test will be questions asking students how much they enjoyed the unit and what assistance they would have liked to receive to improve their learning. The study will also include a delayed post-test administered in early December to evaluate the retention of the skills acquired during the unit. The test will be similar to the original post test, with the summary questions removed.

I expect findings from this study to help teachers understand the benefits of using graphic novels in the classroom. I believe students who work with illustrated literature will have increased understanding and retention of vocabulary along with better comprehension. I also expect students to be able to have less noticeable, but still increased fluency in their presentation of the plots and material due to their increased comprehension and vocabulary. Students should score higher when asked about cultural differences as well, because of the visual examples they have observed.

If findings show that there is a benefit to language and culture learning and retention in the three communicative modes through the use of graphic novels, then I expect teachers to be more open to experimenting with graphic novels in the L2 classroom. I also hope that librarians will see the benefits of graphic novels for L2 learners. This should lead to more librarians looking for appropriate authentic graphic novels to place in their libraries. I expect teachers and librarians to collaborate more to make sure graphic novels are made available to their students to benefit their growth in

the target language. Through graphic novels students will have a greater opportunity to discover languages and cultures in a way that they find interesting and comprehensible due to the many benefits graphic novels provide.

Personally, I hope the research done on graphic novels will assist me in finding and effectively using graphic novels with my students. Through the strategies mentioned I hope to use graphic novels to improve L2 reading, writing and listening skills. I hope to use graphic novels as a way to provide scaffolding for learners to both express themselves and understand others in the L2.

This research has assisted me in establishing a better relationship with our school librarian. We have a plan in place to research and begin providing L2 illustrated literature in our school library. We have also begun working together to find ways to make L2 graphic novels and the programs necessary to create digital graphic novels available to students through the technology already in place at our school. This research has served as a platform to help me better plan and prepare to incorporate graphic novels in my classes in the upcoming year.

Table 1

<b>Skill</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Student can use all the needed vocabulary to describe the plot of the Graphic Novel	Student struggles with 25% of the vocabulary but is able to describe the plot of the graphic novel using the new vocabulary	Student struggles with 50% of the vocabulary but is able to describe the plot of the graphic novel using the new vocabulary	Student struggles with 75% of the new vocabulary and is able to describe the plot of the graphic novel at a basic level.	Student struggles with most new words, avoids using them to describe the plot of the graphic novel
<b>Comprehension</b>	Student can accurately describe the plot and conflicts of the graphic novel	Student can describe the plot and conflicts with few important gaps and with only one prompt needed	Student can describe the plot and conflicts with some important gaps and with only two prompts needed	Student can describe the plot and conflicts but with important gaps and more than two prompts needed	Students show little to no understanding of the plot
<b>Fluency</b>	Student can summarize the story and their utterances have flow and clarity, few long pauses	Student can summarize the story and flow is smooth. Less than 3 long pauses and 2 prompts needed.	Student can summarize the story, but speaking is broken and lacks flow and clarity. Less than 3 prompts needed	Student can summarize the story but utterances involve long pauses and the need for prompts	Students are unable to describe or summarize the story
<b>Culture</b>	Students are able to identify and describe cultural differences that appear in the graphic novel	Students are able to identify and describe cultural differences that appear in the graphic novel with some prompts	Students are able to identify but struggle to describe cultural differences observed in the graphic novel, even with prompts	Students struggle to identify cultural differences observed in the graphic novel, even with prompts	Students are unable to identify or describe any cultural differences observed in the graphic novel with prompts

LOOKING FORWARD

Upon graduation of the MSLT program I plan to teach another year at North Davis Jr. High. The Spanish program is growing at NDJH and I would like to build a program that has a need for Spanish classes from level 1-3. The school is adding a language lab next year and I would like to experiment with the options this new technology makes available to my students. I also hope to get more involved in coaching this next year as I believe the relationships built between coaches and athletes have a positive impact on students in the classroom. The last year of the MSLT program has helped me understand how important it is to be involved in different student activities and I have missed assisting in the growth that young men and women gain from team sports.

After next year I am considering many different options, the first of which is to teach in Wyoming. While teaching in Utah I have found myself overwhelmed with meetings and lacking in preparation time in a way I never imagined possible while previously teaching in WY. I would also like to experiment with teaching Spanish and History. I have the necessary certifications, and while I enjoy teaching Spanish, History is my first love. I taught both History and Spanish while student teaching, and while it was difficult, the opportunity to teach both would be extremely fulfilling for me. Another way I could satisfy this desire is to teach history in a Dual-Language Immersion school. While I would need to complete the necessary steps for the endorsement teaching History in Spanish sounds like an exciting challenge.

