Teaching a Second Language: Communication, Culture, and Collaboration

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Teaching a Second Language: Communication, Culture, and Collaboration

by

Diannylín Núñez de Paulino

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

MASTER OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah
2018
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ABSTRACT

Teaching a Second Language: Communication, Culture, and Collaboration

by

Diannylín Núñez de Paulino: Master of Second Language Teaching
Utah State University, 2018

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

This portfolio presents the author’s perspectives on the effective use of language teaching techniques, practices, and tools. The first section demonstrates the author’s teaching philosophy, which includes her perceptions as a foreign language instructor and learner, teaching observations of various foreign language instructors, and self-reflections about teaching. The following section contains three research papers, which explore foreign language anxiety, effectiveness of co-teaching a foreign language class, and refusals across different cultures. The last section consists of three annotated bibliographies in which the author analyzes journal articles and book chapters about communicative language teaching, the role of culture in the Spanish classroom, and the use of digital technology to enhance students’ writing skills.

(137 pages)
I am deeply grateful to everyone who has supported me in this journey. First, I thank my committee members for being willing to contribute to my work. I thank Dr. María Luisa Spicer-Escalante for serving as my major professor and for always filling me with encouraging words. Her enthusiasm and positive attitude motivated me not only to be a better teacher but also a better person. I also thank Dr. Kevin Krogh, whose feedback and insights helped me to improve as a learner and as a foreign language instructor. Lastly, I owe my deepest gratitude to Dr. Karin deJonge-Kannan. She has patiently advised me throughout my four semesters in the MSLT program. Without her guidance, encouragement, and selfless help, this portfolio would not have materialized. I also thank Dr. Joshua Thoms, Dr. Abdulkafi Albirini, and Tempe Willey. The insights I gained from their classes will always stay with me. I thank Dr. Bradford Hall for giving me the opportunity to teach Spanish language courses for two semesters, which enabled me to write this portfolio from immediate experience.

I also wish to acknowledge the help provided by Kathy McKee and Darla Moore. Working as a graduate instructor at USU would not have been easy without their constant help. I express my gratitude to my fellow MSLT students, who kindly provided me feedback and help whenever I needed it. In particular, Kim who more than a classmate became one of my closest friends. I give special thanks to my Spanish teaching colleagues Roberto, Marina, Juanita, and Hyrum. Our discussions about activities, techniques, and the differences between Hispanic cultures have made me a better Spanish instructor.
I thank my family, my siblings, aunts, and cousins, and in particular, my parents Pura Pantaleón and Lincoln Núñez, who offered me their help when I decided to come to USU, even though it meant that I would be far away from them. *Este logro es también de ustedes.* I have been fortunate to share this dream and experience with my husband Farlin. His support and company gave me strength whenever I thought I could not do it. I thank my friends in the Dominican Republic and the friends I have made in Logan for their constant support and for lifting my spirits whenever I felt overwhelmed. *Finalmente,* agradezco al Ministerio de Educación Superior, Ciencia y Tecnología (MESCyT) por otorgarme la ayuda financiera para poder alcanzar esta meta.
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACTFL = American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
ALM = Audiolingual Method
CALL = Computer-Assisted Language Teaching
CCP = Cross-Cultural Pragmatics
CLT = Communicative Language Teaching
DLI = Dual Language Immersion
EFL = English as a Foreign Language
ELL = English Language Learner
ESL = English as a Second Language
FFE = Focus-on-Form Episodes
FLA = Foreign Language Anxiety
FL = Foreign Language
L1 = First Language / Native Language
L2 = Second Language
LLS = Language Learning Strategies
LRE = Language-Related Episodes
MSLT = Master of Second Language Teaching
PPT = PowerPoint Presentation
SATS = Self-Assessment of Teaching Statement
SFL = Spanish as a Foreign Language
TBLT = Task-Based Language Teaching
TL = Target Language
TWI = Two-Way Immersion
USU = Utah State University
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INTRODUCTION

This portfolio reflects the work I have done during my studies in the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program at Utah State University. It reflects my beliefs as a Spanish foreign language (FL) instructor at USU and an English FL instructor in the Dominican Republic. The opportunity to be a graduate instructor at USU allowed me to put my beliefs and the knowledge gained in the MSLT program into practice.

My teaching philosophy is based on the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach, which makes students the architects of their own FL learning and the instructor their guide. I use the CLT approach with adjustments to fit my students’ needs in specific contexts. My teaching philosophy highlights the importance of student motivation and understanding foreign language anxiety (FLA). I have discovered that the lack of motivation and excessive levels of FLA are the main obstacles for FL learners. My teaching philosophy also embraces the role of culture in FL teaching and the use of digital technology to improve FL learners’ language skills. If students do not learn about their target-language culture, their learning will be incomplete. These several components of my teaching philosophy are further developed in the research perspectives section and the annotated bibliographies section.
TEACHING PERSPECTIVES
APPRENTICESHIP OF OBSERVATION

Growing up in the Dominican Republic, learning another language besides Spanish was never something I took seriously, even though I was always an outstanding student whether I liked the subject or not. My first experience as an English student was in middle school when I was eleven years old. Teaching a foreign language in the majority of Dominican public and private schools meant that the teacher would write some vocabulary words or grammar explanations (translated into Spanish) on the board and then write some exercises for the students to complete on the board and in their notebooks. My teacher did not have the proficiency level expected of an English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher, but that was not uncommon. School administrators viewed English classes as “just a requisite and anyone can teach it”. In fact, most people in the Dominican Republic still have that same perception of EFL teaching. Despite English being present everywhere (e. g., when reading directions on medicines, when turning on the television to watch a movie, etc.), most people did not think it was important to learn it. If someone wanted to really learn English, they had to study at an English institute, and eventually that is what I did.

When I turned twelve, my parents enrolled me in one of the best English institutions in the city along with two cousins who were three years older than I, and there I discovered the joy of learning a second language (L2). I was the youngest of the three, and yet I always earned higher grades. I helped my cousins with their homework and my teachers considered me an excellent student. Studying English in an English institution helped me learn the language in a more effective way.
After three years, I switched institutions because the first one was no longer as efficient as it had initially been. As time passed, I somehow lost the joy I had once experienced. I somehow lost my motivation. My cousins were now one level below me, and the numbers in my class had diminished over the years. During my last year, of the four classes held each week, I would routinely miss two and sometimes even three, and I did not do my homework. The teacher focused more on one girl of the three students in the class and so I felt I was wasting my time. I did not drop out because I knew my parents would not let me, and also because despite my declining motivation to learn English, I wanted to finish the course and graduate. Later on, I realized that I had become my own motivator.

A few months before finishing the program, I started teaching beginning children at the same institute, and I started to learn a few things about teaching. The experience helped me realize that being a teacher did not mean having all the answers. A teacher never stops learning. But despite this new insight, teaching was not yet my passion. When I was about to begin college, I quit my teaching job. I was not sure about what major to study because the one that interested me most was not available in my town. My mom heard about some scholarships in Education that the government was offering and told me about them. Although I did not love the idea of teaching, I knew I could be good at learning foreign languages.

English was easier for me because of the large American presence in the Dominican Republic. French on the other hand was truly challenging. I enrolled in Alliance Française in my hometown as soon as I began college. In the beginning, I did not like the language. I had never had a French teacher who was proficient enough in
French for me to model. My first teacher at Alliance Française helped me fall in love with the language. From that moment on, French became my favorite subject, and I became the top student in all my French classes. When I was a junior, I was chosen to represent my country in a Caribbean interchange in Martinique along with another student from the university. There I practiced not only French, but also English. The other visiting students were all native English speakers. That summer remains as one of the best of my life because I learned that speaking a second language opens many new possibilities. I had the opportunity to interact closely with native speakers of my target languages, to learn about different cultures, and to make friends from many different countries.

Two years before finishing my studies, I started working as an English teacher at a private middle school. This job made me question whether teaching was what I really wanted to do for the rest of my life. The majority of the students did not buy the textbook, they did not want to write, they did not want to speak, and they did not pay attention to any of the teachers. The worst part was that nobody, not even the principal, did anything about it. I thought to myself: “this is just for a while and it will help you be better; it is only twice a week; be patient”. A year later, I came back to teach at the English institution where I learned English. This job was the opposite of my prior one. Teaching English became “easy”. I enjoyed it, and the students’ disposition to learn made me want to create different and interesting activities. Those afternoons were not simply a job for me. They made me forget my mornings at the private school.

A few years later, I obtained a position at a public school by taking different competence tests. The time I spent working there helped me learn lots of strategies and
techniques that would help me be a better teacher and achieve the goals I set for my
students’ learning. A colleague of mine inspired me every time I observed one of his
classes. For him the students were the most important part of the classroom. He treated
them with respect, and they felt that being their friend was more important than being
their teacher. His way of teaching amazed me because not all the teachers in the school
could manage to keep that group of students in order and maintain their attention. I
realized that if a teacher yells at the students every time they do something wrong, the
behavior that is being censured will only become stronger. These students were used to
their parents yelling at them at home. They needed to be treated with patience and to feel
that somebody cared about them. This was something that stuck with me and that I have
applied to my own teaching ever since. Now, whenever I sense a bad attitude from
students, I speak with them and treat them with respect so that they know they can trust
me and that I want them to succeed.

When I started the MSLT program and observed my classmates teach L2 classes,
I was impressed by the way they taught. I did not know that teaching a foreign language
using only the target language was possible. The first language class I observed at Utah
State University was a beginning Spanish class. The instructor had great energy, and the
students showed positive attitudes toward the target language. Observing others teach
helped me become more interested in teaching adults and incorporating the strategies of
the teachers I observed in my own L2 classroom.

My experience as a second language student raised my awareness of the different
approaches and techniques that teachers adopt in order to be effective L2 instructors. My
journey to become a language teacher taught me that it is not impossible to learn to love a
job that you were not sure about before. Although this was not the career I dreamed of pursuing when I was younger, it is what I feel most passionate about now. I realized that what I needed was guidance and a better teaching approach. My professors and classmates in the MSLT program have provided me with the tools necessary to help me move to the next level in achieving my professional goals.
PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT

After completing the MSLT program, I plan to teach English as a foreign language at a university in the Dominican Republic. Teaching adults is something I have wanted to pursue since I was an undergraduate. I feel I can make a difference and contribute to the production of well-prepared professionals capable of working in different parts of the world thanks to their capacity to communicate in languages other than their native one. There are not many qualified French-as-a-foreign-language instructors in the Dominican Republic. This encourages me to prepare myself more in that area in order to teach at an advanced level. Changing the perspective that most people in my country have towards learning a second language is my main goal, and I believe this program has thoroughly prepared me to do so.
TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

Introduction

Being part of the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program has changed my perspective on teaching a second language (L2) and the most effective ways to teach. I decided to become a L2 teacher because I want to make my students feel the love that I feel for languages. When I started the MSLT program, my goal was to be better prepared to teach English as a foreign language (EFL) and French as a foreign language (FFL) in the Dominican Republic. However, after teaching Spanish as a foreign language (SFL) at Utah State University (USU), I became interested in teaching SFL outside the Dominican Republic. Speaking a foreign language, being able to interact with people from different countries, and getting to know their cultures has broadened my view of the world.

In my SFL classroom, I have been able to apply what I have learned during this journey towards getting my master’s degree. When I taught EFL and FFL in my home country, the activities I created were mostly written. I wrote exercises on the board and the students copied them by hand in their notebooks. According to Cloud, Genesee, and Hamayan (2000), tasks that only require the use of paper and pencil are not likely to produce real-world TL interaction among students. I used to blame the lack of resources such as books and digital technology. However, now I can think of many different ways of teaching the target language (TL) in a communicative way without even needing handouts. I can now teach the TL in the TL with no need of translation, except on very rare occasion.
In my teaching philosophy, I will discuss the four main aspects that I believe are the most essential for effective L2 teaching: the role of the student in the communicative classroom, task-based language teaching, learner motivation, and the use of digital technology in the classroom.

**Student Role in the Communicative Classroom**

In my experience as an L2 teacher, I have noticed that most of the time, even if students are interested in learning the TL, they feel afraid to show their skills due to their low proficiency. One common fear is that their pronunciation is not good enough. Flege (1999) claims that “foreign accents may arise not because one has lost the ability to learn to pronounce, but because one has learned to pronounce the L1 so well” (p. 125). It is the teacher’s responsibility to help the students understand that as long as their listeners understand the message they are trying to convey, accent does not really matter.

Students need to be given opportunities to use the language to interpret, to express, and to negotiate meaning in real-life situations (Wilson-Duffy, 2003) without worrying about making errors. Savignon (1997) states that learners will improve their communicative skills by using the TL in interaction, not by repeating grammatical patterns. Grammar is important in order to learn an L2, but when students begin to learn a language, knowing the names of grammar components is not relevant, as long as the learners know how to use those components. According to Canale and Swain (1980), a grammatical approach is organized on the basis of linguistic forms and emphasizes the ways in which these forms can be combined to form grammatically accurate sentences. A communicative approach, on the other hand, is organized on the basis of communicative functions such as apologizing, describing, inviting, etc., that a learner needs to know. It
emphasizes the ways in which particular grammatical forms may be used to express these functions appropriately. Duff (2014) affirms that “the implementation of CLT is very context-dependent, based on local language education policies, educational cultures, assessment practices, and the availability of proficient and trained teachers and resources” (p. 20). For this reason, it is fundamental for students to develop their communicative competence (Hymes, 1972), which refers to the rules of “usage and appropriacy in a given social context (Savignon, 1983).

CLT helps students practice situations that they will encounter outside the classroom. However, Lee and VanPatten (2003) state that the classroom context often does not provide the interaction necessary for language to be used psychosocially. L2 classrooms do not reflect what happens in the real world. Therefore, the teacher must create activities that prepare students to socialize in real-life environments where they apply what they learn in the classroom. Learners use the TL for real-world purposes through cooperative learning, a term which according to Slavin (1980) refers to classroom techniques in which students work on learning activities in small groups and receive rewards or recognition based on their group’s performance. Group work is one of the most effective means of increasing students’ self-esteem, lowering their affective filter, and promoting the development of interpersonal skills (Johnson & Johnson, 1987). In the same way, Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro and Mandell (2001) explain that the best activities are those that have a purpose over and above the pedagogical goal of practicing particular linguistic forms.

In my Spanish classroom, I often do activities that involve playing games or competing. For instance, to practice vocabulary that names the parts of the body, I divide
the students into groups of three and have them put the name of each part of the body on a drawing of the human body. I give students post-it notes, so that one student is in charge of sticking them on the human body drawing, while the others write the words down on the post-it notes. At the end of the activity, I give the winner or winners a treat. Most times, I give them things from the TL culture such as plantain chips. I noticed that even though my students are adults, they are more willing to participate and more engaged when the activities involve games, competitions, and rewards.

**Task-Based Language Teaching**

Cooperative learning is a part of task-based instruction. Lee (1995) points out that task-based language teaching (TBLT) enables students to interact with others by using the TL as a means to an end. The tasks conducted by the students should be applicable outside of the classroom, in real-world contexts, as discussed in the previous paragraphs. TBLT is based on an analytical approach to language pedagogy (Wilkins, 1976, as cited in Nunan, 2014, p. 458). Pedagogical tasks are tasks that students do in the classroom with the purpose of language acquisition and language skills development (Nunan, 2014). Examples of task-based activities include two-way information-gap activities, which are tasks where students exchange information in order to solve a problem (Doughty & Pica, 1986). According to Nunan (2014), these tasks are different from real-world tasks because they will not occur in the real-world, but there is a connection between the two types of tasks. As in real-world tasks, students engage in negotiating meaning and in asking real-life questions. Ellis (2003) mentions certain characteristics that a task should have. They include:
- A task has a focus on meaning, which involves students using the TL in order to close a gap.
- A task might be done in any of the four language skills (i.e., listening, producing in oral or written form, and reading).
- A task involves cognitive processes such as classifying, ordering, reasoning, and evaluating information in order to be successful (pp. 9-10).

VanPatten (2017) explain the difference between task, exercise, and activity. He argues that while some activities may appear to promote communication, they lack the means necessary to be conceived as communicative. In contrast, exercises fail to encourage expression and interpretation of meaning, which is the main goal of tasks.

In my SFL classroom, two-way information-gap tasks are the easiest for learners. Since my students are beginners, they can practice the language without having to produce language by themselves. Instead, they only have to use what they are provided and figure out what their partners mean according to the information they have.

