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Making Connections Across Language Barriers

by

Aaron Joses Salgado

A portfolio submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

Approved:

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Logan, Utah

2017

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this portfolio to my brother, Evan Arthur Salgado. May the way I spend my life, and the work that I produce always reflect your influence and love for me. To emulate your positivity regardless of the surroundings is my life goal. I love you.

## ABSTRACT

## Making Connections Across Language Barriers

by

Aaron J. Salgado: Master of Second Language Teaching  
Utah State University, 2017

Major Professor: Dr. Karin deJonge-Kannan

Department: Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies

This compilation of academic papers is a portfolio designed to invite the reader to explore the author's beliefs and ideas concerning effective second language learning and teaching. Divided into three main parts, this portfolio addresses:

1. expressing the author's teaching philosophy while putting his position into the context from which it formed,
2. exploring the research perspectives that drive the author to continue participating in this academic field,
3. and chronicling the process of studying the academic material that inspired the previous two sections.

Major topics include a macro view of the U.S. government's and its education system's dance together over time, the author's resulting opinion on modern education paradigms, the pragmatics of having to refuse something, challenges for language learners who write in a second language, and a look at the changing conception of literacy due to technology.

(119 pages)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Due to a mixture of elation and gratitude, I am compelled to acknowledge the contributions of some important people without whom this finished product could not have come to fruition. Thank you Doctor deJonge-Kannan, you have been both a great boon to my ambition and the perfect model of a true mentor. Your contributions to my professional life could never be undervalued. I must resign myself to paying forward the coaching that I received since I could never pay it back to you. Thank you Doctor Thoms, it seemed as though every word you said was to inspire greater ambition in me and to help me to understand and to navigate the world of academia better than the last time I had seen you. Doctor Spicer-Escalante, thank you. I felt that with you on my side I could overcome any obstacle, even the insurmountable obstacle course of bureaucracy. When you and Kathy spent hours to maximize our scholarship funds, I knew that you are no ordinary mentor. I hope to live up to the examples set by my committee members.

I am grateful towards my mother who I suspect earned a PhD primarily to continue to inspire me to keep going and to become the best me that I can become. My wife and children's support was crucial at far more junctures than to which I care to admit. There have been too many colleagues to mention each by name, especially since each has helped me in such unique and personal ways. I will mention three -- Alex, I-Chiao, and Marina -- who I met on the first day and have stuck with me through it all. I do not wish to imagine what my experience would have been without the wonderful people that surrounded me. I wonder if any other program could have offered to me the same caliber of mentors and colleagues. I truly thank each of you for investing in me.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACTFL = American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

AYP = Adequate Yearly Progress

BIE = Bureau of Indian Education

CLT = Communicative Language Teaching

CV = Curriculum Vitae

FL = Foreign Language

GRE = Graduate Record Examinations

ITESOL = Intermountain Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

L1 = First Language / Native Language

L2 = Second Language

MLA = Modern Language Association

SATS = Self-Assessment of Teaching Statement

SLA = Second Language Acquisition

TexLER = Texas Language Education Research

USU = Utah State University

ZPD = Zone of Proximal Development

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## INTRODUCTION

This portfolio consists of a portion of my work produced throughout my degree program in the Master of Second Language Teaching program (MSLT) at Utah State University. My portfolio contains two main themes that frame all its parts, reflecting my interests and passions. The two themes are: recognizing that the beauties and downfalls of historic learning/teaching should inform educators' steps forward, and focusing on the purpose of learning languages, which is to make connections across language barriers, while making pedagogical decisions. While those two themes are not confined to only one section each, I have divided my portfolio into three sections as I explore both themes.

The sections are:

- 1) my teaching perspectives;
- 2) my research perspectives;
- 3) and annotated bibliographies of my research.

## TEACHING PERSPECTIVES

### Apprenticeship of Observation

I view my early experience in education and in languages as far from unique. I grew up in and around Los Angeles, California, attended public schools with large student bodies, and remained monolingual while surrounded by Hispanic bilinguals. I was unable to stand out as a prodigy of any of the great variety of interests and sports in which I participated. Baseball, singing, soccer, drawing, football, trumpet, track, dancing, comedy, cross country, volleyball, science, basketball, math, writing, reading, painting, hopscotch, red rover – you name it, I was decent, far from horrible and far from impressive. That is, until I discovered languages.

To set the scene, I was a pubescent 9<sup>th</sup> grader, still far from reaching 100 pounds, and still shorter than all the girls that I thought were cute. I found myself realizing that I had taken for granted the relative comfort of middle school where most of my fellow students looked about as awkward as I did, but high school deprived me of such safety. Seemingly everyone but me had moved on from transitional to transformed. I started the typical Spanish 1 class with no linguistic background, despite being half Mexican. The only thing that I did bring, as a linguistic head start, was that my last name is Salgado and that if my grandfather ever said ‘la guitarra,’ I knew that I would soon be tickled as he held me sideways.

None of my personal experience would serve me in the rigors of high school-level Spanish classes. Being orientated to how my school year would be structured, I felt deep within me that my mediocracy would finally come to an end within the windowless four cinderblock-walls of my high school Spanish classroom. All the signs were present that learning would take place; the Spanish alphabet lining the walls, maracas hanging from

strings behind the teacher's desk, and posters that I couldn't decipher. How could success and excellence not follow in such a setting?

I can confidently report that my mediocracy was not maintained, though not as I predicted, as I failed the first and only class in all my life, Spanish 1. It turns out that I was not able to keep up with the memorization lists. When I received my Spanish, multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank test, I apparently blundered when I reported to the teacher that I could see erased answers from someone who had mistakenly not used the answer sheet provided, instead of copying the answers onto my own answer sheet first. I had instead decided to demonstrate the amount of linguistic competence developed throughout the class thus far. Embarrassingly, an unimpressive score would have been a significant improvement from the resulting grade.

With a bit of hindsight, I can tell that I was not cut out for lectures devoid of meaning, nor for endless drilling without any context. With that hindsight, I wonder who is cut out for such learning environments? If there are those who are suited to such things, I would never wish them upon those people. Though this experience provided an initial emotional barrier to language learning, I was later afforded a critical experience, living abroad, for my future pedagogical decisions. I would now sincerely thank that high school teacher for tutoring me in language teaching, as it would be a foundation in my affinity to pursue meaningful learning and teaching.

Perhaps my teacher spoke great words of wisdom on deaf ears, perhaps my teacher held a vast wealth of explanatory tricks, cultural tidbits, or even an impressive oral proficiency. Whatever my teacher had to offer, there was nothing transferred from instructor to the intimidated student except intimidation and failure. I later had

opportunities to make meaningful connections with people across linguistic and cultural boundaries. With a life-impacting goal of living in Uruguay for a few years and intrinsic motivation, I would clear the hurdles of emotional aversions to Spanish developed in high school, and a self-perceived natural lack of linguistic competence. My linguistic development was directly related to the perceived meaning behind its development.

I spent two months role playing situations that I would encounter in preparation of living in a Spanish-speaking environment. Each activity was based on anticipation and was clearly relevant to me on the eve of my departure. Once I had constructed a certain level of competence and after arriving, it became almost impossible to not create bonds, to not be fascinated with cultural differences; it was almost impossible to not love the common human ties that culture nor language can hide. Upon my return from Uruguay, I changed my undergrad major so that I could dedicate my career to helping others to make such discoveries on their own, through language teaching. Due to my higher education, I believe in there being certain key components for linguistic and cultural explorations. Motivation and meaning are key to linguistic development, and there are ways that a language teacher can either support or undermine both motivation and meaning. As I have taught adult students at multiple universities, I have shaped my teaching techniques to support both meaning and motivation.

My earliest experience teaching at a university came as I transitioned from university tutor to adjunct faculty. I was introduced to the concept of pedagogical freedom as I gleefully labored to develop my own syllabus and every other course material that would be used until final grades were submitted. In a moment of cosmic irony, the first class that I would teach would be the very one that had conquered the

awkward pubescent version of me. I was to teach the entry-level Spanish course only not at the high school level.

With individualized culture projects, one-on-one interviews in Spanish, and assessments void of multiple choice, I was well equipped for my first semester of teaching. I was sure to meet with each student to discuss their personal interests for learning Spanish and gave students many opportunities to prove competence in meaningful ways. I almost became overwhelmed with joy when students would consistently ask me for an historical explanation for modern linguistic patterns (explained in English). Furthermore, colleagues later reported that the students coming from my class were very well prepared and motivated, but plagued my colleagues with questions about historical linguistic development. I then came to hold a false unpublicized conclusion, that I may have figured it all out. Though it would be dramatic and entertaining to say that my dreams were shattered by the student reviews at the end of the semester, the students actually seemed to agree with my private conclusion.

I would teach six semesters before my wife would finish her degree. We then moved on to accomplish the next steps, the master and doctoral programs. As I studied my students' reviews of my Spanish courses, I found one consistent thread that seemed too thin to notice until I had more evaluations to review. The only consistent critique was that students wanted more practice talking in Spanish. Despite making small adjustments according to previous student critiques, the 'lack of speaking Spanish' comment by at least one student persisted each semester. Never had I imagined that Spanish could be taught to adult entry-level students in Spanish – until I started the Master's of Foreign Language Teaching at Utah State University.



My eyes were opened to a previously unconscious fact; that learning a foreign language involves much more than learning a linguistic system of rules and patterns. As I learned of the different aspects involved, I saw how my adaptations addressed many, but the one that I left underdeveloped was the very one of which students were asking more, the development of verbal communicative competence. Learning these early lessons gave me direction and a sense of purpose in studying throughout this program. The culminating lesson learned from my experiences is that a language, consisting of many dimensions, cannot be properly acquired by ignoring one of its dimensions.

As a student in the MSLT program, I recently took a Russian 1010 course in order to observe the true beginner learner (myself and my classmates). As a language teacher, I was reminded of how stress and anxiety negatively affect the acquisition process (e.g., students being intimidated by upcoming assessments or the inability to detect improvement). Of course each student has a life outside of my class and at different times a particular student may be dealing with situations outside of my sphere of influence. As a true beginner of Russian, I would be subject to both outside and classroom stress and anxiety. It did not take too long before I both experienced and observed from the student perspective what I had seen as the teacher.

From my Russian 1010 journal that I privately kept, I illustrated my first frustration, “From the get go, I could just barely keep up with the Russian, but I did keep up and was able to crawl through the activities” (Entry after 1<sup>st</sup> day of class). I consistently maintained both a sense of accomplishment by surviving, and a sense of frustration. It was enlightening to re-live the struggles and mixed emotions of learning a language from scratch. Naturally, students in class sat near those that were comparably

competent (or incompetent). Within a few class hours, I reported early classroom dynamics by noting that “despite hours of studying, I gained virtually no confidence. It is evident to me that the gap in language ability between students with previous experience and my absolute beginner status has me a bit competitive and slightly bitter about my ‘disadvantage.’” Being aware of how my personality affected my language learning experience, I was able to turn around my sour experience in understanding that the class and instructor were actually very supportive and patient.

I love to learn languages, yet I intimidated myself into being self-conscious and anxious in class. Truly, motivation is as powerful as it is fickle as later I recorded, “I find myself practicing the very basics of the language during my bus ride to campus. I use the basic greetings as often as the occasion permits and may have convinced a few people to consider taking a Russian class in the future” stemming from my change in attitude. Outside factors played a large role in my study habits during a portion of the semester. Soon, I found myself cutting down on my regimented study time in order to work on PhD application materials, apply for full-time positions, study for the GRE, work on the class that I was teaching, work on my graduate coursework, a few side projects to strengthen my CV, etc. As I submitted the applications, took the GRE, and finished side projects, I happily returned to my Russian studies. Not that I was surprised, but it was evident that “not studying for a while makes a big difference that does not disappear after a few cram sessions” (from the entry after I received an embarrassingly low test score).

Though a whole semester’s worth of journaling provides a plethora of insights, I recorded the most impactful to my teaching here. I have since connected with my students well as I shared with them candidly my struggles with Russian 1010, fostering

cooperation over competition. Warning students of the effects of a lack of consistency was received as sincere and relevant instead of a well-rehearsed lecture or sermon that is easy to ignore. In observing teachers and students and in participating as teacher and as student, I have reached the original intentions of these endeavors, to connect research, theory, my personal experiences, and good ideas with practical application. I must continue to refine myself as a language educator, but I am sure that improving will continue to be a passion and a delight.

### Professional Environment

I desire to build a career within the professional environment of academia. As such, I present each aspect of this portfolio as relevant to higher education and adult-learner contexts. My intended professional environment is post-secondary institutions within the United States. Such a context generally includes a certain level of technological resources available for teaching. Though there are plenty of exceptions to the expected classroom demographics, many of the deviances can be predicted. If minors are allowed to participate in the class, they are expected to perform at an adult level. Students with disabilities may request accommodations, but the rigors of course material should not be compromised. Most students are speakers of English as their first language, but the many who speak English as a second language have already proven a certain level of proficiency in order to gain admission. Further, specific admission requirements and course prerequisites help to provide reasonable stability for classroom expectations and goals. Though I focus on learners of Spanish as a second language, these principles and concepts are widely applicable across second language learning.

## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

I spent my early years dreaming of archeology, marine biology, aviation, and just about any other profession that seem to catch the eye of society's youngest dreamers. The only stipulation that remained constant in my periodic dream careers is that I did not hold an interest in public attention. Though I was no recluse, I had never felt any excitement from having all eyes on me. Maybe there can be some sort of psychological link to my middle of five children upbringing that gave me comfort in being able to not draw attention to myself. I seemed destined to do anything but acting, running for political office, or teaching.

I left the comfort of Southern California's beaches, amusement parks, and population to live abroad for a few years. During that time abroad, I found myself in a different world and realized that I had been blissfully living in only one culture. While I had been happy before I left Sycamore beach and Disney Land, I was also ignorant of all the world's diversities.