I also have interest in teaching at a small, rural school where I could teach Spanish to grades K-12. This may require extra certification, but the idea of developing a program that runs throughout students' entire public school experience is something that intrigues me. I want to see how the ideas expressed in this portfolio impact the language

learning of students who use these strategies throughout their public school career. This would also help me improve my ability to give effective feedback, as knowing students for such a long period of time would allow me to know them well. I could know what their goals and needs are in a way that would be impossible in any other situation.

I would also like to be in a position where I can travel to a foreign country (preferably Spanish-speaking) to teach English as a foreign language. I would like to use this as an opportunity to continue to improve my Spanish as well as better understand the cultural differences that exist in different regions of the Spanish-speaking world. It would also provide many opportunities to accumulate different articles of realia (authentic objects/materials from everyday life that my Spanish students in the US could interact with in my Spanish classes.

The last option I am contemplating is leaving the teaching profession and embarking on something new. While finishing the MSLT and teaching at North Davis Jr. High, I have questioned more than ever before if teaching is the profession I want to pursue. This has been a positive experience as it has led me to find what is truly important to me in teaching, as well as truly confront my own weaknesses and shortcomings. I've been confronted with the questions of: Do I lack the qualities necessary to be the teacher I want to be? Do I believe in what I am doing? Do I love teaching? What is keeping me from meeting my expectations? Because you have to love what you do, or you will become a slave to it (Stockton & Pickett, 2013), if I cannot answer these questions in a way that satisfies me as a teacher, I feel it is necessary for me to research the different job opportunities made available to me through the MSLT degree and my teaching experience to find something I truly love



If I remain a teacher, I look to increase my ability to teach culture interactively and give effective feedback as was previously mentioned. I also would like to stay up to date with new technology and its impact on teaching L2 language and culture. NDJH provides me with opportunities to gain experience with these new technologies, for example the addition of the aforementioned language lab. NDJH has begun a program where all students have individual iPads that they can use in school. I look forward to spending this summer and next year working with different apps that can help students engage with the target language and culture. Once I move on from NDJH I will continue to stay abreast of technological advances through conferences, trainings provided by schools, and by reading some of the journals I have come across while studying the MSLT. I have also found this year that as students have access to technology they are good about sharing their discoveries and ideas on how to integrate technology into class.

In conclusion, the MSLT has opened many opportunities to me. There are many different options available to me, in public education and in private sectors. The lessons learned while in the MSLT program will benefit my communication skills working with any culture and background. These skills can help me to be effective in my career, in almost any corner of the world. While I am unsure what direction my career will take, I feel confident that my time in the MSLT will be a great benefit to me personally and professionally.

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

## Motivation in L2 Learning

I believe the key to being successful in any endeavor, including learning a second language, is having a desire. Desire leads the learner or student to put in essential time and effort to overcome struggles that naturally occur when learning a second language. A motivated student is one who follows the teacher's mandates to communicate in the L2, even when it would be easier to shift into the L1. I agree with Lasagabaster who states that, "Motivation is a direct determinant of L2 achievement" (Lasagabaster, 2011, p. 3). While teachers seek for ways to improve their teaching, this instruction will be useless if students are not prepared and motivated to engage with the material presented.

Teachers must monitor the motivation of their students, because motivation is constantly fluctuating (Dörnyei & Ottó 1998). Students are influenced by various people (friends, parents, fellow students), as well as internal factors (insecurity, puberty, developmental issues). These individual, changing needs of the student impact the way that the teacher adapts the lesson to suit the learner. By making the appropriate adjustments, teachers can increase student motivation, which will lay the foundation for the learners to be successful in acquiring the L2.

When teachers understand motivational theory they are more capable of making these important adjustments. Dörnyei & Ottó (1998) described multiple motivational theories that teachers should be aware of to adapt to student motivational needs. *Expectancy-value theories* factor in the students' expectation for success as a motivating factor. If students are overwhelmed or feel destined for failure, their motivation to work on a task will be lowered significantly. A sub-category of expectancy-value theory is

*attribution theory*, which describes how people gain motivation from their past success in similar endeavors. This “success breeds success” mentality is something teachers should foster as they plan activities.

Dörnyei and Ottó also explain *goal theories*. Goals are an essential factor in increasing motivation, as motivation is usually tied to a desire to achieve a goal. An important aspect of *goal theories* involves *self-determination theory*, which is based on an individual’s desire to set their own goals. The authors expound on this when they discuss a flaw in educational setting that limits students’ opportunities to set their own goals, with goals being better accepted when made by the person tasked with completing the goal.

I value the connection that Dörnyei and Ottó made between commitment and goals. Students who are not committed will not perform the necessary steps to reach the goal. I also appreciate the idea that students need to reflect on their success achieving the goal. In my experience, many Jr. High students do not reflect on what they have accomplished. When they are given time to do so, students often feel successful, depending on how close they came to achieving their goals. These feelings can contribute to student commitment and the previously mentioned motivational theories.

