5-2016

Language Teaching in the Secondary Education Classroom: Strategies for Teaching Spanish and English

Alexandria Adair

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LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THE SECONDARY EDUCATION CLASSROOM: STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING SPANISH AND ENGLISH

by

Alexandria Adair

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 de Jonge-Kannan
Committee Member

Dr. Sonia Manuel-DuPont
Committee Member

Dr. Bradford J. Hall
Department Head

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

Logan, Utah

2016
DEDICATION

I dedicate this portfolio to my grandmother, Beverly Turner Adair. You are the epitome of strength and perseverance. You will forever be my example of determination, grit, and above all, grace. You have positively influenced every aspect of my life. I love you, Grandma.
ABSTRACT

Language Teaching in the Secondary Education Classroom:

Strategies for Teaching Spanish and English

by

Alexandria Adair: Master of Second Language Teaching
Utah State University, 2016

Major Professor: Dr. María Luisa Spicer-Escalante
Department: Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies

This portfolio is a compilation of the author’s beliefs about effectively teaching English as a Second Language and Spanish as a Foreign Language. All of the work in the portfolio centers on the teaching philosophy statement, which contains what the author believes to be the most important aspects of second and foreign language teaching. This statement discusses the importance of communicative language teaching, with a focus on real-life interactions with others. It also advocates teaching content via the second language for more concrete understanding. Four artifacts follow the teaching philosophy statement. The first artifact examines the role of neutral Spanish and gives recommendations for implementing telenovelas into Spanish classes. The second artifact argues the case for first language literacy in order to achieve biliteracy and true bilingualism. The third artifact focuses on teaching Spanish formality to adolescent students, with a focus on the pronouns tú and usted. The final artifact discusses using games to teach second language, with a specific focus on online and digital games. A
three-part annotated bibliography follows these artifacts, showcasing the literature that
the author researched on communicative language teaching and the task-based approach,
gaming’s influence on second language acquisition, and the Spanish *telenovela*. The
annotated bibliography portrays how this research affected the author’s teaching
philosophy statement and the four artifacts of this portfolio.

(141 pages)
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the co-directors of the MSLT program: Drs. Karin de Jonge-Kannan and María Luisa Spicer-Escalante. You have both become life-long mentors and friends. Thank you, Dr. Spicer-Escalante for your faith in me as a student and teacher from the very beginning. You have been instrumental in the completion of this degree and have afforded me life-changing professional development opportunities. You pushed me to achieve my best, and taught me to learn from my mistakes. Mil gracias, Profe.

Thank you, Dr. de Jonge-Kannan, for your unending support and guidance. From the first day I walked into your office to see if the MSLT would be a good fit, to the very last days of completing this portfolio, you have been my constant compass. Your patience and kindness have not gone unnoticed. Thanks from the bottom of my heart for the opportunities and direction you have provided me.

Thank you to Dr. Sonia Manuel-DuPont for so graciously agreeing to be my committee member, without even knowing me beforehand. Your knowledge of ESL and the challenges K-12 English learners face is invaluable.

Thank you to the other professors from whom I took classes during the MSLT: Dr. Abdulkafi Albirini, Dr. Joshua Thoms, and Dr. Sherry Marx. Your expertise in your respective fields has lent much to this portfolio.

I could not have dreamed of completing this degree and portfolio without the support of my colleagues and classmates. Thank you to the entire Spanish adjunct team for your guidance and friendship. Thank you to my MSLT peers for keeping me encouraged every step of the way. You have made this experience one of the best of my
life, and I treasure your friendships. Thanks especially to Elizabeth Abell, Yasmine Kataw, Katie Reynolds, Ariel Finlinson, Chemaris Ethington, Jeni Burke, Tempe Mabe, Haitao Zhao, Fred Poole, Anja Brandt, Chad Saunders, Mohammed Hussein, Nouf Alotaibi, and Michael Spooner for the laughs, study groups, editorial assistance, and heartfelt advice throughout this program.

Thank you so much to my amazing parents for everything good that has come into my life. Your examples of hard work, patience, tenacity, humor, and unconditional love have propelled me to be the person I am today. Thanks for encouraging and supporting me throughout this journey.

Thanks to my amazing brothers Bryce, Brett, Scott, Mitch, and Caden for loving me, and keeping me laughing. You are my best friends and I am grateful for your examples. Thank you Hope, for being an amazing sister-in-law and friend. Thanks to Jayne and Emmett for constantly making me smile and helping me see the world as the wonder that it is.

Huge thanks to my current colleagues at Willow Valley Middle School, Jessica Patterson and Julie Derrick, for all of the amazing support and collaboration you have provided me. Also, thanks to Doris Martínez for being my constant afterschool companion, cheerleader, and friend. Thank you for your enthusiasm and love. You ladies are the reason I was able to complete this portfolio and teach full-time simultaneously.

I have saved the best for last. “Thanks” will never be enough to express my gratitude to my incredible husband, Chase. You have always been supportive of my goals and dreams, and you have done everything in your power to help me attain them. This degree is just one of the many endeavors in which you have supported me. Thank you for
the unending meals, laundry, laughs, encouragement, guidance, reassurance, and compassion. You have kept me sane, and the love you have shown me throughout this process is unequaled. It is thanks to you that this work is finished. I love you.

Ali Adair
# CONTENTS

ABSTRACT...................................................................................................................................iv

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS....................................................................................................................vi

INTRODUCTION..................................................................................................................................1

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY..................................................................................................................3
  Apprenticeship of Observation.........................................................................................................4
  Professional Environment..................................................................................................................9
  Teaching Philosophy Statement.........................................................................................................10
  Professional Development through Teaching Observations...............................................................24
  Self-Assessment of Teaching...........................................................................................................30

LANGUAGE ARTIFACT......................................................................................................................35
  Introduction and Reflection.............................................................................................................36
  Neutral Spanish and the *Telenovela*: Using *Telenovelas* for Educational Purposes.........................38

LITERACY ARTIFACT.......................................................................................................................50
  Introduction and Reflection.............................................................................................................51
  Home Language Literacy to Facilitate Biliteracy: The Case for Two-Way Dual Language Immersion Education..........................................................................................................................54

CULTURE ARTIFACT........................................................................................................................65
  Introduction and Reflection.............................................................................................................66
  Teaching the Pragmatics of *Tú* and *Usted* to Novice Learners of Spanish.................................68

TECHNOLOGY ARTIFACT..................................................................................................................80
  Introduction and Reflection.............................................................................................................81
  Technology and Motivation in the L2 Classroom: Using Games to Facilitate Spanish Acquisition..........................................................................................................................83

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES.......................................................................................................95
  Introduction.....................................................................................................................................96
  Communicative Language Teaching and the Task-Based Approach....................................................97
  Gaming’s Influence on Second Language Acquisition.....................................................................106
INTRODUCTION

This portfolio demonstrates what I have learned as well as the work I have completed during the MSLT program from the fall of 2014 until the spring of 2016. The teaching philosophy portion of this document is at its center, and everything within the portfolio is a reflection of my personal teaching philosophy. This section includes my experiences as a foreign language (FL) learner and teacher, my personal teaching philosophy statement (TPS), and reflections of multiple observations I have completed both of myself and of other FL teachers throughout the program.

My teaching philosophy statement focuses on four main aspects of teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) and Spanish as a Foreign Language (SFL). The first aspect of importance is the Communicative Language Teaching approach along with Task-Based Activities. The entire portfolio focuses on these pedagogies. The second facet of my TPS is the importance of Content-Based Instruction and the role it plays in biliteracy development. The third aspect of my TPS gives attention to the growing significance of media in FL teaching and learning. Finally, the last piece of my TPS discusses pragmatic awareness in regards to communicating as a SFL learner.

Four artifacts follow my TPS in this portfolio. These artifacts were written as a part of my coursework in the MSLT program. They further elaborate the four aspects of my TPS by offering literature reviews and addressing the implications this literature has on my teaching. The first artifact discusses the necessity of literacy in the first language to facilitate literacy in the second. This specifically applies to ESL learners and draws from my experience as an ESL teacher. In the second artifact, I discuss the effects neutral Spanish have on Spanish media and specifically the telenovela. I then illustrate how using
*telenovelas* can be an effective way to teach SFL. The fourth artifact focuses on approaches and strategies to facilitate FL learning through various types of gaming, including videogames and online games. In my final artifact, I highlight the teaching of Spanish politeness and formality in the realm of SFL. The artifact focuses on the teaching of the commonly misused pronouns *tú* and *usted*.

Following the four artifacts is a compilation of annotated bibliographies. Each annotated bibliography was written after I had reviewed literature on specific topics pertaining to my TPS and artifacts. The first of the compilation addresses CLT and TBA, the second focuses on technology in the foreign language classroom, and the third gives an overview of neutral Spanish and how it is used.

In the final portion of the portfolio, I state the professional direction I will take after completing this master’s degree, after which follows a list of references used in this document.
TEACHING PHILOSOPHY
APPRENTICESHIP OF OBSERVATION

The first time being a teacher ever crossed my mind was on career day in my first grade class. My teacher asked us what we wanted to “be” when we grew up. My response: either a lawyer or a piano teacher. When I achieved my goal of becoming a piano teacher at age fifteen, I realized I loved teaching so much that I wanted to make a career out of it.

As a child, I enjoyed school, my teachers and my friends. I was motivated to be one of the best students in all subjects. My dad was in law school during my first, second, and third grade years, and we always joked with each other about being in the same grade. Once I hit fourth grade and he was out of school, I teased him that I was smarter because I was allowed into the fourth grade of my school, and he wasn’t. Both of my parents instilled a love of education in me from the time I was a child. They showed me that learning is fun and interesting, and never squelched any desire of mine to become anything I wanted. As a child and adolescent, it never crossed my mind that I would not go to college to pursue my dreams; it was implied knowledge that I would go. I am grateful for my parents’ undying support of all my educational pursuits.

Growing up all over the western United States gave me experiences with many different teachers. I have vivid memories of my elementary and secondary school teachers in Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, and Nevada. It is hard to say which teachers were the most influential in my life, because many of them had such a large, positive impact on me. However, as far as pursuing a career in teaching, I can narrow them down to two of my high school teachers: Señor Hamilton and Mrs. Feinauer.
I first encountered Señor Hamilton in my junior year of high school. He was one of three Spanish teachers in my school, and everyone said his class was difficult. I ended up in his class by chance, and I am so grateful I did. He was engaging, creative, motivating, and kind. We played games in his class to learn the new vocabulary and we celebrated every Latin holiday with a cultural party. He sparked in me a love for the Spanish language, as well as a love for my own native language. I was enthralled with the grammatical structure of Spanish (and consequently English) because never before had I had to think about concepts such as indirect object pronouns or demonstrative adjectives. I became a grammar junkie, and because I loved his class so much, I always did well on quizzes and exams.

During Christmas break that year I went to northern Mexico with some friends for a service project to build houses. I learned so much during the ten days I was there, both in language and in culture that I came back with a different outlook on Spanish. No longer was the class just about getting an A; it was about using the language in context in order to communicate with others. One year later I traveled to Costa Rica with my mother for two weeks. I was able to test out my Spanish skills again, and I was amazed at how much more I understood on day fourteen than on day one. This experience showed me that true immersion is the best way to acquire a language.

My last year of high school was filled with AP and concurrent-enrollment classes, two of which were English classes taught by Mrs. Feinauer. She helped me gain an insatiable appetite for literature of every kind. She reached out to me and took every opportunity to support me in my learning. I owe her for my love of writing, literature, and
teaching. She later became my student teaching mentor, and I am grateful to her for teaching me how to learn, and to teach.

When I began my studies at Southern Utah University, I declared myself an Elementary Education major. A couple years later, when I had finished all but my final classes to take for graduation, I decided I wanted to teach in secondary schools. I changed my major to English Education, and from there I took many courses from Professor Tawa. Originally from New Zealand, he had had many experiences teaching in high schools and middle schools around the world. His classes were full of eccentric anecdotes, and somehow he incorporated everything he did into making the curriculum meaningful and memorable.

Professor Tawa gave me the motivation to work as a long-term substitute teacher in a high school English class the next semester. He worked with me on lesson plans, student behavior issues, and everything in between. After my experience teaching for three months as a full-time substitute teacher, I decided with assurance that I wanted to teach secondary education. What I learned most from Professor Tawa was that teaching is about caring for others and motivating them to do their best in every aspect of their lives. I am grateful to have had his example and instruction in my life.

The final professor that truly shaped my attitudes toward teaching, and specifically Spanish teaching, was Dr. Kirk. She was the professor assigned to accompany us to Granada, Spain, for a study abroad. Through the months of preparation for the trip and within the actual study abroad, she got to know me on a personal level. While we were in Spain, she taught me that it was okay to be overwhelmed by the language and she encouraged me to speak the language at every possible opportunity. By
the time I left Spain, I knew that I wanted to return. Profesora Kirk told me she would make every effort in helping me go back. Since that time, Profesora Kirk has been a constant mentor and motivator in my teaching career.

Upon my return to the States I got a job teaching English 1010 at Snow College. I enjoyed my time teaching at the small college, but I still felt that I wanted to pursue high school teaching. I was then hired by Mountain Crest High School to teach English and Spanish for the remainder of the school year.

Though I enjoyed teaching at Mountain Crest, the thought of returning to Spain would not leave my mind. I contacted Profesora Kirk, and she helped me find a program in which I could teach English as a foreign language. I returned to Spain to teach in a bilingual school outside Madrid. I was, once again, overwhelmed and frustrated with my abilities to speak and understand Spanish. However, after making friends within my program, I was able to adjust and start enjoying my second round in Spain. As I observed my fellow teachers, I gained a greater sense of how I wanted to teach. The teachers at the school taught without much sympathy. Students were terrified to speak for fear of being incorrect, and they were not able to say more than a few pre-scripted sentences when speaking in real time. I realized that I did not want to conduct my future classrooms the same way, and I created ways to get the students to speak English with less anxiety. This experience taught me that lowering the affective factor is key in teaching language.

When I returned, I moved to Moab, Utah, and had the opportunity to teach English to Latino adults at a nonprofit organization. The people I taught at the Moab Valley Multicultural Center were exceptional examples to me of hard work and
perseverance in the face of racism and intolerance. I felt I had found my niche, but the center could not keep me as a full-time employee, so once again, I changed my course.

I moved to Salt Lake City to teach English and Spanish at a middle school. There I was able to use my degree in a meaningful way, and I came out of the experience with long-lasting relationships with the students I taught. I also learned how to teach and understand middle school students, which is not something I had previously dismissed as “not being that hard.” I learned that not only is it extremely difficult, but it also requires patience and preparation.

Through my very differentiated learning and teaching experiences, it became obvious to me that I love learning and teaching language. I enrolled in the MSLT program because I wanted to develop FL teaching skills and broaden and deepen my knowledge of SLA. I also sought to develop professionally. Overall, my goal in obtaining an MSLT degree was to share the joy of becoming proficient in a second language with others. I am grateful to have been a part of the MSLT program because it has fit seamlessly with my personal and professional goals.
PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT

In my relatively short career thus far, I have taught in both foreign language and second language settings. Upon completion of the MSLT program, I plan to continue teaching foreign language (Spanish) and second language (English) in a secondary school setting. Teaching secondary students a language is intimidating and frustrating at times, but it is also rewarding and fulfilling. I enjoy teaching secondary students because their spirit and enthusiasm is contagious, and if harnessed correctly, can be advantageous to FL learning. Through teaching and mentoring adolescents, I believe I truly make a difference in their lives. Finding a way to connect their energy to learning a language is a constant challenge, but the process is very gratifying. My ultimate goal in my career is to find satisfaction, success, and continuous personal and professional growth in teaching foreign and second language.
TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

Throughout my time in the Master of Second Language Teaching program, I have learned how to become a successful language teacher by implementing sound, research-based curriculum into my instruction. Whether teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) or Spanish as a Foreign Language (SFL), my goal as a teacher is to motivate my students to learn independently and think for themselves. My overarching curricular goal is to help my students orally communicate with other people, and reach a high level of literacy in the desired target language.

This teaching philosophy statement will focus on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Activities (CBA); teaching literacy for learning using Content Based Instruction (CBI); and facilitating second language acquisition and intercultural competence through the use of media (i.e., the *telenovela* and digital games). This Teaching Philosophy Statement (TPS) will explore how these foci inform my teaching.

**Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Activities**

*What is CLT?*

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is essential to my teaching philosophy for a number of reasons. According to Ahmed and ul Hussnain (2013), CLT is based on the realization that “language goes beyond grammatical rules, sets of vocabulary, [and] habit formation” (p. 450). Ahmed and ul Hussnain (2013) state that teaching language under the CLT approach is a way to create real world meaning for foreign language (FL) students that serves actual purpose in actual situations. In short, CLT is not the teaching of a set of phonological, grammatical and lexical items; rather, it is a way to teach
language as a tool of communication (Nunan, 2005). CLT is a student-centered pedagogy, in which students are communicating in the target language (TL) with one another in order to acquire language skills (Ellis, 2000; Ellis, 2012).

*Comprehensible Input*

Communicative Language Teaching focuses on giving students comprehensible input in the target language. Lee and Van Patten (2003) explain input as anything the teacher/textbook/media give the students in the target language (e.g., words, phrases, directions). They state that it is absolutely necessary in acquiring language. Comprehensible input therefore signifies that the input given to the students is understandable and meaningful. Comprehensible input can be achieved by using the target language to introduce and expand a student’s vocabulary and grammar. Students who learn by using picture files, Total Physical Response (TPR), and storytelling are more apt to comprehend the input given to them by teachers. Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro & Mandell (2001) state that students are much more actively engaged if the input is clear and interesting, and not too difficult for them. Comprehensible input challenges the students, but does not overwhelm them negatively. Teachers must give comprehensible input in the target language if they want their students to understand and make their own conclusions about language. This means that activities in CLT classrooms should focus on communicative learning goals that are student-centered in nature (Ahmed & ul Hussnain, 2013).