Depending on how I implement two-way information-gap tasks, they allow students to practice the L2 with different classmates in the classroom. I have seen shy or anxious students lose their fear of practicing the L2 by having the opportunity to practice with different people.

Along with CLT and TBLT, it is important to follow the guidelines published by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages [ACTFL] (2015). The ACTFL website offers the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (which I will refer to as the ACTFL standards), which are classified into five goal areas, also called the five “C” goal areas: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and
Communities (2015). The first goal area follows three standards or modes of communication: *interpersonal communication*, *interpretive communication*, and *presentational communication*, and outlines what students are expected to do with each of the modes. In interpersonal communication, students engage in negotiation of meaning through interaction. Interpretive communication refers to learners’ understanding of and reasoning in the TL. Presentational communication occurs when students present information that persuades or explains something to interlocutors. In a communicative classroom, all three standards of communication take place. In my SFL class I focus mainly on interpersonal communication in my efforts to guide students in practicing the TL, and they frequently practice that interpersonal communication by carry out tasks in groups.

Examples of interpretive communication in my classroom include reading assignments students do as homework, as well as their analysis and understanding of what their classmates’ and I mean when we speak. To facilitate interpretive communication for learners, I focus on making the input comprehensible. Comprehensible input is the language L2 teachers use that helps learners understand meaning in the L2 (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). For instance, I use visual aids and gestures, I speak slowly, and I relate most tasks to students’ real lives. I also use examples from my own life when I deliver class content. Students practice their presentational communication whenever they try to convey a message to their peers or to me, and at the end of the semester, they have an oral exam in the form of a presentation. Students use what they have learned throughout the semester and are free to be creative in the way they present.
In addition to the five goal areas, the National Council of State Supervisor for Foreign Languages (NCSSFL) and the ACTFL (2015) have formulated the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements, which are in the form of checklists that students use to assess their proficiency in the TL in the three modes of communication. According to the NCSSFL-ACTFL, the goal for all language learners is to develop a functional use of another language for various contexts and purposes. Can-Do Statements allow teachers to monitor students’ L2 development and plan accordingly. At the same time, Can-Do Statements allow students to verify their own progress, identify their weaknesses and strengths, and then work on their weaknesses. When learners themselves see what they have accomplished, they become more motivated to learn the TL. I had a student who thought she was not appropriately acquiring the TL because she could not retain all the vocabulary words in the textbook, but when she checked the Can-Do Statements for the first time, she realized she was being too hard on herself. After this, she seemed less anxious and more relaxed and willing to participate in class.

**Learner Motivation**

When I was studying EFL at a private English institution, I sorely lacked motivation. I was what Dörnyei (2001) calls “a demotivated learner […] someone who was once motivated but has lost their commitment for some reason” (p. 138). Dörnyei discusses how factors can decrease a learner’s motivation, factors such as attractive alternative actions that serve as a powerful distraction (e.g., watching a film instead of doing homework), the gradual loss of interest in a long-lasting, ongoing activity, or the sudden realization that the costs of pursuing a goal are too high. As an English language
learner, I started to believe that it was too much of a sacrifice and was not worth the effort. I lost interest in studying English, but perhaps I would not have done so had the teacher approached me and tried to discover why. Dörnyei (2014) explains that “motivation is responsible for why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity, and how hard they are going to pursue it” (p. 519). He further explains that motivation is connected to cognition and emotion. For example, students will more likely be motivated to carry out an activity if they believe that some good will come from it (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Students may also get angry, frustrated, or sad if they feel that the task outcomes are not positive (Dörnyei, 2014). I experienced this myself when I took a German L2 class. Many times I did not feel confident with participating in class voluntarily because I was afraid to make mistakes. Consequently, I got anxious, frustrated, and demotivated.

I have concluded that motivation to learn an L2 is the responsibility of both the teacher and the student, but teachers must take action when they sense discouragement in the student. Winne and Marx (1989) claim that motivation is both a condition for and a result of effective instruction. Without motivation, there will always be limitations in students’ L2 acquisition. For this reason, I make my classes as interactive as possible. Whenever I notice that students who were once the first to answer questions seem to have lost enthusiasm for the TL, I speak with them and try to figure out the factors that could have led to their demotivation. “It is crucial to understand what our students’ motivations are” (Oxford & Shearin, 1994, p. 12). If, after reflection, I conclude that I have contributed to their lack of motivation, I reevaluate my language teaching strategies. It is
important for me to communicate with my students and figure out if they are struggling for reasons outside of what is happening in the classroom or if I am the one who needs to do things differently.

Foreign language anxiety (FLA) can make students lose motivation. According to Liu and Huang (2011), motivation helps learners preserve their “efforts to learn the language” (p. 2) and it is highly related to self-confidence and FLA. FLA is a “situation-specific anxiety that students experience in the classroom which is characterized by self-centered thoughts, feelings of inadequacy, fear of failure, and emotional reactions in the language classroom” (Oh, 1990, p. 56). The performance of learners with high levels of FLA can be poor in comparison with that of non-or less-anxious students (Liu & Huang, 2011). Krashen (1988) states that anxiety increases learners’ affective filter. This causes limitations in learners’ TL comprehension and interrupts L2 acquisition.

In my SFL class, I address FLA in five main ways. I try to establish connections with my students from the first day. Each class period, I arrive up to ten minutes early, I play music in Spanish for them, and I ask them questions about their lives. These questions can be about their plans for the weekend or what they did during the weekend, how they are doing in their other classes, etc. Since it is a first-semester class, most of these before-class conversations are in English. Additionally, I use real-life examples during class activities, which leads to more conversation with students after class. I also try very hard to create a safe environment in which students are able to make mistakes and not feel badly about making them, but rather see the opportunity to learn from those mistakes. Instead of quickly correcting errors, I wait for students to finish an idea and then correct them in the form of recasts that do not single out their errors explicitly. I also
offer students the opportunity to make up for missed practice in class by coming to my office and doing activities with them. I even give them the chance to raise their grade on exams by going over their errors and fixing them with me. Oxford and Shearin (1994) propose techniques for L2 instructors to prevent and decrease FLA. They state that L2 instructors should foster a pleasant classroom environment through music and laughter, abstain from criticizing students, praise students’ accomplishments, and promote a system of support between students. I incorporate all these techniques in my own SFL classroom.

**The Use of Digital Technology in Second Language Teaching**

Nowadays most people, and especially young adults, rely on digital technology in every aspect of their lives. They use phone applications to track buses to get to and from school, do research online, use spelling and grammar checks when they write papers, and some students take online classes. Educational tools have adapted to learners’ needs. Digital technology reinforces language skills when students do not have the opportunity to go to countries where the TL is spoken as an L1 (Blake, 2008). Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) facilitates the L2 teaching-learning process and engages students in interaction. CALL refers to “the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning” (Levy, 1997, p. 1).

CALL allows students to interact with L1 and L2 speakers of the TL without face-to-face interaction. This means that the use of digital technology in the L2 classroom is connected to the five Cs contained in the ACTFL (2015): communication, cultures, comparisons, connections, and communities (Gonglewski, 1999). Blake (2008) proposes three things to consider about digital technology: 1) “the mere use of technology by itself
will not improve the curriculum” (p. 9), 2) technology is always developing, so language instructors also need to be up to date, and 3) technology is an umbrella term to refer to numerous tools that can be used for L2 teaching and learning. L2 instructors do not have to stick to just one CALL tool. In my SFL classroom, I use six CALL tools that help students develop their Spanish language skills:

**CANVAS**

*CANVAS* is a learning management system. It is the platform that all students use at USU. However, not every instructor incorporates *CANVAS* into his or her teaching, nor do they all use it the same way. In my case, I provide students access to coursework materials such as videos, files that contain grammar explanations or useful cultural points, the PowerPoint presentations I use in class, etc. I also use the *CANVAS* grade book and the “Announcement” and “Email” tools.

**Quizlet**

*Quizlet* is an application that allows students to review class content through electronic flashcards. I use *Quizlet* for vocabulary and grammar practice, and students have direct access to it through *CANVAS*.. Flashcards with pictures give students context and make it easier to recognize when to use vocabulary words and verbs. Additionally, visuals facilitate memory retention (Levin, Anglin, & Carney, 1987).

**iLrn**

My students do their preparation for class practice in *iLrn*, a web-based learning platform that contains their textbook in electronic form, assigned learning activities, and instructor feedback on those activities once they are completed., This platform allows class time to be devoted almost entirely to language practice through interpersonal
communication because students receive the necessary initial instruction and practice opportunities outside the classroom before class. Instructors have to review only a portion of the *iLrn* assignments because the website grades the rest automatically.

**Kahoot**

This CALL tool is a website where teachers can create quizzes and games with multiple-choice questions for students. I use it in class in activities in which the students all participate together. They select the correct answers through their cellphones, tablets, or computers. Although using Kahoot develops only students’ interpretive communication, it provides a relaxed climate in which students compete with each other, which promotes motivation. For every Kahoot quiz, I have students choose one word from the vocabulary of the lesson as their name, which appears on the screen for everyone to see. This works as a vocabulary review for my students. Sometimes, students do not recognize the words they see on the screen, and they ask their classmates for clarification. I make sure that the Kahoot quizzes are short (five to seven minutes) and to the point. My students always get excited whenever we use Kahoot in the classroom. I usually give three winners surprise treats from the TL culture.

**YouTube Videos**

According to Swaffar and Vlatten (1997), “videos expose students to authentic material and to voices, dialects, and registers other than the teacher’s and provide cultural contexts” (p. 175). In my SFL, I sometimes use videos to introduce grammar aspects. These videos are usually grammar tutorials with images or a scene from a sketch, a movie, etc. I also play music videos before beginning every class.
**Wikis**

“A wiki […] is a piece of software that allows users to freely create and edit the content of Web pages” (Mak & Coniam, 2008, p. 439). Students can work together on the same assignment without having to meet in person, which saves students time. In my classroom, I use Wikispaces to promote collaborative writing among students. During the last weeks of class, I pair students to work on a short wiki project in which they have to advertise Utah State University (USU). Students write personal information about themselves, such as their likes and dislikes, where they are from, etc. They also have to say why people should study at USU (what places to visit and activities people do in their free time).

Table 1 represents the way I incorporate the tools mentioned above in my L2 classroom.

Table 1: CALL tools in my Spanish language classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>How I use them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CANVAS</td>
<td>- Keeping record of students’ grades.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Giving students access to course materials (videos, class PowerPoint presentations).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Communicating with students through announcements and direct messages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>Features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **iLrn**    | - Assigning and reviewing students’ homework.  
              - Providing students feedback. |
| **Quizlet** | Giving students access to vocabulary and grammar flashcards. |
| **Kahoot**  | - Creating quizzes and games with multiple-choice questions.  
              - Reviewing class content. |
| **Youtube videos** | Showing students music videos, grammar tutorials, and real-world situations in the TL. |
| **Wikispaces** | - Improving students’ TL skills through collaborative writing.  
                     - Providing students feedback. |

Undoubtedly, CALL facilitates L2 learning as it fosters student autonomy and empowerment (Sagarra & Zapata, 2008). However, “the use of technology is a complex decision that extends beyond the consideration of student needs” (Lam, 2000, p. 391). In my home country, the Dominican Republic, for instance, it is not always possible to teach with digital technology; because of limitations on available resources. If I cannot use digital technology in my L2 classroom, I will still use CLT and TBLT and adapt them to the context.
Conclusion

Learning a second language is not an easy task. Students will not learn TL by translating every new word to their native language. In real life, people use languages to interact with each other. As an L2 instructor, it is my job to provide my students with the means necessary for them to develop the five Cs or goal areas to be successful L2 speakers. Even though CLT has to be adapted to the circumstances, I believe that it has the features necessary for L2 learners to become proficient and to be able to communicate in the TL. To create a communicative classroom, it is important to use meaningful task-based activities that along with digital technology encourage student motivation. The effective use of the available learning tools and the continual refinement of communicative strategies can help students apply what they will learn and practice in the classroom to situations in different contexts in the real world.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TEACHING OBSERVATIONS

Being in the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program gave me the opportunity to see my colleagues’ performance in their foreign language classrooms, and analyzing their strategies helped me become a better second language (L2) teacher. The classes I observed include first-semester Spanish, second-semester French, and first-semester Russian. Although I learned many useful techniques from the French and Russian classes, the Spanish classes prepared me best for my immediate goals. All the instructors I observed used the communicative language teaching approach (CLT), which is the approach I use in my own L2 classroom. They also used techniques that reflect my teaching philosophy.

Student Role in the Classroom

The CLT approach is based on the idea that students learn a L2 by practicing it. Instead of being the authority in the classroom, the instructor serves as a facilitator. He or she guides the students through the target language (TL) learning process, but the premise is always that the students are the ones ultimately in charge of their learning.

The first class I observed was a Spanish class. Even though Spanish is my native language, I had never taught it. I realized that being an L1 speaker of the TL would not automatically make me a good teacher. The instructor made me want to teach Spanish and inspired me to be better in my own teaching. He used the TL at all times and the students understood what he said. All tasks were based on real-life situations. This means that students got to engage in activities based on contexts that they might really be in some day. I also had the opportunity to see information-gap activities in action. This type of activity makes the students interact in the TL without forcing them to produce output.
by themselves. Getting to see a different approach to teaching an L2 made me want to implement it in my classroom and change the way foreign languages are taught in my home country. In the Dominican Republic, teachers still use traditional methods such as grammar-translation and the audiolingual method. Although these methods have features that can be useful for certain aspects of the TL, I believe that they are not as effective as the CLT approach.

Another class that I enjoyed watching was a Spanish class where the instructor used acronyms to teach how to use the verbs *ser* and *estar*. The purpose was to help students memorize the rules to help them use verbs correctly by memorizing the acronyms PLACE and DOCTOR. Furthermore, the instructor used Disney characters for the examples and activities, helping students relate the language examples to things that they knew outside the classroom. Before starting the class, the instructor provided a quick review about the last class and at the end of the class she reviewed everything they worked on that day. Repetition and review is essential in the classroom. They allow students to reflect about their learning and see the progress they are making.

Before I observed the Russian class, I thought I would not understand anything that was being said, but, by using gestures, videos, and pictures, the instructor made herself understood. Even though I could not understand all she said, I was able to see clearly what she expected from the students. She equally balanced the amount of time she talked and the amount of time the students talked. I truly enjoyed the activity that required students to practice a tongue twister. After listening to the pronunciation of each word in the tongue twister and repeating after the instructor, the students practiced in groups. Then, some students read the tongue twister in front the class. I liked especially
that the students seemed to be having a good time without that good time being the main purpose of the activity: the tongue twister was helping them improve their Russian pronunciation.

**Student Motivation**

Motivation is fundamental in my L2 classroom. If a student does not show interest in the class, they will not learn the L2 effectively. The instructors I observed created activities that kept the students interacting with both their classmates and the teacher. They focused on doing short tasks with meaningful purposes. Short tasks help students avoid getting bored, but the amount of time allotted to each task must be appropriately distributed. If not, teachers might appear to be in a hurry, and the students might miss the purpose of the tasks. Furthermore, most of the instructors I observed placed great importance on providing students with an outline at the beginning of the class. This allowed learners to know what to expect before starting each class.

The instructors I observed monitored the students when working individually or in groups so that if the students had questions about a task, the instructors could help them. Most importantly, the instructors allowed students to talk without interrupting in order to correct their errors. If teachers correct students every time they make a mistake, students will feel afraid to practice the target language (TL). Instead, the instructors noticed the common errors among students and then they addressed those errors without reprimanding the students. Sometimes students get frustrated because they cannot understand what the teacher is saying. Visual aids and gestures help students understand the TL and foster their willingness to participate in class.
All the teaching observations that I conducted provided me with several techniques and strategies that will help me teach a second language efficiently. The instructors’ passion inspired me to give my best in every class. My observation gave me the opportunity to see how the CLT approach works, as the only experience I had with this method beforehand was in theory. I discovered that teaching observations are an excellent way to help novice L2 instructors develop their teaching philosophy. Observers have the opportunity to reflect on their own teaching methods and to incorporate what they see fit into their own classroom—it can likewise be beneficial for more experienced instructors. As part of a professional learning community, instructors can observe and provide valuable feedback to one another.
SELF-ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING STATEMENT

Introduction

In this section called Self-Assessment of Teaching Statement (SATS), I reflect on my own teaching as a Spanish graduate instructor at Utah State University (USU). This self-reflection model was designed by Dr. Spicer-Escalante and Dr. deJonge-Kannan (2016). I had the opportunity to video-record two classes I taught during the fall semester of 2017. For one class, I was individually observed by my advisor, and for the other class, which I taught with a fellow Spanish instructor, I was observed by a colleague. They later provided feedback about my teaching. Both classes were fifty minutes long and the students were beginners of Spanish as a foreign language (SFL). After teaching the classes, I watched the video-recordings and analyzed my own teaching performance. This allowed me to modify the activities and behaviors that were not beneficial for my students in the classes that followed. Later on, I watched the video two more times and took notes about my strengths and weaknesses.

