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# Becoming a Teacher: Integrating Strategies, Activities, and Objectives

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BECOMING A TEACHER:  
INTEGRATING STRATEGIES, ACTIVITIES, AND OBJECTIVES

by

Juana Andrade Batalla

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

of

MASTER OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

Logan, Utah

2018

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DEDICATION

To my dad Juan Andrade Quintanar.

To my beloved husband Jorge, my dear sons Pahoran and Ari, and my precious daughter

Asenat. Thank you for your support.

I love you all.

## ABSTRACT

Becoming a Teacher:  
Integrating Strategies, Activities, and Purpose

by

Juana Andrade Batalla: Master of Second Language Teaching  
Utah State University, 2018

Major Professor: Dr. María Luisa Spicer-Escalante

Department: Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies

## ABSTRACT

This portfolio reflects the perspectives that the author believes are effective in second language teaching. The first section comprises the author's teaching philosophy which includes creating a favorable classroom environment, facilitating learning through a communicative approach, and applying activities with appropriate and specific objectives. Following the teaching philosophy are three research papers: the use of fairy tales to promote a communicative approach together with other academic skills in second language teaching, the importance of teaching pragmatics, and the significance of helping Hispanic students develop confidence through Dual Language Immersion. The last section of this portfolio contains three annotated bibliographies about specific methodologies that support language acquisition: dialogue journals, collaborative writing

in a second language using wikis, and teaching language through content-based instruction.

(125 pages)

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I would like to thank all the members of my committee for their guidance and support. I thank Dr. Maria Luisa Spicer-Escalante because she was an example for me and encouraged me to enter the program. I am here because of her. I am grateful for Dr. Karin deJonge-Kannan because of her gift to make me see my potential, and because she has been an exceptional mentor. I am indebted to her because she guided me throughout the program to finish it. I know that without her constant direction it would have been even harder to accomplish. I thank Dr. Valencia for being so kind to serve on my committee even though I never took a class with him.

I am grateful to this institution, Utah State University, my academic home for two years. I also thank Dr. Brad Hall for being a tremendously supportive and compassionate chair of the department. Many thanks also to the administrative personnel in the department of Philosophy, Language, and Communication Studies for their support. I want to thank my teaching colleagues and my graduate peers because they were so helpful to me with their collaboration that made it possible for me to be a successful teacher.

Finally, I thank my wonderful family because they accepted my absence during the weekdays and too many weekends throughout these two years that I was pursuing this Master's degree. I am grateful to Jorge, my husband, for his great patience and his rational mind that helped me see clearer and in an objective way; for my son Jorge, because he is a great reader, and such a great debater that "he can sell water to a drowning man", for my beautiful daughter Elena, because of her passion for writing that

can be contagious, and for my son Ari, because of his amazing creativity that leads him to accomplish great things. All of their qualities have been an inspiration to me.

All of you have helped me achieve my dreams. So, again, thank you all.



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACTFL = American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

AP = Advance Placement

CLT = Communicative Language Teaching

DJ = Dialogue Journal

DLI = Dual Language Immersion

EFL = English as a Foreign Language

ELL = English Language Learner

ESL = English as a Second Language

FL = Foreign Language

L1 = First Language/Native Language

L2 = Second Language

MSLT = Master of Second Language Teaching

OECD = Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

SLA = Second Language Acquisition

TL = Target Language

USOE = Utah State Office of Education

USU = Utah State University

## INTRODUCTION

This portfolio is a combination of the most significant work that I did during my studies at the MSLT program. My experience as a student of the program and as a teacher of Spanish have built my portfolio. Initially, my teaching philosophy tended to be influenced by the traditional teacher-centered method but I gradually modified towards a communicative approach.

My teaching philosophy focuses on three essential elements: creating a favorable classroom environment, facilitating learning through collaboration, and applying purposeful activities which aim to promote effective language acquisition.

The research perspectives reflect these beliefs and support the teaching philosophy whose goal is to teach language effectively to prepare students to face real-world situations. The topics of my research perspectives include the use of fairy tales to promote a communicative approach and other academic skills in second language teaching, the importance of pragmatics in second language teaching, and the significance of helping Hispanic students develop confidence through Dual Language Immersion.

Language teaching demands creativity from the teachers to design activities that promote communication in spoken and written form. I cannot conform with following a textbook that is grammar based, but I keep looking for activities that help my students learn through collaboration. As a graduate instructor of Spanish, I saw how implementing these strategies enriched the classroom in language learning. Thus, this Portfolio demonstrates my abilities to connect theory and practice in a student-centered, communication-focused environment.

## TEACHING PERSPECTIVES

## APPRENTICESHIP OF OBSERVATION

When I was a child, opportunities to learn a second language were very limited. My school implemented an English program which consisted of a 1-hour class every Friday when I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Then, in middle school, we were supposed to have one English class every day but there was no teacher so we got free hours instead. From there, I did not have any ambition to learn English, especially because my sister wanted to portray a very international image by saying a few phrases in English, which I found ridiculous. I thought that if I were to speak English I would do it seriously. There was one time when a man started an English group in my neighborhood but he did not continue. Some people that I knew had to go to Mexico City to enroll in formal English courses in a college, but it was not convenient for me because it was a two-hour drive to get there from home. Later, an English school was established in my city, but it was not affordable.

Because of lack of support and various circumstances in my life, I could not attend high school until later in time and it was at a boarding school in México City. That was the first time I received formal English classes. All the English teachers were properly trained as such, especially one who had lived in the US for two years. She used the most advanced technology at that time and exposed us to authentic material. I remember that she was in charge of the listening class, and I loved it.

Later, when I got married, my husband and I moved to another city where I took advantage of affordable and convenient English classes. At that time, I had a French boss who spoke very good English and encouraged me to learn it. Then, my husband and I moved to the US so that he could go to college.

Once in the US, I took English classes for two semesters but they were not really challenging, and I did not improve my English language skills. I watched TV, listened to the radio, and read in English as much as possible, but when I tried to speak and realized that my English was not good enough, I thought I needed more reading and listening. Of course, that was the wrong approach. However, I devoted special attention to listening and reading because I started to prepare to take the GED to finish high school which I never did when I was in Mexico.

Later, when my husband finished his college and started to work, it was my turn to study for my bachelor's degree. My reading and listening skills were appropriate for university level but my speaking and writing skills were not. Graduating from college required tremendous effort in these two aspects of the language. I never had consistent and formal training to learn the English language the proper way. Most of the time, I labored on my own, and this struggle, to this day, is still reflected in the way I try to communicate my ideas orally and in writing. This situation motivated me to choose TESOL as a minor in college, because I wanted to help my students learn English the proper way. For the same reason, I applied to Utah State University to study the Master of Second Language Teaching. In addition, I had the opportunity to teach Spanish as a graduate instructor for four semesters.

At the beginning of the Master's program, the graduate instructors were introduced to the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach (Lee & VanPatten, 2003; VanPatten, 2017). Initially, I did not believe that language learners could speak within the first semester. I was a little insecure to start teaching but I

discovered that as a language teacher, I could grow through collaboration, observation, reading and studying, and creativity.

One of the greatest strengths of this master's program was the spirit of collaboration among the graduate students, who were also instructors. The fact that they were from different countries, backgrounds, and experiences, enriched our conversations. For example, an American colleague, who taught the same Spanish course that I did, helped me be aware of some common difficulties American students face when learning Spanish. Therefore, I prepared the corresponding lessons accordingly. Not only that, my professors also gave me suggestions about activities and concepts to apply in my classroom. The sharing of ideas, materials, and time supported me in my growth about learning and practicing CLT in my teaching.

Another factor that helped me grow as a teacher was the ability to visit other instructors' classes for observations. Watching how they applied the ideas that we were discussing. I always felt welcomed and supported, and I learned a lot from my fellow teachers.

My development as a language teacher also came through studying various Second Language Teaching theories as part of the master's program. It was advantageous that, teaching my own Spanish class, I could put some of those theories into practice, thus checking and clarifying my understanding of those models. Initially, the MSLT course readings were overwhelming, but they helped me discover valuable ideas and aspects of language teaching. For example, applying the task-based activities described in Van Patten (2001) helped me interpret his ideas. I realized that when I guided my students in those activities, they could produce excellent results. I taught novice level class, but



students could communicate with their peers even on the second day of class. The task-based results were excellent: in that first semester, the students made presentations, talked about their families, and planned a vacation, all in the target language.

Creativity was another factor that helped me grow as a language teacher. There have been times that I could not find activities that fit the needs of my students, suited the objectives and purpose of the class or matched my personality. Under those circumstances, my creativity grew, even though I was shy to try new things at first. I now know that creativity is an essential element that teachers should cultivate to promote interaction and a sense of community in the classroom.

My experience as a language teacher has been remarkable. The support and advice that I have received from my colleagues and professors have helped me expand my knowledge and be more effective. I also made a commitment to doing my best. When I prepare my classes, I think of how to improve the students' Spanish acquisition through a series of activities and how to foster a sense of community in the classroom. I understand my teachers' insistence on using CLT because I have seen the results. With appropriate guidance and activities, students can accomplish amazing things. That has been the best part of my experience: to see students express ideas in Spanish very early in the semester even with their limitations. During the semester and at the end of the course, I have seen them give wonderful oral presentation, and they are proud of showing me how much they have learned. I admire them for being brave and willing to try; something that took me years to develop. I am convinced that learning a language needs a lot of collaboration from both the teacher and the students. I congratulate and cheer my students

when they try, telling them that the effort they invest will also mold their character, which in turn will help them in other aspects of their lives.

I love teaching. I especially like to teach Spanish because it is my first language and part of my identity. It might seem ironic but I have come to understand Spanish better by teaching it. My journey has been long and very rewarding, from learning English to accomplishing my academic goals of becoming a language teacher. I am committed to continue looking for ways to motivate, engage, and support my students in their efforts to learn another language.

## PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT

I have been teaching Spanish to university students for four semesters, and I have applied principles that I learned in the MSLT program in my classes. Practicing a communicative approach, for example, I have witnessed how students increase their language acquisition.

From being an English language learner myself to being a teacher of a second language has been an adventurous journey. I look forward to having the opportunity to instill the love and excitement of learning a new language into young students by teaching Spanish and/or English at a junior high or high school level. Also, being originally from Mexico, I want to share my culture when teaching Spanish. It is my hope to also help the Hispanic student population to consider their potential and use it to reach their goals.

This portfolio analyzes theories and methodologies that I have applied in my classes and want to develop with my future students to help them accomplish the challenging task of acquiring a new language.

## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

The ability to communicate with others creates relationships that are essential for our lives. “Language is one of the most uniquely human capacity that our species possesses, and one that is involved in all others, including consciousness, sociality and culture. We employ the symbolic system of language to make meaning and communicate with other fellow humans” (Ortega, 2006, p. 1). The number of social connections that people can have increases with their ability to speak a second language (L2). At least, this has been my experience. Learning English as a second language has enriched my life by giving me the opportunity to be able to read, listen, and learn from speakers and writers in English with different perspectives. It has not been easy, but even though my journey of learning an L2 has been full of hard moments, it has given me personal, educational, and employment growth without comparison.

The path I took to learn a new language has been long because many times I took the wrong path. For example, for a long time, I avoided speaking in English with native speakers because I wanted to be proficient before I would do it. I was also afraid to write because I did not want to make mistakes. As a consequence, I struggle in great measure to convey ideas in a clear way. Another reason for the long journey was the traditional and inadequate methods that my teachers used to teach me this second language. Because of all of this, I want to promote second language learning without all the pitfalls that I encountered. I obtained a minor degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), which led me to the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT)

program. Both MSLT curriculum and my own experience as a second language learner and teacher have helped me define a better way to teach another language.

Teaching is intellectually stimulating for me because of the principles that I discover and the growth that I experience as I teach and apply those concepts with my own students. It is also very challenging because “many factors impact how well language learners will acquire communication skills and how quickly they will reach different ranges of performance” (ACTFL, 2015, p. 2). Therefore, in my teaching philosophy, I advocate for a supportive learning environment, a communicative approach, and activities with appropriate and specific objectives.

When I was in my sophomore year in college, one of my professors asked me to write my teaching philosophy. He showed the class his doctoral dissertation as an example for this assignment, but I did not understand what a teaching philosophy was because I never had any teaching experience. This was my first class related to education, and even when I went to talk to him several times in his office, I still struggled to get the task completed. Therefore, my teachers, the knowledge I received, and the experience I had as a teacher have helped me shape my philosophy of teaching, which comprises three components: classroom environment, learning through collaboration, and activities with the appropriate objectives.

### **Classroom environment**

The teachers’ abilities to conduct a classroom determines the students’ success. It is the teachers’ responsibility to foster an environment conducive to the accomplishment

of the course objectives, in my case: second language acquisition. Bowen and Watson (2016) explain this point of view:

Our job as faculty is to understand how the brain learns, what motivates students, and how to create environments that encourage good learning behaviors on the part of students. We need then to assess progress, provide feedback, and encourage more work. It is a bit like helping people use a gym, except that our design issue is largely psychological instead of physical. Faculty are cognitive coaches. (p. xviii)

This reminded me about a conversation I had with a high school sports coach some years ago about his role and relationship with his team. He said that “coaches motivate students and then they push them to work hard”. I think that the analogy is perfect to describe the role of teachers in their classroom. Teachers are there to inspire students, not to degrade them. Cutshall (2012) declares: “It is imperative that teachers create a comfortable environment by not embarrassing or overcorrecting students, but instead encouraging them” (p. 36).

The environment involves the organization and preparation of the teacher, the physical settings of the classroom, the student’s activities, and the tone of acceptance. Bowen and Watson (2016) describe classrooms as “places for building community and encountering differences” (p. 92). The classroom should be a place where mistakes create a sense of community where the students feel that they belong and where the teacher is an ally in their academic success. According to Steele (2017), “interpersonal relationships are fundamental to learning and human development. To develop a positive and safe classroom environment with student motivation and learning, [language] educators need to learn to relate and connect effectively with others” (p. 34). The best learning

environment is one in which students could feel welcomed and feel free to participate, make mistakes, and feel comfortable to share with their classmates.

I always try to set the students' chairs as much as possible in a U-shaped arrangement so everybody can be in the front row, as an invitation, according to Johnson (1982, p. 4), so that every "student becomes part of the group" (p. 5). Also, such an arrangement makes easy to monitor their work and participation.

To create a sense of camaraderie, the first day, following the example of one of my teachers, I ask everybody to fill out a survey about some personal preferences. Then, I ask the students to tell about their classmate's information. Doing this, one of my students once told me with an enthusiastic voice: "I got it. You are doing this so we become friends, right?" I believe that a friendship environment invites students to be open about their experiences, and as hooks (2010) says "When students learn about one another through the sharing of experience, a foundation for learning in community can emerge" (hooks, 2010, p. 57). In second language (L2) learning, a sense of community in the classroom is vital to promote interaction and collaboration for a common goal to practice and learn the target language.

Steele (2017) says that

Respect and trust inspire and motivate students to work hard and learn. People are all more willing to embrace opinions of those that are respectful and respected. Within a safe environment of trust and respect, there will be an increased willingness to take risks and be vulnerable, which can lead to greater ... experiences" (p. 37).

Even though Steele's comment is in the context of music teachers, I believe that language learning is similar. Students who speak in a new language are taking risks every time they try to complete a task in the classroom. Therefore, showing them respect and

recognizing their effort and progress is very important. Of course, respect among classmates must be part of a beneficial learning environment as well.

Another factor to promote an excellent environment is the teacher's high expectations for their students. Having great expectations for students means that we should believe that everyone is able to learn even when extra help or a different approach is used. Whitaker (2004) says "Great teachers have high expectations for students but even higher expectations for themselves" (p. 34). This means we should take responsibility and demand of ourselves that we give our best efforts. Once, a student told me that she did not know how to read until a 10th grade English teacher noticed it and worked with her until she could read well. The teacher exceeded her responsibilities to help this student learn how to read. This teacher had great expectations for the students and herself.

Praising students for their efforts also invites them to a place where it is appropriate to learn. As part of my syllabus, students have oral presentations four times during the semester. Their presentations are not perfect, but I praise them for their willingness and effort. Some work harder than others, but I think it is important to let them know that they are progressing in their acquisition of the language, and I recognize that they are doing an outstanding job. Armstrong (2000) notes, talking about what happens in several classrooms he visited, that "less than 3 percent of classroom time was devoted to praise, abrasive comments, expressions of joy or humor, or somewhat unbridled outbursts such as 'wow' or 'great'" (p. 5). Prior reading Armstrong book, I thought that teachers should not praise their students frequently because the phrases used could lose importance and value, and potentially could not have the desired effect



anymore. However, the intention is what is important. I learned that I should congratulate students with sincere expressions of recognition, especially for their efforts. Dweck (2006) says that praise without real effort could create problems in students, but that “the right kinds of praise can lead [students] down the path of hard work and greater hardiness” (p. 136)

In a communicative approach, teachers’ preparation is fundamental to achieve successful interactions because teachers are designing how they will achieve the goals for the class. Through preparation, teachers select, organize, and sequence the activities and the material that is necessary to accomplish the objectives for the day. Lack of preparation project chaos to the classrooms and prevents building a good learning environment. The preparation of a teacher is one of the best ways to create a relaxed environment. Students will perceive whether the class is important for their teachers through the teachers’ preparation and attitude. The environment in the classroom is one of the key components for second language acquisition. This component, in turn, affects the second element of my teaching philosophy: learning through collaboration.

### **Communicative Language Teaching**

Learning English as a second language, as I said in the introduction of this section, has open a new whole world of intellectual and social adventures. I want to give my students the same opportunity I obtained by learning a second language. That is, I want to give my students the opportunity to communicate and develop relationships with people who speak Spanish.

When I was learning English as a second language, I did not speak because I thought that I would do that after I became proficient in the language. Of course, I could not become proficient because I did not try to speak. I always relate this situation to my students so they avoid making the same mistake. I have seen that when I give them the right environment, they try their best and start communicating in Spanish from the beginning. The idea that this could be possible was hard for me to grasp at first. However, when I learned about the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, my perspective of things changed drastically.

VanPatten (2017) explains that there are two reasons to use a language: to establish and maintain a relationship, and “another major reason we communicate is to express or obtain information, or to learn or do something (i.e., complete a particular task)” (p. 9). Following VanPatten’s idea, when the classroom promotes interaction, we are helping students establish and maintain relationships so they obtain information and learn from others.

The classroom, for many of our students, is the only place that they practice the target language (TL). So, it is necessary to use class time wisely to facilitate communication. Cutshall (2012) says “with the time limitations and other stresses, more and more language educators are realizing that a focus on actual communication gives them greater “bang for their buck” than grammar drills, worksheets, and memorizing vocabulary lists” (p. 36). So, to reach my students goal of communication, I use the communicative approach.

The features of effective instruction in a (L2) taught in a meaningful way, are laid out in the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method. Larsen-Freeman and

Anderson (2011) says that CLT “makes communicative competence the goal of language teaching” (p. 115). Communicative competence means: “knowing when and how to say what to whom. Being communicatively competent in the target language means being able to communicate appropriately with others” (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 238). The effective language class emphasizes the need for communicative competency so that speakers of the target language say what they would say in a real-world conversation. “Language is not something to be learned the way a person learns other subject matter if the goal is to develop communicative ability” (VanPatten, 2017, p. 20).

To accomplish effective communication, I use CLT in my classroom. I organize and plan meaningful activities, and give clear instructions. The activities are carefully designed and sequenced to help students practice the language. The students then need to interact to reach the objectives for the lesson and organize the information learned from peers to present it to others.

CLT has changed the traditional roles of teachers and students to achieve the objective of learning another language by increasing student’s communicative skills. Lee and VanPatten (2003) explain that teachers’ major role in the CLT classroom is as a resource person whose purpose is to “provide activities and tasks that allow for a distribution of teaching functions between instructors and students” (p. 68). In a similar manner, Keblowska (2002) says that the roles that teachers have are to be an organizer, instructor, controller, facilitator, counselor, participant, expert, resource, evaluator, creator of conditions conducive to learning, friend, socializing agent, motivator, and learner (pp. 319-320). Students, instead of waiting to be taught, are participants in their learning and, through the interaction, they help one another. In the CLT, it is expected

that students “must become more active, more responsible for their own learning” (Lee & VanPatten, 2003, p. 68).

Teaching with a CLT seems overwhelming, considering that beginner students do not have the vocabulary to understand and produce ideas, but as Cutshall (2012) explains

many strategies that instructors can use to facilitate comprehension and support meaning making, including providing comprehensible input that is directed toward communicative goals; making meaning clear through body language, gestures, and visual support; negotiating meaning with students and encouraging negotiation among students; and more (p. 36).

In my, Spanish 1010 classes, I help my students practice Spanish through games, interviews, information gap activities, or other activities to ensure that they have as much interaction in the target language (TL) as possible. With the vocabulary they learn and the homework the students do before class, they can carry on a simple but active conversation. For example, students watch a short video and take notes and share them later with their classmates. After sharing their ideas and talking about the emotions and feelings of the main characters, they have to find a new ending for the story. They present their stories either to the whole class or to small groups. In this way, students interact with members of their group to improve their speaking and writing skills and, at the same time, they increase their interpersonal, interpretative, and presentational skills as well. Hooks (2010) says that students “learn best when there is an interactive relationship between student and teacher” (p.19).

