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Breaking Traditions: Teaching EFL in the Dominican Republic

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BREAKING TRADITIONS:
TEACHING EFL IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

by

Farlin Paulino

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

MASTER OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

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2018

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ABSTRACT

Breaking Traditions:
Teaching EFL In The Dominican Republic

by

Farlin 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 is a compilation of the author's beliefs in regard to effectively teaching English as a Foreign Language and Spanish as a Second language. This work was completed for the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program at Utah State University. All the work compiled in this portfolio centers on the teaching philosophy statement, which contains what the author believes to be the most important aspects of teaching a second language. In the first section of the portfolio, the author presents the experiences that made him pursue the profession of teaching languages, his personal philosophy of teaching shaped by what he has learned in the MSLT program, and how he believes are the roles of teachers in a classroom.

The second section of the portfolio contains three papers that were written during the MSLT program as term papers for courses. First, the language paper describes the current situation of Latin American countries' education systems, how Dual Language

Immersion (DLI) program works, and how it could be implemented in their context. Second, the culture paper explores the importance of refusal in transcultural interactions. Third, the literary paper focuses on co-teaching in a Spanish as a second language classroom. Finally, the annotated bibliography contains three sections, each addressing topics that record the author's learning in the MSLT program. The first topic is about the author's acknowledgement of the Communicative Language Teaching methodology. In addition, the second topic explores the phenomenon of Dual Language Immersion (DLI) in the second language classroom. Lastly, the third topic explores the use of social networks in the classroom.

(129 pages)

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A mi familia en especial a mi madre Mareitza Sanz y mi padre Leandro Salomón Paulino, que siempre quieren lo mejor para mí y me ofrecen cada día su apoyo incondicional; a mi tío, Rafael Sanz, por siempre ser motivo de admiración, guía y propiciador de mis ideas, ambiciones y metas.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACTFL = American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

CLT = Communicative Language Teaching

DLI = Dual Language Immersion

EFL = English as a Foreign Language

ESL = English as a Second Language

L1 = Native Language/First Language

L2 = Second Language

SLA = Second Language Acquisition

TBAs = Task-Based Activities

TBLT = Tasked-Based Language Teaching

TL = Target Language

UNESCO = The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

USU = Utah State University

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A. – Lesson plan on using Facebook to develop writing skills through collaboration

Appendix B. Lesson plan on using literature in an L2 classroom

Introduction

This portfolio documents the main work that I have completed during my two years in the Master of Second Language Teaching Program. The teaching philosophy statement is the core of the portfolio and focuses on three pedagogical aspects that I consider essential in my classroom. In the first part, I explore the roles of the teacher and the students, illustrating the essential pieces that make communicative language teaching effective through comprehensible input and meaningful interaction via task-based activities. In the second part, I illustrate the use of the ACTFL Proficiency guidelines and Can-Do statements in my classroom to set goals and have a clear view on what my students need to achieve in order to become proficient language speakers. In addition, my students can correlate the goals I set in their own Can-Do statements. In the last part, I illustrate my beliefs of how benefiting it is to have authentic materials in the classroom. Furthermore, I argue how technology makes authentic materials accessible for all students.

Following the teaching philosophy statement, three papers are included in the portfolio. First, the language paper illustrates an overview of education in Latin America and the Caribbean, a history of dual language programs and how it could be implemented in the Dominican Republic. Second, the literacy paper is a reflection of co-teaching in a Spanish as a second language classroom. Third, the cultural artifact examines refusals in cross-cultural aspects. These papers were chosen due to their relevancy to the Dominican Republic context and how these can contribute to the current education models.

Following these three papers is a compilation of annotated bibliographies that were written after I had reviewed literature on specific topics related to my teaching philosophy statement and papers. The first of the compilations addresses dual language immersion, the second focuses on communicative language teaching, and the third focuses on technology in the foreign language classroom.

In the final part of the portfolio, I state the professional direction I will take after culminating this master's degree, after which follows a list of references used in this portfolio.

TEACHING PERSPECTIVES

APPRENTICESHIP OF OBSERVATION

How do you learn a second language with an educational system that is not designed to do so? One of the main criticisms my country's educational model receives every time it is mentioned is how far from the learners' goals it really is when it comes to foreign language instruction. There is a curriculum to guide teachers through, but the objectives are just a list of grammar aspects that students should learn in a year; as a result, the lessons imparted do not take into account whether students actually learn what is being taught.

My first experience learning a language other than my native language was with English and French in middle school. To progress, it was a matter of learning the same basic vocabulary: classroom objects, pronouns, greetings, fruits, some basic verbs and grammar structures. Getting good grades was an easy thing too, as once you notice the pattern, it is easy to complete assignments and raise your hand when need be. This experience did not push me away, mainly because I could notice it wasn't the teachers' fault, but the school administrators': the ones teaching us English were not foreign language teachers per se, they just were put there because of budget constraints or the lack of language teachers overall. Nevertheless, I was determined to learn English.

Besides what I was taught in school, my only contact with the language was through cassette tapes my brother had accumulated over the years and Saturday morning cartoons, so I asked my parents to sign me up for English classes at a local private institute. There, my views about the language changed dramatically. English was not only this interesting and foreign set of articulated sounds I was curious about earlier; it was

something fun and I felt I could do something with it: communicate. Gone were the never-ending lists of vocabulary and the same mechanical drills I had to fill out in middle school. Now there were games, stories, music, and engaging activities, along with teachers who loved teaching as much as they loved the language they taught us every day. These teachers made me fall in love with the language. I remember Mr. Eduardo, who once took me aside after class and introduced me to magazines of my favorite cartoons, and Miss Santos, who shared her love for romantic movies with us and took us to the multimedia room to play them for us on the videocassette player. I still cherish those afternoons, along with all her stories and songs.

In high school, I had the opportunity to have English teachers who were engaging in their activities, but behaviorism was a big part of their approach to teaching the language, making the learning process a bit repetitive and a chore. Having learned English at the private institute made these classes a breeze, but my oral proficiency was not up to par with my comprehension and writing abilities as I was really shy when it came to using English in front of my classmates. This deficiency made me feel stuck between two walls; I was able to comprehend the language, but I was not confident enough to use it.

After I finished my studies at the institute, I tried to speak the language with some of my friends who were American and knew the language very well, but they didn't like my pronunciation, so they didn't engage with me. It made me feel helpless, mostly because I knew that using the language in a real environment and real situations would help me develop my speaking skills. The next best thing was immersing myself in the language through literature, music, and TV shows, which I did enthusiastically.

During my senior year in high school, I was offered an opportunity to teach a children's beginner class at the very same institute where I studied years prior. I was hesitant at first given the fact that I was not a teacher and mostly because I was fearful of how I sounded when I spoke. Because I had received so much significant input over the years, words came easy to me and teaching was a moderate success. The books had a teacher's guide that I followed the best I could, but at the same time I added things of my own. This experience served as the foundation of what I am today. It helped me decide what I wanted to study in college and what I wanted to do in life. It also made me realize that I could not just acquire knowledge: I had to share it with the same passion that my teachers at the institute did when I was younger.

Thus, I became a teacher at a young age and I was instantly addicted to teaching. The curiosity of my students during the lessons I taught, and the progress I saw in my students made every moment worth it, driving me to create more and more for them. Even before I obtained my Education in Modern Languages degree from College in 2013, I already started working as an English teacher for middle school and high school at the same languages institute that opened its doors to me at a young age.

Teaching in college made me realize that I wanted to reach an even bigger audience, so I applied for the MSLT program to broaden my horizons, learn new skills, and examine closely how languages work and what approaches are optimal if I want my students to learn even more. I also aspire to change how languages are taught in the Dominican Republic by working in the Ministry of Education and fixing our curriculum. As the MSLT program is designed with foreign language education in mind, I believe the

knowledge and skills I learn will drive me closer to my goal of being an excellent teacher.

PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT

With the knowledge acquired of second language teaching in this program, I plan on teaching English to college level students and working professionals in the Dominican Republic. Although my main focus is English as a foreign language, given the opportunity, I would also love to teach English as well as Spanish to foreign teenage and adult students in Europe and Asia, where the need to learn English as a second language has become essential in order to be able to obtain a job.

Thanks to the MSLT program, I can combine my love for teaching a language as well as having a grasp of the various approaches that facilitate students' comprehension and usage of a second language.

My experiences as a teacher have been diverse. I have experience teaching English in high school and university levels, as well in private language institutes. I am confident I can implement what I have learned in college classrooms to teach students from diverse backgrounds and proficiency levels. Another option I have contemplated is to pursue a PhD in order to work alongside my country's ministry of education in the creation of a new curriculum and workshops with the intention of providing what I know about second language teaching to change how foreign languages are taught in public and private schools in the Dominican Republic.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

Not growing up in an English-speaking environment didn't give me the chance to immerse myself in the language the traditional way. I relied, instead, on the spoils of the American culture exports: magazines, books, music, movies and TV. I reminisce about those days where I sat in a rocking chair facing an old radio while I browsed through countless cassette tapes and listened to each one of them, often rocking myself to sleep under the beguiling tunes of artists such as The Doors and The Cranberries. This may sound like a typical story except for the fact that I as of yet did not understand a single word of English.

I grew up in the Dominican Republic, a Spanish-speaking country not by choice but by chance. Despite English being taught in school, it is not really learned, as the lessons do not take into consideration the students' needs. This opportunely sparked my curiosity to learn English which led me to witness teachers who took pleasure in making sure I learned, enabling my love for English literature, and leading me to my true calling: teaching. Thanks to these teachers I looked forward to my classes as a result of the effort these educators put into every lesson, populating each second of it with stories, songs, games and hoping to receive a new magazine or a new book to read. These were not even part and parcel of their lessons, but they helped a lot to motivate and immerse me in the English language.

As soon as I finished the course, my encounters with the language were scarce, with fewer and fewer opportunities to use the language communicatively. However, I kept on reading, listening to music, and watching TV shows in English. I was living off another culture, yet I had not experienced it personally. When I was presented with opportunities

to use the language, I normally choked and resorted to simple monotonous answers, as I was not confident in my speaking skills. Those moments made me realize I could not let down my English teachers who put their soul into teaching me, thus I decided I needed to become a teacher, which helped me overcome my self-imposed limitations and help others by teaching, just as my English teachers did at one time.

The decision of wanting to become a teacher did automatically make me a teacher, which led me to do some research in the topic. Hungry for information, I discovered through study about effective methods of teaching an L2 and started implementing them in my classroom. Seeing the results and how my classes became spaces for language learning, I was convinced that I needed to become more knowledgeable in order to give more to my students. Having developed this passion for a different approach to language teaching, I decided to temporarily leave the Dominican Republic behind to enroll into USU and enroll in the Master of Second Language Teaching program at Utah State University. Since then, I have dedicated my life to language education. My philosophy is the result of my personal experience, starting from those cassette tapes, plus several years of teaching at a private institution, public school, and at universities.

In this teaching philosophy statement, I will focus on principles I believe will guide my students to use the target language. These principles will always be present in my classrooms from the first time I meet my students. As for the pillars on which this teaching philosophy statement stands on, I will define the fundamental role of the teacher and student, task-based activities along with the ACTFL guidelines and Can-Do statements, and the use of technology and authentic materials in the classroom.

The role of the teacher and the learner in the classroom

Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandell (2001) point out that “no matter what the method or teaching approach, a principal goal of language teaching for several decades has been, and continues to be, speaking proficiency” (p. 2). Therefore, my first step as a teacher is to understand the students’ specific communicative goals and proficiency level beforehand, which gives me the ability to shape how the rest of the class is going to be and the tools that I will put at their disposal.

I believe that learning an L2 is complex and various factors such as the setting, previous knowledge, and the way the brain processes that new information affect how individuals learn the language, so as a teacher I have the crucial role of providing the students with comprehensible input tailored to their goals (Holland, 2005; Lee & VanPatten, 2003). Comprehensible input is discourse that is at the level of students’ proficiency, and my role is to ensure that said input matches with the words and structures that they already understand and are able to use (Krashen, 1982). Being familiar with my students’ background knowledge and their communicative goals helps me provide them with relevant comprehensible input. In my experience as an English as a Foreign Language instructor in the Dominican Republic, I learned that my students were not familiar with a wide range of words describing snow in northern countries, while students who had traveled overseas were somewhat familiar with it. Regardless of their experience, it is my role as a teacher to provide my students with the necessary background knowledge of what is being discussed in the classroom. As a result, this knowledge increases comprehension which leads to meaningful contributions from the students (Fisher, Frey & Lapp, 2012). However, for this to work, students should not only

receive input, but they “must be active conversational participants who interact and negotiate with the type of input they receive in order to acquire language” (Shrum & Glisan, 2016, p. 22). In an ideal second or foreign language classroom, speaking, listening, writing, and reading should be taught equally and in an integral way. In my classroom, I focus on the communicative approach, whose focus is on acquiring the target language through meaningful interaction (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001; VanPatten, 2017). Of course, reading, writing and listening are also part of the learning process.