When I first found myself in a conversation with a Uruguayan local, I struggled for a moment to choke out a phrase in Spanish. After a rather effortless defeat, I decided to finish my broken sentence in English. From personal experience in California, Spanish speakers seemed to always speak at least a little bit of English, understood at least a little bit of English, or at least pretended to do both. To my utter shock, this Uruguayan Gaucho had never heard a word of English and felt no obligation to pretend to understand nor to even want to understand.

In that moment, I began to see that my limiting monolingualism had slyly shut countless doors of opportunity and discovery. If I discovered such barriers and wanted to

conquer them, then there must be others who come to similar conclusions and who come to the resolve of learning new perspectives through language and culture studies as well. I would help them, as a teacher, to overcome such limits. I, then gladly, put away any aversion to public attention necessary to help others open as many doors as possible through education. Since then, I have dedicated my major, minor, and master degree to foreign language education. My philosophy is the result of personal experience, years of teaching Spanish at universities, and challenges and demands that such positions require, research, course studies, and guidance from trusted mentors.

I map my philosophy by principles that I believe lead students to be able to make connections that were previously unattainable. As I teach in a classroom setting, these principles must be clearly defined, embedded from syllabus to each lesson plan and from assessments to each student-teacher interaction. As for my guiding principles, I will define the fundamental role of a student, the fundamental role of a teacher, the nature of classroom activities, and the big picture goals of language instruction and learning.

The teacher's role in the classroom

As I started my academic career in education, both as a student and as an educator, I maintained a clear vision of the role of the student in a classroom. Despite my experience in public schools, where “teachers have traditionally placed themselves at the center of the classroom action,” (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001, pp. 6-7), I conclude that students should be the driving force of learning. They are the ones that need more practice and they are the purpose for teachers to come to class. If students do not have a say in classroom instruction then “instructors are authoritative knowledge transmitters, the students become their passive audience, receptive vessels” (Lee &

VanPatten, 2003, p. 6). Language learners must be at the forefront of application, as they bring unique goals and seek various perspectives. In the place of listening to hour-long exclusively grammar-based lectures, students should spend class time trying out the language and discovering what they can and cannot do so far. They should be provided time for active practice and to work towards building individually relevant competence. The balance of teacher-centered time and student output should be carefully considered according to the cultural expectations of the educational setting, the learners' current cognitive abilities, and the learners' linguistic capabilities. This balance, wherever it is judged to rest, will directly affect the amount and character of teacher talk and learner talk.

Key aspects of learner talk in a second language (L2) classroom have been discovered as important pieces of the learner's language competence. One of them is the silent period during which "a complete beginner [is] 'generally silent'" (Ellis, 2012, p. 161) while making sense of the initial language input. This period is characterized by self-talk (often times manifested as the learner is rehearsing a word or phrase before using it for others to hear) that consists of mostly formulaic speech which is "a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other meaning elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated" (Wray, 2000, p. 1). This is a very important part of some learners' linguistic progression but the caution is to guard against the teacher taking so much of the spotlight of classroom activity that students would be largely confined to silence and self-talk throughout the whole course of study.

Discovering through study and practice that the spotlight (if there should be any at all) should focus on the students rather than on the teacher was a personal comfort to me.

I had previously come to the conclusion that attention on me would not deter me from teaching. At that moment of resolution, I only had examples of purely lecture-based instruction. Most can readily shudder from personal memories of teachers who were more convinced than anyone else that what they knew was the most relevant information in the world. Teachers should be conscious about their impact on the learning environment and “as we all know, good teachers are wonderful and bad teachers are not and may even do damage to a student’s progress” (Blake, 2013, p. 137). An invaluable mentor of mine told me that “a good teacher loves students’ voices more than her/his own voice.”

Presentation-based instruction is not the adversary of all learning, devoid of any merit whatsoever. Rather, it should be one of many tools used in pedagogical decisions, balanced to provide ample output opportunities for the language learner, and designed to be relevant input for the acquisition process. Language, at its very foundation, is purposed to make connections. Students study languages to make connections that are otherwise out of reach. The classroom environment, and additionally the students’ role, need to be based on the goal of “getting to know other people and learning about new cultures through those personal connections” (Ballman et al., 2001, p. 9). If we lose sight of this, “all action and interaction as well as all explanations, are dictated by the instructor” (Lee & VanPatten, 2003, p. 8) and when the dust settles, this imbalance is what decontextualizes language learning. Teacher-centered moments are a vital tool for building class structure, explaining activity directions, and other useful objectives. I simply advocate balance over extremes.



### The student's role in the classroom

Students need time putting the target language to use. The degree of knowledge possessed by the teacher does not influence the degree of need for language practice. Here is an example of the proper place for teacher wisdom in a class. In an introductory Spanish course, a history major–student asked me for some historical context in order to understand general characteristics of the language. A moment of insight during office hours afforded her understanding as to how a medieval war and an emphasis on oral-based-entertainment aided in the solidified highly phonetic aspects of the modern Spanish language. This was of great personal benefit to her, yet I hesitate to say that such explanations would benefit all students of any age. Wisdom and metalinguistic knowledge have value, but their role is not the center stage position, nor the goal of instruction.

A student-centered classroom environment should be “dynamic, constantly changing, in part at least because of the part played by learners in helping to construct and reconstruct” (Ellis, 2012, p. 192) the class’ culture. The dynamic aspect of a class shines as each student contributes to the learning environment. Asking the teacher to step down from a soap box may be difficult enough, but asking students to step up their contributions to the class can prove to be even more challenging. Teaching students to be active learners is a crucial element to this equation; “learners cannot simply listen to input, [but they] must be active conversational participants who interact and negotiate the type of input they receive in order to acquire language” (Shrum & Glisan, 2016, p. 22). To encourage interaction, care must be taken to design “teacher-led but not teacher-dominated discourse” to structure student output opportunities (Hughes, 1998, p. 189). It

may take a bit of effort to provide a classroom environment conducive to participation from language learners, but it is more than just a good idea, it is central to fostering communicative competence.

Students need to understand that the added expectation of their participation is more responsibility than that to which they are accustomed. Students should be expected to contribute their goals and interests to shape a portion of classroom activities. They should learn to talk about their personal hobbies and goals for the target language. The goal is to create an air of discovery about the language classroom.

A crucial opportunity comes along with L2 learning, the opportunity to see the world in a different light. During an interview for a news article (Eaton, 2014), Wade said

Learning a new language is not just the ability to speak a language and communicate. It is the ability to see everything more deeply, to see more, to hear different sounds that you have never heard before, to notice sights that you have never seen before and to hear voices that you have never heard before and to have perspectives that you would never have known existed...Learning a language is a strategy for breaking down barriers of all kinds. It is potentially transformative. (p. 5)

If students are passive receptors, the potential transformation referred to by Wade will be stifled. Conversely, the active participation of students in discovering cultural differences can be mentored, modeled, and coached (Hammer, & Swaffar, 2012). Culture is part of the teaching and learning standards called the Five C's: communicating; cultures; connections; comparisons; communities (Weldon & Trautmann, 2003). Culture is included in the standards of language learning since it is core in determining how to communicate (Cuesta & Ainciburu, 2015). An embarrassingly recent incident that illustrates how culture effects communication is when I used a certain phrase causing me to unwittingly call a colleague of mine 'hot' in Spanish when I innocently intended to

compliment his hair. A simple attempt to casually give a compliment turned into a potentially awkward situation since the cultural norms of who I was talking with do not readily accept a man calling another man 'hot' especially not when he was standing next to his wife.

My perfect sentence structure and clear pronunciation were not enough when my understanding of the cultural perception of that certain phrase was lacking; in that moment I played the role of a "fluent fool" or someone who lacks in understanding of context rather than not understanding linguistic forms (Bennett, 1997, p. 16). I had passively learned that phrase and had assumed that I understood its implications.

Successful language learners are independent and motivated learners, they are learners of cultures and proficient in the varying rules of cultural engagement (Westhoff, 1996).

Successful language learning environments cultivate ambition within the learners, they provide a welcoming space for language acquisition to occur.

#### Classroom Activities and Perspectives

It is not enough to call for high classroom standards without aiding in mapping out the new model. I will now give some guiding principles and insights to what I feel to be the best use of class time. Class time should be comprised of two important elements,

- effective and productive activities that require students to practice things that are easily applicable to them; and
- big picture views that help students and teachers work together as a team towards long-term goals.

First, the type of activity can either deprive students of language learning or enrich their current competence. To expound on the first element which puts value on the

applicability of instruction, “there is NO room for mechanical practice that is devoid of meaning” (Shrum & Glisan, 2016, p. 36). I do believe that practice is essential. What I see to be the danger in mechanical practice is the tendency to leave behind any meaning, or to lose sight of the original intended meaning of the practice. While Shrum and Glisan emphasize the amount of room for such practice, I desire to expound on the type of practice. Practice should, most importantly, be full of meaning. Such practice can be fostered well by task-based activities (TBA). Lee (2000) defines task-based activities as an

activity or exercise that has an objective attainable only by the interaction among participants, a mechanism for structuring and sequencing interaction, and a focus on meaning exchange; and a language learning endeavor that requires learners to comprehend, manipulate, and/or produce the target language as they perform some set of work plans. (p. 32)

Here is an example of what I have done in the classroom with Internet-based platforms, inspired by a presentation at the ITESOL conference by two colleges of mine, Kataw and Abell (2015). They taught an interactive approach to writing activities by utilizing social media platforms already relevant to students’ lives as a means for target language communication. My activity’s objective was to make an opinion-based post on a Spanish vacation website.

The students worked together in small groups to comprehend the original posts that L1 Spanish speakers wrote, they drafted their texts to produce their comments, which were well within the capabilities of early language learners of Spanish, while stretching each student to produce a level of language output just above what they could do on their own. Group work facilitated the interpersonal target language interactions throughout the various steps. This activity was easily applicable to the adult students as they either

already give their opinions on web-based platforms or like all human beings who communicate, give their opinions in other venues of communication.

In accordance with affording students their human nature, interests, and desires, language play also should have a place in the classroom. Even the most dedicated professional should be able to unwind and to enjoy something that is considered relaxing. When a human being connects with someone about the nail-biting season finale of their favorite show, shoots hoops with their buddies, or reads the latest book of the trendiest book series, language is at play. Incorporating humor into the classroom environment through the target language can lead to more interpersonal interaction helping students to be “able to assume a different agency, and to develop their capacity for creativity and imagination” (Forman, 2011, p. 561) all within the L2. Students of a language should learn how to enjoy life through that language as well. I believe that enjoyable facets of language use inspire intrinsic motivation to further language learning.

Just as important as learning to value languages, to complete tasks, and to make enjoyable human connections is that students and teacher maintain a big picture view of their combined efforts. I maintain five aspects that help me to frame the previous fundamentals of my teaching philosophy, on which I will discuss.

*1) A big picture view of classroom activities*

I understand the affinity the many movie goers, TV watchers, book worms, and comic-con enthusiasts cling to as they fight for the importance of suspense (despite the ever greater predictability in popular western entertainment). When it comes to task-based activities, however, suspense is not always what students need. Giving students a big picture view of the purpose of an activity will engage the “students who approach

classroom tasks with a genuine desire” to perform with understanding (Murdock & Anderman, 2006, p. 130). Task-based activities should be easily connected to students’ personal goals, and clearly relate to their linguistic ambitions.

Applicable activities seem to be a novel concept to some students and language teachers with students and language teachers accustomed to “long grammar explanations, verb conjugations, and vocabulary lists, as well as mechanical drills, repetitions, and sentence transformation exercises” (Spicer-Escalante & deJonge-Kannan, 2014, p. 2438). While Spicer-Escalante and deJonge-Kannan (2014) trained international language teachers many of the same principles that I also advocate, “most participants were not able to distance themselves from lecturing and providing long explanations of vocabulary and grammar concepts” (p. 2441). Because of this natural resistance, regular maintenance of this big picture view is at times very necessary while at other times it is more readily accepted by the class.

Two disconnected realities influence students in our language classes. The reality that there is a demand for “an individual who combines an expertise in a marketable skill with knowledge of a foreign language” (Primeau, 1979, p. 122) is one of the two. The reality that students prefer “traditional methods of preparing for the test” (Pan, 2014, p. 19) is the other, and the two commonly at odds. I do not go as far as to say that all standardized testing inhibits classroom learning, yet the pressure of test scores often creates a culture that resists building individually practical linguistic competence.

It seems to me astonishing that there is resistance to spending class time getting students ready “to perform real-life tasks in scenarios that they are likely to encounter in their personal and professional lives” (Spicer-Escalante & deJonge-Kannan, 2014, p.

2438), yet such resistance seems to be institutionalized by standardized tests that put little emphasis, if any, on applicable language competence. An exception is ACTFL's Oral Proficiency Interview, which does focus on applicable and individually relevant language competence and may well serve as a model for language tests designed to serve the role of standardized summative assessments. Whether the tests outside of the individual teacher's control distracts from building actual competencies or not, it is the teacher's responsibility to maintain the big picture view that each activity is designed to practice actual communication. Passing a test requirement is an artificial and extrinsic motivation to learn languages, while making meaningful connections is a lasting motivation.

I would see the ideal summative assessment to be one that relates to the activities in class, one that requires original output, and that relates to the goals of the students. Summative assessments in general should relate "to a language-use and language meaning orientation" (Byrnes, 2002, p. 420). When the language teacher is afforded the autonomy to develop course specific assessments, what actually happens during class should be noted at the end of the class meeting, and taken into consideration for the corresponding assessment. Instruction should inform assessment, and assessment should inform instruction. Completing a task, such as a student teaching other students their favorite hobby (ballroom dancing, origami figures, how to play the violin, etc.) and other such assessments communicate to the students the practical value of the skills that they practice during class time. Transparently relevant activities and assessments help students to understand the big picture view of each moment of class.