It is the teacher’s responsibility to provide opportunities so that students can practice the vocabulary and structures they learn. VanPatten (2017) says that “classrooms and materials need to be spaces in which learners receive lots of input and have many chances to interact with it” (p. 54). One concept that it is important to emphasize is that

language learners need to work outside class. They should not think that what they are learning in class is all they need to know about the target language. Students need to do some assignments and try to practice the language outside the classroom, so that when they come to class, they can participate in the activities that are prepared for them.

### **Activities with Appropriate Objectives**

The main goal of my language classes is that students learn through interactive activities. One quote that made me reflect on my teaching is Corder (1981) quoting Von Humboldt "... we cannot really teach language, we can only create conditions in which it will develop spontaneously in the mind in its own way" (p. 169). From my own experience, students learn when there is a need to produce the language, and they will have that need when the class is planned with activities that have a purpose, or that have some relevance to them.

It is our responsibility as teachers to select the best activities from all the variety that exist in books and in the internet. Class time is limited, but we can maximize its benefit by engaging our students in activities that are fun and have pedagogical value. Of course, digital technology can support language learning as long as we utilize it judiciously. Blake says

some teachers who are overly enthusiastic about technology tend to confuse the use of technology with some new and superior methodological approach to language teaching, although, in truth, new digital technologies offer a new set of tools that can function in the service of a particular language curriculum. In other words, how these tools are used and to what principled ends define the scope of a methodology, but the mere use of technology by itself will not improve the curriculum. (2013, p. 9)

Choosing an activity has to be guided by a specific goal, as Echevarría, Vogth, and Short (2013) state “for maximum learning to occur, planning must produce lessons that target specific learning goals” (p. 25).

Every activity needs to have a learning goal or a purpose which needs to be strengthened through interaction. In addition, the activities need to establish or maintain relationships or exchange information. The limited vocabulary my students have makes it difficult to maintain a conversation for more than a minute. However, there are some strategies to help them have an activity that lasts for 10 minutes. For example, we have an activity where the students have to ask 12 simple questions to almost every single person in the classroom, and the students have to answer with complete sentences. In this regard, VanPatten (2017) says that we can use a script as a guide for beginner students. In this way they can have longer conversations. García Mayo (2007) says that “the sociocultural approach claims that interaction is an opportunity to learn. During interaction, learners are given the possibility to develop not only their linguistic skills but their cognitive and problem solving capacities as well” (p. 94). Even for beginners’, interaction in a second language could give them a chance of finding solutions on how to describe or use another word to say something.

A classroom has a lot of limitations if we want to pretend to have several settings, like a bank, a grocery store, or a restaurant, but with some imagination we can have activities to reflect some real places: “language learning activities in the classroom need to mirror real-world, authentic communication as much as possible” (Cutshall, 2012, pp. 35-36). The language with which we surround the learner must be meaningful and it must

be relevant. I have using popular movies, fairy tales, pop-culture or popular characters in my classroom activities to help students make connections with experiences and the language they are learning. This is relevant because the more connections we make, the more we learn.

Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandell (2003) talk about task-based activities to encourage communication, interaction, and to accomplish a learning objective. They say that task-based activities are “guidelines that may be used to ensure communication in each class session, lesson, and unit” (p. 76).

According to Ballman, et al. (2003) Task-Based Model have these components

1. Are learner-centered
2. Require an activity that focuses on a meaningful exchange of information
3. Guide participants through a series of predetermined steps that culminate in a concrete representation of the information shared or gathered.

It is important to note that the tasks that we implement in the classrooms need to contain two characteristics defined by VanPatten (2017):

- Tasks involve the expression and interpretation of meaning.
- Tasks have a purpose that is not language practice. (p. 80)

Task-based activities are a set of small activities that have the goal to complete a bigger task, for which students need to work in groups or pairs. For example, during my class, when we are studying the unit about types of food, we have a series of small activities for my students to role play the interactions that take place in a restaurant, so when the students go to a real Hispanic restaurant they are able to order their food in

Spanish. Some examples of small activities to achieve the greater goal in this particular instance are: reviewing the related vocabulary, defining the ingredients of different recipes, or preparing a menu as if the students were the owners of a new restaurant. All the activities that are implemented in a group must have a clear objective. There is very little time in class to cover every single concept of language learning, so the teacher should use it wisely by implementing meaningful activities to reach the goals. Shrum and Gilsan (2016) say that “A key consideration in planning for language instruction is selecting content that not only addresses standards and curriculum goals but that is also meaningful, engaging, and motivates learners” (p. 93).

To reach the goal for the class, teachers should define the main objective that they want to achieve, and after a concrete goal, the activities, exercises, and tasks need to complement the final desirous outcome. Shrum and Gilsan (2016) defined this approach a ‘backward design’ “In backward-design planning, the desire end result drives the creation of unit and lesson plan and assessments” (p. 90). Using the backward-design teachers could plan all the activities to end in a “representation of the information shared or gathered” (Ballman, et al., 2003, p. 76).

## **Conclusion**

Even though I had an education background, I never really had a clear teaching philosophy until I experienced teaching in a real classroom, and study the theories and concepts that helped me start shaping it. The MSLT program has helped me build my



teaching philosophy by connecting literature on education with my experience. Besides education and real practice in teaching, my professors have taught me that I have to look beyond our assignments. They have taught me to be an independent learner making me accountable for my learning. I believe that as teacher, I have the responsibility to keep learning for my personal benefit, the efficiency of my classes, and my commitment to my students.

I think that it is also my responsibility to provide my students with a learning environment that promotes communication through organized activities with specific objectives so the students can learn from each other. Bowen and Watson (2016) say

Education is ultimately a design problem: the goal is to create structures and processes that will encourage students to engage in the behaviors that lead to learning. In the end, students must do the work, but that does not mean that we are simply content providers. Instruction is not teaching; it is designing (p. xxiii).

My work as a teacher is that of a cognitive coach to motivate my students, to give them ideas on how to learn the language better, to encourage them, and to show them how much progress they are accomplishing on their journey. My job is to guide them in the journey, giving them the best of myself as a teacher and mentor.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TEACHING OBSERVATIONS

Observing other teachers' performance is part of the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program requirements. Some of the purposes of this activity is to create a collaborative environment among teachers and to learn from them. However, because of bad personal experiences, observations made me feel very stressed. One day, during my undergraduate program, I was teaching a lesson to my students, and the person who was observing me, took control of the class because she did not like the way I was conducting it. This action, which was totally inappropriate, disconcerted me. Now, even though the purpose of our observation is not to evaluate the teacher we are observing but to take ideas to apply in our own classrooms, we still have to make judgments. Sometimes, when I was the observer, I felt unwelcomed in the classroom. Because of these experiences, I was afraid to observe others and to be observed here at USU. Despite these feelings, the culture that I found in the MSLT program was a culture of collaboration and acceptance.

One of the examples of teamwork was when an adjunct professor -who was teaching the same class that I was going to teach- invited me and the other new teachers to observe her classes. I went to one of her class for two days, and she was not only friendly, but she also explained the purpose of the activities to me. When one of my professors instructed us to do some observations, I tried to delay the assignment. When I finally decided to asked some classmates, adjunct professor, and professors if I could observe their classes, they were very inviting and told me that I could go anytime. Given my past experiences, I was surprised by the welcoming response, and I decided to visit as

many classes as I could not just to fulfill my class requirement, but also to learn from others which I did a lot. I was excited about learning this way from others. Sometimes, I went to observe some teachers who were teaching the same class I was going to teach, and other times I visited advanced classes. I learned a lot of from these observations.

One of the first things I learned was about a teachers' expectations. It was interesting to see that the teacher's beliefs could affect the students' performance. In this class, the professor believed that his students had the ability to communicate in Spanish most of the time, even when they only had basic linguistics abilities. The teacher had several interactive activities to help them with this objective. The teacher was so motivating and energetic that students trusted their teacher, and therefore followed his instructions. That attitude inspired me to believe that my students, with the correct guidance and appropriate activities, could accomplish a lot. I learned to not be afraid of having high expectations on the students, and that it is essential to support them before, during, and after the activities. Since then, I began implementing activities that challenge my students because I believe they can do it because I provide support for them.

Activities are an important part of any lesson, and therefore the teachers need to use them efficiently and with creativity to accomplish the class objectives. This is exactly what I saw in one of my observations of a teacher who was teaching the same class level I was teaching, which was Spanish at an entry level. The teacher used several images from pop culture for the activities, and the students were engaged because the images were familiar by using pop culture. The students were able to describe the physical characteristics of the personages presented or create short stories about them. I realized that this idea can be easily adapted to different proficiency levels. I immediately

applied a similar activity to help my students learn about vocabulary and verbs about feelings and emotions. I showed them images from a famous Disney movie “Finding Nemo” that all students knew. The advantage of this was that we did not have to spend time explaining the movie’s plot, so the students went directly to describing the characters’ emotions, applying what we had just studied in class by talking to a partner and writing in their journals.

I had an interesting experience when observing a teacher teaching Chinese 2010. I have to mention that I do not know anything about this language, and because of that, I learned that modeling an activity is essential for students to succeed. This teacher was excellent at showing the students how to do the activity that I had an eye-opening experience. Even though I did not understand the language, I understood the objective of the activity, and that gave me a good example of how to set up a lesson. The teacher spoke Chinese throughout the whole class, but she occasionally said a few words in English. Her modeling and the few words she said in English were two factors that helped me understand what the activity was about, its purpose, and how to accomplish it. This experience taught me that when the teacher explains an activity to the students, they must show to them how to do it, using some key words, and the students will be successful when trying to complete the task.

Once, I asked a teacher of an upper level Spanish class to allow me to observe him, and I ended up attending his class for the whole semester. I am grateful for his generosity in allowing me to do that. This teacher believes that students learn more by participating than just by listening and passively receiving knowledge. Therefore, the teacher had his students discuss and debate, in groups or in pairs, interesting topics that

he gave them in advance. The students were assigned to read before coming to class and to be prepared to answer some questions about it. The questions were so interesting that several students kept talking about the questions and responses even after the activity was finished. Sometimes, the students would still be conversing about it after class. I want to emphasize the fact that I was able to observe his class for the whole semester, and his way of encouraging his students to participate throughout the entire course was remarkably consistent. I can see that this teacher has put many hours of preparation into his material to reach excellence, and that is something I want to emulate. He also shows some videos to reinforce students' comprehension. Most of his activities in class promote critical thinking. I have not been able to use the kind of questions that he uses with my own Spanish class, but I am following the strategy of having the students be prepared in advanced and be ready to speak Spanish in class

Most of the classes I observed were interesting and very illustrative, but others were not good. As I said before, I observed those classes with the purpose of obtaining ideas that I could apply into my own class. However, after having reflected on my experience observing classes, I also learned from other teachers' mistakes, or at least what I considered to be mistakes. For example, I observed a teacher that was very quiet and hardly moved from his desk to check his student's work. The class was not motivated and great opportunities to give students feedback were lost. I learned that a teacher needs to move around the classroom regardless the level of the class. This is applied from elementary school all the way to university classes.