The First Observation

Objectives of the lesson:

- Students will be able to distinguish between the verbs ser and estar according to their use and context.
- Students will be able to recognize different professions/occupations and say what the people with these jobs do.
- Students will be able to say the nationalities and professions of some famous Hispanic artists.
Students will be able to describe scenes using new verbs.

Students will be able to say how frequently they do different activities.

Before class time, I gave students vocabulary and grammar sheets. I began the class by clarifying that although we use the expression *estar divertido* to say when something is fun, it is not appropriate to use it for people. To better explain this, I wrote down one example with *ser divertido*, and another example with *estar divertido* on the board. I wrote the word *persona* on top of *estar divertido* and marked it with an x. I did the same with the phrase that contained *ser divertido*, but to show that it was correct, I marked it with a check. Then, students worked on an activity, in which they had to choose between *ser* and *estar* to complete sentences. They also had to take into consideration gender and number in each sentence. This activity served as a review since we had worked on the differences between the two verbs in the previous class.

Next, to introduce the topic of professions/occupations, I asked two students what their professions were. There were too many vocabulary words in the book, and they had previously worked on activities using professions in their homework, so I decided to show students only professions that are the same regardless of the gender of the person. To practice the vocabulary, I had the students give recommendations to each other according to what they liked. They then did a two-way information-gap activity, asking each other where famous Hispanic people were from and what their professions were.

The next activity involved students having to describe different scenes of the routine of one person using verbs that are irregular with the first person singular *yo*. Originally, I was also going to have them ask each other how frequently they did specific activities that require the use of this grammar aspect, but I decided instead to finish the
class with a charades game in which, students had to guess the profession of the image on their classmate’s forehead according to the another two students’ description of the job.

**Positive Outcomes**

I was satisfied to see that I appropriately monitored the students’ work and made sure that they understood what they were supposed to do in every activity. They seemed to do better after I explained the activity to them. All the activities were small-group activities that allowed more proficient students to help struggling students. I determined the content of the groups so that the activity would be beneficial for all students. My observer pointed out that the activities were short, and thus reflected students’ proficiency level.

Another helpful activity for the students is when I point out in class common mistakes that I see them making on their *iLrn* activities. In the video, I explain that even though the expression *estar divertido* is in the book under ‘emotions and moods’, it is not used for people. Most students do not read the feedback on *iLrn*, so discussing common mistakes in class helps them avoid making them again. Handouts and vocabulary sheets were also very useful for students. Whenever they forgot how to say something, they could rely on the information available in a handout.

The most positive comment from my observer was that I pay “very close attention to students’ eyes to check for close comprehension”. Having been a foreign language (FL) instructor for some time now, I have learned that it is not enough to ask students if they understand what I mean. Some students feel ashamed if they do not understand and will not express their confusion. I have learned to rely more on students’ faces when I am
giving instruction. If I notice that students are not clear on what they are supposed to do, I explain again and model as many times as needed.

**What needed improvement**

In my TPS, I place great importance on modeling activities while explaining them, especially when I have a T.A., but sometimes I forget to do it. In the video, I modeled some activities, but not all of them. I also feel that I failed to appropriately explain how the students were supposed to play the charades game, which suggests that my input was not very comprehensible. On this matter, my observer pointed out that students lacked the command of the vocabulary required for them to better complete the activity, which could have been prevented or fixed by reviewing vocabulary before the activity, or by giving students handouts, although when I do give them handouts with the vocabulary, they spend too much time looking for the words they want to use on the vocabulary sheet. Next time, I should create a vocabulary sheet that is easier for learners to use.

The charades game was probably too long, but I felt it was a good way to practice the vocabulary, since there were too many words that could not be discussed in class because of time restrictions. My observer also noticed this and recommended that I plan extra activities, instead of spending too much time on only one. Given that I thought I did not have enough time, I skipped an activity where students had to say how frequently they do certain activities. In that activity, they were going to conjugate verbs in the first person singular present tense. I seemed to have forgotten that the point of the grammar aspect was to practice the yo form, which my observer drew to my attention. She also explained that as a FL instructor, I should focus on what students need for the lesson. The students
only practiced the conjugation for the third person singular *she*. If I had done the activity, it would have been easier for students to do the activity in which they described the scenes. Thus, I need to improve my time management. Next time, I will also try to motivate students with a competition and prizes and I will create more short activities to practice vocabulary.

When I watched the video-recording for the second time, I realized that I began teaching how to talk about professions, then moved to verb conjugation, then went back to professions. There did not seem to be connections between the tasks, which can result in students losing their focus. I also feel that I could have had more energy. I did not seem to be motivating or engaging enough. A teacher’s lack of energy or failure to show energy can make students lose interest and motivation. I also noticed by watching the video that members of each group did not contribute equally in every activity. Struggling students seemed to rely too much on more proficient students. Additionally, the T.A. often took over during the activities, not giving students the opportunity to practice the TL. This means that I need to be more attentive of how he handles activities from now on. Finally, I believe that I needed more engaging and communicative activities. Keeping the students engaged and motivated is my main goal.

**The Co-teaching Class**

Objectives of the lesson:

- Students will be able to say where they usually go during the week and during the different seasons of the year.
- Students will be able to say where they like to go and what they like to do and ask their classmates as well.
- Students will be able to say their birthday and ask their classmates when their birthday is.

- Students will be able to talk about future plans.

To introduce the verb *ir* (to go), and since it was Friday, I started the class by asking students what their plans were for the weekend. Building on what they had previously practiced in their homework, my fellow teacher and I talked about the places we go each day of the week. To better illustrate those places and to make the activity more engaging, we showed actual pictures of ourselves. They next wrote down on a handout the places they go each day of the week, and then asked classmates where they went each day of the week in order to compare their schedules and practice other conjugations of the verb *ir*.

The next activity was a game of bingo. On their handouts, students had twenty-five different activities to choose from, but they also had the option of saying something else they liked to do. My fellow teacher and I reviewed what they had previously learned and practiced in *iLrn*: how to say dates in Spanish. We showed them pictures of various holidays and asked them when these holidays were celebrated. Next, students asked each other when their birthdays were. They all had a handout with the twelve months of the year and blank spaces for them to write the name of each classmate on the month of their birthday. At the end of the class, we explained to students that we could use the verb *ir* to talk about the future. Finally, the students asked other questions using the verb *ir* and vocabulary of the day.
Positive Outcomes

Before class began, I showed my students a musical video that contained the grammar aspect we were going to work on that day. On several occasions, students have expressed their enjoyment when I play music in the target language (TL). I feel that it is a good way for the students to get used to listening to music in Spanish and learn some culture, since at the end of the song, I always tell them the names of the artists and where they are from.

The introduction to the class content was also a good way to get students familiar with the verb *ir* and break the ice. Using photos to present the grammar aspect also seemed to be motivating for the students, especially since my colleague and I used pictures from Google and put our faces on them in some of the examples. In addition, instead of just presenting the verb *ir*, my colleague and I first had a real conversation. For instance, my fellow teacher said, “*Los sábados mi amiga y yo vamos de compras, pero a mí no me gusta ir de compras* (On Saturdays, my friend and I go shopping, but I don’t like to go shopping)”, to which I replied, “*Él solo mira y espera* (He only looks and waits)”. We tried to speak slowly and use lots of gestures to make input comprehensible. My observer pointed out that students seemed to be having fun. Presenting the grammar content and vocabulary though real-life events and conversation among the teachers and with the students seemed to keep students engaged and relaxed.

The observer also pointed out that the use of plenty of visuals helped students better understand the class content. For example, to show that they were supposed to ask their classmates when their birthdays were, I showed pictures with cakes and people celebrating. I also showed them the handout they were going to fill in with their
classmates’ names on the corresponding month of the year. I was pleased to see that after repeating their birthdays a few times, the students did not need the PPT to see what they were supposed to say.

For every activity, my fellow teacher and I put a timer on the PowerPoint (PPT) presentation with the time each activity should take, which kept students going at the right pace. The observer was pleased to see that my fellow teacher and I used color pencils to pair students and that we showed a picture with color pencils to signal that were going to do a group activity. He expressed that it was a creative and different way to group students. Judging by the positive attitudes that the students demonstrated, they enjoyed all the activities prepared for the class, and every student contributed equally to the tasks. The observer appreciated that for almost every task, students had to leave their seats and walk around to work with their classmates. He said, “there wasn’t a moment when the students were bored”. I was pleased to read this comment, since I place great importance on student motivation.

What needed improvement

In general, I feel that the class went better than I expected, but there were some occasions when I spoke too fast. As a native Spanish speaker, sometimes I try to act so natural that I forget that I am teaching a beginner class. I also noticed that I tend to say “¿ok?” and ¿verdad? (“right?”) too much. In addition, the observer noticed that my fellow teacher and I explained how to use the verb *ir* to say how to go places at the beginning of the class, and then returned to this explanation to talk about future plans at the end of the class. It was unclear to the observer why the same grammar aspect was broken down into two parts. He further explained that returning to the verb *ir* after having
worked on a different topic broke the flow of the tasks. Breaking down the grammar aspect into two parts seemed like a good idea in order to do easier activities in the middle, which were supposed to give students a break. However, I realized that even the tasks where students practiced grammar aspects were engaging and interactive, so there was no point in breaking the same aspect into two sections. This suggests that I should carefully assess the tasks I prepare for my students and decide the correct order for students to carry them out.

**Conclusion**

Observing myself teaching and having someone else observe my teaching was both challenging and rewarding. When teachers are in front of the class, there are things that they do not notice. Therefore, having the opportunity to get someone else’s perspective on my teaching is very helpful. In addition, watching myself teach and noticing things that I do without realizing I do them raises my awareness of my body movements, face gestures, and the way I talk. I need to be careful when I move and talk, because depending on the way I do it, I can either distract students or keep them engaged. By watching myself teach, I can also learn from my errors, do better with time, and keep getting better at what I do well. Teaching with another instructor makes classes more interactive and promotes diversity in teaching style, and I adjust my style somewhat to that of my fellow teacher, but I can still recognize that I have indeed improved as FL instructor. After writing the second SATS, I see the progress I have made since the first observation.
RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES
LANGUAGE PAPER

Foreign Language Anxiety: A Student’s Perspective
I started learning about foreign language anxiety (FLA) when I took a first-year German as a foreign language (FL) class with the purpose of writing this paper for my portfolio. As I enjoyed learning the language, I reflected on my FLA through the use of a journal. I decided to take the class because I believe that being in my students’ shoes helps me better understand what FL learners experience, especially when they are beginners. FLA affects student motivation and, therefore, their language performance. By knowing my students’ types of FLA, I can help them find the learning strategies that better suit their personality types, which helps lower their FLA levels. I also evaluated my German language instructor’s strategies and as a result found several that I plan to incorporate into my own language classes.

After taking the class, I became more patient with my Spanish FL students. I also began to notice that I was using certain techniques in my classroom that were not as effective as I thought. For instance, repeating vocabulary words three of four times is not as useful for developing pronunciation as seeing and using the vocabulary in context. Visuals and gestures facilitate students’ retention of new words without expecting them to memorize only through repetition. Visuals and gestures also allow FL instructors to stay in the target language, making it easier for students to understand. Finally, I was able to incorporate useful techniques from my German FL instructors into my own teaching. For example, I became more assertive with my students, trying hard to motivate them while doing better at alerting them to their errors without making them feel ashamed.
After writing this paper, I can definitely say that I have become more understanding of my students’ needs and that I have improved my skills as a FL instructor.

**Introduction**

Beginning to learn a foreign language (FL) can be difficult, and overcoming anxiety is often among the students’ most challenging struggles. Learners can become frustrated because they do not know how to deal with their limitations. This paper explores the theory behind foreign language anxiety (FLA) and its role in language learning strategies and language learning styles. I support my own views and conclusions with examples from my experience as a German FL learner.

**Foreign Language Anxiety**

In his affective filter hypothesis, Krashen (1988) states that affective variables are fundamental in second language acquisition (SLA). These variables include: motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. These variables can determine students’ affective filter level. A high affective filter interferes with students’ language intake and “impedes language acquisition” (Schütz, 2005, p. 3). Learners with a higher affective filter often try to distract themselves from their limitations by interacting with people who are close to them such as friends or classmates, which helps them avoid dealing with their struggles with the FL. However, this does not always work and can lead to anxiety (Chametzky, 2013). FLA is a “situation-specific anxiety that students experience in the classroom and is characterized by self-centered thoughts, feelings of inadequacy, fear of failure, and emotional reactions in the language classroom” (Oh, 1990, p. 56).

FLA is a complex, multi-layered phenomenon. According to Scovel (1978), FLA
is “a cluster of affective states influenced by factors which are intrinsic and extrinsic to the foreign language learner” (p. 134). In my case, what motivated me to take a German class was the fact that besides learning a new FL, I was also going to learn something about teaching a FL from my German instructor. In the beginning, I felt very motivated and even studied on my own. For me, it was intrinsic motivation. However, part-way through the course I began to overanalyze my instructor’s strategies, and my motivation became extrinsic. As a result, I slipped into doing only what I had to in order to pass the class.

General anxiety and FLA are very similar. Al-Shboul, Ahmad, Nordin, and Rahman (2013) point out that general anxiety and FLA are different terms but share common aspects such as “tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry in some specific situations” (p. 33). Anxious FL students are learners who see learning a FL as a distressing activity that limits their participation in class and who think they are being judged when they make errors (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Even though I felt anxious and afraid of what my classmates’ and teacher would think, my teacher’s attitude was my principal motivation for overcoming my anxiety. She made me think that making errors was acceptable and normal, and this motivated me to always be willing to participate in class.

Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) state that for some students, learning a FL seems like a never-ending process that is always changing. The authors studied how speaking more than one language can evoke learner anxiety, and what makes students enjoy the target language (TL) class. In my case, given that German was the fourth language I was
learning, it was easier to learn the grammar and some vocabulary words. I could compare the TL with my other three languages and perform better, which helped lower my FLA. Dewaele and MacIntyre focused not only on the negative emotions students might experience, but also on the positive emotions, given that the latter could lessen the former. The authors concluded that the lack of enjoyment did not always lead to FLA and vice versa. In the same vein, Dewaele, Witney, Saito, and Dewaele (2017) found that foreign language enjoyment (FLE) and classroom activities were related. They explain that “too much rigidity and overly predictable classroom activities limit the potential for interesting challenges involving risk-taking, for unpredictability that might cause surprise, and for humour that boosts enjoyment” (p. 5). When my German instructor did different types of activities than the ones we were used to, I became more interested in learning the language. I noticed that this also happened in my Spanish class, especially whenever I, as a teacher, incorporated jokes while explaining a grammar aspect or talking about Hispanic culture.

Competition also plays a large role in FLA. Bailey (1983) remarks that anxiety and negative competitiveness are connected. She defines negative competitiveness as “invidious comparisons with other learners in which the learner perceives himself as lacking and attaches emotional significance to that perception” (p. 96). Bailey further explains that negative competitiveness and anxiety are related because this type of competition can make the learner anxious. This means that since learners feel they are inferior in knowledge, their anxiety level increases. However, Bailey also points out that negative competitiveness can be turned into active positive competition. Competition is
natural in any classroom, and teachers can find ways to make it positive (Effiong, 2016).

For some students, competition means working harder to overcome their own limitations in order to win, which leads to higher FL performance. At the beginning of my German course, I felt that most of my classmates had more background experience with the German language than I had. This increased my affective filter and made me want to quit. To get rid of these negative thoughts, I made myself be the first one to answer my instructor’s questions. This raised my self-esteem and my anxiety decreased.

FLA is also related to test anxiety. Salehi and Marefat (2014) conducted a study with Iranian English students about how language and test anxiety affect students’ language achievement. Their conclusions show that when students’ language anxiety decreases, it is very likely that their test anxiety will too. This occurs regardless of students’ L2 proficiency level (Tsai, 2013). In my German class, whenever I felt confident about my language proficiency level, I also felt positive about my quiz or test outcomes. However, when I did not feel ready because of a lack of practice with any grammar aspect or such, I felt anxious about my exam results.