Students motivation to learn the language is often centered in a desire to be able to use the language. Research has shown (Lasagabaster, 2011) that many students L2 education begins with an oral-based approach during elementary school. He also notes that overall, students seem to enjoy this approach. Unfortunately, as students transition to high school, a method more based in grammar and vocabulary often becomes the norm.

This negatively impacts students' motivation as the language is used in inauthentic ways, robbing language of its purpose. It is apparent from the results of Lasagabaster's survey that the communicative classes in his EFL study were more beneficial to students than traditional EFL classes.

I agree that students perform better in language proficiency tests when they used the language in contexts where the L2 is used in real communicative situations, giving the learning more efficiency and meaning. In his study Lasagabaster mentions different factors that play a role in motivation and I would have liked to see Lasagabaster perform his study on a group of high school students, as that was the group he referenced at the beginning of his study as being unmotivated. If the L2 programs studied really increase student motivation, and the author is concerned with high school student motivation, then the study should have been set in a high school setting. Because college students are quite different from high school students, the lack of research with high school students undermines the study in my view.

Unfortunately, as Lasagabaster recognizes, "a universally applicable theory of motivation may simply not be plausible, so teachers must try a variety of different methods to increase student motivation. One method teachers can use in an L2 class is to design opportunities for learners to use the language in authentic situations. Such situations help give the language context and meaning. This is one reason why following the CLT method is so effective, as it provides more exposure to the language and more opportunities to engage with the language. Lasagabaster and Sierra (2009) found more positive attitudes towards the target language in classes where the language was used to

teach the content. Teachers who use the language to accomplish concrete tasks help students use the language in a realistic and effective way.

While the authors have a well-written article describing the benefits of teaching in a fashion that uses the language to teach content, I feel the article is one-sided. The article is purely focused on student attitudes, and I would like to see the correlation between student success in the class and their attitude, which was not addressed in the article. In general the classes showed an increase in positive attitude, but the authors did not mention if there was also an increase in negative attitude from struggling students. I would have liked to see more detail on the attitudes of the students who struggled in the class, to see how they viewed the class and their opportunities for success when they fall behind.

In classes where teachers use CLT, if a student is struggling they are less likely to put in the effort necessary to communicate. In looking for ways to increase student communication, Macintyre, Dörnyei, Clément and Noels (1998) focus their research on students' willingness to communicate (WTC). The authors caution that WTC in the L1 may not equal the WTC in the L2. Teachers who plan to use CLT methods in their classes need to make sure their students are willing to communicate. Also applicable to CLT methods is the motivational factors that play into WTC. The authors specifically mention interpersonal motivation, intergroup motivation, and self-confidence as essential components of overall motivation. If teachers can increase students' self-confidence and foster an environment where students feel that they belong to a group, then students should become more willing to communicate.

The article is a well-written overview on the topic of WTC. It does an excellent job of breaking willingness to communicate into small, individual parts that a teacher could examine and apply. Many of these parts would apply to motivational issues as well. The article struck me as very dense; trying to cover all the material in one article may have been a bit much. Due to this I found the examples of the use of WTC in the article to be overly simple and obvious. I would have liked to see examples of how to apply the information to more advanced topics in the L2.

One way to help increase student WTC is to create an environment in which students feel comfortable expressing themselves. Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro and Mandell (2001) ask teachers to avoid taking an authoritative stance and instead collaborate with students when teaching. Teachers need to foster an environment in which the class works together as a team and students support one another. With student input, teachers can provide a more interesting course as student interest drives motivation. When classes believe in the team concept they feel more dedication to the task at hand and will be more comfortable collaborating with one another, which leads to increased motivation.

The authors provide multiple tips for managing the class to assist with the flow of the class and allow students to collaborate. I found the book to be very one-sided on the idea of Task-Based Activities (TBA) and motivation. The authors did not acknowledge the possible negative effects that come when students have low social skills, or a form of social anxiety. While I understand this is not the norm for most students, every teacher (especially those working with middle school and high school students) has been in a situation where a student wants to learn the material and gives good effort, but lacks the basic social skills to be successful. For these students the basic plan of TBA as provided

by the authors is not conducive to students' learning. For a teacher to depend on such a collaborative model, they must find an adjustment for those students who struggle socially.

Teachers need to be aware of student desires if they want to effectively meet student needs and maintain high levels of motivation. Freire (2005) emphasizes the need for teachers to listen to their students. Freire recommends that teachers take a democratic stance when working with students, affording them agency to direct their learning in some way. Authoritarian teachers talk to the students and not with the students, in some ways following an ALM style of interaction. The teacher speaks to the student and the student should give the expected response, regardless of their beliefs. This type of authoritarian leadership does not motivate students to truly engage in the language in the L2 classroom.

Freire's democratic class is an interesting idea, but from my experience the management of it would be problematic. I think that with a motivated class, this theory could create a cycle that breeds success. My fear is that for students with low motivation to learn a language (which can be common in public school), students may try to take advantage of the system and the teacher will either compromise or students will feel that the teacher has a favorite class, breeding resentment. In social interactions with students, listening is essential when working with students to build relationships that will help motivation.