## 2) A big picture view of developing skills

A great tool, or at least a great source of inspiration to help students gauge their linguistic development is the Can Do Statements by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (2015). It is prudent to show students all the things that they will learn, and let them mark off things that they learn to do. Language learning, perhaps more so than many other subjects, does not lend itself to frequent ‘lightbulb’ moments when students realize that they have built upon their communicative competence. Language acquisition is a slow and complicated process for most learners (Lee & VanPatten, 2003).

Especially with adult students, showing them that their hard work yields benefits can make a positive difference in the classroom, and is a worthy use of classroom time. Students must maintain a big picture view that their efforts in class are for “the use of the target language for real-world purposes” (Spicer-Escalante & deJonge-Kannan, 2014, p. 2442), and that it takes time to be able to do a portion of what they are capable of doing in their first language (L1). This is a particular stumbling block for adults who are accustomed to being proficient communicators and, in a sense, give up their cherished autonomy in order to work on a L2. The Can Do Statements can be easily accessed and printed, so that students can track their gains, marking what they have done in class, what they feel they could do with help or a sympathetic target language speaker, and what they can do on their own. The march is long, whether language learners track it or not, but by tracking it, novice learners avoid a morale-killing pitfall of perceived stagnant competency.



Students have the natural tendency to focus their time on what teachers keep track of. Most often what teachers track constitutes a portion of the grade submitted. If liberty is afforded for the teacher to influence assessments, then the Can Do Statements could be a practical tool to help assess student progress. All class assessments should be designed “to motivate the student to become as proficient as possible in the skills that are” most relevant to their goals (Hall, 1993, p. 1). Knowing that each component of class time is a part of the individual’s goal will contribute to language learning.

### 3) A big picture view of participation and morale

In a language classroom that provides ample target language input, there is a high potential for intake. Input is all the target language presented, while *intake* is everything that does not go over the student’s head or otherwise escapes the learner’s attention. If the gap between volume of input and the amount of intake widens too much, a serious risk to learner engagement arises. The intake part of hearing language input is dependent on a crucial factor: “*the learner must be able to understand most of what the speaker (or writer) is saying if acquisition is to happen*” (Lee & VanPatten, 2003, p. 26). Students are supposed to wrestle with their current limitations. But the dark side to this reality is that adult language learners are used to being competent communicators, and it is hard for many to willingly give up that ground of being competent to learn a new language. This is why language learning has a natural stress level for adult learners. Language teachers who are unaware or insensitive to its effect on classroom morale often add to the innate barriers against participation which students already have to confront.

Through experience, teachers might know what is stress-inducing and what is manageable. If classroom stress impedes learning, addressing it becomes imperative, but

how? Ellis (2012) argues that “the teacher should use the students’ L1 as little as possible in order to maximize students’ exposure to L2 input” (p. 127). I agree, and emphasize that the ‘as possible’ of his statement means that there are valid reasons to have a brief L1 moment. One such reason is to lower learning-impeding emotional responses.

While helping students prepare to make comments on an online site that was frequented by Spanish speakers, I had given many directions to the students to help them be prepared to make their posts. A student had misinterpreted a direction and felt lost and confused. After a hearty attempt to explain the miscommunication during a one-on-one interaction, the student transitioned from lost and confused, to defeated and finally to emotionally deflated. At that point I decided to speak English for a brief moment to help that student get back with the activity as well as to help with morale. If not for the brief English moment, that student would have likely missed out on valuable language practice, thus English was used as a tool for learning Spanish. The goal in mind is to create and maintain an environment that invites target language use and cooperation. Enhancing the student’s ability to participate is holding to the priority to take steps towards the goals that students bring with them to the first day of class.

#### 4) A big picture view of achieving personal goals

I always begin each semester’s class with a survey. The survey helps me to uncover initial hesitations and ambitions, student confidence and student fear (Parahoo, 2008). By connecting with students’ personal goals I gain the opportunity to keep students fixed on why they volunteered to give up their comfortable L1 for as long as they are in the classroom. Adult students go through the pains and joys of language learning for a personal goal (Kormos & Csizer, 2008). Lantolf and Genung (2002)

describe the case of a strict educational environment in which a grad student, already highly motivated to learn languages, had her intrinsic motivation drained from her due to grammar drills and repetitious class activities. Lantolf and Genung conclude the following,

This ultimately resulted in a shift in her motives and related goals from being in the class, which in turn gave rise to a shift in the ways in which she behaved mentally, and even physically, in the classroom community. Thus, motives, goals, and their affiliated behaviors are very much emergent. (p. 191)

Though the teacher does not take the spot light in my ideal classroom, the teacher should take an active role in fostering students' goals within the class subject's context. When students "find the course interesting and relevant to their needs and if they experience success and satisfaction in that success, they are motivated to participate and to persist" (Ballman et al, 2001, p. 15). Motivation is both powerful and fickle, so by maintaining a big picture view of personal goals, and how the class works to help students meet them, language learners can experience more consistent and reliable motivation toward language learning.

##### 5) A big picture view of the dynamic nature of human interaction

It is not practical to identify all competencies that will be needed by a survey at the beginning of a semester's class. To illustrate this, I shall give an example of how a 'not immediately communicative' topic became very communicative for a former student. As an adjunct professor at Brigham Young University Idaho, I had a student who described a compelling motivation to learn Spanish on the first day of class. She explained to me that she had just discovered that she was adopted as a baby and that her biological mother spoke only Spanish. Her purpose in learning the Spanish language was

to be able to contact her mother and reconnect with her. The complication came when we started brainstorming what she would need to know to be able to make such a connection.

Trying to predict interesting points of conversation, potential hobbies, possible religious beliefs (and their corresponding terminologies), probable scholastic interests and such backgrounds, likely slang, cultural do's and don'ts, etc., was obviously impossible. Was she going to be able to speak to her mother in person, over the phone, in texts, email, letter? From her situation I reached a conclusion: as we connect with people from other cultures, it would be worth the effort to indulge ourselves in aspects of the target culture in preparation to deepen the connections that we make. I am describing cultural intelligence, or "the ability to have effective communication in cross-cultural contexts" (Ghonsooly & Shalchy, 2013, p. 156). This implies that reading English novels would be relevant for an English language learner who might want to connect with me in English. In other words, communication is not all necessary nor always practical, and interest-based communication is a worthy pursuit for language learners (Feldman, 1974). In a globalized world "every day and everywhere we are surrounded by people from different cultural backgrounds" (Baez, 2012, p. 2). Much of the great variety can be discovered in the act of communication, so preparing for communication maintains its center position.

For me, this dynamic aspect of human interaction translates to spending classroom time on exploring hobbies in the target culture and language. For example, students who love sports can learn to love it in the target language as well, and explore the sports valued by the target culture. The Communicative Language Teaching method emphasizes immediate interpersonal communication and I value that perspective. I

simply state that there is room for exploring not so immediate communication topics as well, so long as the goal is to make connections across linguistic barriers. The syllabus and curriculum should take into account the human side to making connections, allowing for long lost adopted students to prepare to make first contact with their biological mothers.

As part of the dynamic nature of life, in the connected world we live in, I believe that literacy is relevant to all students. Though the student's primary goal may be to communicate orally with someone, literacy is continually pertinent today. Genesee (2008) captures my beliefs on literacy well:

It is biliteracy, not just oral bilingualism, that is important if young people are to thrive in and take advantage of global realities. The value of knowing other languages is intimately linked to the ability to read and write, be it related to business, personal or cultural reasons and be it related to Internet or interpersonal communication. (p. 24)

A student might be convinced that all that will be needed are oral conversational skills, but trying to simplify life down to one specific type of human interaction does not change the complexity of our reality, it only limits the ability to interact with reality. Added ability and freedom are inherent in the definition of biliteracy as prescribed by Spener (1994), "biliteracy is bilingualism *plus* reading and writing in both languages" (p. 10). Still, the importance of literacy due to the dynamic individual is amplified by the dynamic society; "all nationwide communications, whether by telephone, radio, TV, or writing are fundamentally dependent upon literacy, for the essence of literacy is not simply reading and writing but also the effective use of the standard literate language" (Hirsch, Kett, & Trefil, 1988, pp. 2-3). In other words, literacy defines one's ability to participate in a literacy-valuing culture. By embracing bilingualism, biliteracy, the many

facets of the target language's cultures, and cultural intelligence, students gain the ability to explore and to express their dynamic selves across barriers. Making space in the classroom for diverse interests and skills is at least appropriate, if not crucial. Preparation for meaningful connections spurs the desires to 'learn a language' and making meaningful connections across language barriers is not an overzealous ambition.

### Conclusion

In defining my teaching philosophy, I describe the ideals that are worth a good struggle. I find that the gap between philosophy and practice widens when language instructors give into the varying resistances that naturally arise. Just as gravity tries to pull us all down, the act of standing up and working builds up strength. Resistance in the classroom to a heartfelt philosophy backed by solid research should be seen as an opportunity to build strength as an educator. When pedagogical big picture views are not maintained, dampened gains likely result.

Human beings want to make connections. Language is a large part of how we make connections. As a language teacher, I have the duty to help students make connections across language barriers. How I help students make such connection is based on my guiding principles. Students must take active roles in their classroom experience by using the target language meaningfully. The teacher must take on a supportive role that fosters language learning and regulates big picture views that provide opportunities for meaningful learning. When these elements align, language learning happens effectively.

### Professional Development through Observations

As I worked towards my Master in Second Language Teaching degree, I read a sizable amount of literature. Simply reading about pedagogy was not a holistic approach to becoming a master of second language teaching, whereas trying to apply what I read in the courses that I teach was a great ‘next step’ to take. As I read articles from more than one author/perspective, I reflected on my teaching, and observed other language teachers to better apply what I learned. Seeing other perspectives in action shaped my work to be well-rounded and more effective. In this paper, I highlight the contributions that other language educators provided as I analyzed their examples. By taking a critical look at the teacher’s perspectives evident in their pedagogical decision, I learned a great deal. I strategized my observation time in the following way to maximize the benefit to my language teaching skills.

Table 1

#### *Motives of Observing Each Course*

Course	Motive to observe the course
Spanish 1010	I chose this class because it was the same level that I concurrently taught. Also, the teacher has a significantly different personality, giving me a chance to see variety in classroom dynamics.
Spanish 2020	I looked to build a clear view of trajectory for entry level students within the program.
German 1020	I went seeking different perspectives, knowing that the teacher had different pedagogical mentors.
Chinese 1020	I knew that I would not run into cognates and be able to be an absolute beginner just watching for classroom behaviors and such.
Russian 1010 (x2)	I observed this class twice over the same semester to gage student improvement over the course of one semester of study.

The class-hour of Spanish 1010 that I taught just before observing someone else's section of Spanish 1010 revealed high levels of student anxiety, which I did not have the opportunity to address before my class ended. In my colleague's class that I observed immediately after, and which covered the same material we had covered in my class, the students were much more relaxed and at ease during every moment of instruction. The contrast from my class's momentary high stress and what I observed stood out like black on white. I easily took away from that observation the benefit of fostering motivation and being constantly aware of its ability to deflate when students perceive failure. I also saw the benefit to having different personalities and approaches to teaching. I never had an idea of 'only one way to be,' but that moment did reinforce the notion of appreciating diversity among teachers.

In the Spanish 2020 class, students spent class time in discussion turned debate on two topics: green jobs, and if access to internet should be a human right. I had a hard time focusing on the teacher's perspective as the discussion was very engaging, but this indicated to me the effectiveness of teaching language through engaging content. The gold standard for classroom management is to have something so engaging for students that the students can't pry their attention from the activity until the teacher forces a stop. I did note that the participation was highly disproportional and the teacher eventually stopped a few students from dominating the conversation with their opinions.

Observing the German class was the most unique experience. The main focus rested on studying grammar, which was in contrast with the other classes I observed. Students practiced grammar points that were explicitly taught in a variety of activities. This seemed very familiar to me and the students also seemed accustomed to such an



approach to language learning. The students appeared very comfortable in the learning environment, laughing and joking all in the target language. In the end, the class dabbled in some great cultural lessons, but I was a bit let down by the shallow depth of the discussions. I hope that the next class hour was going to go deeper in those subjects, to bring out the pragmatic differences hinted at during my observation.

I could follow along (with the aid of the lesson plan) in the Chinese class, but that was due to the teacher's clear directions and non-verbal cues. I did not understand a single word of that observation (except the brief English that a few students used to figure out a difficult phrase). I picked out that students did book reports on children's books. These book reports led to cultural insights and pragmatic protocols. I observed a great deal of creativity and engagement from the students as they looked up new words to incorporate into the birthday invitations that the groups prepared. This teacher mirrored the skill that my Spanish 1010 colleague displayed in creating a relaxing while still engaging learning environment.

The decision to observe a single class twice in a semester to investigate progress became a boon to my professional development. Thus far, I had seen a great deal of teacher-traits that I wanted to develop further or to adopt, I noted ideas to give more variety of instruction, and I became conscious of how my personality effects the classes that I teach. The first observation of the Russian 1010 class was very early in the semester and as expected, students were greatly limited in their ability to interact. I saw how using props (a microphone for a news interview) helped to structure the students' interaction and to add to the ambiance of the interactive class. The second observation

showed how those early efforts paid off. Students were relaxed, joking in the target language, accustomed to participating and receptive to the teacher's efforts.

The teachers whom I observed were clearly competent with individual strengths that are just what I needed in order to help me to see the benefits of changing aspects of my teaching. I now focus on learner stress levels more. I am more conscious of how my actions early in a semester elicit cooperation or reinforce natural boundaries against participation. I also am better aware of the role of grammar instruction, being to approximate the learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to future input instead of language acquisition itself. A final note is that cultural differences seem to be very interesting to just about every student who chooses to study another language. With just hours of observations, I learned of very valuable points of my personal teaching ability. In my teaching career, I will only become a master teacher by continuing this pattern of observation, self-reflection, and application of what I learn. The repetition of this process will be a source of enjoyment and further professional development.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING STATEMENT

### Introduction and Context

#### Protocol

The co-directors of USU's Master of Second Language Teaching program tutor each student in a self-assessment technique for teachers. In compliance with the set protocol for this self-assessment, I invited observers to sit in on lessons that I taught in Spanish. Before each lesson, I sent to the observers my lesson plan and copies of materials that I would use during the corresponding lesson. I also informed my observers of particular concerns that I had in my teaching techniques. I filmed the lesson, and they took notes. After the lesson, I watched the recording and critiqued myself. After I had critiqued myself, the observers then sent me their comments. Then I was able to make a comparison with the differing opinions.

