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COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING:

THE CORNERSTONE OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

by

Sierra Fischback

A portfolio submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

Approved:

Dr. María Luisa Spicer-Escalante Major Professor	Dr. Karin DeJonge-Kannan Committee Member
Dr. Joshua Thoms Committee Member	Dr. Bradford J. Hall Department Head

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

Logan, Utah

2012

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Abstract

Communicative Language Teaching:

The Cornerstone of Second Language Acquisition

by

Sierra Fischback, Master of Second Language Teaching

Utah State University, 2012

Major Professor: Dr. María Luisa Spicer-Escalante

Department: Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies

This portfolio is comprised of a compilation of papers written by the author while completing the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program at Utah State University. The focus of the portfolio is a teaching philosophy outlining the author's beliefs on how to foster effective language teaching in the university foreign language classroom. Included as well are artifacts addressing coping with culture shock, effective forms of language learning, and reading in foreign language literature courses. These artifacts were chosen to reflect important areas of language teaching that have affected the author's teaching philosophy. Finally, the author has incorporated an annotated bibliography of books and articles that have impacted the author's attitudes and opinions towards effective foreign language teaching.

(143 pages)

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I wish to thank my loving parents, Margaret Parsons and Gary Williams, who have consistently supported any dream I wanted to achieve. They always knew I could accomplish anything, and have been willing to help me in any way possible. I must also thank my husband for being a constant and unwavering source of encouragement.

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Contents

Abstract……………………………………………………………………………….. iii

Acknowledgements………………………………………………………………………… iv

Introduction………………………………………………………………………………. 1

Teaching Philosophy……………………………………………………………………... 2

Apprenticeship of Observation……………………………………………………….... 3

Professional Environment……………………………………………………………... 7

Personal Teaching Philosophy…………………………………………………………. 8

Learning Through Observation………………………………………………………….. 32

Analysis and Reflection of Teaching Video …………………………………………..……. 35

Culture Artifact

Introduction……………………………………………………………………………41

Culture Shock: How to Cope ……………………………………………………………43

Language Artifact

Introduction……………………………………………………………………………61

The Communicative Classroom: The Disconnect Between Theory and Practice ……… 62

Literacy Artifact

Introduction………………………………………………………………………….... 77

Vocabulary Acquisition through Reading in L2 Literature Courses……………………. 78

Looking Forward……………………………………………………………………..….. 89

Annotated Bibliography…………………………………………………………..…… 91

References ...……………………………………………………………………….…... 133

Introduction

This portfolio is a reflection of what I have learned as part of the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program. This program has allowed me to mature as a budding language teacher by giving me opportunities to develop a personal set of beliefs about effective language teaching, to practice my teaching skills through graduate instructorships, and to grow as a professional in my field. An intricate part of my growth in the program has come through the development of my teaching philosophy, which is an articulation of the most important aspects of language teaching that I wish to include in my foreign language classroom.

The teaching philosophy is a demonstration of how I believe foreign language should be taught. It covers the following themes: the communicative classroom, activities, target language use, culture, and brain-based language teaching. These themes form the foundation of my beliefs of how to effectively teach a foreign language.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Apprenticeship of Observation

As long as I can remember, I have had a passion for language. My dad whispered Spanish phrases to me in the cradle, and I have always been fascinated with people of other cultures and how they communicate. I have had several teachers from a variety of backgrounds who made use of different teaching techniques. Some greatly enhanced my knowledge of language; others were not quite as effective. In the end, the greatest teacher ended up being experience itself.

My very first language teacher was my dad. He had traveled around Mexico in his youth and was enchanted by the culture and the Spanish language. He never became very proficient, but what he could speak he was passionate about. He taught me the numbers and phrases in songs and games, which as a young child I caught on to very quickly. He made Spanish a delight, something I really enjoyed learning about. His passion for the language and culture instilled in me a desire to speak it for myself.

My first exposure to foreign language in the classroom came when I was in 3rd grade. My teacher had spent several weeks in Mexico and decided to do a unit on Spanish. I was absolutely thrilled at the opportunity to learn more than what my dad had already taught me. Most of what she taught was simply a variety of vocabulary relating to food, plus some cultural pictures that we colored for fun. Little to no language skills were taught, since my teacher was not even an intermediate speaker of Spanish, but I didn't know any better and was delighted with what I could get.

In the United States public school curriculum, a foreign language typically is not introduced until junior high, around 6th or 7th grade. Unfortunately by this time in my life my family had moved from the large city of my birth to a very small town that offered little in the way of foreign language education. I felt cheated out of learning Spanish, at least a few years of it. However, my middle school offered a one-semester French class, so I enrolled with the hope

of gaining some language skills. The teacher had minored in French years ago and her passion for the language had long since died off. She taught long vocabulary lists and showed short films for French children. The class left little impact on me, which is reflected in what I remember of the French language (i.e., how to count to 10 and a few phrases indicating my state of being). I think that if she had shown some excitement for French I would have left with more of an appreciation for its beauty, but her lack of luster left a greater impact.

I finally entered the 9th grade and was granted four years of language instruction in high school. My teacher, Mrs. Tapia, was from Spain and loved her language and culture. In addition to Spanish and English, she spoke German and French and was learning Arabic. I adored and admired her. She was the only Spanish teacher at the school and therefore I was her student for four years. During the first two years she taught with mostly mechanical drills and exercises from the book. The Spanish I and Spanish II classes had up to 40 students each, making it difficult for her to manage much more than these simple exercises. Unfortunately the textbook was not very inventive and the exercises were repetitious and held no personal meaning. What I remember most clearly were the verb conjugations that Mrs. Tapia taught us, with all the different endings in a structured diagram. I found the structure very easy to remember and was able to quickly grasp the concept of conjugations and even memorize the irregular ones. This particular method was helpful for me to learn the grammar. However, this type of learning did not reach beyond verb conjugations, making every other aspect of learning the language, including the actual speaking of Spanish, a struggle. Despite the somewhat stagnant learning environment, I was a diligent pupil and managed to gain from the classes more than most others.

There were not enough hours in the standard school day for Mrs. Tapia to be able to teach a Spanish III and Spanish IV class. However, she was able to combine those two courses into

one, which she taught in the morning before standard school hours. She also worked with the local community college which allowed the high school students to receive college credit for the class. I attended regularly throughout my last two years of high school. These classes were formatted differently than the ones Mrs. Tapia taught for underclassmen. They were based on discussion of recent events, sentence structure and advanced grammar. Her goal for us was to be able to speak. However, her approach to helping us learn how to speak was haphazard. It seemed like she just wanted us to jump up and say something. Unfortunately none of us were that confident or felt particularly proficient. During discussion time we tended to simply read off our statement on the day's topic that had been assigned as homework, without reacting to what others had to say or expressing much opinion. Therefore, I graduated from high school with an excellent understanding of many grammar principles and the ability to read and pronounce, but with little speaking or writing ability. Despite my shortcomings, I adored the language and desperately wanted to speak it well. I had very much enjoyed my Spanish classes and my Spanish teacher, and felt excited to enter college declaring a major in Spanish.

My college Spanish teachers differed little in style from any experience I had before, except that the classes were much faster paced and the material more difficult. After two years of college Spanish to add to my four in high school, I could read well and could understand most of the time, but I could simply not produce language. This led to my decision to study abroad in Argentina for a year. There, I was immersed in Argentine universities with Argentine students and Argentine professors. The option was to learn Spanish or to fail all classes. It took full immersion and plenty of stress for me to finally become fluent in the Spanish language, a life-long goal. I returned home ecstatic about my new ability, and found that I was filled with a new dream - the desire to teach Spanish to others.

Thus concluded my formal journey in learning the Spanish language, which gave birth to my desire to become a teacher. At no specific moment did I make this decision, but rather as I thought about my passions I became more and more convinced that teaching would allow me to use my gift with the Spanish language to help others. However, as it turns out, my language-learning journey was not at a close. I decided to serve a full-time mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. With the experience I had in the Spanish language, I figured I was going to be sent to a Spanish-speaking area. I was therefore shocked to learn that I was being sent to serve in the Sweden Stockholm Mission and would be required to learn Swedish.

The two-month sojourn in the Missionary Training Center, during which time I tried to learn as much Swedish as possible, changed the way I thought about second language learning and teaching. My instructors were extraordinary. One was a native Swede, the other an English speaker who had served a mission in Sweden. Both loved Swedish and spoke it almost exclusively in the classroom. They helped us invent games to encourage us to speak solely in Swedish. They taught grammar with gusto and full confidence in our ability to master every element. After nine intense weeks I entered Sweden with about the same capacity for Swedish as I had with Spanish entering Argentina. In other words, in two months I had learned about as much Swedish as I had learned Spanish during six years of formal education. Of course, as I had experienced in Argentina, there is no replacement for total immersion. I achieved fluency during the 16 months spent in Sweden.

As a missionary I was given many opportunities to teach Swedish voluntarily to foreign immigrants. These experiences solidified my desire to teach language as a profession, and my involvement in the MSLT program has given me the training to become an effective teacher in the foreign language classroom.

Professional Environment

My immediate plans for language teaching include becoming an instructor of Spanish at the college level. I would prefer to start out with beginning classes and eventually move on to intermediate and advanced levels as I gain more experience with teaching foreign language. Although I have not planned on teaching at the secondary education level, I am also open to working in a high school setting, and even in dual immersion schools centered on the Spanish language. The majority of my teaching experiences have been in teaching Spanish, although I would also be interested in teaching ESL to non-native English speaking adults in the community or at a university. Essentially, I am open to a variety of language teaching experiences. With these options ahead of me, I look forward to a variety of teaching opportunities in various professional environments.

Personal Teaching Philosophy

Introduction

My teachers had a great influence on me and gave me many examples, both good and bad, of how to teach language. Through my studies, I have been able to reflect on those experiences and how I would improve upon them. These reflections are included here in my teaching philosophy. I describe the aspects of the second language classroom I find most essential to encourage second language acquisition, which are: designing a communicative curriculum, facilitating activities, using the target language, showcasing culture, and implementing a brain-based approach to language learning. Consistently including these five elements into my language teaching will allow me to achieve what I view as success as language teacher.

Communicative Classroom

Many styles of foreign language teaching have been developed, two of which have received particular attention. In the past, the audiolingual method (ALM) of teaching has been the most common and comfortable method for many instructors. In fact, this is what I experienced during most of my foreign language classes while attempting to learn Spanish. It may not, however, be the most effective method. Current research has shown that communicative language teaching (CLT) is a more effective method to help students communicate in the second language (L2) (Bell, 2005; Lee & Van Patten, 2003). A review of both of these methods, including the advantages and disadvantages of both styles, has demonstrated that the CLT method is an effective method of language instruction (Hiep, 2007). For this reason , the CLT is a cornerstone of my teaching philosophy.

The ALM reflects an aspect of the Atlas complex, so named because in Greek mythology the Titan Atlas was charged with holding up the world. Similarly, in the ALM, teachers play the role of Atlas. It is their responsibility to figuratively hold up the world in the classroom, meaning that they are the constant main focus, the center of the class, the sole transmitters of knowledge. Teachers are the authorities or experts whose job it is to motivate the students and enforce learning, whereas it is the students' job to passively receive the information (Lee & Van Patten, 2003). In concordance with this description, I tended to revere my instructors as absolute sources of knowledge. I did not recognize them as capable of making any errors and followed blindly as they encouraged me to perform drills that were mechanical, focusing on perfection of pronunciation, syntax, and grammar. These drills carry no meaning for the student and as such are not useful in helping the students retain the language. The curriculum is, for the most part, focused on grammar as the main goal, reflecting the attitude that one cannot truly learn a language without mastering its grammar (Lee & Van Patten). As a consequence, I excelled in Spanish grammar, but my communication skills were sadly lacking.

In sharp contrast, the CLT method promotes communication as the main goal of the classroom (Kramsch, 2006), as "meaning-focused self-expression [is] found to be a more effective way to develop communicative ability" (Savignon, 2005, p. 640), compared with the ALM. In general, students attend foreign language classes not for the purpose of reciting grammar principles, but to become proficient in the L2, with "the ability to use language to perform […] language functions within a variety of contexts" (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 247). I personally held this goal, and assumed my teachers knew the proper way for me to attain that goal. Students' purposes for attending a foreign language class might be integrative (meaning they have a personal interest in the culture or people and wish to integrate with their society,

which was my own reason for wanting to learn Spanish) or instrumental (meaning they have practical interest in the language, perhaps to increase job opportunities), but in the end the student attends the class to be able to communicate (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro & Mandell, 2001).

The CLT method is unique in that it promotes the idea that a L2 can be learned the same way the first was learned (Kennedy, 2006) – by creating an implicit system through intake of meaningful input. Only by practicing elements of language that are comprehensible to the learner can they produce output, which is "the ability […] to produce utterances in real time" (Lee & Van Patten, 2003, p. 18). This implicit or subconscious system is created through genuine communication in the classroom about something that is meaningful to the student (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001; Lee & Van Patten). It makes perfect sense that a foreign language would be learned in the same way that the native language was learned; the trial comes with the work it takes to implement such an approach. The instructors help the student communicate by taking the role of architects or facilitators instead of "drill sergeants" (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 282). This way, they provide meaningful activities and enough grammar and vocabulary for the students to be able to perform the activity with minimal assistance.

Meaningful activities are those that practice real-life experiences and will help students in a practical setting; for example, ordering food in a restaurant or purchasing a bus ticket. It is the instructor's job to help keep the students on task and communicating in the L2 during the activity, but the students are the ones interacting and speaking the target language. This encourages the students to take the role of builders, co-workers, or teammates (Lee & Van Patten, 2003). Responsibility for learning is on their shoulders and is dependent upon how actively they participate (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001). Instructors must be able

to relinquish control of their classrooms and allow the students to communicate with each other. It is only fair that the responsibility be placed on the learner; "communication should not be a spectator sport" (p. 80), as Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro and Mandell succinctly state, and students who make it so are bound to fail.

An essential element necessary for students to learn foreign language communication is engaging in the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning (Lee & Van Patten, 2003). This negotiating or bartering with language allows the students to attempt to understand each others' messages and forces them to focus on the language spoken. During expression, the speaker attempts to relay a message to the listener. During interpretation, the listener attempts to comprehend the message of the speaker. During negotiation, the two parties come to an understanding about each other's messages and achieve communication (Lee & Van Patten, 2003; Shrum & Glisan, 2010). I have found that when my beginning Spanish language students interact in this manner, their ability to acquire the language increases significantly. The process of expressing, interpreting, and negotiating in Spanish facilitates their foreign language learning. Students' ability to negotiate meaning is dependent upon the Spanish to which they have been exposed. Therefore, proper input is a central part of CLT.

Input is the language to which the learner is exposed, be it in oral or written form. It is the educator's job to provide input that is comprehensible (Krashen, 1982); that is, language which has meaning, relates to real-life scenarios, and is expressed simply. As an educator, it is essential that I provide input that is comprehensible, since it has the potential to become intake. Intake is the language that is actually taken into the brain and processed by the learner (Lee & Van Patten, 2003). Providing comprehensible input involves knowing how to simplify what one says or the message one conveys so that the language to which the students must attend is intelligible, even

if the students have very little mastery of the language. I have found and used several specific strategies to provide comprehensible input, which include: speaking slowly, pausing longer, using pictures and gestures, speaking with simple syntax and short sentences, and discussing topics that commonly occur in known places (Lee & Van Patten). I find that the more repetition, cognates, pictures, and gestures I include in my discourse, the more my students understand my directions, teachings, and even my jokes.

Comprehensible input, however, is not enough for successful SLA. The students must also be able to produce output; that is, to create language utterances themselves (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). With each utterance, the students receive some sort of response from their peers or instructors. In fact, as Hattie (2007) states, "feedback is […] a 'consequence' of performance" (p. 81). Therefore, I concern myself greatly with the feedback I provide my students. It is essential that my feedback be constructive and helpful since every time learners produce the language, they receive some sort of feedback about their performance. There are many kinds of feedback. According to a study done by Lyster and Ranta (1997) the most popular form of teacher feedback is recasting, in which the teacher repeats the student's utterance minus the error made. Unfortunately, this is also the least effective form of feedback; students in the study were able to repair or fix their utterances only about a third of the time. Strategies such as elicitation, in which the teacher repeats the correct section of the utterance and then waits for the student to provide the correction, yielded better results – all students were able to repair their utterances (Lyster & Ranta). Based on this research, my teaching needs to include effective forms of teacher feedback so that my students can effectively repair their utterances when making mistakes in the L2.

Establishing a communicative classroom in which feedback is an effective part of instruction is an essential element of my teaching philosophy. I have found that this

communicative atmosphere fosters learning in ways that the traditional audio-linguistic approach fails to do. An important part of this communicative classroom is the type of activities which I use to facilitate learning, which will be discussed in the next section.

Activities

Second language acquisition (SLA) is a complex process (Dörnyei, 1994; Lee & Van Patten, 2003). Language is learned in a dynamic manner, and develops slowly over many years (Lee & Van Patten). Because of these "givens" of SLA (Lee & Van Patten, p. 14), I have come to understand that, if a L2 must be learned in a classroom, it is best learned in a communicative classroom that uses task-based activities (TBA) to help students communicate with each other in the target language (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro & Mandell, 2001).

TBA are designed to cause students communicate with each other to reach a common goal. These activities are learner-centered, focus on the meaningful exchange of information, and provide predetermined steps that lead students through tasks that culminate in an ultimate communicative goal, which is a "concrete representation of the information shared and gathered" (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro & Mandell, 2001, p. 77) by the students. Each task has a specific purpose, and each one teaches some lexical or grammatical structure that will help the student accomplish the end language goal. Designed by the instructor, these tasks cause students to interact with one another. This interaction facilitates SLA since the students are producing language together (Swain, 2008). The tasks comprising TBA support interaction in that they are student-focused and done in pairs or groups. Examples of these tasks include interview activities, in which students ask each other questions to complete a survey, and information gap activities, in which each party has a separate piece of information that the other needs to be able to complete the activity (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). These small tasks build upon one another and add

to the students' knowledge to create enough background information so that the students can complete the end goal (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro & Mandell).