In another class, I observed that he had an interactive computer program for the group to play, that even though it was engaging, in my opinion, it did not have

pedagogical value, or any connection to the principles that were being taught. This showed me that relying solely on technology, could sometimes be disadvantageous: sometimes students do not have the required device, the internet is down, and sometimes class time is wasted on trying to log in or solving technical issues. Therefore, I learned that we need to be wise and use all variety of resources to teach our students. I hope that other teachers took advantage of my mistakes to avoid them when teaching their own students.

My perspective about observations has changed and now I feel that they are an important part of a teachers' development. I know that I will probably be observed and evaluated for the rest of my professional career as a teacher. Certainly, I am going to encounter colleagues who will not like to be observed, but I will welcome anyone who wants to come and learn from my skills and mistakes. It is hard to change the culture within an organization such as a school environment but by welcoming other teachers to my classroom, I will be promoting an atmosphere of collaboration with the friendly attitude that I received during my time in the MSLT program at USU.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT TEACHING

As a requirement for the Master of Second Language Teaching, graduate instructors are expected to evaluate themselves as teachers. The procedure is to video record one's teaching and to analyze the video later. Even though it was hard to see myself teaching, I believe it is one of the best tools that we have to improve as teachers because we can critique ourselves from another point of view. As an observer, I could evaluate my teaching with honesty, without others influences. It was a humbling experience, and necessary to improve my teaching.

I usually arrive early to prepare everything I need for the day and to start the class on time. I turn on my computer and select a Spanish song with a topic related to the concept we would learn that day. I play the song at the beginning of the class. Music is an intrinsic part of any culture and I want to share it with the students. It is unfortunate that the Spanish radio stations here in the US do not portray the enormous variety of Spanish music that exists in Latin America, as they only play one genre of music. The song I played that day was "El Viaje" [The Trip] because we were talking about going on a trip. At 9:30 AM, I stopped the song and welcomed everybody.

I started by showing a PowerPoint presentation that reviewed some important words as part of the vocabulary we would use for the first activity. The presentation had the translation of these words, but upon reflection I think it would be better to give them an image representing the words instead of their translation to help students remember them more permanently.

Then, we started an activity to practice the present tense using their school schedules. I instructed the students to work with a classmate and ask their partner about their school schedule for the next day at different times of the day. The undergraduate teaching assistant (TA) helped me distribute a handout with the questions for the activity. I walked around the room monitoring the students' interactions. Because it was a review activity, students did well, but I noticed that I did not give them clear instructions pertaining to the activity.

For The second activity we did bingo. We asked questions about personal likes and dislikes with the verb "gustar." We had used bingo in previous lessons, so they understood how the activity functioned and the need to talk with multiple people for the activity. The activity lasted 13 minutes. I noticed that most of my students made an effort to use Spanish, but some of them would occasionally use English for clarification. I realized that I should have reviewed the vocabulary in the handout, so they could ask questions about the words we would be using without having to interrupt the bingo activity.

I asked them to take a seat and proceeded to explain the next activity. It was about planning a trip "Vamos a Viajar." I provided a script with the necessary information for this partner activity in which they chose the locations, length of the trip, departure/return dates, recreational activities, and appropriate clothes they would need for the trip.

In a PowerPoint presentation, I explained the activity with images I took from their text book. This activity was similar to one of their homework assignments, but much more extended. I presented four locations in the Spanish-speaking world. Then according to the pictures, they could choose the things to do during the trip.



We reviewed the verbs from a previous chapter. The verbs for this activity were presented in complete sentences. For example, instead of just saying “to run”, they would say “to run on the beach.” The PowerPoint contained images of people performing the action of the verb, and the script that I provided had the same sentences as the PowerPoint. In this way, if the students did not remember a verb, I directed them to the images on the PowerPoint using only Spanish. In addition, the extra vocabulary provided in the sentences exposed the students to new words. The students wrote down their choices and presented those to another group. This way, they practiced listening and speaking skills. This activity covered vocabulary from chapters 1, 2 and 3, providing a thorough review. Towards the end of class, we wrapped everything up, and I proceeded to say good bye and wish them well in their endeavors.

Overall, I believe it was a good class because students interacted with their classmates and spoke in Spanish for over half of the period. They reviewed vocabulary and used the verbs in complete sentences. My role was to answer questions and make informal assessments of their interactions with other students, including how they used the verb “me gusta”. However, I recognize that there are several things I could improve.

For example, I need to place more emphasis on our objectives at the beginning of the day, and I should end the class with a brief summary. I believe that this would help the students see what I want them to accomplish during the class period, and it would allow them to recognize what we have learned. I think I could also include a brief preview for the next day. I need to be clearer on instructions, so everybody understands what they need to do. For example, I should clearly explain the way I would like them to answer, such as yes or not, thumbs-up, or complete sentences. During the bingo game,

some students said yes when I wanted them to use the verb “gustar” in their answers. The directions for the “Vamos a Viajar” activity were somewhat unclear at the beginning. I realized this when I checked every group to see if the students were doing what I had in mind. Some students were doing well, while others needed more assistance.

Also, I need to work on the transition from one activity to another because my transitions were very abrupt. For example, there was a gap between bingo and the tour activity. I should emphasize the purpose of the activities. In addition, I need to be more careful in the terms that I use, and I should limit my vocabulary to the words that we have covered. I noticed that I used synonyms that they have not yet learned and thus created confusion. This exercise of watching myself teach made me see many details that I could not have perceived in any other way.

## RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES

LITERACY PAPER

Using Fairy Tales to Promote a Communicative Approach and Other Academic Skills in  
Second Language Teaching

## PURPOSE AND REFLECTION

This paper was developed during the LING 6800 with Dr. Sarah Gordon as the professor for the course. In the beginning, the topic for my paper “Teaching Languages through Fairy Tales” seemed a bit bold for my standards, but Dr. Gordon’s way of teaching allowed us to be creative and bold regarding our teaching because her examples were “outside of the box.” Introducing literature in second language teaching seems overwhelming with beginners and intermediate students; however, Dr. Gordon exemplifies how literature could teach in ways beyond reading and discussing, and that we can use that in the first levels of language teaching instead of waiting until advanced levels to introduce literature. Dr. Gordon involved games, food, the senses, visuals, and props that gave a new insight to poetry, stories, short stories, and other kinds of genres to facilitate and promote language acquisitions.

Dr. Gordon permitted me to be creative, and I loved her teaching style and classes for that. Her lessons provide confidence in students to continue to find fun and engaging forms in teaching a second language, instead of following the traditional literature learning that for the rigorous concepts is denied at the lower levels of language learning. Through imaginative uses of literature, teachers could use it to enhance language acquisition.

## USING FAIRY TALES TO PROMOTE A COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH AND OTHER ACADEMIC SKILLS IN SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

Literature is the written expression of the human experience, real and imagined, and it has been part of the liberal arts curriculum to help us see, as Lewis explains, “with other eyes, to imagine with other imaginations, to feel with other hearts, as well as with our own” (as cited in Bruns, 2011, p.15). Because of this, many people throughout the world have a natural and strong connection to literature. Eaglestone explains its value for academic inquiry: “the study of literature and language could be an opportunity to understand and encourage an even more open and multicultural society” (as cited in Hall, 2005, p. 3). Undeniably, the world is becoming increasingly globalized and it is therefore necessary to learn additional languages not just to communicate in social situations but also to be able to talk with others in an academic setting. From this perspective, literature provides opportunities for storytelling, interpretation, analogies, and critical thinking.

The methods for teaching second languages have been evolving since the days of translation, memorization of vocabulary, and the extensive study of grammar, when the study of literature was framed by concerns for grammar and translation. However, by 1980, as Hall (2005) notes “a crucial development for the role of literature in second language teaching programmes was the burgeoning of the ‘communicative’ language teaching approach” (p. 48). This method, says Hall (2005), “is normally taken to be centrally concerned with learners negotiating meaning for themselves, learning by doing things with language, in authentic contexts. The movement led to an important revival of the fortunes of literature in progressive classrooms” (p. 51).

Teaching a second language using literature is not an easy task because second language learners need to divide their attention to the sometimes elevated nature of literary language (or higher linguistic level) and the content. However, one of the major genres of literature that is common among cultures and which covers universally known topics and story lines is fairy tales. The introduction of fairy tales in the communicative language classroom will allow students to use their background knowledge to acquire the target language and academic skills that will enable them to succeed in their studies. Jones and Schwabe (2016) express their view about this particular approach by saying “we recognize the universal appeal and teaching potential of fairy tales and their adaptability to different instructional classroom settings” (p. 5-6). Some might think that fairy tales are not adequate for classes past elementary grades, but as Zipes says, “We never abandon fairy tales. So, it is not by chance that the fairy-tale has become the most popular cultural commodity in America, if not the world” (1997, p.1). Many recent successful movies are based on fairy tales. This fact has kept their popularity, which now facilitates their use in-classroom due to the easy accessibility to multimodal presentations. The numerous common characteristics of fairy tales make them ideal to teach a second language with a communicative approach and other academic skills.

A communicative approach in a second language class is more meaningful if the students can have a connection between their ideas and the language. For example, in one of the Spanish classes at Utah State University, students were writing stories about thought-provoking pictures for several days. At the end of the project, students showed one of their picture on the screen and talked about it. Their picture showed the students with their families on a family vacation. They talked about the people who were in the

picture, their names, what they were doing, the place, and all those memorable moments they had. One of the students said “that time was very important because it was the last time we were together”. That is an example of language learning while making connections and talking about something meaningful through storytelling.

Fairy tales are so engaging precisely because of the emotional connections people have with them. “Many of us grew up with fairy stories, reading them or having them read to us”. (Sale, 1977, p. 374). It is possible that some people wanted to be a princess or a hero when they were little, because the protagonist of a fairy tale goes on a journey that presents hardship, but at the end, he or she conquered and succeeded, because “Almost all fairy tales involve a quest” (Zipes, 2012, p. x), with a happy ending, which is why they are so emotionally connected to the story. Other people are connected to fairy tales because they heard them from someone they loved, such as a parent or grandparent. Fairy tales have been listened to by everyone throughout the centuries, despite what their social status might be. They were present in farm houses, when the family got together at the end of the workday, or in royal social meetings (Zipes, 2012). Now, fairy tales are used as bed time stories for children. Because of those connections, fairy tales can contribute to a communicative approach and improve academic skills.