#### Background

This self-assessment of teaching statement (SATS) is a compilation of three different lessons, each following the protocol previously explained. The lessons were each taught in a 50-minute class period. This report is the product of what I learned from peer and self-assessment.

#### Students

The Spanish lessons were taught to my entry-level students. Each was a typical lesson and was part of an accredited university course. The three Spanish lessons were each of a different class and were each taught within the first half of the semester. Class size varied from 18 to 25 students. While there was much variety between learners, all of them belonged in the entry-level course, their proficiency level being novice-low.

### Curricular Context

The students' previous knowledge consisted of at least an introduction to the course and explanations of the syllabus. Students did not have much language instruction prior to the observed lessons. Students had the introduction to the course in English as the common language and had been invited to accept the approach of teaching the language through communicative tasks to maximize target language exposure.

### Approach

My intent for each lesson was to introduce a new context as a pattern that would guide the whole course's lessons. The pattern would be to establish a life-applicable goal, prepare students to be able to accomplish the goal, and then to simulate the goal in order to help students gain competency with the Language.

### Lesson Specific Focus

The lessons each had a specific goal. The goals were: Applying to a study abroad program, giving a statement to a police officer as a crime scene witness, and working as comic strip writers/artists. Interaction with the language is intended to be enabling and motivating rather than confusing and overwhelming.

### Self-Assessment

#### Reflection

I look at the Spanish lessons as each a portion of a panoramic view of my competence as a language teacher. The critiques provided were astonishingly consistent. It was clear to me that my Achilles' heel as a teacher was my pacing. Here are a few comments that illustrate this point:

Table 2

*Feedback about Lesson Pacing*

	Comment
1	It takes more than 10 minutes to announce in target language what the plan is for upcoming lessons and explain the instructional plan + activities.
2	Instead of having to explain something this involved (which takes much time to do in target language), perhaps it would have been more efficient to announce the plans (pretend-applying for Study Abroad) in English.
3	Teacher did not announce a time limit for the first round, and it seems to drag on a bit.
4	Charades ended up taking too long.
5	The lesson went overtime by two minutes, so consolidate activities 3 and 4.
6	If lesson goes long again, use activity 5 as a review in a following lesson instead of rushing through it all.

Through this process, I learned that my strength and my weakness as a teacher were really two sides to the same coin. These critiques, of not pacing the lesson well, were because I would plan a real-world theme that would span many class periods. Observers complimented the themes and activities that I planned. The problem was that as long as what I noticed during the lesson seemed to be helping students to practice the language, I did not feel pressed to move on since I would pick up where we left off each class period. It became clear to me that I should teach as if I am walking on coals, at a brisk pace.

I am satisfied that my philosophy in teaching was not betrayed in how I taught. I am more satisfied to see a clear avenue for my efforts in becoming a better language teacher. I feel that students were very engaged in the activities. It is true that if I did not keep up the pace, attention strayed for a few, but the activities themselves (if done in

better time) were of value to students' interests and to students' language development. I was able to find many things to improve while discovering strengths that are hard to see without this reflective process of watching the recording and reading the observers' comments.

#### Inclusion and Takeaways

One observer noted that I should check for understanding before transitioning from one activity to another. Though I would love to employ my nervousness while teaching as a valid scape goat for why I did not adequately check for understanding during the lesson, if I consistently do not check for understanding that would be a critical weak point in my performances. I can include "verifying understanding" checkpoints into my lesson planning in order to avoid instigating stress among the language learners in my classes. Much of what else was suggested, I had intended. This shows me of what I do effectively and ineffectively during a lesson more than faults in preparation and planning.

#### Final Thoughts

My colleagues and Doctor deJonge-Kannan are very competent and well qualified to help me to improve my teaching techniques. Those of my colleagues who observed me focus on teaching various languages and I feel a sense of comfort and connection with them as they focused on the same techniques that I had been worried about. Doctor deJonge-Kannan sits among the most talented teachers I have or will ever meet in my life. I am sure that she noticed more than she wrote, but in her expertise, she focused her comments to give me direction as I seek to improve class time management. I am grateful for all of their contributions to me improving as a teacher of languages. I plan to take advantage of their suggestions in improving my lessons for teaching Spanish.

RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES

LANGUAGE PAPER  
Teaching Second Language Pragmatics: Refusals



## PURPOSE AND REFLECTION

While I took a culture teaching and learning course, Doctor deJonge-Kannan guided my exploration of pragmatics. I decided to explore research on refusals since it had been such a hurdle in my own second language ventures. I previously discovered that I had damaged a relationship with someone I thought to be close to me due to my lack of understanding of cultural expectations with regards to refusals. I did manage to repair the damage that I unintentionally caused, and learned a valuable lesson about human interaction. I learned that by understanding differences, and acknowledging the value of varying perspectives, I was better able to make meaningful and lasting connections across such very real barriers. In Doctor deJonge-Kannan's class, I learned to better articulate that valuable lesson, sift through research on the matter, and apply pragmatics-based principles to language teaching. After wading through research, organizing my thoughts, and receiving feedback, I now am better capable of helping language learners preempt the kind of relationship-damaging mistakes that pragmatic ignorance invites. This paper on pragmatic language use serves to explore the following concepts from my Teaching Philosophy Statement: the dynamic nature of life and people; the relationship of culture and second language learning, and the pursuit of achieving L2 learners' personal goals.

## Teaching Second Language Pragmatics: Refusals

### ABSTRACT

Language acquisition is dynamic and involves many dimensions (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). Language learners cannot hope to make or maintain meaningful connections with target language learners without adhering to pragmatic expectations of discourse. Learning to navigate the expectations that vary by culture and even by personality should happen in the earliest stages of language learning. Putting off or ignoring the cultural rules of interpersonal communication easily results in perceptions of undesirable personality traits. Among the most difficult of interpersonal speech acts is the act of refusal. While refusals might only come down to a preference, it may also be a serious matter due to health concerns, safety, obligations, and at all times, relationships. Refusals are, in nature, a response to a previous communication and often stretch the limits of the language learner's communicative competence. In order to prepare language learners to appropriately refuse an offer, specific attention must be paid to pragmatic instruction in the classroom. The focus of this paper will be on the use of Spanish for refusals.

Keywords: Refusal, Spanish Language Learners, Pragmatic Teaching

### Spanish Pragmatics

Learners of Spanish as a second language (L2) or foreign language (FL) often desire to become competent users of the target language (Harlow & Muyskens, 1994). To achieve their goal, L2/FL learners commonly approach language learning by following rigid grammar-based lessons (often provided by language teachers) that aim to build up linguistic proficiency that will somehow turn into communicative competence. However,

while dissecting grammatical concepts and memorizing vocabulary are common practice, “language proficiency is an additional issue” (Yates, 2010, p. 288). Developing full proficiency, or *communicative competence* (Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia, 2007; Savignon 1997) involves grasping not just the form of the language, but along with it the corresponding cultural norms. According to Cuesta and Ainciburu (2015) “culture is a determinant factor in encoding and decoding utterances” (p. 208). If only the words are interpreted, the meaning and intent may be lost.

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

When pragmatics instruction is saved for a later class, immediate “miscommunications are not only possible but also potentially damaging” when students

use the language before such instruction is provided (Yates, 2010, p. 288). These miscommunications can range from silly and harmless to rude and offensive. Lauper (1997) comments on the high stakes of pragmatics in language use by noting that “although native speakers attribute grammatical errors to a lack of knowledge of the target language, sociolinguistic errors are often attributed to the personality of the speaker” (p. 4). Perhaps the level of priority for language use outside of a classroom can be indicated by the level of focus on pragmatic instruction. Félix-Brasdefer and Cohen (2012) add that “like phonology, morphology, and syntax, which are necessary for learning a L2, pragmatics should be integrated into the language curriculum from the beginning levels of language instruction” (p. 650).

Emphasizing early pragmatic instruction enables language learners to communicate with minimal risk to students of losing face. Face describes “the relationship two or more persons create with one another in interaction” (Arundale, 2010, p. 2078). “Various acts can differ in the amount of threat to different face needs” and in particular a refusal act threatens face in differing ways across cultures (Park & Guan, 2009, p. 245). Therefore “teachers need to become aware of the pragmatics of a language, such as how language is used in socially appropriate” ways in particular situations (Félix-Brasdefer & Cohen, 2012, p. 654). Unfortunately, “Spanish learners are still memorizing grammatical forms without necessarily having control over the pragmatic functions of these forms in discourse” (Félix-Brasdefer & Cohen, 2012, p. 665). This reflects a lack of understanding of the nature of language as an essential part of how we connect with each other. Grammar is a tool for communication, it is not communication itself. Cultural

norms have more say in our communication as it extends beyond verbal structures.

Pragmatics is an essential component of language learning.

This literature review focuses on one aspect within the world of pragmatics, the speech act of refusals, in order to highlight the complexity of L2 communication and the necessity for pragmatic competence among L2 learners. To analyze refusals, this paper will establish the cultural basis for studies, present examples of the do's and don'ts, explain the methods used to understand refusals, and highlight some classroom-applicable teaching methods.

The wide and innumerable cultures within the Spanish-speaking world seem to determine that pragmatic studies are destined to never reach a comprehensive conclusion. Regardless, studying language-specific refusals will inevitably cross cultures and situations. Appropriate and accepted “pragmatic language use is a very complex phenomenon with a lot of contextual factors influencing its actual performance” (Flor & Juan, 2011, p. 49). Despite the seemingly insurmountable task, “for some years now research findings on L2 pragmatics have been accumulating” (Félix-Brasdefer & Cohen, 2012, p. 665). Through that research, the speech act of refusing has shown to change in its execution due to factors such as social status and social distance, the setting, the culture and so forth (Cuesta & Ainciburu, 2015; Flor & Juan, 2011). Félix-Brasdefer and Cohen (2012) gathered specific responses from native Spanish speakers, being careful to indicate identifying factors to highlight the relevant variances in refusal situations. The reason for refusal, the gender, and the specific cultural setting have an impact on how much explanation is given by or expected from the person who refuses. This implies that

a class should not necessarily arrive to one simple rule of thumb in studying cultural differences.

Being exposed to authentic discourse, students have a chance to digest similarities and differences. Teachers can capitalize on authentic materials as tutors of pragmatically-savvy refusal techniques accepted by those from the target culture. This critical aspect of pragmatic tutoring should not be missing in a classroom setting. To have students assume that gender, status, social distance, and other relevant factors should be ignored, is to have them recreate Vincent van Gogh's painting *Starry Night* in black and white. Such a 'colorless' approach to language teaching ignores the original purpose of language, to interact and make connections with others, diluting and diminishing the value of language learning.

The do's and don'ts

Grammar is an integral part of languages, but insufficient on its own to describe the intricate details of human verbal interactions, let alone other means of communication. According to Lauper (1997), "in order to become competent in a second language it is important for second language learners to know how to recognize and perform speech acts" (p. 3). The complexities of verbal interaction often intimidate those venturing into the realm of second language communication. Yates (2010) adds another dimension to L2 interaction by noting that "not only speaking, but also listening can be perilous for learners" (p. 296). As L2 educators, we should do our best to help students navigate the do's and don'ts of the target culture's accepted pragmatic rules. Learners do not need to approach L2 pragmatics as if they will become nativelylike, rather they should

try to map out do's and don'ts to make conscious choices of how to present themselves within the new cultural context (Félix-Brasdefer, 2006).

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

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

The do's and don'ts are all situational and can vary by personality along with the many other factors but for most, the goal is uniform, to be accepted by peers (Laws, Bates, Feuerstein, Mason-Apps, & White, 2012). Yet requirements for acceptance varies greatly from group to group. In fact what might make you acceptable to one group could be appalling to another, or rather it often is since cultural norms come in all shapes and sizes (Wierzbicka, 1996).

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

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



### Discovering the differences for Pedagogical Application

The studies outlined above help to define the do's and don'ts but "also help in the creation of materials and textbooks that incorporate sociocultural contents to develop the intercultural competence of the learners of a foreign language" (Cuesta & Ainciburu, 2015, p. 213). The goal is for students to explore the world of pragmatics as they embrace the life-long pursuit of self-politeness training. The complexities of human interactions cannot be listed, defined, and memorized, then passed off with a standardized test. However, individuals can become aware of pragmatic guidelines to take better control of the image projected to others through the presiding cultural filters. Students must gain the capability to accurately judge for themselves what is polite and what is not within the target cultural norms (self-politeness training). The big 'How to teach the do's and don'ts?' should be a logical next thought.

Context is a good first topic to address due to the changing results of the studies in relation to the many variations of context. Defining the context can be facilitated by a survey given to students to find their ambitions and existing ties to the target language. With Spanish as a posterchild of diversity, narrowing the contexts as best as possible is helpful to avoid throwing pedagogical darts in the dark. Since the variety of pragmatic norms is overwhelming, "the role of teachers is to customize the speech act learning strategies to specific languages and student populations" (Félix-Brasdefer, 2006, p. 175). With the survey results, instruction can be aimed to the most likely target language populations that are currently in contact with the learners and that are likely to come their way.

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

#### Concluding thoughts

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

interaction will ensure that learner pragmatics will continue to be an area of great relevance” (Yates, 2010, p. 301).

In teaching language learners how to navigate their new world of potential connections, they should be taught to love and embrace the complexities that come along the way. The world of pragmatics is inseparably tied to all languages and should not be ignored in any language learning setting. When L2 learners understand and appreciate the beautiful variety of the target language, they start the process of making new connections, which is a basic purpose of communication.