When I implement TBA in the classroom, I notice that students benefit from these activities because they are often enjoyable, promote meaningful exchange of information, and involve social interactions. Ellis (2005) states that TBA are "cognitively involving and motivating" (p. 721). All the tasks have application in the real world and therefore are worth learning about, which the students recognize (Sung, 2010). The students are the communicators and the creators in the classroom as they accomplish tasks leading up to the culminating task (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro & Mandell, 2001). In TBA, my role becomes that of facilitator, present to promote the development of linguistic functions. I plan the activities and am proactive in my lesson planning, which means I anticipate the grammar and vocabulary the students will need to accomplish each task. I am also responsive, in that I pay close attention to the students' utterances to evaluate which concepts they grasp and which need work. I give feedback and correction as necessary, and answer any questions the students might have (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro & Mandell). The techniques that I utilize to enhance TBA include circulating in the classroom to help the students stay on task and encouraging communication in the target language. By doing so, I have the opportunity to observe the students' progress and assess their strengths and weaknesses. This allows me to teach more effectively and plan activities focusing on concepts with which the students struggle (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro & Mandell).

I use many strategies with TBA to enhance the students' comprehension of my instructions, the task, and the language concepts they are attempting to learn. I include techniques such as the use of realia, which help students to make connections between the material being learned and their lives. Real-life objects and visuals are a good aide for students

who need more than just auditory stimuli to be able to process new concepts. Technology such as PowerPoint can be utilized to project images and help the material come to life in a visual way (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). One specific kind of visual stimulus is a graphic organizer, which enables students to conceptualize information in new and meaningful ways, in addition to focusing students' attention on important details. Since students need to interact with each other to learn language, using paired and group work more often than individual- or teacher-fronted work is an effective technique to encourage communication in the target language. These techniques enforce the negotiation of meaning and foster SLA (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008).

Attempting to reach the culminating goal may seem intimidating to the students, but by moving through activities step-by-step, each activity can build upon previous ones and therefore build sufficient background knowledge to accomplish the more daunting task (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001). Through the progression of activities, the teacher provides scaffolding, which is substantial assistance provided at the beginning of an activity and then gradually decreased as learners grasp the new concepts. This pushes students towards their limits of knowledge and then provides just enough help for students to accomplish the task at hand before moving on to a more complicated activity (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). Activities must stretch the students so that when they communicate they have to negotiate meaning to be able to decipher what needs to be done by each party. In this manner, TBA promote communication and enforce the negotiation of meaning (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell). While planning my lessons, I need to be careful to ensure the tasks are communicative, as there are many mechanical drills that can masquerade as TBA, but that in reality do not enforce the

negotiation of meaning (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). For these activities to be effective, it is essential that each task is mastered to be able to reach the culminating language goal.

In the communicative classroom, every task and activity is carried out to develop the students' capacity to communicate effectively. Every vocabulary word and grammatical concept taught is for the express purpose of enhancing communication. TBA are used to help achieve this goal. Students are able to learn meaningful aspects of language that will assist them in achieving fluency through the implementation of TBA in the classroom.

Target Language

For foreign language instruction to be effective, the target language must be the main mode of communication in the classroom. In fact, research demonstrates that 90 percent of all discourse should be in the target language to allow students to practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001; Lee & Van Patten, 2003). In my experience as a language instructor, the research holds true. In concurrence, Foster (2009) states, "target language explanations lead to more secure learning than mother tongue explanations." This includes instructions for activities or homework assignments, and even explanations for students who are falling behind. If students know that instructions will follow in the L1, they will not focus on the L2 instructions. The only way students will recognize the importance of listening carefully is if they know they must pay attention to understand instructions. At the same time, it is essential that I ensure that my own output is intelligible for the students' level of comprehension. Students will comprehend when instructions and directions are given in a way that is easy to understand. As stated previously, using gestures, pictures, and realia assists in communicating the message. Similarly, planning ahead to provide enough stimulus to assist the students' comprehension is an important element of successful L2 teaching

(Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001). It is unlikely that students will be given other opportunities to practice the target language outside of the classroom. Therefore, the only exposure they have to the language will be provided in the classroom (Crawford 2004), by me and the students' classmates.

Nevertheless, although teachers maybe believe that instruction should be given in the target language (Allen, 2002), they often fail to use the target language in the classroom for various reasons (Levine, 2003). Particularly for teachers who are non-native speakers of the target language, it can be intimidating to speak entirely in the target language for fear of making mistakes – especially if any of the students are heritage or native speakers of the language (Bateman, 2008). I know that this is a stumbling block for me personally – I recognize that I make mistakes when I speak and when I teach, and I am sometimes inhibited by the fear that my students will catch my mistakes and discredit me as a teacher. Another reason teachers may fail to use the target language is lack of time (Bateman). I understand the temptation to simply explain in English when students are struggling to grasp a concept. However, I believe the cognitive exercise of attempting to understand the target language ultimately benefits the learner. Allen suggests that teachers might simply be unsure how to teach in the target language, since they have never been shown a model of how to do so. Similarly, Bateman states that student teachers who have never seen their mentor teachers use the target language are hesitant to use it themselves, having never seen an appropriate model. Teachers may also feel too fatigued to use the target language consistently, which occurs most commonly in secondary educational settings where a teacher may spend four hours straight teaching (Bateman). To do so in the target language, while attempting to hold the attention of the students, would be a struggle. However, as more time is spent doing so, and as the students become accustomed to hearing the target

language spoken, I have found that it becomes less tiring and more rewarding. In fact, speaking the target language becomes smooth, habitual, and easy.

In addition to citing several reasons instructors may fail to use the target language in the classroom, Bateman (2008) also offers suggestions to help teachers make using the target language in the classroom easier. He states that

> teachers can discuss with their students their rationale for conducting class in the target language and the benefits in terms of language learning. They can explain that the students will not be expected to comprehend every word, but should strive to understand the general meaning of what the teacher says, much as they would do if they were sojourners in a country in which the target language is spoken (p. 26).

The first day of class, I announce to the students that I will be using the target language and why it is so important to do so. I also explain that I do not expect them to understand everything, and that I do expect them to be confused from time to time. Another suggestion Bateman makes is that teachers prepare in advance with pictures, gestures, and realia to explain concepts that they know students will have difficulty grasping. This thinking ahead helps a lesson flow smoothly, and, in my experience, students understand the meaning without needing to comprehend every utterance. In addition, Levine (2003) reports students in classrooms where the target language is frequently spoken have lower anxiety about the target language. That is, the more exposed students are to the language, the more comfortable they are with using it. Since my goal is to help the students learn to speak, I will use the target language to help them feel comfortable with the language.

While the teacher may be motivated to use the target language, it may be a different story for the student. While attempting to speak the target language, students may experience anxiety

and lack the motivation to overcome their anxiety and use the language (MacIntyre, 2007). Motivation has been identified as one of the most important components related to a student's ability to acquire a foreign language (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). As such, learning how to motivate learners and help learners to self-motivate is an important part of foreign language teaching. At the most basic level, motivation can be fostered by a simple reward system (Ahl, 2006); these rewards can be directly tied into the classroom curriculum, such as creative and engaging activities, and supplementary and authentic materials (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). Other motivating elements that can be incorporated into the classroom include designing language games, personalizing the learning process (discussing topics that interest the learners), and helping the learners understand the target culture (Dörnyei & Csizér), although it should be remembered that motivators are individual and what motivates one student may not motivate another (Robinson, 2001).

As logic demands, using the target language in the classroom facilitates the students' ability to acquire the language. Teachers must conquer their own fears to give their students the best environment possible to encourage language acquisition. When the teacher is motivated and excited about using the language, the students are more likely to be motivated as well. Similarly, I have found that teachers who are enamored with the target culture transmit this enthusiasm to their students. Since language and culture are intrinsically bound together, it is essential that I support language learning not only through the use of the target language, but also through explicit discussion of common cultural differences, nonverbal behavior in the target culture, and the use of authentic texts, as will be discussed in the next section.

Culture

In everything we do and say, we display aspects of our culture. This concept is universal in that all persons carry aspects of their culture, in the way they think, talk, and behave. Culture is the way we explain the world around us and understand the behaviors of others. It is “the sum of the way of life of any group of people” (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2007, p. 12).

Language and culture are intrinsically linked. In fact, DeCapua and Wintergerst (2007) state, “a culture’s beliefs, values, and norms are reflected and reinforced by the discourse patterns of a language” (p. 242). So strongly are language and culture intertwined that Bennett (1993) asserts that an L2 learner who views language as merely a set of linguistic rules is a “fluent fool” (p. 16), one who can speak a foreign language but is clueless as to the significance of the language and its countless elements among members of a cultural group. The fluent fool will make few linguistic mistakes but many cultural blunders that may eventually lead to a negative outlook on the target culture and negative impressions of the person on the part of the target language speakers (Bennett). Understanding the cultural aspect of language is the only way to avoid being a fluent fool, and in fact to fully understand the culture one must examine the language, and vice versa (Moran, 2001).

In my experience, the interaction of language and culture teaches much about the individuals within that linguistic and cultural group. Bennett gives specific examples of how fundamental this relationship between language and culture is. He explains that language is linked to our experience of the world, giving the example of the people of the Micronesian islands of Truk, who do not have words to differentiate between the colors blue and green. DeCapua and Wintergerst assert that language is intrinsically linked to our social relations. For example, the fact that in the Japanese language there are many linguistic forms to address a

second party shows that their culture is more concerned with status, compared to speakers of the English language, which has only one linguistic form for the same purpose (Bennett, 1993). In a separate study, Bennett (2004) states that in dominant cultures, or cultures in which there is a tendency to view outsiders as lesser beings, us versus them language is extremely prevalent, effectively pointing out another way that culture and language are intertwined. The cultural aspect of the Spanish language which consistently confuses me is the differentiation between formal and informal addresses. Since this concept does not exist in English, it is easy for me to make a cultural error and use the incorrect form. An important aspect of language learning is to recognize the cultural implications of the language forms one uses. Consequently, I need to be careful to demonstrate, if not explicitly teach, these cultural aspects of language in the classroom, and in so doing help my students avoid becoming fluent fools.

In addition, culture influences the way people manipulate language to convey a certain meaning (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2007). Therefore, it is important that students of foreign language have a firm understanding of the cultural implications of the language forms they are learning and how to speak appropriately in a real-world setting. They must have a solid grasp on the target language culture to be able to interact successfully with members of that culture (Moran, 2001). In my own experience as an L2 learner studying abroad in Argentina, there were so many things that I wish my language teachers had taught me about their way of life, their values, and the way these values were expressed through language, both verbal and nonverbal. A specific example of a cultural expression that I wish I had learned about is the tradition of a kiss on the cheek as a form of greeting. I was told that this is the appropriate greeting, but meeting people was very awkward for me until I figured out how it to do it properly. I did not realize that it was a fairly complex sequence, involving a kiss (cheek touch with pursed lips) that always

occurs on the right side of the face. The left hand is placed gently on the opposing person's shoulder for balance and, if two people are meeting for the first time, names are exchanged directly after the kiss. These, and other cultural anomalies, remained mysteries for me until I was able to decipher them for myself.

A particularly salient type of cultural anomaly can be found in nonverbal communication. As demonstrated with my example of the kiss, effective communication does not necessarily include extended spoken exchanges. Nonverbal communication is an often overlooked but important aspect of both cultural and language learning. DeCapua and Wintergerst (2007) even state that "the most important part of communication may not necessarily be what speakers actually say but how they convey that message through body language (kinesics), eye contact (gaze), [and] the use of interpersonal space (proxemics)" (p. 72). This language of the body often dictates how to properly interact with others (Quinlisk, 2008), and varies widely based on culture. In fact, a gesture of politeness in one culture might be a highly rude expression in another. In the United States, for example, holding the index finger and thumb together to make a circle indicates that something is okay, whereas in Brazil this same gesture is an insult (DeCapua & Wintergerst). Similarly, the thumbs up sign, which in the United States signifies that all is well, is a highly obscene gesture in many African and Middle Eastern countries (Dresser, 2005). All human beings engage in some type of nonverbal behavior, which mostly occurs subconsciously. The most common functions of nonverbal behavior are to express emotions, accent verbal messages, contradict verbal messages, and substitute for verbal communication. These nonverbal cues contain significant communicative relevance (Gullberg, 2008) and are essential to understand the true message of the speaker. In fact, more than 65 percent of social meaning is conveyed through nonverbal communication (DeCapua &

Wintergerst). Learning appropriate nonverbal cues is key to being able to communicate effectively within the target language culture. Without nonverbal communication, social interactions are difficult to navigate for the language learner. It is, therefore, essential that nonverbal communication be at least an implicit part of foreign language learning.

Not only is nonverbal communication an important part of cultural understanding, it is also a great help for those learning a foreign language. Sime (2008) states that nonverbal communication plays "a crucial role in providing second language learners with comprehensible input" (p. 259). Gestures, in particular, "improve comprehension in L2 topics" by "captur[ing] attention, provid[ing] semantic redundancy, and generally engag[ing] more senses by grounding speech acts in the concrete, physical experience" (Gullberg, 2008, pp. 290-291). Teachers who frequently use nonverbal communication, particularly gestures, create another medium through which their students can understand the target language. I have found through my own teaching experience that the more gestures I use to describe my utterances, the easier a time my students have in following my discourse. Nonverbal communication will be an essential element of my foreign language classroom.

Including such issues as nonverbal communication in the classroom can be difficult if not overtly placed within the curriculum. However, I have found a way to include culture in the foreign language classroom, which can be taught both explicitly and implicitly, through the use of authentic texts. Authentic texts are excellent principle sources of language and culture (Moore, 1996). Swaffer (1985) explains that

> an authentic text, oral or written, is one whose primary intent is to communicate meaning. In other words, such a text can be one which is written for native speakers of

> the language to be read by other native speakers (with the intent to inform, persuade, thank, etc.) (p. 17).

These are texts created by members of a language and culture group for their own use, and as such demonstrate a form of the language that is completely natural and a context that is culturally and contextually accurate (Polio & Zyzik, 2009). They "carry a rich cargo of references for the broader culture of the country" (Kelly, 2005, p. 181). Examples include novels, poems, television shows, newscasts, etc. (Omaggio Hadley, 2001). These forms of text give students the opportunity to understand how people in that culture truly interact and speak with each other. Students hear and see how the language serves a purpose for the people (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). Understanding how the people use the language can even help overcome ethnocentric tendencies.

There is a tendency to judge others based upon one's own standards. With this ethnocentric viewpoint, one's own culture is "central to reality" (Bennett, 2004, p. 62) and, in extreme cases, people of one culture view those not of their culture as less than human. L2 educators need to help their students grow from this ethnocentric mind frame and embrace cultural differences instead of allowing students to view these differences as alien and distasteful (Omaggio Hadley, 2001; Reagan, 2005; Storti, 2001). Educators must aide their students in fostering tolerance; not the tolerance that is "a civilized way of coexisting with the repugnant" (Freire, 2005, p. 77), that merely covers disrespect or hides negative perceptions, but the tolerance that embraces uniqueness and celebrates differences (Freire). I aspire to teach tolerance in my foreign language classroom so that my students will be open and accepting of the different.

That which is different can be easier for language learners to accept when they understand the culture from which the different behavior comes. A way to do this is to understand how to use pragmatics. Pragmatics is "the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society" (Mey, 2001, p. 6). That is, speakers understand the cultural implications of what they say in the structure of the conversation and the appropriateness of an utterance based on the situation (Soler & Martínez-Flor, 2008). For example, this includes understanding the "local norms for making requests, accepting compliments, and performing many other speech acts" (LoCastro, 2010, p. 7). This can be difficult for foreign language learners because they have to learn not only the words and the grammar rules, but also how these aspects of the language affect their relationship with native speakers of the language. Fortunately, pragmatics is teachable. Routines such as apologies, complaints, compliments, refusals, requests, and responses to these routines can become a viable part of the foreign language classroom (Kasper & Roever, 2005). Each of these pragmatic elements is attached to another principle of the language that can be included in a lesson plan; I have found it effective to include them as a task in my TBA lesson. By teaching pragmatics, I enable my students to increase their ability to communicate competently.

As a language teacher, it is my goal that my students be able to communicate competently in the target language. Communicative competence is the ability to function in a communicative setting, which includes being willing to take risks, being resourceful with the language, and generally making oneself understood (Savignon, 1972). There are four main components of communicative competence: sociolinguistic competence, grammatical competence, strategic competence, and discourse competence (Lee & Van Patten, 2003). A look into these four components of communicative competence will reveal that although they are

different, most of them have connections to cultural understanding as well as the ability to communicate in the target language. For instance, sociolinguistic competence is the ability to use language appropriately according to a certain social setting. To be sociolinguistically competent, an individual must be sensitive to cross-cultural differences and how language affects the participants involved in the discussion (Omaggio Hadley, 2001). It has been noted that, although many people may be willing to forgive grammatical incompetence (making errors in the linguistic code, which is the opposite of grammatical competence or mastering the linguistic code [Omaggio Hadley]), they are less likely to forgive sociolinguistic incompetence, or social errors. In my experience, if I mistakenly use the wrong preposition or fail to use the subjunctive appropriately, speakers of the target language take little notice. However, if I use the informal or formal language incorrectly, or perform an emphasizing gesture inappropriately, I am faced with potentially hostile responses. To help my students avoid such awkward situations, I need to help them develop sociolinguistic competence.

A way to combat a lack of sociolinguistic competence is through strategic competence. This involves "the use of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies to compensate for gaps in the language user's knowledge of the code or for breakdown in communication because of performance factors" (Omaggio Hadley, 2001, p. 6). Essentially, strategic competence is the ability to be creative with the language in order to make the message understood. In my experience, use of such a strategy allows for cultural leniencies, as it is apparent to the native speaker that the non-native speaker is doing their very best to make themselves understood. However, this strategy is mostly used by beginning speakers. More advanced language learners strive toward discourse competence, or the ability to speak cohesively and coherently through several ideas (Omaggio Hadley). Achieving this competence allows the speaker to "indicate how

he perceives the social relation between him and his interlocutor" (le Pair, 1996, p. 652) across an extended discourse, which allows for the expression and interpretation of cultural ideas.