Learning a new language requires a lot of time and effort from students, so the more connections a language has to their lives, the bigger and more positive the impact will be on the students. Considering that fairy tales have an emotional connection with the majority of students in their own language, they can promote second language acquisition. Emotional connections will help students be able to talk about the stories and learn the necessary vocabulary to express their emotions, which may boost motivation.



Fairy tales are also appealing and motivating for students to talk about because the themes found in fairy tales are almost universal. Jones and Schwabe (2016) found that "... tales contained examples of human conduct and provided guidelines on how to overcome serious challenges, survive struggles, or master problematic interpersonal relations" (p. 3). Even though fairy tales have been around for a long time, the values and personal challenges they depict are still relevant to people's lives today. For example, the wish to be beautiful is not an exclusive idea of Snow White's step-mother. It is in fact, a prevalent desire in our modern society. Parkinson and Thomas (2000), while not addressing fairy tales specifically, claim that "this 'genuine feel' of literary texts is a powerful motivator, especially when allied to the fact the literary texts so often touch on themes to which learners can bring a personal response from their own experience" (p. 10). Parkinson and Thomas (2000) explain that "... a reader can discover their thoughts, feelings, customs, possessions: what they buy, believe in, fear, enjoy; how they speak and behave behind closed doors" (p. 9). Again, when second language learners make a connection between the genuine, authentic material of study and their personal lives, they are more eager to learn and communicate their feelings and ideas in the target language.

Variations and archetypes of different fairy tales are found around the world, making them well known among learners and thus very useful to teach a second language. According to Opie and Opie (1974) (as cited in Worthy & Bloodgood, 1993, p. 291), there are, for example, 700 variants of the Cinderella story. Surlalunefairytales.com, a website dedicated to promoting fairy tales, shows 49 fairytales and their versions across cultures. This website has more than 20 different versions of Sleeping Beauty, including similar stories from different countries. Some fairy tales have

become even more famous as media productions. We see them in books, commercials and advertisements, theater, music, musicals, audio books, podcasts, and movies. Disney produced an animated version of *The Beauty and Beast* in 1991, and a real character version in 2017. There is also a French movie version of the same story that is very well made. There is thus a rich body of media for use in the L2 classroom.

Because the content of fairy tales is indeed universal, when second language students study fairy tales they can pay more attention to the form of the language and less consideration to the content since it is already familiar to them. Knowing the content causes a decrease in the anxiety that students feel when they are presented a new text, thus helping them acquire the language better. Worthy and Bloodgood (1993) mention that “since the stories and language of common fairy tales are familiar and predictable for most students, they found [them] easier to read and comprehend than any other text written at about the same difficulty level” (p. 293). Since fairy tales are available in various formats, students can read, listen, or watch them as an extra class activity to be prepared to discuss them the next time they meet in class. Of course, class time is valuable to practice communication skills and it is not recommended to show a whole movie in class. However, clips can be presented to engage the students in conversations about the content and analysis of the story. Presenting different version of a fairy tale will allow students to discuss and compare the characters, the plot, and other important parts of the stories and put their ideas in written form such as charts. The comparison of two versions can be done with a more advanced group of students, for example by watching Disney and the French version of *The Beauty and the Beast*. The advantages of this material have no limits. The discussion among students can be more in depth about

the symbolism of the rose in both stories, for example, or the differences about Belle's father and her family. Teachers can conduct a discussion with the whole group or students can discuss with a partner.

The rhetoric of fairy tales offers second language students the opportunity to develop their proficiency through exposure to appropriate and excellent writing. Parkinson and Thomas (2000) claim that "people study literature because it is supposed to provide a model of 'good' writing" (p. 9). Collie and Slater (cited in Parkinson and Thomas, 2000, p. 9) say that "reading a substantial and contextualised body of text, students gain familiarity with many features of the written language... which broaden and enrich their own writing skills." It is important to note that, in many cases, textbooks used to teach second language learners are written specifically for them. Reading sections found in textbooks often do not have the same level of difficulty as texts intended for L1 speakers. The more exposed the second language learners are to original texts, the better their likelihood of acquiring the target language. Texts intended for L2 learners might be too easy and thus impede the development of reading skills which according to Parkinson and Thomas (2000) "includes the developing of ways to cope with unknown language, whether by consulting reference books, making guesses and provisional hypotheses, or deciding that unknown elements are not important" (p. 5). These skills enable students to encounter academic readings with a can-do attitude, instead of frustration. That is why it is essential that students work with literature that is well written and authentic.

When a text is designed for L1 speakers, it is said to be authentic. Picken (2007) says that "authentic texts are ones that have been produced in the normal course of language use in a given language community rather than 'contrived' for the purposes of

language teaching” (p. 12). Because some fairy tales were written originally in German or French, some people disregard translations as authentic. However, Jones and Schwabe (2016) say, “the skill of translation consists in captivating the reader or listener ... [and it is not a] one-to-one word correspondence and that translators are artful interpreters” (p. 134). It is true that the original stories were written in other countries but the art of translation makes it possible to have the text in translated form, directed to L1 speakers. This feature makes good translations useful, together with the literary style and rich vocabulary, to use with second language learners.

As part of language instruction and assessment, students need to produce not only in speaking but also in writing. Simple ways to help students in their writing skill using fairy tales include changing the end or perspective of the tale, adding personages, summarizing, or even writing their own fairy tale. Students can mix or even exchange characters from other fairy tales without being criticized or judged for their choices. Parkinson and Thomas (2000) add that “a further advantage of this kind of approach is that learner independence is encouraged in that there is a shift away from the kind of teacher-dependent organization which is so much a feature of the traditional literature classroom towards the active engagement of the learner” (p. 2). Once students feel free to act instead of following instructions, they can use the language to create, which will result in meaningful practice for them. This creative process of students modifying the story can be very engaging and fun. An entertaining example of changing perspective is “The True Story of the Three Little Pigs” by John Scieszka where the wolf tells his side of the story. One can imagine how enjoyable this story is. At the end of the whole project, of course, following the purposes of the communicative approach, the students can

present their own versions to the group. This, reading fairy tales helps develop linguistic skills.

The form of the presentation will vary according to the parameters of the assignment and abilities of the students. Some may present their projects through a skit or a sketch using costumes, props or puppets. Alternatively, they can create a song about their story, or integrate music while narrating or acting out the story. Furthermore, students can make a digital production of their stories, with all the advantages of digital technology. As Jones and Schwabe (2026) describe

new technologies and access to seemingly endless digital resources make it easier than ever to incorporate illustration, artwork, photographs, film, video, music, rare texts, and a host of other artifacts and experiences into the fairy tale classroom. The infrastructure and resources are in place for courses we could not envision thirty years ago (p. x).

When using literature to enrich their classes, second language teachers face the challenge of finding just the right material. Many texts that are designed to teach foreign languages using literature include only excerpts. This is not ideal for a communicative approach where students are expected to learn the language by discussing, debating, comparing, and contrasting elements of text. Describing the advantages of short stories with respect to other forms of literature, Parkinson and Thomas (2000) say that they are “self-contained; they generally require less contextualization than longer fiction, or, in a different way, drama, and they are less linguistically complex than poetry” (p. 80). Therefore, fairy tales in spite of being short (which may actually be an advantage), are adequate for plot analysis, problem, resolution, or character traits, etc., because of their completeness. This is convenient because the analysis can be done in one or several class

periods, depending on the level of the students, the purposes of the section being studied, the depth of study, and the goals of the program.

With the communicative approach, literature can be used to teach second languages. The advantages of teaching literature are expressed by Bruns (2011): “A common attempt to justify literature’s place as an academic subject is to list skills widely recognized as necessary in today’s world that can be developed through reading and writing about texts—skills of interpretations, problem solving, oral and written communication, evidence-based argument, and the ubiquitous critical thinking” (p. 11). Because of the potentially difficult language presented in other genres of literature, it has been proposed that fairy tales can be used instead. The rhetoric and authenticity of fairy tales expose learners to proper form and vocabulary use in the target language. The versatility of this genre allows teachers to address the needs of students not only at the beginning but also at the intermediate and advanced levels cultivating in them strong writing and speaking skills. For example, beginner level students can arrange the images of a fairy tales in sequence, write a short sentence about what is happening in the image, and tell a partner about them. More advanced students can talk about symbolism, comparison, contrast, word choice, tone, time, sequencing, and other literary concepts.

Jones and Schwabe (2016) argue that there is a “deeply ingrained misconception that the pedagogical use of fairy tales limits itself to kindergarten and elementary school settings, or children’s literature departments” (p. 7). However, research shows that fairy tales are a powerful tool for students of all ages to increase their creative speaking and writing skills through a variety of activities such as changing the end of the story or the perspective of it.

Kraemer (2008) tell us the happy journey of a second language literature class in German. She describes how implementing a class about fairy tales in an advanced-level literature and culture class solved the problem of encountering different levels of proficiency in German between students in the same class. She says that fairy tales can be used in all levels of proficiency to enhance the learning of the language, but in particular she emphasizes that fairy tales could be used to expand the basic skills to more cognitive and thinking skills. “The German Fairy Tale Tradition” class has passed reading and discussing, and moved on to “an exploration of the global circulation of these stories through history and their sociocultural impact.” (p. 63). In addition, the curriculum for the class has been adapted to allow more technology, which increases the exposure of the students to authentic material in German.

Leal (2015), also shows the potential of using fairy tales in an adult second language classroom, where it “can be used to improve students’ linguistics, cognitive, and socio-emotional skills” (p. 199). Fairy tales can also be used as a topic of discussion for what the culture of the story implies for the time period and the geographical area. As Oates (1997) describes, the topics in fairy tales could be analyzed in sociocultural terms. This in turn will encourage independence and critical thinking in the student that could help them succeed in higher education.

The goal of the communicative approach is to help students engage in conversations that are meaningful to them. Thus, when students discuss, write, and present their productions to others, they will reflect on their emotions, beliefs, values, and their way of thinking. These multimodal productions can take the form of a sketch, or a painting, or a digital presentation, but teachers will always ask students to talk about

them. Parkinson and Thomas (2000) state that “for language teachers on the hunt for texts that generate communicative activities, [short stories] are ideal in that they offer opportunities for group discussion, role play and so on” (p. 80). Jones and Schwabe say “we wish to emphasize the educational opportunities offered by fairy tales, which can fill a broad range of curricular needs: instructors in a variety of academic fields can draw on fairy tales to help students improve critical-thinking abilities, strengthen writing skills, and explore cultural values” (p. 6). Fairy tales are thus important texts for language learning because “fairy tales provide an avenue for coming to good terms with both the structure and the culture of the target language” (Davidheiser, 2008, p. 215).