LITERACY PAPER  
Redefining Literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Language Classroom

## PURPOSE AND REFLECTION

I wrote this paper as the last addition to this portfolio under the mentorship of Doctor Thoms. I had learned from him about the impact of technology on language use and on language learning/teaching. Then he taught me about different language acquisition theories and of different pedagogies. I designed this paper to combine those themes into an exploration of the implications of modern life upon teaching literacy in a target language. I unintentionally ran into emerging views that challenge (at least on the surface) some views that I have adopted while studying principles of communicative language teaching. Since communicative language teaching has so many different faces across classrooms, programs, institutions, and cultures I encountered difficulty in pinpointing exactly what it means to teach communicatively. Oddly enough, finding challenges to this perspective solidified what I do and do not sustain to be sound pedagogy. While I do not believe that everyone should agree with my perspectives, I do see it to be necessary for me and any other educator to consider different pedagogies to form a sound and informed opinion. This paper, in a way, is the capstone of my journey in becoming a well-informed language educator. Of course, I hope to be among the researchers that challenge one day, what I have found so far. To me, being an academic is to have a glass-like position, in that it is almost solid and that it welcomes new light and images to inform its message.

## Redefining Literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Language Classroom

### ABSTRACT

To take an informed look at the future or to understand the direction of the present, the past must be considered. An important aspect of human history is that it directs and shapes the future. This has certainly applied to the history of literacy and to its current position and direction moving on. This paper takes a look at the presently changing definition of literacy and its implications both now and moving forward. By taking into account how much literacy has changed over the course of human history, the current condition of 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy seems a logical addition in literacy's evolution. Acknowledging changes to literacy brings with it implications for language learning environments. After establishing the distinguishing features of modern literacy, this paper guides the exploration of a new perspective on teaching languages, informed by research on modern uses of literacy.

Keywords: Literacy, Language Classrooms, Multiliteracies

### A New Paradigm

Technology has shaped human interaction consistently throughout recorded history. It has influenced how we trade, how we wage war, how we communicate. In this emerging century, it is evident that this concept continues to apply (Cortada, 2016). Just as the act of recording language was redefined by the Phoenicians, communication transformed by the telegraph, and literacy becoming widespread due to the printing press, contemporary technology and Web 2.0 interactions are now reshaping literacy. What it means to be literate, when and how to communicate, and even how to record a message

are now all being reenvisioned and reshaped (Reinhardt, & Thorne, 2011). Expanding the existing paradigm of literacy “implies that literacy in a foreign language is not an isolated individual achievement, but a social process of rewriting one-self through dialogue with another” (Kramersch, & Nolden, 1994, p. 34). The growing relevance of literacy skills and literacy’s changing definition are affected by advances in Web 2.0 technologies and have also resulted in researchers making use of sociocultural theoretical views of L2 learning and teaching (i.e., language acquired through/in interaction) in their work.

The emergence of a new paradigm of literacy resulted largely as researchers answered the call by the Modern Language Association (MLA) to close the gap between “the two-tiered configuration [that] has outlived its usefulness and needs to evolve” (Modern Language Association, 2007, para. 8). The expression “two tiered configuration” describes the apparent gap between communicatively taught lower-level language students who are trained for real-world purposes and the upper-level language students who spend significant time diving into target language literature, which requires underdeveloped literacy skills (Gala, 2008; Rose & Destruel, 2015; Swaffar, 1998). The shift from traditional notions of literacy to one that incorporates the technological aspects of human communication/interaction has been taking place over the course of recorded human history. The historic/traditional understanding of literacy was defined as a “set of decoding and encoding skills needed to read and write” (Reinhardt & Thorne, 2011, p. 259). The emerging view of literacy has changed in that it now includes social and cultural factors that shape the context, “mediated by various tools and technologies” (p. 260).

In addition to Reingardt and Thorne's contribution to an analysis of changing literacy paradigms, Kammerer, Kalbfell, and Gerjets (2016) include a crucial aspect of literacy with regard to the number of sources freely available to literate persons. An implication of their contribution is that since "anybody can publish freely on the Internet without review by professional gatekeepers," part of modern day literacy should include the need to "evaluate the source of a website for its trustworthiness" (Kammerer et al., 2016, p. 431). The term 'digital literacies' specifies the mediating tools and technologies to digital tools and digital technologies. So then to access online news articles, basic literacy is needed to read the article but also there is a requirement of navigating web pages to find the article before its information can be consumed. Digital literacies do not replace the historical view of literacy, as traditional tools and technologies are still relevant. In other words, digital literacy is an important component of learners' varying literacy skills required across a wide range of literacy settings.

A growing number of second language acquisition (SLA) researchers are exploring what literacy means and what it takes to be literate given the omnipresence of technology in L2 learners' academic and social lives (Allen & Paesani, 2010; Angay-Crowder, Choi, & Yi, 2013; Barton & Lee, 2012; Garcia, 1994; Kramsch & Nolden, 1994; New London Group, 1996). Implications for the language classroom are now beginning to emerge from a growing body of research (Allen & Paesani, 2010). Multiliteracies, a resulting new perspective on L2 learning and teaching, attempts to address the diversities of language learners' lives, seeded in the goal to provide "a teaching and learning relationship that potentially builds learning conditions that lead to full and equitable social participation" (New London Group, 1996 p. 60).



Without taking this redefinition of literacy into account, “reading and writing are viewed as solitary rather than collaborative acts” (Allen & Paesani, 2010, p. 124). While traditional views of literacy are still relevant, they are no longer the whole picture as they were before Web 2.0 technologies. Due to an intrinsic value placed upon the interconnected nature of modern literacy, a multiliteracies-informed pedagogy aligns best with sociocultural theoretical perspectives on SLA.

#### Theoretical Framework

While multiliteracies is not a language acquisition theory itself, it is informed by some of the tenets that are inherent in sociocultural views of SLA. Sociocultural theories (Vygotsky, 1986) are characterized by the social constructivism paradigm which integrates the act of interaction with the construction of new knowledge (Wang, Bruce, & Hughes, 2011). In essence, social constructivism mirrors Web 2.0 technologies as they also generate new knowledge through interaction. Furthermore, sociocultural theory asserts that acquisition is more than just a tool for acquisition (VanPatten & Williams, 2007). As I see it, sociocultural theory views interaction as the ‘yarn’ in ‘knitting’ target language competence. Interaction is both an indispensable tool for the final product and is part of the final product. In parallel, a multiliteracies view approaches target language skills as interconnected instead of separated skills to be developed individually. Implied in adopting a new paradigm is a shift in classroom practices.

#### Embracing Variety

Researchers have already begun to explore the various implications for language teaching that result from a multiliteracies perspective. The common thread between the various research topics in this area to date is that adopting a multiliteracies perspective

requires embracing a variety of literature. Widening the scope of acceptable texts gets at traditional views of literacy education (Morrell, 2015).

Maintaining privilege for print-based literature in education, namely the classics, excludes technology-based literature (e.g., blogs, online news sources) from a modern-day definition of literacy. A multiliteracies view attempts to “extend, but not replace, print-based literacy” (Mills, 2005, p. 75). This approach to language learning and teaching “aims to move literacy education forward from antiquated pedagogies of an exclusively formal, standard, monomodal and national language to those that are inclusive of informal, open-ended, multimodal forms of communication” (Mills, 2009, p. 105). Research topics that incorporate a multiliteracies approach to language learning and teaching have reflected the idea of embracing this kind of variety of what and how we define text.

Examples of this movement away from monomodal approaches to literacy education include Jacobs’ (2013) investigation on practical guidelines for designing multimodal assessments appropriate for a multiliteracies classroom. Jacobs advocates assessments that afford learner autonomy, value different intelligences, and assess critical thinking skills. As we re-examine literacy from a sociocultural perspective, “when we consider reading and writing in their social contexts - as complementary dimensions of communication, rather than as discrete skills - we more easily see how they relate to other dimensions of language use” (Kern & Schultz, 2005, p. 382). Regarding skills as different sides of the same coin highlights an integral component of multiliteracies in the act of integration over separation of target language skills. Angay-Crowder, Choi, and Yi

(2013) investigate digital storytelling, taking into account the four curricular components of multiliteracies (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Four Components of Multiliteracies*

Components	
1	Situated practice: an immersion among a community of learners that can play different roles;
2	Overt Instruction: rather than drills and memorization, this is an active intervention by the teacher to help students develop a conscious awareness and to develop control;
3	Critical Framing: students evaluate themselves, draw conclusions and transfer the conclusions to other aspects;
4	Transformed Practice: students transplant a text from one context to another while protecting the original meaning.

As paradigms shift, researchers provide “insights into what counts as literacy learning and teaching and how we reframe literacy pedagogy in our 21<sup>st</sup>-century classrooms” (Angay-Crowder et al., 2013, p. 43). To highlight the unorthodox inclusion of texts aside from ‘the classics’, Table 4 includes a few studies that would have been out of place in historical research:

Table 4

*Examples of Research on Unorthodox Texts*

Author/Year	Research
Newman 2005	explored rap music with the lenses of socioliteracy, which is the inclusion of practices, genres, and perspectives into literacy and multiliteracies.
Barton & Lee 2012	contributed their investigation into Flickr.com with a focus on vernacular literacies, noting “that many practices of reading and writing are being transformed by people’s participation in online activities and, as a result, the dynamics of everyday life are changing in profound ways” (p. 282).
Kammerer et al. 2016	looked into participants’ ability to pick up on contradictions between web pages. They conclude that students need to “increase their awareness of the necessity to consider source information when using the Internet as a knowledge resource” (Kammerer et al., 2016, p. 454).

Research relevant to a multiliteracies classroom investigates Web 2.0 venues for literacy, non-traditional forms of literature, and atypical assessment techniques, along

with whatever forms literacy takes in the future. Rejecting the validity of this widened view of literacy will inevitably increase the natural gap between the latest reality of contemporary life and the ability of researchers to ascertain its implications for the language learning classroom. The risk is then that language classrooms would lose relevance as fossilized instruction becomes disconnected from relevant language skills. As a multiliteracies perspective becomes more common, it will continue to challenge traditional approaches to language teaching. Given the ubiquitous nature of communicative language teaching (CLT), researchers have begun exploring how a multiliteracies approach differs from CLT.

#### Multiliteracies & CLT

A multiliteracies approach to language learning and teaching is an alternative to other approaches. The rise in a multiliteracies perspective has resulted in many questioning a CLT approach. While CLT varies from one proponent to another, a major component of the heart of CLT is that “a principal goal of language teaching for several decades has been, and continues to be, speaking proficiency” (Ballman, Lisikin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001, p. 2). In fact, disagreements among CLT advocates can be illustrated by Lee and VanPatten’s (2003) argument that “much of what passes as “communicative” these days is nothing more than communication at the service of grammar learning” (p. 1). Paesani, Allen, and Dupuy (2016) uncovered tendencies among language educators to morph and change guiding principles and frameworks that they intend to implement in order “to match the needs of their curriculum” (p. 794). Their findings suggest that any new paradigm, however clear in its definition, will always be expanded, distorted, and adapted as more educators adopt it.

The principle of constant change has also affected CLT. Allen and Paesani (2010) observe that “current iterations of CLT have more instrumental goals, with reading and writing functioning as secondary support skills” (p. 122). The common thread that ties the plethora of CLT views together is the core belief that oral speech, specifically in the interpersonal mode of communication should be a dominant priority (Sultana, 2014).

A multiliteracies framework responds in the recognition of two main points that stand at odds with the views of many CLT disciples: 1) the separation of skills to be practiced in isolation does not accurately reflect language acquisition or real-life language use, and 2) the over-emphasized privilege for oral speech does not prepare L2 learners adequately for the rigors of upper-division courses nor does it prepare L2 learners for the amazing variety of language use contexts that naturally arise due to the integration of Web 2.0 technologies into quotidian 21<sup>st</sup> century life. A pedagogy of multiliteracies values both the linguistic and literary development of students in that it “...offers a way to narrow the long-standing pedagogical gap that has traditionally divided what we do at the early levels of language teaching and what we do at the advanced levels. That is, it offers a way to reconcile the teaching of ‘communication’ with the teaching of ‘textual analysis’ (Kern, 2003, p. 43).

As such, a multiliteracies approach addresses these two points and researchers will be much obliged to test its proposals to assess its feasibility. As with CLT, different flavors of pedagogy of multiliteracies will emerge as more educators attempt to make use of it. Simplifying language use to one privileged skill does not change the reality that we face, rather it only inhibits developing the ability to participate fully in each situation that

arises. The common thread of multiliteracies will continue to be the goal of “full and equitable social participation” (New London Group, 1996, p. 60).

### Conclusion

As a pedagogy, multiliteracies upholds the goal of enabling L2 students to fully and equally participate through literacy. It values interaction as socioculturalists do. Researching the sociolinguistic patterns that L2 learners will need to discern will aid in informing future pedagogy to the end that educators can guide L2 learners to acquire this kind of literacy (Allen & Paesani, 2010; Angay-Crowder, Choi, & Yi, 2013; Byrnes, 2001; Frantzen, 2002; Gala, 2008; Garcia, 1994; Jacobs, 2013; Kramsch, & Nolden, 1994; Modern Language Association, 2007; New London Group, 1996; Paesani, 2004; Wang, Bruce, & Hughes, 2011). The changing of the guard between researchers’ old and new paradigms of what it means to be literate is undeterrably underway. Including traditional literacy skills is just as important as broadening the collective view of relevant, technology-mediated literacy skills. Literacy and its relevance has gone through several transformations. Examples include the growing number of *who* could learn to record language was redefined by the Phoenicians, the *speed* of communication was transformed by the telegraph, the *when* and *where* of literacy skills were re-conceptualized due to the printing press, and now contemporary technology and Web 2.0 interactions are reshaping what it means to be literate. As a consequence, developing literacy skills in a 21<sup>st</sup> century language classroom should change in tandem.