Developing communicative competence is seen as a main goal for the language learner, and "culture is seen to play an instrumental role in shaping speakers' communicative competence" (Savignon, 2005, p. 639). Understanding the target language's culture is, then, an essential element of language learning and the ability to communicate in the target language. Therefore, to achieve my goal of helping my students communicate in the foreign language, culture teaching must be an integral element to my foreign language classroom. In order to teach culture and other elements of the target language, I will apply techniques influenced by brain-based research, outlined in the next section, into my teaching methodology.

Brain-Based Language Teaching

In addition to studying Spanish, I also earned a degree in psychology. The ways in which the mind works intrigue me, and therefore how the brain acquires language is also of interest to me. Understanding how the brain learns as a plastic, dynamic unit (Osterhout et al., 2008) allows educators to plan lessons and teach in such a way that is profitable for the students (Christison, 2002; Lombardi, 2008). In this section, I will discuss some of the research that examines how understanding the manner in which the brain acquires language is an asset to L2 educators.

The brain is driven by meaning. It attempts to apply meaning to each new piece of information. In language learning, "students can master rote memorization, but they often become full of information yet starved for meaning" (Christison, 2002, p. 5). Memorized information may last until test day, but without meaning will likely not be retained. In my own learning experience, when I sat down and attempted to memorize verb conjugations and

vocabulary lists I was wildly unsuccessful. Learning came when I interacted with native speakers and heard them use the words I was attempting to learn.

Since the brain attempts to apply meaning to unique situations, it makes sense that the brain reacts quickly and intensely with each new stimulus. This is especially true when the brain feels threatened. In this situation, energies detract from clear thinking and problem solving (Christison, 2002). In fact, complex learning is severely inhibited by threat, and conversely enhanced by stimulating challenge (Lombardi, 2008). This suggests that emotion is critical in learning. In fact, "emotions are crucial to memory because they facilitate the storage and recall of information" (Christison, p. 5). Teachers must think about how activities affect their students emotionally.

Kennedy (2006) explains how the brain learns by processing emotion. The manner in which the brain processes emotion should be an important consideration for teachers. The more emotions a person experiences while learning, the more the information is processed and then assimilated into the learner's working memory. In addition, the more emotion one feels, the more attention one pays to the task. Once in the working memory, if emotions are still attached to this particular learning experience, the information is much more likely to be assimilated into long-term memory. Kennedy provides several strategies that teachers can use to help them encourage this language assimilation by their students. He states that novelty needs to be added to any repetitive experience; if teachers have to teach something more than once, they should do so in a creative and unique manner. This is supported by Lombardi (2008), who claims that activities which are exciting and engaging help the brain acquire language. Kennedy (2006) also states that working in small groups helps students assimilate language into long-term memory by allowing them to acquire the language by doing something with it. Similarly, Lombardi (2008) states that

emotions are critical to patterning, which is "meaningful categorization and organization of information" (Christison, 2002, p. 5). Because the brain is organized and seeks out patterns, when teachers introduce new topics and relate them to previously understood concepts, students are able to pattern by relating the previous material to the new material.

Not only is the brain prone to organization, but it likes to organize and work in complex manners. It can function in many ways and on many levels at the same time (Lombardi, 2008). Christison asserts that "brain-compatible teaching should orchestrate the learner's experience so that many different aspects of the brain's operations can be addressed" (2002, p. 5). Changing activities several times throughout the class period and including reading, writing, listening, and speaking enhance learning (Lombardi, 2008), which conforms with current research in SLA (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001; Lee & Van Patten, 2003). In addition, "class time must be structured in a manner that takes *ultradian rhythms*, the attention highs and lows commonly experienced in cycles of 20 minutes or less, into consideration" (Kennedy, 2006, p. 479). Therefore, according to brain-based research, activities should be short to maintain students' attention.

Kennedy also suggests providing students with several ways to use vocabulary in "meaningful and creative ways that stimulate the mind, which directly affects the growth of enriched neuronal connections" (2006, p. 480), and explains that using visual images and TPR are excellent ways to do so. In concordance, Jensen (1998) states that posting key concepts with pictures helps prime the students' brains to assimilate the new information. She also points to dramatic student-created presentations as particularly stimulating for the brain. In agreement with Kennedy and Jensen, I have found that the more emotion-evoking activities and creative

visual and kinesthetic stimuli I provide, the more my students tend to remember the vocabulary and even the grammatical structures that went along with a particular lesson.

A simple way to include activities that are emotion-evoking, creative, and kinesthetic is through group work. I have found that when students work with others, they are more engaged, use more creative language, and move around more often. Lombardi asserts that "the brain likes and responds well to social engagement and oral sharing" (2008, p. 221) – that is, the brain works best when interacting with others. Learning is enhanced by positive and engaging social contact (Christison, 2002), and therefore, group work encourages foreign language learning.

Another advantage to group work is that it allows students to move about the classroom and change their physical location. This is beneficial because physical movement improves brain functioning (Christison, 2002). Teachers should be encouraged to include activities that cause students to move about the classroom, change positions to work in groups, and have students come to the board (Christison). Likewise, I have found that I receive the fewest reactions from students who are stationary – they tend to stare at me blankly. Students who are moving around and working in groups are generally willing to engage in conversation.

Understanding how the brain acquires language helps educators to provide communicative opportunities for language learners. Reading through this research has given me a greater appreciation for many of the theories involved in SLA which are supported by brain-based research. It also inspires me to organize lessons and activities that are short, emotion-bearing, and involve social interaction. Applying these elements to my language classes will help me to be a well-rounded educator capable of fostering a favorable environment for my language learners.

Conclusion

In this teaching philosophy I have outlined the elements that I find to be the most important aspects of an effective foreign language classroom and that have shaped the way I perceive both the teaching and learning process. I plan to run a communicative classroom focused on speaking the target language in a meaningful context. I will facilitate activities that are task-based and learner-centered. I intend to include cultural elements such as nonverbal behavior and pragmatics into my lessons to give my students a well-rounded understanding of the language. Finally, my goal is to apply my knowledge of how the brain acquires language to facilitate language learning in my classroom. I aim to be an educator who incorporates each of these elements during every lesson that I teach, to enable my students to successfully acquire the foreign language.

LEARNING THROUGH OBSERVATION

Throughout my time in the MSLT program, I have learned important theories in the field of SLA. I have learned about communicative language teaching, and how providing students opportunities to negotiate meaning helps them practice their language skills. I have found that the target language should be used as much as possible so that students are exposed to the language. I have developed lesson plans involving task-based activities, which are among the most effective types of activities to carry out in the classroom. I have ascertained that culture and language are intrinsically linked, and therefore culture must be present in language teaching. I have even learned through doing – as a graduate instructor of Spanish, I discovered ways to effectively teach my students the Spanish language. However, one of the most effective methods of learning how to teach language that I experienced at Utah State University has come through the observation of other language teachers.

One of the more obvious benefits of observing how other language teachers run their classrooms is the ability to gather new ideas for one's own personal use. I have found that if a particular topic is troubling, or if I am struggling to create a communicative activity for a specific grammar concept, observing how another instructor teaches that topic or that concept provides me with new ideas. Often I am able to not only plan a good lesson based on those ideas, but also to incorporate those ideas into other lessons as well. The more diverse and creative my lessons, the more exciting my language teaching is, and the more likely my students are to enjoy learning.

Observing instructors that teach a higher division course of the same language that I teach has also been helpful. They are often more experienced and confident in their language teaching. However, they are also usually imperfect and may have become complacent after years of teaching. Observing their imperfections allows me to consistently reflect on my teaching philosophy and recommit myself to following the language teaching practices I have found to be

most effective. It also inspires me to avoid complacency and actively seek out new and creative methods to employ important SLA theories into my teaching.

Generally if I am seeking new ideas for my own lessons, I observe classes that teach languages I speak. However, other insights are gained by observing classrooms in which I am unable to understand a single word. The extent of the use of the target language by the teacher is more readily observed, as well as whether or not the students strive to use the L2. Since I am unfamiliar with the target culture in these cases, mannerisms distinct to the target language people are more observable, which allows me to reflect on ways that I mirror the customs of the target culture in my own classroom. One of the best examples of this I observed in a Chinese classroom, in which the teacher greeted and dismissed the students with the traditional bow.

Throughout my studies at Utah State University, the ability to observe other instructors has been a useful strategy in discovering new ways to teach effectively. After my graduation, I plan to continue this practice for the purpose of continually strengthening my language teaching skills. In addition, I plan to be willing to allow others to observe my teaching. I have found that I am more motivated to enhance my own teaching when another instructor is analyzing my classroom practices. Hopefully, I will be able to assist others in gathering new ideas the way that my observation of others has helped me in excelling in the language teacher capacity.

ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION OF TEACHING VIDEO

The recording and observation of the video took place at the end of my first semester as a graduate instructor of Spanish. I taught an entry level Spanish course to undergraduate students. The class period lasted 50 minutes, during which time I facilitated a lesson on the preterite form, a past-tense conjugation. From observing my video, I learned that although there are many things about my teaching that are in keeping with my teaching philosophy, certain aspects need much improvement. Observing myself teach while having my teaching philosophy close at hand allowed me to identify the areas in which I excel, as well as those that demand development.

My teaching philosophy states that my goal is to be a facilitator in my classroom, and to have my students perform the activities while I help them. I do this well, giving them instructions in the target language on what to do and then letting them work together to discuss how to accomplish the task. I did this for most of the activities throughout the lesson. However, there was a game we played called *Lotería* (bingo) that was teacher-fronted. If I had designed the activity differently, for example by having students ask each other about the pictures on the bingo board, I could have made that a student-centered activity instead. By observing myself, I realized that I can put more thought into my lesson plans so that there will be more student-centered activities.

An important element of student-centered activities is the ability to give good instructions and supply comprehensible input. Providing comprehensible input is an important part of being a language teacher, and although I did speak slowly to my students, I could have worked to speak a little more clearly. Also, because of the size and shape of the classroom, in order to view the screen I was forced to turn away from the students. Therefore, if I needed to look at the board to remind myself of the instructions, I was invariably speaking away from them. To avoid this problem, I should have better familiarized myself with the instructions I was giving, or written

them out on something I could hold so I wouldn't have to turn to know what was happening next. I did not need the visual support for myself when repeating instructions that the students failed to understand the first time. Once I remembered what we were doing, I was able to explain slowly and clearly what I wanted of them.

Although I was able to explain directions well, the way I administered feedback was ineffective. I noticed that I most often used recasting, in which I restate the word correctly when the student makes a mistake. This is the most ineffective form of feedback, and definitely needs adjustment. I was, however, quick to praise good performance and able to encourage my students and help them feel at ease with my friendly, relaxed demeanor. I was even able to do this in the target language in a manner that my students understood.

As stated in my teaching philosophy, 90 percent of all discourse should be in the target language. This is particularly important to me, since I firmly believe that unless my students work their hardest to attempt to produce the language in the classroom, they will never be able to do so in real life. In addition, unless they hear the language from me or from their peers, they are probably not hearing it at all. Therefore, Spanish is exclusively spoken in my classroom, which was evident in the video. I did not use English at all, and only twice throughout the hour could I hear my students speaking English.

In addition to not hearing the target language outside the classroom, my students are similarly not experiencing the culture of the target language outside the classroom. Therefore, I try to include at least a small bit of the Spanish-speaking culture into each lesson. I was able to use an authentic text in the form of a music video as a warm-up for the class. The main purpose of the video was to get into the Spanish mood and let the students see something belonging to the target culture. This is the most basic of culture-inclusion in the foreign language classroom, and I

aspire to do much more. I need to be more creative in including cultural elements, such as a written text to read and discuss in class, or simply talk about the cultural experiences I had while traveling abroad.

I observed myself facilitating several small activities throughout the class period. One of them was a *Firma Aquí* activity, in which the students seek out several people with whom to hold a short conversation. It is an activity that I do fairly frequently and therefore my students should know how to accomplish the task, but it still needed more than the rudimentary instructions that I gave. It would have been better if I had modeled how the activity would be done – all I did was explain what I wanted the students to do. Although they claimed to understand, they fiddled around uncertainly for a minute or so before starting. At that point, I gave them a few more instructions and encouraged them to get on their feet and talk. I should have realized that the uncertainty probably was not a lack of willingness to complete the activity, but rather a lack of understanding exactly what they should be doing. During the activity I constantly circled around the classroom, which I state in my teaching philosophy to be an important part of facilitating an activity. I need to be available to answer questions, help students work through problems, and keep the students on task and talking in the target language. Another technique to keeping students on task and engaged is to cut the activity short (Ballman, Liskin- Gasparro & Mandell, 2001). Unfortunately, I let the activity run too long. Watching the video, I noticed that after a while students had a harder time finding someone with whom they had not yet spoken and tended to wander around the classroom. In the future, I need to be more conscious of when most of the students have accomplished the activity.

A section of my teaching philosophy addresses the importance of understanding how the brain learns and applying that understanding to my classroom practices. I was pleased to see that

I had taken how the brain learns into consideration while planning and executing this lesson. For example, the brain is social – we learn well when we are able to interact with others. The activities I organized involved lots of interaction and opportunities for students to relate to each other. The brain also learns well when experiencing emotion. I was able to provide amusement for my students by using funny pictures of myself as a visual reference to the language concepts we were practicing in class that day. In addition to emotion, the brain also performs well when physical movement is involved. During the *Firma Aquí* activity, in particular, students were able to be on their feet and moving around the classroom.

This thorough examination of how I teach in the classroom has been eye-opening. Although I am delighted to observe the things I am doing right, such as using the target language and applying brain-based learning practices, I am also frustrated to observe the things I am doing wrong, such as providing ineffective feedback and inadequate instructions. However, the purpose of this exercise is to help me understand ways I can improve my teaching practices to align with my teaching philosophy. It has helped me to be more committed to "practice what I preach" and become a more effective language teacher.

CULTURE ARTIFACT

Introduction

I originally wrote this artifact as part of a linguistics course on culture. I was given free rein to write on any topic, and I chose to address culture shock. In this paper, I introduce and define culture in general and explain why culture shock happens. I describe the stages that an individual usually experiences during culture shock, including re-entry shock. I also highlight some specific cultural phenomena that cause tension between cultures, as well has how one can cope in a new cultural environment.

As I state in my teaching philosophy, culture and language are intrinsically linked. In order to speak the language properly, a general understanding of the culture is necessary. I intend to foster this kind of environment in my classroom. However, I will readily inform my students that no amount of classroom study can make up for the experience of spending time in the target language country. I will cite my own life-changing experience studying abroad in Argentina as an example of the eye-opening power of international travel. However, I also need to be ready to warn my students of the frustrating elements that come with crossing cultures and living outside one's comfort zone. In fact, if a traveler is under the impression that there will be no cultural clashes and, once arriving, experiences these clashes, then the experience can be so detrimental that the traveler comes to dislike the target language and culture. I hope to help my students avoid undergoing this negative experience by warning them of how frustrating traveling cross-culturally can be – which is, of course, outweighed by the linguistic advances that come from it.

While writing this artifact, I was able to reflect upon how much individuals are shaped by their unique cultural environment. Our culture largely dictates how we interact with the world around us. With this understanding, I am able to relate better with those from other cultures. I am able to experience more empathy and appreciation for others' differences. I sincerely hope that

this attitude is transmitted to my students, since one of my goals is to foster tolerance for other cultures. Instead of my students viewing people from other cultures as weird and strange, I want them to view these cultures as unique and fascinating. One of the ways to do this is to help them understand the diverse perspectives of others and accept the different for what it is – merely different.

Culture Shock: How to Cope

Traveling can be an exciting and adventuresome activity which broadens the traveler's horizons and opens up a myriad of new experiences. However, travel can also be stressful and frustrating, as the sojourner attempts to adjust to a new cultural environment. In this paper, the author explores culture and culture shock, discussing the process and stages the cross-cultural traveler will experience as well as personal and cultural factors that may affect a traveler's experience with culture shock. Techniques and strategies are presented to help cope with the trauma of culture shock. The less well-known re-entry shock is also discussed, as well as methods for coping with that stressful time. The traveler who successfully assimilates into a new culture and then adapts back to home life is a dynamic individual (Lima & Brown, 2007).

Culture Defined

To fully grasp the concept of culture shock, the term culture itself must be examined. Many conceptions of culture are limited to civilization, which embodies the achievements of people as represented in their art, history, music, literature and social reforms. This is commonly viewed as the "big C" culture (Moran, 2001). An aspect of culture that is often overlooked, but will serve for the purpose of this paper, is the "small c" culture – the everyday practice, customs and traditions of a people (Moran). In agreement with this concept, DeCapua and Wintergerst (2007) see culture as collective beliefs and values that guide the behaviors of a group of people and is, in essence, the "sum of the way of life of any group of people" (p. 12). An important aspect of culture is that it is shared within a group. Culture can not exist unless the practices, customs, and traditions are perceived to be communal among a population of individuals (Schaller & Crandall, 2004), and these elements act as a powerful bond between those

individuals (Lubkemann, 2008). In reference to how culture is passed on, Schönpflug (2009) states, “parental values are inculcated by their children and then become internalized as normative beliefs concerning appropriate behavior” (p. 327). Culture is learned by each generation and its traditions are shared (Hwa-Froelich & Vigil, 2004), embodying the practice of customs, the learning of language, and the expression of values and feelings (Rabe, 1997; Storti, 2001). The development of these cultural patterns occurs not only through relationships but also through institutions (Pitman, Eisikovits, & Dobbert, 1989). Culture is inherent in everything we do, say, and think.

With culture having such a profound impact on our everyday lives, it can be viewed as part of our identity. We have difficulty distinguishing our culture from our selves, which can lead to ethnocentric tendencies. Ethnocentrism is the belief that one’s own cultural group is superior to others (Reagan, 2005). This view of others is often subconscious to the individual and is intrinsic to every culture group. We view other cultural groups through the lens of our culture’s norms and values, and judge them by our own standards. DeCapua and Wintergerst (2007) explain:

> [Ethnocentrism] is a highly subjective, personal, emotional and (usually) subconscious way of valuing one’s own culture above other cultures. The symbols of a cultural group’s ethnicity, religion and the like are objects of pride and veneration. There is the tendency to judge members of other cultures on the basis of one’s own personal cultural standards (p. 63).

We expect people to behave in the only way we have ever known people to behave: like us. Therefore, if we see behavior that varies from our own, we view it as wrong (Storti, 2001). When

we are placed within a different culture and are no longer judged according to our culture's standards, culture shock is often the result.