Fairy tales have been part of growing up for many people around the world. They are popular and they have not grown out of fashion. They are interesting and they entertain people of all ages. Fairy tales could be a great resource to teach literature in a second language classroom, fomenting language acquisition.



CULTURAL PAPER

The Importance of Teaching Pragmatics

## PURPOSE AND REFLECTION

This paper was originally written in collaboration with my colleague Tairon Kimura for Linguistics 6900 Culture Teaching, & Learning, taught by Dr. Karin deJonge-Kannan in Spring 2017. Initially, the purpose of the paper was to study refusals in different cultures, called Cross-cultural Pragmatics. I have since made changes to the content and have transformed it into “The importance of teaching pragmatics.” In this new paper, besides analyzing the topic of cross-cultural pragmatics, I explain what pragmatics is, its characteristics, and how teaching pragmatics is vital in a second language class to avoid misunderstandings in relationships between native and non-native speakers.

I am interested in teaching pragmatics because as a language learner myself, and during taking the Ling 6900 class, I realized that pragmatics should be part of the curriculum in language classes to improve assimilation to the culture for language learners. This paper will explore pragmatics in general, in refusals strategies, and how English foreign language teacher have overcome the challenges of teaching it.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING PRAGMATICS

Learning a new language can be accomplished with many years of practice, possibly supplemented with study. However, when learning a language, there is an aspect of language that does not come from studying the vocabulary and grammar: culture. LoCastro (2012) defines culture as “a reflection of the values and beliefs about the world, held by the members of a community which forms, in effect, the substratum of their everyday life” (p. 20). There might be people who can construct perfect sentences in a second language, grammatically speaking, but who do not transmit the message they try to convey. Even within the same country with people who speak the same language, we can see problems of communication, for example because of those differences in values and beliefs. For instance, I am originally from a place very close to Mexico City and I was surprised when I met a lady from the south of Mexico who referred to me in a way that I found uncomfortable and even annoying, especially since our association was taking place in a professional environment. When I expressed my thoughts about this with her, she explained to me that, in her region, people use those words to be polite. So, here we were, having a communication problem despite the fact that we are from the same country and speak the same language. Tatsuki and Houck (2010) say “even native speakers of a language require information on how to talk about what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate speech acts in different contexts” (p. 1).

This is further exemplified by popular advice columns by Miss Manners, Dear Abby, or Dear Amy answering questions about how to express some points of disagreement while also being polite. Now, if native speakers have difficulty expressing

themselves while seeking the right effect in their communication, language learners have even more problems to convey their message because, in addition to their language limitations, they have to deal with cultural differences. Vásquez and Sharpless (2009) state “pragmatic error can easily lead to misconstruals of speaker intentions, which can in turn lead to negative judgments about a speaker’s personality or moral character” (p. 6). Therefore, it is important for people who are learning another language to know how to use that language in the specific cultural contexts to communicate socially appropriately. This aspect of linguistics is called pragmatics.

Pragmatics, as Crystal (1985) defines it, is “the study of language from the point of view of users, especially the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication” (as cited in LoCastro, 2012, p. 7). The effects that the language provides constitute an essential part of our communications because we are constantly interacting with others to establish relationships. There are cultures whose languages distinguish, for example, the informal and formal form of the word “you”, which requires the use of specific verb forms. Knowing versus not knowing their usage can mean the success or failure of a relationship and even the person’s survival in the target language (TL) environment. As Chen (1995) clarifies, “pragmatic competence relates to the ability to function socioculturally felicitously” (p. 4). Consequently, language learners should not only be aware or knowledgeable about the mechanics of the language but also skillful in the basic applications of these social rules when using language. However, pragmatics is not usually part of the curriculum in language classes

(Vásquez & Sharpless, 2009). This paper will focus on the characteristics of pragmatics, cross-cultural pragmatics, and the lack of and need for pragmatics teaching.

### **Characteristics of Pragmatics**

According to LoCastro (2012), some of the characteristics of pragmatics involve the meaning of an idea, the context which includes both linguistic and nonlinguistic features, and constraints of who can say what to whom (p. 14). Meaning is created by the interaction between speakers and listeners. The interaction does not have to be verbal: it can also be in the form of other types of expressions. As Zeff (2016) explains, “pragmatic norms related to greetings also include nonverbal behavior (e.g., eye contact, gestures, facial expression, and physical contact), spatial association, and relational responsibility” (p. 10). When I came to the United States, I had several experiences that caused me to think that Americans were disrespectful. For example, one time I asked my teacher to give me my textbook, in another occasion I asked another classmate if I could borrow a pencil, and a third time I asked a bank clerk to return my credit card and, in every instance, people “gave” me those things by tossing them on the table or counter. That is considered very rude in Mexico, where people would give you those objects in your hands. They would never toss them on the table unless they intentionally wanted to be rude to you. Eventually, I got immersed in the American culture and adjusted to it; those actions are normal for me now. Later, I also realized that my own culture can be perceived as rude as well. This came to me when I read, LoCastro’s (2012) example about the ritual that Japanese business professionals use to give each other their personal cards.

Exchanging cards includes not only bowing, but also holding the extended card in a specific way and putting the card on the table in front of one. The card always has to face the person who received it, and the recipient must carefully read it and perhaps comment on the content of the card. (p. 6)

If I were interacting with Japanese business professionals, giving them my business card as a good and polite Mexican, they would have found my actions and my culture very rude! Constraints (who can say what to whom) in using language in social action are significant also. It is not the same to greet an acquaintance as to greet a friend or a boss (Félix-Brasdefer, 2003, 2006). Not only do our attitude and action change depending on who we are interacting with, but also the way we speak to them. Factors such as age, status, relationship, gender, and education should be considered when interacting with a person and expressing any speech act. (Bella, 2013; Ebsworth & Kodama, 2011; Félix-Brasdefer, 2003, 2006; García, 1992; Izadi & Zilaie, 2015; Takhellambam Sandhyalata & Madhubala, 2014).

### **Cross cultural pragmatics**

Pragmatics is essential because it relates to our everyday interactions using speech acts such as greetings, invitations, refusals, etc. The analysis of interactions between people who do not share the same language is called cross-cultural pragmatics (CCP), and of course such interactions are complex.

Cross-cultural pragmatics (CCP) is arguably the subfield of pragmatics that draws the most attention in the modern world where on a daily basis, participants interact while not sharing the same native or primary language for communication. Both comprehension and production of pragmatic meaning become quite complicated. (LoCastro, 2012, p. 79)

When people of different first language (L1) backgrounds interact, the risk of misinterpreting each other increases, which is dangerous because the listener may judge the character of the speaker. One example of a misinterpretation is when one of my classmates, from Chile, came to the United States and met one of her American teachers for the first time. The Chilean, applying the norms of greeting used in her country, kissed the teacher on her cheek. The teacher immediately showed signs of embarrassment. However, kissing people on the cheek is a common practice not only in Chile but in many Latin American countries. Females kiss males on the cheek and vice versa when they are introduced to a new person. It is normal for females to kiss females; however, it is not the norm for males to kiss males. This practice of kissing on the cheek is preserved as long as the friendship lasts. In my classmate's case, once she noticed her teacher's confusion, she tried to clarify her action but there was no way to erase the awkward moment that the teacher already experienced. This is what is called pragmatic failure, interpreting the behavior from our own culture's point of view without knowing the other's cultural perspective or norms.

Research has provided numerous examples of misinterpretation in cross-cultural pragmatics in different speech acts. One speech act that has been interesting to study is refusals. Refusals are difficult for language learners because, while declining an invitation, offer, or suggestion, the students need to use all their repertoire in their second language (L2). As Salgado (2017) puts it "a great deal of competence is required: listening comprehension, grammatical structures, deciphering intentions" (p. 111). Moreover, what is considered appropriate refusal behavior may vary across cultures (as cited in Félix-Brasdefer & Bardovi-Harlig, 2010, p. 163).

We are part of a social environment, and therefore, it is almost inevitable that we are going to be invited to participate in a social gathering, be offered something or be invited to some event. Of course, when we receive any of these speech acts, it is expected that we comply or accept. Nevertheless, certain circumstances may impede us from accepting such invitations. We refuse or decline the invitation either because we are busy, have previous arrangements, need to do something else, or simply because we do not want to do it.

A refusal then is the negative answer to a speech act that was originated by someone else, and it can be seen as a “disapproval of the interlocutor’s intentions and consequently, a threat to the interlocutor’s face” (Martinez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2011, p. 56). It is uncomfortable to say “no” to a cordial invitation, request, offer or suggestion, which is why Eslami (2010) claims that a “refusal can be a difficult speech act to perform” (p. 217). When we refuse something, we try to do it in the nicest way possible so that we do not damage the relationship with our interlocutor due to a possible misinterpretation. Refusals are indeed intricate. Martinez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2011) cite Brown and Levinson regarding refusals: “The core component of a refusal is a denial to comply with the interlocutor’s proposed action plan and therefore, tends to risk the initiator’s positive face” (p. 64). However, Chen (1995) says that the risk is for both interlocutors: “refusals are considered to be a face threatening act (FTA) in that either the speaker’s or listener’s positive or negative face is risked when a refusal is called for or carried out” (p. 5).

“‘Face’ is the public self-image that every member of a speech community wants to claim for herself/himself” (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Eslami (2010) says that “as a



dispreferred response, it [the refusal] is complicated in form and it usually involves various strategies to avoid offending one's interlocutor" (p. 217). Strategies are used to minimize the refusal and to save the positive face of every person involved in the interaction, and any strategy that we choose should be polite. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness is a universal principle of human interaction that every society has: "societies everywhere, no matter what their degree of isolation or their socioeconomic complexity, show these same principles at work; yet what counts as polite may differ from group to group, from situation to situation, or from individual to individual" (p. xiii). In other words, every culture has norms of politeness which are expected to be enacted by everyone in the community, especially during refusals. Naturally, the matter gets complicated when two individuals from different cultures and languages try to perform the delicate speech act of a refusal.

When compared across cultures and languages, refusals reveal that interlocutors employ different strategies to implement these speech acts, resulting in both differences and similarities. Researchers have investigated how speakers directly or indirectly refuse requests, offers, suggestions, and invitations. Strategies such as mitigating the refusal, indefinite reply, excuse/explanation, regret/apology, gratitude, alternative, well-wishing, lying, and changing the subject are used to decline an invitation (Bella 2013; Ebsworth & Kodama, 2011; Eslami, 2010; Felix-Bradsdefer, 2003, 2006; García 1992, 1996, 2007; Izadi & Zilaie, 2015, Morkus, 2014, Takhellambam Sandhyalata & Madhubala, 2014). Refusals are only one example of the complexity of speech acts, but they give a clear idea of the general importance of teaching pragmatics to language learners.