In my own CLT classroom, I act as the facilitator of the classroom, rather than just the instructor. By designing lessons and activities that provide opportunities for my
students to hear, see and use the language in a meaningful way, I am actually giving them the tools to ready themselves for real-world language experiences.

As a language teacher now, I try to be adept at designing communicative activities in which the students become the constructors of learning the language, rather than simply the vessels of teacher-driven information (Lee & Van Patten, 2003). Students are responsible for expressing, interpreting and negotiating for meaning with their peers and their teacher (Lee & Van Patten, 2003; ACTFL, 2014). Negotiating for meaning is an essential part of everyday life, both in first language (L1) and (second language) L2 contexts. According to Lee & Van Patten (2003), negotiation of meaning happens between two or more communicators when there is a message to be understood. Jamshidnejad (2011) says that in order to achieve negotiation of meaning, individuals have to use context or ask questions in order to interpret what is being said, or they might have to exchange more information in order to create an understanding amongst themselves. Just as I would negotiate with my friend to see what we might do on a Saturday night, students negotiate with their teacher and their peers in order to come to an understanding of the language (Lee & Van Patten, 2003). Negotiation of meaning is crucial in my classroom because it is the means by which students complete goals and create authentic language.

According to Hasan’s study (2014) on the oral performance of EFL secondary students, students are more confident in a communicative classroom. Hasan goes on to say that there are many hindrances that affect oral communication, and one that is very apparent is the anxiety and self-consciousness students feel when trying to communicate in a foreign language. In other words, the “affective filter” is at work here. This affective
filter is described by Krashen (1982; 1985) as anxiety, lack of motivation and self-consciousness while communicating in the target language.

In an attempt to understand the affective filter better, Jamshidnejad (2011) conducted a study with Persian-speaking students learning English. He discussed the difficulty foreign language learners encounter when they are immersed in the language. Students get frustrated when they are not able to articulate what they want to say. They might be able to convey their message, but they do not use the words they truly want to use. I have experienced the same frustrations as an FL learner, and as a teacher, I want my students to have the confidence to work through this discomfort as they encounter the target language in real time.

To combat this affective filter, students in communicative classrooms are encouraged to speak for the sake of communicating, even if they make mistakes. In my own classroom, I let my students know that it is okay if they speak with errors and incorrect pronunciation or grammar. One of the reasons CLT appeals to me is the fact that students can practice their language skills in a low-anxiety environment. This goes along with what Lee and Van Patten (2003) have concluded: Teachers in communicative classrooms find that students are speaking more and are less concerned with accuracy because they know that mistakes are part of the language acquisition process.

CLT mandates that FL teaching should be taught within the context of real life. Because of this, learners must be provided with opportunities in which they can learn how to communicate with others in a multitude of real world situations (Ahmed & ul Hussnain, 2013). Although meaningful input in the target language is essential, it is still insufficient if it is not supplemented with ways in which students can create output.
(Swain & Lapkin, 2005). Shrum and Glisan (2010) state that in order to achieve output from the students, it is necessary for the teacher to create “meaningful, purposeful and motivational” opportunities for students to speak (2010, p. 22). If communication is the goal of my language classroom, it makes sense that Communicative Language Teaching is the central pedagogy around which I teach.

In my experiences as both an FL learner and teacher, I have come upon the obvious, but striking, reality that in order to fully acquire a foreign language, one must use it for real world purposes. Verb conjugating brilliance (or any other grammatical aptitude) does not equal communication. It is doubtful that a student would ever be able to communicate in the real world, in real time, by simply memorizing phrases or grammatical features of the TL (Ballman et al., 2001). It seems simple and obvious, but many classrooms do not foster this type of methodology (some of which I have been a part). I have been in classrooms where grammar is taught explicitly, without any context or meaning attached. As I look back upon those experiences, many students were bored, frustrated, and overall disinterested in what the teacher was lecturing about. I agree with Shrum & Glisan (2010) in that within a classroom, “There is NO room for mechanical practice that is devoid of meaning” (p. 35). Instead, I strive to teach grammar in support of communication, wherein students learn the acceptable grammar and vocabulary, not just for the sake of knowing it. Rather, they learn it so that they can produce it in authentic situations.

In the next section, I will discuss a task-based approach in which students can directly apply the target language to complete specific real-world tasks.
Task-Based Activities

In order for me to expand my students’ communication skills, students must be required to use the language during class-time, and in a meaningful way. In order to achieve meaning, tasks must be authentic. This means, for instance, that if I mandate that my students complete a task in which I give them a specific list of the words, it cannot be considered a genuine activity or task (Hasan, 2014). In the past (and in many classrooms today) it was commonplace to use grammar drills and rote memorization in order to teach students the grammatical structure of the L2 (Lee & Van Patten, 2003; Shrum & Glisan, 2010) This kind of teaching does not support communication, and is not part of the CLT framework. In contrast, task-based instruction teaches grammar only in support of the communicative goal, which gives students the skills to navigate in real-world situations. I use Task-Based Activities (TBAs) because I want my students to know that the language they use in class has a direct correlation to the language they will use in real life interactions.

The theory behind language teaching using TBAs is that students will learn useful language by participating in a series of activities that lead to a larger communicative goal (Ballman et al., 2001). Ballman et al. (2001) point out that teachers should create lessons in which students must have a reason for using the language to do something communicative. Goals in the classroom should be dictated by tasks students need to carry out using the target language. This goes hand-in-hand with communicative language objectives because if the tasks are related to real-life scenarios (e.g., asking for directions, ordering food at a restaurant, buying clothes at a department store, etc.), they will have
meaning for students, while implicitly incorporating the grammar needed for communication into the lesson (Ahmed & ul Hussnain, 2013).

According to Ballman et al. (2001), “Task-based instruction is characterized by three main components” (p. 76). First, TBAs are learner-centered and create many opportunities for cooperation between students (Hasan, 2014). The only way to complete the activity is via genuine information students give and receive from their peers. Second, TBAs must center on an information exchange between students. This kind of exchange can be an activity for which the students interview one another, complete a survey or participate in an information-gap exercise.

The last component to the TBA is that it must guide learners to create a specific representation, or culminating task, about the unit or lesson (Ballman et al., 2001). In order for the TBA to be successful, the teacher must have students complete multiple tasks—tasks that build on one another—together in groups or partnerships before completing the ultimate task (Ballman et al., 2001). This gives students opportunities to use the target language for gathering and assessing multiple pieces of information that lead them to their final communicative goal. According to Ellis (2000), “Tasks are viewed as devices that provide learners with the data they need for learning” (p. 193). Ultimately, students will need to use smaller tasks in order to collect the data they need to complete the culminating task.

It is essential that students negotiate for meaning with one another, for that is one of the main objectives of TBAs. Hasan (2014) states, “By interacting with others, students have an opportunity to listen to language which may be beyond their present ability, but which may be assimilated into their knowledge of the target language for use
at a later time” (p. 255). When students participate in a genuine task, they must negotiate for meaning in order to come to a plausible conclusion. This gives students opportunities to listen to the language spoken by other people than themselves. Ahmed & ul Hussnain (2013) echo this by stating, “[The Task-Based Approach] encourages interaction, makes students confident, motivates them, [and] empowers them to take charge of their own learning process” (p. 459). Task-based instruction also gives students room to experiment with the language while they are trying to complete the end task.

In my teaching, I aim to carefully plan and carry out activities that are linked to communicative goals by using task-based instruction. A good model of planning a TBA is given by Ballman et al. (2001): “Task A + Task B + Task C → Culminating Task” (p. 85). This model shows that if the teacher creates small tasks that build on each other, then the culminating task will be attainable without being overwhelming to students. Learners must negotiate for meaning with one another, and through the exchange of authentic information (i.e., information that is not contrived for the sake of the learning activity; information that is genuine and specific to each individual), they will accomplish the culminating task presented to them. It is my goal to create significant task-based activities for my students that will help them achieve language proficiency in the real world.

The advantage of using a task-based approach over a more teacher-centered approach is that the activities within the task-based activity provide meaningful interactions for student, and learners must negotiate for meaning while providing authentic information to their peers. The tasks the students have to complete all lead to a greater communicative goal, which gives both teachers and students meaning for the
lesson. Lessons rooted in TBAs are inherently more communicative than lessons based on grammatical principals.

Learning in my classroom occurs within cooperative and collaborative group work. I have found this strategy effective and positive to reaffirm and develop strong student-to-student and teacher-to-student relationships. By establishing honest and sincere communication in my classrooms, I have been able to create a positive and enjoyable environment for my students, which motivates them to actively participate in communicative activities.

In order to make TBAs as successful as possible, I use the Can-Do Statements (CDS) set forth by the American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 2014). Using these guidelines has helped me design activities that specifically target skills my students will use outside of the classroom. For example, when I taught Spanish 1010 I used the following Can-Do Statements as the objectives of a location-themed lesson plan: “I can ask for directions to a place; I can tell someone how to get from one place to another, such as go straight, turn left, or turn right; I can tell someone where something is located, such as next to, across from, or in the middle of” (2014, p. 7). I am anxious to continue helping students acquire the target language by using meaningful activities that facilitate these Can-Do Statements.

Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Activities are naturally intertwined, and they have become a large part of my FL instruction. They are mostly centered on oral communication, although reading and writing are involved. The next pillar of my teaching philosophy deals with teaching literacy for learning.
Teaching Literacy for Learning through Content-Based Instruction

Standards for Foreign Language Learning

Along with fostering a communicative classroom through comprehensible input and appropriate TBAs, I also strive to incorporate the language standards set forth by the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project. These content standards include five specific language goals: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and community (ACTFL, 2014). Three modes of communication fall within the first standard: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational. These modes of communication are imperative in creating lesson plans that will prepare my students to competently use the TL in a variety of settings.

Because these five goals are simple (yet explicit), they assist me in creating lesson plans that are in line with state and national standards. Each standard has affected how I have begun teaching FL. By teaching with these standards as guidelines, acquiring the FL is no longer abstract and intangible.

The communication goals and Can-Do Statements outlined by the Standards for Foreign Language Learning (ACTFL, 2014) focus on more than the simplistic learning of the traditional language competencies (i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing). They help teachers put these competencies into action. In the fourth edition of the Teacher’s Handbook, Shrum and Glisan (2010) state,

A standards-based approach requires abandoning the traditional notions of language teaching as developing the four discrete skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Instead, it emphasizes that language learning and practice
involve the integration of modes of communication with meaningful content, such as that based on culture and connections with other disciplines (p. 74).

This is not to say that these competencies are forgotten or devalued; rather, these skills are taught implicitly through the integration of the five different standards and the three modes of communication. Because these discrete skills are not taught explicitly per se, they become a part of the language learner’s skill set that can be applied to differing real-life situations. By using these standards myself, I create an environment where my students learn to use the target language not only as a means of basic communication, but also as a means to cultivate an appreciation for all people and their respective cultures. It is my belief that by adhering to these language content standards, my students will become more open-minded and accepting individuals—be it inside or outside of the target language culture(s). My ultimate purpose in the teaching of second or foreign language is to promote life-long learning within the context of the TL (Standard 5.2, ACTFL, 2014).

**Facilitating Second Language Acquisition through Media**

By reviewing research on multiple forms of media designed for FL learning, I have come to use media in my FL classroom much more than I ever thought I would. I am especially interested in the use of digital media and the Spanish *telenovela* to facilitate Second Language Acquisition (SLA) in my Spanish as a Foreign Language (SFL) classes. I was never a big fan of television or video games; however, I have read convincing literature on the positive effects of these media if used appropriately.

Using the *telenovela* lends an element of reality to my SFL classes because my students must be able to comprehend the language in order to understand the message of
the television show (Allison, 2006). The educational uses of the telenovela far outweigh any negative stereotypes (Astroff, 1988) it may induce. I have specifically enjoyed teaching with the telenovela series *Sol y Viento* developed by Van Patten for SFL learners. Along with telenovelas developed specifically for SFL education, I believe in using authentic telenovelas to teach listening comprehension and to reduce my students’ anxiety and increase their motivation (Krashen, 1982). Telenovelas also give students the opportunity to practice listening to the language outside of class, which is crucial to become fully proficient in the language (Shrum & Glisan, 2010).

I use digital games in my SFL and ESL classrooms for some of the same purposes. I use the telenovela. Digital games are motivating to students who have grown up as ‘digital natives’ (Blake, 2013) and they afford my students opportunities to use the TL in a low-anxiety environment (Reinhardt, 2013). Digital gaming is becoming increasingly prevalent in the global society. By giving my students the option to communicate with L1 speakers of the TL throughout the world, I am giving them real-life experiences that will assist in their overall communicative competence (Savignon, 1997). I believe that these technologies and media facilitate acquisition of the TL if used properly, with a base in current research.

**Conclusion**

Communicative Language Teaching, Task-Based Activities, and Standards for Foreign Language Learning guide my foreign language teaching. I strive to create a truly communicative classroom where meaningful input eventually leads to acquisition. Task-based activities that are focused on culminating, communicative goals are imperative for
students to realistically negotiate for meaning and use the target language in an authentic way.

As a facilitator of this negotiation of meaning, it is my responsibility to create lessons with communicative, real-life objectives for my students. The standards outlined in the Standards for Foreign Language Learning give me the springboard from which I can push myself to be an exceptional foreign language teacher. These standards are essential for me to create and carry out meaningful communication that will maximize the learning of my students.

The Standards for Foreign Language Learning proclaim, “Language and communication are at the heart of the human experience. The United States must educate students who are linguistically and culturally equipped to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad” (ACTFL, 2014, p. 2). This statement excites and empowers me. I believe that outstanding educators in the field of second/foreign language teaching are crucial in creating positive, successful learning environments in which students can learn and appreciate a new language and culture, while gaining an appreciation of their own language and culture (ACTFL, 2014).

As a language teacher, I want to help students achieve the basic skills to understand and communicate in the target language. In addition to CLT and TBA, the use of media to supplement my FL classes is crucial to my teaching because it gives students ways in which they can interact with the TL outside of class and in the ‘real-world.’ By using this media, I not only stay up-to-date on the latest SLA research, but I also facilitate TL acquisition in a meaningful, creative way. By creating and executing lessons that are
centered on communicative goals and using media to supplement my FL classes, I believe my students will acquire the TL for real-life purposes.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

Teaching is a profession in which growth, both professional and individual, happens mainly through experience. It is a career that is not only rewarding, but also times, tiring and difficult. Becoming a truly exceptional teacher takes many years of hard work, practice, and getting back up after failure. Throughout the last five years I have been teaching, experience and reflection on my experience have been my best instructors. That being said, an important part of my learning has also come through observing my peers. Observing other professionals has exposed me to methodologically strong teaching and lent new perspectives to my own instruction.

The observations I have completed during my time in the MSLT program have influenced the way I teach foreign language, and I am grateful to the many teachers who allowed me to observe them in their classrooms. Because I was able to observe multiple teachers during my time in the program, I learned valuable lessons that will help me become a better FL teacher. I have grouped aspects of the observations into areas I find important for a FL teacher.

Importance of communicative activities

At the beginning of my first semester in the MSLT program, I sometimes felt confused and anxious about the communicative language teaching method. Because I wanted to see how this type of teaching was actually incorporated into real classes, I elected to observe a colleague of mine in the Spanish department. I was anxious to observe someone who understood and taught the CLT method well.

The class I observed was Spanish 1010, taught by a teacher who had completed the MSLT program a few years earlier. She started her class right on time with an
introduction to the lesson via a PowerPoint presentation. Each item she introduced had a picture next to the word in Spanish. She spoke in the target language to introduce the new words, and she also asked students to repeat after her for some of the more difficult to pronounce words. After moving through the PowerPoint, she facilitated multiple different activities in which her students had opportunities to talk with one another and ask and answer questions, thus negotiating for meaning. Her students stayed in the TL during these activities and seemed engaged. The teacher enabled her students to use the TL in a meaningful way and her students left class with a feeling of accomplishment.

By observing this teacher, I was able to better appreciate the importance of engaging, communicative activities and how to incorporate them into my own class. This observation helped me understand more clearly the CLT method. I am so glad that I observed this class at the beginning of my time in the program because it solidified what I had been taught in the Pro-Seminar class regarding task-based and communicative activities.

_Importance of content-based instruction_

As is apparent in my teaching philosophy statement, content-based instruction (CBI) is an important aspect to my FL teaching. Because many FL classes do not incorporate CBI fully, I was eager to observe a class in which CBI was the main method of FL learning. In the spring of 2015, I observed multiple Dual Language Immersion (DLI) teachers in elementary schools throughout Cache Valley. One class I observed was a first grade Portuguese immersion class in Smithfield. I walked into this class not having seen any DLI classrooms previously. What I saw amazed and excited me.
The teacher was friendly and created a happy, engaging environment for her students. She talked to students in the TL only, and required them to speak to her in the TL at all times. The room had an inviting atmosphere with many pictures and words all over the room in Portuguese. I walked in during a math lesson and was surprised to see and hear all the students communicating with her and each other about addition and subtraction in Portuguese. She introduced new vocabulary words using context clues and cognates. She did not break out of the target language, even when a student asked her a question about the content. She used circumlocution with the student so that he could understand the concept with the vocabulary he already possessed. Students seemed to understand everything the teacher said, and if they didn’t know a word in Portuguese, they would ask how to say the English word using the TL. Her language was communicative in nature even though the lesson I observed had a content-specific goal rather than a communicative one.