**CULTURE PAPER**  
The Testimony of an Advocate for Additive Educational Paradigms



## PURPOSE AND REFLECTION

This paper emerged as I studied Dual Language Immersion programs in a class taught by Doctor Spicer-Escalante. She guided my discoveries of language teaching paradigms as I navigated through the literature that she recommended. I dueled with reconciling my and my father's experiences with language learning. While attending and presenting at the 2016 Texas Language Education Research Conference, I conversed with two of the three key-note speakers, Doctor Ana Celia Zentella, and Doctor Deborah Palmer. They both encouraged me to write a *testimonio* of my unique perspective on the effects of bilingual education. While my experience of reading *testimonios* suggests that they are written by those who grew-up bilingual, I decided to show my semi-connection to 'true bilinguals' by offering an adjusted mimic of a more typical *testimonio*.

My depiction of the "[ironic] beauty of straddling multiple worlds, languages, and identities" would have to be fissured into the two separate voices that reside within me (Saavedra, 2011). They are in many ways completely separate voices due to my family's background with bilingual education. My ties to English hold almost a monopoly on my academic identity, my professional self-image, while Spanish was reduced to a second language acquired by personal desire and through interpersonal connections (lacking a presence and value from my K-12 education).

As my reflections on cultural contexts in which language learning takes place took form, I hoped to become a voice representing the children and grandchildren of immigrant families and a mediator to those not so closely connected to such demographics. I chose to let my voice reflect my background. Intentionally, I only

present academic citations and evidences within English portions of this paper, and my personal convictions are exclusively expressed in the Spanish portions.

While it would have been logical for my paper aimed at culture to address teaching culture in a traditional classroom, this paper instead explores the impact of culture on language learning. This paper aims me towards using language teaching and learning as a tool for promoting solidarity amid diversity. This research has been the foundation of two conference presentations and a pressing passion to continue such pursuits. I include in each language class that I teach the perspective that language learning is an irreplaceable tool in breaking through the barriers that divide and the obstacles that inhibit, making deep and lasting connections when cultural and linguistic differences are prevalent. This paper serves to expound upon the following concepts from my Teaching Philosophy Statement: the big picture view of developing skills and of the dynamic nature of life and people, culture, and second language learning.

## The Testimony of an Advocate for Additive Educational Paradigms

### ABSTRACT

Language education has a deep root in the United States, but has historically been tied to assimilation, or the subtracting of one identity in order to build another. This paper is meant to challenge the subtractive mindset that has largely dictated language immersion education in this country. I do not believe that by ignoring this nation's historical friction in diversity that we become magically immune to actions that support discrimination in the future. By recognizing our past, we can better take measurable steps forward, moving beyond the belief in racial superiority. This is my personal testimony, backed by historical examples and research, in which I advocate for supporting additive educational programs. I express my views in English and Spanish, not in translation of each other, rather in conjunction to support each other. I do not see the strength of this nation being the ability to ignore, erase, or subjugate 'others.' I see the true merit of this nation in its Bill of Rights, which calls for civil rights to be maintained for all, and in the ability to value the great diversity already present within our borders.

Key Words: Dual Language Immersion, Public Education, Historical Public Education

La identidad perdida

Habiendo nacido en los Estados Unidos, he estudiado el español ahora que soy adulto. Sin embargo, esto no debió ser así. La primera lengua de mi padre es el español, pero él decidió hablarme en inglés exclusivamente. Así que hablo español con acento. De vez en cuando me cuesta expresarme en español con los demás. Tengo un apellido hispano, pero solo como herencia cultural. ¿Acaso le echo la culpa a mi papá? No. Si pudiera simplificar todos los elementos de mi historia familiar, no cambiaría la realidad

actual que es tan compleja. Sin embargo, reconozco que la decisión de mi padre de no hablarnos en español le afectó mucho, sobre todo mantener el propósito de hablar únicamente inglés en la casa.

Mis abuelos llegaron desde Chihuahua, México, a los Estados Unidos. Abrieron una panadería en California y mandaron a sus hijos a la escuela para que aprendieran inglés. Entiendo que, al establecerse dentro de una nueva cultura y en un país diferente, lo que más les importaba era aprender inglés y que los hijos también lo aprendieran. Comprendo que ellos fueron pioneros; sacrificaron todo y padecieron mucho para que, en el futuro, sus descendientes tuvieran el éxito, las oportunidades y la esperanza que ellos no lograron conseguir. Les agradezco desde lo más profundo de mi corazón todo lo que hicieron.

Ahora que soy adulto y he investigado lo que mi familia padecía, veo la fuerza interna que tuvieron, como la que hay dentro de ustedes, quienes ahora leen lo que escribo. Empiezo a entender el engaño que sufrieron mis antepasados, de la misma manera que les sucede a algunos de ustedes cuando llegan aquí a los Estados Unidos: la mentira de que sólo podemos enseñar una lengua a los hijos y que debemos escoger entre el inglés o el español. A través de este engaño, fui perdiendo la identidad de ser hispanohablante y también la posibilidad de conocer al resto de mi familia, además de a mis padres y a mis hermanos.

Historical view of immersion based education

Unfortunately, the loss of identity is not a modern invention, nor is it new to this country. While today an immersive experience likely calls to the mind a highly valued study abroad program, domestic immersion programs have, for a long time, been a

vehicle for actively erasing identities of minority populations. Immersion education refers to the student's experience in class. This immersion is a linguistic and a cultural immersion. For example, a student could be educated in a language other than their 'at-home' language. By taking a look at our past we can identify fundamental beliefs that shaped this nation, measure the strides that have been taken in immersion education, and take an evaluative look at the current situation.

Before the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century many children from immigrant families found themselves in an immersive educational experience, but the government did not actively institutionalize educational immersion until there arose a problem to address. The perceived problem to address was the Indians or rather the Native Americans and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (formerly part of the war department) would take charge of addressing such far reaching problems (Belko, 2004). Native Americans had not confined themselves to reservations, they had not learned the white man's tongue, and they had not given up their way of life, religion, nor culture yet. Due to this resistance against mass assimilation, the rise of government-sponsored immersion programs showed great momentum in the 1890's for the United States of America (Riney, 1997). This program placed Native American students in boarding schools where

School administrators and teachers cut children's hair; changed their dress, their diets, and their names; introduced them to unfamiliar conceptions of space and time; and subjected them to militaristic regimentation and discipline. Educators suppressed tribal languages and cultural practices and sought to replace them with English, Christianity, athletic activities, and a ritual calendar intended to further patriotic citizenship. (Davis, 2001, p. 20)

Such controlled education, from the federal government, was a misfit in how the federal government had previously treated (or rather, largely did not treat) educational

concerns (Stoddard, 2009). Of course this is all being interpreted with both hindsight and the current paradigm the federal government holds on education policies. So then, what was the need that drove this slow but strong wave of education legislation, and the institution of immersion in school?

The model after which Native American immersion boarding schools were founded was dreamed up largely by the ‘success’ of Richard Henry Pratt who declared,

A great general has said that the only good Indian is a dead one. In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him and save the man. (Charla Bear, 2008)

The resounding mantra was “complete assimilation into the dominant society” through total immersion (Charla Bear, 2008). This was cause for the government’s heavy handed legislation that (by the tail end of the 1800’s) took children away from their families, by force if necessary, to receive a white man’s education in the east, wear the white man’s clothes, and so forth (Charla Bear, 2008). After receiving full indoctrination, they were returned to their families only to find that they did not belong in their native culture and were still unacceptable to the ‘white’ public around them because of their unchanged skin color (Davis, 2001).

Unfortunately, elements of this past mindset in how some view the purpose of immersion education persist. Research has shown that “only 50% of Navajo now speak their own language and their numbers are declining each year” (May, 2008, p. 24), and that cultural decay has continued. The boarding school model was unabashed in its subtractive goals, meaning that it was purposefully trying to erase part of who the student is, where the student comes from, and the unique perspective that the student holds. This

blunt subtractive agenda is referred to as cultural genocide which coincides with Pratt's previous declaration (Strickland & Protti, 1993).

Some families simply did not understand what was happening with their children, and only caught on when they realized that their child from years ago returned but could not function within the tribe any longer (Surface-Evans, 2016). Some families saw the 'need' to assimilate, so then losing all of their indigenous culture and language was necessary or else the children could never participate in the invading society (Davis, 2001). Others resisted to preserve their beliefs and cultures, asserting that the white man's culture is not superior in every way as was preached to the tribes (Surface-Evans, 2016).

A select few gained the ability to function in several cultures, maintaining their ethnic identity while gaining full access and participation in the context of the United States of America. This was relatively rare at first, and only became more common as those who resisted died or were killed. Actively seeking to erase many cultures, religions, and languages is in direct contrast to our romantic dream of our cultural 'melting pot' as is taught in our schools and against government-declared civil rights (Bill of Rights of the United States of America, 1791). This history is appalling and regrettable, but at the same time useful for learning lessons, moving forward, and building up the people within this nation's boundaries.

Un valor desconocido

Lo más triste de la niñez de mi papá, es que él asocia el español con el sufrimiento. Esto refleja lo que pasó con los nativos norteamericanos. Existe el racismo. Es real, es fuerte, es chocante, es constante, algo que es inaceptable. Exponer la idea de que la raza

decide el valor de uno mismo es una mentira. Supongo que los lectores de este testimonio conocen el racismo muy bien, aunque preferiría estar equivocado. Pero los años y los incontables momentos en los que la sociedad le declaraba a mi familia que un idioma vale más que otro, hicieron ‘verdadera’ esta farsa de una forma u otra. La decisión de excluir el español de mi aprendizaje no fue tomada en el momento de mi nacimiento, sino que fue el resultado de una vida entera menospreciando a los migrantes por su condición de hispanohablantes y por cómo se les identifica.

No importa lo que pase, hay una verdad que ustedes no deben olvidar. Esta verdad es que hay un gran valor en la variedad del mundo porque se ofrecen más de una perspectiva y una cultura. Esta verdad no cambia al llegar a los Estados Unidos. Si yo hubiese aprendido español al mismo tiempo que inglés, podría haber recibido más de lo que mi familia me ofreció. Ser bilingüe tiene una ventaja inmensa, es magnífico y es precisamente lo único que me faltó.

#### Misinterpretation of intentions

From the original immersion initiative to modern programs, subtraction was at their core. The great majority of educators put hard work and emotional investment into giving students a shot at success, however defined. The government certainly intends to support student success, regardless of how legislation actually affects the outcomes. Such intentions are mirrored today as “many English-only advocates are guided by the view that the school’s primary responsibility is to prepare children to function in the dominant society” (Wright et al, 2000, p. 63). The persistent pursuit of subtractive education provides a potent obstacle in the potential of immersive educational programs (Crawford, 2007). There still lies a fundamental disconnect in the belief that children must be



exposed to only one language and to only one culture. This disconnect constitutes maintaining bilingualism and biculturalism as disadvantages despite worldwide and domestic evidence (Mehisto & Marsh, 2011). It includes enforcing a social hierarchy since students get the best shot to succeed by having their identities replaced with another instead of placing value and adding upon diversity (Tranter, 2012), and in the over-centralization of educational curriculum and testing which cannot adequately provide for the education of diverse individuals (Simmons, 2004).

The flaw at the heart of the decisions made in favor of Indian Boarding Schools was its intention of cultural genocide, but most people at the schools who were involved in the education process were good-intentioned people. Clergy men and women from various Christian sects, volunteers, and whole-hearted educators spent years of their lives convinced that the work they did was to give their students a real shot at both enterprise and the adoption of the Christian faith (Adams, 1995). Not until recent history has there been a paradigm shift that began the debate of “the role of educational institutions in maintaining and enhancing minority languages” (Wright, Taylor, & Macarthur, 2000, p. 63).

Until recently, there had been almost no consideration of preserving minority languages (Fase, 1995). Either the majority was served or else there was no public support (Stoddard, 2009). After generations dedicated to civil rights movements, and the initial steps to a modern immersion program, which divorces itself from the strictly subtractive mindset, many communities now have the opportunity to take part in an additive model, one I wish my father had had access to while in the public school system. This model values multiple perspectives and does not declare a superior race or culture

that should rule the others. Just as important, there is no call for attacking the majority in the name of retribution.

Indeed, like the Native American families of the late 1800's, many 'out of place' families feel a 'need' to choose one language over another, as if success and bilingualism cannot coincide. I am a product of the effect of such a 'need.' "The symbolic domination of languages and speakers of languages structure language policies, language education policies, and implicit practices," extending to even influence public views and values concerning minority languages (Field, Skutnabb-Kangas, & Torres-Guzman, 2008, p. 295). Citizens and politicians commonly neglect the historical evidence that having languages at our disposal is an invaluable asset. One such example would be the Cherokee, Choctaw, and Navajo code talkers who utilized bilingualism to give the U.S. navy an invaluable edge in the Pacific Theater during World War II. By using their bilingualism as an asset, they provided tactical opportunities that saved many lives during the conflict. Aside from war time applications "the value of a language is at the crossroads of several disciplines and has ethical, sociological and economic aspects" (Lehmann, 2006, p. 208). Still, the code talkers' moment in time serves well as a standard for current immersion programs who seek additive education and view bilingualism and biliteracy as invaluable assets to the individual student, community, and nation.

#### The case for Dual Immersion

Various models of bilingual education aim to provide language immersion. They are not all tied by the paradigm that bilingualism is at its core a good thing. It is prudent to view specific models as either additive or subtractive. Additive programs embrace diversity and actively develop both oral and literacy skills in more than one language. In

additive programs, the standard content is taught at the same level of non-immersion classes, only in both languages. The mission is “to develop all students’ academic skills and knowledge in line with school and district standards” (Genesee, 2008, p. 28). The differences between additive programs comes down to the demographics of the students; their mission is unanimous in supporting more than one language and culture.