Building relationships also help teachers find students' interests and encourage the pursuit of these interests. The Lantolf and Poehler (2008) mention the essential social



steps needed to increase student motivation. They discuss the need for students to feel comfortable expressing themselves to the teacher. Through this the teacher is better equipped to view the needs of the entire person, not just the student. By becoming aware of students' interests, learning styles, experiences, and goals, teachers can adapt their teaching to help students succeed both academically and socially. The authors studied student motivation while using dialogic journals. Through the use of dialogic journals, the authors found that students were able to communicate in ways they were unable to orally. As students write these things and find that they are understood, student fear of mistakes will decrease, and the feeling of success should lead to an increase in motivation.

The authors also address the factors that work against motivation. Factors such as fear, frustration, and low self-confidence cause students to restrict their own work. The authors provide realistic ideas to combat these factors, such as giving opportunities for students to write without the fear of being graded. This allows students to just write and worry less about errors. I was somewhat disappointed that the authors seemed only to address how these ideas work in a more advanced class. I would have liked to see if the benefits from their study extended to all levels of L2 learners, not only the more advanced learners.

To help students overcome negative motivational factors Schwarzer (2009) gives an overview of specific techniques and teaching strategies to apply in the classroom to increase student motivation. He touches on the need for teachers to help students build a bridge between cultures and be more open to adapting to cultural customs. Schwarzer mentions a good way to do this is to use authentic materials that students use in their

everyday lives: Multimedia, periodicals, advertisements, etc. The author argues that one way to help increase motivation is to allow “curriculum negotiation,” or to allow students the opportunity to participate in the decision of what material will be studied. This helps students build a community of learners and feel welcome and a part of the team, which also increases motivation.

I appreciate that many of Schwarzer’s topics have concrete examples of how the material presented could be adapted to my classroom. I also value his idea that the learner’s native culture should be appreciated and celebrated, not ignored. The author also recognizes that students may face challenges outside of the classroom and the impact those challenges may have on performance and interests inside the classroom.

Chen and Oller (2005) studied the motivational benefits of using multimedia in the target language. To effectively use multimedia the authors recommend that: 1) the L2 is used in high frequency, preferably by native speakers of the L2, 2) the content is appropriate to the interests of the students, 3) the content is appropriate for the audience. These recommendations are easily adapted to the class when the teacher is familiar with student interests. Teachers can find multimedia that cover a wide range of emotions, which helps improve memorability of the material. Multimedia also provide the ability to repeat scenes, which can help students work out what is happening.

When I have referred to the three general criteria that teachers should consider when selecting multimedia for their class, they have helped give me a clearer idea of how to choose the best multimedia for class objectives. The authors seemed to understand why beginning students should not watch an entire movie in one sitting. The authors

pushed for teachers to show a scene and then direct the learners' attention to the topic being taught. As teachers check for understanding, then return to the multimedia to find how that information affects the students' understanding they "proceed upward in steps that accommodate the ZPD of the learners. The process proceeds in cycles of repeated viewings of the relevant portions of the [multimedia]" (Chen & Oller, 2005, p. 277). I found the author's discussion of working in the ZPD to be lacking. It seemed to me that working in the ZPD was a phrase they used to give credit to their argument, but it deserved more discussion and analysis.

While multimedia can be useful, teachers need to help students learn to speak, listen, write and read in the L2. Commercials and print advertising can provide many sources to work on the various skills. Because many students struggle to find motivation to read in the L1, let alone the L2, teachers need to be creative with the reading material they provide students. Frey and Fisher (2004) provide ideas on how teachers can provide learners more interesting opportunities to engage in the language. They claim that the use of graphic novels improves motivation, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension. The authors give a fair and balanced perspective on the use of graphic novels, noting both the positives and negatives of their use.

I was impressed that in their study the authors used graphic novels in various formats, reading them, while also allowing students to create their own. The authors found that their ESL students increased their writing skills and were self-motivated to research more creative word choice. The average length of the creation of graphic novel projects was 478 words, a substantial amount, especially for an L2 learner.

While the article was very informative, it focused mostly on the use of English comics (understandable for an ESL class) and Japanese manga. This was interesting to me as a majority of their class (75%) were Latino. I would have liked to see the authors work mostly in English and provide copies of graphic novels that connected to the students' L1 culture. I think this would benefit those students who can culturally connect to their new culture and their native culture. I worry that the use of manga may serve as a cultural dead end many students. I also would have liked to see how culturally appropriate comics affect the motivation of students in class and what benefits tying the graphic novels to a student's native culture instead of a foreign culture have on the student.