After I observed this DLI teacher, I thought about the importance of using CBI to teach FL. By observing this classroom for just a few hours, I saw first-hand the benefits of teaching information through the FL rather than just explicitly teaching the FL. Students in this classroom were able to carry out mathematical equations in the TL without hesitation. They were also talking to each other as they worked. The teacher encouraged this type of speaking by giving ‘Think, Pair, Share’-type activities. During these activities, students seemed committed to working and talking in the TL.

This classroom observation reinforced the research I have read that FL learning occurs rapidly when students are being taught content via the FL. Even without becoming
a DLI teacher in the future, content-based instruction is a pedagogy I can use currently with my FL learners.

*Importance of rapport and enthusiasm*

Although every teacher intrinsically knows that rapport and enthusiasm are key components to his or her job, I find it important to be reminded of how much it plays into student confidence when teaching a second or foreign language. The next observation did just that for me. I observed a first grade Spanish DLI classroom in the fall of 2015 near the end of my third semester in the program. Going into this observation with a better understanding of the communicative method was helpful to me because I could really appreciate the strategies and methods used by the teacher.

In this class, the teacher’s demeanor was kind, fun, and helpful. She was patient with the children, and although she reprimanded them for speaking English at times, she did it in a way that was motivating, rather than demeaning. She reminded those students in a caring manner that they are not to speak in English in the class. She said multiple times, “¿Qué hablamos en esta clase? Hablamos español!” She went over “¿Cómo se dice?” again and this seemed to help students remember to use their Spanish to ask about English words. She was excited for the students, and showed it, when they succeeded—whether it was figuring out a math equation or reading a passage correctly. This kind of enthusiasm fostered an environment in which the students were set up for success.

The activities in this classroom, just like in the other DLI classrooms I visited, were designed around the content to be taught. The class’s morning routine activity seemed especially meaningful because it facilitated knowledge the students use in everyday life. Students were reviewing the date and day when I came into the classroom.
It appeared to be something the students did every morning as a routine because they were comfortable in doing each step. The teacher had one student helping her who got to hold the pointer and choose classmates to participate. The teacher assisted the student, but the student was primarily responsible to lead the class in the warm up. To see a first grade student leading the class in her second language was impressive! The teacher was constantly motivating her with enthusiastic comments and friendly language ‘helps’ when she needed them.

Observing this Spanish DLI classroom made me reflect on the enthusiasm I portray in my classes, as well as the rapport I have with each of my students. Although I teach at a secondary level and have five times the number of students this teacher did, I still feel that it is imperative to know each student and play to his/her strengths. Her enthusiasm for the content and for the language was contagious, and as I observed her students, I found that they were engaged with her because she was engaged with them. Many of this teacher’s mannerisms and behavior management strategies are especially helpful for my own teaching.

*Importance of purposeful materials*

I observed a beginning level Arabic course during the fall of 2015. I was surprised to find out that the class was Arabic 1010 because the way the students interacted with the teacher and each other seemed far beyond that of 1010 students. I attribute much of this motivation and willingness to communicate to the classroom environment and the teacher’s excellent use of materials.

Having known this teacher for quite some time, I knew that she created many of her classroom materials on her own because her current textbook was not designed with
the CLT method in mind. Since her focus of this class was communication, she took it upon herself to create and/or find every piece of material she used. In this specific class, she discussed current events with the students and showed clips in Arabic that were actually intended for an Arabic-speaking audience. The PowerPoint presentation she created for this class was visually appealing and informative. Each slide had a purpose, and each slide built on the previous one. Because she taught the past tense to this class, she had to explicitly teach some grammatical concepts; however, it never became the primary focus of the class, nor did her activities function as just conjugation/grammar practice. Her activities were geared toward both oral and written communication. Each activity had a model on the slide for students to refer to as they completed it. The handouts she had created for the activities were put together meaningfully and helped facilitate the communicative goals of the class. Each slide and handout was put together thoughtfully, and this demonstrated the importance of purposeful materials in any class, and especially in a FL class. After observing this class, I found myself eager to create better PowerPoint presentations and handouts for both my ESL and Spanish students.

The above experiences have influenced my FL teaching in ways I would otherwise not have thought about if I had not been required to do the observations. Each teacher made me think about my teaching in a different, specific way. As I grow as a professional, I want to continue observing other teachers to gain the perspective I need to continually better myself as a FL teacher.
SELF-ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING STATEMENT

Throughout the MSLT program, I was observed by professors and recorded by peers various times. These observations and recordings were helpful in making myself a better language teacher. In this Self-Assessment of Teaching Statement, I will discuss a specific lesson I taught, what I learned from my instructor/observer, and what I learned by watching myself.

During the fall semester of 2014, one of my professors observed me as I taught a novice-level Spanish class to USU undergraduate students. A peer recorded me while I taught so that I could watch the recording and reflect on the lesson. After I had reviewed the recording and made comments about it to my professor, she sent me detailed feedback on how she perceived the lesson, and whether or not it was in line with what I was being taught in the MSLT. This feedback helped propel me to make changes where I needed to, and to continue to create meaningful lessons that centered on communication in the TL. By watching this recording, I was able to pinpoint some of my strengths and weaknesses as a language teacher. The following self-assessment is an evaluation of my teaching in October of 2014.

The class I taught was comprised of twenty-two students, though only about eighteen came on a regular basis. These were all undergraduate students studying Spanish either for the very first time, or to refresh what they had learned in high school. Many of them were planning to study Spanish as a part of their USU degree. All of them were between the ages of 18 and 26. I taught three fifty-minute lessons per week, and students were expected to do about six hours of online homework a week. Students learned many
of the grammatical principles through doing their homework and came to class to receive more detailed instruction and have opportunities to practice.

Previous to this lesson, students had received instruction in using Spanish to talk about themselves (e.g., Soy una mujer baja, rubia, y graciosa. Translation: I am a short, blonde, funny woman). Students were already able to formulate different types of sentences, including making Statements, asking questions, and responding to the questions of their peers. Students could also use non-linguistic cues to show comprehension. Students were familiar with present tense verbs, and could communicate in the “I” form and the “You (singular, informal)” form. In this specific class, I taught a 50-minute lesson about feelings and states of emotion.

The communicative goal of this class was for students to write their best friend an email telling him/her how they were feeling about the upcoming Thanksgiving and Christmas breaks (the vocabulary I had to teach dealt with states of emotion). I started the lesson with a video about states of emotion provided to me by my Dr. Spicer-Escalante. It is a video in which a young boy both says and acts out how he feels. This was a great warm-up for the lesson. I then proceeded to show a PowerPoint presentation in which students saw pictures of the vocabulary words, as well as the words spelled out in Spanish. They also watched and listened to the comprehensible input I provided (i.e., gestures, voice intonation, etc.). They then participated in a picture-file activity in which they had to match the card with the written state of emotion to the picture of that emotion. They completed this activity in groups. We then transitioned to another slide in which the vocabulary words were used in the context of a conversation. I modeled the conversation with my teacher’s aide, and checked for understanding using “¿Cierto o Falso?” Students
used individual non-linguistic cues once again to show comprehension. After this activity, I had students complete an interview-exchange activity, in which students had to ask one another questions, and if the person being asked gave a certain answer, that person had to sign the questioning person’s paper. This was called “Firma Aquí.” The students then completed an information-gap activity with a peer in which each student had the information that the other student needed. I did not give my students enough time to complete the email during class time, so they completed the email at home.

The following commentary is what I thought after viewing the video of this lesson:

My activities were communicative in nature, and they did lead to a larger, real-life goal. My observer mentioned that the scaffolding of the lesson was well paced and that students were engaged. Students were aware of what the end goal was; therefore, they understood the steps they needed to take in order to achieve that goal. This made the lesson a true TBA, and I was pleased that students were able to leave class having accomplished the writing of an email to a friend in Spanish. I was happy to see myself speaking the TL almost the entire time, although there were times in which I used the students’ L1 instead of using circumlocution. My observer also commented that I was able to adapt to her suggestions on the spot and without hesitation.

Although this lesson went smoothly and had a communicative goal, there was room for improvement in a couple of areas. For example, the email on my slide was not large enough for students to see well, and I should have caught that beforehand. More modeling and having the Spanish words projected on the screen during the email writing time would have also helped the students to understand more completely. I also received
a comment from my observer that I needed to speak more at a sentence level, rather than in paragraphs. This suggestion goes hand in hand with CLT because it demonstrates the need for *comprehensible input*. It was very helpful to watch and reflect on this lesson because now I am better equipped to create future lessons more precisely and facilitate enhanced student understanding.

As I viewed this video of me teaching, definitive strengths and weaknesses came to light. Through watching the videos, I saw that I enabled happy, appropriate communication with my students. I have always believed that in order to be excellent, the teacher must create positive relationships with his/her students. As I watched this video, I was glad to see that although CLT was brand new to me at the time, I was still able to create a positive and accepting environment for my students. While watching the recording, I saw myself making sure that I paid attention to students who had questions, comments, or just seemed confused. I hope that I can make my relationships with my students even stronger by encouraging them to speak the TL in an atmosphere that is creative, yet appropriately challenging.

Although I achieved my goals in some areas, I also found that I had a lot of room for improvement in other areas. One of the largest takeaways from assessing this lesson was that I needed to create goals that are achievable within a certain time frame, keep better track of time, create more explicit slides with plenty of activity examples, make input comprehensible and at the students’ level, and come to class prepared for multiple extraneous situations.

Overall, observing myself has been a great learning experience. I found it effective in helping with my own teaching, and I wish I had done it while I studied.
teaching in my undergraduate degree. Observing myself gave me the opportunity to reflect upon the challenges of teaching a successful lesson, what I did well, and what I can improve upon. It is something I want to continue to do because I am striving for excellence as a language teacher.
LANGUAGE ARTIFACT

Neutral Spanish and the *Telenovela*:

Using *Telenovelas* for Educational Purposes
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this artifact is to showcase my newfound knowledge of using the *telenovela* as a resource in SFL classes, as well as demonstrate the positive effect neutral Spanish and the *telenovela* can have on SLF learners.

This paper was originally written in collaboration with my MSLT classmate, Tempe Mabe. We wrote the paper for Dr. María Luisa Spicer-Escalante’s Hispanic Linguistics class during the spring of 2015. With guidance from our professor, we started learning about the concept of neutral Spanish, along with the potential impact of the *telenovela* in an SFL classroom. We began by reading about neutral Spanish and its use inside and outside the U.S. We then explored the concept of neutralization and how it has affected media and commerce. From there, we researched statistics on Latinos in the U.S., the respective buying power of Latinos, and the different ways neutral Spanish may be perceived by Latinos in the U.S. We explored how the neutralization of Spanish can stereotype different Latino populations and foster negative feelings toward Spanish as a language and L1 speakers of Spanish. Finally, we turned our focus to the *telenovela* and its potential use in an SFL class. We discussed and researched multiple ways to incorporate *telenovelas* in SFL classes. We also examined the benefits and challenges of implementing the *telenovela* in different grade level Spanish classes.

After reviewing this artifact for the purpose of including it in my personal portfolio, I decided to focus less on some of the statistics about Latinos and more on the use of the *telenovela* to supplement SFL classes. Much of the research I found about using the *telenovela* for educational purposes was relevant and insightful, and it focused
on using the *telenovela* as a tool to foster communicative competence. Although the literature I read about neutral Spanish was interesting and thought provoking, it was not until I read articles about the actual use of the *telenovela* in SFL classrooms that I connected the importance of neutral Spanish with the use of the *telenovela*. The articles I read *after* I had completed the original draft of this paper turned out to be more in line with the direction I wanted to go with this artifact. I was able to find unique perspectives on the *telenovela*, along with convincing research about the positive effects it has on learner affect (i.e., anxiety, motivation, confidence, and proficiency in listening to and speaking the language). The articles I read about the implementation of the *telenovela* were crucial to my understanding of *how* to appropriately use the *telenovela* in my own classroom.

As I reflect on the writing of this artifact, I am surprised by how much I have become a ‘convert’ to the ideology of using the *telenovela* as a supplementary part of my SFL curriculum. Previous to writing this paper, I had thought of the *telenovela* as simply the Spanish version of the English soap opera, and therefore thought it had no place in an educational setting. However, after I researched this topic in conjunction with neutral Spanish, I came to realize that the *telenovela* is a powerful tool in SFL education. I now feel strongly that it should be used as a part of my SFL curriculum and I am eager to implement it in my future Spanish high school classes.
Neutral Spanish and the Telenovela: Using Telenovelas for Educational Purposes

Abstract

This paper focuses on the telenovela being a powerful tool for foreign/second language education. The paper begins by depicting statistics of the growing Latino population in the United States and the neutralization of the Spanish language and culture. A background is then provided on the use of neutral Spanish in commerce and the resultant evolution of Spanish telenovelas in the media. The following sections review literature regarding the economic and cultural effects of neutral Spanish used in telenovelas. The paper then provides an examination of studies regarding the telenovela in SFL classes; for example, how telenovelas can be used as supplementary curricula in content-based classes and the effect the telenovela has on student anxiety, motivation, confidence, and listening comprehension. The literature reviewed in this paper is examined with regard to my own SFL classes and how I can implement the telenovela in the secondary education classroom to foster greater communicative competence in Spanish.

Key words: neutral Spanish, telenovela, communicative competence, learner affect

Introduction

Learning a second language is becoming more and more imperative for people of all ages. Because the job market is becoming increasingly difficult, and immigration and emigration are prevalent, the world demands cultural awareness and sensitivity toward all languages and peoples (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000; Genesee, 2008; May, 2008;
Roberts & Wade, 2012). As a teacher of Spanish in a secondary school, a part of my job is to show my students that bilingualism opens doors to exploring the world that are closed to monolinguals. Because most of my students are L1 English speakers, I frequently discuss with them the positive implications of becoming bilingual. For example, Genesee (2008) states, “The spread of English as a world language does not reduce the importance of knowing other languages. Indeed, individuals and communities who know English and other languages will have the real advantages…” (p. 23). Although people living in the United States are indeed fortunate to speak English as their L1, learning a second language has become increasingly vital in order for students to be prepared for the global 21st century. It is important for my students to first understand this concept before they fully appreciate some of the strategies I employ as their language teacher.

One strategy I have found to be of importance is the use of the telenovela to support positive attitudes toward bilingualism in SFL classes. Although some research (e.g., de las Cuevas, 2003) refutes the use of the telenovela to foster positive attitudes toward Spanish and L1 Spanish speakers much research done on the use of the telenovela shows significant student gains in communicative competence in SFL (Jacobson, 2012; Sellers, 2005; Wen, 1989; Weyers, 1999).

Neutralization

In order to understand neutral Spanish in the telenovela, one must understand neutralization as a concept itself. Neutralization attempts to define the consumers of a certain media product, often making generalizations based on race or national origin (Astroff, 1988; Carlson & Corliss, 2011). In today’s global market, producers often
neutralize products such as video games, TV series, radio shows, and most other merchandise, primarily to maximize their profit while minimizing production costs. Once producers determine the attributes of an ethnic group or country, they create products that will appeal to the widest range of people from this ethnic category.

For example, if video game producers want to sell a Japanese game in the United States, they first will determine what most North Americans are like, and, consequently, which attributes of the video game will or will not appeal to them (Allison, 2006; Carlson & Corliss, 2011). If producers suspect that North Americans do not understand parts of Japanese culture, they may remove any certain cultural references or wording and replace these with mainstream North American references. If they want to maintain some superficial level of Japanese culture in the product, they may feature chopsticks, martial arts, and other concepts that Americans are used to. When the product is released, the creators of this modified cultural artifact launch it into the media world where their modified version of Japanese culture is solidified in many consumers’ minds. In essence, creators of global products create standardized racial characteristics with which they connect their merchandise (Carlson & Corliss, 2011). These goods many times serve as the sole representation of that culture to various parts of the world (Astroff, 1988).

*What is Neutral Spanish?*

Although neutralization has been applied in many markets worldwide, this paper focuses on the neutralization of products mainly intended for the Latino population throughout the Americas. Therefore, a definition of neutral Spanish is necessary. De las Cuevas (2003) defines neutral Spanish as a type of Spanish that does not contain slang, non-standard grammar, and/or informality, and Ahrens (2004) defines neutral Spanish as
a variety of Spanish free of overt regionalisms (i.e., idioms, vocabulary words, slang, verb conjugation, etc., specific to one Spanish-speaking country or region). To create this type of neutral Spanish, every dialect and colloquialism of Spanish must be taken into account, and then avoided (de las Cuevas, 2003). Such neutralization is a tedious, and possibly, impossible task (Astroff, 1988; Stewart, 1999); therefore, producers have adjusted their definition of neutral Spanish.

The Spanish specific to the people of Mexico City is now being used throughout the world as the “standard” of comprehensible Spanish (de las Cuevas, 2003). This may be due to Mexico City being the most populated Spanish-speaking city in the world (World Population Review, 2014) and that most television programs, specifically *telenovelas*, are produced in Mexico and exported to other countries (Astroff, 1988; de las Cuevas, 2003).

Because of the exceptional growth of Spanish and Spanish-speaking people both inside and outside of the United States, there is an ongoing discussion about incorporating this type of “Mexicanized neutral Spanish” into the goods produced by the U.S., as well as by other countries. According to Telemundo executives, Mexican Spanish is “the broadest-appeal, easiest-to-understand Spanish” (Ahrens, 2004). While some critics disagree with this statement, in the case of *telenovelas*, Spanish from Mexico City is clearly understood by any L1 speaker of Spanish (Ahrens, 2004).