Types and Components of Foreign Language Anxiety

The research on FLA has made a distinction between facilitating anxiety and debilitating anxiety. Scovel (1978) comments that facilitating anxiety makes students face the struggles that they experience with a new task. Similarly, Occhipinti (2009) defines facilitating anxiety as “the positive force which may lead the student to become even more motivated for language learning” (p. 12). Alternatively, debilitating anxiety
makes them give up and avoid the task (Scovel, 1978). Nevertheless, some students might experience both types depending on the situation. Whenever I did not get enough practice in a task, or there was too much teacher talk, I had debilitating anxiety. This confirms that much of student motivation depends on the teacher’s attitude, strategies, and methods.

Over the years, researchers have studied three types of FLA: trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situation-specific anxiety. Trait anxiety can show itself regardless of the circumstances (Spielberger, 1983). State anxiety is “situation-specific trait anxiety; that is, an individual suffering from state anxiety will manifest a stable tendency to exhibit anxiety but only in certain situations” (Phillips, 1992, p. 14). Situation-specific anxiety depends on the situation (Occhipinti, 2009). This is related to students’ personality types. For instance, extroverted students might feel anxious during written tasks, while for introverted students, speaking in front of the class might be the anxiety trigger. For me, as a somewhat introverted student, it was difficult to speak in front of the class, but I could easily speak the TL while sitting, even if I knew the whole class was paying attention to me.

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) classified FLA in three components: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Horwitz et al describe communication apprehension as the fear of interacting with others. Test anxiety is “the type of performance anxiety resulting from a fear of failure in an academic evaluation setting” (p. 127). Fear of negative social evaluation refers to the students’ concerns about other people’s reactions to their performance. Learners can present either
all of these FLA components or only one of them. I found it interesting that in the
beginning of my German course I felt fear of negative evaluation whenever I spoke in
English in front of the whole class. This did not mean that I felt communication
apprehension; my lack of confidence was due to English being one of my FLs.

**Language learning Strategies**

In order to be a successful FL learner and maintain levels of anxiety low, it is
important that students use appropriate language learning strategies. Language learning
strategies (LLS) can be defined as the techniques the learners use to enhance their FL
learning (Green & Oxford,1995). LLS are not right or wrong. Learners should use the
strategies that best adapt to their individual needs. Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) explain
that L2/FL proficiency can be affected by factors such as context, type of learning
strategies, and student traits. Martinez (1996) states that “learning strategies are not
always observable to the human eye” (p. 105). He/she further explains that strategies are
fundamental L2 learning tools that help develop language skills.

Oxford (1990) classified learning strategies in six categories: affective strategies,
social strategies, memory-related strategies, cognitive strategies, compensatory strategies,
and metacognitive strategies. *Affective strategies* aim to reduce anxiety and motivate and
change students’ attitudes towards learning. *Social strategies* help with interaction with
native speakers of the TL. *Memory-related strategies* allow learners to develop a system
in order to do tasks such as rhyming, reviewing, etc. *Cognitive strategies* support the
development of skills for reasoning, practicing and the combination of background
knowledge with new information. *Compensation strategies* help struggling students cope
with the TL by engaging them in activities such as guessing what is happening in a situation by analyzing the context. Lastly, metacognitive strategies benefit self-evaluation, planning, and self-correction. The strategy I used most as a FL learner was the affective strategy. I listened to German songs while trying to read the lyrics. I employed a cognitive strategy by working on extra activities in my textbook and workbook. To easier memorize vocabulary, sometimes I made digital flashcards and worked on online activities, which is a cognitive strategy.

**Language Learning Styles**

Learning styles reflect students’ preferences for specific language learning strategies. Dunn (1983) defines learning styles as "the biologically and developmentally imposed set of characteristics that make the same teaching method wonderful for some and terrible for others" (p. 3). This means that what may work for some students does not necessarily work for others. According to Brown (2002), some students learn by practicing with people, while others enjoy studying the TL alone. Some students learn fast, while others need more time to process. Brown also states that students’ learning styles can change over time depending on the situation. Sadeghi, Kasim, Tan, and Abdullah (2012) comment that “learning styles are the general approaches to learning a particular item” (p. 117). Various types of leaning styles have been studied over the years. For example, Oxford (2003) mentions four aspects of L2 learning styles: personality types, biological differences, sensory preferences, and desired degree of generality (p. 3). In the next several paragraphs, I will focus on personality types as I believe they are related to the other aspects.
Personality types

Students’ learning styles can be directly influenced by their type of personality. According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), personality refers to features “of an individual’s behavior, attitude, beliefs, thoughts, actions, and feelings” (p. 275). Shy students might be more willing to participate in written tasks rather than tasks where they have to speak the TL. In contrast, outgoing students might prefer engaging in tasks where they can interact with others and practice the language. Ehrman and Oxford (1989) studied how personality type can affect L2 students’ learning strategies. They conclude that extroverted students tend to use affective and visual strategies, whereas introverted students use strategies for meaning communication. The most used strategy was compensation, which helped struggling students process information. Oxford (2003) classified personality types in four categories: intuitive-random vs. sensing-sequential; extroverted vs. introverted; closure-oriented/judging vs. open/perceiving; and thinking vs. feeling.

According to Ehrman and Oxford (1995), intuitive-random learners like to generate ideas about their own learning and carry them out without following “step-by-step learning” (p. 70). In contrast, sensing-sequential learners need more direction from the instructor in order to be precise. As a sensing-sequential student, it was difficult for me in my German class to carry out tasks that were not carefully explained and were confusing.
Moody (1988) states that *extroverted* students are social individuals who gain their energy by creating connections with other people and situations. *Introverted* students, on the other hand, “are more restrained” (p. 390), enjoy working by themselves, and rely on a small number of friends with which they make deep connections. In my case, even though I enjoy working with classmates and hearing their ideas, I also enjoy working by myself and taking my time analyzing my FL.

*Closure-oriented/judging* learners “are serious, hardworking learners who like to be given written information and enjoy specific tasks with deadlines” (Oxford, 2003, p. 6). *Open/perceiving* students enjoy learning the TL, but rather than seeing it as an obligation, they like to conceive the learning experience as a game (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989). Of these two personality types, I am the closure-oriented learner who appreciates clear and detailed directions.

*Thinking* students tend to be objective and honest when they make decisions (Sharp, 2004). In contrast, *feeling* students value relationships and care about others. They analyze and organize their words in their minds before speaking (Oxford, 2003). In my case, I realized that I can be both a thinking and feeling student. Although I consider myself objective, I try to evaluate my thoughts before speaking my mind. This way, I make sure my hearers understand my point without hurting their feelings.

Therefore, depending on the situation, students may display more than one personality type. I realized that I can be sensing-sequential, introverted, closure-oriented/judging, and feeling; however, I can also be open/perceiving and extroverted.
This confirms that students’ learning styles vary depending on the situation, which in turn means they can be open to trying new strategies when circumstances warrant. Instructors should consider helping students develop a wider array of language learning strategies (see Brown, 2002).

Many FL instructors teach the TL according to their own needs and often do not consider the students’ individual needs as L2 learners. Fridan (1986) points out the importance of recognizing students’ learning styles, which must not be confused with the instructor’s learning style. Indeed, learning styles awareness is also beneficial for instructors. Gargallo Camarillas and Girón García (2016) list several advantages of understanding learning styles for both the teacher and the learner. They mention that this awareness allows teachers to analyze their own learning styles and use that knowledge to use different strategies in class, which leads to effectiveness in the students’ performance. Gargallo Camarillas and Girón García argue that students gain “more control over their own learning and take responsibility of their own learning” (p. 60). Brown (2002) provides guidelines and tests to help FL students figure out the learning strategies that best adapt to their learning styles. His/her book promotes positivity towards learning a FL and gives students strategies for using FLA to their advantage. After reading the book, I started incorporating Brown’s suggestions in my German class. Although I still felt anxious at times, I overcame my fears for the most part, and I became more confident about my learning.
Conclusion

FLA is an aspect of FL learning that cannot completely be eradicated, but teachers and students can learn how to cope with it so that it has less power over the students. Being a successful FL learner requires commitment and self-reflection. Every student is different and will likely require different approaches. Learning strategies are as important as teaching strategies. Having strategies can decrease students’ FLA levels (Mohammadi, Biria, Koosha, & Shahsavari, 2013). Students need to select the language learning strategies best suited to their learning styles. Additionally, teachers play a significant role in lowering students’ affective filter levels. It is essential that teachers take into consideration each of their students’ specific needs. In my own experience, using language learning strategies helped me become more confident and boosted my motivation to learn the TL. Moreover, being in my students’ shoes allowed me to understand which practices may lessen their FLA and which might intensify it. As a teacher, I can now avoid using the techniques that did not work for me as a FL student and implement the ones that did work, while at the same time keeping an open mind about the potential effectiveness of a wide range of strategies.
PEDAGOGY PAPER

Co-teaching in a Spanish as a Foreign Language Classroom
PURPOSE & REFLECTION

I originally wrote this language paper with my colleague Farlin Paulino for an independent study course I took with Dr. Spicer-Escalante. I first heard about co-teaching when Dr. Spicer-Escalante proposed that Farlin and I implement it in our Spanish FL classrooms. I was immediately interested because I thought I would learn from the experience. Besides providing a literature review on co-teaching, its models, benefits, and challenges, I offer my own views after having experimented with this teaching practice. In the beginning, we took turns visiting each other’s classes once a week, but after a few weeks, we decided to co-teach in both our classes. We wanted to compare the outcomes of the two classes. Every Friday, we taught one group in the morning and the other in the afternoon using the same content. After the morning class, we discussed the activities and modified those that were not effective for the afternoon class. The following semester, as the outcomes of co-teaching were positive, we taught the same Spanish class together. We often took turns teaching the class, but planned all classes together and told the other one how every class went.

My co-teaching colleague and I presented an overview of this paper at the Lackstrom Linguistics Symposium in Utah State University in October 2017. The audience seemed to enjoy the presentation and was interested in our experience as co-teachers. Teaching with another instructor is beneficial for the co-teachers and for the students. Co-teaching makes the FL class more interactive and allows learners to receive more attention from the instructors. Consequently, learners’ FL proficiency improves.
Introduction

Co-teaching is an instructional practice that has gained great popularity in recent years (Altstaedter, Smith, & Fogarty, 2016; Dieker & Murawski, 2003). Cook and Friend (1995) define co-teaching as "two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse or blended group of students in a single physical space" (p. 2). The instructors collaborate and teach the same class or classes simultaneously, share responsibility, and have the opportunity of learning from their co-teacher (Murphy & Scantlebury, 2010). According to Murawski (2010), for collaboration to take place, teachers must interact. Murawski also points out, however, that not all interaction leads to collaboration. Collaboration can be defined as "a style for interaction, which includes dialogue, planning, shared and creative decision making, and follow-up between at least two coequal professionals with diverse expertise, in which the goal of the interaction is to provide appropriate services for students, including high achieving and gifted students" (Hughes & Murawski, 2001, p. 196). Students who participate in a co-teaching classroom show more motivation, get more individualized instruction, have more opportunity to ask questions, and receive answers and feedback faster than those in one-teacher classrooms (Teacher Quality Enhancement Center, 2010).

This paper explores the benefits and challenges of co-teaching for both students and teachers, as well as the features and types of co-teaching. In addition, I offer my views on co-teaching developed while experiencing it first-hand. For the purposes of this paper, my co-teaching colleague and I taught each other's Spanish classes cooperatively once a week for one semester.
How to Make Co-Teaching Work

Honigsfeld and Dove (2015) state that for co-teaching to be successful, the instructors must trust each other. The authors also point out that besides co-teaching, the instructors involved must commit to plan the class, assess student work, and reflect together. Similarly, Villa, Thousand, and Nevin (2004) mention some features for co-teaching to work effectively. Instructors need to:

- Share at least one goal and co-plan to accomplish it.
- Accept and respect the opinions of their partner and combine them with their own beliefs to find a middle ground.
- Distribute work, responsibilities, and role of leadership equally among the co-teachers (p. 5).

Davis-Wiley (2000) claims that for co-teaching to work, the instructors must be prepared to sacrifice some beliefs in order to keep the peace among team members. Some researchers, such as George and Davis-Wiley (2000), believe that the instructors should have different teaching styles so that they complement each other. However, Murata (2002) explains that although it is preferable for the teachers to have different areas of expertise, they should have common teaching goals and interests. In my case, although my teaching partner and I differed in some techniques, we both believed in the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach, and we wanted our students to feel comfortable practicing their Spanish.

According to Beninghof (2011), communication failure between co-teachers is "unlikely to produce high levels of learning" (p. 21). For this reason, whenever we disagreed on something, such as the delivering of a task, we tried to find a middle ground
and put a piece of both our approaches into each activity we planned. Even though co-teaching can be challenging in the beginning, the more experience instructors gain in co-teaching, the easier it gets. Hepner and Newman (2010) state that "co-planning time becomes more productive, comfortable and creative as they work at it" (p. 73). For instance, when my colleague and I started co-teaching, we used to interrupt and even frustrate each other without meaning to. However, after a few weeks into the course, we learned to work together, and instead of hindering one another, we completed each other's sentences. The second semester, co-teaching became even more natural for us and we did not spend as much time deciding who would deliver which content.

**Models of Co-Teaching**

Co-teaching, also called collaborative teaching, can be implemented in different ways. Instructors apply the model that best fits students' learning needs, traits, and teacher preference, among others (Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2010). According to Rogers (2016) "teachers need to be aware of and comfortable with a shift in roles and responsibilities in the classroom" (p. 47). Co-teaching models can be classified as: interactive teaching; one teach, one observe; one teach, one assist; parallel teaching; station teaching; and alternative teaching.

*Interactive Teaching*

Also known as team teaching, interactive teaching requires great coordination and trust between the co-teachers as they take turns leading activities and explaining language aspects. In the interactive model of co-teaching, it is desirable that the teachers have similar teaching styles (Thomas, 2014). This was the model of co-teaching that my colleague and I followed for both our Spanish language classes and the second semester,
when we taught together, we used the interactive model as well. In addition to planning together, we had to decide who was going to lead which activities. We divided the content into equal amounts, and as one explained concepts, the other provided examples on the board, which complemented the explanations. Our first semester co-teaching, after we finished teaching the morning class, we discussed what worked and modified the activities that did not work in order to do a better job in the afternoon class. Our teaching performance in the afternoon class was always superior to our performance in the morning class. However, since each group had different characteristics, sometimes the morning class surpassed the afternoon class in outcomes. We attributed this to students' motivation to learn the language and the size of the classes. The morning class had sixteen students, so there was more energy in the classroom, and most students seemed committed to learning. The afternoon group, on the other hand, had only eight students and some of them were taking the course merely to fulfill degree requirements.

One Teach, One Observe

In the one teach, one observe model of co-teaching, one of the co-teachers merely observes while the other delivers the content. After class, the observer shares the information collected with his or her colleague. Although one teacher is responsible for the delivery of instruction, the instructors beforehand discuss the aspects the observer will focus on in the classroom (Cook & Friend, 1995). We tried this model once but did not find it very helpful. My teaching colleague acted as the observer while I taught the class. I felt like he was there to supervise me, not to support me, and he felt the urge to stand and teach alongside me. We decided to incorporate aspects of the one teach, one observe model into the interactive teaching model. When one of us was explaining a
concept, the other observed learners and added to the instruction according to the attitudes and needs perceived from that observation. An observer can notice things that the instructor in front of the class might miss, but we did not follow the model for a whole class period. That would have required us to abandon all together the interactive model, which we felt was the more effective method.

One Teach, One Assist

This one teach, one assist model shares some features with the one teach, one observe model, but instead of focusing on the students' attitudes towards the target language (TL), the instructor who assists supports students by monitoring their work and providing assistance with activities (Rogers, 2016). In this case, since we had a teaching assistant in both classes, we did not deem this model necessary.

Parallel Teaching

In the parallel teaching model, the instructors plan together and divide the class into two groups. Each instructor delivers the same content to their assigned group of students (Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2010). Considering that we were dealing with college students and that each of us had their own group of students, the days we did not co-teach, we discussed our experiences with students and shared the lesson plans with each other. Every PowerPoint presentation contains a combination of both my colleague’s and my own identity that informs our decisions about what classroom activities to do with the students and how we prefer to teach the material. By using PowerPoint as the departure point for both of our teaching methods, we are able to teach separately but still understand our goals for the students for each lesson plan in a collaborative way.
Station Teaching

Similar to parallel teaching, in station teaching the instructors divide the class into two groups. The content is also divided so that the two instructors teach different content simultaneously. When the teachers finish with one group, they switch to repeat the same content to the other group (Spicer-Escalante, 2018). Although we did not employ this model, we saw how it was done in a dual language immersion school. From what we could see, station teaching helps keep learners active and increases motivation. Having a change of scenery, teacher, and topic refreshes students' minds and helps keep them interested (Conderman, 2011).