Personal beliefs and perspectives are not the crux of dual immersion programs’ value. Rather the researched evidence can speak for itself in the assent of additive bilingual education. Research on students in additive programs has soundly concluded that being exposed to languages and cultures did not result in any loss of ethnic identity (Swain & Lapkin, 2005). Studies have consistently shown that students in enrichment modeled programs perform at least as well as traditional programs with the immense added benefit of more than one language. Montone and Loeb (2003, p. 2) offer the following non-comprehensive list of benefits:

Table 5

*Benefits of Additive Immersion Education*

Benefits	
1	Lower likelihood of tracking and other practices that might be detrimental to language minority students
2	Development of bilingualism and biculturalism
3	Development of positive cross-cultural attitudes
4	Development of cognitive flexibility
5	Provision of an efficient model for serving the second language needs of English language learners and native speakers of English

Impressive consistency in research findings asserts the effectiveness in both teaching English speakers a new language, and teaching minority language speakers

English. Additive models are the only modes that are successful in closing the language gap for English language learners (Collier & Thomas, 2004). While studies continue to report a sound advantage to the additive models, natural obstacles exist against the implementation of dual language immersion models. Depending on the target language, materials may be hard to come by. This is particularly difficult for less commonly taught languages (e.g., Arabic, Japanese, and Russian). As families move around (to follow a job opportunity or to be with family, etc.) it can be difficult to maintain enrollment numbers.

While such problems should be addressed, they must be understood as fundamentally separate from the program's worth and merits. "Clearly dual language education is a school reform whose time has come" (Collier & Thomas, 2004, p. 18) to act as a symbol of our social development and international success. Participation in an additive program is not only a significant advantage for the students and their communities, but also a message that there is value in diversity and respect between cultures in the communities that support them.

Dual language immersion programs provide opportunities to both students and communities. While the potential benefits are strategic in many facets of today's globalized dynamics, there is a particularly unique chance to teach the next generation to embrace the growing diversity of their world. Ignoring the past friction does not create immunity to the fundamental intolerances nor to future attempts to cultural genocide. The integration of languages into the public education system is a symbol of national development and potentially a measurable defense of civil rights. In reference to the publication of the United States' newly ratified Bill of Rights, Ann Robert Turgot said,

“They are the hope of the human race; they may well become its model” (Appleby, 1992, p. 419). I echo this sentiment in regards to the children who, through dual language immersion programs, will begin to inherit the disposition to look for the good in the diverse perspectives of the world along with the augmented ability to interact with such diversity, making meaningful and lasting connections across linguistic and cultural barriers.

#### Un rayo de esperanza

Los programas de inmersión, que enseñan a los niños en inglés y en la lengua que los padres escojan simultáneamente, representan una esperanza. Así, los niños aprenden el valor de otras culturas y los estudiantes comparten con otros esa perspectiva. Los hijos van creciendo, apreciando y considerando otros puntos de vista. Ya que en el mundo no hay solo una cultura, tenemos que aceptar la diversidad que se ofrece a nuestro alrededor, porque si no todos perderíamos lo que yo he perdido; además de la lengua, se pierde la identidad.

El mensaje que anhelo expresarles a ustedes es que todas las oportunidades que no estuvieron a su alcance, sus hijos sí las pueden obtener. Ellos pueden obtener el don de ser bilingües, ya que hay maneras y programas que les apoyarán a ustedes para lograr esta meta. Al inscribir a sus hijos en este programa de inmersión, ellos estarán heredando algo más que ser ciudadanos de los Estados Unidos. Tendrán la conexión con la sangre y también valorarán la identidad que tienen de sí mismos. Si no hay un programa de español cerca de ustedes, aún pueden inscribir a sus hijos en uno de otra lengua y hablarles español en casa. De ese modo, serán trilingües, ya que el inglés se aprende en todas las escuelas, y en el entorno. Es importante que nuestros hijos vean el valor de la

diversidad tanto en casa como en la comunidad. A través de ese propósito, ellos construirán una identidad fuerte, con la autoconfianza que los llevará a ser exitosos en la vida.

Ahora que soy padre, les hablo a mis hijos exclusivamente en español y mi esposa les habla en inglés. Nuestra decisión como padres, es comunicarles a nuestros hijos que hay un gran valor en su apellido hispano, en la variación y en ellos mismos. Decidimos inscribir a nuestros hijos en el programa de inmersión porque nosotros creemos que nuestros hijos deben entender la importancia de ser bilingües y multiculturales. Es la esperanza que me animó a estudiar español. Entre mis antepasados hispanohablantes y mi posteridad quiero ser el único monolingüe en mi familia al dar a mis hijos el don de ser bilingües.

No soy el único que siente que no pertenece a su propia familia extendida, porque hay otros que pierden su identidad también. Por dentro me siento muy limitado porque solo puedo hablar bien en inglés, cuando me hubiese gustado hacerlo en ambas lenguas. Y es por eso que espero que todos los niños, incluyendo los míos, reciban de sus padres lo mejor que ellos puedan ofrecerles, y sobre todo, que ellos entiendan el gran valor que tiene el hablar las dos lenguas. Mantengo una gran reverencia en cuanto a los sacrificios de mi padre y de sus padres. Por lo tanto, me toca a mí respetarlos al aumentar la herencia que proveo a mis hijos a través del bilingüismo.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Government Influence in Public Education, Challenges in Second Language Writing

## INTRODUCTION

This section consists of two annotated bibliographies which were born from personal research interests. Since they are each an investigation into intriguing topics of which I knew insufficiently, I approached the papers as chronological recordings of my findings. I chose both topics during the process of researching for this portfolio. Each annotated bibliography corresponds with a paper from the Research Perspectives section. Together, these bibliographies served as the foundation of my professional opinions presented in the Research Perspectives papers. The two topics are: 1) *Government Influence in Public Education* to prepare for my testimony as an advocate for additive educational paradigms and 2) *Challenges in Second Language Writing* in preparation of my paper on 21<sup>st</sup> century literacies in the language classroom.



## Government Influence in Public Education

While enjoying a Ken Burns documentary film (1996) on the United States' expansion into the West, I learned of special boarding schools dedicated to the education of Native Americans. This type of school was designed to force children from their families and off the reservations, to require that they adopt a 'white man's lifestyle,' and to even erase traces of their tribal backgrounds. My initial reaction to such history was disgust and anger, but as a self-proclaimed level-headed adult, I soon resolved to investigate how the U.S. government has influenced public education throughout its history. I divide my findings chronologically into Early, Middle and Current periods. Early history in a young country is relative of course, so when I started this investigation I decided to consider early history to include the initial colonies until 1900. The middle period would cover the 1900s until 1970, leaving for the current period only a little of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. I chose this uneven distribution both to reflect the amount of resources that would be available and to coincide with my view of the 'American mindset' as regards to historical events. Though I did not know what I would discover, I wanted to take a particular interest in culture and language education.

### The Early Period

Going into this early period, I knew that the education system in England would have an influence on how pilgrims and colonists would envision education. **Zuckerman (1971)** taught me that "the English commitment to permanent agricultural communities ineluctably intensifying the concern for preservation of their cultural heritage among men and women who could expect no imminent return to their mother country" was the center of concern (p. 19). With the shift from religious pilgrims to British colonies, political

influence started to compete with the religious influence on education. By finding a related article, I was able to add that “there were other vital educative institutions, such as the home, the church, and the community” to my understanding of colonial education (**Tucker, 1975**, p. 343). In that same article, Tucker made reference to an intriguing letter that commented on the symbolic nature of educational systems.

Upon finding the letter, I read, “the easiest way of becoming acquainted with the modes of thinking, the rules of conduct, and the prevailing manners of any people, is to examine what sort of education they give their children; how they treat them at home, and what they are taught in their places of public worship” (**de Crèvecoeur, 1782, Letter V**). By linking the profound meaning of education to the roles of church, families, and seemingly isolated colonial communities, de Crèvecoeur helped me to understand the great efforts and value that education held for the United States of America at that time.

Education seemed to be holistic in two ways: 1) the whole community took some part in the education of a person despite the lack of public schools, and 2) education involved both hitting the books and building competence, as well as moral concerns tied to Christian beliefs. After these discoveries, I realized that I would either need to devote my life to being an historical education researcher, or to skip a great deal of important history to find the transitions that lead to the Indian boarding schools previously mentioned.

In pointing my research to the context of those boarding schools, I found that “the belief that Indians needed to adapt to European standards of behavior dates back to the colonial era. From that time forward, corporal punishment was seen as a useful tool in promoting the discipline necessary for assimilation” (**Trennert, 1989**, p. 595). Trennert

went on to explain how education, discipline, and productivity were common to both Native American and European standards yet the methods of each were radically different (Trennert). While corporal punishment was prevalent at white schools, reports of Native American students suffering “brutality, whippings, beatings, and even death” illuminate practices that would not have been culturally accepted among white students as disciplinary measures (Trennert, 1989, p. 595). A largely unquestioned paradigm of Native American inferiority masked the severity of the crimes committed against boarding school students.

Political dialogue revolved around cultural superiority. Those favorable of Native Americans saw a big brother relationship, those not inclined to value them saw them as enemies or as a nuisance. The uniformity among the varying perspectives rested on the assumption that Native Americans were not equal to ‘Americans.’ Though the idea of ‘Indian Reform’ held roots earlier in time, **Adams (1995)** showed me a pivotal moment in the political strength of the reform movement. Two reformers visited the Sioux tribe in 1882, concluding “first, that Indians were capable of being assimilated into the mainstream of American life; and second, that the only barrier to achieving this objective was the lack of a sustained political will to do so” (Adams, 1995, p. 9). Though I am grateful for Adams’ insights and details, the more I read from his book, the more deviance from original educational beliefs I found.

Ironically, the Indian boarding schools were viewed, by reformers, “as a seedbed of republican virtues and democratic freedoms. A promulgator of individual opportunity and national prosperity, and an instrument of social progress and harmony” (Adams, 1995, p. 18). I found this to be a hypocritical notion that by, at times, forcefully taking

children from families the government was providing an example of its ‘republican virtues and democratic freedoms’ (Adams, 1995; **Burns & Ives, 1996**). **Lindsey (1995)** commented on the decline of this school program teaching me that “boarding schools failed because student accommodation was often little more than pragmatic adaptation to changing historical realities” (p. 165). The ‘need’ for continuous forced assimilation began to be outdated as the youth of the tribes became more receptive of Euro-American culture and sought it out. Despite the simplistic notions of the reformers, reality remained dynamic and the inevitable program failure did happen. After gaining a better understanding of such an educational setting, I turned my focus to the gap or similarities that I would discover leading to modern formal education.

#### The Middle Period

I jumped to fairly modern history to find the setting for our present-day educational politics. Unfortunately, I found mention of a not-so-positive court case from 1923, *Meyer v. State of Nebraska*. Due to the Great War (World War I) and prevalent anti-German sentiments, restrictions on language instruction were put into effect and “an instructor in Zion Parochial School... unlawfully taught the subject of reading in the German language” (**FindLaw, 2016**). Despite the unconstitutional nature of the prosecution, I found the following result; “Section 1. No person, individually or as a teacher, shall, in any private, denominational, parochial or public school, teach any subject to any person in any language than the English language” (FindLaw, 2016). Subsequent sections explain that this restriction would apply to those who have not already successfully finished the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, allowing for high school and college-level foreign language classes. Despite the first amendment to the Bill of Rights that ensures

freedom of speech, this court ruling decided that the freedom of speech would be limited to that freedom only existing in English (**The Charters of Freedom, 2016**). That is, until the results of the civil rights movement would determine otherwise.

I was glad to find **Gonzalez (2002)**, who pointed out the ray of light that I was craving. Emerging from the civil rights movement legislation, the U.S. government produced Title VI which “prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs and activities receiving Federal financial assistance” (Gonzalez, 2002, p. 5). I reflected back to de Crèvecoeur’s letter thinking that perhaps the United States of America had begun to show its priorities through its education system. The “[p]assage of The Civil Rights Act of 1964 marked a new period of legislative and judicial activism aimed at assisting language minority students [to] succeed in public schools” (Gonzalez, 2002, p. 6). I soon found that this new period was not so linear, as I continued to research government influence in education.

I was looking up articles that would show me how the Civil Rights Act’s Title VI influenced public education. Though I did not find the magic article, I found mention of court cases with mixed results. The American people were struggling to decide how to apply the Civil Rights Act. I was glad to discover the case *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* of 1969. This case concluded that “students do not shed their constitutional rights at the schoolhouse gate” (**Justia United States Supreme Court, 2015**). At this point, I reflected on how much had changed since the time that families and churches carried more weight than government in education. There have been pros and cons in this fundamental shift, but clearly the role of government was well established by this time.

## The Current Period

I had the opportunity to travel and exchange ideas with many different people when I attended the 2016 TexLER conference. Some of our conversations reminded me of California's Proposition 227 (1998). I had forgotten some of the details, or rather as a 10-year-old boy living in California, I had not grasped much of what it proposed. When I investigated, I found that this particular proposition "requires, among other things, that all children in California public schools be taught English by being taught in English" (**California Legislative Information, 2014**). This explicitly anti-bilingual education proposition seemed to echo the *Meyer v. State of Nebraska* sentiments during the anti-German mindsets.

Proposition 227 also specifies that a pupil's parent or legal guardian has standing to sue for enforcement of its provisions and, if successful, to receive normal and customary attorney's fees and actual damages, but not punitive or consequential damages. Proposition 227 further provides that school board members, other elected officials, and public school teachers or administrators who willfully and repeatedly refuse to implement its provisions may be held personally liable for fees and actual damages by a pupil's parent or legal guardian. (California Legislative Information, 2014)

There was a notable difference in that there was no Great War to inspire it; rather, many of the public voting in favor of the proposition felt that it would respond to 'overcoddling Spanish speaking children who would never learn English.' This proposition was overturned in the November 2016 ballot, effectively allowing for languages other than English to have a legal presence in Californian public schools.