Using culturally appropriate illustrated texts helps bridge culture gaps and increase cultural understanding. In her book, Igoa (1995) explains how the use of pictures helped motivate immigrant students while also helping to alleviate some of the culture shock. Igoa discusses the use of "filmstrips" for students to tell stories when their linguistic skills could not. These illustrations allow students opportunities to acknowledge who they are and help students bring the two cultures in their life together. Opportunities to create graphic novels also offer a window into the soul of many students, as they allows students a medium in which they are more able to express their creativity, intelligence, and talents. These talents are easily hidden by the students' inability to express themselves in the L2.

Similar to Lantolf and Poehner, Igoa mentions the obstacles to high motivation. She describes isolation, loneliness, depression, confusion, exhaustion and fear. What I most appreciate about Igoa's book is that she addresses these issues directly with

scenarios from her experience, giving the ideas presented life and context. The author also documents her experience trying to integrate different theories and practices into the class, including both failures and successes. I would like to see a more updated version of the book, to hear the author's thoughts on how newer technology can be used to create a similar environment. Much of the technology she discusses is no longer in use in schools, and I wonder if immersion into a new culture, along with possibly new technology, would facilitate or be a detriment to the student.

Motivation is essential to helping students be successful in learning a second language. While teachers cannot completely control students' levels of motivation, they can try to create a good relationship with the students, set realistic goals, and help students believe they will succeed. Teachers who use authentic texts also give the language context, which makes activities more realistic and meaningful to students. Beyond increasing motivation authentic texts also serve as a bridge to teaching culture.

## **Culture**

Culture is an essential part of language instruction, but culture is also a broad term that includes many different subcategories. It is important to know what cultural aspects to teach to students as well as how to include as much culture with the language as possible. In her book, LoCastro (2012) distinguishes between *big C* Culture and *little c* culture. *Big C* Culture involves the large historical, artistic, and literary tradition that a language or culture has. *Little c* culture on the other hand is more focused on the daily routines, living situations, and scenarios of ordinary people in the target culture. While *Culture* is taught more explicitly, teachers need to teach *culture* as well. In this way

students can gain a greater appreciation for the society's contributions to the world, as well as the day to day practices that give deeper meaning to the language being studied.

LoCastro gives a thorough overview of different ways to teach culture, specifically through pragmatics. The book reminds me that culture is not always something we can see or touch, but can be something that is deeply imbedded in the language. While informative, I believe LoCastro largely overlooked the opportunities that modern technology provides to for instruction of both forms of culture in a more authentic fashion.

To better teach culture, teachers need to understand how culture is learned. Vygotsky (1978) describes the cultural development of a child as social process. For teachers to effectively help students engage with the target culture, teachers need to allow students opportunity to engage with the culture socially. Improved understanding of the culture comes as students work with the culture through realia, authentic texts, etc. As students engage with these tools, as students engage with the culture interpersonally (socially), the culture will begin to be analyzed intrapersonally (internally). Following Vygotsky's idea of internalization, the cultural forms of behavior become part of the student, and they become a part of the students' behavior when they interact in the L2.

Vygotsky mentions the need for students to interact with the culture socially. This has added a new dynamic to my thoughts of teaching culture in the classroom. Culture has always been something teachers explain, show, model, etc. Vygotsky's theory clarifies why that is essential and gives teachers something to focus on as they plan cultural activities. If students are not truly engaging with the culture, if they are only

viewing it, then they are not being afforded the opportunity to work with the culture intermentally and intrapersonally. The same ideas that relate to internalization of the language also relate to the internalization of the target culture.

Cultural learning is indispensable in language instruction, according to Tschirner (2001). The author emphasizes the importance of authentic texts and stresses their availability through new technology. Video documents, by combining pictures, human action and the language, can create an accurate example of subtle communicative scenarios. Through technology, teachers have the ability to slow down and repeat these cultural and linguistic interactions so that students can observe and analyze the semiotic systems which appear in different cultures and regions.

Tschirner's article covers some excellent points, but also has some deficiencies. I agree with Tschirner that by partnering language and culture in instruction, the instruction will connect with the students' emotions by helping students better identify with people from the target culture. Increasing cultural instruction/interaction helps students understand that the goal is not to successfully navigate scripted conversations, but successfully interact with fluent speakers. Tschirner's article emphasizes the relationship between language and culture when discussing culture, but I was disappointed makes few ties to culture when discussing how videos can assist language learning. The author argues against this very thing in his culture section and then fails to apply it in the article.

There are many ways to integrate teaching culture in the L2 classroom, as Peck (1998) outlines. The author presents creative ways to allow students to interact with the

material to better understand the target culture. She mentions cultural islands (pictures, posters, realia, etc.), sending students on scavenger hunts to grocery stores to look for foods common in the target culture as well as presenting multimedia to focus on cultural similarities and differences. Peck argues that integrating authentic materials is essential, because it plays an important role in shaping the students' attitudes towards the target culture.