Alternative Teaching

The alternate teaching model is beneficial for students who need reinforcement in some aspects of the TL. The instructors adapt the content to the students' proficiency level. One instructor teaches the group of students who need special attention, while the other teaches the rest of the students (Hepner & Newman, 2010). Due to time constraints, we did not employ the alternative teaching method in our classes. However, as we paid close attention to our students during our co-teaching sessions, we invited students who needed some reinforcement to visit us during office hours to make sure they were not falling behind. These sessions had a positive impact on student performance during activities and subsequent homework assignments. As a result, most students who attended these office hours became frequent visitors and did not hesitate to ask for help in the future.
Benefits of Co-teaching

Students benefit from co-teaching in a classroom as they receive a higher level of attention from their teachers because co-teaching lowers the student-to-teacher ratio (Thomas, 2014; Villa et al, 2004). Having two teachers in the classroom means that there will always be shared responsibility of class management and instruction. Outside of class, my colleague and I collaborated to review tests, check homework, and discuss student progress and what strategies would work better. Being equally responsible for the outcome of our students helped us identify students who struggled during our planned activities and help them accordingly.

Because both instructors are interested in the students’ language development, there is an increased opportunity to detect and respond to students’ needs. It is even more beneficial for the students when, besides the teaching assistant, they have the option to ask either of the two instructors for help. According to Murawski (2002a), class flow does not need to be interrupted in order for a student to seek help at most moments in the classroom. Students have the opportunity to interact with different teacher personalities, giving them more chances to connect well with one of the teachers (Aliakbari & Bazyar, 2012). For instance, my colleague is usually more energetic and enthusiastic than I, and students who liked his spontaneity and fun way of explaining the content preferred going to him for help. Students who needed more measured and thorough explanations, on the other hand, preferred seeking help from me.

During our co-teaching experience, we learned from each other’s techniques, and at the end of the semester, our teaching styles were not so different than at the beginning. Creating connections in the classroom encourages small-group and one-on-one teaching
opportunities. Research has shown that co-teachers become more aware of the students’ needs, which the co-teachers reflect upon in designing future lessons and make necessary adjustments to those lessons (Kroeger, Embury, Cooper, Brydon-Miller, Laine, & Johnson, 2012; McHatton & Daniel, 2008; Siry, 2011). This meant that even when students asked only one of us for help, my colleague and I discussed together how we could help them reach their full potential.

Given that each teacher has a different perspective, having two teachers in the classroom creates an opportunity for sharing and providing a wide range of expertise for the students to learn from. As a result, more creative activities for lessons will emerge (Sims, 2008). There is also the option of switching between the various co-teaching models in order to adapt the lessons to the students’ needs and for teachers to learn from each other. In my case, my colleague and I decided to follow the team teaching model since it was the model we believed was most fit for our students.

Students react positively to having two teachers in the classroom. Carless (2006) claims that teachers can easily model interactions for dialogues and do demonstrations where one teacher asks and the other answers naturally. It also helps students who may not have understood the prompts made by the teachers or contained in the textbook, helping students be more willing to participate in class and contribute to group activities. Our students did not hesitate to address the teacher who was closest to them, and they seemed to enjoy the interaction between my colleague and me. Given that these interactions occurred in a natural manner, students were able to see real-world communication in the TL first-hand.
Challenges of Co-Teaching

It is evident that co-teaching is beneficial for teachers and students, but it is important to also acknowledge the challenges instructors have to face when co-teaching. One common challenge is having two teachers with different teaching styles teaching the same lesson. Although diversity of personalities contributes to students’ TL learning, sometimes it is difficult to agree on the delivery of instruction. This can be overcome with an open mind, and willingness to compromise, and deal positively with opinions different from their own (Villa et al, 20014). Working with another instructor is a difficult task, so it is important to have strategies in place to do so, such as offering incentives and conducting surveys that show the preferences of the teachers (Murawski, 2010). These strategies allow teachers to identify their strengths and weaknesses so that classes are taught appropriately. Working with a non-compatible colleague may create clashes that can derail entire lessons, and frustrate both teachers, preventing them from enjoying the experience. It is important to discuss what the role of each teacher should be in a co-taught classroom in order to maintain a good relationship based on trust and understanding (Beninghof, 2012). My colleague and I did not have such an issue, as we made sure we spent a similar amount of time interacting with the students. I believe that having a close relationship before deciding to do co-teaching also helped us bond more easily.

Shared control may come into play, as it is sometimes difficult for two teachers to present themselves as equals in the classroom. Cherian (2007) states that co-planning and distributing the same amount of content to teach in each lesson among the teachers can help build a strong relationship. Co-teaching does not work if only one of the teachers
delivers the content while the other is busy doing tasks not directly related to teaching, such as making photocopies, grading, or tutoring students outside the classroom (Murawski, 2002). Communicating effectively before starting a lesson is essential, because “while the results of poor communication may not be immediately life threatening, they can be life altering to the students in their classes” (Beninghof, 2012, p. 21). In the beginning, my colleague and I distributed the class material according to our strengths in respect to the other teacher. For example, my colleague was in charge of vocabulary presentation and I was in charge of grammar explanation. Later on, we took turns doing both and assisted each other by giving examples. We were able to improve our teaching by observing the way the other one taught.

The most pertinent challenge of co-teaching is time. It is important to have administrative support, as co-teaching requires time and organization. Kroeger et al. (2012) explain that if schools really want co-teaching to succeed, they should make time for teachers to collaborate. Some schools work around this issue by offering a flexible schedule to co-teachers or by allowing co-teachers to collaborate during low-maintenance academic activities such as silent reading (Beninghof, 2012). Researchers also suggest that school administrators reach out to local universities and create partnerships via internships that would benefit them both. Instructors might also refuse to co-teach if they feel that it is too time consuming (Thomas, 2014).

**Conclusion**

Co-teaching is an effective model that can transform foreign language classrooms and provide new experiences for teachers and students. The collaborative nature of co-teaching fosters the professional development of language instructors and generates, at
the same time, a new kind of rapport with the students. Having two teachers collaborating in the classroom can also promote solidarity and a sense of community among the students (Thomas, 2014). Despite the challenges to overcome, co-teaching offers countless benefits for the classroom environment. After teaching Spanish as a foreign language with a colleague, I can say that I have grown as a professional. I learned from my mistakes and my colleague’s strengths, incorporating them in my own teaching and fostering a more interactive climate for my students. I also was able to see myself grow professionally after co-teaching for two semesters.
CULTURE PAPER

Refusals: Cross-Cultural Perspectives
PURPOSE & REFLECTION

I wrote this research paper for a course on Culture Teaching with Dr. Karin deJonge-Kannan. I originally worked with Farlin Paulino, but later adapted the paper to the needs of my portfolio. Learning a FL without learning about its culture is like driving a car on the opposite side of the road. It does not matter how well you drive if you do not follow the rules in the country where you are driving. In the same way, being proficient in Spanish will not ensure that you will always understand what a native speaker in Mexico means and vice versa. Cultures may have many similarities, but phrases, vocabulary, and nuances may vary from country to country and from language to language. Words and phrases may also have different meanings depending on their context. For example, the first time I heard the expression “Does that make sense?”, I was confused. I thought the speaker was asking me if I agreed with what she was saying. After hearing it a few more times, I realized that it was an alternative to “Do you understand?” As a nonnative English speaker in a foreign country, in order to fit in, it was important to me to understand pragmatic aspects such as this.

I decided to investigate how people from different countries use complex speech acts like refusing a request or declining an invitation. Refusals can be challenging because they require that speakers responding to invitations take into consideration not only their own needs, but also the requester or inviter’s needs. After writing this paper, I realized that even when the invitee is not very fond of the inviter, a civilized invitee would want to be perceived as a polite human being. For this reason, I believe it is important for L2/FL learners to be aware of their TL’s pragmatic rules. As a FL
instructor, it is essential for me to know how to address the TL’s pragmatic aspects by using effective activities and strategies.

**Introduction**

Learning a second language (L2) entails more than learning its grammar and vocabulary. It also involves knowing its norms and ways to communicate pragmatically. For example, each country has its own definition of politeness. In some countries, directness is not considered to be a sign of impoliteness, whereas in others it is (Ogiermann, 2009). Speech acts in the target language (TL) need to be analyzed carefully to avoid “pragmatic failure”, which happens when the mistakes made by L2 speakers are due to the lack of knowledge about the appropriate TL behavior in a given context (LoCastro, 2012). Pragmatic failure can lead to misunderstandings in communication, disruption in the course of interaction, and even damaged relationships (Fernández Amaya, 2008). For this reason, it is important to study the cross-cultural differences between the first language (L1) and the L2. Cross-cultural pragmatics (CCP) studies the linguistic differences in speech acts among different cultures (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993).

**Face and Refusals**

“Face” is defined as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61). This means that individuals have a need to be accepted by their interlocutors (positive face) and to be unimpeded (negative face). Scollon and Scollon (2012) classify the face system according to *power, distance*, and *weight of imposition*. They define *power* as people’s distinction in social status. According to Elias (2016), *distance* is “the level of closeness that exists between two
people” (p. 6) and the weight of imposition depends on the circumstances. For instance, employees will not refuse a request from their boss to work extra hours the same way they would refuse such a request from a co-worker. When an invitation is issued, the inviter will receive a response of acceptance or refusal. While acceptance would be the preferred response, as it satisfies the inviter’s positive face, that is, the need to be liked by others, a refusal is also possible (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Refusals threaten face because they involve a linguistic challenge as the interlocutors express a discrepancy in their communicative intentions. Alemi and Tajeddin (2013) state that refusals contradict what the inviter wants. The invitee does not initiate the speech act, but a reply is expected. Researchers agree that, regardless of language and culture, refusals are a clear face threat and the receiver of the refusal (i.e., the inviter) is more exposed to damage in that regard than the invitee (Siebold & Busch, 2015). Refusals carry an “inherent risk of offending someone” (Eslami, 2010, p. 217), so there is a strong need for pragmatic instruction to help learners use the strategies necessary to use this speech act appropriately.

Refusals are considered a face-threatening act because listeners are asked something they do not wish to do, but they do not want to offend the speaker by abruptly rejecting the request, suggestion, or invitation. Brown and Levinson (1987) state that language users base their decisions on face considerations. Some cultures view refusing an invitation as indicative of impoliteness, especially if the invitee does not plan to comply with the invitation. Knowing how to refuse politely in the TL will allow learners
to interact appropriately in the TL culture. For these reasons, this research paper contrasts and analyzes the pragmatic use of refusals in different cultures.

**Background**

Pragmatic awareness is fundamental for the appropriate use of speech acts. It refers to “the conscious, reflective, explicit knowledge about pragmatics” (Alcón & Jordà, 2008, p. 193). Students need to recognize pragmatic features in order to properly perform a speech act (Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin, 2005). Knowing how to appropriately decline an invitation or offer helps preserve relationship with others. A refusal is more complicated than other speech acts because it is not initiated by the speaker. Rather, it is a response to an initiated act, which adds another layer of complexity to the speech act, (Gass & Houck, 1999). Refusals have been the object of numerous L1 and L2 studies in the last decade (e.g., Ghazanfari, Bonyadi, & Malekzadeh, 2013; Hosseini & Talebinezhad, 2014). It is one of the speech acts where communication breakdowns are more likely to occur due to its communicative role in everyday interactions. In many cultures, “how to say ‘no’ is more important than the answer itself” (Ghazanfari, Bonyadi, & Malekzadeh, 2013, p. 52). Interlocutors are expected to have the pragmatic competence to know how to use an appropriate form of refusal depending on the context. Without that competence, they risk offending others.

Learning a second language and becoming pragmatically competent means that learners need to have knowledge of varied linguistic forms such as grammar and lexis at their disposal. They also need to understand the sociocultural norms and rules of the TL (Taguchi, 2009). After all, speaking a language is not just about uttering grammatically correct sentences. Learners can be considered fluent due to their mastery of many phrases
and grammar, but still lack the capacity to express themselves with pragmatic competence.

**Pragmatic transfer**

Pragmatic transfer “occurs when speakers apply rules from the L1 culture to a second or a foreign language” (Wannaruk, 2008, p. 319). This is evident in L2 speech performance given that learners often learn the L2 in their home country with limited exposure to the L2 culture or exposure to native speakers of the target language. Pragmatic transfer implies socio-cultural knowledge, as learners in a target language environment have to recognize a target-language speaker’s choice of a particular speech act and its accordance to the local target language socio-cultural norms (Kasper, 1984). Cohen (1996) defines socio-cultural knowledge as:

The speaker’s ability to determine whether it is acceptable to perform the speech act at all in the given situation and, so far, to select one or more semantic formulas that would be appropriate in the realization of the given speech act. (p. 254).

There is a solid body of research in regards to L1 speakers from different cultures and the refusing norms of their native language compared to their L2. In his empirical study on pragmatic transfer in refusals, Chang (2009) used a discourse completion questionnaire consisting of twelve situations where refusals were elicited. The author examined the responses of American college students, English-major seniors and freshmen (native speakers of Mandarin), and Chinese-major sophomores (also native speakers of Mandarin). Chang found that American students were not as specific in giving excuses as Chinese students in two types of refusals. The Americans students were
very direct in their refusals but gave vague explanations. This could be problematic for Chinese students when refusing in English, given that the hearer might perceive their long explanations as false excuses.

Furthermore, Sattar, Lah and Suleiman (2011) concluded that Malay university students’ use of excuses or explanations was similar in its specificity to that of Chinese students, which suggests that people from China and Malaysia share some beliefs and norms. Between Mandarin and Malaysian, positive pragmatic transfer might occur, but not between these languages and English. Important contextual factors must also be taken into account, such as the status of the speaker. Al-Eryani (2007) examined refusal strategies of Yemeni learners of English and Yemeni native speakers of Arabic. He compared them to the strategies used by L1 speakers of American English. The results show that when students were asked to refuse invitations from a person with equal status, all groups of students used the same strategies, but when the speaker had a higher status, the L2 English speakers were more direct than the L1 English speakers. Nevertheless, both Yemeni learners of English and American-English speakers used the expression “I’m sorry” in the first position of the refusal. This means that they started apologizing before explicitly refusing the requests.

**Positive and Negative Pragmatic Transfer**

The research literature distinguishes two types of pragmatic transfer: positive transfer and negative transfer. Negative transfer occurs when the L1 and L2 do not share the same language rules. Positive transfer takes place when the L1 and L2 share similar language rules that can be transferred to the TL (Wannaruk, 2008). Pragmatic misfires, on the other hand, may be more likely to take place when two languages, such as English
and Japanese, do not share transferable similarities the way, for example, Spanish and French do.

Pragmatic failure may occur in cross-cultural communication due to differences in culture and language, but that does not mean that the interlocutors have failed to acquire pragmatic competence (Taguchi, 2009). In some instances, these “pragmatic failures” may result in harmless double takes, while in other cases they may cause frustration, embarrassment, and even communication breakdown (Cruz, 2013). For instance, in Spanish, the expression “estar bueno” means to be handsome or beautiful. Many native English speakers of Spanish often use this expression to say, “I’m fine”. Because the equivalent of the English verb to be is two different verbs in Spanish, it is easy for English-speaking learners to make this negative transfer.

Social Status

One of the many factors that influence our decision to refuse a request or decline an invitation, as well as how we decide to do it, is the difference or similarity in the interlocutors’ social status. Hedayatnejad, Maleki, and Mehrizi (2015) studied the refusal strategies of Iranian EFL students and concluded that learners used indirect strategies when they were given scenarios in which the speakers had equal status. When the inviter were of lower status, they were more direct. When the inviter were of higher status, they used the same amount of direct and indirect strategies. In a similar study, Nikmehr and Jahedi (2014) found that Iranian EFL students tended to use direct strategies to refuse a request. Nonetheless, the inviter of a higher social status mostly used regret strategies employing expressions such as ‘I’m sorry’, and ‘I feel terrible’. Nikmehr and Jahedi also
found that regardless of the speaker’s social status, Iranian EFL students showed more formality than English-speaking American students.