The goal of implementing this neutral Spanish is to make the products and entertainment comprehensible for all Spanish speakers. Language is used to sell products, so it makes sense that if appropriate language is not used for the product, the product will not sell (Astroff, 1988). For this reason, the idea of developing a neutral type of Spanish
in which slang, idioms, and different pronunciations do not disrupt the meaning of the language is appealing to companies that want to market their goods to a wider variety of Latino people.

It is important to note that because the *telenovela* has increased substantially in popularity the last thirty years (Ahrens, 2004), varying opinions about the effects of the *neutral* Spanish employed in *telenovela* programs have surfaced (Astroff, 1988; Carlson & Corliss, 2011; Stewart, 1999). Some scholars are in favor of the neutralization of the language, stating that neutralized Spanish makes the language more comprehensible for a wider range of viewers, rather than specific varieties of Spanish (e.g., Carlson & Corliss, 2011; Fonseca-Mora & García-Barroso, 2010). However, other researchers see the neutralization of Spanish in the media as negative and apt to foster stereotypes (e.g., Ahrens, 2004; de las Cuevas, 2003).

Although some of the opinions about neutral Spanish are conflicting, I believe the use of neutral Spanish within the *telenovela* can be a positive aspect of SFL learning. The following research outlines what I find to be the most important characteristics of using the *telenovela* in my own SFL classroom.

**Literature Review**

*Spanish Population Statistics*

It is important for me, as a teacher of SFL in the United States, to understand the impact and significance of Spanish in the world, and specifically in the United States; therefore, I need to understand population statistics of L1 and L2 Spanish speakers. According to Spanish Language Domains (2014), more than 500 million people speak Spanish as a native language in the world. Regarding L1 speakers, Spanish is currently
the second most spoken language in the world and Spanish is spoken on six of the seven continents of the world: North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Australia and Asia (Ethnologue, 2015), and is spreading rapidly within many of those continents.

We have seen an enormous rise in the number of Spanish-speakers in the United States over the past thirty years. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of Spanish-speakers has grown by 233% since 1980, and currently more than 54 million Latinos legally live in the U.S. The United States is currently the second largest ‘Spanish-speaking’ country in the world, second only to Mexico in number of L1 speakers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Due to the growth of the Latino population in the U.S., neutral Spanish has become an even more valuable asset for companies looking to increase their selling power.

This increase in Spanish-speaking inhabitants in the U.S. has had and will continue to have an impact on many corporations and businesses. Such organizations must provide goods and services written and/or spoken in Spanish in order to gain the business of the Latino people. As the Latino population continues to grow in the U.S., the demand for household goods and entertainment produced in a type of neutral Spanish will subsequently increase.

Although the aforementioned research is crucial for teachers aiming to use the *telenovela* in their SFL classes, the most important implications of this paper are the educational aspects of the *telenovela*, which will now be addressed.

**Telenovelas for the SFL classroom**

While some research on neutral Spanish dwells on possible negative effects of neutral Spanish within media and commerce (Astroff, 1988; Cecilia-Mendez, 1979; Villa,
1996; Zentella, 2004), other recent studies have revealed that neutral Spanish in the *telenovela*, perhaps in part due to its cultural and linguistic simplicity, is a direct and powerful educational tool (Jacobson, 2012; Sellers, 2005; Terrell, 1993; Weyers, 1999). Research conducted on the educational use of the *telenovela* reveals positive effects on student learning (Jacobson, 2012; Sellers, 2005; Terrell, 1993; Weyers, 1999), namely, listening comprehension, decreased anxiety, increased motivation, increased self-confidence, and overall, a high achievement of communicative competence. These benefits overlapped in various studies, indicating that the use of the *telenovela* positively influences student SFL learning.

*Authentic telenovelas*

In a study conducted by Weyers (1999), students were exposed to authentic *telenovelas* as part of the curriculum in a second-semester Spanish course. The results showed that the group who had viewed and responded to *telenovelas* actively throughout the semester scored higher on listening comprehension posttests than the control group. Furthermore, students “demonstrated greater confidence in their speech and an ability to provide greater detail in their discourse” (p. 347). Wen (1989) conducted a similar study in EFL classes in Taiwan. The author investigated whether the use of authentic television shows in English increased student attendance, scores, and attitudes, and his results are echoed by Weyers (1999). Wen’s (1989) experimental group improved significantly over students in the control group in all areas. Students not only enjoyed viewing authentic television in the target language (English), but they also scored better on comprehension tests, corroborating Weyers’ (1999) results that showed listening comprehension to be a positive effect of using authentic target-language television in FL classes.
As a result of using authentic telenovelas in their class, students gained more vocabulary words and were able to use those words in a culturally appropriate context (Weyers, 1999). Weyers (1999) also determined that as the students viewed and understood the telenovelas throughout the semester, they became more comfortable hearing Spanish spoken by L1 speakers. The results showed that the students’ level of comfort while listening to the L2 increased their level of comfort as they spoke the L2. In addition, as students viewed the telenovelas, they “took chances in their speech in daring to make mistakes in order to communicate an idea” (Weyers, 1999, p. 347). These results correspond to Krashen’s input hypothesis (1985) and the effect of the affective filter on student anxiety and motivation. Using telenovelas to lower the affective filter proved to work to the students’ advantage, especially in terms of using new vocabulary when speaking in the TL.

Sellers (2005) further validates the positive implications of the telenovela in her study on cooperative learning and content-based instruction. The study evaluated the effect of the telenovela on the communicative competence of college-level intermediate SFL students. The results of this study are based on using the telenovela as a part of a content-based classroom. Students were exposed to and taught content through authentic telenovelas during the semester-long course, and their final project for the class was to create their own telenovela. Cooperative learning was employed to complete the final project. In this study, it is interesting to note that the telenovela itself was used as content for the class, rather than supplementary material. This author’s work confirms research conducted by Wen (1989), Weyers (1999), Terrell (1993), and ultimately Krashen (1982; 1985).
The use of authentic telenovelas has resulted in “higher achievement, reduced anxiety, increased motivation, improved relationships and enhanced self-esteem” (Sellers, 2005, p. 9) in all of the discussed studies (Sellers, 2005; Terrell, 1993; Wen, 1989; Weyers, 1999). Although each one of these studies is unique, they conclusively show that authentic television programming provides students with a high level of input and thus results in an improvement of student output (Weyers, 1999).

**Telenovelas designed for SFL classes**

Van Patten, a renowned scholar in Hispanic linguistics and second language acquisition, developed one of the first educational telenovelas, named “Destinos.” It is the dramatic story of a lawyer who travels throughout many Spanish-speaking countries to uncover a family mystery (“About Destinos,” 2015). It is still popular today in foreign language education. This series has both grammatical and cultural videos and exercises that span the entire scope of Spanish grammar. Van Patten, Leeser and Keating (2011) also developed a comparable telenovela called Sol y Viento. It is similar to Destinos in that it gives students the ability to listen to Spanish spoken by L1 speakers in real time, and in ‘real’ scenarios. It also follows the same format as Destinos, with each episode building on the last. The main difference between these two curricula is Sol y Viento was developed as part of a curriculum for intermediate SFL learners and Destinos is designed for beginners.

In both of these educational telenovelas, the simplification of culture and language enables students to focus on the message, understand content, and acquire the language. The entertaining storyline motivates students to learn both the meaning of the language and the grammar behind the meaning (“Destinos: Reviews and Awards,” 2014).
For example, after watching an episode, students use the accompanying workbook to deepen their understanding of grammatical concepts that are embedded in the plot. *Telenovelas* developed specifically for SFL learners are designed to provide learners with more comprehensible input than the traditional *telenovela*, which is intended for L1 speakers of Spanish (Jacobson, 2012). Conversely, the language used in *telenovela* series developed for SFL instruction (e.g., *Destinos*) is intended for L2 audiences, and specifically, *learners* of the L2. One benefit of implementing educational *telenovelas* over traditional *telenovelas* is that the teacher can use the episodes as language building blocks, in addition to having the freedom to adapt the episodes to the curriculum being taught (“About *Destinos,*” 2015). Overall, both forms of *telenovelas* have been shown to improve the communicative competence of FL learners, specifically in listening comprehension, while also reducing student anxiety, increasing motivation and self-confidence, and enhancing level of output (Jacobson, 2012; Sellers, 2005; Terrell, 1990; Weyers, 1999).

**Additional uses of the telenovela**

In addition to their valuable use in foreign language education, *telenovelas* have been shown to be effective to educate Latino families on key issues. One such example is the use of the *telenovela* "The Best of Both Worlds: Nurturing Multiple Languages" to teach parents the importance of maintaining their home language. A developer of this *telenovela*, Joanne Knapp-Philo, uses this *telenovela* as an important resource in the Head Start program. The plot of this *telenovela* includes a father and a mother who have a discussion about whether or not they should teach their child Spanish in the home. The *telenovela* includes valuable information as the wife shares convincing scientific
evidence with her husband regarding the benefits of being bilingual. By the end, her husband is excited to support his child's first language. Knapp-Philo states that parents connect to the storyline and finish the program with a determination to teach their children Spanish (J. Knapp-Philo, personal communication, March 27, 2015).

Other studies show positive statistics associated with the use of educational *telenovelas* to reach out to Latino families. Some of the ways they have been used include promotion of health screenings, work safety videos, finance management, and career awareness (Jacobson, 2012; “*Mis finanzas,*” 2012; Wilkin, Valente, Murphy, Cody, Huang, & Beck, 2007). Such entertainment education has been shown to be particularly beneficial to Latino families (Wilkin et al., 2007). It is especially effective in reaching people who are illiterate. All of these studies reinforce the value of the *telenovela* as an effective educational tool to benefit both second language learners and Latino families.

**Conclusion**

According to Escamilla, Hopewell, Butvilofsky, Sparrow, Soltero-González, Ruiz-Figueroa, & Escamilla (2013), if a person can speak English and Spanish, then that person can communicate with around 80% of the world population because the number of L2 speakers of English is increasing rapidly. This suggests that the number of students learning SFL will increase in future decades. Thus, more SFL teachers will be needed. As teachers prepare to teach SFL, many will do so learning the CLT method. Therefore, current and future SFL teachers who strive to have communicative, content-based classrooms may benefit from the research presented in this paper about neutral Spanish and the *telenovela.*
Even though opinions about neutral Spanish and its widespread influence have conflicted, teachers of SFL cannot ignore the effect it has had, and will continue to have, on the Spanish-speaking population throughout the world.

Finally, additional studies should be conducted to substantiate the research that exists on this topic. The *telenovela* may also positively influence Latino families in other possible fields of education. Ultimately, more research needs to be conducted in order to progressively implement aspects of the *telenovelas* in SFL education.
LITERACY ARTIFACT

Home Language Literacy to Facilitate Biliteracy:

The Case for Two-Way Dual Language Immersion Education
INTRODUCTION

This paper was originally written in the spring of 2015 with my classmate, Nouf Alotaibi. We wrote the paper together as a final requirement for our Foundations of Dual Language Immersion class taught by Dr. María Luisa Spicer-Escalante. As we began, we wanted to focus specifically on the literacy aspect of DLI education. So, we found articles and books that outlined the benefits of DLI regarding biliteracy and literacy in general. We created a bibliography of the research we read pertaining to biliteracy and from there, wrote the course paper.

In the following months, I was hired to teach ESL reading and writing at a local middle school (6th and 7th grades). As I started teaching my students, I started noticing a pattern in regards to their proficiency in reading and writing. The students who had moved to the United States after they had received formal education in their home language (‘newcomers’) gained literacy in English much more rapidly than the students who had either been born in the U.S., or had immigrated before they had a chance to receive education in their L1. This observation was almost startling to me, as I had previously thought the longer the student had been exposed to the L2, the more proficient he/she would be in all aspects of the language. This observation made me wonder about the influence of the L1 on the L2, especially in regards to literacy. I thought of my own process in learning Spanish, and about how much knowing the structure of my L1 helped me learn the structure of an L2.

After pondering these observations, I reviewed my original DLI paper and read more research about how beneficial two-way DLI education has been in successfully
closing the ESL achievement gap. This all of a sudden made sense to me. The minority language-speaking students in two-way programs successfully ‘caught up’ to their native English speaking peers in many of the studies. After re-reading our paper, I decided I wanted to take what we had written about DLI programs supporting biliteracy and change the paper by reading more research about L1 literacy. The main question I had before researching this aspect of biliteracy was, “Does proficiency in L1 literacy affect L2 literacy?”

Although I did not conduct my own research, the simple observations of my students triggered a passion for learning more about this ‘phenomenon’ of my newcomer students achieving proficiency in literacy much more rapidly than their counterparts, who had been in ESL programs since they entered Kindergarten. Home language literacy and its influence on L2 literacy started to become a kind of fascination for me and I began to change and rework this artifact from the original broad overview of biliteracy.

This paper has special meaning to me because I was able to present it to other professionals at a conference held in San José, Costa Rica. I was made aware of the conference by my professor, Dr. Spicer-Escalante, and was able to attend and present in March of this year. The international conference focused specifically on teaching reading and writing, and I learned strategies that I have since implemented into my ESL classes. Without writing this paper and gaining more knowledge about biliteracy and the role of literacy in the L1, I would never have had the chance for such professional development. I am excited for collaboration opportunities with the professionals I met at the conference, and I hope to return to the same conference in years to come.
The concepts behind this paper have become so important to me that I have made spreading awareness about the importance of home language literacy my own personal *lucha*. I feel passionate that the advocacy of literacy in the L1 should be disseminated to the public, and especially to the Latino community. Since writing and presenting this paper, I have had opportunities to talk to parents about the importance of not only speaking their L1 at home, but also fostering phonemic awareness and reading in the L1. I hope to be able to continue to spread information about the importance of biliteracy and the positive influence home language literacy has on L2 literacy.
Home Language Literacy to Facilitate Biliteracy:
The Case for Two-Way Dual Language Immersion Education

Abstract

This paper explores the theoretical research of literacy and biliteracy among ESL students. Literacy is an area in which ESL students repeatedly score low. This is due to a number of factors, one of which is ESL students’ L1 literacy skills, or lack thereof. This paper focuses on the transferability of home language literacy and how literacy in the L1 supports literacy in the L2. Much of the literature reviewed in this paper refers to bilingual students who are orally proficient in both languages, but struggle to become proficient or maintain proficiency in reading and writing. Based on observations of my own ESL classes, I have seen a difference between the reading and writing skills of students who have arrived in the US after receiving some formal education in their home language, and students who have lived in the US their entire lives, but have never obtained a formal education in their L1. This paper discusses the success two-way Dual Language Immersion (DLI) programs as the most effective curriculum in bridging the ESL achievement gap.

Key words: English as a Second Language (ESL), Dual Language Immersion (DLI), English Language Learners (ELLs), biliteracy, achievement gap, home language literacy

Introduction

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016), 9.2% of people living in the United State’s are English language learners. Even more, 16.7% of all school-aged children are ELLs (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Because of the
large number of ELLs, research, theories, and strategies are constantly being examined and evaluated by ESL teachers nation-wide (Collier & Thomas, 2004). Many programs in the U.S. are not adequately preparing teachers for the difficulties ESL teachers face, nor are they addressing underlying issues of poor ESL achievement. One of the largest concerns ESL educators have is that of the growing achievement gap between ELLs and their monolingual L1 English speaking peers (Bialystok, 2001; Collier & Thomas, 2004; Soto, 2002). This achievement gap only grows larger as students age because after second grade, reading to learn rather than learning to read becomes mandatory (Common Core Standards, 2016). Thus, if a student is not proficient in reading by second grade, it can be almost impossible for that student to bridge that gap and succeed in later grades (Feinauer, Hall-Kenyon, & Davison, 2013; Common Core Standards, 2016).

In the field of ESL, literacy has been shown to be the area in which ELLs’ skills fall far below par (Bialystok, 2001; Bialystok, Luk, & Kwan, 2005; Canard, 2007; Cummins, 1980; Thomas & Collier, 2002). In my experience as a secondary ESL teacher, I have seen this to be mostly true. This is not to say that some monolingual L1 speakers of English do not struggle with literacy; rather, it is the sheer number of ESL students who consistently fall behind in their literacy skills that illustrates the severity of the problem (Bialystok, Craik, Green, & Gollan, 2009; Bialystok, 2001; Soto, 2002).

Although an enormous amount of research has been conducted in the last forty years about L1 literacy influencing L2 literacy (Bialystok et al., 2009; Bialystok 1991; 1997; 2001; Canard, 2007; Collier & Thomas, 2004; Cummins, 1979; 1980; 1981; 1984; & 1992; Durgunoglu & Hancin, 1992; Gebauer, Zaubauer, & Möller, 2013; Jared, Cormier, Levy, & Wade-Woolley, 2011; Lindholm-Leary, 2000; Thomas & Collier,
2002), many ESL programs do not support the L1 of the ELLs, either because the school districts in which many ELLs live lack economic means to do so, or because program coordinators lack this crucial information (Pérez, 2003). ESL curriculum in public education is often not aligned with current research (Freeman & Freeman, 2014); thus, students are not benefited by curriculum that supports their very specific needs, especially related to literacy (Freeman & Freeman, 2014; Pérez, 2003). Many teachers are not trained in second language acquisition, making ESL education more disadvantaged than regular education.

**Observations**

This past school year has been the first year I have ESL in secondary, public education. At the beginning of the year, I taught only Latino, L1 Spanish-speaking students who had either arrived in the U.S. in the past few years, or had been born here. In October of 2015, I started noticing an intriguing occurrence in my ESL classes: my students who had recently arrived to the U.S. and had received a formal education in their home country (in their L1, Spanish) were learning at a much more rapid rate than their peers who were born and/or raised in the USA. Many of these students have never been to their country of origin, but speak Spanish at home with their parents. At the time, I did not necessarily know why this was happening, but I started formatively assessing their interactions with their peers and myself, as well as recording test and assignment scores, mostly out of curiosity. I continued to observe my students over the next couple of months, but I could not find a reason as to why my newcomer students were progressing more quickly than their peers. It seemed counterintuitive to me because the students who
had been in the U.S. for a long period of time spoke and interacted with their peers and myself in L1-like fluency, whereas my newcomer students were just learning to speak.