In the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, the classroom is student-centered; lessons are designed for the purpose of teaching students what they need to know to accomplish a previously-set goal connected to real life (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell 2001). Under CLT, lesson plans focus on tasks that mirror day-to-day situations, such as asking for directions in a new city or finding the ingredients for a recipe at a supermarket. In both of these situations, providing the necessary tools, such as vocabulary, commonly used phrases along with their pragmatic use, and grammar, helps learners carry out these tasks. Making these lessons authentic and giving learners the central role in these activities allow them to actually use what they learned in the real world as opposed to the Atlas Complex method as illustrated by Lee and VanPatten (2003), where the classroom is centered around the teacher who alone is responsible for everything that happens inside the classroom with little to no input from the learners.

I believe learners should be actors in their own learning. In my classroom, there is not a center stage where I am the main character. Instead, the learners are active participants who create their own learning and I am their guide. In my classes, I provide

students with texts from news, travel sites, or song lyrics with tasks that have them move around the classroom, figuring out what information other learners know or have gathered, asking questions, and telling their own stories and experiences. When learners ask and answer questions, they become “co-creators of context; their learning is interactive, rather than passive” (Eddy, 2007, p.143).

Being the facilitator enables me to move about the room and hear what students are saying, and occasionally stop to explain things about which they might have questions. Learners respond positively when their purpose is not to sit at a desk and take notes, but to move around and interact with classmates, which helps me as a teacher to support their autonomy (Shrum & Glisan, 2015; Weger, 2013). As a result, students use the target language with a clear purpose, enabling them to put more effort in what they are trying to communicate to their classmates, instead of trying to reuse words from a list of words they should use. As Lee and VanPatten (2003) stated, “one learns to communicate by practicing communication” (p. 50).

Task-Based Activities

When learners are asked what their expectations are when learning a language, they usually state that they want to communicate with others, so they naturally see speaking as the most preferred skill (Choudhury & Dutta, 2015). One method to ensure there is communication in the classroom is through the use of Task-Based activities. TBA guide students through hands-on activities designed with the learner’s interest in mind (Long, 2014). These are essential in communicative language teaching as task-based instruction prepares students for real-life communication that (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro & Mandell 2001). Ballman et al. describe three components that make TBA essential in

CLT. First, they are learner-centered, because the only way to complete these tasks is via interaction with other learners. In my classroom, students need to stand up and interact with students at the other side of the classroom in order to fulfill the tasks. I also plan pair and small-group activities where my students need to learn something only the other student knows, such as their class schedules, hobbies, aspirations or favorite food. This ensures there is interaction, which translates to language use in the classroom (Ellis, 2012; Ellis, 2016).

Second, task-based instruction requires meaningful exchange of information between learners (Long, 2014). I achieve this in my classroom by providing my students with tasks that encourage them to use the language the same way they would in a real-life situation (Pyun, 2013). One of the activities students asking about a classmate's family members. As every family is different, students can complete their tasks only if they interact with a classmate. Thus, these tasks allow the students not only to interact but also to create different interpretations of what family means to another person, giving the language more meaning (Kapucu, 2012).

Finally, task-based instruction guides students through a series of steps that ultimately lead to a final presentation of all the gathered data. My students achieve this by gathering the information they collected and building something meaningful with it that can be shown and shared with the whole class for further discussion. For example, in order to teach my students about schedules and free time activities, I have them work in small groups and discuss what classes they are enrolled in. When they are done, I ask them to come up with activities they can do in their own free time, taking into account each other's availability. To ensure they all have free time, students can do so by building

a chart where the group shows all their gathered data, explain it to the whole class, and ultimately invite other classmates to share their data on top of theirs, showing the class' similar routines, favorite leisure activities, and even movie-viewing routines. This exchange initiates conversations that were never planned, getting the students to ask, share, negotiate meaning and “use the language for real-world, non-linguistic purposes” (Van den Branden, 2006, p. 4).

These interactions happen with minimal to no interference from me. During task-based activities I act as an architect, modeling the scenario in which my students will interact. It is what Ballman (1998) refers to as learner-centered because the students are the ones in charge of what they learn, as opposed to teacher-fronted, where the teacher is the main focus of the class and all interactions involve the teacher in order for the activity to progress. Therefore, I believe the role of the students is to be in charge of their own utterances through engaging tasks designed by the teacher.

VanPatten (2017) stated that tasks should be the backbone of the curriculum. Tasks, as opposed to activities or exercises, have a communicative purpose and involve the expression and interpretation of meaning. These engaging tasks have a significant impact on learners. Oxford and Nyikos (1989) found that when learners believe that tasks will lead to meaningful results, that is, skills that they think they can use in real-life situations, they put forth more effort. Ellis (2012) similarly reported that these types of interactions can create the conditions for language acquisition to occur. In my classroom, I try to design tasks that go along with what my students hope to do with the target language. Most students would love to travel overseas or study abroad, so I implement activities that will get them to ask each other questions they wouldn't normally ask

during traditional course book activities. For example, by exposing them to world destinations and having them learn about these places, I put them in relatable situations from these places, where they have to ask for directions, ask for food, and what is customary to do when they travel there. These tasks have resonated with previous learners, as they have commented how they got to use the target language and interact with other classmates using their own ideas and opinions. Dörnyei and Kormos (2000) similarly report that students with a positive attitude toward meaningful tasks were more engaged in them, and as a result, learners produced more language.

ACTFL proficiency guidelines and Can-Do Statements

Each class I teach brings new challenges. Figuring out what my students need to learn to move from one chapter to the next, and what strategies I should use in order for my learners to develop the skills necessary to communicate easily can be a difficult task. I have found the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2015) to be a useful tool to help me set goals for whatever level I am currently teaching and what I want my students to accomplish. The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines have had a major impact on the field of second language teaching and can be accredited as a catalyst for significant changes foreign language teaching profession in recent times (Shrum & Glisan, 2015). These guidelines are pushing the profession from a focus on grammar to a focus on communication, and as a result have sparked improvements for second language teaching, such as student-to-student interviews, the use of role-plays, and strategy instruction (Liskin-Gasparro, 2003). These guidelines have provided me with descriptions of what individuals can do in the target language. As a result, they help me understand and assess what my students can do with the language outside of the

classroom according to their level of proficiency. Having a clear framework of what my students need to achieve in order to become novice or intermediate language speakers helps me plan my lessons according to what abilities I want my students to acquire and use during task-based activities. Thanks to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines I can show my students what my lessons depend on and what I want them to achieve during the semester.

Along with these proficiency guidelines, I use the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages ACTFL Can-Do Statements (2015), both as a learning target checkmark for me and as a self-assessment tool for the students. Can-Do Statements ensure that the students know that no matter which technique I use to measure their performance at the end of the semester, the final score has validity (Hughes, 2003). When it is time to grade the students, I use a modified version of the Can-Do statements to check what my students have learned during the semester, and my students can correlate that with their own sheet of Can-Do statements, giving them the chance to participate in the grading process. I can then compare what they have learned with what I have taught them, in order to know what my weaknesses are and improve for next time. For a lower-level class, I can use the Can-Do statements to set goals for the semester, by having a list of what I expect them to be able to do with the language after the semester is over, such as being able to communicate on familiar topics with full sentences and respond to basic queries.

Another way I utilize the Can-Do statements is in providing an overview of the chapter goals. Giving the students an overview of what they will learn gives them realistic expectations for their performance in the three communicative modes: the

interpersonal mode, which refers to non-scripted two-way interaction in the target language to share information and thoughts; the interpretive mode, which refers to the learner's capability to understand the target language, not only orally but written as well; and the presentational mode, which means the learner can present information, as well as persuade and narrate stories and topics in different environments (ACTFL, 2015; Shrum & Glisan, 2015). In my classes I emphasize these three communication modes in class activities in order to promote language acquisition as students utilize the Can-Do statements to build their skills by using task-based activities. At the same time, students are able to make note of which skills they need to brush up on and ask me or a teaching assistant for help.

When it comes to writing activities, I maintain a list of the activities I task my students in order to have a visual representation of what they have individually done so far, as well as any notes I have added to their work. For example, when I ask my students to write a paragraph describing themselves, I keep an excel sheet where I keep track of their performance, so as to have an overview of what my students are capable of. I do this in order to know what to emphasize during the next day of class. Even though students do get a final grade at the end of the semester, I value effort instead of perfection, so I encourage my students to focus more on communication than on perfect task completion.

Authentic materials

One of the things I have learned about teaching an L2 is that I will always feel like I must expose my students as much as possible to the language. For my students, it is not surprising to see me with news articles, books, or multiple restaurant brochures to show the class when the topic arises. I enjoy browsing through video materials such as

advertisement just to find something relevant to show my students in class. When I plan a lesson, I include as much culture, slang, idioms, and authentic material as possible in order to prepare my students for the interactions they may have with the target language, whether it is a game, a grammar lesson or a section at the beginning of the class in which I show my students how the language is used in real-life contexts (Nunam, 1999; Nunam, 2004; Özüorçun, 2014).

I learned the importance of authentic materials at a young age. Listening to my brother's songs in English helped me get accustomed to various accents and pronunciation styles of native and fluent speakers. Reading also helped me acquire vocabulary and word order. As I grew older, watching American television shows helped me realize how much of the language I could understand almost effortlessly. It taught me not only sentence structure and new vocabulary, but also cultural tidbits I later inserted in my lessons, such as what to say in certain situations. Authentic texts reinforce my lessons because they connect the target language with the outside world (Gebhard, 1996).

Authentic texts, such as TV ads, comics, blogs, news clips, and even street signs, make classes more engaging by showing the students the target language in use. In my classes, I commonly use short news clips and editorial articles, as I want my students to be able to understand and discuss current topics in the target language. In addition to focusing on what words they understand, I invite them to tell me what they thought of the video or text, and what they can add to improve it. As Gilmore (2007) points out, "It has long been recognized that the language presented to students in coursebooks is a poor representation of the real thing" (p. 98). Therefore, adding authentic materials not only

makes classes engaging, but it also enhances the parts that a coursebook may not be able to fulfill.

Whenever I introduce a new activity, I enjoy having students intuitively figure out what the next step is through the use of authentic materials. I do so by modelling instead of explaining what they should do. For example, in one of my activities involving adjectives to describe people physically and emotionally, I use a game similar to Guess Who. Each student has a card with a diverse group of characters, each with different physical features, and students must pick one of these characters. The object of this game is to guess which character was chosen by one's classmate, by asking questions such as: "Is it a man or a woman?" or "Is he bald?" and so on. Instead of explaining this to my students, I show them a commercial of the same game before the activity starts. Without me explaining to them what to do, my students already know what they have to do, and my only job is to assign them a classmate. I think students should believe in themselves by figuring out what the next step is without depending too much on me. However, I understand that "classrooms are complex social contexts and they vary enormously" (Ellis, 2012, p. 192), and not everyone is at the same level of proficiency, so I may offer a brief explanation when necessary.

Technology as a vessel

Technology has shaped the way we see things, and it is evident that technology is also part of the classroom, where changes happen faster than had been expected (Lim, Zhao, Tondeur, Chai & Tsai, 2013). One of the main reasons I incorporate technology in the L2 classroom comes from the fact that the Web is authentic by itself. It offers content created by speakers of the target language for speakers of the target language, and the

way users interact with it already makes it “an extension of L2 culture or society” (Warschauer & Meloni, 2000). Research shows that technology is met with skepticism when it comes to its implementation in the classroom. (Eteokleous, 2008), but I believe that technology is a tool that can be used to facilitate the distribution and projection of authentic materials from the comfort of the classroom and beyond it. Using Peardeck, a tool similar to PowerPoint, lets me introduce my students to authentic material they can actively interact with from the comfort of their seats using their electronic devices, providing them with interactive slides where they can drag, draw, participate in polls, and offer instant answers (Çelik, Akçetin & Asmalı, 2016). Peardeck also gives students the opportunity to share their thoughts anonymously if they want to. Furthermore, these tools are enjoyed by students, change the classroom environment, and make them feel part of the classroom community (Bunce, VandenPlas, & Havanki, 2006; Hamilton, 2015). I am convinced that integrating technology in the classroom brings students together, as they are more engaged with the content (Lawson & Lawson, 2013).