Culture Shock Defined

Culture shock occurs when we find a culture unfamiliar and frustrating; it is a "normal human response to an alien cultural environment" (Mumford, 1998, p. 153). Pedersen (1995) discusses how the term culture shock originated in the 1960s to describe anxiety as a product of uncertainty in a new culture. When familiar social cues are removed, resulting responses can vary from discomfort to severe disorientation (Chapman, 2007). We are suddenly faced with an environment in which our normal patterns of behavior are no longer valid (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2007). This creates constant tension and a distinct feeling of unease (Storti, 2001). We no longer understand how to interact properly with others.

Culture shock occurs in a variety of situations, both in one's own country and abroad. Traveling abroad is not necessary to "face a contradiction between one's own values, beliefs and assumptions and those of the person or people surrounding one" (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2007, p. 106). In fact, Schaller and Crandall (2004) found that "the construct of culture is … readily perceived" between the northern and southern United States. Since the USA is so multicultural in nature, cross-cultural conflict and immersion occur constantly, creating a source of stress for many (Winkelman, 1994). It is not necessary to travel far from home to experience culture shock.

Personal Factors that Affect the Culture Shock Experience

Although a culture does not need to be remarkably distinct from one's own to be perceived as foreign, the degree of difference between the home culture and the new or host culture will play a part in determining the severity of the cultural shock (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2007; Furnham & Bohner, 1986; Lockie et al., 2000). This is one of the many influential factors that will determine how the experience of culture shock affects the individual. Previous cross-cultural experience will assist the individual to adjust more readily to a new culture, although each new culture brings its own set of challenges (Winkelman, 1994). Certain individual psychological characteristics, such as motivation, high tolerance for ambiguity, and decreased stress levels, are indicators of reduced likelihood of experiencing severe culture shock and higher likelihood of assimilation (DeCapua & Wintergerst). These factors influence an individual's experience with culture shock. However, certain basic characteristics of stress influence all those experiencing a new culture.

Culture shock is caused by several kinds of anxiety-inducing scenarios. Very prominent is the inability to communicate fluently. Trying to express oneself clearly while learning a new language in a new culture is mentally and emotionally straining. This experience can even be humiliating, as one fails to communicate at the intellectual level to which one is accustomed (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2007; Winkelman, 1994). As one fails to interact properly in social situations, one may feel a strong sense of displacement, or not belonging, in the new culture. Feeling like a constant outsider is disconcerting, and the inability to navigate in social situations is a source of stress (DeCapua & Wintergerst). These factors can increase one's stress level to a state of debilitation. This constant level of stress harasses the body so violently that one feels threatened, vulnerable, and incompetent; it can even cause one to become susceptible to disease

(Storti, 2001; Winkelman). The majority of foreign travelers experience an inability to communicate, a sense of displacement, and increased levels of stress. These factors inevitably lead to culture shock.

Cultural Factors that Affect the Culture Shock Experience

While there are factors affecting an individual's likelihood of experiencing culture shock, there are also some common cultural differences that aggravate the cross-cultural traveler. These include: individualism versus collectivism, monochromic versus polychromic time observance, the concept of "face," power distance, and societal roles (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2007; Rabe, 1997). Individualistic cultures value assertiveness, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency. In such cultures, individuals see themselves as autonomous and independent of social groups (Hwa-Froelich & Vigil, 2004). They regard competition as a positive trait, and expect each person to seek self-satisfaction. In contrast, collectivist cultures value cooperative efforts, loyalty to a social group, and hierarchical roles (Lockie et al., 2000). Individuals view themselves as appendages of a group instead of a singular entity, and work towards the common good instead of their own personal goals (DeCapua & Wintergerst). Based upon these differing values, conflicts are likely to occur for an individualist entering a collectivist society or vice versa. For example, collectivistic cultures see nepotism as natural to assist members of their group; alternatively, within individualistic cultures, nepotism is not only frowned upon but often illegal. Communication styles also differ greatly, as individualists tend to be straightforward whereas collectivists try to avoid offense by circumnavigating the conflict (DeCapua & Wintergerst). In both cases, cross-cultural interchanges can be frustrating and stress-inducing.

Another stress-inducer is the conflict between monochronic and polychronic time observance. In a monochronic culture, punctuality is held sacred (Rabe, 1997). High value is set on scheduling and managing one's time effectively; time should be highly structured and organized. Polychronic cultures, on the other hand, see time as fluid and flexible. Spending time in the here-and-now is more valuable, as the future is unknown and therefore can not be planned (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2007). Serious cultural clashes occur when these two time concepts conflict in interactions, and can lead to stereotypes. For example, monochronic cultures view polychronic individual who arrives late as rude, while polychronic cultures view a monochronic individual who does not wait as impatient. Again, frustration can arise on both sides because of cultural differences.

A less well-known cultural difference that is found mostly in Asian cultures is the concept of *face*. Experiencing the concept of face for the first time can be particularly exacerbating for those not familiar with it. In many Asian cultures, face defines how their society functions, as it is linked to positive social self-image. Loss of face not only incurs self-embarrassment, but also humiliation to the group, which disrupts social harmony. To save face, one avoids direct confrontation, uses nonverbal cues to communicate, and tells white lies. In cultures without the concept of face, it is more important to admit mistakes, be honest, and take responsibility for one's actions (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2007). Individuals attempting to maneuver in cultures who observe face may become frustrated with a lack of efficiency, whereas individuals who observe face traveling in cultures who do not exhibit this concept may become offended by abrupt communication styles.

Another common cultural difference is that of power distance, a term used to "refer to how widely an unequal distribution of power is accepted by the members of a culture" (DeCapua

& Wintergerst, 2007, p. 201), and is specifically aggravating for the traveling professional. Cultures with high power distance are rigid, hierarchal systems in which seniority and age are revered above other qualifications (Rabe, 1997). People are not viewed as equals, and everyone has a specific place within the system (Hwa-Froelich & Vigil, 2004; Lockie et al., 2000). Cultures with low power distance are flexible and promote equality, thus allowing movement in the hierarchy based upon individual achievement (DeCapua & Wintergerst; Rabe). Cross-culture business professionals might be alarmed at their inability to move up the company ladder, or shocked at the lack of respect in the workplace, depending on their culture of origin.

Closely related to the concept of power distance is that of differing societal roles, which play a large part in an individual's identity. Entering a culture that views one's social role differently than expected creates a huge personal identity crisis (Chapman, 2007). Gender is perhaps the greatest issue in regards to societal roles (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2007). Women especially are treated differently within different cultures (Rabe, 1997). A woman accustomed to a social identity of independence, self-sufficiency, and respect will experience a significant amount of distress upon entering a culture in which a woman's social role is to be silent, dependent, and second-class to men. This drastic change in status deeply impacts an individual's sense of identity and contributes significantly to one's experience with culture shock (DeCapua & Wintergerst; Winkelman, 1994).

Culture Shock in Stages

Culture shock is not a single event, but rather a process one undergoes (Lockie et al., 2000; Pedersen, 1995). This process occurs in phases and is often experience as an emotional rollercoaster. These phases are referred to as the honeymoon stage, the disintegration stage, the reintegration stage, the autonomy stage, and the interdependence stage (Pedersen). There is some

variation between the number and names of these stages. For example, DeCapua and Wintergerst (2007) and Winkelman (1994) describe four main phases instead of five, called the honeymoon or tourist phase, the crisis or culture shock phase, the adjustment phase, and the adaptation or acculturation phase. Despite these differences there are many parallels to explore.

The honeymoon phase is widely understood as the first stage of culture shock. The new culture is viewed as exciting and interesting, and the cross-cultural traveler rejoices in observing the differences between the new culture and the home culture. Any inconveniences are seen as an adventure instead of a hindrance (Pedersen, 1995). Many travelers experience an extreme sense of well-being, and even negative experiences are viewed in a positive light (Winkelman, 1994). This phase is also described as the tourist phase, as this is the way a tourist, who enters the culture for only a brief visit, feels and reacts (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2007).

The second stage in the process of culture shock is the crisis or disintegration stage. During this stage, one experiences the classic culture shock sensations of anxiety, helplessness and frustration; emotions heightened by the inability to communicate and feeling treated like a child (Winkelman, 1994). The differences between one's home and host culture become glaring instead of irrelevant, causing irritation, disorientation, and a sense of loss (Pedersen, 1995). This sense of loss causes feelings of isolation from, and defensiveness of, the home culture. The new culture becomes an enemy which attacks with each social encounter (Rabe, 1997). This is the most unsettling stage in the process of culture shock, and is the most detrimental to cross-cultural sensitivity, as it results from unfamiliarity with proper social conduct (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2007).

Pedersen (1995) views the third stage, reintegration, as a time of anger and hostility towards the host culture. Travelers blame the host culture for their problems instead of taking

personal responsibility for them. Although this aggression seems negative, it is a sign of gradual recovery (Lockie et al., 2000). Winkelman (1994), Rabe (1997) and DeCapua and Wintergerst (2007) see this reintegration stage as a part of stage two, and interpret the third stage, the adjustment phase, as a time of learning how to adjust to a new cultural environment. This is a turning point in one's cultural experience, when the traveler either goes home or learns to adapt by developing problem-solving skills and building an appreciation for the uniqueness of the new culture (DeCapua & Wintergerst; Winkelman). The sojourner's feelings are a compromise between the honeymoon and culture shock phase, which enables one to view both the pros and cons of one's home culture and the host culture (DeCapua & Wintergerst). Rabe states that adjustment will occur "much more quickly if you try to study your country more carefully and learn the reasons why people act the way they do" (p. 61). This awareness and examination of cultural values causes one to grow and develop as a cross-cultural being more than during any other phase of culture shock (Winkelman). All of these elements are described in Pedersen's fourth stage, which he termed the autonomy stage.

The last stage of the culture shock process, the interdependence or adaptation phase, is characterized by an effectively functioning individual navigating in the host culture (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2007). It is achieved through personal change and gradual acculturation and development of a bicultural identity (Winkelman, 1994). Pedersen (1995) describes this state succinctly:

> The individual has moved from alienation to a new identity that is equally comfortable, settled, accepted, and fluent in both the old and new cultures. There is a sense of belonging to several cultures at the same time. Even though the individual is still different from the host culture in a variety of ways, those differences do not dominate or

> control the individual's identity any longer. A mutual adaption has occurred that defines the profoundly significant common ground between visitors and the host culture (p. 245).

This new identity becomes a part of oneself to the extent that the foreign culture is as acceptable as one's own; in fact, it is just another way of living (Rabe, 1997). The culture shock process results in a culturally aware and adaptable individual (Arnold, 1999).

How to Cope with Culture Shock

Although culture shock is stressful, it can be an enlightening process for many cross-cultural travelers. Several techniques may be utilized to enhance the experience and mitigate some of the frustration of the crisis stage. Winkelman (1994) states that, "successful management of cultural shock depends on awareness of the experience, a cognitive orientation that directs one toward successful adaptation, and the development of behavioral skills that lessen or resolve cultural shock" (p. 123). Dealing with culture shock effectively involves awareness, acceptance, and adaptation on the part of the individual (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2007).

Traveling to a foreign country and culture is both stressful and fatiguing (Lockie et al., 2000; Waterhouse, Reilly & Edwards, 2004). Management of this stress is critical to cross-cultural adjustment and adaptation. Ambiguity is a particular source of stress. Therefore, understanding the host culture's norms and values, and the reasons for which it esteems these values, will aide in the adaptation process by allowing the cross-cultural traveler to understand the host society. Such comprehension alleviates the stress associated with ambiguity, and even assists in the tolerance of ambiguity in general (Winkelman, 1994).

Being prepared and planning ahead is a key part of avoiding serious problems related to culture shock. Before entering the new culture, the traveler should make both informational and mental preparations. Talking to someone who has lived in or traveled to the target culture is a great way to get insights into what living there is like, and what challenges may lay ahead. Studying travel guides and phrase or language books will assist in being able to interact with people at least on a basic level (Rabe, 1997). It is also important to recognize the different values and ways of life of the people, and reflect upon how this will affect one during travels. Being realistic and expecting culture shock is a much more effective tactic than denying that one's discomfort is related to conflicting values. Unfortunately, this denial is common among those experiencing culture shock. Evaluating one's own value system before departure allows for self-awareness, as well as a more positive outlook on the cross-cultural experience. This evaluation creates a mental environment in which one can recognize the values of others without feeling threatened by them (Winkelman, 1994).

A common stressor for those residing in different cultures is being able to provide basic necessities for themselves – namely, food, shelter, and security. Having plans in place to secure these things before departure, or at least the necessary tools (be they linguistic or otherwise) to find these things once in the new environment, will relieve a lot of anxiety. Having these physical needs met allows the individual to work on social adaptation and develop self-confidence interacting in the host culture (Winkelman, 1994).

Upholding a network of social relations is a key factor in maintaining a sense of security; in fact, "social support is directly related to increased psychological well-being and to a lower probability of physical and mental illness" (Furham & Bochner, 1986, pp. 184-185). Social support networks have been shown to relieve stressors associated with culture shock by

"provid[ing] positive interpersonal relations for self-esteem and for meeting personal and emotional needs" (Winkelman, 1994, p. 124). Building these relations provides assistance through validation of self-worth, specifically when those in the social network express acceptance and assurance, as well as opportunities for venting that lead the individual suffering from culture shock to recognize the fallacies in cultural judgment (Winkelman). It is important for the sojourner to have both strong social ties with those at home (as well as a way to contact them), and a social support network in the host country, with either locals or fellow sojourners. Managing a stable social life alleviates many of the hardships associated with culture shock (Chapman, 2007).

The ability to communicate is another skill that will reduce the amount of stress associated with entering a new cultural environment (Rabe, 1997). However, communication is not limited to verbal language. Nonverbal behaviors such as gestures, gaze, and posture send very strong messages; in fact, 65 percent of social meaning is carried through nonverbal cues (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2007). Mastering these as well as proper social interaction patterns, combined with a general understanding of what it feels like to perform these patterns as a native to the culture, reduces stress and allows for swifter assimilation into the host culture by being able to participate in daily life (Winkelman, 1994). Successful cross-cultural communication will assist the foreigner in gaining respect from and building relationships with natives of the host cultural (Rabe).

As in many facets of life, the most effective method to counteract negative feelings associated with cross-cultural travel is through problem solving. Anticipating social discomforts and finding ways to counteract with positive experiences promotes cultural learning and growth (Winkelman, 1994). Being able to attribute feelings of discomfort and anxiety to the natural

process of culture shock instead of blaming the host culture is a practice of cultural relativism – "recognizing that cultural behavior is reasonable in the context of the cultural individual who produces it" (Winkelman, p. 125). Therefore, even if the behavior is incomprehensible to the traveler, it is recognized as normal and acceptable for other cultural participants. Identifying this fact creates a realistic outlook on the host culture.

Re-entry Shock: The Other Side of the Coin

Whereas culture shock is a widely recognized concept, its counterpart, re-entry shock, has received much less attention. Returning to the home culture can be just as stressful and antagonistic as was adjusting to a new culture (Chapman, 2007). In a study of American returnees, 64 percent reported experiencing culture shock upon re-entry to the United States. Similarly, only seven percent of teenagers felt comfortable with their home culture peers after spending a significant amount of time abroad (Storti, 1996). Re-entry shock is, in essence, culture shock in reverse (Rabe, 1997). Since the majority of those who travel abroad will eventually return home, an examination of re-entry shock is a useful exercise for those planning a cross-cultural journey.

Re-entry shock, like culture shock, occurs in phases or stages, including the leave-taking or departure phase, the honeymoon phase, the reverse culture shock phase, and the readjustment phase. The way in which each individual experiences these phases and to what degree depends on the person and the experiences that one had in the host culture. For example, the longer the sojourn away from home, the harder re-entry will be. Similarly, the more the traveler identified with and integrated into the host culture the harder it will be to enter the home culture, whereas the more contact one had with the home culture while abroad, the easier it will be to adapt back to home life (Storti, 1996). Ironically, by coping well with culture shock abroad through adapting

to the culture, the individual becomes more susceptible to re-entry shock upon returning to the home culture (Rabe, 1997).

Although technically re-entry does not occur until one steps foot back in the home country, the mental processes begin months before departure. Thus, the first stage of re-entry shock is called the departure phase. It is the beginning of disengagement from the host culture (Chapman, 2007). Thought is put into packing, saying good-bye, visiting favorite places for the last time, or even getting excited about all the things to do once back in the home culture. Emotionally, this phase is bittersweet. Enthusiasm for returning home may be marred by sadness at leaving the overseas life behind and apprehension over the uncertainty of what awaits at home. As with most major life changes, ambivalence plays a key role in initiating stress (Storti, 1996).

The honeymoon stage of re-entry shock, comparable to the first stage of culture shock, is a time of extreme excitement (Chapman, 2007). The returned traveler is almost a celebrity, sought after and revered for enduring a difficult cultural change. One receives the opportunity to do things not available in the host culture, such as visit a favorite restaurant or shop, or spend time with old friends. These few weeks after returning home are like a vacation, with little responsibility as one adjusts to home life. It is a time of happiness and pleasant bliss (Storti, 1996).

Unfortunately, the honeymoon always comes to an end. The third stage of re-entry shock, called reverse culture shock, marks the gradual end of extreme excitement fading into a time of distress. Returned expatriates start to find flaws in their own culture's norms and to pass judgment based upon these observations. In fact, this judgmental streak is so vehement that the individual seems to be determined to seek out these flaws to exalt the host culture's virtues. This irrational reaction is also present in noticing that although one has changed significantly, no one

else has changed in the same way, leading to a sense of isolation (Storti, 1996). A balance is not yet achieved between the home identity and the host identity, and therefore the returned traveler feels like a minority; a disturbing sensation to experience in one's own home. Just like when arriving in the host culture, attention to detail is essential in everything one does to avoid making mistakes – routines that once were natural now must be done with significant mental effort, which leaves little time or effort for higher-order thinking and problem solving. It is an overwhelming sensation (Storti).

Although reverse culture shock is as overwhelming as culture shock, it similarly leads to a phase of readjustment. A balanced view of home and host culture is eventually achieved as perspective about the pros and cons of each is gained, as well as an understanding of the host culture in relation to the home culture (Chapman, 2007). The transformation is slow, as new routines are built and one becomes familiar with old routines and predictable relationships (Rabe, 1997). The experiences of re-entry and culture shock become incorporated into one's character, and life is viewed through the eyes of both a stalwart patriot and an adventurous expatriate (Storti, 1996).