I appreciate the author's focus that students do not need an historical/geographical understanding of the culture as much as they need opportunities to feel, touch, smell, and see the target culture. This article led me to seek opportunities to integrate everyday instances of culture in the classroom through pictures, phrases and expressions, interactions with fluent speakers who represent the culture, and by trying to bring realia into the classroom. It also helped me understand how to capitalize on the use of these materials instead of using them as an activity to fill time.

The link between learning culture and learning the language is essential and inseparable. Along with a well researched history of foreign language teaching and the reasons culture should be taught, Thanasoulas (2001) gives practical ways to teach culture in the L2 classroom. As part of this discussion, Thanasoulas' analyzes the use of textbooks in the L2 classroom. He argues that teachers should avoid the stereotypical examples of culture provided in textbooks and look to use more authentic texts. Thanasoulas claims that the most effective way to teach culture is to use authentic texts to build a bridge between these cultural artifacts and the students' culture to find common ground.



I agree with Thanasoulas on the importance of teaching culture with communication because they are so interrelated that “foreign language learning is foreign culture learning” (Thanasoulas, 2001, p. 2). Teaching language without culture robs the language of its life. By combining the two, we provide students with the support they need to fully engage with the language. I would have liked to see Thanasoulas give a few more specific examples of what kind of culture to bring into the class, or how to effectively teach the culture, but his overview was informative.

To build a bridge from one culture to another it is essential to understand both cultures. While much of my readings focus on the teaching of the target culture Ovando and Combs (2006) claim that teachers need to understand not only the target culture, but the individual cultures of the students they teach. Without an adequate understanding of our students’ culture, teachers can become guilty of the same stereotyping they are trying to help students avoid when thinking of the target culture.

I appreciate the authors’ points on acculturation and assimilation. As language teachers we need to help students (and their parents) understand that the goal is an understanding and tolerance of other cultures, not the assimilation of a new culture and abandonment of a student’s native culture. I found that while the author gave a good overview of the importance of cultural instruction to a student’s success, there were too few examples of how to effectively integrate good cultural instruction in the classroom.

One reason language instruction is so important in the public education system is because in these classes students learn about people who speak, act, and live differently. Martinez-Gibson (1998) explains how commercials can serve as an authentic text that

teachers use to illustrate L2 culture. The author states that although the language may be simple in the commercial, the context being observed in the culture can be very rich. In the study performed, the author found that combining commercials with pre- and post-viewing discussion led to increases in cultural recognition and increased the quality of students' writing.

The author gives a fair and balanced review in her article, both describing the positive outcomes and the negatives to the method. Teachers may have difficulties finding commercials that satisfy the demands of the topic they are teaching. Teachers must build a collection that not only covers a range of topics, but also a wide range of countries to demonstrate cultural variance from country to country. While the article was dated and did not address recent advances in technology, the idea is sound and many of the same difficulties described still exist for teachers.

Earlier research on the use of commercials in L2 learning was conducted by Yang (1995). Yang explains the benefits to using commercials to teach because they are stimulating and provide meaningful cultural input. The author presents examples of questions that teachers could use to take advantage of these resources in teaching culture. She suggests teachers start with questions focused on simple cultural differences, such as greetings, relationships, and compliment responses. These can be pointed out by the teacher or a student and discussed as a class. Next the teacher could draw attention to the product being advertised, and draw similarities and differences from the students' culture and the culture presented in the commercial. Teachers can also draw attention to linguistic concepts and discuss why certain vocabulary is used and why certain vocabulary is not.

The author provides an excellent application of how to engage students with the culture and language through the use of authentic materials. Unlike Martinez-Gibson, Yang does not discuss how teachers should choose material and prepare students to engage with the authentic texts. This was a large oversight by Yang because if teachers do not adequately prepare to present the material, then students may find the material to be unappealing, strange, and not relevant.

It is essential teachers provide opportunities to engage with the language in activities where culture is a strong component. Teaching a language without the culture is only teaching half the language. Students will have higher motivation and have improved control of the language when they understand the cultural background to the language. By helping students to engage with the culture through realia, pictures, and representatives of the culture students will be more capable of and willing to use the L2 outside of the classroom

### **Feedback**

Feedback is an essential part of the teaching process, and one that I see as my greatest weakness as a teacher. In the L2 class, feedback can come from many different sources. As I prepare class, I try to design activities that provide many opportunities for students to receive feedback on their performance. Good feedback is much more than error correction. By researching the following literature, I have developed a foundation to grow from as I provide effective feedback to my students

Feedback and error correction is a topic discussed by Lee and VanPatten (2003). They mention direct correction, indirect correction (rephrasing the student's response in

the correct form), and delayed feedback (noting common errors in class and pointing them out later). I think delayed feedback is commonly used in schools, but this is the first book in which I have seen it specifically mentioned as an option.