As a teacher, I am always on the lookout for tools that can enhance classroom experience. One such tool is Quizlet, an app which lets me create sets of flashcards and distribute them electronically to my students. I create a classroom in which I upload content as the semester progresses and students choose to practice the unit’s vocabulary or grammar. What I like about Quizlet is that students have agency when it comes to how they like to learn. They can write, listen to the word, and take tests based on what they need to learn each week. Furthermore, it enhances the students’ vocabulary outside of the classroom (Dizon, 2016). My students find it easier to access Quizlet in the classroom during activities instead of using their vocabulary sheets, which saves them time

whenever they need to remember some terms they need to use. As this platform is ubiquitous, students tend to use it more (Lu, 2008). Another tool that I have at my disposal is Kahoot. It turns questionnaires into a whole-class game where students compete to see who can score the most points against each other as they see their current ranking at the end of each question. To make it less intimidating, I ask my students to come up with a name that does not identify them, and at the end of the game they may choose to reveal their identities or not. In my classrooms, Kahoot helps them see how much they have learned and engages them in fun competition. At the same time, they also evaluate how much they have learned and get answers to questions. Zarzycka-Piskorz (2016) found that the majority of students had learned the targeted grammar as a result of a game and found it fun. Whenever I use Kahoot to check on grammar, I usually stop and ask my students who did not get the correct answer if they have any questions.

I believe that teachers must use technological tools as a means to expose their students to materials that meet their communicative goals. That is, to move students towards stronger understanding of the language via temporary assistance during tasks until they can work independently (Benko, 2012). As a result, the use of videos or images to introduce the class to a new activity or images that mirror the students' day-to-day activities empower students to create their own personal goals during tasks, as they can see the target language in use.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TEACHING OBSERVATIONS

In this section of my teaching philosophy, I will reflect on techniques and practices that I have observed in other language classrooms throughout my time in the MSLT program. I have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to observe my peers, especially first-year classes. I chose to observe these classes because I believe the greatest teaching challenges lie at beginner levels. These observations inspired me to reflect on my own teaching and how to modify my strategies to better suit the needs of my students.

In my teaching philosophy statement, I discuss how the communicative language teaching approach is essential if I want my students to acquire the language through meaningful interactions. I witnessed this practice in most of the classrooms I observed, which reinforced my belief in the effectiveness of this approach. Two observations in particular, but from the same instructor, strengthened my beliefs regarding CLT. Both classes were novice-level university Spanish. During this class, the instructor used the target language even before the class started. The class period was largely led by the students participating in activities designed to have them interact with each other to accomplish tasks they could not possibly complete with solitary work at their desks. The instructor set up these activities and then walked around the room, helping when needed. After observing this class, I tried to understand how the instructor could conduct this class effectively without intervening.

The other class taught by the same instructor made me look more critically at my own task-based activity design for my classroom. This second class was also a novice-

level university Spanish class, during which the instructor and TA both worked in sync. They would briefly explain the activity and the tasks students had to follow, and everyone started to move. To keep the activities flowing, the instructor would occasionally hint at the vocabulary needed, writing words on the board whenever he saw one or more students struggling during these interactions. The TA also moved around the classroom and lent a hand when needed. I really enjoyed watching how the students interacted and used the vocabulary effortlessly as they moved from task to task.

After I observed this teacher, I thought about the importance of using task-based activities to teach a second language. As is apparent in my teaching philosophy statement, task-based activities are an important aspect of my second language teaching. While I am no stranger to these kinds of activities, I saw the benefits of teaching new concepts that the students then had to put to use. The students in the classroom were able to ask questions of their classmates without hesitation. They even scaffolded each other during these interactions. The instructor encouraged this type of behavior by designing activities for which they had to work in groups and move around. Observing this class made me realize how important it is to give student tasks they can complete via interaction. It reinforced the research I have read about task-based activities and how it prepares students for real-life communication.

During these classes, the instructor moved around constantly, never staying in one place for more than a few seconds. He also used plenty of clarification and cognates which I think made him easy to understand. He followed up with questions whenever a student was stuck during one of the activities, which fostered the student's engagement

throughout the whole class session. It became clear that this was the kind of instructor I want to be: one who is engaging, understood and active.

To make this a reality, one of my main goals is to get to know and understand my students so that I can adapt my teaching to meet their goals and expectations for themselves of the target language. I gained more insight into this practice through observing yet two more novice-level university Spanish classes. In both classes, the instructors appeared to know their students pretty well and offered engaging, effective lessons tailored to their students' needs and aspirations. One thing that really struck me about these classes was how the instructors took time outside of class to better understand what their students' expectations of the target language were. These instructors really cared about their students' outcomes and brought activities to the class with these interests in mind. One of the instructors went as far as creating an oral activity in which instead of talking about what the teacher wanted the student to talk about, they chose the topic instead. The fact that the instructor trusted the students enough to allow them to choose their own topics spoke volumes to me and showed me what was possible in a well-organized and engaged language-learning community. The same was true with the other instructor. The students spent most of the class period creating a story from a set of pictures the instructor gave to the assigned groups. The instructor gave the students a lot of freedom to use the target language how they wanted to in order to complete the activity, and there was very little off-topic conversation. In fact, most of the conversation focused on what to say about the stories, some of them even funny, which was then shared with the rest of the class. Both of these classes made me realize that I should give

my students the freedom to create and to choose their topics. These observations made me realize that trusting my students to work independently and giving them the chance to talk freely about a subject they truly enjoy will result in a more engaging and supportive environment in my classroom.

Another aspect of this idea of students creating output while engaging in meaningful tasks came into play in a novice-level, Portuguese class. There were only six students in the class, but the instructor did a very good job of creating an engaging and communication-centered space for them. The instructor started the class with music and asked the students to sing with her. These students were shy; however, the instructor gave them a little push whenever she felt that they did not know how to start an utterance during class interactions.

After observing these classes, I can better see how having the students work with as little intervention from the instructor as possible, designing meaningful task-based activities and giving them the chance to express themselves on the topics that matter to them the most can help engage the students and play to a wider variety of strengths. I saw that engagement, variety, and empathy were part of all the classes that I observed. The instructor used a lot of the target language and moved the class along through activities, the students had freedom to create output with the language in the class, which kept them motivated and engaged with the classroom activities. The instructors spent very little class time talking. Instead, the students interacted with each other. At different stages during the class discourse, the instructors acknowledged some of the students' progress, praising them for their vocabulary grasp or creativity. It all seemed as motivating and

encouraging to me, and it made me realize how it all connects with the students' view of the language and how much he has learned.

Observing my peers while they teach has got me thinking critically about who I want to be as an instructor. The classes that I observed worked because the instructors took their time designing and tailoring activities before using them in class. Observing instructors as they teach has made me more aware of the hard work an instructor does before entering a classroom and, as an instructor, I plan to do the same.

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING

In this section of my teaching perspectives, I will describe and reflect upon a lesson I taught at Utah State university in November 2017 in my Spanish 1010 class. This self-reflection model was designed by Dr. Spicer-Escalante (2015) and following the four components of the dialectical relationship from the article *Reflective Practitioners: Foreign-Language Teachers Exploring Self-Assessment* (Spicer-Escalante & deJonge-Kannan, 2016). The class during this observation was made up of fourteen students who fell within a wide range of Spanish proficiency: for some, this was their first semester studying Spanish, others had already taken at least one year in high school. All of them shared the same L1, English, and were between the ages of 18 and 30 years old. In this lesson, the students were working with the professions vocabulary, the use of the verbs *ser* and *estar*, and our communicative goal for the lesson was for them to identify and talk about people's jobs, describe what they wear and what people commonly do.

We began the lesson by reviewing the verbs *ser* and *estar* along with its usage. This was a flipped classroom, which means that students are supposed to study before they go to class. However, some students found the material hard to digest, and some of them did not finish or still had questions about the topic that was going to be discussed in the classroom. I modeled my lesson so that we could discuss the material before we delved deeper into the topic.

As a warmup, we continued practicing the verbs *ser* and *estar* by using a composite image with professionals numbered, going back and forth with some of them.

This activity worked well as a warm-up, to get the students ready for the next discussions.

To keep the topics connected, I introduced the next activity by showing the students some famous people from Latin America in an interactive map. To make this part interactive, I gave the students clues about their professions. For example: This person was born in New York, she is a singer, she is famous for the movie *Maid in Manhattan*. Once I had given them clues, I gave them time to figure out the person's profession. I found this part of the lesson satisfying because I exposed my students to some parts of Latin America and people to associate these with. To connect with the content, I added some personal tidbits by adding my favorite writer to the list of famous people.

Once students were familiar with locations, professions and famous people, I asked them to find a partner and I gave them a task where they had to ask their classmates about people and their nationality. As usual, I walked around the pairs of students as I heard and modeled some of the questions my students had. I noticed some of the students began the activity before I even modeled the instructions, which I don't mind given that they usually knew what to do.

After the activity was over, I showed them images of the people they were talking about in the task. I like to make comments about people and culture, just so my students are exposed to more input.

For the next activity, I had given my students a card with a number, so I asked them to find classmates who had the same number card. Once every student had found their group, I gave each group a set of cards in order to play charades. Even though my students knew how to play, I modeled the task along with my teacher assistant by picking up a card and acting in front of the class. To make charades more communicative, I tell students they can ask questions such as: “Does the person wear a blue uniform?” and “Does he or she drive a car?” During this activity, I walked around the classroom making sure all groups actively participated, as well as offering some clues to students who seemed stuck.

I chose charades for this part of the vocabulary because art is very extensive, and charades give my students the chance to go through the vocabulary in an interactive way. It also helps in the articulation of ideas, which is necessary in order for them to tell their classmates what card they are holding.

To wrap up the activity, I asked them about some of the professions and what were their duties at their jobs. Granted, some of them cannot articulate full sentences, it helps my students to think a little bit more out of the ordinary. I feel that this doesn't help students who struggle a little bit with the vocabulary, but in retrospective, they can listen to their classmates speak and take ideas from there.

Finally, I had my students write about a fictional character. Even though I planned the activity with the intention of practicing the verbs introduced in the unit, I let the students use any verbs regardless. It did help, as some students have difficulty

conjugating verbs and some others have a hard time with the spelling of some words, so I walked around the classroom making sure they were on the right track. I believed my brief instructions were clear enough, but some students managed to get lost. However, I had them back on track as soon as I noticed them.

Overall, I believe this lesson was a success. For example, I provided my students with plenty of visual support for the day's activities in my PowerPoint slides, making it clear during each step what I was referring to at all times, making it easy for the students to follow along. I circulated and listened while the students worked in groups or pair during various points in the class. Additionally, I modeled instructions for them to follow and made sure I highlighted key phrases to help students understand the tasks. I received similar feedback from my advisor who also observed this lesson: she highlighted my relaxed demeanor and that I make my students feel comfortable.

There were, however, some ways that this lesson could have gone better. At a certain point in the lesson, I had them work on a writing activity, but some of the students did not know what to do. While I noticed quickly explained it to them, I think it would have gone smoother if I had given them better instructions. I told them they had to use specific verbs, but I think I should have just told them to write without constraints, especially since they have demonstrated in previous classes they can express themselves using other verbs. As my advisor pointed out, this activity involved quite a bit of translanguaging on the students' part.

RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES

LANGUAGE PAPER

Dual Language Education in Latin America: A Nationwide Proposal

INTRODUCTION & REFLECTION

This paper was written originally for my coursework for dual language immersion (DLI) LING 4700 with Tempe Willey in spring of 2017 but following substantial feedback from conversations with my advisor Dr. de Jonge-Kannan and my major professor Dr. Spicer-Escalante regarding my future plans, I revised it and used it as the basis of my proposal to implement Utah DLI in the Dominican Republic.

My motivation for writing this proposal first came from my interest in changing how languages are taught in my country. My experience observing two DLI schools in Hillcrest and Providence in Logan, Utah strengthened my determination of becoming a DLI advocate and devoting myself to change children's lives from all social backgrounds. In addition, my other motivation came from the articles I read about DLI education. In this proposal, I first present the current status of education in Latin America and the Caribbean. Next, I introduce DLI, its models and the current Utah DLI model. Finally, I propose the implementation of DLI in the Dominican Republic. As there is not enough readily available research material pertinent to the Dominican Republic, I included information of adjacent countries from Latin America and the Caribbean due to their similarities in education programs.

Introduction

Given the influence of the United States in Latin America, English is a commonly known language throughout the continent (Becker, 2004; Georges, 1990). However, when it comes to learning English without resorting to the expense of moving to an English-speaking country, the efficacy of learning it in public schools in Latin America is pretty weak due to factors such as social inequity.

According to statistics, Latin America is one of the most unequal regions of the world (De Ferranti, 2004; Hoffman & Centeno, 2003; Psacharopoulos, 1997). In Latin America, the richest 5 percent controls 45 percent of the region's wealth, while the poorest 30 percent controls 4 percent of the wealth (Klikberg, 2000). World Bank (2018) estimates that 36.4 percent of the rural population in the Dominican Republic is below the poverty line. Inequality is present in all aspects of life, in its institutions as well as for citizens, and education is no exception.

Inequality in education in Latin America and the Caribbean go hand in hand with social inequality. According to LLECE (2008), the socioeconomic level is among the most important variables that explain the performance of countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Economic needs

One of the challenges faced by countries in Latin America and the Caribbean today is the lack of significant progress in reducing poverty and unemployment. Such a reduction might be achieved by expanding the opportunities available in the school sector, in conjunction with programs designed for the needs of the demographic group it intends to serve.