Coping with Re-entry Shock

Some carefully planned strategies will help the returning traveler to avoid some of the more negative effects of re-entry shock. Simply planning ahead and anticipating the frustration of adjusting back to the home culture will change one's response to the new stimuli and allow for examination of one's feelings and standards instead of becoming lost in them. Recognizing expectations before realizing they are not being met leaves little opportunity for disappointment. Therefore, during the departure stage it is important to evaluate what one expects upon returning

home and how likely these expectations are. Being thus prepared will make re-entry less traumatic (Storti, 1996).

Another simple yet important element to remember during the departure phase is to say proper good-byes to those the traveler has befriended during the stay in the host culture. Having effective closure in one area will allow for easier adjustment in another. Leaving loose ends behind while attempting to transition back home will only draw one further back towards the host culture, thus halting progress (Storti, 1996).

It is important to be able to discuss one's experiences with friends and family. However, a strategy for coping with re-entry shock is to avoid spending vast amounts of time talking about experiences in the host culture. Telling all one's stories at once will eventually bore an audience, and will leave the returned traveler little to talk about after all the stories are told. It is important to bring into conversations what has happened to others during one's time away, and show interest in their lives as well (Storti, 1996). Since it is imperative to be able to discuss one's experiences, seeking out others in the community who are either from, or who have spent time in, the target culture is beneficial. Having another who can relate to one's experiences and with whom one can practice the new language, if a language was learned, will act as an emotional relief. Such a person can relate and connect with the experiences of the host culture, provide a sympathetic ear, and assist the returned traveler with a smooth change back into their native culture (Storti).

Conclusions

The traveler who survives the culture shock experience, manages to throw off ethnocentric tendencies, and embraces multiple cultures as his or her own, is a dynamic individual. This ability to reject prejudice and embrace diversity is an essential quality in anyone desiring to be an active member of the global community (Lima & Brown, 2007). Learning the coping skills for cross-cultural sojourns presented in this paper will help the traveler to recognize both the pros and cons of each new culture and appreciate its uniqueness. Culture shock then becomes merely an opportunity for personal growth as the traveler adapts to each new culture with greater ease and appreciation for cultural diversity.

LANGUAGE ARTIFACT

Introduction

This artifact was written together with an MSLT peer for LING 6800 topics course. I worked with Lea Whiteley to develop a research paper based on comparison of the theory of SLA with teaching practices in the foreign language classroom. We interviewed teachers of foreign language classrooms and observed their classrooms to see if they practice what they preach. We discovered that although teachers live up to their own expectations when it comes to speaking the target language in the classroom, they fall short in their activity design. My reflections on the interviews and observations have contributed to my understanding of how I want to run my classroom, specifically in my determination to consistently use the target language and facilitate meaningful activities. In addition, this research has added to my resolve to remember my teaching philosophy and to refer to it often to avoid having a disconnect between my own beliefs and practice.

The Communicative Classroom: The Disconnect Between Theory and Practice

The most effective way to help students acquire a foreign language has been investigated for years. Several methods have been proposed, implemented, and evaluated. Recently, research has indicated that the communicative approach (CA) is one of the most effective methods of second language teaching (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). Research suggests that instructors should therefore utilize this approach in their foreign language classrooms. The present study was conducted to determine if this method is being implemented at Utah State University, specifically examining the application and importance of the textbook, the use of the target language, and the design of classroom activities. The textbook is an important tool that can either enhance or detract from the learning experience. Use of the L2 is a key feature of the communicative classroom, as well as activities designed to get students to practice communication. Although the observed instructors incorporated these elements in to their classrooms, they failed to completely apply most of the principles of the CA.

According to Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandell (2001), when real-world communication is the focus of the FL classroom, the relevancy of the material is increased. Students attend L2 classes not for the purpose of reciting grammar principles, but to be able to speak to others in the L2 (Sung, 2010). In our globalized society, opportunities to use the L2 outside of the classroom have increased. As Doyle et al. (2010) point out, "[as] economic and social life becomes more globally connected and challenging, there is increased need to develop societies with the capacity to connect, engage, and prosper internationally" (p. 471). Therefore, students' purposes for learning a L2 might be psycho-social (meaning they have a personal interest in the language, perhaps to increase job opportunities), but in the end the student attends the class to be able to communicate (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell,

2001; Lee & VanPatten, 2003). Instructors help students communicate by taking the role of an architect or coach (Ballman, Lisken-Gasparro, & Mandell). They provide meaningful activities and enough grammar and vocabulary for the students to be able to perform the activity with minimal assistance. Meaningful activities are those that role-play real life experiences and will help students in a practical setting. It is the instructor's job to help keep the students on task and communicating in the L2 during the activity, but otherwise it is the students who are interacting and speaking the L2. The students take the role of builders, co-workers, or teammates. Responsibility for learning is on their shoulders as learning depends upon how actively they participate (Lee & Van Patten).

Andrews and McNeil (2005) list the characteristics a good language teacher should possess. Notably, they state that knowledge about language or theoretical language acquisition is not enough. Good language teachers recognize their language limitations, have a desire to help students achieve their goals, and demonstrate a passion for the language. Andrews and McNeil acknowledge that good language teachers are not the "finished article" (p. 174) and should be encouraged to strengthen their knowledge base constantly. On the other hand, Bateman (2008) found that although L2 teachers may excel at speaking the L2, they may find teaching frustrating and become impatient. Instructing language teachers in strategies for effective second language acquisition is necessary to foster successful language teachers (Bateman).

The CA offers several advantages for effective language teaching as it relates to the use of communication in the classroom. Students are given opportunities to use the language with each other, explore how the language is used through the negotiation of meaning with other students and with the instructor, and understand the real-world application for the class. In defining negotiation of meaning, Lee and Van Patten (2003) state:

> Negotiation consists of interactions during which speakers come to terms, reach an agreement, make arrangements, resolve a problem, or settle an issue by conferring or discussing: the purpose of language use is to accomplish some task rather than to practice any particular language forms (p. 65).

Through negotiation of meaning, students learn how to use the language as a person would use it outside the classroom by focusing on the meaning of their utterances.

Based upon the present research, the author sought to discover if L2 teachers at Utah State University implement the CA.

Methods

Four main forms of data collection are available to those studying FL classrooms: observation, documentation, tasks and reports, and introspection (which include interviews and questionnaires). For the purposes of this study, in-class observation and interviews were used. Two instructors were formally observed three times each in the FL classroom context at Utah State University. Professor Smith [pseudonym] teaches English as a Second Language (ESL), which is an integrated skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) ESL college course. It is a multi-level class, meaning that the English proficiency of the students varies, although the majority of the students are at the intermediate-level. The second instructor, Professor Petersson [pseudonym], is a tenured professor and teaches Spanish at the collegiate intermediate level. He also teaches various upper-division courses, including grammar and literature. He stated that the students were at varying levels of proficiency, similar to Professor Smith's class. These instructors were later interviewed in a semi-structured manner (see Appendix A), each with the

same interview questions, to discover their philosophies and to what extent they believe they implement the CA in their classrooms.

Teaching Philosophy

Teachers' philosophies describe their personal beliefs in regards to how they should teach in the classroom. A discussion of Professor Petersson's and Professor Smith's teaching philosophies revealed the instructors' awareness of the benefits of the CA, as well as how they feel about implementing this method in their classrooms. While one instructor explicitly stated that his classes are communicative, the other expressed how the students are the primary concern. Professor Petersson described his philosophy as "based on the principle that students need to discover things themselves," stating that he promotes conversation and interaction among the students. Professor Smith, when asked about her philosophy regarding teaching, stated that both her role as the instructor and her teaching philosophy center around the idea that she is responsible for "[figuring] out the needs of the students and giving them what they want, and what they need in the best way possible [and making] it interesting, making it applicable and true to real life." From personal experience, she understands some of the concerns and difficulties foreign students face when they come to the United States. It is her responsibility to decipher what her students need and to provide them with the necessary help through instruction.

From the interviews and observations, it was determined that what the instructors claimed to do and what in fact occurred did not always coincide. Textbook use, target language use, and classroom activities all reflect whether instructors incorporate the CA in the classroom.

Relevance of the Textbook

A common difficulty instructors face when incorporating the CA in the classroom is the textbook. According to Shrum and Glisan (2010), the textbook "has been at the center of the L2 curriculum, used by teachers […] as the framework for organizing instruction and the primary source of exercises and activities" (pp. 62-63). Despite the push towards more communicative classrooms, textbooks have yet to make complete the transformation from audiolingual methods to communicative methods. As a result, instructors who prefer communicative activities are required to adjust the textbook activities. Many activities found in the textbook are grammar-focused, rather than being "embedded in real-world contexts" (Brown, 2009, p. 53). Although the activities might be placed within some context, this does not mean that the activities are meaningful (Shrum & Glisan). Meaningful communicative activities, such as task-based activities (TBA), are essential to the CA.

Since most L2 textbooks do not follow CA principles, teachers may feel that the textbook limits their ability to use the L2 in the classroom, and reduces the possibility of creating a communicative classroom. One concern of teachers is having to choose between "communication and coverage" (Ballman, Lisken-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001, p. 25). They feel they need to choose whether to teach with communicative activities or cover the material in the textbook. The observed instructors used the textbook in different ways in their respective classrooms. Professor Petersson explained that the textbook does not dictate what or how he teaches, while observations of Professor Smith's class showed a more central role of the textbook in her classroom. Professor Petersson, the Spanish instructor, uses the textbook as a resource, as it provides topics to choose from and some activities to use, but he does not feel hindered by the limitations of the textbook. He admits, however, that as a more experienced

instructor it is easy for him to gather materials and ideas from other lessons and texts and create his own activities. His teaching experience enables him to avoid reliance on the textbook as the backbone of classroom instruction. During classroom observation, the textbook was only referred to a handful of times and no work was done directly from the textbook, although a few of its activities that were relevant to the topic being discussed were used.

As was previously mentioned, Professor Smith's English instruction seemed based primarily on the text, despite her claim that she adapts her lesson materials to the needs of her students. The reason for this might be because the material is new to her and, as she said, she is still discovering the best method of teaching it. In her interview, she explained how she was piloting a new textbook during the semester in which this study was carried out. She acknowledged that the old textbook was outdated, but she thought the content was more applicable to the students. With this new textbook, she is working to determine how it is applicable, and what adjustments she needs to make to adapt it for her students. She considers it important to take ownership of the textbook, reflected in a statement saying she wants to, "make it my own and help it […] help the students in the best way that it can and that I can." She said that she is willing to omit anything from the text that she does not feel is pertinent and to bring in outside materials to supplement the lesson.

As was previously mentioned, the textbook can hinder the application of the CA in the classroom. Both instructors acknowledge the disadvantages of the textbooks. Professor Petersson limits his use of the textbook, using other materials to supplement his lesson, which was reflected in his practice during the observations. Professor Smith, however, claims to adapt the textbook and bring in supplemental materials, although this was not apparent during the

observations. She frequently referred to the textbook and had the students complete the activities in the textbook.

Use of the Target Language

For L2 instruction to be effective, the target language must be the main mode of communication in the classroom; in fact, 90 percent of all discourse should be in the L2 (ACTFL, 2010) to allow students to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing (Lee & Van Patten, 2003). Foster (2009) states, "target language explanations lead to more secure learning than mother tongue explanations" (p. 253). This includes instructions for activities or homework assignments, and even explanations for students who are falling behind. If students know that instructions will follow in the L1, they will not focus on the L2 instructions. The only way they will recognize the importance of listening carefully is if they know they must pay attention to receive instructions (Lee & Van Patten).

A multitude of techniques exist for assisting their comprehension. For example, providing written as well as oral directions and handouts in the L2 allows the students to refer to another source for more information. If a few students are struggling, modeling how the activity is to be accomplished and being willing to explain one-on-one in the L2 are useful techniques in aiding comprehension. Most importantly, it is essential to ensure the input in the classroom (both spoken discourse and written text) is comprehensible to them (Krashen, 1982). Additional aides include gestures, pictures and realia, which can be used to assist in communicating the message (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro & Mandell, 2001). Especially in the case of L2 teaching, it is unlikely that the students will find opportunities to practice the L2 outside of the classroom. Therefore, the only exposure they have to the language will be provided in the classroom. It is imperative for the instructor to support language learning through the use of the L2.

Despite its importance, teachers struggle to use the L2 in the classroom. Carless (2008) reports, "use of L1 was identified by informants as a key challenge in the school task-based language classroom" (p. 332). Students have a tendency to speak their L1 in the foreign classroom regardless of the necessity of speaking the L2. The instructors themselves may become discouraged from using the L2 for a variety of factors, including lack of time, fatigue, and inability to manage the classroom (Bateman, 2008).

Although many factors may discourage the use of the L2 in the classroom, the observed professors excelled at speaking the L2 and were diligent in encouraging their students to do the same. Professor Petersson excelled at using Spanish to explain grammar, to give instructions for activities, and to answer questions. In turn, the students were diligent in their use of the L2 as they participated in activities and even during social interactions. It was obviously a breach of protocol to speak in the L1, as an uncomfortable sensation pervaded the classroom when it occurred. While reflecting on the use of the L1, Professor Petersson stated that grammar explanations need to be in the native language to avoid the risk of students failing to understand. However, the text provides this explanation and should be part of the students' preparation before attending class. He went on to indicate, "when they come to class, they come to hear the language and use the language and see the language modeled. [The language is] the skill you want the students to develop." For Professor Petersson, any grammar explanation outside of class is performed in the L1, but in the classroom the L2 must dominate in order for students to acquire the language (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro & Mandell, 2001).

The students' use of the L2 demonstrated that they appreciated and respected Professor Petersson, not only as an instructor but as someone with whom they felt comfortable speaking. The relaxed atmosphere in the classroom is an element of the affective filter, which is part of the

input hypothesis first suggested by Krashen (1982), a concept which has been influential in the development of several aspects of second language acquisition research (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001). The hypothesis states that students who feel secure and less anxious will be more likely to speak up and be unafraid of making mistakes. This willingness to step out of their comfort zone is essential for them to produce output. Krashen explained that, “the effective language teacher is someone who can provide input and help make it comprehensible in a low anxiety situation” (1982, p. 39). Professor Petersson exhibited the characteristics of a good language teacher in this regard, as he caused the affective filter to lower, and therefore facilitated the use of the second language.

Professor Smith’s classes had a similarly relaxed environment, in which the L2 was used on a regular basis. She encouraged the students to speak only in English, which she did through several methods. For example, if she heard any language in class other than English she reminded all the students to speak only in English. She said if she does not understand it then they should not use it. Also, when she divided the students into groups, she made it a point to require that they should pair up with someone who did not speak their L1.

Research in second language acquisition demonstrates that the key to learning a L2 is the development of linguistic skills. Students will be incapable of developing these skills if they are not exposed to the L2 (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001). It is the instructor’s responsibility to provide students with a model of the language they are learning through consistent use of the L2 in the classroom. Both Professors Smith and Petersson excelled at this, demonstrating their dedication to helping their students acquire the second language. An area in which they fell short, however, was in their activity design.

Activity Design

Activities should stimulate students to apply newly acquired linguistic knowledge to real communication (Sung, 2010). Task based activities (TBA) are designed to get students to communicate with each other to reach a common goal. These activities are learner-centered, in that they focus on the meaningful exchange of information between learners, and they include steps that lead students through tasks that culminate in an ultimate language goal, which is a concrete representation of the information shared and gathered by the students (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001). Each step or task has a specific purpose, and each one teaches some vocabulary or grammar structure that will help the student accomplish the communicative goal. The tasks cause students to interact with one another through different forms, such as having them interview one another to complete a survey, or an information gap activity in which each person has a separate piece of information that the other needs in order to be able to complete the activity. These small tasks build upon one another and add to the students' knowledge in order to create enough background information so that the students can complete the communicative goal (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell).

Another advantage to a task-based approach is that it represents an opportunity for students to re-activate previously taught language forms and structures, thus refining their language output (Carless, 2008). Since successful completion of the task is dependent upon student-to-student interaction, these activities help students to negotiate meaning and scaffold their learning (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell). Despite the effectiveness of these activities, the instructors observed for the study did not follow the unique pattern of TBA. The activities observed, although some may have been communicative in nature, did not appear to lead to a culminating communicative goal.

Based on observations of Professor Petersson's class, it appeared as if the interactions between the students were mechanical drills instead of meaningful activities. The students were asked to conjugate sentences in rotating pairs, which felt monotonous. Although the students were speaking, the dialogue was provided by the teacher. In addition, the sentences were not meaningful for the students and did not promote creativity or foster the negotiation of meaning. For example, the students were learning complex grammar principles such as *si* clauses and past conditional. Random sentences were given to them in present tense with instructions to change the verbs into past tense with a partner. Shrum and Glisan (2010) explain that putting mechanical drills into context may trick both students and teachers into believing there is meaningful discourse. However, if both students know what the other is going to say, then there is little to no interpersonal communication, as there is "no real information gap that serves as the catalyst for negotiation of meaning" (Schrum & Glisan, 2010). Although Professor Petersson stated: "I use communicative activities, where [the students] produce conversation and dialogue," it was obvious that while technically the students produced the language, they did not have to implement the negotiation of meaning and the dialogue was not conducive to meaningful conversation. Professor Petersson appeared not to recognize the difference between interpersonal communication and mechanical activities that are unsuccessful in fostering negotiation of meaning.

Professor Smith seemed to fare better. Her activities promoted more creative dialogue between the students. As an example, she presented a lesson focused on learning the names of animals. She divided the students into groups and each group was instructed to go through the vocabulary list and try to describe the animals to each other. Although the strategies students used to describe the animals were at times unconventional, they were able to communicate,

whether through actions, drawing pictures, or verbal description. Another example included the organization of a mock town hall meeting. The issue being discussed was what should be done about the wolves in Yellowstone National Park. Students were required to take positions (they had three options) and defend those positions. Although these activities did provide for the negotiation of meaning, they were not true task-based activities in that they were not part of a larger activity with an ultimate communicative goal.