Wannaruk (2008) showed that native speakers of Thai tend to express negativity followed by an explanation when refusing invitations. They tended to be indirect while interacting with someone higher in social status. For example, to an advisor’s invitation to a party, native speakers of Thai would say, “I’m afraid that I can’t go, there’s a party at my house on the same day”, taking into account the inviter’s higher social status. However, when it came to refusing invitations from a friend, Thai speakers often used more direct strategies. They said simply “no” and then added an explanation, similar to what native English speakers tend to do. American English speakers generally do not take social status into account. They refuse in a more direct manner and have a tendency to not give reasons (Kwon, 2004).

**Refusal Strategies**

Given the delicate nature of refusals, different situations require different strategies. Beebe et al. (1990) classified indirect strategies into eleven semantic formulas, three of which are *wish, statement of alternative, and avoidance*. The direct strategies were classified into performative, and non-performative statements. One example of a performative statement is ‘I refuse it’. A non-performative statement would be ‘I don’t think so’. The personality of the invitee and the environment play important roles in the choosing of the refusal strategy. Eslami (2010) explains that “an appropriate or preferred range of strategies manifests differently depending on the interlocutor’s individual personalities and social background” (p. 220). This means that the strategies students use to decline an invitation or refuse a request must be carefully considered. Alemi and
Tajeddin (2013) compared the refusal strategies used by native English teachers from various countries and Iranian English foreign language (EFL) teachers. They concluded that both groups used similar strategies to refuse, such as the brief apology and statement of alternative strategies. However, the English L1 speakers’ strategies stressed the importance of an explanation, whereas the nonnative English speakers’ strategies focused on politeness. This contradicts Kwon’s (2004) findings, which leads to ambiguous results about native English speakers’ refusing preferences.

Similarly, Hong (2011) shows the differences between Chinese EFL students and English L1 speakers’ refusal strategies. The English L1 speakers were convincing in their reasons for refusing an invitation. In comparison, the EFL speakers used unbelievable explanations that led hearers to think that they were not entirely truthful in their reasons. Guo (2012) highlighted the fact that people from different cultures share similar views on refusal strategies and that differences in those strategies are found mostly in the different levels of politeness. Similar to Wannaruk (2008), Guo’s findings reveal that American-English speakers utilize more direct strategies as opposed to Chinese speakers using English as foreign language or speaking Chinese.

**Conclusion**

The current research literature takes a sociolinguistic perspective by discussing the patterns of refusals among various cultures, situations, and social status. Even though Thai, Iranian, Chinese, and Yemeni learners of EFL rely on their L1 and transfer these rules to L2 English, it is important to study the underlying cultural assumptions. Refusals are one of the most difficult speech acts, especially when they involve interactions between people of varying social status and cultures. If students are pragmatically aware,
they can minimize instances where they could offend their interlocutors. Students need to be aware of the differences across languages and learn how to separate their L1 and L2 rules and beliefs. It is fundamental that L2 instructors show learners such differences and help them understand that every language has its own interaction rules. L2 instructors should follow the guidelines Tatsuki and Houck (2010) provide. These guidelines propose using activities that raise L2 students’ pragmatic awareness and give strategies for teaching speech acts that follow a series of steps. By becoming more pragmatically competent, L2 learners are able to engage in meaningful interactions with native speakers of their TL without misfires and negative pragmatic transfer.
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES
THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN SPANISH DLI CLASSROOM

Dual language immersion (DLI) is a school program where language minority and language majority students are combined in the same classroom with the purpose of learning content in both languages (Potowski, 2004). According to Lyster (2007), DLI is:

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

The United States is a country formed of a vast diversity of immigrants, with the Hispanic being the largest minority. More than 56 million Hispanics live in the United States of America (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Typically, people from other countries are expected to adapt to the American culture and English language. However, American citizens do not have an obligation to learn Spanish, and this creates a gap between the two communities. Immigrants often lose their heritage culture to adapt to the needs of the country they live in, and this also causes a gap between immigrants’ generations.

During the time I have been in the United States, I have noticed that there are plenty of students whose parents are from a foreign country, but these students do not speak their parents’ first language. Some of them even admit being exposed to that language every day in their homes to understand it, but they respond in English. DLI education has come to close this gap between immigrants’ generations and has even helped to build a stronger bond between English-speaking American people and immigrants. According to Fortune (2013), the ABC’s of DLI are: Academic
Achievement, Bilingualism and Biliteracy, Cultural Competence for learners. In this annotated bibliography, I focus on Cultural competence.

The first book I read about the features of DLI was *Biliteracy for a global society: An idea book on dual language education* by Lindholm-Leary (2000). Lindholm-Leary points out that dual language education has three features or components. These include: the students are integrated for most content instruction, the program involves periods of instruction during which only one language is used, and both native English speakers and native speakers of the target language (TL) are participants. She also mentions the main goals of DLI, which are biliteracy, bilingual proficiency, and achievement in a content area according to the students’ grade level or higher, and multicultural competencies. This means that the students have the opportunity not only to be immersed in two languages, but to be part of a culture different than what they experience in their daily lives outside the classroom. In this way, I learned from this article that teaching a foreign language requires more than teaching grammar and vocabulary. Students need to be aware of cultural differences and embrace the TL culture as if it was their own. As a teacher, it is fundamental that I prepare my students to develop this cultural awareness.

In order to know how Spanish two-way immersion (TWI) programs work, I read Cervantes-Soon’s (2004) article *A Critical Look at Dual Language Immersion in the New Latin@ Diaspora*. The author claims that despite DLI being a very promising approach for English learners, research shows disadvantages. Examples include the needs that DLI must meet through the integration of communities with linguistic differences as well as differences in their social status and resources. Administrators also have to deal with distinct expectations from the students’ parents and with the diverse needs of the
students. Cervantes-Soon argues that there is still inequity in some TWI Spanish programs. In an ideal two-way immersion classroom, half of the students speak the majority language and half speak the minority language (Genesee, 2008). Nevertheless, according to Cervantes-Soon, English is often placed above Spanish in this model of DLI. I believe this happens when the administrators and parents still view the TL as foreign language. In addition, something that usually happens, even with Latino students is that they only practice Spanish at school. Some Latino parents do not speak English, so they communicate in Spanish with their children, but children reply in English. I have seen cases like this with relatives who have been raised in New York. They spend most of their free time surrounded by Spanish speakers. When they know that the person they are talking to does not speak English, they try to communicate in Spanish, even if they mispronounce some words. On the other hand, when they know a person speaks English, they resort to English, no matter the language that person replies with.

In order to know more about the results of DLI, I read Collier and Thomas (2004)’s article *The astounding effectiveness of dual language education for all.* They investigated education services in U.S. public schools provide for diverse students. The authors explain the difference between enrichment dual language education and remediation programs. They state that enrichment education “closes the academic achievement gap in [second language] L2 and in first language (L1) students initially below grade level, and for all categories of students participating in this program” (p. 1). According to Collier and Thomas, the thematic units of enrichment programs’ curriculum challenge learners’ cognition and aim for students to engage in real-life problems. Enrichment education also encourages collaborative learning. Remediation programs, on
the other hand, do not completely close the gap. Similar to native English speakers, after students finish remedial programs and go to mainstream programs, they make only one-year progress. This gap usually grows when learners go to secondary school.

Collier and Thomas (2004) state that one-way and two-way education help students accomplish the set goals for their grades and sometimes get to a higher level of language proficiency, which does not occur with mainstream education. Furthermore, contrary to what many people think, “native-English speakers’ language and identity is not threatened, because English is the power and status language and they know it” (p. 11). Teachers and administrators express that even though putting enrichment dual language models in place properly takes time and planning, the results make it worth it. Additionally, parents feel a part of their children’s education, as they are always invited to activities and the schools value their opinions. This article is a great example of why DLI works and how this school program has come to contribute to students’ sense of identity. Hispanic students in these programs do not have to be part of one culture or the other, but embrace both cultures as their own.

Culture plays a big role in students’ attitudes towards DLI programs. Bearse and de Jong (2008) conducted a study to analyze the differences between Anglo students and Latino students’ perceptions about TWI. Bearse and de Jong’s concluded from their study on secondary DLI students that while Anglo students expressed that they were in DLI because of college and job-related opportunities, Latino students expressed their intrinsic need to study Spanish in order to preserve their cultural identity. In my Spanish class, I had a student whose parents were from Mexico. She knew a lot about Mexican culture and enrolled in my class to interact more with her family in Spanish. She was one of the
top students in my class, and it was evident how much she enjoyed learning the language appropriately. In Bearse and de Jong’s (2008) article, both groups of students expressed concerns about the decreased amount allotted to Spanish instruction in high school, compared to the amount of instruction in elementary school. This strengthens the argument that Spanish is given less importance than English. Nevertheless, I believe that this decreasing occurs because of the complexity of secondary education and all that it entails. For example, the need for teachers who are prepared to teach content at high levels willing to teach in this type of context. DLI is still a program in process, especially in secondary education.

I became more curious about Latino students’ perceptions about TWI, and the effects that participating in this type of program have had on their lives. For this reason, I read the article *Perceived impact of two-way dual immersion programs on Latino students’ relationships in their families and communities* (Block, 2012). This article studies mainstream and TWI Latino students’ attitudes in order to make a comparison with the relationships with their relatives. The results of the study show that indeed, TWI Latino students built more personal relationships with their Spanish-speaking relatives than Latino students in English-only mainstream programs. Block interviewed parents of group of students about their children’s experiences in school. He reports that mainstream students’ parents talked about English and exams, whereas TWI students’ parents talked about bilingualism, biliteracy and interaction of their children with family. Even though the study was conducted in a single part of the United States, it shows that DLI may have better outcomes than monolinguial education, and that it is beneficial for both minority and majority students.
For further understanding of the benefits of DLI, I read the article

*Translanguaging in a Reggio-inspired Spanish dual-language immersion programme.*

Alamillo, Yun, and Bennett (2017) explain the term *translanguaging*, which is the ability of a multilingual person to integrate their knowledge about different languages in the same system in order to make themselves understood. They state that this concept is related to the concept of biliteracies, which they define as the “interrelated development of multiple literacies in more than one language” (p. 471). The study shows that the context of DLI helps students form this unique ability called translanguaging. What I find compelling about this idea is that students do not need to stop thinking about one language to start thinking in another, but react instinctively and naturally using that joint system according to the situation.

Moreover, an important element that contributes to DLI success and development of biliteracy and biculturalism is the students’ parent’s involvement and commitment to their children’s education. For this reason, I read the article *Parental Voice and Involvement in Cultural Context: Understanding Rationales, Values, and Motivational Constructs in a Dual Immersion Setting.* Gerena (2011) collected information from parents whose children had participated in 2 years of a dual-immersion bilingual program. Gerena found that both English-speaking parents and Spanish-speaking parents were satisfied with DLI and pointed out that what they liked the most was the fact that their children were learning another language without falling behind on their L1. However, this contradicts other researchers’ findings such as Cervantes-Soon’ (2004). As mentioned in this paper, Cervantes-Soon points out that in TWI programs, teaching English is a priority rather than teaching English and Spanish in equal amount and
quality. My view on this matter is that some DLI schools succeed remarkably, while others need more time to adapt. This success depends on various aspects such as the type of immersion program, the schools’ administrators’ perspectives, etc.

The last article I read gave a different perspective about culture in the language classroom. de Jong and Harper (2005) argue that instructors should be aware of their own cultural identity, their students’ identity and students’ families’ identity. Knowing “the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (Gay, 2002, p. 106) is fundamental.

According to de Jong and Harper, some students come from cultural backgrounds where the teacher is the one who should the most in the classroom or are simply not used to participate in class discussions and do group work. Therefore, instructors need to be open to facing beliefs or situations that might seem foreign for them. Teachers should also use different strategies depending on their students’ needs. This reminded me of a student I had from South Korea. His second language was English and though English and Spanish have similarities, he could not grasp most cognates or grammar rules. Instead of becoming frustrated and letting him get behind, I offered to work with him in my office hours every week and assigned him partners that could help him improve. After a few weeks, I noticed that his comprehension skills had become better. de Jong and Harper also point out the importance of connecting and establishing rapport with students. In my Spanish L2 classroom, I rely on laughter and personal stories to connect with my students. This helps them feel more comfortable asking questions and telling me about their own life experiences.
To sum, despite the challenges that many DLI schools are still facing, this type of education program has helped build bridges to bring communities from different cultures together. In addition, it allows Latin@ students to be part of American culture without losing their own. DLI also serves as a means for the Latino community to maintain relationships with their families and friends who do not speak English and to cherish their heritage culture even if they have never been immersed in it.
THE COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING APPROACH

Several approaches and methods for teaching a second language (L2) have been advocated over time. When I was in college and studying to be a teacher, I learned about the evolution of the communicative language teaching approach (CLT). Despite having known about this approach for many years, I did not understand how to put it into practice in my classroom. My teachers did not use it; in fact, the ones that thought they implemented CLT confused it with the Audio-lingual Method (ALM), which, despite its focus on oral competence, does not prepare students to communicate in real-world situations. It was not until starting the MSLT program that I began to understand the importance of CLT and the impact it has on students’ second language acquisition. CLT appeals to me because of its main purpose: preparing students to interact and use the target language in the real world.

My first source of information on CLT was Lee and VanPatten’s (2003) *Making Communicative Language Teaching Happen*, and its perspective opened my eyes to a different way of teaching and learning a second language. The authors state that the traditional classroom context does not provide the interaction necessary for language to be used psychosocially; therefore, teachers must create activities that allow students to socialize in the target language (TL) in real-life environments where they can apply what they learn in the classroom. These activities or tasks need to have a communicative goal that the students can later use outside the classroom. I was also introduced to input, which Lee and VanPatten claim is essential for successful language acquisition. Many factors contribute to comprehensible input, including negotiation of meaning, that is, learners
asking for clarifications or repetitions so that the interlocutors can then modify their speech so learners can understand the message they intend to convey. Furthermore, input has to be meaning bearing, i.e., the language that teachers use needs to contain a message that learners can understand. I learned that teaching a second language (L2) does not require that I use the students’ first language (L1) if the input the students receive is comprehensible. Features that make input comprehensible include using visual aids, gestures, speaking more slowly, and using simple words that are easier for students to understand. Input is said to be meaning bearing when it relates to topics and themes relevant to the students’ lives.

According to Lee and VanPatten (2003), the major roles that instructors are beginning to assume are those of resource person and architect (p. 68). They affirm that when the instructor is a resource person, students work in pairs and groups to negotiate meaning, and they stop seeing the instructor as the one responsible for providing answers to the questions they are supposed to ask. When the instructor is an architect, she or he is responsible for the planning but not for the results, and the students become builders/coworkers (pp. 69-71). This means the CLT approach places the student at the center of the classroom. Students can work in groups to complete the tasks while the instructor moves around the classroom to make sure students understand what they are supposed to do, what they are “building” according to the architect’s plan. Whole class discussions after completing the communicative tasks are not always necessary but can be helpful when students make common mistakes that need clarification.

I also read The Communicative Classroom by Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandell (2001). Before reading it, I thought that teachers used traditional methods
because they were not concerned about the students’ needs or because they were self-absorbed, but according to Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandell, traditional practices persist because of insufficient information about how CLT works and because teachers do not see CLT in practice. Many instructors teach the way they were taught. Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandell wrote about the three modes of communication contained in the Standards for Foreign Language Learning (2015). These modes are interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational. The authors claim that when one person speaks (interpersonal mode), the other person must be able to understand and interpret what they hear (interpretive mode). After exchanging information, students should be expected to do something with what they have learned from the exchange (presentational mode). A communicative classroom is intended to provide the means necessary for students to be able to use all three modes of communication.

Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandell (2001), as well as Lee and VanPatten (2003), refer to the importance of negotiation of meaning. Students negotiate for meaning when they use communication strategies. Students must be forced to use communication strategies to find out ways to say something that they are not sure how to express in the TL, for instance, when students describe the word they want to say instead of saying the exact word. This helps them stay in the TL as they make themselves understood. Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandell explain the importance of classroom communication that prepares students for real-life communication, that is motivating, and that, when the activities are carefully constructed, accelerates language acquisition.

In the communicative classroom there must be a middle ground between the assumption that grammar has no role in the classroom, and the opposite assumption that
teaching must be focused on structure and vocabulary (*grammar for grammar’s sake*). This ‘middle ground’ is called *grammar in support of communication*, and it is based on the idea that indeed, grammar is important for instruction, but it is not the main goal.