The authors discuss research performed on the effects of “responding to form” and “responding to content.” Studies found that learners who received feedback on content were more successful than those who received other forms of feedback. The authors also supply examples of how to provide this type of feedback that is useful to the students, by focusing the feedback on things that help students express themselves better.

I was impressed with the authors’ ideas on giving feedback and suggestions to make that feedback more meaningful to the student. I think that these ideas are valuable to teachers because feedback can be a source of inspiration or frustration to students. I was disappointed though with the lack of examples provided by the authors on how to give feedback, especially in a book so filled with examples elsewhere. Throughout the book the authors explain how to utilize different ideas, but when explaining feedback they seem to tell more than teach.

Because feedback can both inspire and frustrate students, teachers need to be aware of how to use feedback affectively. Hattie and Timperley (2007) address three questions to help teachers use effective feedback by basing feedback on three questions. The questions are: Where am I going? How am I going? and Where to next? The authors argue that when students can answer these questions, their motivation will increase and learning will be enhanced. When students cannot answer these questions,

teachers must provide feedback to assist learners so they can direct their learning in an effective way.

The authors also mention the four levels of feedback: Task, processing, regulation, and self as a person. *Task feedback* assists students to understand their performance of a task and is usually the main form of feedback provided by teachers. *Processing feedback* is meant to help students understand relationships between concepts, which helps students recognize their own errors. *Regulating feedback* helps students to control and feel confident regulating their actions to complete a learning goal/task. It encourages students to be disciplined to use the material appropriately in a self-directed way. These three levels of feedback are used in tandem with each other and should build upon one another, starting with task feedback and growing to feedback about student regulation.

I appreciate that the authors include *self as a person feedback*, even though they recognize that it too often used, and is rarely task related. Some students need this feedback to foster a good relationship which can be beneficial, but from a content perspective this feedback is almost useless. The article contains was a general overview of feedback, and offers teachers good principles, but does not focus on L2 classrooms at all, which carry a very different feedback dynamic than Math, Science, and English classes.

Feedback in the L2 classroom should help students both understand how accurately they are using the language, while also helping them continue to practice the L2. Shute (2008) categorizes feedback into the categories of verification and elaboration.

While verification has its place, elaboration is much more adaptable and can be used to increase student achievement. By helping students elaborate on their response, teachers provide additional opportunities for students to mediate the psychological tools and also have a more capable peer to guide them if needed. Shute provides a thorough description of various types of feedback commonly found in classrooms and explains some of the positives and negatives of each type of feedback. She emphasizes the importance of formative feedback, which helps a teacher analyze which form of feedback they over utilize and what other types of feedback they need to integrate.

I was somewhat disappointed the author did not discuss more in depth the relationship between goal-directed feedback and motivation. The author built up the topic of motivation and then do not adequately address how to integrate the two so that they supported one another. I was however impressed with the author's attention to both the positives and negatives of various types of feedback. The detailed nature in the different facets of feedback, along with her detailed descriptions of how timing and scaffolding can enhance learning; prove her understanding that more complex feedback is not a magic pill that solves all ills.

While feedback may not solve all problems, if used appropriately it will engage the learner with the language. Shrum and Glisan (2010) explain how to engage the learner by using what they describe as effective feedback and using less evaluative feedback. Much of the interaction that happens in a classroom happens as the teacher asks a question, the student responds, and the teacher evaluates the response. The problem with this form of feedback is not only that it is evaluative and simplistic, but also that it limits the students opportunity to use the language. Worse yet, the teacher begins the

interaction by asking an assessing question which limits feedback to a basic, inauthentic interaction.

A better form of feedback is when a teacher initiates the interaction with a question, the student responds, and the teacher, instead of evaluating the student response, encourages more interaction. Teachers ask students to explain their response in greater detail so students get more opportunities to use the language in unique, unplanned situations. To create opportunities for effective feedback, teachers should ask assisting questions, or questions that push learners to use the language at a higher level to explain their response.

The authors include ideas on how to use more effective feedback and interpersonal communication in their teaching. Their ideas are mostly grounded in planning and curriculum decisions which unfortunately may be outside of a teacher's control. I question the effectiveness of some of their methods in large public school classes with adolescents because many of the techniques they propose have the teacher talking to individuals or small groups while the rest of the class observes. I have found this to be ineffective in my classes. In my view, the authors largely ignore the idea of using students as resources to provide feedback to one another. While the authors state that incorporating interpersonal communication in the classroom is important, I would appreciate more ideas of how to effectively provide opportunities for student to student feedback.

Student to student feedback frees the teacher to interact with those students that most need feedback. Gallimore and Tharpe (2004) revisit an earlier study of coaching

great John Wooden and the feedback he provided to players. What fascinated me about this article was the way Wooden prepared to give feedback. The article states that “he studied each individual carefully so he could anticipate what his students would do – or fail to do – and he was primed and ready to instantly respond” (Gallimore & Tharpe, 2004, p. 124). As teachers teach a lesson multiple times in a day, or throughout their career, they must predict where student difficulties will arise, and be prepared with effective feedback to benefit students.