In the case of the Dominican Republic, its value as the largest tourist destination in the Caribbean depends on how prepared the population is to communicate with the influx of international travelers to the main tourist attractions found around the island (CTO, 2017). Year after year, international companies develop tourism-oriented initiatives that create jobs for local residents (Duffy et al. 2016). As a result, local families in the adjacent communities benefit from the influx of jobs (Roessingh & Duijnhoven, 2005), with high levels of literacy in Spanish and English leading to particularly good employment opportunities.

To better prepare the population for good jobs, changes in the educational system should be implemented, especially in the regions where tourism is the main source of income.

Government Programs

Many Latin American countries have implemented educational reforms with the objective of improving school enrollment in the last fifty years (Bernasconi & Celis, 2017). Programs such as Chile Solidario, Bolsa Escola (Brazil), PANES (Uruguay), focus on motivating children and teenagers in the educational system through cash subsidies to families (Marteleto, Gelber, Hubert, & Salinas, 2012). These incentives help poor families afford sending their children to school in the short term through income support, hoping the end results lead to more educated family members in the long term, thus improving their chances at better jobs at the end of the school cycle.

In 2000, the Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL) estimated that a minimum of 10 school years are required for education to have a significant role in poverty reduction. Even though cash subsidies have improved school

enrollment, “the evidence on whether the additional schooling results in better learning outcomes for children who were brought into school by these programs is mixed” (Levy & Schady, 2013, p. 207). The social inequality between rural and urban schools remains critical.

Cash subsidies through educational programs should broaden the criteria of how they work. In addition to providing cash incentives to families who send their children to school, they could also reward schools that have increased their enrollments and whose students have made significant academic gains. In the Dominican Republic, there are similar systems that try to alleviate student spending by offering college students a small monthly stipend for copies and transportation. In Chile, the *Proretención* program “provides subsidies to schools for every child enrolled in grades 7-12, provided they attended school during the previous year” (Marteleto, Gelber, Hubert, & Salinas, 2012, p. 355). If the government establish a school rewarding policy to schools with increased attendance from these educational programs, school administrators would have solid reasons to promote school attendance and teachers would make sure children stay in school, thus improving the level of instruction (Martínez, 2002).

In order to reduce the educational divide that exists between low socioeconomic status students, whose families are among the 40 percent of the population with the lowest wealth, and high socioeconomic status students, those whose families belong to the 20 percent with the highest wealth (Stromquist, 2004) in Latin America, the scope of the policies has to change. Educational policies tend to focus on quantity, not on quality, but this is not working. The educational systems in Latin America reproduce social stratification (Sloan, 1984). Thus, living in rural areas, being poor or indigenous currently

behests children's educational opportunities. Schools must instead be places where children, regardless of background or ethnicity, receive the same opportunities to succeed.

To some extent, cash subsidy programs make a difference because rural parents do not have to decide between sending their children to school or to work underpaid menial jobs. However, one of the changes I would recommend is to provide rewards not only in cash, but in incentives that improve these children's and families' quality of life via programs that give these student skills they can use in the workforce along with their family members. The illiteracy rate among adults in Latin America is 21 percent (Estrada, 2004; UNESCO, 2017), but this percentage fluctuates in rural areas. Enabling programs for adults in areas of help their children and the community as well. Parents who are prepared for the workforce can incentivize their children to move forward and at the same time, with literacy programs parents can help with school work, thus making their children's school experience more meaningful by being involved, increasing the chances to grow out of poverty.

Adult education programs can be conducted on weekends and evenings in the same physical space that these schools provide when they are not being used to educate children. Voluntary programs can be created to train and bring literate people in rural communities. All it takes is a solid and organized government plan, and leaders of the community who are interested in changing the communities' way of life in order to put these plans into action. Similar programs have been in effect throughout Argentina in the early 1980s and in Venezuela since 1945 through popular groups as a challenge to the dominant culture, with great success (Freire, 2018).

A solution to the school system's current modus operandi

Schools in the Dominican Republic lack autonomy. They cannot implement new programs by themselves. The same condition prevails in many neighboring Latin American regions (Gamboa & Waltenberg, 2012), wherever a general curriculum is developed for the entire population without taking into account the needs of the different regions of the country. In the Dominican Republic, everything is run through the ministry of education. While the country is divided into districts and regions, these serve the purpose of regulating the personnel and making sure the current curriculum goals, determined at the national level, are met locally.

Latin America countries are heterogeneous, which means that schools would serve students better if certain aspects of the curriculum were developed according to the needs of the population. Students who live in the tourist-centered areas could benefit from a curriculum that includes a richer second language education. Decentralizing the educational systems would mean that the curriculum could be catered to specific groups of the population and would make school administrators more responsible in terms of results.

Curriculum decentralization could foster the involvement of the often-scrutinized private education sector, consequently improving the quality of education in both the public and private education sector. In order to achieve decentralization, the already-established districts would have to be responsible for their educational systems (Puryear, 1997). A similar project in Nicaragua, The Nicaragua Basic Education Project moved to a decentralized education system whose purpose has been to improve the quality of

primary education, giving their educational efforts freedom from government policies and bureaucracies (Edgerton, 2005; Rivavola & Fuller, 1999).

With the involvement of both the public and private education sector in a plan for decentralization, inequality could be reduced, giving the poorer population a chance to compete in the same markets as the population with better economic means.

Training Teachers

Latin American countries suffer from a discrepancy in teacher salaries. These often offer a lower wage and set of benefits compared to other professions (OECD, 2017). Thus, the teaching profession is not seen as a high-status job. This has historically lead academically qualified people to pursue careers outside education. As a result, non-qualified instructors are commonly seen teaching in schools.

This situation is made worse when little to no professional development is available to teachers. Local, regional and national governments must develop and offer teacher training programs that address the prevalent weaknesses in the education system.

Education is an essential element of every country. New studies with new information about learning strategies are published every day. For teachers, their university education should not be enough; constant training programs that encourage them to keep the conversation about innovative approaches and pedagogical technologies going should be the norm.

An urgent issue that pertains to rural education is the lack of differentiation in the curriculum for the many different rural areas of the country. People who live on the coast, in the mountains, or in the jungle face different issues, histories, and overall social contexts. These factors have to be taken into account when developing the curriculum as

well as when assigning teachers to rural areas. A way to address this issue would be if schools of education made changes in their teacher preparation programs to include the reality that is rural education. Rural education must be differentiated and promoted among prospective teachers. This, along with decentralization of the education system, will make teacher training focus on each region's issues, while at the same time putting an end to archaic teaching practices.

With a decentralization of the education system in place, teacher training programs would build new knowledge and theories through the participation of the teachers for their specific social contexts and their experience (Richards, 2008). Furthermore, programs such as dual language immersion can be implemented to support better education standards which would reduce the inequity present in the country.

Dual language immersion: Bilingualism, Biliteracy, and Bicultural identity

Dual language education has gained a lot of traction in the US, evidenced by the rise of many school boards deciding to implement a dual language program (Carrera-Carrillo, 2003; de Jong, 2016; Detwiler, 2016). Learning a second language is necessary for students given as over the past three decades, the number of people who speak a second language in the United States has increased from 23.1 to 78.4 million people (Wiley & García, 2016). In addition, all aspects of society are becoming increasingly more international, especially in the realms of business and technology.

The four models of bilingual education

Dual Language Immersion (DLI) is a form of bilingual education in which instruction is presented in the target language by one teacher during part of the school day and in English by another teacher the other part of the school day, fostering additive

bilingualism (Lyster, 2007). Four main models of DLI exist: *developmental one-way bilingual education model*, *one-way foreign immersion*, *two-way immersion* and *heritage language immersion model* (Spicer-Escalante, 2017).

The *Developmental one-way bilingual education model* aims for oral and written proficiency in two languages (Cloud, 2000; Genesee, 2008). The Utah DLI program, which currently encompasses Spanish, French, Chinese, German, Portuguese, and Russian typically starts in the first grade and uses a 50-50 model, with half the instruction presented in English, while the other is presented in the target language. (Hansen, 2009; Utah Dual language immersion, n.d.).

In *One-way foreign immersion*, also known as foreign language immersion, over two-thirds of students are majority language speakers, and all students study the target language together, which “is typically the *majority language* of the broader society” (Christian, 2010, p. 3), as well as their native language. Instruction in the second language may start as soon as kindergarten or later in elementary school (Genesee, 2008).

Two-way immersion aims to promote bilingualism by having two groups of students of different L1s, where one group aims to learn the language the other group already knows and vice versa, using each group’s language for academic and literacy instruction (Genesee, 2008).

The *Indigenous Revitalization Immersion* is usually associated with the revitalization of indigenous languages. It aims to revitalize a heritage language that is no longer spoken as a first language. Students may or may not be proficient in it, but usually have a connection to this language through their heritage. It is also aimed at students who still use the indigenous language, in order to maintain it (May, 2008). f

Praises and concerns

It is not surprising that knowing two languages has been shown to be beneficial for all learners. DLI students exhibit educational, cognitive, economic, social, and cultural benefits (Bialystok & Craik, 2010; Saiz & Zoido, 2005; Thomas & Collier, 2012). In fact, some even claim that it is “the key to the successful future of U.S. education” (Feinberg, 1999; Thomas & Collier, 2003, p. 1). Evidence shows that students in dual language programs improve not only their second language but also their first language (Cloud, 2000). Moreover, English-speaking students achieve high levels of functional proficiency in a second language without detrimental effects to their primary language (Genesee, 1987; Lambert & Tucker, 1972). Consequently, students who come to the U.S. with limited proficiency in English show better progress learning English if they are schooled in their primary language at the same time they are introduced to the English language (Cummins, 1991; Thomas & Collier, 1998). Furthermore, students from minority groups who receive literacy instruction in their first language can apply these skills to the acquisition of English literacy (Cloud, 2000). Bilingual programs are beneficial because students acquire higher levels of proficiency, which they would not otherwise obtain in a traditional classroom, while at the same time acquiring proficiency in English (Cloud, 2000).

Compared to their monolingual counterparts, students who achieve high proficiency in a second language demonstrate cognitive and linguistic advantages. Research has shown that fully proficient bilinguals outperform monolingual students in all-English schools on English language tests (Burkhauser et al., 2016; Marian, Shook, & Schroeder, 2013; Lambert, 1993; Thomas & Collier, 2015). Additionally, these same

students outperform monolinguals in tasks where divergent thinking is involved, such as finding alternate solutions to problems and exploring different ways of using household objects. Research shows that exposure and use of two languages in early childhood supports, and in some cases accelerates, the child's verbal and nonverbal abilities (Yoshida, 2008).

Socially and economically speaking, knowing a second language empowers individuals to broaden their opportunities (Cloud, 2000). While English is seen as a mediating language as people from all around the world use it to communicate when interactants do not know the other person's language, knowing a language other than English opens the opportunity of learning new cultures and interacting with new people, their values, and their way of seeing the world, as "individuals who know other languages can tap into and take advantage of opportunities that are available only in those languages" (Cloud, 2000, p. 4). Knowing a second language also enhances an individual's chances of finding jobs that call for bilingual proficiency.

The research literature on DLI is vast and consistent: students in bilingual programs typically do as well as, and often do better, than monolingual English students on English reading tests (Burkhauser et al., 2016; Krashen, 2004; Marian, Shook, and Schroeder, 2013; Thomas and Collier, 2015). The positive outcomes of bilingual programs affect not only the students, but also teachers, who show excitement for the program. They express that "they love teaching now and would never leave their jobs. They feel they have lots of support, once the staff development and teacher planning time are in place for this innovation" (Collier & Thomas, 2004, p. 11). Similarly, Thomas and Collier (2002) found that parents of students in dual language programs participate more

in school activities because they feel valued and included in school decision making. Administrators add that they are committed to making dual language work for the whole community even when it takes an enormous amount of planning for it to work (Collier & Thomas, 2004).

Parents from students who struggle in school wonder whether they should be enrolled in dual language programs. Given how these programs are optional, students with learning difficulties are sometimes discouraged from participating in dual language programs, due to the perception that a dual-language program might slow down or even jeopardize English acquisition. However, research shows that DLI students with background characteristics that may put their academic achievement in jeopardy can attain the same level of first language competence and academic achievement as students in programs that use the native language exclusively (Genesee, 2008).