In traditional classrooms, grammar is the principal element. Students become little grammarians but do not acquire proficiency in the use of the TL for real-world purposes. In communicative classrooms, students do not need to stress about knowing every grammar detail as long as they are able to make their listeners or readers understand what they want to express. Immediately correcting students’ errors does not allow for the negotiation of meaning, which, if allowed to run its course, will correct many of the errors made along the way.

Many have wrongly understood CLT as an approach used to teach only oral communication. In her article *Beyond communicative language teaching: What’s ahead?*, Savignon (2006) affirms that “the principles of CLT apply equally to reading and writing activities that involve readers and writers engaged in the interpretation, expression, and negotiation of meaning” (p. 213). The author presents different perspectives on CLT and its status in various countries. She claims that CLT adapts to learners’ needs in a given context. For instance, group work, though motivating and helpful for students, is not always appropriate in every situation and culture. Consequently, the author proposes a more open and evolving CLT approach. Because of the diversity of cultures, she states that CLT can be merged with different methods in order to adjust it to the circumstances. It is important to understand how CLT is viewed elsewhere, as language teaching is a globally-oriented profession.
In the same vein, the article *Some misconceptions about communicative language teaching* by Thompson (1996) explains that many teachers are confused about what exactly CLT is. This article impressed me because even though it was written 20 years ago, some of the misconceptions about the approach remain today. According to Thompson, some teachers still refuse to use CLT because, among other objections, they think it means not teaching grammar, teaching only speaking, and expecting too much from the teacher. The author points out that these are damaging misconceptions.

Although explicit grammar instruction is not prioritized, it has its place in CLT. Thompson points out that in CLT, rather than teachers explaining or covering grammar, students are now presented with comprehensible context that allows them to discover grammar.

Another misconception about CLT is that, because its focus is on communication, it teaches only speaking. Thompson (1996) states that communication also occurs in writing. Real-life situations not only involve the students speaking, but also sending letters/emails, writing a resume in the TL, and so on. Yet another misconception is that CLT requires more work of the instructor. Thompson agrees with this perception to a certain point. He concedes that in the CLT approach, “lessons tend to be less predictable; teachers have to be ready to listen to what learners have to say and not just how they say it” (p. 13). But the initial extra work is a good investment. These challenges force teachers to develop their professional skills, and besides, in a communicative classroom, the variety of innovative activities makes the teaching experience more enjoyable. The teacher is meant to be a guide in CLT while the students are the ones who carry out the activities. When I used other teaching methods, such as the ALM, I sometimes could not
wait to finish my class periods. Whereas whenever I create activities with the CLT approach, I enjoy my work and cherish the time spent in the classroom. As I see it, teachers should become better informed about the evolution of CLT throughout the years before rejecting it.

Teaching an L2 requires knowing how to interact with students in a natural, but purposeful way. For this reason, I read chapters five, six, and seven of *Language teaching research and language pedagogy*. However, I will focus on key points I derived from the book chapters that are important for me to consider in a communicative classroom. In chapter five, *Ellis (2012)* investigates teacher talk in the L2 classroom. He states that it is important to analyze the teacher’s use of language because teachers make “the major contribution to L2 discourse” (p. 115). He further explains that teachers are the main source of input in the classroom. I learned from this book chapter that the language teachers use make a great impact on learners L2 development. Ellis claims that teachers modify their language to facilitate students’ comprehension, that they ask students plenty of questions, and that they show different ways of providing corrective feedback to students. In chapter six, Ellis lists several features of learner talk. For example, it is nearly impossible for learners not to use their L1 and metalanguage to manage “instructional tasks and learning” (p. 191). Following these claims, I arrived at the conclusion that although using the TL in the classroom as much as possible is important, it is normal for students to use their L1 to mediate their language learning. Additionally, gap-based activities provide students with more opportunities to practice the TL and improve their proficiency.
In chapter seven, Ellis (2012) focuses on task performance in L2 classrooms. Ellis cites Breen (1989) to define the term “task”. A task is “… a structured plan for the provision of opportunities for the refinement of knowledge and capabilities entailed in a new language and its use during communication” (p. 187, as cited in Ellis, 2012). Ellis mentions different types of tasks according variables. For instance, tasks can have different types of ‘gaps’ for students to fill, such as information gaps, opinion gaps, and reasoning gaps. In information-gap activities, students need another classmate’s information to complete the task. In opinion gaps, students have access to the same information and must work together to find a solution to the task. Finally, in reasoning gaps, learners extract new information from the information the teacher provides.

The most important findings I draw from chapter seven is about language-related episodes (LRE) and focus-on-form episodes (FFE), which I always encounter in my classroom. LRE occur when students discuss the language they are using, question its use, and correct themselves or others. FFE, on the other hand, occur when students and/or teachers focus on “some aspect of linguistic form” (p. 205) while working on a communicative task. FFE can be responding FFEs, which takes places when a student or the teacher responds to a linguistic error or unclear meaning made by another student. In student-initiated FFEs, a student focuses on a linguistic aspect, usually in the form of a question, because of something he/she does not know. When the teacher targets a linguistic aspect because he/she believes can be challenging for learners, the FFE is a teacher-initiated FFE. I noticed this type of utterances in my classroom before, but I did not know how they were called or why they happened.
Richards (2006) describes key components to consider in creating activities based on CLT. These include the purposes for which the students are learning the TL, the setting where they will use the TL, and the diversity contained in the TL. I was reminded of a student who once asked me what they called a computer in Spanish in Chile. I didn’t know and felt badly because as the teacher, I am supposed to “know everything”. On the other hand, I knew that I could not be expected to not know the word for every object in every single Hispanic country. Elements of the same language can be very different depending on the country or region of a country. In addition, teaching the students multiple ways of communicating the same meaning at beginning levels will only confuse them. I realized that what I should have done was to ask the student if she was going to travel to Chile. Knowing the specific needs of my students allows me to study the concepts that I am not sure about beforehand. Instead of teaching these concepts to the whole class, I can meet individually with the students who will need to know them.

Richards (2006) also states that “one of the goals of CLT is to develop fluency in language use” (p. 14). He claims that students improve their fluency in the TL when they engage in classroom activities where they use negotiation of meaning and communication strategies, correct misunderstandings, and work to avoid communication disruptions. He asserts that fluency and accuracy do not mean the same thing. “In CLT, the notion of fluency is used to assess how well learners use their knowledge to achieve their linguistic and communicative purpose” (Chambers, 1997, p. 537). I used to think that being fluent in a second language meant being accurate as well. Now I know that a student might be fluent in a L2 without necessarily using correct pronunciation, vocabulary, or sentence structure. A learner might also demonstrate great accuracy in the structure of a language
but still be difficult to understand. Ideally, students would be both fluent and accurate. Students can be fluent and manage to make listeners understand them, but being accurate in the L2 without being fluent might only work in limited circumstances, such as writing a simple email or filling out a form.

I became interested in knowing how CLT was different from other approaches. **Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1997)** compare and contrast the direct approach and the CLT in their article *Direct Approaches in L2 Instruction: A Turning Point in Communicative Language Teaching?* They explain that in the 1990s, many researchers suggested that the approach needed some changes. These changes included content specifications on testing the learning outcomes and the idea that students learned grammar through communication and not direct instruction. The authors claim that explicit grammar teaching and communicative competence can be combined in order to achieve more significant language outcomes. Every L2 teaching approach requires evaluations that correspond with the learning outcomes of the approach being implemented. According to Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell, if the tests do not reflect the approach used in class activities, they cannot yield meaningful data.

According to Dörnyei and Thurrell (1994), three features bring together direct approaches and CLT: adding particular input to communicative activities; calling the students’ attention to language use, organizational principles in sentences, and other contexts; and organizing the tasks based on a theory of discourse grammar. The difference between direct approaches and CLT as pointed out by Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1997) is that the direct approach is based on a traditional method where instruction occurs in an explicit way and the focus is on grammar. In contrast, CLT is an
approach that places great importance on engaging students in real-life contexts where they gain communicative competence without necessarily putting aside the focus on form. This article serves as evidence that CLT is not as new as some people believe. It clearly shows how much CLT has evolved over the years. The comparison between direct approaches and CLT allows teachers who still prefer not to use CLT to see the changes it has gone through over time.

This annotated bibliography has provided an overview of articles and book chapters that present the benefits, misconceptions, evolution, and features of the CLT approach. This approach not only focuses on speaking, but also on written communication. As it has evolved over time, CLT has incorporated the teaching of grammar concepts into the practice of the TL through interaction. CLT can be highly beneficial for L2 learners. It motivates students by engaging them in purposeful and interactive activities, and it helps them be better prepared to face the situations they will encounter in the real world. L2 teaching has moved from the teacher being the center of the class to the students constructing their own language skills with the teacher as their guide.
USING WIKIS TO FACILITATE L2 COLLABORATIVE WRITING

Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) is becoming increasingly popular in second language (L2) classes. CALL provides students with opportunities to reinforce their language skills in and outside the classroom and allows them to be in charge of their L2 learning. “Courses with a face-to-face and a CALL component have also been shown to promote student autonomy and empowerment” (Sagarra & Zapata, 2008, p. 210). The use of digital technology facilitates the L2 teaching-learning process and engages students in interaction, making L2 acquisition motivating for them.

Wikis are an example of CALL tools being used in the L2 classroom for collaborative writing. According to Purdy (2009), a wiki is an asynchronous communication tool that helps strengthen writing skills through collaboration, continual revision, and cooperative knowledge formation. Asynchronous communication occurs when “there is a significant delay between the time the message is sent and when it is received by the addressee” (Smith, 2003, p. 30). This type of communication allows learners to analyze what they want to write and correct errors they might notice in their own writing before their interlocutors see them. The use of wikis also allows students to work on group projects without having to coordinate a time to meet. Each student has access to the project, and each group member(s) can see the modifications made by the other members. A wiki is a collaboration tool that is simple to create, edit, and view, and it can be used with any browser. For these reasons, the use of wikis for L2 teaching is an area of study that I became interested in and decided to explore. This annotated bibliography explores nine articles that study the use of wikis for L2 collaborative writing learning.
The first article that encouraged me to use collaborative writing through wikis in the L2 classroom was Li’s (2012a) review article of research conducted on the use of wikis to improve writing in the L2 classroom. Li analyzed twenty-one empirical articles highlighting various areas of research on the use of wikis for L2 writing. Li also examined archives of wiki pages, questionnaires, interviews, written reflections, observations, and video recordings. The articles studied were taken from six acclaimed academic journals, and the studies they present were conducted in different parts of the world”. Three of the articles focused on secondary education students, while one article focused on primary education students. Some of the types of tasks used in the studies were expository, argumentative essays, narrative, and culture tasks, and some of the tasks had a focus on particular grammatical aspects.

Li concluded that the use of wikis for teaching L2 writing in different educational settings has increased over time. Most of the studies examined in this article gave priority to the interaction between the students and their insights on the use of wikis for collaborative L2 writing. Li also found that most studies focused on accurate grammar use, overall organization, and patterns of interaction used by the students. I found it interesting that students in certain studies experienced technical challenges with the wiki pages. Some students complained about the lack of contribution from their classmates to the assigned wiki projects. Despite their limitations, wikis are being used in different settings globally and have been shown to be effective. Digital technology and group work motivate students to give more of themselves and make written tasks less anxiety producing. Before reading Li’s (2012a) article, I thought that wikis could not produce
good outcomes if incorporated in an L2 class for children. Now I realize that the use of wikis can be adapted to any level and age. After reading the article, I felt motivated to investigate the effect of task type on students’ wiki editing.

Among several studies that show the differences between L2 students’ performances according to the task is one conducted by Aydin and Yildiz (2014) at a private university in Istanbul. The participants were thirty-four English as a foreign language (EFL) intermediate-level undergraduate students from different educational backgrounds, and all of them spoke Turkish as a first language. The authors analyzed the number of form-related and meaning-related changes that students made depending on the task assigned.

Meaning-focused tasks can be defined as tasks in which students have an aim to convey a message to an audience thereby encouraging them to focus on the content of the text they produce. However, a form-focused task, such as drills or gap filling exercises, could be described as a task which encourages the learners to focus on the formal elements of the language (p. 164).

Aydin and Yildiz also examined the number of self-corrections and peer corrections during each of the tasks.

The participants were divided into two different groups of an equal number of students and the groups shared one of the instructors. Three meaning-focused tasks were used for the study: argumentative, informative, and decision-making writing tasks. These tasks were based on real-life situations and required the participants to work and make decisions together. Before setting up a wiki for each class, the researcher conducted a training session to ready the students. The students then worked on the different tasks
over a period of seven weeks. In the seventh week, they were given a questionnaire about their experiences using the wiki. Finally, some of the students were interviewed and video-recorded so the authors could better analyze those students’ experience with the project.

Aydin and Yildiz (2014) concluded that the students focused more on meaning than on form in all task types. They also focused more on peer-corrections than on self-corrections. Doing peer-corrections allows learners to notice things that they might not notice in their own work. Since students provide feedback to one another, they are able to help their classmates improve their language skills in a non-critical manner. Aydin and Yildiz’s study found that students provided more substantial peer-corrections in the argumentative task than in the other two tasks. This might have been due to the complexity of the other two tasks. Finally, according to the questionnaire and the interview results, the students’ experience using the wiki for collaborative writing was enriching. The majority stated that there was a major improvement in their writing performance after working on the project. I next decided to explore a study on students’ perceptions about the use of wikis for collaborative writing.

Wang (2014) also investigated the use of wikis to promote collaboration in foreign language acquisition as well as students’ perspectives of wiki projects. The study is based on a social constructivist perspective, a theory that emphasizes students’ need to collaborate in order for them to be able to learn (Woo & Reeves, 2007). The participants were forty-two EFL students in their first year of an English composition course at a technical university in Taiwan. The students received training in the form of practice sessions with the researcher and their instructor. They were assigned
three tasks during the semester. The first task was to learn the steps of the writing process pointed out by Tompkins (2004). These steps are pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. The second task required students to collaborate and interact with their classmates in order to improve their writing skills. The third task required them to use their improved writing skills to work on their wiki pages.

The students took two online questionnaires; some students were also selected randomly to participate in an interview. They worked on the tasks in groups of 4-5 students. At the end of the semester, they were asked to post a reflection about the project on their wiki pages. Wang (2014) concluded that working on wiki projects increased the participants’ motivation and interest in L2 learning. The students felt that “their communicative competencies have improved through regular scaffolding and feedback” (p. 388). This supports the social constructivist theory view that collaboration between students helps them improve their L2 skills. Even though most students had reservations about providing peer feedback at the beginning of the semester, by the end of the project the students became more confident and showed more willingness to collaborate in this part of the process. This study encouraged me to write a lesson plan containing a collaborative wiki project with a similar structure with the hope that having a series of stages would help students understand what they were going to do step by step without overwhelming them. It is important for the students to understand the wiki page that they will use for the collaborative writing task. For this reason, giving them training on how to use the technology tool before starting to work on the task is crucial.

To see how using wikis in a Spanish classroom would, I read Castañeda (2011)’s article, where he compares L2 teaching using videos, blogs, and wikis with traditional
text-based teaching. The initial participants were seventy-five undergraduate students enrolled in five sections of a second-semester Spanish class at a Midwestern public university. Most students were majoring in English, Psychology, or Computer Science. During the semester, eleven students dropped the class, thus only sixty-four remained in the study. Before beginning the study, the participants took a demographic survey. They were also asked if they had studied the past tense in Spanish before and if they preferred working alone or in groups. In addition, students received three anonymous pre-tests and post-tests. The classes were fifty minutes long and took place four times a week. The five sections were divided into three control groups and two treatment groups. The students from the control groups submitted their written narratives either handwritten or using a word processing program. In contrast, the students from the treatment groups submitted their narratives either using a wiki or a blog. The students were assigned to these groups according to their preference in working alone or in groups. The researcher used video clips of cartoon animations for the treatment groups as supplementary writing activities. Students also had to write an essay using the imperfect and preterit in Spanish based on videos and pictures.

Castañeda (2011) states that “traditional approaches to aspects that rely heavily on cloze passages (fill in the blank texts) without any visual component require students to guess what the narrator must have visualized” (p. 703). He further explains that this can cause students to go in different direction from what is expected from them. Castañeda found that even though using blogs and wikis to teach Spanish as a FL does not influence students’ performance in lower levels, it makes students aware of the use of certain grammar aspects. The results show that in general, the students who were taught with
these technologies outperformed those who were taught the traditional way. In addition, having visual aids and in a virtual platform seemed to have helped students better understand the differences between the imperfect and preterit. Although the primary focus of this study is not the use of wikis for collaborative writing enhancement, it shows how useful wikis are to help students improve, especially if visual aids are included.