## Teaching Pragmatics

As we can see, the role of pragmatics in language learning is vital to avoid misunderstandings. However, textbooks, even when they are promoted as communicative tools, do not contain pragmatic much (if any) information, which is disadvantageous, especially for students who have their textbook as the only source of the target language. To illustrate, Vellenga (2004) examined textbooks for English as a second language (ESL) and for English as a foreign language (EFL), to see if pragmatic information was part of their content, and whether ESL vs. EFL textbooks “differ in the amount of pragmatic information.” She found that “the treatment of most speech acts in the textbooks is, for the most part, pragmatically inadequate” (p. 6). This is problematic for learners whose only exposure to the target language (TL) comes from the textbook.

Kim and Hall (2002) recognize that teachers who learned English as a FL themselves “may not have had many opportunities to develop their pragmatic knowledge and skills fully. Thus, their ability to provide ample learning opportunities for their learners may also be rather limited” (p. 333). Nevertheless, and despite the lack of pragmatics in textbooks, L2/FL teachers should include it in their curriculum. LoCastro (2012) states “classroom instruction in pragmatics for [learners] of the new language needs to include, consequently, opportunities to learn about pragmatics, conversational routines, and other dimensions of communicative competence” (p. 107).

Trying to amend the lack of pragmatics in textbooks, some researchers have assigned their students to read novels to promote pragmatics and also to increase vocabulary. For additional ideas and resources to teach pragmatics see Appendix A. Novels, unlike foreign language (FL) textbooks, contain interactions between people

depicting real situations in an English-speaking country (Kim & Hall, 2002). Also, teachers can have ESL students make some daily life observations, as the students live in a place where the target language is spoken. They can observe and analyze how people interact during a conversation in the street, at school, and other places. For EFL students, videos and TV shows can provide some examples of speech acts that students can analyze and learn from (Tatsuki & Houck, 2010). According to Zeff (2016), “observing and documenting a speech act in a TV show brings culturally relevant experience into the classroom” (p. 5). Even though the script for those programs has been written and polished, such videos can be chosen carefully for similarities with real life. Zeff (2016) says that teachers should “equip their students with a critical component to successful interactions” (p. 2), and pragmatic skills are surely a part of this.

## **Conclusion**

Second Language learners, without direct instruction in pragmatics, are destined to have embarrassing moments because, even in their best intentions to be polite, they can only see the world according to their own perspective. Learners deprived of pragmatics instruction will discover that their way is not always accepted in other cultures. Pragmatic considerations and effects permeate the interactions between people in the different speech acts, from simple greetings and invitations to the complicated act of refusals. So, to prepare our students for encounters with native speakers of the second language, teachers need to teach pragmatics. Zeff (2016) states “as a language teacher, I have long realized that knowing the words of a language is only part of speaking it. Knowing how to interpret a communicative act is equally important, and it needs to be taught explicitly”

(p. 2). Teachers should give students the tools to respond appropriately to avoid the danger of being misunderstood or stereotyped. As Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2003) state “the chief goal of instruction in pragmatics is to raise learners’ pragmatics awareness and give the choices about their interactions in the target language” (as cited in Zeff, 2016, p. 3).

People can tolerate our bad pronunciation when they know that we are language learners, or they can overlook the deficiency in our grammatical correctness. However, they may not forgive us if they misinterpret our character because of a bad choice in our response to a certain speech act with our interlocutors. As a language learner, and as a language teacher, I understand the need and importance of pragmatics, and I support its incorporation in our curriculum.

DUAL LANGUAGE IMMERSION PAPER

Assisting Hispanic Students Develop Confidence through DLI

## PURPOSE AND REFLECTION

I developed this paper in the class of Linguistic 6700, Foundations of Dual Language Immersion (DLI), taught by Dr. María Luisa Spicer-Escalante, during Spring 2018. In Dr. Spicer-Escalante's class, we have been exposed to interesting readings, speakers, DLI's teachers, and Dr. Spicer-Escalante's expertise explanations about DLI's history, development, and success in different parts of the world. We have studied how DLI has grown in the last years in Utah and now it has turn into a model to follow.

We have analyzed the challenges to implement DLI, and how it could be beneficial in cases where indigenous languages are getting lost. These languages could be in the process of recovery because of language immersion. Also, we have been studying the academic, cognitive, and social benefits of bilingual education, which is one of the mains goals of DLI.

This paper explores the social pressure that Hispanics have experienced in the US, and how they have been stereotyped and affected in relation to their academic performance. These factors have impacted this group to the point of being at risk of losing their language, culture and identity. The paper proposes that DLI could be the way to help Hispanics regain confidence in their culture and first language, while increasing their proficiency in English also, to reach their academic goals.

## ASSISTING HISPANIC STUDENTS DEVELOP CONFIDENCE THROUGH DLI

According to the Pew Research Center, Hispanics are the second largest ethnic group, after whites, with 18% of the total population in the US (Flores, 2017). Even though the growing Hispanic population has been slowing down compared to previous years, Hispanics have now dispersed through the United States (Pew Research Center, 2016), resulting in Hispanics being more involved in every aspect of American life, including k-12 schools.

A report from the National Center of Educational Statistics indicates that Hispanic students enrolled in public schools in 2016 was 24%. This is an important percentage and because of that, the impact of their unfavorable academic performance in society is alarming. Their average GPA is 2.64 and they have the largest percentage of high school drop outs. (Musu-Gillette, Robinson, McFarland, KewalRamani, Zhang, and Wilkinson-Flicker, 2016, p. iii). MacGregor-Mendoza states that the number of dropouts in Hispanic students is high in general, but it is much higher in urban areas where there is a bigger concentration of Hispanics (1999). The Pew Research Center provides data regarding different ethnicities stating that even though Hispanic's dropouts have been declining in the last decade, they are still the group with the highest percentage of dropouts and are less likely to enroll in college (Krogstad, 2016).

MacGregor-Mendoza states that educational authorities have seen a correlation between students who speak Spanish and dropout percentage by saying that "Due to the low educational profile of U.S. Mexicans [Mexicans are the lower academic achievers in

the Hispanic population] and their proclivity for retaining Spanish, language is often presumed to be a barrier to their academic success” (1999, p.3). Zentella (1997) says “It is assumed that [Hispanic] children drop out because they do not know English..., or because their bilingualism is cognitively confusing” (p. 4). Furthermore, educational authorities advise against bilingualism (Zentella, 1997, p. 126) and push for only English (Crawford, 2007) in order to improve academic success (MacGregor-Mendoza, 1999) without considering that language and culture are interweaved (Fishman, 1996, Spring, 1997).

Once the language is eradicated from Hispanic children (and their culture as a consequence), they do not have a clear identity. They are Hispanic, but they do not speak Spanish, and speaking English does not make them American. As a result, they do not really identify with any culture, and a “Sense of belonging is a fundamental aspect of cultural identity and of students’ identification with academics” (Weber, Kronberger, and Appeal, 2018, p. 216). By not encouraging them to learn Spanish, and pushing for English instead, we are taking their identity and their academic success away.

These challenges related to education and identity translate into negative consequences in all spheres of the human activity such as social, economic, emotional, and even political. MacGregor-Mendoza says, “The consequences for dropping out of high school are decidedly adverse... [in] education, cognitive, health, [and] political participation” (1999, p. xi-xii). People who drop out of high school tend to have jobs with minimum wages, resulting in their income not being enough to pay for good health care. They are also incapable of giving their children opportunities for extracurricular



activities, and we see this trend passing on through generations. On the other hand, “individuals with high educational attainment generally have better health, are more socially engaged, have higher employment rates and have higher relative earnings” (OECD, 2015, p. 30).

It would be good if the education sector could help Hispanics develop their potential and help them finish high school and college. If their academic performance increases, then the chances for them to seek further training or education also grows. They can then get better jobs and can, therefore, obtain better salaries with all the social and economic benefits for them and their communities. In this paper, I will explore some social and political pressure that Hispanic students have experienced regarding education, how they have been affected and stereotyped to the point of being at risk of losing their language, their culture, and their identity, and how Dual Language Immersion can be an answer to help Hispanics strengthen and regain confidence in their identity in order to reach their academic goals.

## **SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PRESSURE TOWARD HISPANIC STUDENTS**

There are several reasons for which Hispanics do not finish high school, or if they finish it, they do not pursue 4-year bachelor degrees. According to Krogstad and Fry (2015), Hispanics tend to go to a 2-year college because it is less expensive (and they usually come from low income families), they are less prepared for college, or they are working to help their families monetarily, and thus “Hispanics are significantly less likely than other groups to have student debt” (Krogstad, 2016). It might also be that they have

come to the point where they believe what other people think of them, which is that they are second-class citizens and that the only thing they are good for is hard work. This is the product of decades of social and economic conditions and segregation. “Lighter skin color became associated with a greater degree of ‘civilization,’ while darker hues connoted ‘moral inferiority and social backwardness’” (Moreno, 2008). Because of these circumstances, many Hispanic students are aware that their ethnic conditions are and have been subject to discrimination, which affects their identity and as a consequence their education performance (Weber, et al., 2015).

From 1920 through 1950, Mexican American children were segregated from white students in schools, and during the Great Depression, many people in California who had a Hispanic appearance or who spoke Spanish were deported to Mexico regardless of their citizenship or legal residency in the US. (de Jong, 2011; Donato and Hanson, 2017; Gándara, & Aldana, 2014; Moreno, 2008; Spring, 2016).

After many years of segregation, leaders were in favor of educational support for the students’ native language, without opposition. Crawford (2007) explains, “Bilingual education has been controversial in the United States since the 1970s. Nevertheless, over the next two decades, it continued to enjoy support from the liberal wing of the Democratic Party and from ethnic politicians” (p. 1).

## **THE RISE OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION**

During two decades after 1970, speaking another language, including Spanish, in the U.S. was accepted and applauded. Some people in high-level offices (such as the U.S. Secretary of Education in Clinton’s Administration) considered bilingualism as an asset.

“The Clinton Administration became active in promoting approaches designed to cultivate bilingualism” (Crawford, 2007, p. 1) and the government reauthorized the 6<sup>th</sup> version of the Bilingual Education Act in 1994 that advocated for bilingualism in schools. From then on, some politicians and the media have been sensationalizing the anti-immigrant sentiment to attract people in favor of their political views. Some people thought that the “media accounts tend to perpetuate stereotypes and misconceptions” and others claimed that “the idea of bilingual education is not necessarily a good thing. The goal must be toward English fluency” (Crawford, 2003, quoting McQuillan and Tse, 1996, Crawford, 1998, and Hargrove, 2001).