What DLI aims for

DLI aims for bilingualism, biliteracy, and biculturalism. A bilingual person is defined as one who meets the communicative demands of the self and society in two or more languages in his interaction with others in his day-to-day activities (Reif, 2016). Biliteracy, on the other hand, refers to the ability to carry out communication in two languages in written form (Hornberger, 2004). Pérez and Torres-Guzmán (1996) describe biliteracy as the “acquisition and learning of the decoding and encoding of and around print using two linguistic and cultural systems in order to convey messages in a variety of contexts” (p. 54). What is essential in these two definitions is that biliteracy goes farther than just reading and writing in two languages, it also demands an understanding of the

cultures associated with both languages (Fortune & Tedick, 2008). Fortune (2013) states that Bilingualism and Biliteracy, along with Cultural Competence, are what DLI aims for.

The last two decades have seen a rise in bilingualism and biliteracy research. Various reasons have been suggested for this surge in these areas. One obvious explanation could be the realization that over 50% of the US population speaks at least two languages (Ansaldo, Marcotte, Scherer & Raboyeau, 2008). As a result, the situation of bilingualism in The United States affects people worldwide in all levels of society and even in seemingly monolingual countries. As a result, educators and parents aim to create an enriching environment for their children, in many cases to ensure future professional aspirations (Reif, 2016). According to Baker (2011), knowledge of two languages “is increasingly seen as an asset as the communication world gets smaller” (p. 422).

Making DLI work in the Dominican Republic

Based on the gathered evidence, along with my proposal for a decentralization of the education system, I believe DLI can work in the Dominican Republic. My proposal is to design and implement a pilot program at multiple public schools implementing the developmental one-way bilingual education model with English as the target language. This model typically starts in the first grade and uses a 50-50 model, with half the instruction presented in English, while the other is presented in the target language (Hansen, 2009). There are various DLI models. However, from my perspective, and after observing the different models and analyzing how Utah implements DLI, the best model for the Dominican Republic would be the developmental one-way bilingual education starting from kindergarten or the first grade. For its effectiveness in the country, constant

analysis of the progress made can be carried out in order to see what changes can be made to the pilot program as deemed necessary.

Training teachers for the pilot programs can take place simultaneously by professionals familiar with dual language programs, working from theory to practice, in order for the participating teachers to become familiar with the context of this new approach to language teaching and the pedagogical techniques that will apply to their region. This will influence how teachers will implement the new school curriculum that these pilot programs will employ.

Only highly proficient and enthusiastic teachers would be eligible to teach in these programs. They will be hired through a competitive application process and vetted through training tailored towards these pilot programs. For an unbiased view in the vetting and training processes, a team of highly-skilled professionals knowledgeable with DLI could be invited to share their ideas and help with the implementation of the program.

It is also important to educate the language teaching population about dual language immersion in order to have language teachers informed and prepared for future expansion of the pilot programs. This can be done by implementing the available information of dual language immersion to teacher training nationwide.

Conclusion

In this paper I first provided a brief history of how inequality affects education in Latin America. One of the many challenges that this region faces today is a lack of significant progress in reducing unemployment and poverty. These two factors can directly be affected by a robust education designed for the needs of the demographic

group it intends to serve. As the Dominican Republic is a famous tourist location, it makes sense to give the population directly affected by good job opportunities, which calls for a change in the currently education system. One of the goals of DLI is to prepare learners who are bilingual. An education reform of this magnitude would bolster the economy and would mitigate the current inequality present in the country, especially in rural communities. For a country that is potentially full of opportunities, my proposal of implementing DLI as a pilot program should be taken into consideration.

PEDAGOGY PAPER

Co-teaching in a Spanish as a Foreign Language Classroom Setting

INTRODUCTION & REFLECTION

This paper was originally written with my colleague Diannylín Núñez as a paper for an independent study course with Dr. María Luisa Spicer-Escalante in the Fall of 2017. Co-teaching was brought to our attention by Dr. Spicer Escalante, who had previously written about it (Spicer-Escalante, 2018). After reviewing the literature and Dr. Spicer-Escalante's experience with co-teaching, it was obvious to both of us that this model was something we had to try in our class setting, so we jumped at the opportunity. Having read articles that compared the different models of co-teaching, we settled for interactive teaching. The biggest challenge was how time consuming it was at first, but at the same time, it was a rewarding experience.

In this paper, my colleague and I explored the benefits and challenges of co-teaching in two first Spanish 1010 classes at Utah State University. For the purposes of this paper, we co-taught twice a week, once in each other's courses for one semester.

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 the delivering of "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 the opportunity of asking questions, and receiving answers faster, as well as receiving feedback faster than one-teacher classrooms (Teacher Quality Enhancement Center, 2010).

This paper explores the benefits and challenges of co-teaching for students and teachers, as well as the features and types of co-teaching. In addition, I offer my views on this educational practice having experienced it first-hand. For the purposes of this paper, my fellow co-teacher and I visited each other's Spanish classes once a week for one

semester and taught cooperatively. Additionally, the following semester, we shared one Spanish class and co-taught on a weekly basis.

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 effectively work. Instructors need to:

- Share at least one goal and co-plan to accomplish it.
- Accept and respect the different opinions their partner has and combine them with their own beliefs finding 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 the team members. In addition, 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, such as how we approached the use of authentic materials or the student seating arrangements, we both

believed in the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach. We both wanted our students to feel comfortable with 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 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 fellow co-teacher and I started co-teaching, we used to step on and interrupt each other without meaning to. However, after a few weeks, we learned to work together and instead of interrupting one another, we completed each other's parts.

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, 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 1: interactive teaching, 2: one teach, one observe, 3: one teach, one assist, 4: parallel teaching, 5: station teaching, and 6: alternative teaching (Spicer-Escalante, 2018).

Interactive Teaching

Also known as team teaching, this model requires great coordination and trust between the co-teachers. The instructors take turns leading activities and explaining

language aspects. For this model, it is desirable for the teachers to have similar teaching styles (Thomas, 2014). This type of co-teaching is the one my colleague and I used for both our Spanish language classes. In addition to planning together, we had to decide who was going to lead which activities. We divided the content in equal amounts and as one explained concepts, the other provided examples on the board, which complemented the explanations. 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 on the morning class due to the fact that we were able to modify parts of the lesson prior to the afternoon class. However, since each group had different characteristics, sometimes the morning class surpassed the afternoon class. We attributed this to students' motivation to learn the language and the size of the classes. The morning class had sixteen students, thus there was more energy in the classroom and most students seemed committed to learning Spanish. The afternoon group, on the other hand, had only eight students and some of them took the course merely to fulfill degree requirements.

One Teach, One Observe

In this model, one of the co-teachers serves as an observer and the other delivers the content. After class, the observer shares the information collected with the colleague. Although one teacher is responsible for the delivery of instruction, the instructors discuss the aspects the observer will focus on in the classroom beforehand (Cook & Friend, 1995). We tried this model once but did not find it so helpful. My teaching colleague acted as an observer while I taught a class. I felt like my colleague was there to supervise me, not to support me and she felt the need to stand and teach alongside me.

Alternatively, we decided to incorporate the *one teach, one observe* model with 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 perceived from the learners. I believe that an observer can notice things that the instructor in front of the class might miss. Nevertheless, it is not necessary to have an observer for a whole class period.

One Teach, One Assist

This model shares some features with the *one teach, one observe* model, with the main difference being that the second teacher can assist the main teacher with individual students during key moments. However, 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 this 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, we did not employ this method. However, the days we did not co-teach, we discussed our experiences in the classroom and shared the lesson plans with each other. Every PowerPoint presentation we used contained a combination of me and my fellow teacher's identity that informed our decisions about what classroom activities to do with the students and how we preferred to teach the material. By using

the PowerPoint as a base for both of our teaching methods, we were 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, the instructors divide the class in two groups. However, the content is also divided so that the instructors teach different contents to both groups of learners. When the teachers finish with one group, they switch to repeat the same content to the other group (Spicer-Escalante, 2018). Although we could not employ this model, we saw how it was done in a dual language immersion school and how beneficial station teaching was in that setting. From what we could observe, *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

This co-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 but noticed how it could be effective in a multilevel class. However, as we paid close attention to our students during our co-teaching sessions, we invited students who needed some reinforcements to visit us during office hours to make sure these students were not falling behind. These sessions had a positive impact in student performance during activities and subsequent homework

assignments. As a result, most students who attended these office hours became repeat-visitors and did not hesitate to ask for help in the future.

Benefits of incorporating co-teaching

Students benefit from co-teaching in a classroom as they receive a higher level of attention from the teachers, as co-teaching lowers the student-to-teacher ratio (Villa et al, 2004). Having two teachers in the classroom means that there will always be shared responsibility of the management of the class as well as the instruction. Outside of class, my colleague and I collaborated to correct tests, check homework, comment about how students were doing, and discuss what strategies would work better. Being equally responsible for the outcome of our students helped us identify any students that would struggle during our planned activities and help accordingly.

As both instructors are interested in the students, there is an increased opportunity to detect and respond to students' needs. Class flow does not need to be interrupted in order for a student to seek help at most moments in the classroom (Murawski, 2002a). Furthermore, students interact with different teacher personalities, thus giving them more chances to connect well with one of them (Aliakbari & Bazayr, 2012). These connections encourage small-groups and one-on-one teaching opportunities. Research has shown that co-teachers become more aware of the students' needs, which co-teachers reflect in following lessons by making adaptations to their planning (Kroeger, Embury, Cooper, Brydon-Miller, Laine, & Johnson, 2012; McHatton & Daniel, 2008; Siry, 2011).

Having two teachers in the classroom creates an opportunity for sharing, providing a wide range of expertise for the students to learn from, given that each one has a different perspective. As a result, more creative activities for lessons will emerge (Sims,

2008). Co-teachers suggest ideas that can enhance current and future lessons (Spicer-Escalante, 2018) There is also the opportunity of switching between the various co-teaching models in order to make the lessons less monotonous to the students and for teachers to learn from each other.

Students react positively to having two teachers in the classroom. Teachers can easily model interactions whenever the lesson asks for dialogues or demonstrations where one teacher asks and the other answers naturally (Carless, 2006; Spicer-Escalante, 2018). It also helps students who may not have understood the prompts made by the teachers or in the textbook. Therefore, students will be more willing to participate in class and contribute to group activities. Our students did not have any issues addressing the teacher who was closest to them, and some even enjoyed the interactions of my partner and me between activities and demonstrations. Spicer-Escalante (2018) found that teachers really enjoyed co-teaching, as teachers highlighted the opportunity to make classes more fun, share their ideas with others, and expand their limitations.

Challenges of incorporating co-teaching

It is evident that co-teaching is beneficial to teachers and students, but it is important to acknowledge that there are some challenges as well. One common challenge is having two teachers with different teaching styles teaching the same lesson. However, this can be overcome with an open mind and willingness to compromise. Choosing a colleague for co-teach 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). Working with a non-compatible colleague may create clashes which could derail entire lessons and both teachers would end up frustrated and not

enjoying the experience. It is important to discuss what the roles of each teacher should be in a co-taught classroom in order to maintain a good relationship based on trust and understanding (Beninhof, 2012). My partner and I did not have such issue, as we made sure we spent a similar amount of time interacting with the students and were compatible professionally.

Shared control may come into play, as it is sometimes difficult for two teachers to present themselves as equal in the classroom. Setting up lessons with the co-teacher before class can help build a strong relationship and equally shared responsibility by having the same amount of content to teach in each lesson (Cherian, 2007). Co-teaching does not work if only one of the teachers controls the content while the other is busy doing tasks not directly related to teaching such as making photocopies, grading, or tutoring students separate from the class (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” (Beninhof, 2012, p. 21).

The most pertinent challenge of co-teaching is time. First, it requires administrative support, as co-taught classrooms require time and organization beforehand. If schools really want co-teaching to succeed, they should make time for teachers to collaborate (Kroeger et al. 2012). 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 (Beninhof, 2012). Researchers also suggest school administrators to reach local universities and create partnerships via internships that would benefit them both.

Conclusion

In an era of often-tired teaching practices and curriculum standards, co-teaching is an effective model that can transform the classrooms and give new experiences to teachers and students. The collaborative nature of this model fosters the development of teachers professionally, while at the same time generating a new kind of rapport with the students, as having two teachers collaborating in the classroom can foster students' solidarity and sense of community. While the research has shown clear benefits for both student and teachers, the purpose of this paper is to highlight my partner and I experiences as co-teachers during the 2017 Fall semester at Utah State University.

CULTURE PAPER

Refusals: Cross-cultural perspectives

INTRODUCTION & REFLECTION

This artifact was written for LING 6900 with Dr. Karin de Jonge-Kannan in spring 2017. I originally worked with Diannylín Núñez, but later adapted the paper to the needs of my portfolio. As an L2 English speaker, I know that culture plays a crucial role in language use and the context during conversations. During my stay at Utah State, it became obvious that the what I considered normal utterances could be cause of misunderstandings in the United States if I was not careful.

One of the speech acts that spiked my interest was the act of refusals (Hymes, 2005). With the curiosity about researchers' perspectives on refusal strategies, I began to read articles that compared the use of refusal strategies used by native and nonnative English speakers. It became clear that some speakers from different cultural backgrounds had different refusal strategies while others used similar methods.