Presently, there are some realities that must be acknowledged. I drew from my personal experience of standardized testing and other such top-down initiated public school characteristics to know what to search for next. **Gottlob (2010)** stepped in to show

me how the modern day student is analyzed by GPA, and various standardized test scores and other rigid components of education. I was interested in these criteria for measurement not to opionate over their validity and relevance but as markers of fundamental changes in how the U.S. views education. **Sipple (1999)** added another dimension to how top-down decisions are made concerning education in that “business[es] contribut[e] substantively to the debate over the direction of education reform” (p. 482). I was starting to see how education had become more of a resource than a right, in that it was important since education helps the economy, and that fact seemed more important than the pursuit of learning and of moral obligation. Early settlers taught their children from the bible despite the fact that it must have been a distraction from their immediate economical state.

This topic would take a career to explore, and I was beginning to see that other demands on my time called for some sort of conclusion to my investigation. In an attempt to find a satisfying conclusion, I liked **Coe’s (2014)** blunt description of the current educational situation: “the challenges districts currently face in times of high government involvement with educational policy” relate to a lack of freedom in educational models and decisions (p. 1). Also, I wanted to know the current situation with Native Americans in education and found **Amoitte (2009)**;

The United States federal government has a unique, trust responsibility and obligation to provide for the education of Native American children. Today, while the vast majority of Native American children attend public schools, the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) continues to oversee 174 elementary and secondary schools located on 63 reservations in 23 states across the United States. Tragically, the academic achievement of students in these schools falls far below that of students in public schools. Less than one-fourth of the 174 schools under the direction of the Bureau of

Indian Education are making adequate yearly progress (AYP) as defined by No Child Left Behind. (p. ii)

I do not have a fully developed opinion as of now, on how much the government should be involved in the educational system. I do believe that we are still recovering from damaging legislation, and that most often, legislation reflects the ‘popular mindset.’ I find that de Crèvecoeur’s analysis truly does apply as much then as now. The nature of an education system reflects the people and governments that produce and sustain them. Children’s education should embrace cultures and perspectives rather than move to eradicate cultures and perspectives as was done through the Indian Boarding Schools shown in Ken Burn’s *The West* (1996).



## Challenges in Second Language Writing

Though many adults already confront various difficulties while writing for professional or academic purposes, writing in a second language presents a whole new set of difficulties. This annotated bibliography is an exploration of the differences between the two writing scenarios. As a second language teacher, it is paramount for me to understand the challenges presented by each task assigned to students. As an individual, I have always loved literature and writing. I naturally grew curious about the differences between writing in a second language and writing in a first language.

Because of my resistant reaction to writing in an L2, I decided to investigate the research literature on L2 writing. At first glance, I expected writing in other languages to be only a matter of quick translation. While reading assigned texts for my Culture Teaching and Learning course, I came across the quote that stirred the need to investigate, “it does not seem prudent to assume that theories of first language writing alone will suffice” (**Kroll, 1990**, p. 20). I recorded my thought in reaction to reading that quote as follows, “Actually, I have been assuming that, so what have I been overlooking?” Research shows that my quick translation theory could not be farther from the truth. Writing in a second language involves both languages’ lexical complexities, draws on multiple pragmatic codes, and is, at its foundation, a different process entirely.

### Lexical and Syntactic Factors – L2 writing does not equal L1 writing

What seemed to me to have been apples to apples was really an apple and an orange painted red. **Hinkel (2011)** teaches that “learning to write in an L2 is a process foundationally and substantively distinct from learning to write in an L1” (p. 528). This first discovery was both a shock and a natural lesson since my personal experience

reflected the claim. Writing in the L1 involves organizational thought. Through many years of learning writing protocols in secondary schooling, a good portion of students gain basic writing proficiency while still lacking elegance. Hinkel's lesson to me was to verify Kroll's initial quote that started my slow realization.

Next, Engber taught me how writing in the L2 has a different concern since lexical and syntactic errors often impede comprehension. **Engber (1995)** analyzed intermediate-level writers of a second language and concludes that "a number of errors either could not have been understood in context or would have caused significant effort on the part of the reader in terms of comprehension" (p. 149). Engber helped me realize that when I wrote in Spanish or French, my concerns and efforts were distinct from writing in English.

The more I reflected on what I had learned so far, the better I could distinguish the challenges between writing in English and writing in my L2. **Connor (1996)** helped me see that writing in a second language requires much more and at times even a different set of organizational requirements. The writer must balance discourse competence, socio-linguistic competence, strategic competence, and grammatical competence all contextualized by the given setting for the work of writing. The balance of these competencies brings the writer to an eventual final stage of second language competence which "allows a learner to let ideas flow on paper without the interference of having to translate them or being overly conscious of the language" (Connor, 1996, p. 4). As I love writing in general, I write enough to have had many personal experiences that reinforced Connor's analysis of linguistic consciousness.

When I wrote a series of short stories in another language, my greatest concerns were always comprehensible phrasing and wording as my ideas did not flow without translation as they do with my L1. I likely wrote more notes and scribbles in my L1 to prepare to write than the resulting L2 product. Hinkel (2011) defined my writing concerns by saying that the errors of L2 writers are different since the errors of L1 writers “are unlikely to impede comprehension” (p. 531). I was relying on my L1 as a tool to address errors other than comprehension, reflecting Hinkel, Connor, and Engber’s teachings.

Pragmatics – “Common Sense” writing practices are not common to all

While searching for a distinction between approaching L1 and L2 writing, I found **Fu (2011)** who added a dimension to L2 writing by pointing out that despite growing western influences, “Chinese writers still tend to be indirect, which means Chinese writers still do not fully follow the Western Writers’ pattern of putting a topic sentence at the beginning of the paragraph, followed by support sentences, and then drawing the conclusion” (p. 27).

I first wondered if this is an example of a prominent writing style or if this is evidence of various culture-based writing styles. Fu (2011) went on to analyze Japanese writing culture, and found that “there is no firm conclusion, only an ambiguous ending that may point to several possible outcomes” (p. 28). In the same vein, **Crismore, Markkanen, and Steffensen (1993)** showed me “that the linguistic devices used for” discourse may be “used very little or not at all in the mother tongue but are used frequently in the foreign language” causing problems for L2 writing (p. 41). Crismore et al. (1993) found as an example of this that Finnish university students used more

interactive texts such as “see table 1.1” with greater frequency than students from the U.S. The picture started to come into focus for me. Culture influences writing; therefore, mixing and matching language with cultures can create inconsistencies.

Next, **Shrum and Glisan (2016)** taught me that languages involve much more than grammar such as sociocultural norms, gestures and other non-verbal elements, styles of communication, and pragmatics. Thus I gained an awareness of cultural factors in expectations of writing.

I then thought that L2 writers might need both the linguistic competence to write down their ideas and understanding of the writing cultures involved. Both **Taylor and Taylor (2014)** and **Mohan and Lo (1985)** affirmed my hypothesis by teaching that each genre of writing carries with it rules and regulations that are well established by the specific culture over time. So then the L2 writer must identify and conform to genre differences for successful culture-specific writing. So long as the reader is not aware of such differences or does not accept them, the potential for misunderstanding will persist. **Fox (1994)** showed me examples that revealed evidence that international student writers receive “so little useful help along the way with writing and thinking in the U.S. university context” because of a mono-cultural perspective on writing (p. 125). The mindset seems to be that when international students are accepted into a university, they should be proficient in its writing culture before arriving. While dwelling on this train of thought, I began to believe that perhaps instead of a conformity mindset, it can also be due in part to the reader’s ignorance to cultural writing norms. I was beginning to think that conversely readers should also escape a mono-cultural perspective on writing as there are many contexts even within one culture that dictate good and poor writing.

Language learners are at a stark disadvantage when writing in a second language just as anyone would be if given a task without the necessary ‘Common Sense’ to carry it out. Once the multi-cultural writer understands this fallacy of ‘Common Sense’ then the writing task becomes an attempt “to appeal to the reader through a reality upon which the writer and the reader can agree, and to convince the reader of a particular argument within this reality” according to Kroll (1990, p. 31). After learning of lexical, syntactic and pragmatic factors, I felt a natural pull to turn this research into applicable knowledge as a language teacher.

#### Pedagogy – Structuring writing activities for language learners’ success

Thus far my research had been largely selfish and spurred by my love for writing, but I have a duty to translate this into advantages for my students. I continued my research to discover pedagogical implications and did not come out wanting. First it was **Bialystock (1978)** who gave me clues to second language writing in the classroom: “We don’t learn language by having our errors pointed out and corrected; we learn as a by-product of using language in order to do things we care about doing” (pp. 82-83). So when I am planning a writing activity for my students, I should keep in mind how I will look at them. I should not focus on errors to point out, but a purpose to accomplish.

With the end defined, I needed to know how to prepare students before they would begin writing. I discovered that **Kepner (1991)** suggests that “the use of writing prompts which are personally as well as cognitively engaging are essential to developing writing proficiency in emerging L2 writers” (p. 311) which was echoed by **Shamsuzzaman, Everatt, and McNeill (2014)**. One such prompt might be: Write a love letter to a girl who speaks only Spanish. This would tie back to Bialystock’s advice in

that the success of the love letter would naturally be measured by her understanding the letter or not, rather than a misplaced accent.

So far, all the research was pointing to target language use, but I did not have clearly defined in my mind the appropriate uses, if any, of the L1. As I continued the hunt, I found suggestions to use prewriting to structure the activity towards the desired results. **Johannessen (1982)** taught me that prewriting results in greater benefits from the actual writing activity. In order to tackle a large task, which can be presented in a writing prompt, pre-writing activities scaffold the writing. Gathering data through research and organizing thoughts beforehand through brainstorming and mind mapping are procedures that help “students learn the thinking strategies essential to a specific composition task before they begin to write” (Johannessen, 1982, p. 23). Johannessen reminded me that there is a bigger picture to a single writing activity in that successful second language writers would learn the strategies to complete writing tasks outside of class as well. I assumed that these prewriting activities might call for L1 use that would enhance the learning opportunity, given that there is a common language for the learners. **Rell (2005)** reaffirmed the appropriateness of a brief L1 moment whose purpose was to enable better L2 use. She taught that “the role of the L1 in a CLT classroom may vary greatly depending on the teacher, the needs of the students, and the task at hand” (Rell, 2005, p.11). The use of the L1 should be minimal, pointed at enhancing the learning experience.

### Conclusion

As a result of my research, I highlighted three main discoveries that are of the greatest impact for an avid reader of second language writing such as I am. Lexical and syntactic difficulties that naturally arise among all second language learners and

pragmatic writing differences give critical insight into this matter. Furthermore, preparing students for successful second language writing is important due to the fundamental differences.

Due to the evident differences between L1 writing and L2 writing, I concluded that a reader needs to be more accepting of both organizational differences and of influences of the L2 writer's L1. I also now believe that the L2 writer needs to have a clear understanding of the reader's cultural expectations. I also now think that achieving native-like writing should not be the goal of L2 writers, rather to gain the L2 writing skills necessary to participate in the target sphere of writing pragmatics. With both parties involved embracing a cross-cultural view, both parties open themselves to more completely exploring this world than was previously possible as they share their perspectives and insights.

Pre-writing activities and writing prompts are great tools in guiding L2 writers to success. Through this exploration of L2 writing, I made sense of my L2 writing past and am better prepared for my L2 writing future. I have developed a deeper understanding of what I should expect of students when asking them to write. I will also know what should not be expected of students when asking them to write in a L2. I hope to apply these lessons in a way that improves not only the writing that I will produce, but also the writing I require of others.

## LOOKING FORWARD

I came into this program having taught six entry-level Spanish courses at a University. I have taught four more while studying at Utah State University. As I look to the future, I am guided by my thirst for perspectives. I feel as though my background and my interests point me towards teacher training. I will continue to explore different pedagogical perspectives, and hope to mentor others in their exploration in how to best teach and learn languages. I have thus far spent my time teaching within the higher-education realm and am projecting a career in this same setting. I am currently deciding between several PhD programs in which I will further explore SLA in general or bicultural, bilingual and biliteracy education. I see both avenues as offering a promising career in which I will help others figure out their teaching philosophy.



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APPENDICES



## Appendix A

*Grounds for Spanish Refusal Acts*

Grounds for refusal	Results from data*
Moral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subjects refused more directly, e.g., “I cannot go with you, I am going to Christmas Mass with my family that night.”</li> <li>• Direct rejections based on moral grounds are much less of a threat to a relationship.</li> </ul>
Educational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More tact and supplementary reasons are required; “[E]ducational reasons may not be as valid or acceptable as other reasons... so the refuser provides even more explanations” (Lauper, 1997, p. 18). E.g., “I would love to, but I can’t with the math class’ midterm coming up. If I fail another test in my math class my grade will be sunk for good.”</li> <li>• Commonly the “dispreferred response” (Félix-Brasdefer, 2006, p. 174).</li> <li>• More likely to threaten a relationship.</li> </ul>
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Likely to be easily accepted.</li> <li>• Most likely to use “statements of regret” (Lauper, 1997, p. 19), e.g., ‘I would love to go to the rock concert with you, but I can’t afford the ticket. I can’t believe that I will miss out!’</li> <li>• Often lead to further conversation about financial restrictions.</li> </ul>
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “[I]n refusals for physical reasons, subjects also used gratitude frequently” (Lauper, 1997, p. 17), e.g., ‘thank you, but I am full, maybe I will eat more in a few hours.’</li> <li>• Readily accepted in general but comprise variety of severity, e.g., food allergies verses taste preference, ‘I cannot go surfing because of my back’ verses ‘my toe is soar.’</li> </ul>
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires careful explanation “to ensure that the requester didn't take the refusal "personally"” (Lauper, 1997, p. 17). E.g., “That sounds great, but I am so sorry that I won’t be able to go with you this time. I normally would jump on such an opportunity except that is the same night that I will be out of town visiting my sick grandmother. I’m sorry, maybe next time ok?”</li> <li>• Often characterized by lengthy lists of excuses and many turns taken, the ‘social dance.’</li> </ul>

*\*drawn from Lauper’s 1997 study*