That fall, we started reading The Circuit, a true story about a migrant family from Mexico who had come to California for a better life, together. One day as we were reading the autobiography out loud, I noticed that my students who had been born and/or raised mostly in the USA could not read the Spanish words scattered throughout the dialogue of the book. Simple words like arbol, hogar, and conejo\(^1\) confounded them, and either the newcomer students or I had to help them read the words. This also happened with English/Spanish cognates like comunicación, inmigrante, and biografía\(^2\). Once the word was pronounced, they obviously knew what it meant and could then repeat it, but they were unable to decode the word on their own. At that moment, I finally realized that my students who had lived in the U.S. most or all of their lives could not read in Spanish. They were illiterate in their home language. This was an incredibly eye-opening moment for me because it led me to ponder literacy and its potential transferability.

My newfound understanding gave me perspective on why my USA born/raised students might not be progressing as rapidly as my newcomer students. The newcomers had a base of literacy in Spanish, their L1, while the others did not. I thought about my own experience as a language learner and how much my knowledge of English and its syntactical and orthographic structure influenced the learning of my L2, Spanish. These observations are invaluable to me because they led me to research the why of this phenomenon. I was most interested in researching and learning about the influence of

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\(^1\) English translation: tree, home, rabbit  
\(^2\) English translation: communication, immigrant, biography
home language literacy on L2 literacy and academic achievement. This interest led me to read a large body of literature on literacy, biliteracy, the interdependence of languages in bilinguals, and the transferability of literacy between two orthographically similar languages (Bialystok et al., 2005; Cummins, 1979). The following literature review is my assessment of the sizable existing literature about these concepts.

**Literature Review**

*Effects of L1 literacy on L2*

The transferability of language is a topic that has been studied in depth by numerous researchers and scholars in the field of second language acquisition (Bialystok 1991; 1997; & 2001; Bialystok et al., 2009; Canard, 2007; Cummins, 1979; 1980; 1981; 1984; & 1993; Durgunoglu & Hancin, 1992; Gebauer et al., 2013; Jared et al., 2011; Lindholm-Leary, 2000; Thomas & Collier, 2002). Cummins (1979) conducted arguably the most important research on the transfer of language by creating two hypotheses that formed to achieve the theory that “a cognitively and academically beneficial form of bilingualism can be achieved only on the basis of adequately developed first language (L1) skills” (p. 222). One of his hypotheses explains that the competency of a person’s L2 relies on the competency they have “already developed in L1 at the time when intensive exposure to L2 begins” (Cummins, 1979, p. 222). His research has paved the way for many scholars to elaborate on the transferability of language.

Jared et al., (2011) conducted a study that predicted the biliteracy development of students attending a French-English immersion program. The researchers results yielded positive correlations between the students’ proficiency in the L1 at the Kindergarten level and the proficiency of the L2 at the fourth-grade level (Jared et al., 2011). The results of
this four-year study are corroborated by a study conducted by Kelly, Roe, Blanchard, & Atwill (2015). Kelly et al. (2015) studied L1 Spanish-speaking children and the influence of the L1 in acquiring vocabulary and phonemic awareness in the L2 (English). The results showed that the acquisition of English receptive vocabulary increased in students with at- or above-level Spanish receptive vocabulary. The study also showed that phonemic awareness in Spanish helped students achieve phonemic awareness in English.

Feinauer et al. (2013) conducted a study about the relationship between L1 (Spanish) literacy skills and the acquisition of L2 (English) reading skills. The results of this study, like the previous studies mentioned, indicate that L1 skills are cross-linguistically transferred (Cummins, 1979; 1980; & 1984) to the L2 for both monolingual and bilingual students (Feinauer et al., 2013). Along with Feinauer et al. (2013), Bialystok et al. (2005) show the cross-linguistic interactions among languages with similar writing systems. The results of this study showed that “bilinguals transferred literacy skills across languages…when both languages were written in the same system” (Bialystok et al., 2005, p. 43). This study indicates that because English and Spanish share almost the exact same alphabet, bilingual Spanish/English students should be able to transfer their linguistic skills in their L1 to their L2 (Bialystok et al., 2005).

Even without the same orthographic system, Ovando and Collier (1985, as cited in Canard, 2007) state that language learners are able to apply what they know about their L1 to reading in their L2, especially in terms of visual, linguistic, and cognitive strategies. Readers are able to maximize the linguistic strengths they possess in their L1 to decode text, even if the language does not follow a similar written pattern (Canard, 2007).

Collier and Thomas (2004) demonstrate the benefits of utilizing DLI education to
capitalize on the potential of biliteracy in bilingual students. They state that DLI is “astoundingly effective” (p. 9) for all students, but even more specifically, for ELLs. Montanari (2013) echoes these results in a study conducted upon children in an Italian-English DLI program. About half of the students were of Italian descent and were ELLs. The results showed a transfer of literacy skills from the L1 to the L2. Her findings imply that decoding skills in Italian facilitate development of English reading skills. The ELLs in the study read increasingly better over time, which “confirms the possible long-term benefits of DL[I] instruction on English reading development” (Montanari, 2013, p. 509). These findings validate Cummins’ (1979; 1980) opinion that instead of subtracting from the L1, DLI education adds context and depth to the L1 while giving support to the L2. The following section is a literature review on dual language immersion and its effects on ESL literacy proficiency.

**Dual Language Immersion Education**

*What is dual language immersion education?*

According to May (2008), dual language immersion education is classified as instruction in two languages to teach content “…for any part, or all, of the school curriculum” (p. 20). The instruction of each school day is divided into learning content in the target language (TL), or second language (L2) as well as in the local native, or first language (L1). Similar to May (2008), Swain and Lapkin (2005) classify immersion programs as “developing fluency in an initially unknown language through content-based teaching in the second/foreign language, at no expense to the home/first language of the students” (p. 2005). Fortune and Tedick (2008) also explain that instruction in the TL is ideally used to teach subject matter for at least 50% of the school day. According to
Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan (2000), the goal of DLI is to facilitate the “attainment of challenging, age-appropriate academic skills and knowledge; advanced levels of functional proficiency in English along with an additional language; [and] understanding and appreciation of cross-cultural differences” (p. 6).

Cloud et al., (2000) state that on high-stakes tests, students in DLI programs have been reported to do as well, or slightly better, than their monolingual peers. As for cognitive benefits, they also reported that students could identify structures in their native language, as well in their second language more easily than their monolingual counterparts.

Beyond the above definitions of immersion education, there are other specific factors present in dual language immersion programs. In a presentation given by Spicer-Escalante, Wade, and Leite, the “ABCs of Immersion” are discussed as the goals of dual language immersion. The ABCs stand for the following: A for Academic Achievement, B for Bilingualism/Biliteracy, and C for Cultural Competence (Fortune, 2014 as cited in Spicer-Escalante, Wade, & Leite, 2015). This characterization of DLI is especially helpful to understand that immersion programs are more than just language schools. DLI programs assist students in becoming intelligent, bilingual, and culturally competent individuals.

In all of these definitions, it is clear that both languages are used as the medium of instruction; thus, DLI programs are intrinsically taught using content-based instruction (Fortune & Tedick, 2008; May, 2008; Swain & Lapkin, 2005). Though research shows that a myriad of benefits come from DLI education, I have chosen to focus on the
benefits of ESL students participating in two-way DLI programs to facilitate biliteracy in Spanish and English.

Two-way DLI bridging the ESL achievement gap

A two-way bilingual immersion program can only be implemented when at least 30% of the student population speaks the TL at home (Fortune & Tedick, 2008). Research has shown that two-way immersion programs have increased positive attitudes toward the minority language as well as multiculturalism (Christian, 2011; Collier & Thomas, 2004; Fortune & Tedick, 2008; Lindholm-Leary, 2000; May, 2008; Swain & Lapkin, 2005). L1 speakers of the TL become classified as assets to the school and community, rather than ESL ‘burdens.’ Collier and Thomas (2004) state that two-way DLI education successfully closes the achievement gap for ELLs because of the support L1 speakers of the TL receive daily. Thus, two-way DLI programs add to any prior L1 knowledge because they implement the two languages equally in order to strengthen academic achievement in reading and writing (Alanís & Rodríguez, 2008). Many scholars researching DLI also claim that minority-language learners thrive in DLI programs because they are given opportunities to contribute to their own education, as well as to the education of their peers (Bialystok, 2009; Feinauer et al., 2013; Freeman, 1998; Montanari, 2014).

Bialystok et al. (2005) display an advantage for students learning to read in two languages simultaneously. Bialystok et al. state, “the results [of the study] showed a general increment in reading ability for all the bilingual children, but a larger advantage for children learning two alphabetic systems” (p. 43). The evidence from this study by Bialystok further supports the argument that biliteracy can be achieved without
jeopardizing the L1. This echoes Cummin’s interdependence hypothesis (1979) by showing that the literacy achieved in the L1 is transferred to the L2, and with even greater impact if the languages are orthographically similar (Bialystok et al., 2005).

Met (2008) states “Language and literacy go hand in hand” (p. 49), and when students learn their second language, they build their L2 literacy the same way they did in their first language. Therefore, a key factor in gaining biliteracy is being initially proficient in the L1 (Lindholm-Leary, 2000). But, if L1 literacy skills were never fully developed, building L2 literacy will be an almost impossible challenge (Cummins, 1984). DLI education and its focus on simultaneously fostering literacy in the L1 and L2 is, according to many scholars, an obvious ‘answer’ for bridging the ESL achievement gap (Alanís & Rodriguez, 2008; Bialystok, 2009; Collier & Thomas, 2004; Lindholm-Leary, 2000; Montanari, 2014).

Overall, learners involved in DLI programs are likely to develop language skills in both their L1 and their L2. Bilingual students can especially benefit from DLI programs because their L1 literacy is explicitly taught and preserved, which consequently aids them in learning to read and write in their L2 (Collier & Thomas, 2004; Lindholm-Leary, 2000; Montanari, 2014). ELL students enrolled in two-way DLI programs are increasing their literacy in both languages; thus, they are not only gaining and maintaining more academic success in English than their ESL-enrolled peers, but they also have the advantage of being able to academically express themselves in both their L1 and their L2.
Conclusion

As the need for intelligent, culturally sensitive, bilingual and biliterate individuals increases worldwide, educators, parents, politicians, and students must consider the viability and practicality of dual language immersion education for current and future generations. What the conducted research has shown is that there have been large gains in academic achievement, literacy and oral proficiency in both languages when a DLI model has been incorporated, especially with ELL students (Christian, 2011; Collier & Thomas, 2004).

Roberts and Wade (2012) affirmed that although some parents are aware of the “cognitive, educational, social, cultural and economic benefits associated with learning a second language” (p. 10), most people—educators, politicians and parents alike—are uneducated as to what DLI programs are, and furthermore, are unaware of how to go about incorporating them into their communities. As I learn more and more about the benefits of DLI, I feel that it is my responsibility to help educate my community about the positive effects dual language immersion has on the biliteracy of ELL students.
CULTURE ARTIFACT

Teaching the Pragmatics of Tú and Usted to Novice Learners of Spanish
INTRODUCTION

This artifact was written as a final requirement for my Pragmatics (LING 6900) class I took with Dr. de Jonge-Kannan in the fall of 2015. I originally wrote the paper with my classmate, Chemaris Ethington. Chemaris is originally from Puerto Rico and is a native Spanish speaker. She is also a secondary educator. We decided to write this paper together because we both teach Spanish as a Foreign Language at the secondary level (i.e., middle school and high school). The idea of researching and writing a paper about the pragmatics of tú and usted was appealing to us because we have both found that our students struggle immensely with this concept. Together, we discussed the most pressing issues about formality in our respective SFL classes, and from there we researched literature relevant to our topic. Chemaris was an invaluable resource while we wrote this paper because she offered the perspective of an L1 Spanish speaker, which gave even more validity to our concerns.

After we completed the paper for the class, I decided to continue working and fine-tuning the piece to make it a part of my portfolio. I started observing my middle school students more carefully and I specifically watched for correct and incorrect usage of tú and usted. What I observed did not surprise me; however, it brought to the surface the challenges SFL learners face when learning formality. This propelled me to find and read more literature regarding strategies to teach tú and usted.

I still struggle to properly help my students understand and appropriately use tú and usted pronouns, but I now have more information to guide me in doing so. Although not all of the research was conducted in secondary education courses, it is my belief that these strategies can be implemented across many grade and proficiency levels.
Ultimately, I hope to incorporate the strategies I found in this literature into my own Spanish classes, both currently and in the future.
Teaching the Pragmatics of Tú and Usted to Novice Learners of Spanish

Abstract

This paper reviews literature having to do with formality and pragmatic awareness in the Spanish as a Foreign Language (SFL). It specifically focuses on the usage of the Spanish forms of the English pronoun ‘you’. Crucially, while in English, ‘you’ is used as the multipurpose second person singular pronoun, in Spanish there is a clear distinction between the formality of the two pronouns used for second person singular. This paper notes these distinctions, and expands on the literature regarding the use of tú and usted depending on a number of factors, including age, gender, status, relationship of interlocutors, and country of origin. As a teacher of Spanish as a Foreign Language (SFL), I have noticed a gap in the pragmatically appropriate use of tú and usted in my students; therefore, another aspect of this paper is to review of a number of techniques for teaching tú and usted to secondary-level students. The last section of this paper displays my observations of my students and their use of tú and usted. I also include my experiences using tú and usted as an L2 Spanish speaker and how that informs my teaching of tú and usted.

Key words: tú, usted, pragmatics, formality, Spanish as a Foreign Language

Introduction

Proficiency in learning a second or foreign language is not limited to communicating ideas via speaking or writing; rather, true proficiency lies in the ability to appropriately navigate the cultural nuances of the L2 (Bennett, 1997; LoCastro, 2013). Many speakers of a FL are skilled in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, but they lack the intercultural competence that necessitates true proficiency of a FL (Bennett,
1997; LoCastro, 2013; Medrano, 2010; Shrum & Glisan, 2010). This can lead to not only comprehension problems between two interlocutors, but also to inappropriate or offensive situations, either via speech or writing. Thus, becoming a proficient L2 speaker requires competences that go beyond the syntactical structure of the language. In the case of SFL learners, problems may arise regarding formality, and even more specifically, the pronouns tú and usted if not taught and practiced properly (Medrano, 2010).

The idea that pronouns implicitly contain formality is a somewhat difficult concept for L1 English speakers (Hampton, 1974; Whitley, 2002) to grasp. Because the second person subject pronouns in English are neither formal nor informal, the Spanish pronouns that take the place of the English ‘you’ are generally difficult to acquire for students of SFL (Hampton, 1974; Soler-Espiauba, 2000; Whitley, 2002). As a teacher of SFL, I have observed difficulty in my L1 English speaking students’ acquisition of the two pronouns tú and usted. Students find it challenging to know when to use the informal pronoun tú versus the more formal pronoun usted (Hampton, 1974). This is likely due to the fact that only one pronoun for ‘you’ exists in English. This is not to say that it is impossible to acquire the pragmatic knowledge of tú and usted; rather, this paper reviews the literature regarding this topic and subsequently gives recommendations for SFL teachers aspiring to teach appropriate formality in Spanish.

**Literature Review**

As I researched the literature regarding the uses of tú and usted, I first wanted to investigate the origins of these pronouns. Spanish is the result of the evolution of spoken Latin, slowly changing from generation to generation (Hualde, Olarrea, Escobar, & Travis, 2010). According to Penny (2002), “TÚ being used whenever a single individual
was addressed, whatever his or her status vis-à-vis the speaker, and V(OS used for addressing more than one person” (p. 137). As time passed and Latin continued evolving, tú and vos became one in meaning, both used for informal address. During the Golden Age, “the cumbersome form of address vuestra merced [English equivalent, ‘your grace’] underwent a series of contractions, at first disallowed in cultured speech, which gave rise to vuesarced, voacé, vucé, vuced, etc., and finally usted” (Penny, 2002, p. 138). Usted then became the formal second person singular pronoun instead of vuestra merced.

Although these origins of tú and usted make sense for L1 speakers of Spanish, most of the time this concept is initially difficult to grasp for L2 learners. In some cases, even bilingual people who have grown up speaking both Spanish and English have trouble knowing when to use tú and when to use usted (Lambert & Tucker, 1976). Jaramillo (1996) analyzed the use of tú and usted among Spanish-speaking Mexican-American families. The author found that most respondents used tú less as familiar relationships got farther away from the nuclear family. Although this suggests that the use of the formal usted has stayed intact as the choice when communicating with unfamiliar people, the author noted that the youngest group used tú much more than their older counterparts when addressing “ceremonial” family members (i.e., godparents) (Jaramillo, 1996).

The study found a close relationship between age and gender and educational level of the respondent. The youngest generation had received a higher level of both regular education and Spanish education (Jaramillo, 1996). This shows that education might not be the key, or only, factor in the way Spanish speakers use tú and usted. Rather, the informal pronouns that the youngest group used might be attributed to the
dynamic nature of formality in Spanish. All languages change over time, and one generation’s speech tends to differ from another generation’s speech. Specifically, with younger generations in the United States, the use of tú is becoming more prevalent than the traditional usted (Jaramillo, 1996). Although Jaramillo’s research is not as recent as other research done on tú and usted, it remains relevant because the trend is continuing among Mexican-Americans (Medrano, 2010). The same can be observed in a study done in Chile, where usted is more now predominantly used among the older generation while the younger generation has adopted tú in its every day speech (Helincks, 2015).