Findings from the literature demonstrate the complexity of refusals and remind me that as a foreign language teacher it is essential to make my students aware that they have to be alert and respectful of the different cultural aspects. Teaching refusals help students save face in situations that could place them in unfortunate situations due to simple cultural differences. The purpose of this paper is to shed a light in being pragmatically competent in order to make teachers and students aware of possible misfires using refusals.

Introduction

Learning a second language (L2) entails more than learning its grammar and vocabulary. It also involves knowing its norms and ways to communicate, as politeness is essential in every culture. However, each culture has its own perceptions of the definition of politeness. For instance, 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 refers to the mistakes made by L2 speakers 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 linguistic performance of different cultures (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993).

Face and Refusals

Face is considered “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) classified the face system in *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, an employee 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 may receive a response of acceptance or a refusal of the offer. 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 an interactional challenge as the interlocutors express a discrepancy in their communicative intentions. Alemi and Tajeddin (2013) state that refusals contradict what the inviter wants. This speech act is not initiated by the invitee and as a result, a reply is expected. Researchers agree that, regardless of language and culture, refusals are a clear face threat and that the receiver of the refusal (i.e., the inviter) is more exposed to damage in that regard as opposed to the invitee (Siebold & Busch, 2015). Additionally, refusals carry an "inherent risk of offending someone" (Eslami, 2010, p. 217).

Refusals are considered a face-threatening act because the listener is 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, even if the hearer does not plan to comply with the invitation. Hence, knowing how to refuse politely in the TL will allow learners to interact appropriately in the TL culture. For these reasons, this article aims to contrast and analyze 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). The students need to recognize pragmatic features for them to be able to properly perform a speech act (Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin, 2005). Knowing how to appropriately decline a request, offer, or invitation helps preserve relationship with others. Refusals are more complicated than other speech acts, as they are not initiated by the speaker; rather, it is a response to an initiated act, adding another layer of complexity to refusals (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. Furthermore, 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, or 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, and 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 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 regard to L1 speakers from different cultures and the refusing norms of their native language compared to their L2. For example, Chang (2009), in his empirical study on pragmatic transfer in refusals, used a discourse completion questionnaire consisting of 12 situations where refusals were elicited. The researcher 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). One of the main findings was that even though Americans and Chinese used excuses and reasons, American students were not as specific giving excuses as Chinese students in both types of refusals. Furthermore, the study showed Americans 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 is very high, as is 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, where both languages share similar rules, but not between these languages and English. However, important contextual factors must 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. The author compared them to the strategies used by L1 speakers of American English. The results show that when the students were asked to refuse invitations from a person with equal status, all groups of students used the same strategies, whereas when the speaker had a higher status, the two 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

Two types of pragmatic transfer are distinguished in the research literature: positive transfer and negative transfer. Negative transfer occurs when the L1 and L2 do not share the same language rules. In comparison, positive transfer takes place where the L1 and L2 share a similar language rules which can be transferred to the TL such as word order (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 Spanish and French do.

Pragmatic failure may occur in cross-cultural communication due to differences in culture and language. However, this 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/beautiful”. Many native English speakers of Spanish often use this expression to say, “I’m fine”. Because the equivalent to the English verb *to be* is two different verbs in Spanish, it is easy for learners to make this negative transfer.

Social Status

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

Moreover, Wannaruk (2008) showed that native speakers of Thai, when it comes to invitation refusals, tend to express negativity followed by an explanation. 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 interlocutor's social status. However, when it came to refusing invitations from a friend, Thai speakers often used direct strategies with the addition of 'no' followed by an explanation, similar to native English speakers. They also tended to be indirect while interacting with someone higher in social status. In contrast, American English speakers do not take into account social status, they refuse more directly and have a tendency to not give reasons (Kwon, 2004).

Refusal Strategies

Given the delicate nature of refusals, different strategies are needed depending on the situation. Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) classified indirect strategies in 11 semantic formulas. These include: *wish*, *statement of alternative*, and *avoidance*. The direct strategies were classified in performative, and nonperformative statements. One example of a performative statement is 'I refuse it'. A nonperformative statement would be 'I don't think so'. Personality and environment of the invitee play an important role 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 of participants used similar strategies to refuse such as *brief apology*, and *statement of alternative*. However, the English L1 speakers stressed the importance of an explanation, whereas the nonnative English speakers 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 to refuse an invitation. In comparison, the EFL speakers used unbelievable explanations that led hearers to think that they were not truthful in their reasons to refuse, given as it is pragmatically correct in the Chinese EFL students' culture. Additionally, Guo (2012) highlighted that people from different cultures share similar views on refusal strategies, the difference being the politeness approach to the situation. Her findings reveal that American-English speakers utilize more direct strategies as opposed to the Chinese using English as foreign language or speaking Chinese, similarly to the results found by Wannaruk (2008). All these studies show the importance of carefully choosing refusal strategies in order to avoid pragmatic failure.

Conclusion

The current literature review 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 varying social status and cultures. If students are pragmatically aware, it could

potentially minimize instances where they could offend the interlocutor and thus avoid misfires. Students and teachers need to be aware of the differences across languages and learn how to separate their L1 and L2 rules and beliefs. As a teacher, I believe it is fundamental that L2 instructors show learners such differences and help them understand that every language has its own interaction rules. One way of doing this is by following the guidelines Tatsuki and Houck (2010) provide. The authors propose activities that raise L2 students' pragmatic awareness, as well as strategies to teach speech acts following 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

INTRODUCTION

The following annotated bibliographies are a combination of articles that I found particularly meaningful in developing my understanding of effective language teaching and emphasized in my teaching philosophy statement. The first topic is dual language immersion which is a collection of articles that I read regarding dual language education. The next bibliography is an overview of the literature regarding communicative language teaching. Finally, the last piece of this annotated bibliography focuses on the use of Facebook for classroom activities.

DUAL LANGUAGE IMMERSION

My first exposure to DLI came from the class called Foundations of DLI in my second semester of the MSLT program. My understanding of DLI has been expanded under the guidance of my professors and the literature I have read with different perspectives towards DLI education. Most of the resources I have read advocate DLI in schools. I was intrigued in part because of how the concept of teaching content in two languages is interesting and innovative for me as a second language instructor. In the following sections, I will expand further my findings about DLI based on the sources I have read.

My first orientation with bilingual and immersion education comes from **May (2008)**, who introduced me to the early development and the basic definition of Bilingual education as posited by Andersson and Boyer (1970). The latter define bilingual education as the “instruction in two languages and the use of those two languages as mediums of instruction for any part, or all, of the school curriculum” (p. 12). I learned that for a program to be deemed bilingual, both languages must be used to deliver curricular content. This brought to my attention how in The Dominican Republic, programs are called bilingual education when a foreign language is taught in the classroom. However, the foreign language is taught without taking the rest of the curriculum into consideration and is essentially classified as a subject by itself.

As I continued reading, I learned that some programs can have different approaches in the way the second language is taught. These two approaches are labeled additive and subtractive. An additive approach fosters longer-term student bilingualism, that is, it aims to add another language to the learners’ repertoire, without minimizing the

language they already know. The subtractive approach, however, aims to eventually shift the learner to the dominant language, by replacing one language with another. This information concerned me, as I don't believe in depriving the learner of a language, and I needed to know how DLI is implemented in the U.S.

This search brought me to **Genesee (2008)**, who explains the three models of Dual Language programs that are found in the U.S., and Canada. With the first, one-way immersion, instruction of the second language may start as soon as kindergarten. The majority of students in this type of program speak the majority language, which as Christian (2010) explains, is typically the language spoken in the broader society. This model used to be the standard for quite some time. When my nephew arrived in the United States, he was quickly placed into one of these programs.

Second, in the Developmental one-way bilingual education model learners are native speakers of a minority language, and that language is used in the classroom along with the majority language. What I like the most about this program is that the minority language is used 90% of the time and is then reduced gradually until both languages are used 50% of the time. I believe that this is one of the most effective approaches for with children whose families speak a language other than English at home. However, the third model, called Two-way immersion, caught my attention. This approach aims to promote bilingualism by having two groups of students of different target languages, where for example, one group wants to learn English and the other group wants to learn Spanish. Normally this program does not necessarily need to enroll exactly fifty percent of each linguistic group, but when it does, it helps keep the balance of students of each language and cultural background, further helping the process of second language acquisition

(Collier & Thomas, 2004). I believe this model to be the most rewarding one, as two-way immersion students learn from each other.

In another study that illustrates the different DLI models, May (2008) presents another approach, called the Heritage language immersion model. This approach aims to revitalize indigenous languages that are no longer spoken as a first language. Students may or may not have some proficiency in it, but usually have a connection to this language through their family heritage. It can also work for students who still use the indigenous language at home, in order to maintain the language. Heritage languages are part of indigenous history, and it would be a shame to lose them. Heritage language immersion may keep indigenous languages alive.

Reading Genesee's (2008) and May's (2008) chapters, it seemed clear to me that DLI provides the kind of environment I envision in a classroom, which is an all-inclusive education experience for all students. To find out whether DLI programs provided these kinds of environments, I read a study by **Thomas and Collier (2003)**. This article gave me a good introductory understanding of what DLI offers students. I learned that the instructional infrastructure of DLI programs provides learners with full instruction instead of a watered-down version of the language, ensuring full proficiency of the second language, with instructors in the two target languages providing the curriculum demands.

Dual language programs also provide integrated, inclusive, and unifying education experiences for their students, in contrast to the segregated, exclusive, and divisive education characteristics of many traditional English-only and transitional

bilingual programs. It also put my mind to rest by affirming my beliefs on how a DLI classroom should be

The previous article also highlights an early article by of **Thomas and Collier (2002)**, which shows that English learners who received 5 years of dual-language schooling reached the 51th percentile on a national test. In contrast, the same district's effective transitional bilingual program scored at the 34th percentile. The most important part of Collier and Thomas' article, I believe, is their discussion of how non-minority students expand their worldview to include respect for the traditions of others.

Finding how effective DLI programs were and reading Thomas and Collier's successful findings on DLI education made me wonder what other benefits learning a second language through DLI brought to the table. This brought me to a book titled *Dual language instruction: A handbook for enriched education*, by **Cloud, Genesee, and Hamayan, (2000)** which discusses many of the benefits of DLI. The most obvious benefit is learning a second language, but without weakening the student's first language. The authors also highlight the fact that DLI students achieve higher levels of functional proficiency in the target language. Research has shown that students who acquire advanced levels of proficiency in a second language exhibit certain cognitive and linguistic advantages when compared to their monolingual peers. Social and economic benefits also come into play. "Individuals who know other languages can tap into and take advantage of opportunities that are available only in those languages" (Cloud, 2000, p. 4). Indeed, individuals who know a second language have more opportunities when looking for a job, preparing them for the global marketplace.

Reading about all these benefits led me to think about what controversies might

surround DLI, which landed me on an article by **Crawford (2003)**, who describes some of the challenges that DLI had to overcome to get where it is today. In California the public was surveyed with a zero-sum poll, that means that they were tailored in a way that no matter what the person being polled thought, the answer would reflect results that favored the people who created the survey. This event set back the progress DLI had made educating the people of its effectiveness in language education. Fortunately, a movement to counter-attack this English-only proposition was born with the intention of showing the population that they should have the opportunity to learn another language besides English.

Wanting to know more about how students felt about biliteracy and bilingualism, I read an article by **Fielding and Harbon (2013)**, which gave me insight into student identity. The researchers found that student's ability to identify themselves as bilingual didn't come from them being proficient in the language, but by what tasks they could carry out in more than one language. The students in this article also felt bicultural just by having a connection to the target language, like family, birth or life experience. This attitude to identity was common in students with Latin America ethnicity backgrounds.

Another article, this time by **Bearse and de Jong (2008)**, gave me a contrasting opinion regarding bilingualism. In their study conducted at an English/Spanish DLI school, Anglo students acknowledged they had learned about culture, but they did not feel bicultural. They did, however, feel that they learned how to be more sensitive towards other cultures. Latino students, on the other hand, felt that being bicultural came as a natural extension of their lives because they have connections to their heritage culture and were immersed in American culture at the same time. However, I do believe

that to some extent these students become bicultural just for being active participants in these environments and the day-to-day interactions they have with students from different cultures.

The main conclusion that I have drawn from the literature is that DLI in and of itself is an effective program that give students not only the opportunity to learn a new language, but also the cognitive, social, educational and economic benefits cannot be ignored. The evidence is out there, and the benefits of DLI outweigh any arguments against it. Utah should serve as an example to the rest of the United States by how it has implemented DLI in hundreds of schools and counting. It is, however, a work in progress, and as every good idea, there is always a counter argument and challenges which include the need of proficient staff, curriculum development.