TBA are effective in the foreign language classroom because they support the meaningful exchange of information between students (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001). When students are communicating in the L2, they are learning how to successfully manipulate the L2 (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell). This is the main goal of language instruction. The observed classrooms were unfortunately lacking in TBA. By designing lesson plans based on final communicative goals, instructors will be more effective in teaching their students how to speak a foreign language.

Limitations and Conclusion

As in every research project, there are some limitations to this study. The number of observed classrooms was limited, as well as the time spent interviewing the instructors. Additionally, whether or not an instructor followed the principles outlined in their teaching philosophy was at the discretion of the interviewer. In future studies, more classrooms should be included as well as more detailed interviews. A specific rubric should also be implemented to help determine the degree to which an instructor is following the principles outlined in their teaching philosophy.

Despite the increased need to learn to communicate in a foreign language and, while research supports communicative language teaching, it has yet to be fully implemented into

foreign language classrooms. Through these observations and interviews, the author came to understand some of the difficulties instructors face in incorporating the CA into the classroom as well as some of the discrepancies between instructor beliefs and actual practice. These discrepancies are possibly due to certain factors such as difficulties with the textbook or not understanding the characteristics of communicative activities, or perhaps even the fallibility of human nature. Further research is needed to investigate the role of the CA in the classroom, especially the disconnect between instructors' understanding of the CA and the actual application of the CA in the classroom.

Appendix A

The following questions are those used in the study during the interview process:

Why did you decide to be a [target language] instructor?

Why did you decide to teach at the university level?

Summarized what you would say is your teaching philosophy?

What is the role of the students in your classroom? What do you expect of your students?

What kind of activities do you tend to use in your classroom? Do you feel they are well received?

Do you feel that you are the center of learning in the classroom/source of information?

Do you feel you have a good rapport with the students? Do they find your classes interesting? Are you engaged with them?

LITERACY ARTIFACT

Introduction

This paper was originally written as a requirement for a linguistics course focused on research. I was free to write on any topic, and chose to research the relationship between reading and vocabulary. I specifically sought to discover if the reading done in L2 literature courses assists students in acquiring new vocabulary. I additionally investigated techniques that teachers can use to assist their students in acquiring new vocabulary through reading, as well as common strategies that students use towards the same goal.

Through my research on this topic, I discovered that reading and vocabulary development have an intrinsic link. Those who read more tend to have a more developed vocabulary, and an easier time acquiring new words through their reading. In many ways, reading in the L2 is better for learning language than speaking, since the language is presented in a rich context with few colloquialisms. I never thought that there were such advantages that come through reading in the L2. Because of the research I have done on this topic, I have come to understand how important reading is to vocabulary development in addition to comprehension of the language in general. Although I see myself as a language teacher, and not necessarily as a professor of L2 literature, I now view reading as an important part of a language classroom.

Vocabulary Acquisition through Reading in L2 Literature Courses

Reading in the target language (L2) is an excellent way for learners to receive exposure to the L2 (Esky, 2005; Laufer & Rozoviski-Roitblat, 2011; Mackay, Barkman, & Jordan 1979). Reading helps language learners specifically in the acquisition of vocabulary (Esky; Meara, 2005; Nation, 2005). The advantage of an L2 course focused on reading L2 literature is that “rather than viewing vocabulary items as a long and boring list of words, vocabulary [can be] seen in its central role in contextualized, meaningful language” (Brown, 1994, p. 365). The present study seeks to determine if the reading done in L2 literature courses allows readers to acquire a richer vocabulary.

Reading in the L2

L2 learners need sources of comprehensible L2 input to acquire the language. Written sources of the language provide that input (Mackay, Barkman, & Jordan 1979). Reading provides L2 learners with “an excellent source of the authentic language students need to interact with in quantity – language that is always meaningful, often in fully grammatical form, and that includes every feature of the target language but pronunciation” (Esky, 2005, p. 563). Esky claims that reading in the L2 provides learners with language input they could not obtain through other methods, a claim supported by Laufer and Rozoviski-Roitblat (2011). Reading affects many aspects of learners’ linguistic skills, including their ability to write. Krashen (1984) notes that voluntarily reading for pleasure assists students in their writing endeavors, stating that “not one poor writer reported ‘a lot’ of pleasure reading during high school” (p. 4). Reading more seems to help one’s writing ability even more than practicing writing does. The more competent a reader is at reading, the greater benefits received.

Reading competence, or reading ability, refers to, "successful comprehension emerg[ing] from the integrative interaction of derived text information and preexisting reader knowledge" (Koda, 2005, p. 4). In essence, a reader understands when able to extract useful information and apply it to what is already known. This can be further broken down into three distinct processes: decoding, text-information building, and situation-model construction. In decoding, the reader extracts the linguistic information from the text. Then, in text-information building, the extracted ideas are cognitively organized to uncover the meaning of the text. Finally, in situation-model construction, the text information is related to the reader's prior knowledge, which applies the information to the life of the reader (Koda). The ability to perform these processes fluidly affects the reader's ability not only to read coherently, but to identify and understand new vocabulary.

In reference to the reading done in the classroom, there are two main forms of reading: intensive and extensive. Eskey (2005) defines intensive reading as "working with small amounts of text in class to make various points about the nature of texts and the reading process" (p. 574) and extensive reading as "assigning whole texts to be read outside of class or in a reading lab setting" (p. 574). Extensive reading also provides readers with "large quantities of material within their linguistic competence" (Pigada & Schmitt, 2006, p. 2). Generally, extensive reading is understood to be the more successful in terms of vocabulary acquisition (Laufer & Rozoviski-Roitblat, 2011; Meara, 2005; Nation, 2005).

L2 learners who aspire to read in the L2 have the ability to draw on their prior knowledge (Pulido, 2003) and apply their understanding of L1 reading skills to the L2 (Mays, 2008). However, L2 learners are still learning the linguistic structures and functions of the language they are attempting to learn, and they have to draw upon their L1 significantly to accomplish this

task (Koda, 2005). The better the learners' reading skills in the L1 and the more exposure the learners have to the L2, the better their reading comprehension in the L2 (Koda).

Similarly, the reading strategies that readers develop in their L1 transmit to their L2 reading. Koda (2005) and Plakans (2009) outline some of these strategies, which include supervising, supporting, paraphrasing, and establishing coherence. Using supervising strategies, readers are constantly aware of how well they understand the text. They adjust the rate of their reading, make conjectures, and seek confirmation using the context of the passage. Conversely, readers who use support strategies tend to skip unknown words, skim for general understanding, and seek out known words to provide context. Readers who paraphrase use cognates between the L1 and L2 for understanding, translate words, and speculate the meaning beyond what is in the text. Readers who use strategies for establishing coherence use context clues to glean meaning, relate concepts to background knowledge, and reread difficult passages. No one strategy is found to be most effective. However, readers who employ these strategies are more successful at comprehending L2 texts than readers who do not employ these strategies (Koda; Plakans).

To assist students in building these reading skills, Esky (2005) outlines strategies that teachers can use. Reading does not yield a product that a teacher can assess, but it is a skill essential to the development of other skills, such as writing, as has been discussed. The teacher's job, then, is to motivate students to read and help facilitate the reading process. One of the strategies is to select an appropriate text that is suitable for the reading level of the students and captures their interest. Readers may be motivated if allowed to choose their own reading material from a list (Esky). Describing good second language reading teachers, Esky states,

> [they] create… a new kind of literacy club for their students, sharing their own reading and responding to it as native speakers normally do. They also read with their students,

> making use of such simple protocols as asking students to paraphrase what they are reading or to speculate on where the text might be going in order to determine what their real problems are (p. 577).

L2 reading instructors can inspire students to read by being engaged in reading themselves, and by helping students to interact with the text in a book club type setting that facilitates discussion.

Reading is an important part of language learning, and developing this skill in the L2 is imperative for learners of foreign languages. Next will be discussed some advantages to reading in the L2. As will be shown, the inherent link between reading and vocabulary allows the L2 learner many opportunities to acquire new vocabulary.

The Link between Reading and Vocabulary

The relationship between reading and vocabulary knowledge is widely acknowledged; it is understood that the best, and perhaps only, way to "acquire the extensive vocabulary required for reading widely in a second language is reading itself" (Esky, 2005, p. 567). Meara (2005) argues that reading is more important than the development of oral skills, stating, "spoken language is lexically less rich than written language, so students are probably exposed to a narrower range of lexical input when they learn a language [through speaking]" (p.76). Because speaking and listening tend to be informal activities involving colloquial language, the vocabulary necessary for speaking is smaller than the vocabulary needed for reading (Nation, 2005). Reading is obviously the key to vocabulary acquisition, and how vocabulary acquisition occurs through reading will be examined next.

Vocabulary development through reading, also referred to as incidental vocabulary learning, involves learning new words as a by-product of reading (Gass, 1999). More specifically, it is "a by-product of any activity not explicitly geared to lexical acquisition.

Intentional vocabulary acquisition, on the other hand, refers to an activity aimed at committing lexical information to memory" (Laufer, 2003, p. 574). Vocabulary development through reading is a complex process (Esky, 2005), involving an intricate series of steps, at the end of which it is uncertain whether the reader will store the new vocabulary in long-term memory (Pulido, 2007). Readers first must notice that there is a gap in their vocabulary knowledge as they come across an unknown word. Then, assuming the readers do not have access to dictionaries or other forms of assistance, they must infer the meaning of the word through the context of the passage using what linguistic knowledge they have. Additionally, for the vocabulary to become a viable part of their L2 system, the readers must form connections between their previous linguistic knowledge and the possible form and meaning of the new word, and then integrate this information into their understanding of the L2 (Pulido). This is an elaborate and fragile system; if the individual is overwhelmed or unable to process the text, or if unfamiliar words are deemed not important enough to warrant attention, the words will be processed only on a superficial level (Laufer & Rozoviski-Roitblat, 2011; Pulido).

Readers' efficiency in recognizing new words in a text is a good indicator of how well they understand the text. Word recognition is defined as "the process of extracting lexical information from graphic displays of words" (Koda, 2005, p. 29), and is an important part of gleaning meaning from L2 texts. Koda also explains that "individual words are critical building blocks in text-meaning construction, and efficiency in converting graphic symbols into sound, or meaning, information is indispensable in comprehension" (p. 29). Consequently, how readers undertake word recognition is essential to their ability to understand new texts.

The relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension confirms the fundamental role word knowledge plays in text understanding. Although word knowledge

(understanding a word's form, derivations, associations, and constraints) is important, a readers' vocabulary knowledge "correlates more highly with reading comprehension than other factors" (Koda, 2005, p. 49). This vocabulary is intertwined with real-world experience, and develops through repeated exposure to the word in a given context (Chen & Truscott, 2010; Koda; Laufer & Rozoviski-Roitblat, 2011). This suggests that the more applicable the word to a reader's life, the greater the likelihood that it will be retained in long-term memory.

Pertinence to a reader's life is not always necessary for vocabulary acquisition – often simply providing *some* context is all that is needed (Esky, 2005; Pulido, 2007). Citing numerous studies about children's ability to acquire vocabulary, Koda (2005) states that learning words from context is more successful than explicit vocabulary learning. Repeated exposure to a large quantity of printed words is vital to acquire vocabulary, especially so in the acquisition of academic vocabulary (Koda). Many times, these academic words are the ones readers struggle with and stumble over as they attempt to comprehend an L2 text.

As stated, reading and vocabulary development are intrinsically linked. Additionally important is the fact that quality and quantity of written material are required in order for a reader to acquire new vocabulary words. Examined next are L2 literature courses, and if the reading done in these courses is beneficial to the reader in terms of vocabulary development.

L2 Literature Courses

The advantage of an L2 literature course is the amount of reading done in such a class. Laufer (2003) discusses vocabulary learning as a cumulative process, one in which exposure to the vocabulary needs to be done frequently in order for the words to be retained. In concurrence, Krashen (2004) states that vocabulary acquisition is "best done when encounters with words are spaced or spread out over time" (pp. 47-48) and when repetition occurs steadily. Each exposure to the word reinforces the meaning in the learners' memory (Matsuoka & Hirsh, 2010). In fact,

"reading is a good source of vocabulary learning when learners read longer texts and encounter new words repeatedly" (Laufer, p. 581). The volume of reading necessary for this process is high, and unlikely to be found in a standard language class. However, an L2 literature course would be an ideal scenario, as thousands of words are read throughout the course, and words are likely to be repeated through themes.

Polio and Zyzik (2009) outline some of the important elements of an L2 literature course. They state that such courses should be designed to introduce the content and new cultural and literary concepts, while at the same time providing opportunities for students to enhance their language skills. Furthermore, they see vocabulary development as an important element of these upper-division literature courses, and through their study they discovered that students feel the same way. Students in the study also perceived substantial gains in their vocabulary knowledge through participation in the L2 literature course.

To assist their students' vocabulary development, L2 literature instructors need to be careful in selecting the texts to be read in their classrooms, as has been previously mentioned. In addition, the instructor needs to think ahead to the lexical challenges students will face as they tackle reading an L2 text (Pulido, 2003). Esky (2005) emphasizes the importance of this concept, stating,

> second language readers should be lexically prepared for any texts assigned and the texts should meet Krashen's i+1 standard for comprehensibility. Vocabulary cannot be force-fed through reading, and second language readers cannot read texts that are lexically beyond their proficiency (p. 567).

In addition to selecting a suitable text, Laufer (2003) suggests providing activities to enhance the reading experience. In her research, Laufer discovered that vocabulary acquisition occurred most

frequently when instructors took the *reading plus* approach. That is, they supplemented the text with activities such as short writing exercises. Polio and Zyzik (2009) offer other suggestions, including providing a list of important words and requiring the students to keep a vocabulary journal to track these words, or providing the students with comprehension questions to respond to in their journals. The latter suggestion has the additional advantage of fostering group discussion within the classroom, thus providing more opportunities for student output (Polio & Zyzik).

On the surface, L2 literature courses appear to offer an ideal context for L2 readers to acquire new vocabulary. However, success is not guaranteed. How the literature course is designed and what activities are included as part of the course-work plays a role in whether the students will be able to learn new words. Specific strategies that readers can use to enforce vocabulary learning will be discussed next.

Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Research suggests that extensive reading is the most effective form of reading for vocabulary development (Nation, 2005). Extensive reading "involves…reading large quantities of material" (Nation, p. 587), and provides input that is meaning-focused. In addition, the words that the readers understand assist their fluency with the L2 by providing a stepping stone for words they do not understand. As long as the unknown vocabulary words occur sporadically (optimally no more than one unknown word per 50 known words), readers are able to use reading strategies to help them understand the meaning of the unknown word (Nation), which further emphasizes the importance of the instructor's role in choosing an appropriate text.

Nation (2005) outlines four major vocabulary learning strategies that learners use to understand unknown words: guessing from context, using a dictionary, learning from word

cards, and using word parts. While utilizing the guessing from context strategy, learners infer from the context of the surrounding words what the unknown word might mean (Nassaji, 2003). More specifically, learners "[make] informed guesses of the meaning of an unknown word with the help of all available linguistic cues as well as other sources of knowledge the learner can resort to" (Qian, 2004, p. 156). They seek for clues to help them understand the new word (Laufer, 2003). This informed lexical guessing is difficult to perfect and may make for slow reading, but it is the most widely used strategy by L2 learners (Qian).

Guessing from context can provide a conceptual understanding of a word in a specific context; checking that the guess is correct by looking it up in the dictionary is a natural next step (Koda, 2005). There are several types of dictionaries for this purpose, including monolingual and bilingual dictionaries. Each have their own advantages and disadvantages, but Chan (2011) found that, for the purpose of reading, monolingual dictionaries are more helpful to L2 readers. However, whether mono- or bilingual, complex dictionaries are not useful and can be confusing for L2 learners. Instead, a simplified dictionary should be used, providing basic information regarding word definition. In addition, training students how to use dictionaries can be productive for increasing their vocabulary knowledge (Nation, 2005).

Learning from word cards has been a popular technique in language classes, and current research is demonstrating that although this strategy has weaknesses, when done correctly it can be effective (Nation, 2005). The learner should write the L1 and L2 words on the front and back of cards and study only a few minutes at a time by saying the word out loud in the L2 and attempting to identify it before looking at the L1 translation (Nakata, 2008). The cards should be systematically shuffled and like words should not be grouped together. In addition, this technique is particularly helpful if the learner uses mnemonic tricks like breaking the word into

pieces to see the meaning of the parts, or putting the word into a sentence (Koda, 2005). Nation emphasizes that word cards are significantly more effective than vocabulary lists, since these lists present the L1 and L2 word together, robbing the learner the opportunity to attempt retrieval. Additionally, the list is in a fixed order, and serial learning (i.e., one word becomes the cue for the following word) might occur instead of actual mastery of the vocabulary word.

As mentioned previously, breaking words down into smaller pieces can be useful in helping the reader identify the meaning of an unknown word. This technique is called using word parts, and involves "learning a relatively small number of prefixes and suffixes, being able to recognize them in words, and being able to relate their meanings to the meaning of the word" (Nation, 2005, p. 592). Once learners have a basic grasp of some common affixes, they are able to relate the knowledge and meaning of each part of the word to a specific concept (Nation). For example, the Spanish word *desconección* can be broken into *des-* (negative), *-conec-* (to put to together) and *–cion* (noun) to engender the concept of "a lack of togetherness" or literally "a disconnection." Using word parts is a simple technique, and a strategy that readers use in their native languages to understand complex texts. It transfers naturally to L2 learning.

Research Questions

Based on the literature review above the following questions are proposed:

1. Do L2 literature courses help students acquire new vocabulary?
2. What methods of vocabulary teaching are used in the L2 literature course setting?

Methods

To determine if L2 literature courses help students acquire new vocabulary, an assessment form must be chosen. There are a variety of formats, and choosing carefully is important in order to best evaluate the knowledge of the L2 students. A method found to be moderately difficult but possible for the upper-division language students is a network

knowledge measure. It involves providing the students with the vocabulary word and then eight other words, four of which are synonyms for the vocabulary word. The student is asked to identify the synonyms, such as in the following example: *sound* – logical, healthy, bold, solid, snow, temperature, sleep, dance. This test has been found to be a reliable measure of vocabulary acquisition through reading comprehension (Nation & Chung, 2009). Several Spanish L2 literature professors will be asked to submit a list of vocabulary words. These words, combined with other vocabulary words of similar difficulty, will be presented to the students in these courses in the form of a pre-test using the network knowledge measure. At the end of the course, a similar assessment will be presented as a post-test, to determine if the words were acquired.