Because the article went beyond analyzing feedback, input, or any other aspect of teaching it helped me develop my teaching philosophy which is based in the connections between coaching and teaching. The article focuses on how to mix these parts of teaching with the individual to achieve the best result. The only area in which the article was lacking was in bridging certain forms of feedback (especially nonverbal reward) from sports to the classroom. Certain touches that are acceptable in the arena are not acceptable in the classroom. While this type of feedback is important, integrating it in the classroom is problematic.

The authors described the feedback that Wooden gave to his players as praises, reproofs, nonverbal reward, non verbal punishment, and “Woodens.” “Woodens” involved reproof combined with reinstruction. All the articles I have studied focused on feedback as a tool to help students understand. This article discusses these forms of feedback, it reminded me that feedback in the classroom should go far beyond instructional purposes. It should also benefit the emotional domain of the student.



As teachers use feedback to teach and support students emotionally, they help students overcome fears and become more willing participants in the class. Jack Richards (1996) addresses some of these fears in his book. Richards explains that successful students are aware of when they need help and they know how to get the help needed. Unsuccessful students may struggle with other factors that impede them from requesting feedback. Some students are fearful of negative feedback or worry that they will appear unintelligent to their peers when they ask questions. If teachers foster an environment in which students feel comfortable asking questions, then teacher feedback can be directed at specific student needs.

Richards also goes into detail about the auxiliary benefits to good feedback. Positive feedback can increase motivation and help create a good classroom environment. Richards states that to create a positive environment teachers must be aware of their students' expectations of feedback. Often students place higher importance on error correction than teachers do. Richards mentions that error correction and other feedback can be used by asking another student how they would say the utterance. This group focus on form allows for students to teach one another which leads to deeper learning.

Richards limits his discussion of feedback primarily to error correction. He seems to prefer direct, specific error correction. While reading, I reflected on how I could use his strategies to explain what was incorrect and why, but I reflected more on the timing of when such correction would be appropriate. This type of feedback must be carefully regulated so as not to be overwhelming and de-motivating, but also frequent enough to allow students to understand the adjustments they need to make in their language use.

It can be difficult for teachers to find the balance in their feedback. Each student needs and wants different amounts of feedback, so teachers need be able to vary their feedback. In her book, Gottlieb (2006) gives very applicable examples of how feedback can be given in a classroom. She discusses how feedback should come from students as well as teachers. The author recommends that as students give feedback to each other, they follow a standard format provided by the teacher such as a rubric or project description sheet. This form of feedback allows students to analyze and practice skills learned to complete the task and assist one another to improve. While the author provides good ideas on this material, I would have like to have seen more data supporting her idea. This section seemed more opinion than academically researched strategies.

While student to student feedback is important, the author also explains that feedback is not only something that the teacher gives, but it must be something the teacher receives as well. For teachers to effectively know students' needs, they must provide opportunities for students to express themselves and their concerns. The author provides examples that teachers could use in class, such as KLWH charts, a variation on the traditional KWL. KWL charts allow students to reflect on what they already Know (prior to the lesson), what they Want to learn (allowing teachers to gauge what direction student interest is), and What they Learned at the end of the lesson. The author's version asks students to explain what they Know (prior to the lesson), what they Learned (after the lesson), what they Want to know (what are they interested in?), and How they plan to learn it. By asking how students plan to learn the material, teachers place the burden of learning on the students. This allows students to create an individual plan to learn the material.

Pawan (2008) also addressed the idea of scaffolding as a form of feedback that to enhance learning. Scaffolding originally referred to work done between an “expert student” and a “novice student.” The term has developed through the years to also include tools, guides, and other resources. Teachers need to understand that they do not have to be the sole provider of feedback for the class. Students can receive feedback from other students, conceptual scaffolding (charts, illustrations, etc.) and other technological means (e.g. computer programs).

The article offers a detailed list of scaffolding techniques teachers can use, which I found beneficial. With this list, I can create a lesson and prepare multiple ways to provide scaffolding to students so they receive some feedback, while I am free to move about and provide more explicit feedback if needed. The author also provides good examples of specific teachers using scaffolding to benefit and provide feedback to students that the teacher themselves could not provide due to linguistic barriers. I would have liked more detail on some of these experiences, which would have been difficult to get based on the set up of the study.

Feedback has many benefits, such as allowing students’ unique opportunities to engage with the language, increasing students’ motivation and providing needed direction to learners. Feedback must be a two-way street, where teachers give and receive feedback from students and students give and receive feedback from one another. Feedback has been proven to help student performance in the classroom, and teachers who follow the feedback they get from students on their needs will become more effective teachers.

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