The sources I presented above have expanded my understanding of DLI. I found diverse perspectives on DLI students and models, but all agree on making the classroom an inclusive space with equal opportunity. From my comparison of various perspectives of DLI, my observations and my teaching experience, I conclude that DLI will continue to be an effective model for students.

COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

Thanks to the MSLT program, I have been exposed to a wide array of methodologies and approaches, but one of the approaches I have taken more interest in part for its dynamism is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). I learned about it early in the Master of Second Language program (MSLT) via **Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandell (2001)** in their book, *The Communicative Language, Volume III*. Given that I had never heard of CLT before reading this book, each sentence was like a new world for me. Even though I taught my students this way, I didn't know the concepts to back up my approaches to second language teaching. This made me appreciate CLT even more. In the first chapter of this book, the authors said something that stayed with me ever since I read it, and it says that regardless of method or approach the main goal of language teaching is oral proficiency. I learned the importance of classroom communication, and how pivotal it is in language instruction.

I benefited the most from the description of Task-Based Activities (TBAs) and how these help students learn the target language via activities they would normally do in their everyday life. From this book, I learned that in order to help the learners achieve the use of the target language in an authentic manner, I should plan tasks that encourage meaningful spontaneous communication and that these activities should contain three critical features described by the authors: they must be learner centered, must involve meaningful exchanges of information, and these should conclude with a presentation of the information they gathered in the previous step. In the book *While We're on the Topic*, **VanPatten (2017)** explains the difference between tasks have a communicative purpose and involve the expression and interpretation of meaning, as opposed to activities or

exercises. These engaging tasks have a significant impact on learners. After learning about CLT and TBAs, I had the opportunity to design and teach a TBA in Spanish for my LING 6400 micro-teaching assignment. The purpose was to teach a simple lesson plan under twenty minutes to my peers who don't know Spanish and I decided to teach them the use of the verb *gustar* (like) combined with gender and number when talking about food items. After I taught them the necessary vocabulary, I asked them questions to make sure they had grasped the content given. Then I gave them a small chart with the fruits they had seen before the activity. They work in pairs asking each other what they like or didn't like until they had surveyed their classmates. To conclude, I had them tell the rest of the class to share with the class the food items that their classmates liked or didn't like. Although it was a short amount of time, I followed the three critical features TBAs must contain and saw them in progress. This class was considered successful by my peers and I learned that students should have a reason to use the target language in order to use it. Although this method is shown to be effective, it should be noted that it could be difficult to implement given that it takes time to develop and to implement. TBAs have become a staple in all my classes and it is rewarding to see students express themselves and understand others through activities that are meaningful to them.

It is essential to know how CLT has evolved and how it evolved from past approaches and methods, so while doing research on that matter, in the book *Making Communicative Language Teaching Happen* by **Lee and VanPatten (2003)**, I learned how CLT evolved in what it is today and how it became the antithesis of the Audiolingual Method (ALM), as it changes the focus from teacher-centered to student-

centered, basically breaking the Atlas Complex where the teacher took responsibility of what happened in the classroom.

Lee and VanPatten (2003) stress the importance of providing learners with input meaningful to the learner. As a teacher, I learned that in order to make input meaningful I had to use plenty of gestures and making use of images and drawing. Lee and VanPatten suggest using information gap and interview activities as these make students pay attention to the utterances in order to carry out the tasks being asked by a classmate. These contrast the traditional instruction where the teacher would provide speaking activities, but the benefit of using gap activities and interview exchange activities is the absence of patters that students may cling to.

This book changed the way I used to plan my lessons. Even though my classes were of communicative nature, the time for communicating in class was often obfuscated by lengthy grammar explanations and review of vocabulary. I started to look at my lesson plans more critically, asking myself how I can turn this into meaningful interactions and how can I make my input more accessible to my students. During lesson planning, I design my tasks and come up with plausible scenarios, taking into account how much my student will interact to follow these tasks and how much input they will receive.

Lee and VanPatten (2003) put in order five givens of second language acquisition which they examine and show how traditional instruction is deficient in addressing these. Of the five givens, the one that really caught my attention is the one that states the fact that L2 learners fall short on their goal to sound native-like in the second language. While I agree to some extent, I concluded from this argument that the amount of input really matters in second language acquisition. The notion of trying to sound native-like

shouldn't be part of the classroom. Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandell (2001) argue that students' main goal is to communicate instead of positioning CLT as a means to check the SLA "givens".

The *Teacher's Handbook* by **Shrum and Glisan (2015)** proved to be a good source of second language teaching pedagogy. This book introduced me to various topics in Second Language Acquisition, including the role of input, standards, helping students with diverse needs, and technology in the classroom. Two parts in particular influenced my understanding of CLT: Input and the ACTFL Can-do Statements, both of which I immediately grew fond of and made them part of my lessons.

Shrum and Glisan (2015) illustrate the need for teachers to organize and create lessons that adhere to standards-based goals. Shrum and Glisan (2015) suggest the use of authentic input and content in order to engage students.

Krashen (1987) emphasizes that language acquisition only occurs when there is comprehension by the students. He advocates that language acquisition develops slowly, but with the use of comprehensive input, while not forcing the students to produce the language in early stages, prepares them to do so when they are ready. In my Spanish 1010 classes my goal is to just use the target language even if the utterance is addressed to me in the student's native language.

In an article that emphasizes the use of the target language in the L2 classroom, **Turnbull (2001)** lay claim that teachers in L2 classrooms should use the TL in its entirety to provide as much input as possible. However, Turnbull backs the use of the L1, too. Due to my experience as a foreign language teacher, I have always advocated the use of the TL in its entirety as I believe it as a positive effect on the students, but this article

made me realize that there is a place for the L1 in special situations. The L1 is useful when scaffolding students, as long as the communicative goal of the lesson is met (Ellis, 2012).

Teaching communicatively has its challenges, especially when you want to have clear objectives as well as to determine how well the students understand my lessons. Years ago, I started looking for a proven method I could use to evaluate what I taught at different levels and to also have my students evaluate their own progress. I found that **NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-do Statements (2015)** helped me in both situations. It helped me assess what my students are able to do with the target language in the classroom, and as it works as a checklist, students can independently checkmark what they know. I learned about the modes of communication: the interpretive mode, the interpersonal mode, and the presentational mode (ACTFL, 2015). Implementing Can-do Statements in my classes not only helped me prioritize which topics I had to reinforce in future lessons, but also gave the students a realistic view of what they were able to do with the language they had acquired. This gives the learner realistic goals and control on what is being taught in the classroom and a sense of responsibility on what he has to do in order to achieve his or her goals.

I also use NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-do Statements to plan classroom activities. Whenever I had to create a TBA, I adjust the goals in order that they go hand in hand with the content I am about to teach. Having a list of the goals I want my students to achieve gives me a clear picture of what the students will be able to do at the end of the tasks I created.

I found that planning TBA with a clear purpose made me more aware of what works and what does not in my lessons, making me more critical of every step I take during planning.

TECHNOLOGY

As a language learner, I understand the importance of comprehensible input as well as having the opportunity to use the language that I have learned. As I study abroad, and my second language is English, I have no trouble practicing my L2. Unfortunately, most students do not have that convenience, and their interaction with the L2 is dictated by how many hours students receive education in the L2 classroom. To provide my students with an environment where they can use the L2, I implement the use of Facebook as a way to keep students interacting throughout the day outside of the classroom in conjunction with other technological tools. This annotated bibliography will review the literature that influenced my view of technology and its place outside the L2 classroom.

Boasting over 1.89 billion monthly active users (1.79 billion of those being mobile active users), and 1.15 billion people checking their Facebook accounts every day, Facebook is too big to be ignored (Facebook, 2017). It has leveraged the ever-changing technological and social norms to grow into the world's largest social network. This implies that a large number of Facebook users are consistently active in their visits to the site, giving language teachers a promising audience to work with.

In an article about social learning networks, **Huang, Yang, Huang, & Hsiao (2010)** demonstrate how students can be put into Facebook Groups where they can share thoughts, images, and links to interact with other learners through comments. Furthermore, they claim that using social networking sites can such as Facebook improve reading and writing skills in the L2 through collaboration activities. For me, the most interesting part of this article is when they highlight how these environments can help

bridge the gap between interpersonal interactions and academic language. Furthermore, I believe that using Facebook as a learning platform gives students the advantage of having multiple ways to access these environments throughout the day via their phones or their computers, eliminating the time constraints of a typical classroom (Thoms, 2012).

The main reasons users take part in Facebook comes from the need to maintain communication with their families. **Decarie (2010)**, in an article about the challenges and opportunities of the platform says that if these users are students, Facebook can also be used as a platform to keep in touch with classmates and teachers. Both use-cases, however, foster interpersonal interaction and important communication skills. It promotes connections and motivates users to keep using the platform. Consequently, when used to foster writing skills, students have positive feelings about the platform. The main advantage of Facebook as a classroom tool is the versatility of both education purposes and to keep in touch with the family. In my experience using the platform, students usually replied within the first five minutes a post or a response was published, which meant that they either received a notification in their mobile devices or were already using the platform.

The next article that I read looked at the attitudes students had towards Facebook. **Yang (2013)** found that students had positive attitudes towards Facebook used as a virtual English writing classroom. Since learners found the platform convenient, they were more likely to check Facebook during the day while commuting or waiting for someone. Given that access to the tool is ubiquitous, and learners are exposed to it constantly, they had the opportunity to receive updates from their classmates whenever they interacted in the classroom's virtual group. Furthermore, as the focus of the platform

is to connect people, it provides a consistent flow of communication between teachers and students.

Yang also found out that the participants of the study felt connected to each other. They felt that they could send and receive opinions from each other with no hassle. Facebook groups gave students the opportunity to express themselves with no limitations in regard to time and space thanks to the real-time communication aspect of the tool, this helped them get closer to their classmates and generated a sense of belonging among the learners in the platform. “Due to the informal structure of the Facebook setting, students do not seem to consider these methods of information exchange as a form of actual writing but rather as a method of social communication” (Yancey, 2009, p. 27).

Besides convenience, learners highlighted how Facebook became an open space in which every learner had a chance to learn from their peers by reading each other’s writing, an opportunity that is rare in a traditional classroom which often has time constraints. **Bani-Hani, Al-Sob, and Abu-Melhim (2017)** were interested in using Facebook for writing purposes. Facebook groups were used to teach English writing to a group of Jordanian learners. Learners were instructed to log on to Facebook and write on the assigned topic, with the purpose of sending drafts to peers and instructors, and to discuss or correct as they deemed necessary. Bani-Bani et al. found that a vast majority of the participants found that the utilization of Facebook groups aided them in their writing process. Specifically, the data showed that these groups helped students brainstorm during the pre-writing phase, thus a further development in their vocabulary took place. Additionally, the groups helped lessen the occurrence of spelling mistakes. This finding may be attributed to the fact that students have plenty of time to brainstorm while

participating in Facebook group discussions, unlike traditional classrooms where time is limited and often used by the instructor.

I particularly enjoyed Bani-Hani, Al-Sob, and Abu-Melhim's article because it gave validity to my use of technology outside of the classroom. There is an excess of tools created to make student discourse outside of the classroom as a reality, but truth is, students already feel comfortable with the tools they already interact with.

Additionally, learners received instant feedback from their peers, giving them the opportunity to freely discuss their ideas without the moderation of the instructor which, as Dang (2010) claims, promotes learner autonomy. **Akbari, Pilot and Simons (2015)** also claim that Facebook can help with students' sense of autonomy. In an empirical study, Akbari, Pilot and Simons (2015) analyzed the differences between a student group learning English in a traditional classroom and a group learning English through Facebook. Akbari et al. hypothesized that using Facebook can help students feel more autonomous, competent and at the same time, bring them together effortlessly "and that the fulfillment of these three needs together help students to learn better." (p. 127).

In Akbari et al.'s study, one group attended face-to-face classes, and the experimental group which used Facebook. The experimental group was exposed to the English language one hour a day for a month through formal sessions via Facebook groups. The students were instructed to write a paragraph on a daily basis and were allowed to post and use any kind of supporting materials (pictures, videos and links), provide feedback and raise questions which were answered by the teacher and other students.

The other group was exposed to the English language the same number of hours, but in a traditional classroom. Akbari et al (2015) found that even though both groups were administered the same content, the group taught in the traditional classroom spent an extra 40 minutes giving and receiving feedback whereas the experimental group gave and received feedback in their own time. Furthermore, the study also showed that students shared what they considered interesting regarding the studied materials with others, which consequently created more interaction between them. Moreover, their learning outcomes were higher. In my classes, I have taken advantage of the platform by giving instant feedback to my students' posts and also suggest any changes or kick start a conversation. However, as successful as Facebook as a learning platform can be, I always ask my students if they would agree to use Facebook for these activities.