In a study conducted in 2010, Gutiérrez-Rivas mentions how Cubans and Cuban-Americans sometimes have difficulty using these pronouns. In her study, Gutiérrez-Rivas chose two groups: the first consisted of second-generation Spanish speakers aged 40-53 (five men and five women) who were either born in the United States or had immigrated to the United States before the age of twelve. The second group (five men and five women) was comprised of descendants from second-generation Cuban-Americans. In her study, both groups had trouble choosing the correct pronoun. For example, one of the participants employed “poliformismo” which is the use of tú and usted for the same subject in the same conversation (Gutiérrez-Rivas, 2010, p. 89). Notably, the third generation preferred the use of tú in almost every setting.

Based on this study, I wonder if I should teach only usted to novice learners. As a teacher using the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach (Lee & Van Patten, 2003), I strive to teach only what is needed at the moment, or what my students would most likely use if they were to be immersed in a Spanish-speaking community. If that is the case, should I teach one form first, introducing the other pronoun when the
students are more advanced? Or, should I teach both simultaneously, in the hope that the students will eventually catch the meaning of both pronouns and when to use each one? These are essential questions I ask myself both when I introduce the concept of formality, and also when I reinforce it throughout the year. I am currently testing, in my own classroom and with my own students, which method works best.

Another aspect to take into consideration is that, when teaching language in the most basic form, L2 Spanish students will mimic the same mistakes L1 Spanish children make. Depending on the culture, the pronoun of preference will be tú or vos (another form of tú found in Central America and some countries in South America). Since most children use tú and most of the teachers are young and use tú as well, chances are that the pronoun of preference will be tú (Soler-Espiauba, 2000). The teaching of tú versus usted will greatly depend on how the instructor talks. For example, if I normally talk to my students in Spanish using the pronoun tú, there is a greater chance that the students will respond in tú and have more difficulty using usted. In fact, my colleague (an L1 Spanish speaker) was surprised to hear the governor of Puerto Rico talking in tú to the whole population. After some research, I realized that tú has been used quite predominantly in Puerto Rico instead of usted (Fortuño, 2011). The exception would be in situations that warrant the use of usted, such as talking to a professor or someone of higher status (e.g., in education, political, religious settings). Soler-Espiauba (2000) mentions situations when tú is commonly used versus usted. In familiar settings, tú is used “excepto en muy reducidas zonas rurales, donde aún se
practica Usted con padres, abuelos, suegros y tíos”³ (Soler-Espiauba, 2000, p.186). In a professional setting, a supervisor may use tú with everyone but the subordinate will use usted with the supervisor. In public settings, such as stores, big warehouses and restaurants, usted is used by store personnel speaking to customers (Soler-Espiauba, 2000).

In regards to what Spanish teachers should teach, Whitley (2002) mentions “a useful rule of thumb is to adopt tú if ‘you’ would be addressed with a given name and usted if a title or title and last name would be used” (p. 326). This is a useful and effective rule of thumb, as students can recognize the need to call someone by their title rather than his/her proper name. However, this could have some negative repercussions because differences are common among Spanish speakers from different countries. This is important to note because it portrays how two different places, which both speak Spanish as an L1, vary in the formality of everyday speech. LoCastro (2013) mentions “learning how to be polite in another language is […] not an easy task: doing so takes time, exposure to authentic, local practices, and mindfulness in communicative contexts” (p. 136). This is true when learning a foreign language versus learning a variation of such language. As a teacher of SFL who uses mostly Spanish from Spain, I need to stress the importance of such differences while teaching my students.

Because the continuum of the use of tú and usted is so large, especially if all Spanish-speaking countries are taken into account, some of this information may be considered arbitrary. However, it is important to note that because I am a teacher of SFL

³ Translation: except in some rural zones where usted is used with parents, grandparents, in-laws and uncles/aunts
in the United States, studies conducted on bilinguals currently living in the U.S. are relevant and important to my research. Soler-Espiauba (2000) mentions certain situations where tú could be used. They are age and group association. “Para poder tutear sin problemas, es preciso tener algo en común con el/los interlocutores: edad, sexo, trabajo, estatus social, familia, partido político, club deportivo o social, categoría profesional, casa de vecindad, lugar de vacaciones, amigos comunes, etc”⁴ (Soler-Espiauba, 2000, p.188). Just as Soler-Espiauba states, both L1 and L2 speakers should carefully use the less formal tú pronoun. An understanding of the nuances of formality in Spanish will assist speakers, both L1 and L2, to use the two pronouns appropriately in many diverse settings and situations (Fortuño, 2011; Gutiérrez-Rivas, 2010).

The following section reveals research-based strategies for teaching the pragmatics of tú and usted to SFL learners. It is important for teachers of SFL to have knowledge of multiple, meaningful strategies so that they can implement them successfully and appropriately in their classes. Although each approach is a little different, I have gleaned methods I feel comfortable and confident with in the teaching of tú and usted.

Strategies for teaching tú and usted in the SFL classroom

To begin, Terrell (1980) points us in an effective direction in regards to the teaching of verb forms/conjugations by proposing “a radically different approach to the teaching of verb form and function”—that is, radical at the time (p. 129). At the time of

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⁴ Translation: In order to use tú without problems, it is necessary to have something in common with the speaker: age, gender, job, social status, family, political affiliation, sports or social club, professional category, neighborhood, vacation destination, common friends, etc.’
Terrell’s publication, the audiolingual method and teacher-centered classrooms were the norm in FL teaching (Ellis, 1995). His research was groundbreaking in that it proposed an approach to teaching grammar, and specifically verbs, that excluded conjugations of all forms of each verb. Rather, students learned the meaning of many verbs in a single form before learning all conjugations. This aided in the acquisition of grammar in support of communication (Lee & Van Patten, 2003). Although this article does not point to specific methods for the teaching of tú and usted, Terrell’s research goes hand-in-hand with the paradigm of communicative language teaching (CLT) (Lee & Van Patten, 2003) in that he proposed teaching only the verb forms that were needed for a specific communicative purpose.

Betti (2013) reports on a different approach. Instead of focusing on the grammar and conjugations of verbs at all, this study prompted teachers to take the implicit pragmatics of Spanish formality into account. Betti (2013) examined a large corpus of student writing samples and analyzed the gaps in the pragmatic development of those students, especially concerning the use of culturally appropriate forms of address and politeness. She came to the conclusion that instead of teaching students only the pragmatic skills of the TL, teachers should focus on making comparisons between the L1 and the L2. This approach, therefore, would be more explicit and deductive than other approaches in which the teaching of tú and usted is taught more implicitly and inductively (Shrum & Glisan, 2010).

Although research on comparative approaches to exploring pragmatics shows them to be important and potentially successful, there are some important caveats to note. Whitley (2002) states in his book that the system of language is not homogenous; rather,
it is unique to each speaker and, therefore, teachers must take into account not only the different dialectical pragmatic rules of a language, but also the different “idiolects” each speaker within a group uses (p. 1). This idea brings to light that we may not always be able to use a comparative approach when teaching our beginning and even intermediate students when to use *tú* or *usted*. It is important to explain to students that although there are specific differences between the use of the ‘you’ pronoun in English and Spanish, those comparisons do not necessarily dictate all uses everywhere, no matter the dialect (Whitley, 2002).

Contrastive methods might work for L1 French speakers learning Spanish as an L2, but they are difficult to apply to classrooms of L1 English speakers. Present-day English does not have a *tú* or *usted* equivalent. Therefore, though comparisons might be helpful for students who share certain pragmatic characteristics of their respective languages, it is not particularly useful in teaching L1 English speakers. Instead of comparing and contrasting specific features of the languages, SFL teachers can introduce the pragmatics of *tú* and *usted* by showing English-speaking students what formality looks like in their L1 (e.g., probing the students for examples of how one might talk to a parent, sibling, teacher, boss, friend, stranger, etc.). This way, teachers help students understand the concept of formality and in which contexts one uses it, whether or not it is specific to the ‘you’ pronoun. This type of instruction facilitates better understanding of formality in the Spanish language, which will then lead to the teaching of *tú* and *usted*. 
Observations

Students

I have observed that my students lack understanding related to both the difference between *tú* and *usted*, and the fact that Spanish even has two second person pronouns. My students struggle to use the appropriate pronoun and its conjugation when addressing me as *usted*. They don’t seem to have trouble speaking in *tú* while talking to classmates, but this could perhaps be due to the fact that most of the activities I incorporate require students to speak to one another, and *tú* has been explicitly taught as the pronoun students are to use when addressing classmates. This differs with the heritage speakers of Spanish in the class. They often address me in *usted*; however, they sometimes use *tú*, and neither pronoun is used consistently. Many of the heritage learners and speakers in my class have not spoken Spanish regularly since they were very young, and although they understand it seemingly perfectly, they seem much less aware of the pragmatics of *tú* and *usted* than their L1 Spanish speaking counterparts. The L1 speakers of Spanish (especially the ones born outside of the United States) almost always use *tú* and *usted* appropriately. This seems to cement the idea that the pragmatic usage of these two pronouns is much more difficult for SFL learners than it is for L1 Spanish speakers.

Myself

My knowledge of Spanish has come from a mix of places, countries, and types of study. I learned the basics of Spanish in high school, and later studied briefly in the last part of my college experience. I studied in Spain as an undergraduate student, and later also taught English there. As an SFL learner in high school, I primarily learned to speak in the *tú* form, although I remember being taught how and when to use *usted*. When I
spent time in Mexico and Costa Rica as a teenager, I continued to use tú with the local people. No one corrected me, and I did not think much of the correct usage of usted during those times.

The first time I studied in Spain, I was met with an overwhelming amount of tú usage. Because I was actually studying the language in school, as well as speaking it to my friends and host family, I became more aware of the pragmatics of tú and usted, more or less for the first time. I learned that in Spain, the use of tú is much more common than it is in Latin America. I experienced this firsthand when I returned from Spain the second time. I started working with Mexicans at a non-profit educational center in the USA, and I felt I was constantly offending people because I had practiced usted so infrequently. I also felt awkward when my students, who were much older than me, addressed me as usted. Because I primarily learned to speak with the pronoun tú, I find myself still struggling to use tú and usted appropriately. Although the correct usage of tú and usted is an acquired skill, I want my students to be able to navigate formality in Spanish effectively. Thus, teaching my students tú and usted is very important to me.

Conclusion

The studies conducted in this body of literature are all striving for the same thing: pragmatic competence when using the second person singular pronoun in SFL classes. Although many students have difficulty with this concept, it is something that not only cannot be ignored, but also must be taught, in my opinion, both explicitly/deductively and implicitly/inductively. It is imperative for teachers to know how to use this literature to their advantage in the teaching of tú and usted.
My goal in reviewing this literature was to develop effective techniques to teach my students how to use *tú* and *usted* appropriately. I have found ways to practically apply the teaching of *tú* and *usted* in my own classroom. I incorporate activities such as interview exchanges, role-play scenarios, and information gap puzzles to assist students in learning how to appropriately use *tú* and *usted* in real-life situations. This refers to the premise of my foreign language teaching philosophy, which is communicative language teaching and task-based activities. Thus far, I have been pleasantly surprised to see my beginner level SFL students identifying the use of each pronoun with ease, and consequently, using each pronoun (with guidance and corrective feedback) to converse with myself and their peers. By applying what I have learned about teaching students the pragmatics of *tú* and *usted*, I have become a more effective SFL teacher. It is my goal to become more and more effective in the teaching of Spanish formality throughout my career.
TECHNOLOGY ARTIFACT

Technology and Motivation in the L2 Classroom:

Using Games to Facilitate Spanish Acquisition
INTRODUCTION

I originally wrote this artifact in conjunction with Ian Thorley, a classmate in Dr. Joshua Thoms’ Technology for Language Learning course. The class took place during the fall of 2014, which was my first semester in the MSLT program. Ian and I were interested in motivation and its effects on second language acquisition. Because the class focused on technology to facilitate foreign language learning, we started to brainstorm different ways to encourage motivation. The students we taught at the time (I taught Spanish 1010 to mostly freshman students and Ian taught French 2020 to mostly sophomore students) were considered ‘digital natives’ because of their life-long exposure to digital media. Therefore, we decided on the topic of using digital media, specifically gaming, to teach foreign language. We started to explore this topic with the guidance of our professor and were pleasantly surprised to find a body of current literature about video games and language learning. Although this field is still fairly new and unexplored, we found research papers that specifically address how to use games to motivate students in the foreign language classroom.

After submitting this paper to Dr. Thoms, I chose to tweak and rework it in order for it to be a part of my final portfolio. I read more literature on digital gaming and, consequently, gained a deeper appreciation and understanding of the benefits games can have in an FL classroom.

I had previously never been a big ‘fan’ of digital gaming; however, I quickly found that all video/online games are not inherently bad, nor are all of them a waste of time. I did not often play video games as a child or adolescent, so previous to writing this
paper, I did not understand the potential positive influence digital games can have on learning. I started to appreciate the idea of using digital gaming to supplement my SFL classes, and I was pleasantly surprised to read a number of recent studies that show positive gains of implementing digital gaming in FL classes. I now feel that games can and should be incorporated in my current and future SFL classes to differentiate instruction and increase motivation.
Technology and Motivation in the L2 Classroom: Using Games to Facilitate Spanish Acquisition

Abstract

This paper explores the recent and current literature about digital games and their influence on language learning. Research shows a positive correlation between games and student motivation. Digital Game-Based Language Learning (DGBLL) is becoming more and more popular and effective, as teachers are adapting their curriculum for the ‘digital natives’ in their classrooms. The literature review encompasses various types of video/online games such as Synthetic Immersive Environments (SIEs), Second Life, and Massive Multiplayer Online Role Play Games (MMORPGs). The literature illustrates the efficacy of gaming and addresses myths surrounding video games. The paper then goes on to explore a future classroom application of digital games the author will conduct.

Key words: digital natives, digital immigrants, gaming, Second Life, SIEs, DGBLL, MMORPGs

Introduction

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

Recent years have seen a greater inclusion of technological applications in L2 classrooms (Neville, 2010; Reinders & Wattana, 2014; Reinhardt, Warner & Lange, 2014; Sykes, 2014; Sykes, Oskoz, & Thorne, 2008), which has allowed learners greater access to authentic materials. It has afforded students more ways to interact with those materials, with each other, with teachers, and with individuals outside of their classrooms (Holden & Sykes, 2011; Neville, 2010; Reinders & Wattana, 2014; Reinhardt et al., 2014; Sykes, 2014; Sykes et al., 2008). These advances in technology are also aiding teachers in meeting the ever-increasing demand of engaging students (Holden & Sykes, 2011). Many of our current students are accustomed to using digital media that they are bored easily; therefore, using games in the FL classroom can be a way to appeal to even the most ‘detached’ learners (Buckingham, 2007). Achievement of proficiency in a language requires a significant amount of time on task, and teachers are using technological tools as a way to connect with more students than otherwise achievable (Cornillie, Thorne, & Desmet, 2012). These tools also make the time students spend practicing the language as efficient as possible. For these reasons, recent research in L2 acquisition has begun to evaluate the usefulness of digital game-based language learning (DGBLL). DGBLL uses either commercially produced or made-for-education video
games as a method for students to practice their language skills. Given the benefits of
play in language learning (Cornillie et al., 2012; Holden & Sykes, 2011; Reinders &
Wattana, 2014; Reinhardt, 2013; Sykes, 2014), the fact that newer generations of
language learners are ‘digital natives’ (Prensky, 2001), and that language proficiency can
only be attained through practice (Ellis, 2000; Lee & Van Patten, 2003), video games are
currently being experimented with both inside and outside formal language learning
programs. While there will naturally be a considerable number of skeptics among
existing language teachers (many of whom could be considered ‘digital immigrants’)
(Neville, 2010), recent publications on the young field of DGBLL hold persuasive
arguments on the general utility of video games for language learning, especially the
ability of video games to lower learner anxiety and increase learner motivation
(Buckingham, 2007; Cornillie et al., 2012; Gee, 2003; Holden & Sykes, 2011; Neville,
2010; Reinders & Wattana, 2014; Reinhardt et al., 2014; Sykes, 2014; Sykes et al., 2008).

**Literature Review**

For video games to assist teachers in meeting the goals for their classes, it is
important that teachers understand what kinds of games are available, why they are useful
to learners, and what preconceived notions about video games may or may not be valid.
Although the use of digital gaming is rather new in L2 acquisition research (Buckingham,
2007; Thorne, Black & Sykes, 2009), video games themselves have existed for decades.
While few video games have been developed specifically for the purpose of language
practice, teachers are incorporating many commercially produced games into language
learning programs, and they are finding success with these implementations (Gee, 2003;
Online games, which have mediums with great potential for learners to participate in authentic interactions in an open-ended format (Gee, 2003), can be put into three categories (Thorne et al., 2009): social virtualities, massive multiplayer online games (MMOGs), and SIEs. Social virtualities, such as Second Life, allow users to interact in an artificial world through avatars they create. Although no pre-set objectives appear in these formats, users can create spaces based on interests and ideas and interact with other users online.

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Myth #3: Digital games only reflect American and Japanese culture” (Reinhardt, 2013, p. 165). As teachers strive to provide their students with cultural training as part of an L2 curriculum, the question of whether a video game can provide useful cultural knowledge across multiple languages is a valid concern (Buckingham, 2007; Reinders & Wattana, 2014; Thorne, et al., 2009). Although it is true that the largest video game producers are North American and Japanese, it is also true—especially due to the rapid expansion of the industry—that significant video game releases are happening across the world (Cornillie et al., 2012; Reinhardt et al., 2014). Additionally, as video game producers try to target a more global market, the settings of video games are frequently designed to be of a hybrid nature (Cornillie et al., 2012; Reinhardt, 2013).