To evaluate what methods of vocabulary instruction are generally used by L2 literature professors, three courses will be periodically observed by the researcher. These sessions will be recorded, and stimulated-recall will be carried out with the professors.

Implications

Although it is generally understood that reading assists vocabulary development, it is less well known whether or not the reading done in L2 literature courses provides readers will opportunities to acquire new vocabulary. Were it to be carried out, this study would answer questions concerning whether or not new vocabulary words can be acquired in such a course. Additionally, this research would give insights into methods that instructors employ to facilitate vocabulary development. Depending on the effectiveness of these methods, it may be found that current practices are ineffective and that teachers should employ new strategies in the classroom. This finding may change the way vocabulary development through L2 literature is viewed.

LOOKING FORWARD

My journey as a language instructor is merely beginning. My graduation from the MSLT program is a huge stepping stone that will allow me to reach other goals. I intend to apply for language teaching jobs in the United States, either Spanish or English focused, and start my teaching career. My immediate plans include continuing my teaching at Utah State University as an adjunct professor of Spanish. I am a proponent of life-long learning, and therefore intend to stay current in the theories of SLA and be aware of new research in my field to consistently better my teaching skills. I also wish to improve my Spanish skills, which I will do by seeking out native Spanish speakers and visiting Spanish-speaking countries as often as possible. I also aim to use my Swedish language skills as much as possible, and learn other languages. In the classroom, I will strive to be a proponent of communicative language teaching and seek to uphold the ideals outlined in my teaching philosophy. Additionally, I will encourage other language teachers to become facilitators in their classrooms, instead of mere instructors. No matter where I am or what I am doing, I will endeavor to be culturally aware and teach tolerance and acceptance of the unique. As I step out into the world, I will seek to implement the valuable lessons I have learned during my experience at Utah State University in the MSLT program.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Introduction to the Annotated Bibliography

During my time in the MSLT program, I have read countless journal articles and books. In the following pages, I present an annotated bibliography of the sources that have greatly affected my teaching philosophy and my views on language learning in general. These books and articles, covering recent research in the field of applied linguistics and foreign language learning, have provided crucial insights during my journey towards becoming a foreign language educator. The books and articles are grouped alphabetically within their respective sub-sections, which are: Brain-based Language Learning, Communicative Classroom, Culture, Literacy, and Pedagogical Practices.

Brain-based Language Learning

Haley, M. H. (2001). Understanding learner-centered instruction from the perspective of multiple intelligences. *Foreign Language Annals, 34*(4), 355-367.

<u>Summary:</u>

In this article, Haley discusses how the theory of multiple intelligences in education promotes diversity rather than the "lowest common denominator" approach to teaching; that is, the information will appeal to most of the students instead of the common majority of the students. The greatest challenge for educators is fostering a curriculum that features each facet of the multiple intelligence theory; that is, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Interpersonal/Social, Intrapersonal/Introspective, Logical/Mathematical, Musical/Rhythmic, Naturalist, Verbal/Linguistic, and Visual/Spacial. A balanced set of classroom activities that appeal to many or all of the intelligence styles reaches more students and create a more stimulating environment. Providing students many ways to learn a new concept maximizes their potential in the classroom.

<u>Reaction:</u>

Although this article was written primarily with general education in mind, I find it applicable to the foreign language classroom. Providing a variety of activities that appeal to many learning styles will help students acquire language more readily than relying on merely one or two methods. In addition, incorporating the four main elements of language – that is, reading, writing, speaking, and listening – will further assist language students' ability to comprehend and produce the target language.

Christison, M. (2002). Brain-based research and language teaching. *English Teaching Forum, 40*(2), 2-7.

Summary:

Christison states that teachers should take interest in how the brain learns best, as this knowledge will assist teachers in helping their students learn in the most efficient manner possible. She introduces some of the basics involved in brain-based learning, such as memory and emotion, as well as specific elements associated with language learning. The author also includes seven principles that have practical importance to the language classroom, as well as strategies for taking advantage of these principles. For example, she states that the brain is a parallel processor, capable of carrying out many tasks at once. Therefore, brain-compatible teaching should include a variety of activities that appeal to many different learning styles. Another principle is that the brain is driven by meaning. Although students can memorize elements of the language, this is not meaningful to them and will not be well retained. Keeping brain-based research in mind, teachers should orchestrate activities that have significance to the learners.

Reaction:

It is fascinating that research into how the brain learns can be specifically applied to foreign language learning and teaching. I plan to keep all of these principles in mind as I plan activities for my students. By doing so, I will appeal to the brain's basic functioning and inspire learning in my foreign language classroom.

Kennedy, T. J. (2006). Language learning and its impact on the brain: Connecting language learning through the mind through content-based instruction. *Foreign Language Annals, 39,* 471-486.

Summary:

In this article, Kennedy discusses ways in which brain-based research plays an important part in the field of second language teaching. Kennedy gives an in-depth discussion on different brain structures that are particularly pertinent to language and outlines the essentials of a brain-based foreign language curriculum. For example, Kennedy explains that emotion is essential to learning. The more emotions a person experiences while learning, the more the information is processed and then assimilated into the learner's working memory. Once in working memory, if emotions are still attached to this particular learning experience, the information is much more likely to be assimilated into long-term memory. This process of transferring working memory into long-term memory is inherently repetitive, and Kennedy states that repetition is important for language learning; however, he adds that novelty needs to be added to the repetition. That is, the repetitive exercises need to be meaningful, engaging, and stimulating.

Reaction:

Since I received a bachelor's degree in psychology, I find brain-based research in relation to the field of second language acquisition fascinating. Kennedy's article gives a good background into how the brain works in second language acquisition, as well as several strategies on how to use this information to develop a brain-based curriculum. I found these strategies logical and exciting to read about. I plan on implementing his suggestions into my own classroom activities.

Lombardi, J. (2008). Beyond learning styles: Brain-based research and English language learners. *Clearing House, 81,* 219-222.

<u>Summary:</u>

Lombardi uses brain-based research to propose many strategies for encouraging second language acquisition. She describes neurodevelopmental constructs that give evidence for "teaching around the wheel" – that is, using a variety of auditory, visual, and kinesthetic activities to facilitate language learning. In addition, she outlines twelve principles of brain-based research and how these principles apply to second language learning. The principles include a discussion on the brain as a social, adaptive system that innately seeks out meaning through patterning. Emotions are critical to this patterning process, in that the more emotion associated with an experience, the more time it spends in active memory and the more likely it is to be assimilated into long-term memory. This is true with both negative and positive emotions; however, the positive emotions are better for a relaxed learning environment. Additionally, learning involves both focused intention and peripheral perception, and always involves both conscious and unconscious processes. Memory, an important part of learning, is organized in at least two separate ways, including short term and long term memory. The way the brain learns is developmental, and complex learning is enhanced by challenge but inhibited by threat. Finally, every brain is uniquely organized. Some of the teaching strategies Lombardi recommends include that, because the brain is social, it learns well through interpersonal communication and interaction with others. Lombardi also explains that because emotions are critical to patterning, language learning is enhanced by comfortable and stimulating environments. An instructor can use the knowledge that complex learning is enhanced by challenges but inhibited by threat by creating situations that are difficult but not impossible.

Reaction:

In my experience, each of the twelve principles Lombardi describes holds true. What is fascinating to me is how she ties in these principles to language learning. I appreciate the specific examples she gives of how an educator can encourage language learning through knowing how the brain works and what stimulates language learning, specifically. I will be able to use these principles in my foreign language classroom.

Robinson, P. (2001). Individual differences, cognitive abilities, aptitude complexes and learning conditions in second language acquisition. *Second Language Research, 17*(4), 368-392.

Summary:

Many variables affect a student's ability to acquire a foreign language. In this article, Robinson explores some of those factors and the role they play in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). He identifies aptitude, awareness, and age as "important learner variables" and states that individual differences within each of these variables greatly affect a learners' ability to acquire a second language. Aptitude involves the speed of a person's recall, working and long term memory, and general intelligence. Awareness includes the ability to recognize patterns, plus overall motivation to learn the foreign language. Age is significant in that children and adults acquire language in distinct manners that need to be taken into account by the foreign language educator.

Reaction:

When educators are aware of students' innate and diverse capabilities, they are better able to adjust the curriculum to meet the needs of their students. I must evaluate the different capabilities my students bring to the classroom and take advantage of these capabilities in order to help them acquire the second language in a manner that suits them.

Communicative Classroom

Aski, J. (2003). Foreign language textbook activities: Keeping pace with current second language acquisition research. *Foreign Language Annals, 36*(1), 57-65.

Summary:

Foreign language textbooks have been notoriously slow to implement recent research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). In this article, Aski explores why this is and how the textbook could be better utilized to assist students in their foreign language education. She points out that "learners reach higher levels of foreign language achievement if grammar instruction and practice includes an exploration of meaning and communicative practice" (p. 57). Aski cites evidence stating that according to current SLA research, mechanical exercises prolific in foreign language textbooks should be discarded altogether in favor of ones containing communicative practice. Aski states that communicative language practice activities are those that textbooks should include, as they focus heavily on meaning and use this as a means to generate form. The author also provides an assessment procedure which a language teacher can use to rate a textbook for the purpose of discovering how well it provides students to with communicative language practice.

Reaction:

As a foreign language educator, I am constantly frustrated by the lack of communicative language practice provided in the students' textbook. I am forced to spend extra time deriving activities from the material in the textbook, or otherwise adjusting the textbook's attempt to provide a communicative activity. I find that, in agreement with Aski's research, foreign language textbooks have fallen far behind the results from current SLA research.

Ballman, T., Liskin-Gasparro, J., & Mandell, P. (2001). *The communicative classroom*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Summary:

Students do not attend language classes in order to learn about grammar or the structure of a language; rather they have a desire to learn language so that they can express themselves and understand the expressions of others. In other words, they wish to communicate. This book focuses on how to plan lessons that promote communication in the classroom and the different kinds of activities instructors can utilize to encourage the students to use the language in a classroom setting. It is imperative that the target language be the primary language in the classroom in order for students to be able to express themselves and produce language, which is the goal of communicative language teaching. It is important that all students are able to participate in producing language and that several more advanced students are not singled out as constant participators. A series of tasks are described to help the teacher create a communicative language learning atmosphere, including interviews, total physical response, and information gap activities. Having a task-to-task syllabus design allows the teacher to assist the students in achieving the objective in the culminating task, or ultimate learning goal.

Reaction:

Considering the necessary elements for a communicative classroom is an essential exercise for a second-language teacher. The possibility of speaking almost entirely in the target language is daunting, but the more I read about how to help students produce and comprehend language, the more I understand that it is essential to their learning process. It is important for me to escape the idea of a grammatically based syllabus, as I was primarily taught with this method,

and personally enjoy grammar. However, that was not my purpose for wanting to learn language and I need to remember that it is not the purpose for my students either. The discussion of learning vocabulary and its importance in the communicative classroom made an impact on me. When students begin to search the dictionary for every word as they attempt to express themselves, I must teach the vocabulary that they need.

Bartels, N. (2005). Applied linguistics and language teacher education: What we know. In N. Bartels (Ed.), *Researching applied linguistics in language teacher education.* New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Summary:

Bartels discusses how knowledge of applied linguistics can have a positive impact on language teachers. However, helping teachers acquire knowledge and conceptions about language and language learning alone is not enough to significantly change their teaching, as knowledge about language does not need to be high for teachers to perform well in that it does not necessarily transfer to L2 teaching. For knowledge to transfer successfully, practice tasks have to be as close as possible to target tasks. Participation in hands-on activities similar to the target activities helps knowledge retention and use. It is not teaching experience that has the most important impact on teacher expertise but the willingness of the teachers to invest their time in learning more about their teaching. Use of cognitive shortcuts and schemata, such as using “rules of thumb” and focusing on information that is task-relevant, can assist the teacher in becoming more efficient in the classroom. To enable teachers to take full advantage of knowledge about language in their teaching, they need to spend a significant amount of time in applied linguistics classes. This will assist novice teachers through several kinds of activities, which include: developing schemata of language and language learners, helping teachers organize their knowledge so that relevant information triggers the schemata, and helping teachers develop appropriate rules of thumb.

Reaction:

Bartels makes a strong case for language teachers to learn about applied linguistics and gain knowledge about language itself. I do not have a good grasp on what such classes would cover or how they would be translated to the classroom. Apparently Bartels has the same concern, at least when it comes to knowledge translating to L2 teaching. I was reminded of the importance of providing activities that simulate the real world when Bartels mentioned that practice tasks need to be as close as possible to target tasks. It makes sense that teachers should be trained in the same way they teach their students. I think that developing appropriate rules of thumb is an important skill for teachers, because it is easy to make assumptions and vital that we assume as correctly as possible.

Echevarria, J., Vogt, M., & Short, D. (2008). *Making content comprehensible for English learners: The SIOP model* (3rd ed.). Boston: Pearson.

Summary:

This book outlines the features found in the SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) Model, designed to assist teachers of non-native English speaking students in the school system. As the title states, the goal is to make the lesson content comprehensible for these English learners. The objective is to help them improve their language skills while at the same time monitoring their learning of the subject matter. The authors outline such techniques as having a clearly defined and displayed lesson objective, including meaningful activities that contain both lesson concepts and language practice, teaching the students learning strategies, and building background knowledge in order to facilitate the assimilation of new concepts. They also include a number of activities that have proven valuable for English language learners, such as the use of graphic organizers, jigsaw text reading (groups read separate paragraphs of a difficult text and then explain to the class), realia (real-life objects), and response boards (small dry-erase boards that each student can use for group responses). Included in the text as well are sample lessons in a variety of teaching environments exhibiting the application of these techniques.

Reaction:

Although the text is specifically focused for teachers of elementary and secondary school students, I found that these lessons and techniques could apply directly to a foreign language classroom. Although written for teachers who assist students learning English in a standard classroom, the book can be used by teachers of a foreign language. I found a study of the text to be useful in conceptualizing the ways I could enhance learning for my students through the application of elements such as realia, building background, and orchestrating student interaction in the classroom.

Hernandez, T. (2009). Situating grammar instruction in the world language classroom: Four content-enriched strategies. *The Tennessee Foreign Language Teaching Association, (1)*1, 50-60.

Summary:

This article discusses the role of grammar and how it should be included in the communicative classroom. The author outlines the pitfalls of traditional grammar instruction and discusses how foreign language students need communicative and interactive language learning experiences. Four strategies are given to assist the world language teacher in applying grammar principles to more communicative classrooms. The first is Textual Enhancements activities, wherein the language learner's attention is drawn to a specific form in a text, through italics or bold type. Emphasis must be placed on the form-meaning connection, so that students can relate the patterns highlighted in the text to communicative interaction. The strategy of Input Flood attempts to make specific features of the foreign language input more numerous and significant. All input, both oral and written, available to the learner is saturated with the target form. The third strategy is called Structured Input Activities. These activities seek to draw foreign language learners' attention to form-meaning relationships, thereby assisting them to improve converting input into intake. As output is also essential to help students acquire a second language, the author describes the final strategy of dictogloss. During this kind of task, students listen carefully to a short text and then work in groups to recreate the text, adhering as closely as possible to the original grammar and theme.

Reaction:

I found this article to be practical and useful in attacking the issue of grammar instruction in a communicative classroom. The strategies outlined are straight-forward and simple to implement. Teaching grammar communicatively is daunting, but these strategies make it seem manageable. I feel confident in my ability to apply all four of them in my own foreign language classroom with the basic explanations and steps offered in the article. It is simply logical, for example, to inundate all forms of input with the target grammar function as described in the strategy of input flood. In addition, I particularly look forward to using dictogloss, which is a new concept that sounds both effective and pleasurable for students.

Hinkel, E. (Ed.). (2005). *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Summary:

In this aptly titled book, Hinkel provides a comprehensive look at many aspects of second language teaching and how to assist learners to acquire a second language. She peruses such topics as pragmatics, reading and writing in the L2, pedagogical practices, and assessment. Included is recent research about controversial topics such as how to teach grammar, use of the target language in the classroom, computer-assisted language learning, and vocabulary development through reading. In terms of vocabulary development, extensive reading has been found to provide input that allows readers to develop their vocabulary. Similarly, development of grammar can occur without explicit instruction by exposing students to correctly structured forms of the target language. This research supports my belief that communicative language teaching is the most effective method of second language instruction.

Reaction:

This booked aided me immensely as I researched a variety of topics about second language acquisition. I was able to get thorough and detailed information about important elements of second language learning, and ways to help my students acquire a second language. Additionally, reading this volume helped me to generate new ideas for future development.

Lee, J. F., & Van Patten, B. (2003). *Making communicative language teaching happen* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Summary:

Lee and Van Patten describe how grammatical practice is rarely effective in promoting communication. In fact, they propose that the purpose of language is to accomplish a task and not practice a specific language form. Communicating in the classroom is essential for language learning; indeed, it is rare for students to have any other chances for meaningful communication outside the classroom. Therefore it is essential for instructors to avoid the Atlas complex and to help students practice communicating effectively in the classroom setting. The best way to initiate expression, negotiation, and interpretation of meaning is through activities that are not dominated by the instructor. When the students work in pairs or groups, they are often given more reign to communicate effectively. The activities must have meaning for the students and allow them to use the context of a scenario to communicate.

Reaction:

I never thought of communicating as being a negotiation, but through the examples given and reflection of my own experience with language I understand how communication can seem like negotiation when others have to guess what we are trying to say, or when we have to interpret the messages of others. The concept of initiating communication in the classroom makes perfect sense, although before reading this book I did not have a good grasp on how to do so. The activities described provide excellent examples for how to avoid a class dominated by the instructor speaking instead of giving meaningful opportunities for the students to communicate with each other. The idea of the instructor being like an architect, who designs and

plans the lesson but isn't necessarily responsible for the final product, is enlightening. It is the students who must become the builders, who put the communication together. They become coworkers as they attempt to communicate effectively. When students are habitually placed in situations in which they learn to communicate in the classroom, then effective communication in the real world becomes less intimidating and more feasible.