In a survey study carried out by **Kabilan, Ahmad, and Abidin (2010)**, 300 undergraduate students were approached and given a questionnaire that explored the students' general usage of Facebook and their views on Facebook as an English language learning platform. The general opinion of these students concluded that the use of Facebook would enhance their communication skills and their confidence to write in English, as it provides them with authentic interaction and communication that the students would not have chance to experience otherwise. These positive experiences can then lead to a sense of connectedness and confidence in language acquisition. These findings are similar to those found by Yang (2013) and students' viable use of Facebook.

Kabilan et al., (2010) stated that the majority of students in this study expressed that Facebook can be a practical environment to practice their writing and their reading skills. From these articles, I can conclude that Facebook is a viable platform to enhance

these capabilities, and at the same time create connections between the students which, as seen in Yang's (2013) study, gives them a sense of belonging. These articles were especially important to me because it made me realize that students are more willingly to use tools that are familiar to them. Furthermore, giving students a sense of belonging gives me the opportunity to teach them content through the means that makes it more comfortable to them. This gives me the ability to diversify the activities that are done in the classroom,

Even more than developing writing and collaboration skills, I see Facebook as an all-inclusive platform that can be adapted. On a base level, it is still a communication tool that is available and accessible to most all students. However, there can be other uses that can enhance the L2 classroom experience such as video calls, games, competitions and voice calls.

Looking for new ideas, I came upon the finding of **Barrot (2016)**, who concluded that e-portfolios had a positive outcome in the students' writing practices by giving students the necessary skills to develop autonomy and engagement, as well as a medium to showcase their work and receive peer feedback. E-portfolios are also an excellent tool for instructors to follow student progress. Finally, they motivate students to improve their writing through peer feedback and by noticing gaps in their writing as they read other classmates' submissions on Facebook.

Using the Facebook as an e-portfolio, which is a collection of students' assignments, showing what they have achieved and progressed during a course or class period would give the students a timeline of how much they have progressed during class.

LOOKING FORWARD

During my two years in the MSLT program, I learned that teaching a language is all about giving students the necessary tools to produce the language in their daily lives. I learned to create engaging lessons that are not only for me to create as a teacher, but for my students in the classroom. In addition, I have been fortunate to be able to put the theories I have learned to practice as a Spanish instructor. This experience of teaching novice level students at USU prepared me as a language teacher.

As I finish my work in the MSLT program, I know that I have many working opportunities around the world, but in the future, I would love to go back to the Dominican Republic and implement the skills I have learned and pay it forward by developing dual language immersion programs, curriculum and programs to train teachers. If my plans do not come to fruition I would like to pursue a PhD in instructional technology or teach overseas.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Lesson Plan Vamos de vacaciones!

Description:

This lesson plan presents activities to help students develop reading and writing skills via collaboration through a social network, in this case Facebook.

This is a first year 50-minute Spanish class composed of 15 American English-speaker students. Their ages range from 18 to 24 years old. By the time the students get to this lesson, they will have learned how to use the past, present, present continuous and future tenses, indicative, as well as location, leisure time activities and a substantial number of verbs.

Can-Do: Students can discuss and support recommendations in a social gathering, such as co-planning travel with friends, identify destinations and major attractions on websites, and basic information on travel brochures.

Purpose: To be able to communicate and exchange information about familiar topics using phrases and simple sentences, sometimes supported by memorized or previous-written language.

Warm-up.

Time allotment: 10 min

Step 1. Students are invited to the class' closed group and are given posts with images from various exotic locations in key Latin American countries (México, Perú, Chile, The Dominican Republic, Bolivia, Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador). Then, they are asked to brainstorm what words or phrases come to mind when they see each picture.

Step 2. In groups of three, students are asked to analyze pick up a favorite place, and brainstorm ideas about how the can do to get there, and what means of transportation are required to do so.

Activity 1**Time allotment: 10 min**

Step 1. In pairs, different from the last activity, students role-play a dialogue in which one character is inviting the other to go with him to his chosen location and share how to get there.

Step 2. Students are asked if they would accompany his friend to his trip or go to his own.

Step 3. As a refresher, students are shown some images/videos of means of transportation.

Activity 2**Time allotment: 10 min**

Step 1. Students are shown a video of leisure activities and with a partner, take turns discussing which things can be do at the place or city they chose.

Step 2. Some students are asked to share what he and his partner discussed, and the class is asked whether or not they chose said activity.

Step 3. In-class talk: We briefly discuss the future tense.

Activity 3**Time allotment: 20 min**

Step 1. In their original groups from activity one, students find information about their chosen place, such as how to get there, what to do, where to stay, and share it in a private group conversation for review.

Step 2. In those same groups, students brainstorm and recollect relevant data from their searches and make a list of all the information they can use.

Step 3. In their original groups from activity one, students plan a future trip to their assigned location: how to get there, what to do, how many days it will be, etc. When they are done, the results are posted in the group by one of the students (and tag their group).

Activity 4

Time allotment: ∞

Step 1. Students will ask questions, by commenting on the posts, which will be answered by the group members, and any recommendation, if it sounds good or appealing, will be added to the main post.

Step 2. After the first day, a poll opens where the whole class votes for the place that they would likely travel to.

Next day of class

Warm up

Time allotment: 10 min

Step 1. Students are asked why they chose the location they voted from in the poll, and if what the students wrote in their paragraphs and the questions that were asked/answered had weight in their decision.

Step 2. Students are asked to join the group of the city they voted for and write about the main things from the location chosen.

Activity 1

Time allotment: 30 min

Step 1. The class is divided into three groups: The two top choices from the poll, become group one and two, and the rest. Will form group three. Group 1 and 2 will try to convince the other students to join their trip. Group three is encouraged to ask questions and voice their concerns.

Step 2. During the debate, students from group three are encouraged to move to the group they think has the best “vacation package”

Assessment

Formative, administered throughout class; and summative, administered at the end of the class.

I will conduct formative assessment through the lesson steps by asking questions such as why they chose a specific location, what can they do there, as well as prompt students to add to the ongoing debate.

As part of the lesson plan states that students have to plan a future trip to an assigned location, I will assess that part of the lesson with the following rubric:

Grammar & mechanics	1	2	3
Structure (subject verb order)			
Spelling (correct spelling of the words, punctuation)			
Verb tenses (used the applicable tenses correctly)			
1 - Approaching: Sometimes uses _____ correctly; 2 - Meets: Usually uses _____ correctly; 3 - Exceeds: Consistently uses _____ correctly.			

Content	Approaching (1-4)	Meets the requirements (5-7)	Exceeds expectations (8-10)
Presents main idea clearly (how to get there, what to do, where to stay)			
Information is organized and easy to read (smooth transitions from idea to idea and holds the reader's interest)			
Well-presented and argued (ideas are well supported)			

APPENDIX B

Annotated Lesson Plan:

Text: A long walk home, from *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul*

Objectives

Students will be able to...

- recognize the past perfect
- Comprehend phrasal verbs
- analyze a short story
- interact with others to discuss opinions and share information;
- Create a timeline of events and discuss

A Long Walk Home

Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul is just one of many best-selling books in the Chicken Soup for the Soul series, edited by Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen. Chicken soup is traditionally thought to be an extremely healthy food that can cure sickness and give comfort. The title of these books suggests that reading the stories within them can have a healthy effect on the soul or spirit. The stories in the books are all taken from real life.

Warm-Up Activity: Personal Connection Question

To introduce the story, these questions will be discussed in order to get students acquainted with the main topic of the story

1. Have you ever told a lie to your parents?
2. Were there consequences to your lies?

Students will tell their stories and will listen to others' stories, often adding more things.

Activity 1: Introduction to key vocabulary

- *Phrases (introduced in context so students can infer their meaning)*

The language is accessible, but if necessary, these vocabulary phrases will be accompanied by images and full sentences.

- o Had a few hours to spare, to be serviced, confess to, contemplate, let [someone] down, relent, the look [someone] gave me, lose track of time.

Activity 2: *Introducing the Setting*

- Students discuss what the story can be about by reading the title and looking at an image of a man walking down a road.
 - o Students jot down ideas so that they can be discussed later on.

Activity 3: *Reading the short story*

- Pre-reading: Students read the first paragraph of the story and are given a chance to re-write their notes from activity two.
 - o *This story is set in Spain. Before reading the next paragraphs, the teacher will draw attention to the context of the story and the geographical setting. The teacher will explain that cars are an important means of transportation for a family living in Spain, as well as its regular maintenance.*
- During-reading: Students write a timeline of events.
- Post-reading: Students compare their predictions vs actual story.

Activity 4: *Discussion of story events*

- In pairs, students discuss key parts of the story
 - o What do you think Jason said to his father when he apologized
 - o What's your opinion on Jason's father reaction to his son's lie?
 - o What did Jason learn from that experience?
- The teacher might expand interesting features from the story students noticed.

Activity 5: *Make a timeline*

- Students organize the stories event in a timeline. This will encourage students to discuss the events and when these happened in relation to another event (past).
 - o He apologized to his father for being late. He went to a movie theater. He dropped the car off at a garage to be serviced. He realized his father knew he was lying. He realized it was six o'clock and his father was waiting for him. He followed his father the whole 18 miles home.

He picked up the car at the garage and then went to pick up his father.

He told his father a lie. 1 Jason drove his father into town and dropped him off. He tried to persuade his father to get into the car.

- Students discuss the events in order to get them right. The teacher may prompt questions like: “what had happened before X event?”
 - o If necessary, students can check the short story again.

Activity 6: Other angles

- Students are presented with hypothetical situations and have to discuss and write their outcomes in pairs.
 - o 1. "When I was about six years old, my mother left me at a friend's house for a few hours. This friend had a large supply of erasers and pencils, and I took a few of them without telling her. Later my mother saw the pencils and asked me where I got them. When I told her, she _____
 - o 2. "In my family, we weren't allowed to use any bad words. Even telling someone to 'shut up' was against the rules. One time when I told my sister to shut up, my mother _____
 - o 3. "I don't remember this, but my relatives tell me that when I was little, I took some chalk and drew pictures on the outside of the house. My grandfather was the first to see my pictures and he _____

Assessment

Informal formative. Motivate students to participate in class discussions and the hands-on activities

Formative. Give feedback while students are interacting (if needed)

Criterion-Reference - The purpose of this lesson is to enhance students' reading and writing comprehension, as well as their ability to identify the order of events

Resources

Text

Sheets of paper

Tape

A long walk home

Canfield, J., Hanson, M.C. and Kirberger, K. (1997). *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul*. Deerfield Beach, Florida: Health Communications

I grew up in the south of Spain in a little community called Estepona. I was 16 when one morning, my father told me I could drive him into a remote village called Mijas, about 18 miles away, on the condition that I take the car in to be serviced at a nearby garage. Having just learned to drive and hardly ever having the opportunity to use the car, I readily accepted. I drove Dad into Mijas and promised to pick him up at 4 p.m., then drove to a nearby garage and dropped off the car. Because I had a few hours to spare, I decided to catch a couple of movies at a theater near the garage. However, I became so immersed in the films that I completely lost track of time. When the last movie had finished, I looked down at my watch. It was six o'clock. I was two hours late!

I knew Dad would be angry if he found out I'd been watching movies. He'd never let me drive again. I decided to tell him that the car needed some repairs and that they had taken longer than had been expected. I drove up to the place where we had planned to meet and saw Dad waiting patiently on the corner. I apologized for being late and told him that I'd come as quickly as I could, but the car had needed some major repairs. I'll never forget the look he gave me.

"I'm disappointed that you feel you have to lie to me, Jason."

"What do you mean? I'm telling the truth."

Dad looked at me again. "When you did not show up, I called the garage to ask if there were any problems, and they told me that you had not yet picked up the car. So, you see, I know there were no problems with the car." A rush of guilt ran through me as I feebly confessed to my trip to the movie theater and the real reason for my tardiness. Dad listened intently as a sadness passed through him.

"I'm angry, not with you but with myself. You see, I realize that I have failed as a father if after all these years you feel that you have to lie to me. I have failed because I have brought up a son who cannot even tell the truth to his own father. I'm going to walk home now and contemplate where I have gone wrong all these years."

"But Dad, it's 18 miles to home. It's dark. You can't walk home."

My protests, my apologies and the rest of my utterances were useless. I had let my father down, and I was about to learn one of the most painful lessons of my life. Dad began walking along the dusty roads. I quickly jumped in the car and followed behind, hoping he would relent. I pleaded all the way, telling him how sorry I was, but he simply ignored

me, continuing on silently, thoughtfully and painfully. For 18 miles I drove behind him, averaging about five miles per hour.

Seeing my father in so much physical and emotional pain was the most distressing and painful experience that I have ever faced. however, it was also the most successful lesson. I have never lied to him since.

Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul is just one of many best-selling books in the Chicken Soup for the Soul series, edited by Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen. Chicken soup is traditionally thought to be an extremely healthy food that can cure sickness and give comfort. The title of these books suggests that reading the stories within them can have a healthy effect on the soul or spirit. The stories in the books are all taken from real life.