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

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

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

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

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

The study showed that the use of the video game not only lowered the affective filter by decreasing anxiety and increasing willingness to communicate (Hitosugi et al., 2014), but also that the group using the video game for practice acquired vocabulary and retained vocabulary significantly better than the control group. Although more study is needed to determine all of the possible benefits of video game use in language curricula, early studies indicate that DGBLL can be a useful way for learners to practice grammar and vocabulary, lower anxiety associated with language learning, find ways to guide their language practice toward areas in which they are personally interested, and learn culture and pragmatics (Blake, 2013; Hitosugi et al., 2014; Holden & Sykes, 2011; Reinders & Wattana, 2014; Reinhardt 2013; Sykes et al., 2008).
Along with the studies published by the aforementioned authors, Thorne et al. (2009) also argue that DGBLL extends beyond the classroom and into real life. By giving students opportunities to play in SIEs for language practice, teachers facilitate language learning that goes far beyond what can be taught in the classroom. Thorne et al. (2009) state, “…what occurs online, and often outside of instructed educational settings, involves extended periods of language socialization, adaptations, and creative semiotic work that illustrate vibrant communicative practices” (p. 815). Though some teachers may have reservations, others may perceive the possibility of helping students gain acquisition outside of class as exciting and productive. The idea that games can teach different, or even more, material than what is taught in a traditional classroom may give teachers an incentive to incorporate SIEs or other digital games into their curriculum.

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

After examining the research and drawing my own conclusions about digital gaming in a language classroom, I would like to propose a possible teaching project that includes using DGBLL in a high school classroom.

I plan to incorporate a month-long synthetic immersive environment (i.e., *Second Life*) unit into a Spanish 2 class at Mountain Crest High School. This project will be mainly accomplished outside of class. Although the teacher will guide the students in each step of the gaming project, it will ultimately be the students’ responsibility to achieve the goals of the assignment.

I believe that it is imperative to explore the interests of my specific groups of students I am teaching. This requires that a strong teacher-student relationship must be in place, which means that I know my students personally and understand the dynamics of my class. I must also take into account the time constraints high school students have, and plan the project accordingly (the goal of the DGBL assignment is not to overwhelm the students; rather, it is to motivate them to use the target language on their own in the future). I must choose a project according to the curriculum I teach, my students’ current motivation and language level, and the technological tools available.

The first step I must take in order to incorporate *Second Life* into my Spanish 2 classroom is to choose or create a learning environment in which students will be “placed.” *Second Life* currently has an SEI based in Spain, which is where I would like the game to take place. I simply need to adjust the environment to the needs of the game, and then share it with my students.
It is my responsibility as the instructor to create an environment that represents the culture of the target language, and in this case, I believe Spain to be an appropriate representation of the Spanish language and culture. According to Sykes et al. (2008), SIEs give learners multiple avenues in which they can achieve pragmatic appropriateness. One of the greatest advantages of using SIEs to learn pragmatics is the complexity the game affords the learners. Learners can study specific language functions on their own time. In this way, there is more flexibility for learning pragmatics in SIEs than other traditional games and learning strategies (Sykes, et al., 2008). By applying the research Sykes, et al. (2008) have done, I believe my students will not only gain a better knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of the language, but they will also learn how to appropriately use the language.

Next, I must create learning objectives for my students. These learning objectives will be communicative in nature, as students will have to complete tasks that would happen in a real life situation. Some examples of appropriate learning objectives are the following: Students will be able to order food at an authentic Spanish restaurant; Students will be able to hail a taxi and give the driver directions to where they need to go; Students will be able to coordinate a group trip to La Alhambra with their Spanish friends and classmates; etc.

Next, I will present the unit to students in class. I will give them a course outline, including a timeline and the specific objectives they are to achieve, as well as a rubric to ensure they understand how they will be assessed. This will be a mini syllabus of sorts; it will outline the expectations for the unit. I will then take a class period to demonstrate the SIE, and complete an example objective. I will show students how to record themselves
playing the game, and explain that the recordings will form the basis of their grade. This class period will also be an opportunity for students to ask questions and express concerns about the project.

In order to assess students both formatively and summatively, I will need students to record themselves participating in the game. By creating task-based activities students must complete in the SIE, I will be able to assess how well they are using the language. Each activity will be given a point value, and students will be graded by a rubric that breaks down point values for the criteria of the assignment (e.g., completing the task, incorporating class vocabulary, using the TL, etc.). This rubric will give students a clear knowledge of the set learning objectives as well as how to achieve them.

I believe that by designing an SIE unit in my Spanish 2 curriculum, learners will become more motivated in their study of Spanish. The purpose of the unit will be to expose students to Second Life, a game in which they can play for enjoyment, while also acquiring the necessary skills to communicate in Spanish in real-world scenarios. By carrying out a unit designed around DGBLL, I will directly apply to my own classroom the research I have reviewed.
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES

CLT and TBA, Gaming for SLA, Neutral Spanish
INTRODUCTION

The following annotated bibliography is a compilation of three different papers I wrote during my time in the MSLT program. Each one is an examination of literature I read regarding topics pertaining to my portfolio. I wanted to learn more about CLT, digital games, and neutral Spanish, so I sought to find relevant research to broaden and deepen my knowledge of these topics.

The first bibliography is a collection of books and articles I read regarding Communicative Language Teaching and the Task-Based Approach. In my search to find literature about these topics, I was surprised to find so many studies that took place in other countries.

The next bibliography is an overview of the literature regarding the influence of digital games on motivation and SFL learning. Most of this research is very recent because this niche of the SLA field is fairly new.

Finally, the last piece of this annotated bibliography focuses on neutral Spanish. This piece examines what neutral Spanish is, why it is used, and how the telenovela has popularized it worldwide.
Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Activities

Since becoming familiar with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the Task-Based Approach (TBA) in conjunction with teaching second language, I have been interested in the research behind these approaches. This annotated bibliography is my attempt at making sense of these approaches by examining peer-reviewed articles. Before searching for information about CLT and the TBA, I had to start with what I already knew by referring to *The Communicative Classroom*, by Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro & Mandell (2001). Ballman et al. illustrate that one cannot create a task-based activity without that activity being inherently communicative. The nature of the task-based approach is that it leads learners to a culminating end goal. The TBA gives students opportunities to use the target language for gathering and assessing multiple pieces of information that lead them to their final communicative goal. Foreign/second language learners work with one another by giving and receiving authentic information, participating in information-gap activities and negotiating for meaning. This book was my first exposure to the TBA and CLT. I found it different than anything I had ever been taught or ever used in my own foreign language classrooms. Ballman et al. helped me understand why the TBA was used and how it is an essential part of the communicative approach. Because of my newfound interest in these teaching strategies, I wanted to learn more about the research that supports it. I searched the Modern Languages Association’s (MLA) database and found a myriad of articles concerning these two approaches. I started my research with an article written by Ellis (2000) about task-based research and pedagogy in reference to foreign language and its acquisition.
Ellis looks at both psycholinguistic perspectives and socio-cultural theory in reference to task-based activities and second language acquisition (SLA). According to the psycholinguistic perspective, “tasks are viewed as devices that provide learners with the data they need for learning” (p. 193). This is a reiteration of what Ballman et al. state: students will need to use smaller tasks in order to collect the data they need to complete the culminating task (2001). Ellis starts by defining what a task is in the foreign language (FL) teaching context: “A task is a workplan” (p. 195). His definition of this workplan is that input must be incorporated into instruction in order to have a workplan worthy of being called a task. After reading this article, it is clearer to me that a task is implemented only when students “construct” the activity, rather than “compute” the language.

This led me to think about how language acquisition can be categorized. The discrete skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, writing) have traditionally been viewed as major parts of communication, but as I read more, I found a better way to classify them. The standards in the *National Standards for Foreign Language Learning Project (2014)* define three different modes of communication. These are outlined as communicative modes, and are comprised of the Interpersonal Mode, the Interpretive Mode, and the Presentational Mode. Although these modes are not called ‘listening, speaking, reading and writing’, the four discrete skills are embedded within the modes. For example, the Interpretive mode encompasses both reading and listening, and the Interpersonal and Presentational modes often incorporate speaking and writing. I wanted to discover more about these modes in order to see how they relate to TBA, so I started with researching oral/speaking proficiency.
Hasan (2014) discusses the effect of the TBA on oral proficiency in teaching EFL at a secondary school. This was especially interesting to me because I have an interest in teaching ESL/EFL as well as an interest in teaching at a secondary school. Hasan carried out research on two groups of students. Each group was given an oral proficiency test at the beginning and at the end of this study, and then each group was given a different type of instruction: one group utilized the TBA, and the other did not. Hasan discusses the challenge of using the language to speak. There are many hindrances that affect oral communication—one that is very apparent is anxiety and self-consciousness students feel when trying to communicate in a foreign language. In other words, the “affective filter” labeled by Krashen (1985), is at work. This affective filter is described as anxiety, lack of motivation and self-consciousness while communicating in the target language.

Because speaking is more difficult to acquire and assess than some of the other skills, students (and teachers) focus their studies (and curriculum) more on reading and writing rather than on speaking in real time. Hasan urges teachers and students to step outside their comfort zones to explore new methods to practice speaking. He showcases how the TBA is the best way to get students talking and negotiating for meaning in the TL. Hasan concludes that utilizing task-based instruction was beneficial to the participants. The oral proficiency of the students involved in the TBA-centered class was higher than that of their non-TBA counterparts. The study also reports students in the TBA-centered class having much more positive attitudes toward English. They reported “loving” (p. 262) to speak English when using the TBA method. This study led me to think about students’ reading comprehension skills, and if the TBA had any significance on the interpretive mode of communication.
As I searched for more information about EFL learners in regards to reading comprehension, I found an article by Nahavandi (2011) that discusses the effect of task-based activities and instruction on reading comprehension. This article states that reading can sometimes be boring to foreign language learners, causing their comprehension to suffer because of this boredom or lack of interest. Nahavandi discusses the way English is taught in Iran by explaining that teacher awareness and class meaningfulness is almost absent in most English classes. She reports that students in Iran are taught to listen to their teacher for a period of time, and then regurgitate the same information on a written test, without having “personally built or applied” (p. 57) the language to real-life learning objectives. She was interested in conducting empirical research on using the TBA in a language class and she chose to examine “if” and “how” task-based activities affect learners’ reading comprehension. Her results showed that TBA was indeed helpful in bettering students’ interpretive skills, and specifically their reading skills. At the end of the article, Nahavandi states, “We suggest that reading comprehension can be improved by using aspects of TBA, specifically information-gap, opinion-gap and problem-solving tasks…” (p. 67). It was interesting to me that these activities significantly helped reading comprehension, because I had not before given much thought to the TBA in relation to this mode of communication (i.e., interpretive mode). I was excited to see that this approach had a positive effect on reading comprehension; I wanted to continue my quest to find more research that had been done on the TBA and the interpretive mode. I found an article by Tifarligoglu and Basaran (2007) titled, Enhancing reading comprehension through task-based writing activities: An experimental study.
Tifarligolu and Basara conducted an experimental study that looked at “whether or not task-based writing activities have a positive effect upon reading comprehension in English as a foreign language” (p. 134). Two groups of 28 students participated in the study. Both groups were given a pre-test and a post-test on writing. One group was taught using task-based writing activities, and the other was taught using traditional writing methods. This article explains that although some have criticized CLT “[because it has] been based on first language acquisition [and it] lacks a proper theoretical basis about language learning as a cognitive process…” (p. 134), the research the authors conducted on students shows that the TBA aspect of CLT is effective in FL (foreign language) teaching. These findings corroborate Ellis’ (2012) findings regarding CLT.

This article, like others, defines tasks as focusing on meaning, being workplans, involving real-world language use (and subsequently any of the four language skills/competencies), engaging cognitive processes, and having clearly defined communicative outcomes (2007). The authors discuss the advantages of using written task-based activities over oral task-based activities. They state that with written work, learners have the opportunity to see their progress because they are the ones creating it. They are not filling in blanks in a paragraph; rather, they are forming the written work through participating in guided activities facilitated by the teacher. The results of this study showed that there was a statistically significant improvement of the writing of students in the TBA-centered instruction group over the control group. This article opened my eyes to the possibilities foreign language teachers have when they put into practice TBA models for all of the formal competencies or modes of communication. After reading this article, I started to think about language fluency and accuracy—in all
three modes of communication—and I reflected on my past experiences learning about both fluency and accuracy.

While I was in Spain teaching in a bilingual elementary school, I took a few classes on the teaching of English as a Foreign Language from the University of Alcalá. One main idea that stuck with me since that time was the discussion my class had about accuracy versus fluency in a second language context. I have since thought about this concept many times, both as a FL learner and a FL teacher. Although the one-day class I took at the University of Alcalá explained this subject in very broad terms, I have taken a special interest in the topic because I find it not only interesting, but also applicable to FL teachers and FL students. I found two articles that connected to this concept.

**Jamshidnejad (2011)** discusses oral communication strategies in the development of accuracy. This article talks about the difficulty FL learners encounter when they are immersed in the TL. Students become frustrated when they are not able to articulate what they want to say. They might be able to convey their message, but they do not use the words they truly want to use. I have experienced the same frustrations in my own second language learning. As a teacher, I want my students to have the tools to work through this discomfort as they encounter the TL in real time. The TBA approach shows students that it is okay to make mistakes and that completing the task, even without perfect accuracy in the TL, is the ultimate goal.

This article also focuses on using communication strategies (CSs) in order to improve the fluency of a group of Iranian (Persian-speaking) students learning English. Jamshidnejad (2011) specifically examines students’ use of CSs when they are confronted with a problematic moment in the FL. She concludes that the “majority of the
face-to-face interactions [in the study] can be interpreted as communicative successes” (p. 530). This study shows that by helping learners use CSs as they work together in groups, students’ overall communication is more accurate. Because learners in this study had to negotiate for meaning with their group members when they were placed in problematic language moments, they gained better accuracy in English.

Communication strategies have been around for as long as humans have been communicating. However, in the education world, CLT and the TBA are fairly new to many FL educators. Using CSs in conjunction with teaching with communicative objectives helps teachers assist their students in the struggle for accuracy, as well as fluency, in the TL. I appreciated reading this article because although I have not read a lot about CSs thus far, they make a lot of sense in the communicative classroom. They facilitate FL learning because they give students a platform in which they are able to gesticulate, circumlocute, and negotiate for meaning with their peers. This article, though not directly related to the TBA, illustrates that the CLT approach is one of the best ways to lower the affective filter in FL students, as it makes use of meaningful situations where students can practice the language in real-life scenarios. As I thought about the importance of accuracy in FL learning, I had to recognize fluency in the TL as equally important. This led me to specifically search for articles written about fluency.

In my search for fluency studies, I came across an article that discussed CLT and its relationship to fluency. Gatbonton and Segalowitz (2005) studied fluency in conjunction with the CLT approach. This article was one of the most interesting articles I have read concerning the difficulties that arise between CLT methodology and the promotion of automatization. The authors define automatization as “automatic fluency”
in the TL (p. 326). Their definition means that FL students are able to produce utterances without halted or paused speech. This is somewhat challenging to achieve in a FL classroom. However, this article addresses the difficulty of stimulating automatization of the TL without compromising the communicative objectives in a FL classroom. This study examined beginning FL students within the context of the ACCESS methodology.

Automatization in Communicative Contexts of Essential Speech Segments (ACCESS) refers to what students can take away from a lesson (i.e., acquisition), while also keeping that acquisition genuinely communicative. Students may be able to go home after a day of grammar lessons and study, memorize, and regurgitate information, but if they cannot use that information in a communicative way, then it is useless. The goal of ACCESS is to facilitate fluency by giving students pre-tasks, main tasks, and eventually genuinely communicative goals. This is much like a TBA lesson: smaller tasks build to achieve a larger, culminating communicative goal. ACCESS goes into much greater detail than this simple structure, but to understand the goal of this article, it is important to know the framework of the methodology. After reading this article, I have a better idea of what ACCESS is and that it promotes learning and practice using communication goals.

Finally, I found an article that explores whether or not TBA is, in the authors’ words, “the answer” to the question of how to best teach foreign language. Ahmed and ul Hussnain (2013) discusses why TBA has been so successful in Pakistan. They reiterate what many of the aforementioned authors have said about the benefits of teaching with communicative goals in mind. They state that “[TBA] encourages interaction, makes students confident, motivates them, [and] empowers them to take
charge of their own learning process” (2013, p. 459). However, they also take care to examine when TBA is not the most appropriate for specific settings and individuals (specifically large classrooms and accuracy-driven students). Reflecting on this point, I believe it is wise to assess one’s classroom environment before implementing task-based activities into every lesson one teaches.

After reviewing the literature from multiple countries, cultures, and L1s, along with my own experience teaching Spanish for two semesters, I have concluded that CLT and the TBA work to teach language in a more natural and progressive way, rather than traditional grammar drills and vocabulary memorization. I have been surprised and encouraged by my students’ progress and excitement as I have implemented the TBA into my Spanish classes. The literature and the experiences I have had reiterate to me that CLT and the TBA are some of the best practices of successful foreign language teachers.
Gaming’s Influence on SLA

This annotated bibliography is a compilation of some of the sources I used in my artifact that centered on how gaming can affect second language acquisition (SLA). Some of the top researchers in this relatively new field of study are cited in multiple works that appear in this annotated bibliography. As I began my search for literature on this subject, I began with the websites of a few well-known authors in the field of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), namely Reinhardt, Sykes, Thorne, and Black.