Omaggio Hadley, A. (2001). *Teaching language in context.* Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Summary:

In this text, the author provides a comprehensive beginner's look at the field of second language acquisition and second language teaching. She examines elements such as communicative competence, Krashen's Monitor Theory, and communicative language teaching, and provides discussions and analyses of their validity in the field of second language education. She also describes specific ways that teachers can help foster a student's ability to listen, read, write, and speak the target language. The author states that language study contributes to a cross-cultural curriculum and that culture and language are intertwined; in accordance, she includes a chapter on teaching language for cultural understand, which contains discussions on the difficulty of teaching culture as well as how to overcome these difficulties. For example, she states that finding resources with which to teach culture can be challenging, but that authentic materials such as stories, texts, and music are available through technology and the internet. The author concludes with a chapter on the ACTFL guidelines and how they can be used to improve lesson plans and assessments.

Reaction:

I found this text to include excellent discussions on topics in second language acquisition. I particularly found the sections on communicative competence and Krashen's hypotheses enlightening, as I had never seen them described so succinctly and thoroughly. The chapter on culture also provided new insights to how I can include cultural aspects of the Spanish language in my classroom.

Shrum, J.L., & Glisan, E.W. (2010). *Teacher's handbook: Contextualized language instruction.* Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Summary:

The Teacher's Handbook is designed for foreign language educators to assist them in their teaching. The authors draw on research and influential theories to offer tools for helping foreign language teachers improve their skills. Additionally, the authors supply an introduction to the field of second language teaching, outlining common terminology and acronyms new to beginners in the field. Also included throughout the textbook are discussions on realistic goals for students, planning lessons, integrating culture, effective grammar instruction, development of both oral and written skills, presentational communication, appealing to different learning styles, and how to adapt technology to the foreign language classroom. Prominent research on the role of input and interaction in the classroom is presented, including research from celebrated linguists such as Chomsky and Krashen. Using the work of these noted authors, Shrum and Glisan discuss the importance of providing students with comprehensible input, creating opportunities for peer interaction, and scaffolding pre-existing language skills.

Reaction:

The Teacher's Handbook is truly a guide for the aspiring foreign language educator. I found Shrum and Glisan's presentation of research understandable and applicable; their textbook offers a wide range of advice for language teachers in all capacities. Their introduction to the field was exactly what I needed as a beginner to second language teaching. I found myself both excited to try the techniques they presented and motivated to improve as a teacher.

Sung, K-Y. (2010). Promoting communicative language learning through communicative tasks. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 1*(5), 704-713.

Summary:

In her article, Sung outlines how to encourage a shift from grammar-focused language education to a more communicative style. She discusses communicative competence, a language ideal that students should work towards including the comprehension of proper social interactions in a given context. Achieving communicative competence allows a language learner to interact successfully within the target language and culture despite some weaknesses in language ability. Sung gives a description of communicative tasks in her article. They are activities that involve learners in understanding, manipulating, and producing language. They also include six main components, which are goals, input, activities, teacher role, learner role, and settings. Sung also identifies some of the important elements of communicative language teaching, which include student interaction through group work and communicative tasks. She argues for the communicative approach, saying that even a difficult language like Chinese can be learned through a curriculum based on communicative activities. To discover the validity of her claim, Sung conducted an experiment using a communicative approach to help students learn Chinese. At the end of the study, students were successful in acquiring the elements of Chinese language taught during the unit. Sung therefore concludes that communicative language teaching can be implemented in any classroom and with any language

Reaction:

Language learning is difficult, and in many opinions Chinese is the most difficult of them all. Sung makes an excellent case for the communicative approach through her research. She manages to teach students Chinese through a series of communicative tasks; if this is achievable, then learning any language through this method should be achievable. Sung's achievement convinces me that creating a communicative classroom is possible.

Wong, W., & VanPatten, B. (2003). The evidence is IN: Drills are OUT. *The Foreign Language Annals, 36*(3), 403-423.

Summary:

In this article, Wong and VanPatten examined whether drills contribute to the language learning process and improve language acquisition over time. They further explain that they wish to discover not *whether* to focus on the form of language, but rather *how* to do so effectively. The authors discuss the history of using drills for language education, which originated with the hope that the structure of the language would be "drilled" or imbedded in the students' brains in an error-free manner. Mechanical drills can be performed even using nonsense words that do not exist in the target language. In addition to mechanical drills, the authors address both meaningful and communicative drills. Meaningful drills are those in which the answer is apparent, but the students must know how the language works to perform the exercise. Communicative drills still focus on habit-forming skills, but allow the students to make conjectures and be inventive with language. After their discussion on the different forms that drills take, the authors definitively state that drills do not work. They then present evidence as to why drilling language into students is ineffective, claiming that drills can even impede a student's ability to acquire language. In conclusion, they discuss how to improve language learning.

Reaction:

I was taught Spanish through a drill-based curriculum, and although I learned much about the form of the language, I learned little about real-world communication. I find Wong and VanPatten's analysis of why drills should be put on the backburner to match with my personal experience with language acquisition. I plan to avoid the excessive use of any form of drills, including communicative ones that, although they may seem helpful, can in fact hinder language learning.

Culture

Bennett, M. J. (1993). How not to be a fluent fool: Understanding the cultural dimension of language. *The Language Teacher, 27*(9), 16-21.

Summary:

Bennett describes how viewing language as merely a mode of communication with a set of rules to learn is a serious fallacy. He states that a person who believes language is just words and grammar is a "fluent fool," someone who, although speaking the language well, does not understand the social and cultural aspects of the language. Fluent fools may not make linguistic mistakes, but their cultural shortcomings cause situations from which escape is difficult and these shortcomings may eventually lead the fluent fool to develop a negative view of the cultural group and the target language group to view that person negatively in turn. Bennett goes on to describe how language affects our cultural reality and the ways in which it does so. He states that language and experience are interrelated, describing how in the Micronesian islands of Truk the word for blue and green is the same, which poses a problem for Trukish speakers learning colors in English. Another well-known connection between language and culture is that of social relations, best seen in status markers in East Asian languages such as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. Bennett also provides teachers with strategies for helping students understand how culture and language are intrinsically linked. Helping students see how their native language relates to their cultural perceptions is effective, as is comparing L1 language patterns to L2 language patterns while searching for similarities and differences.

Reaction:

Bennett's concept of the fluent fool is an excellent representation of the connection between language and culture. I found his article to be refreshing and exciting to read, especially the numerous examples of different language forms and how they relate to their culture of origin. I also hope to implement the strategies he describes as helpful for getting students to understand how important culture is when learning a foreign language.

DeCapua, A., & Wintergerst, A. (2007). *Crossing cultures in the language classroom.* Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

Summary:

In this text, DeCapua and Wintergerst discuss how to incorporate cultural learning in the classroom. They give a thorough definition of culture, including elements such as "the set of fundamental ideas, practices, and experiences shared by a group of people," and ask probing questions to help students discover what culture means to them personally. The authors also discuss how language and culture are interrelated and inseparable, in that culture influences the way in which people communicate. They define culture shock as a loss of familiar stimuli that can lead to misunderstandings during social intercourse, and give methods of mediating the anxiety this process brings. The authors recognize the importance of nonverbal communication and how this can create serious social misunderstandings if not properly learned. They outline the cultural impact of social roles and encourage understanding of cultural differences with elements such as gender perception. This text also provides a wealth of activities for educators to provide students with the purpose of assisting higher-order thinking and empathy for other cultures.

Reaction:

I found this text to be an exemplary guide to educating students about cultural practices and differences. It outlines the most important elements of cultural differences in a simple and comprehensible manner while providing copious examples of how culture can be perceived from many unique perspectives. The activities, in particular, are useful tools for helping students explore cultural diversity.

McKay, S. L., & Bokhorst-Heng, W. D. (2008). *International English in its sociolinguistic contexts: Towards a socially sensitive EIL pedagogy.* New York: Taylor and Francis.

Summary:

In their book, McKay and Bokhorst-Weng examine how English has developed as a global language and how this development has affected the status and use of English, as well as other world languages. They define the general term of globalization as the constant interactions between the global and the local arena. Several reasons for the spread of English are discussed, including colonization by both Britain and the USA of such countries as India and the Philippines. In addition, the youth in particular have various incentives to learn English, especially through exposure to media, popular music, and the movie industry. The dangers of this massive English globalization include monolingualism, in that native speakers of English are becoming complacent in their acquisition of foreign languages, and economic divide, as in several countries only the elite receive the opportunity to learn English. The authors state that their overall goal is to explore how the teaching and learning of English can be carried out so as to maintain linguistic diversity and at the same time provide equal access to English learning. As a response they discuss how a pedagogy must be organized so that the language can be learned by students of all native languages and cultural backgrounds.

Reaction:

I firmly believe that, as the world grows smaller in terms of how we can connect with each other, it is crucial to have a common language. We must be able to communicate with each other. As a native English speaker it would be easy for me to sit back and let the rest of the world learn my language; however, as a world traveler I recognize this attitude as impractical. Millions

of people do not speak English, and if I want to communicate with them, I have to learn their language. I will, on the other hand, encourage the acquisition of English as a means of being able to connect with the rest of the world. It is crucial that the pedagogy used to teach English match the communicative styles and cultural bounds of the students. Although enthusiasm for English should be encouraged, an appreciation for the native language of the students should be included in their schooling.

Literacy

Alvermann, D. E., Phelps, S. F., & Gillis, V. R. (2010). *Content area reading and literacy: Succeeding in today's diverse classrooms* (6th ed.) Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Summary:

This text describes many ways to encourage reading and literacy in the classroom. Alvermann, Phelps, and Gillis discuss a variety of techniques, which include how to utilize texts to help the students comprehend difficult material, how to manage whole classroom versus small group work, how to encourage language learning, and how to balance and include culture in the classroom. Their advice includes using the text as a secondary resource to classroom activities, planning how many students are in a single group (since fewer members participate as group size increases), including a variety of visual aides to encourage vocabulary development, and being aware of how culture can affect the use and meaning of language. Assessment methodologies and discussions on learning theories are also included in this text.

Reaction:

The authors provide a plethora of good classroom practices, emphasizing and encouraging literacy in the classroom. Although not focused on foreign language learning, the techniques are directly applicable to the foreign language classroom. The authors also provide quotes from education researchers supporting their work, which I found both fascinating and helpful.

Koda, K. (2005). *Insights into second language reading: A cross-linguistic approach.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Summary:

Koda examines many facets of reading in this book, specifically focusing on L2 learners and how reading in the L2 affects their language learning. She examines the theoretical aspects of L2 reading, including reading competence and the difference between L1 and L2 reading. She discusses word recognition and how readers can effectively identify words in a text. Vocabulary knowledge is discussed in terms of how understanding a word's meaning and properties can help an L2 reader, as well as how to build vocabulary knowledge through reading. Additionally, Koda states that reading involves not just identifying single words and concepts, but understanding an overall message. Therefore, discourse processing is an important element of L2 reading. Additionally, Koda examines the different kinds of texts available to L2 readers (narratives, stories, expository texts, etc.) and the challenges and advantages of reading each one. She ends her book by explaining strategies that L2 readers can use to augment their reading skills.

Reaction:

Reading is one of the four main skills involved in language, and a skill important to classroom learning of a foreign language. As the title indicates, Koda offers many insights into what second language reading is and how it affects L2 learners. Reading this text provided me with a good theoretical base, and also inspired me to include reading as part of my curriculum.

Pigada, M., & Schmitt, N. (2006). Vocabulary acquisition from extensive reading: A case study. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 18*(1), 1-28.

Summary:

The authors begin with a review of research on extensive reading and how extensive reading helps readers to acquire new vocabulary words. They define extensive reading as the consumption of large quantities of material, and emphasize that extensive reading should be pleasurable for the reader. The authors describe why teachers find extensive reading to be effective – mainly, that it is "pedagogically efficient" (two activities are performed at once, reading and vocabulary acquisition), is pleasant and motivating, and provides opportunities for readers to see how the language is used in context. The authors also provide some cons to extensive reading, including that reading for meaning does not necessarily mean new words will be acquired, and that sometimes the text is so rich with information that readers are able to understand the context of the passage without having to identify new words. The authors argue that even if readers are not able to identify the meaning of a word, they can still gain much knowledge about the word and the language in general, such as common spelling and grammar functions. From their case study of an adult learner of French, Pigada and Schmitt conclude that extensive reading can help readers to acquire new vocabulary, although this incidental learning should be followed up by explicit teaching to solidify the new knowledge. In addition, the comprehensible input provided by extensive reading can help readers to learn about the language in general, including the spelling of words and grammar functions.

Reaction:

I found this article to be an interesting and comprehensive look at how reading helps language learners to acquire vocabulary. I was particularly intrigued by some of the findings from Pigada and Schmitt's research, despite the fact that they examined only one reader. Of particular interest was the finding that knowledge about the language outside of lexical comprehension can be gathered by extensive reading. This causes me to be more motivated to include reading into my language classroom.

Polio, C., & Zyzik, E. (2009). Don Quixote meets ser and estar: Multiple perspectives on language learning in Spanish literature classes. *The Modern Language Journal, 93*(4), 550-569.

Summary:

In their article, Polio and Zyzik examine the trend that many upper-division literature courses, unlike lower division language courses, do not include explicit language learning. They report on a study involving three upper-division language courses, in which they interviewed the instructors, administered questionnaires to the students, and observed classroom instruction. The authors noted that most students expected their language skills to improve through discussing literature in the classroom, whereas the instructors had few to no language goals in mind for the course. At the end of the course, the students reported gains in reading and writing skills, but not in speaking skills. This matched the opinions of the instructors, who did not view it as their responsibility as literature instructors to help their students gain knowledge about the language, including speaking and other interpersonal skills. Instructors cited a study abroad experience as the means to accomplish that goal. The authors suggest some techniques that the literature instructors could include in their classrooms to assist the students' language skills (which they claimed would improve through opportunities to produce output). Suggestions include requiring to the students to keep a vocabulary notebook or reading journal, including various dictogloss activities, and adding adjunct classes run by graduate instructors.

Reaction:

This article covers many interesting ideas, but I think the moral of the story is that instructors need to include variety in their classrooms. I need to have literature in my Spanish language classroom just as much as a literature teachers need to have language goals in their Spanish literature classrooms. I appreciate the techniques that the authors outline in their article, and when I include literature I will apply their ideas to help my students further their language goals while simultaneously understanding Spanish literature.

Pedagogical Practices

Dörnyei, Z. (1994). Motivation and motivating in the foreign language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal, 78*, 273-284.

Summary:

In this article, Dörnyei discusses motivation as it relates to the foreign language classroom. Specifically, he describes the difference between intrinsic motivation, which refers to internal motivators such as joy or satisfaction, and extrinsic motivation, which includes external motivators such as good grades or candy. He states that previously, intrinsic motivation was seen as more powerful than extrinsic, but recent research has shown that a self-determined individual focused on extrinsic motivators can cause these extrinsic motivators to be just as powerful and the intrinsic motivators. Dörnyei gives a variety of detailed examples of how teachers can motivate students in different levels. For example, at the language level students will be motivated by seeing cultural examples of the language through films or music, and by identifying cultural similarities as well as differences. At the learner level, students will be motivated by decreasing their anxiety about performing and assessment of what they *can* do instead of what they *can't* do. At the teacher level, students will be motivated by instructors who adopt the role of facilitator and work to empathize with their students.

Reaction:

Dörnyei's specific directions and examples are indispensable for an aspiring foreign language teacher. I want my students to be excited about learning the target language and to know how excited I am about the language; the motivation advice this article contains is exactly what I need to help my students. Although the theory he provides is useful and interesting, the specific elements that I can implement in my classroom now are what make this article an important reference.

Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research, 77*(1), 81-112. doi: 10.3102/003465430298487

Summary:

Hattie and Timperley describe feedback as information given to a learner about the learner's performance or comprehension of the material to be learned. The authors describe feedback as an occurrence that is directly linked to performance; whenever learners execute some task, they will always receive some form of feedback. The authors, then, concern themselves with discovering how to make that feedback effective and productive. In this article, the authors give a few specific strategies for providing constructive feedback. For example, they suggest bringing to the students' attention the positive things they have accomplished, rather than simply focusing on correction. These positive remarks are most effective when they are specific, and when they point out progress that students have made in a particular area. To encourage this kind of progress, Hattie and Timperley suggest setting specific goals with the students. This allows for careful tracking of progress and opportunities for feedback when goals are met.

Reaction:

I have never thought about the importance of feedback to the foreign language classroom before reading this article. Now that I understand that feedback will take place, whether I intend it to or not, I need to focus on how to maximize this feedback, and its effect on my students. I agree with the authors' statement that finding ways to give positive feedback rather than negative feedback is more effective and will facilitate learning; what I need to discover are various methods to do so in my classroom.

Lyster, R., & Ranta, L. (1997). Corrective feedback and learner uptake. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 19,* 37-61.

Summary:

Teacher-generated feedback and student uptake of corrective feedback are the topics of this article by Lyster and Ranta. The authors discuss a study in which they measured what forms of feedback were commonly used by instructors and which forms of feedback generated the greatest uptake by the students, as well as offered them opportunities to "repair" their mistakes. The six main forms of feedback highlighted in the article include: (1) explicit correction, in which the teacher corrects the student by stating openly "you should say…", (2) recast, in which the teacher repeats the student's utterance without the error, (3) clarification request, in which the teacher explicitly asks for clarification about what the student means by an utterance, (4) metalinguistic feedback, in which the teacher asks questions or makes statements about the error without saying what it is, (5) elicitation, in which the teacher repeats the beginning of the student's utterance and then pauses where the error occurs and waits for the student to self-repair the error, and (6) repetition, in which the teacher repeats the utterance with the mistake, but uses such intonation as to question the validity of the statement. After discussing these six forms of feedback, the authors describe how their research demonstrates that although recasting is the most popular form of feedback, it is also the least effective; only about a third of the students were able to uptake, or use correctly in context, the correct form. Clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, and repetition were much more effective, while elicitation was at the top with 100% of the students successfully correcting their utterances.

Reaction:

Many times I go out of my way to help my students correct their utterances; according to this study by Lyster and Ranta, unless I go about it the right way, my efforts may be lost. For that reason, I found this article significant. I want my students to have the best possible chance for success, which requires that I master effective techniques for providing feedback. Fortunately, this article has given me a useful starting point.

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