**Castañeda and Cho (2013)**’s article *The role of wiki writing in learning Spanish grammar* aims for a more focused analysis on the use of wikis. The authors studied the improvement of two classes of undergraduate students in L2 Spanish grammar while using wikis. Fifty-three students participated in this study. The students were enrolled in a second-semester Spanish class at a university in the U.S. A training was provided before starting to use the wiki and the students were divided into groups of three and four. The instructor selected a leader for each group, who was charge of opening the wiki account and invite group members and the instructor. The students were asked to write four stories based on four YouTube videos on Wikispaces. Students had two weeks to write two drafts for each story. The participants expressed having positive experiences with the wiki page. They also found Wikispaces easy to use and helpful for developing their writing skills. Additionally, students reported that providing peer-feedback gave the opportunity of studying more the past tenses in Spanish. However, some students reported feeling uncomfortable editing their partners’ work. Finally, the participants seemed to have significantly improved their writing performance. This article showed me how I could use Wikispaces in my beginning-Spanish class. After reading this study, I thought of a wiki project, where my students advertise Utah State University while using the knowledge acquired throughout their first semester of Spanish class.
Lee (2010) also analyzed the use of Wikispaces in two second-semester Spanish classes at a university in the U.S. with the purpose of replacing traditional compositions. The participants were thirty-five native speakers of English with less than two years of Spanish language instruction before the study. The students wrote about three different aspects. The first writing task was narrating a story “Once upon a time…” using the preterit and the imperfect tenses in Spanish. In the second task, students wrote a cultural report about a Hispanic country of their choice. For the third task, the participants selected a Hispanic country they wanted to visit and create a travel plan with an itinerary for the trip. The last task involved students thinking of a problem and writing a letter asking for help or advice from a famous newspaper writer. The wiki project included several stages: drafting, revising, editing, and publishing with intervals of two to three weeks. Before the starting to write their drafts, students were given twenty to thirty minutes to brainstorm in class. Students had deadlines to complete each stage of the tasks. Furthermore, “the instructor’s assistance was kept to a minimum” (p. 264) to motivate students to provide peer-feedback.

Lee (2010) found that students enjoyed working on Wikispaces and appreciated the freedom they were given to choose what they wanted to write about. Most students, even expressed preferring writing on Wikispaces rather than writing the traditional way. Students also enjoyed having to write in different stages, as they could improve what they already had. Additionally, similar to other studies, many students reported not feeling comfortable editing other students’ work. I learned from this article that there are many different tasks students can carry out on wikis. Writing does not only involve descriptive, narrative, and argumentative essays, but also projects in which students can exploit their
creativity and have fun, study the target language culture, and at the same time, improve their language proficiency with the help of their peers.

After learning about students’ positive experience using wikis to collaborate in writing projects, I wanted to know what patterns they might show when collaborating in a wiki. **Li and Zhu (2013)** conducted a study to analyze the patterns of group interaction of Chinese EFL students in collaborative writing tasks using wikis. The study took place at a southwestern university in China. Fifteen Chinese EFL college students with an Intermediate High level of English proficiency participated in this study. The students were divided into five self-selected groups of three. The first week, they were orientated about the use the wiki page. Between the second and fourth weeks, they worked on three tasks: narration; argumentation; and exposition. During the fifth week, seven students were interviewed and recorded. The other participants were sent the interview questions via email.

The patterns of interaction analyzed were “the ways in which students negotiated the writing tasks as well as ways in which students acted upon their negotiated meaning through text construction” (p. 67). The interactions within the groups were classified into three categories: contributing/mutually supportive, authoritative/responsive, and dominant/withdrawn. Li and Zhu (2013) found that despite having the same educational, cultural, and linguistic background, not all of the participants were able to work collaboratively on the wiki project. This affected the students’ perceptions about their experiences. It was also concluded that students have the ability to scaffold each other in a group. This occurs when all members in the group show the same amount of interest in each other’s work.
Some features of the group interactions related to face-to-face interactions. Li and Zhu’s article shows the importance of monitoring students’ progress during the assignment. In my wiki project lesson plan, I decided to use Wikispaces as my CALL tool. This tool allows teachers to monitor students’ progress and contributions to the writing task. If a student does not collaborate, the wiki project does not serve its full purpose. If I monitor them on the wiki and I notice that some students are not contributing enough to their project, I will approach them, and try to motivate them to collaborate. If they are confused about what they have to do, I will meet with them and guide them through the process.

Bikowski and Vithanage (2016) also explored the effects of in-class web-based collaborative writing tasks on students’ writing scores, but at a university in the United States. The authors studied student perceptions of the tasks as well as instructor perceptions of in-class collaboration during the tasks. Two of the four groups of undergraduate non-native English-speaking students participated in ungraded in-class collaborative tasks using Google Docs. The content of the groups was determined according to the members’ skill in digital technology, grammar, and organization, making sure that each student had something to contribute to the writing tasks. The other two groups of students participated in the same ungraded writing tasks, but worked individually. The teachers monitored student work in two ways; from a computer and in person in case the students had any questions. The researchers created an anonymous online survey in order to analyze the students’ perspectives on the writing tasks process. Bikowski and Vithanage concluded that students working in groups increased their scores in the post-test compared to their pre-test scores. The groups who engaged in
collaborative writing obtained more learning gains than the students who worked individually. In my Spanish class, I have seen the difference that working in groups can make. For instance, I had two students who always wanted to do activities together. They both showed difficulty understanding task instructions, so when they worked together, they were both lost at the beginning of the activities. When they worked with classmates who were more proficient, they showed more confidence, and if they did not understand something, they asked their partner. For this reason, I personally pair my students ninety percent of the time. When I do not pair them, it is because I have planned activities where they have to speak to several different classmates to get specific information from them.

The majority of the students who worked individually in Bikowski and Vithanage’s (2016) study expressed that they would have liked to do the in-class writing tasks in groups. On the other hand, some of the students in the collaborative writing group expressed difficulty agreeing on ideas for the tasks. They also mentioned that they felt more comfortable receiving teacher feedback than peer feedback. Working with others through a web-based tool can be challenging for some students. For this reason, the authors emphasize the important of providing more training and monitoring for this type of student. Giving students guidelines on how to provide feedback to their peers can make them feel more comfortable when they receive their own feedback. If not sufficiently instructed on how to provide feedback, some learners might express their opinions in the form of criticism and hurt their classmates’ feelings.

After analyzing what I had read about the interaction between EFL students in a wiki, as well as their perceptions, I decided to investigate wiki collaboration between
English for specific purposes (ESP) students because I’m interested in teaching ESP in the Dominican Republic in the future. Bradley, Lindstrom, and Rystedt (2010) examined the written interaction in wikis between advanced ESP students. The participants were fifty-six Swedish software engineering students divided into twenty-seven groups. The majority of students had never used a wiki page for collaboration. Three teachers participated in this study acting as administrators of the wiki, guiding the students, and providing feedback. The students worked on four assignments. The first consisted of discussions about today’s culture’s ideas about modifying language from informal to formal structures. The second assignment was analyzing argumentation and speech rhetoric. In the third assignment, the students wrote collaborative texts where the use of editable online references in technical reports was debated. They also provided feedback to other groups. In the last assignment, the students wrote critiques on topical issues.

The study found that contribution types vary among students. Some students showed significant effort in interacting with their peers and collaborating while others showed little or no effort. But it was revealing that even those who avoided collaboration, most were engaged and motivated with the wiki project. The study also found that there were variations on the feedback the students provided to each other. Some focused on linguistic errors, but others focused on content. Still others focused on both language and content. The students used three types of feedback. Some students wrote end comments only, which are short comments with no criticism or recommendations. Others used comments in-text only, which showed recommendations and clarifications of concepts.
The majority of students used both types of comments: end comments and comments in text.

In conclusion, using web-based tools, such as wikis, makes the writing process easier for the students and allows them to keep a record of their writing skills advancement. All nine articles I have studied and reviewed here point out the positive comments made by participants after using web-based platforms for many weeks. They also all stress the importance of knowing the students’ perceptions about the use of wiki pages. According to that knowledge, teachers can change elements that do not work effectively.

It is fundamental that teachers support students and make sure that everyone collaborates equally on the wiki. Students who end up working alone on a group project can become frustrated and demotivated about the task. Wikispaces allow teachers to monitor the students’ participation, alerting them to this type of problem and enabling them to react in a timely manner. Wikis have proven to be very useful CALL tools to enhance L2 writing performance. By providing feedback to each other, students learn to detect errors more easily and avoid making them in their own writing. In addition, teachers can complement the use of wikis with a presentation about the project, which will also aid the students’ presentation skills. After reading these several articles about the effectiveness of wikis for L2 learning, I am eager to continue experimenting with this tool in my own teaching. By using wikis, the writing process, along with the development of reading and speaking.
LOOKING FORWARD

After two years of studying FL/L2 teaching in the MSLT program and being exposed to my L2, I can now go back to the Dominican Republic and put all the knowledge I gained into practice. I intend to continue developing my language teaching skills by using the CLT approach in my EFL classroom. Although I might pursue a doctorate degree in the future, my immediate goal is to teach EFL at a university in the Dominican Republic and to further develop my French language skills in order to pursue another master’s degree in FFL. This will enable me to teach advanced FFL levels. I would like to focus on French teaching as it is not as popular as English in my home country. Given that we share the island with a French speaking country (Haiti), I believe it is important for the Dominican people to be able to communicate with our neighbors in their official language. I would also like to train other FL instructors in the Dominican Republic on the appropriate use of the CLT approach. Most FL instructors are familiar with this approach, but they do not implement it in the classrooms. Although my career goals revolve around teaching French, teaching Spanish as a foreign language at Utah State University helped me discover a passion for teaching Spanish that I did not know I had. For this reason, I would also like to teach Spanish abroad and at the same time, explore different cultures around the world.
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APPENDICES
Appendix A

Lesson plan using wikis to facilitate L2 collaborative writing

Students’ background: This lesson plan is aimed for SFL with an Intermediate Mid level of proficiency in Spanish.

Purpose: The students will improve their reading and writing skills by working collaboratively on a wiki project where they will write about a Hispanic country culture and history. By doing this, the students will practice the imperfect and preterit modes as well as verbs like “gustar,” which have different use rules than regular verbs. For example, the verb “correr” conjugated in the simple present is “yo corro,” whereas the verb “gustar” is conjugated as “me gusta.” I decided to focus on these aspects because students often struggle with the use of them. The students will also improve their speaking skills by presenting their wiki page to the class.

Student objectives:
- Students will be able to write a 5 to 6-page descriptive paper.
- Students will use connectors, such as aunque, además, sin embargo.
- Students will be able to conjugate verbs like gustar, molestar, fascinar.
- Students will identify the difference between imperfect and preterit modes and use them for different purposes.

Procedure:
**Week 1.** The third week of class of the semester, the students will participate in a training on how to use Wikispaces. The training will be divided in two 25-minute sessions (the last part of two 50-minute classes). The objective of the project will be explained, as well as all the aspects they will develop in the paper. In the last training session, the students will be divided in pairs, and an access link will be provided to each group. I decided to start the project on the third week of class, because I want to get to know my students before dividing the groups. I want to know the proficiency level of each student to be able to pair the struggling students with the more proficient ones.

**Week 2.** The students will choose a Hispanic country for their projects, and investigate the information asked as follows:

- Why did you choose this country? (1 paragraph)
- Where is this country located? (1 paragraph)
- Summary of its history (approximately 1 page)
- Mention most recognized cities (1 paragraph)
- Mention some celebrations with dates and a brief description of each (2-3 paragraphs)
- What are some famous destinations in that country? Where are they located? (1-2 paragraphs)
- Mention some famous dishes (1 paragraph)
- Mention music genres and some famous artists (e.g., singers, comedians, journalists, actors) (1 paragraph)
- Compare this country with the country you are from. What are some similarities between the two countries? What are some differences? What did you find interesting about the country you chose for this paper? (1-2 paragraphs)

During this week, they will only brainstorm. Even though this is a descriptive paper, the students will use pictures and videos. An example of a descriptive essay will be provided in this link: https://es.slideshare.net/erikamrodriguezz/ensayo-descriptivo

**Weeks 3 & 4.** These two weeks, the students will work on their projects, and have a draft ready by the fifth week.

**Week 5.** This week will be used to provide feedback. Besides my feedback, I will assign students to different groups for them be able to provide feedback to their peers for every draft as well.

**Weeks 6 & 7.** After receiving feedback, the students will edit their work and keep adding information and visuals to the wiki page. By the end of the seventh week, the students will have a second draft ready for feedback.

**Week 8.** This week will be for them to revise their work according to the feedback received. By the end of the week, they will have the final draft ready.

**Rest of the semester.** Each group will present their wiki project in 20 minutes using a Powerpoint presentation. They will also show their wiki page in the presentation for their classmates to see the final results of each wiki project/descriptive essay. One or two groups will be scheduled to present per week until the end of the semester. The students will have the option of decorating the classroom using things from the countries chosen (flags, maps, pictures, and printed information about their history or celebrations with
pictures, dishes, background music, etc.) The objective of the presentation is for them to present the countries in a creative way.

**Important notes:**

- The students will learn the grammar aspects and key vocabulary needed throughout the semester. If an aspect hasn’t been taught by the first and second drafts submission, this will not lower the students’ grade.

- I will explain to the students how to write a descriptive essay at the end of the first chapter.

- The steps to follow for the wiki page will be available on Wikispaces.

- I will monitor the activity of the students, but I will only give them feedback when the drafts are due.

- I will ask the students if they have any sort of technical issues with the wiki page every week.

- If I notice that some students are not contributing enough to their project by monitoring them on the wiki, I will approach them, and try to motivate them to collaborate. If they are confused about what they have to do, I will help them.

- The last week of class the students will be asked to write a reflection on their perceptions about the use of Wikispaces answering the following questions:

  - Did the use of the wiki page help you improve your writing skills? Why or why not?

  - How was the interaction between you and your partner?

- The students will receive 5 extra points for the reflection.
Wiki page assessment rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Shows deep understanding of all the required components</th>
<th>Shows certain amount of understanding of all the required components</th>
<th>Needs improvement</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate use and conjugation of imperfect and preterit past tenses.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 4 3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of the three rules for verbs <em>gustar</em>.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 4 3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accurate use of connectors.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6 5 4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherence and overall organization of essay.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7 6 5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to the project (equal amount of collaboration in the group).</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6 5 4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of engaging visuals.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total score:** ____/40 pts.

**Presentation assessment rubric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Shows deep understanding of all the required components</th>
<th>Shows certain amount of understanding of all the required components</th>
<th>Needs improvement</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate use of vocabulary and grammar.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherence and overall organization of presentation.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate use of time (20 minutes).</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total score:** ____/15 pts.
Appendix B

Lesson plan using a poem for Spanish L2 teaching

Text: Te quiero con lluvia (poem) by “El Poeta”

Target language: Spanish

Level: Novice low

Objectives:

Students will be able to…

Warm-up activity (pre-reading preparation)

- Guessing the theme. Students observe a picture with nature and love elements, and the title of the poem. In groups, they try to guess what it is going to be about.

- Personal questions. Students answer the following question:

  ¿Te gusta el día o la noche? ¿Por qué? (Which one do you like better, the day or the night? Why?)

Reading activity

- One of the instructors reads the poems with background music. The other instructor shows pictures of the words mentioned in the poem.

Post-reading activities

- Students discuss the answers to the following questions about the text:

  1. ¿Cuál es el tema del poema? (What is the theme of the poem?)

  2. ¿Qué agregarías (to add) al poema?
• Some students get a piece of paper with the name of a classmate. These students have to say the poem to that classmate using only pictures and the phrase “Te quiero”.

Assessment

➢ Informal formative. Motivate students to participate in class discussions

➢ Formative. Give feedback while monitoring activities

Resources

• Background music

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9zNJr2M1aCs

• Handouts with questions

• Pictures

Te quiero con lluvia

Te quiero de día,
de luna y de noche,
Te quiero con lluvia
con sol y con mar.

Te quiero y las flores,
la arena y la brisa,
Te quiero sonrisa,
tus ojos, tu piel.
Te quiero y te quise
ayer y mañana,
Te quiero,
Te quise y te quiero
por tierra y por mar.

Te quiero y grito,
lo grito, lo digo
Te digo que más
no te puedo amar

“El Poeta”