Because I had never participated in digital gaming, and especially gaming for learning a foreign language (FL), I did not know exactly where to begin. I was also a little bit skeptical of gaming and its ability to assist in FL learning. I encountered an article written by Reinhardt (2013) that summed up many of my prejudices and skepticisms, and consequently refuted many of them. In this article, Reinhardt addresses the myths surrounding digital gaming and why these myths may be preventing teachers from finding effective ways of incorporating digital games into their curricula. He also discusses the great potential that games have for language learning and suggests that much more research must be done on how to implement effective games. This article not only assuaged many of my own fears about gaming and, in my mind, its inherit “laziness”, but it also showcased gaming in a different, more productive light. The author confronts many biases about digital gaming that might lead one to believe that they are either harmful, or simply a novelty. By doing so, he shows another, more positive, perspective to gaming and its power. After reading this article, I felt more confident about
this specific area of CALL. Once I was able to dispel many of my own biases, I became excited and interested in learning more about language development through games.

Using Reinhardt’s references as my springboard, I came across many more articles about gaming and its potential in FL teaching. One such article, written by Thorne and Black (2007), gave me more background information on second language uses of the Internet, Web environments, and online gaming. This article discusses existing research about virtual environments and gaming. An example the authors give is that of The Sims 2. This game is available in many languages, and though it is not designed for L2 purposes, the goal of the game is to carry out real-life tasks and activities. In this way, the game gives learners the opportunity to use the target language as a means to play the game. The article examines other games that could be incorporated into language learning. World of Warcraft (WoW) and Second Life are two games this article recommends for L2 environments. The authors state that previous research conducted on players of WoW recorded a significant amount of player dialogue between gamers from different countries. They label this communication as “…naturally occurring and unconstrained” (p. 141). I became interested in whether this type of gaming would be motivating for L2 students, so I began searching for literature on motivation and willingness to communicate (WTC) related to gaming.

Reinders and Wattana (2014) specifically address the effect of digital games on learners’ WTC. In this study, the authors had a group of English learners participate in a series of gaming sessions that had been specifically engineered to move them through certain tasks that would require different types of language use. These tasks would also require the learners to independently engage in communications with their peers. The
authors determined the WTC of the learners by giving them questionnaires at multiple stages in the study. The questionnaires were based on MacIntyre et al.’s (2001) WTC scale. The results of these questionnaires showed that before the gaming sessions, the participants reported having low levels of WTC and confidence and high levels of anxiety. After the gaming sessions, the participants reported feeling less anxiety, more confidence, and higher WTC. This article was intriguing to me because it showed specifically how digital gaming can encourage and motivate learners to interact in the L2.

As a continuation of my research on digital gaming and using the Web to facilitate SLA, I decided to visit the website of Julie Sykes to find even more information on this subject. I found an article on Sykes’ website about online virtual worlds, synthetic environments, and Web 2.0. This article was written by Sykes, Oskoz and Thorne (2008) and evaluates the way these tools affect SLA. In this particular article, the authors focus on much more than just gameplay and its implications for SLA. The first part of the article is focused on Web 2.0 (e.g., blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, etc.); however, I found the second half of the article more relevant to my topic because it discusses online virtual worlds, which include open social spaces, massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs) and synthetic immersive environments (SIEs). It explains the unique skills relative to pragmatics that players must master in order to successfully navigate these games. This implies that for language learning, MMOGs or SIEs might be useful in helping students become aware of the process of SLA, as it is a skill that builds on itself. SLA, like SIEs isn’t something that can be mastered, or “beat.” An advantage to language learning through SIEs is having an emotional connection and an authentic, low-risk place in which students can practice. This article helped me understand the specific advantages
of using SIEs in the FL classroom. After reading this article, I wanted to learn more about game-play studies that had been conducted on students recently.

**Hitosugi, Schmidt, and Hayashi (2014)** analyzed how gaming can be used to learn language. This article gives the results of two studies that used *Food Force* in language teaching. The studies were designed to measure vocabulary retention rates as well as learner affect. Participants in the study were given vocabulary pre-tests, post-tests, and delayed post-tests and were interviewed concerning learner affect. The studies showed that participants recalled vocabulary words from their delayed post-tests at the same rate as during their post-tests, even though the delayed post-tests were administered five weeks after students had finished the unit. The studies also showed that learners forgot vocabulary that they learned from a textbook significantly more than the vocabulary from the game. This article was effective in showing that games are not only engaging, but that they might be more effective than conventional teaching methods.

After reading many of these studies that showed the efficacy of digital gaming in SLA, I wanted to learn how to actually implement games in my own classroom. **Reinhardt, Warner and Lange (2014)** present a very interesting discussion on how to incorporate digital gaming into an already effective curriculum. The group studied in this article was a fifth semester L2 German class at the university level. The class was already based on an effective content-based curriculum, but lacked a gaming component. The authors determined that they would add a unit to the content-based curriculum that would be on digital gaming. Therefore, not only would the classroom be using the L2 to discuss

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5 *Food Force* is a UN sponsored adventure-style video game in which the player is an agent for the UNWFP fighting world hunger.
digital gaming, but as part of the unit they would also participate in some digital gaming and use their language abilities as they did so. This article was useful to me because it illustrated that using games in a FL classroom can be more than just a fun way to pass the time. If gaming is implemented thoughtfully and precisely, with a strong focus on the pedagogical goals of the class, it can be extremely effective in students’ SLA, no matter the language. After reading this article about the class of German students, I wanted to find a study similar, but about students learning Spanish.

**Holden and Sykes (2011)** write about augmented reality mobile games and how language teachers can use them to enhance language learning. The authors explore the benefits and drawbacks of using such games to foster language learning. The majority of this article draws on the authors’ experience with the game *Mentira*, which was implemented in a local neighborhood in the Southwest. The neighborhood, Los Griegos, is a town with rich history dating back about 300 years. The game enables university students to experience the local communities. Holden and Sykes found that many students were motivated to learn the language by using this game because it had a real-life historical aspect to it, rather than just being made up to facilitate language learning. Even after completing the game, students were motivated and excited to learn more about the history of *Los Griegos*. This game facilitated not only language learning, but also cultural competence and pragmatic awareness in the students using it for their class. This article helped me visualize using gaming in my own classroom because this type of gaming seems much more conducive to classroom learning than other games that would be more suitable for at-home practice. That being said, I wanted to continue to find
games to use for FL learning, whether used in school or at home, so I turned to articles on Digital Game-Based Learning (DGBL).

Neville (2010) discusses using three-dimensional digital game-based learning (3D-DGBL) environments to help students acquire a second language. This article focuses on examining characteristics of narrative, plot and story in 3D-DGBL games, as well as provides a design rubric to make 3D-DGBL gameplay more effective in SLA. Much of this article is about how narrative unfolds with each attempt players make to understand the game. The author mentions that teachers using 3D-DGBL games should be aware of the importance of narrative and how it can positively or negatively affect the player’s experience. For example, if a 3D-DGBL game were to be incorporated into a language class, students would essentially be able to become familiar with the real sociocultural aspects of the TL. This type of gaming is helpful for students to understand parts of the target culture before actually being immersed in it. Because of the strong narrative 3D-DGBL games have, this type of gameplay seems to connect with students’ willingness to learn the TL. After reading this article, I became interested in learning more about how gameplay influences student attitudes and motivation. I started to look for widely played games and how they affect language learners.

Peterson (2010) specifically addresses the use of massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) for language learning practice. This article spends some time explaining what MMORPGs are (i.e., large-scale network-based interactive games, such as World of Warcraft), and then discusses the ideas behind incorporating such games in the language learning process. The author then analyzes three studies that show that especially for intermediate and advanced learners, MMORPGs are motivating
and provide an excellent venue for meaningful language use. Like the many other articles on digital gaming I have read, the author discusses that although the current research is exploratory in nature, many different types of digital games can be implemented in FL classes. This article is useful in giving specific examples of how games (not necessarily designed for pedagogical purposes) can be beneficial in language learning. Because MMORPGs are virtual reality games, I wanted to take a closer look at more of these types of games and what they can add to FL learner inside or outside of the classroom.

Thorne, Black and Sykes (2009) examine not only the traditional use of technology in the L2 classroom, but also the use of technology outside the L2 classroom. Virtual Environments (VEs), Social Virtualities, MMOGs, and SIEs are discussed in depth in relation to L2 learning. Many of these games involve avatars and fantasy worlds in which students can participate. The authors discuss the importance of the synchronous elements of these games (e.g., chatting via writing or speaking), in which students can use the language in real time with others around the world. The article also discusses both the encouraging and potentially limiting factors of using VEs for L2 learning. A limitation present in gaming is that the form of communication in VEs may not transfer to everyday life, or lend itself well to “real” communicative skills. Although the research done on these VEs is limited and inconclusive, the information presented in this article is supportive of my hypothesis that gaming environments have a positive effect on motivation in L2 learners and consequently, SLA.

By reviewing this literature about gaming and its uses for L2 learners and teachers, I now have a better and broader understanding of how digital gaming (in many forms) affects SLA. As I continue my research into gaming for FL purposes, I hope to
attain clarity about which games will best suit my purposes as an SFL and ESL teacher. Although I had never had a reason to play or learn about “videogames” before, I now see the importance and potential influence of digital games in the FL context.
Neutral Spanish

As I began my search for literature about neutral Spanish, I started with the recommendation of my professor, Dr. Spicer-Escalante, to look at neutral Spanish through the lens of the telenovela. As I did this, I came across an article by Ahrens (2004) that examines different TV networks and how these networks are rated. In this article, the author discusses the Spanish television networks Telemundo and Univisión. According to the article, Telemundo started training all of its actors to modify their speech to a “neutral” Mexican accent. As a result of this speech-training program, the network’s ratings have been able to catch up slightly to Univisión, the U.S.’s more popular Spanish language channel. This change in Telemundo has occurred since the network was purchased by NBC, and Telemundo considers that it is, in a sense, “Americanizing” not “Mexicanizing” the speech patterns of the actors. The actors who are unable to modify their accents are often dropped from telenovelas. After reading this short article, I realized that neutral Spanish is a subjective term and it is applied not only to telenovelas. It can indeed be applied to Spanish of all sorts. I began searching for literature that would help me understand what neutral Spanish is, not only in the field of TV, but also according to scholars.

I came across an article titled, “Neutral Spanish: Is it necessary? Does it exist?” by De las Cuevas (2003). This article gives a brief history of neutral Spanish and the changes it has gone through in the past decades. It discusses the importance of neutral Spanish today in the areas of commerce and media. De las Cuevas defines Spanish more in terms of what it is not, rather than what it is. His definition relies heavily on the fact that neutral Spanish cannot contain slang, incorrect grammar, and/or informality. He also
questions if its existence is important enough to call it a “type” of Spanish. However, he raises a good point in the article: Why not use neutral Spanish for all goods and products exported from various countries? This would save on effort and cost of revising translations for specific countries. The article compares and contrasts the Spanish of many Spanish-speaking countries, but it has a specific focus on the Spanish of Argentina and Spain. This article shed light on many different aspects of neutral Spanish, but I was still eager to learn more about this elusive subject, so I continued to search for variations of Spanish and how they do or do not work together to make a neutral Spanish.

I found a book written by Stewart (1999) that focuses on specific similarities and differences of Spanish in regards to time period and popular culture. It illustrates the variations and changes in the Spanish language from decade to decade and country to country. The book specifically discusses the influence of more modern Spanish in Spain, Latin America, the United States, and the rest of the world. Although it was written in the late nineties, much of the content about Spanish in specific countries remains relevant. Chapter one discusses Spanish in the context of its status as one of the dominant languages in the world. It examines Spanish as a global language, and what that means for both L1 and L2 speakers of the language. The author states that Spanish is much more widely taught than any other language in the United States and that we should capitalize on that by teaching a type of Spanish understandable by all. It gave me perspective as to why a ‘standard’ might be necessary in order to teach students to communicate with any Spanish speaker. In chapter two, the author goes into detail about this standardization of Spanish. She discusses prescriptive and descriptive attitudes toward Spanish, which means (respectively) a focus on the rules of the language versus a focus on the way the
language is actually used in every day contexts. The standardization of Spanish is not confined to the media or marketplace. She also writes about the standardization of Spanish in science, technology, politics, and public administration. This book was a great resource for me to better understand the many uses of Spanish, and how much neutral Spanish plays into specific purposes of everyday life. After reading chapters from this book, I decided to take a deeper look into the Spanish being used by millions of people, both L1 and L2 speakers, throughout the world. The following article gave me a view of Spanish in the arena of video games.

An article by Carlson and Corliss (2011) discusses the language of video games in which the authors use examples in multiple languages, one of them being Spanish. The authors make the argument that the media with which we interact (which is often designed with economic or political motives) helps determines our self-identity and viewpoint of the world. The authors also discuss how video game producers hire people to translate and localize products so that games will be marketable in other countries. They claim that localization attempts to set a balance between maintaining the foreign flavor and keeping the game functional for the variety of audiences.

While this article focuses mostly on video games, it outlines the principles of media localization in general and mentions Spanish as an example. While some consider localization and globalization a threat to cultural differences, others consider them the catalyst that will lead to the preservation of these differences. This article adds theoretical background to the reasoning behind modifying language and cultural content for economic purposes. Because the article discussed localization having certain
consequences, I decided to further investigate to see if localization was synonymous for ‘stereotyping’ in this context.

I found an article by Astroff (1988) about the stereotyping of Latinos and their respective buying market as seen by companies in the U.S. This article addresses the localization of Spanish and reveals that it is indeed a process driven by stereotypes. Although the article was written many years ago, it gave me insight into a time when the Latino population wasn’t visible to advertising companies. According to the author, this invisibility of the Latino buyer is due to companies’ ignorance of Latino value and identity. On the whole, the companies misunderstand the Latino market in the U.S. As the business world has come to know of the economic power of Latino consumers, it has attempted to market towards them; however, their methods of reaching Latinos are based on a very stereotypical version of what it means to be Latino. They often use one image of what it means to be Latino to generically appeal to the entire audience.

This article gives an outline of common stereotypes associated with different types of Latinos, how these stereotypes have been modified (but not eliminated) in order to target one neutral audience, what social constructs lie behind these stereotypes (including the faulty assumption that Spanish speakers cannot understand different dialects), and generally how Hispanics have been used and represented inaccurately for economic purposes. This article was interesting to me because it showed how most companies choose to focus on neutral Spanish, though it actually may inaccurately represent the Latino world at large. This article brought my attention back to the role of neutral Spanish in the media. After reading this, I wanted to bring the focus of my
research on neutral Spanish back to what was important to me: the teaching of Spanish as a second/foreign language.

**Fonseca-Mora and García-Barroso (2010)** consider how Spanish in the media motivates students to learn Spanish as a second language. The authors note that because certain television shows, products, and videogames are available only in Spanish, students may be motivated to learn Spanish. The article also analyzes how mass media in Spanish is creating a link between mainstream American culture and Latino culture. Students see these media and are breaking down some of the stereotypes they originally had about Latinos, or Spanish speakers in general. Finally, the article showcases how media published in Spanish fosters better self-esteem among Latinos. The authors explain that the reading and writing competencies of Spanish speakers are acknowledged as an asset within Spanish media, and by embracing these capabilities, Latinos feel valued.

Previous articles I read had not mentioned the impact of neutral Spanish in the media as positive for Spanish speakers, but this article highlights the benefits neutral Spanish in the media has upon this population. This article helped me understand why neutral Spanish is important in the lives of the Hispanic population, as well as why it might motivate L2 Spanish learning students to study Spanish as a second language.

By reading and reviewing some of the literature regarding neutral Spanish, I now have a clearer understanding of this subject and how to implement this knowledge into my teaching. Although many views and opinions exist on the topic of neutral Spanish, I have come away from my research with an understanding of why it exists, the stereotypes it sometimes holds, and its importance in my teaching. Some of this research informs my teaching because I now want to implement different types of Spanish media in my
classroom. This may be in the form of TV news and advertisements, *telenovelas*, and/or videogames. Previous to reading these articles and book chapters, I would not have thought these types of media would be appropriate for a second language classroom. However, I now see the benefits of implementing them in my classroom. Although my research is not fully complete on neutral Spanish, I have a start from which I can springboard into learning more about this subject.
LOOKING FORWARD

Having many differentiated experiences as a FL teacher has helped me realize what I want to teach and how I want to do it. I am looking forward to continuing my journey of teaching ESL and SFL to adolescent students. Although I thoroughly enjoyed my time as a graduate instructor of Spanish at USU, I find that my place is in public education, and specifically in the secondary sector. I am excited to face the challenging opportunities ahead of me in this field. By attending conferences, staying abreast of current research, and spending time in Spanish-speaking countries, I will continue to develop myself as a language educator. I would like to be able to become competent enough in language teaching that I could teach my peers and colleagues what I know about the CLT approach, and how I implement it in my classroom.

I currently have a special interest in increasing the academic achievement, biliteracy, and cultural competence of ESL students. I hope that I will be able to impress the importance of home language literacy upon those with whom I work in order to make this a reality. In the future, after having taught for some years, I could see myself pursuing a doctorate degree in bilingual education with a focus on literacy. I would like to disseminate information at the community, district, or state level about L1 proficiency facilitating L2 academic achievement. This has become vitally important to me because I currently see ESL students facing hurdles that might be avoided by implementing basic literacy in the L1 at a young age. I would love to end my career teaching FL teachers how to teach, as those teachers have been priceless to me in my life. At the moment, however, I am very content with teaching ESL and SFL to secondary education students.
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