### **ELIMINATION OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION**

From 1998 to 2002, bilingualism was attacked in the states of California, Arizona, Massachusetts, and Colorado through propositions to eliminate bilingual education. In California, for example, many immigrant parents favored proposition 227, “an initiative to dismantle most bilingual instruction in the public schools” (Crawford, 2003, p. 2). Crawford (2003) explains that the questions on the ballots were crafted in such a way that it seemed that immigrant students would acquire English more efficiently when in reality it was to eliminate any support for the immigrants’ first language (L1). Schools did not offer support for students who did not speak English, and instead, they submerged them in mainstream classes.

De Jong (2011) explains that the term submersion “refers to the placement of [non-native speakers of the instructional language] students in a standard curriculum classroom designed for native speakers of the societal language without any special

accommodations” (p. 115). Mehrabi (2014) states that the consequences of a lack of support for minority students that do not speak English in the USA in a “Submersion programme had negative effects like eliminating minority children’s language, weakening their cultural identity and putting them at risk in academic achievement” (p. 1687). Two other states passed similar legislations. Colorado did not have enough votes to dismantle bilingualism education.

The maintenance of bilingualism education in Colorado was not because people favored its benefits for the students in that program. Money donations were made to the apparent pro-bilingual campaign proclaiming ‘Chaos in the Classroom’ in the media. The slogan originated when a reporter interviewed a typical suburban American mother and when the reporter asked her opinion about having children who did not speak English in the same classes as her kids, she exclaimed: ‘They’re going to put them in my kid’s class?’ (Crawford, 2003, p. 18). The proposition was rejected because they believed that immigrant children would negatively affect the English-speaking children in the classrooms and create chaos.

Later, school districts in the USA adopted an approach to try to help students acquire English with the purpose of eventually moving them to the mainstream classes. Those remedial programs for English language learners (ELL) are currently in place and consist of pulling students out from their regular classrooms and teaching them English in a separate room. Those programs, as de Jong (2011) explains, lack resources and qualified personnel, and are usually sub-standard. Many times, pull-out English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction takes place in closets or hallways. Such an unprofessional approach in separate, unequal facilities diminish students’ dignity,

bringing negative emotional or psychological consequences. The biggest Hispanic population exists in California where schools have between 90% to 100% of all minorities. An analysis that was conducted in California “found that EL[L] students were the most intensely segregated in low performing schools of any subgroup” (Gándara and Aldana, 2014, p. 742). Collier and Thomas (2004) state that “Spanish speakers are the majority among English Language Learners (ELL) and one of the groups least well served by U.S. schools (as measured by high school completion)” (p. 5). Because of the lack of support for high-quality ESL programs, many students do not receive the needed instruction, and even if they do, the evaluation of these students’ progress is not accurate, and they might retain their ELL label for a long time. As a result, many teachers consider them “as having a deficit compared with fluent English speakers” (de Jong, 2011, P. 5).

## **EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES**

Educational resources play an essential part in the students’ success: “expenditure per student is a key policy measure that most directly affects the individual learner, as it acts as a constraint on the learning environment in schools and learning conditions in the classroom” (OECD, 2015, p. 17). The lesser quality of classrooms, instructors, and materials for ESL education causes Hispanic students to feel segregated from the rest of the student community. De Jong (2011) claims that “segregation can come at a high cost if the group is treated inequitably or their program is assigned a low-status position with access to fewer resources than other programs” (p. 223). Gándara and Aldana express a similar point of view when they say that “segregation had a broader impact on EL[L]

student achievement when compared with other school factors such as school resources, practices, and structure” (Gándara and Aldana, 2014, p. 742).

The lack of interaction between Anglo-Americans and minorities produce distance. Being a separate group leads to being stereotyped, adding another factor that interferes with their academic success. Weber, Kronberger, and Appel (2018) conclude that being chronically stereotyped

might cause a negative cycle for adolescent immigrants, eventually increasing the risk of low performance and dropout. Consequently, immigrant students have lower chances to tap their full potential and acquire higher education, and thus, to be adequately integrated into the labor market. (p. 231)

Moreover, due to the lack of academic resources and being stereotyped, the social and psychological impact on those students is likely detrimental.

### **LOSE SPANISH – “IT IS JUST A LITTLE LANGUAGE”**

The situation becomes more complicated when Hispanic students are pressured to lose their Spanish in order to focus their attention on English. Some people might think that “it is just a little language” (Fishman, 1996, p. 1). However, Fishman (1996) explains the relationship between language and culture.

The most important relationship between language and culture that gets to the heart of what is lost when you lose a language is that most of the culture is in the language and is expressed in the language. Take it away from the culture, and you take away its greetings, its curses, its praises, its laws, its literature, its songs, its riddles, its proverbs, its cures, its wisdom, its prayers. The culture could not be expressed and handed on in any other way. (Fishman, 1996, p. 2)

According to Fishman, our language is the way we communicate with our loved ones through those tender and memorable moments that laid the foundation for our

identity, our learning, and our belonging. “We are tied to each other through the language. That precious sense of community is not a thing to lose” (Fishman, 1996, p. 3).

As a Mexican descendent and Spanish speaker, I can see the danger of losing my own language. My dad, who was from Mexico, wrote beautiful letters to me in Spanish. Those letters represent the love of my father, and even though when they could be translated, the translation will never be perfect because the magic is in my father’s expressions of love and his thoughts that cannot be articulated in any other language other than Spanish. If I lose my language, I lose those treasures. If we lose our language, we lose our connection with our ancestors, with our community, traditions, and identity. Fishman (1996) presents a philosophical dilemma when asking “Can you be Hispanic without speaking Spanish?... the truth is that everybody now has a nephew or a niece who does not speak any Spanish. Something is felt to be deeply wrong there, and the sense of loss is very deep” (p. 4). Children acquire knowledge and nourishment from interactions with their parents, grandparents, relatives, and adults from the community and not just from the school. This means that if we cut that link of communication, we are cutting another way of learning (Moreno, 2008). However, Hispanics are pushed to lose their language in order to learn English.

MacGregor-Mendoza (1999) states that it is generally believed that Hispanic students have lower academic achievement due to Spanish. Such statements have been proven false, because higher levels of Spanish facilitate English acquisition, and on the contrary “English language use, and positive attitudes toward English were not found to guarantee high levels academic achievement” (p. xiv). So, even when the Hispanics students speak English is not a warranty that they will succeed because there are other

factors that contribute to their academic achievement. One of those factors is that they need to feel that they are accepted and are part of the community in which they live.

### **ASSIMILATION VS. INTEGRATION**

Eaton (2016) in her book “Integration Nation: Immigrants, Refugees, and America at Its Best” talks about many examples around the U.S. where differences in language and culture enrich and enhance financial growth for the community. She said that the word integration for the new movement is completely contrary to “the older efforts of assimilation, which historically have required a shedding of culture, language, and customs as part of the process of acceptance and success in mainstream America” (p. 12). On the contrary, integration is “...valuing what diverse newcomers bring with them, as well as emphasizing what is needed to ensure their success and their potential contribution to the receiving community” (Millona, 2014, as cited in Eaton, 2016, p. 12).

It is essential to find ways to assist Hispanic students find their academic success without losing their language, and to integrate and use their language as a resource. We need to help them develop their potential within the structure of the educational system. Gándara and Aldana (2014) propose three methodologies to increase the quality in education for all English language learners in an integrated way: Dual Language Immersion (DLI) programs, International Baccalaureate, and Magnet programs. I will give a short review about DLI.



## DUAL LANGUAGE IMMERSION

One of the approaches that has been proven to be successful is the Dual Language Immersion (DLI) program. “DLI refers to the integration of literacy and curriculum content instruction in two languages” (Spicer-Escalante, 2017; Cloud, Genesee, and Hamayan, 2000; Genesee, 2008; Howard, Sugarman, Christian, Lindholm-Leary, K.J. and Rogers, 2007; May, 2008). Fortune (2013) has defined the **ABC**’s of DLI: **A**cademic **A**chievement, **B**ilingualism and **B**iliteracy, and **C**ultural **C**ompetence for all students (as cited in Spicer-Escalante, 2017, p. 4). The program has given students the confidence they need to use their L1 to improve the Second Language (L2) because “both languages have social value” at school (Mehrabi, 2014, p. 1687).

DLI is a program where students retain and enrich their first language, which in this case would be Spanish, while learning English at the same time. The second language is not taught as a subject. Instead, it is used as a medium of instruction in an educational setting, and, with appropriate instructional techniques and materials, students learn curricular content as well as an additional language. The native language of the students is also nurtured, and it is expected that students will move toward bilingualism and biliteracy (Cloud, et al., 2000; Christian, 2010; Collier and Thomas, 2004; Fortune, 2012, 2013; Fortune and Menke, 2010; Fortune and Tedick, 2008; Gándara and Aldana, 2014; Howard, et al. 2007; Lyster, 2007; May, 2008; Roberts and Wade, 2012; Spicer-Escalante, 2017; Swain and Lapkin, 2005; Thomas and Collier, 2003; Watzinger-Tharp, et al, 2016).

There are three models of dual language education:

**One-way immersion:** The majority of students speak the main language (English in the US), and they are taught academic subjects and literacy skills through a second language as well as through their native language.

**Developmental bilingual education:** all students are native speakers of a minority language (e.g., Spanish in the US), and the native language along with the majority language (English in the case of the US) are used for instructional purposes, both academic and literacy instruction.

**Two-way immersion:** are a combination of one-way and developmental bilingual programs. Ideally, in each class, members of the majority language group form 50 % and members of the minority group form the other half [33% is accepted now]. These programs aim to promote bilingualism and biliteracy among both groups of students, and they do this by using each group's language for academic and literacy instruction from kindergarten through elementary school and sometimes in secondary school. (Christian, 2011; Fortune and Tedick, 2008; Genesee, 2008; Steele, Slater, Zamarro, Miller, Li, Burkhauser, and Bacon, 2017).

## **ACADEMIC BENEFITS IN DUAL LANGUAGE IMMERSION**

There are many advantages of DLI for all the students:

- One key advantage mentioned by Collier and Thomas (2004) is that the gap of academic achievement between English native speakers and Hispanics could close by the end of their fifth year (p. 15).

- Another advantage for Hispanics when they are in a DLI program is “finding ways to tap into the cultural and linguistic resources that children bring to school and creating opportunities for them to display their knowledge and skills, which may be different from those traditionally found in school” (de Jong, 2011, p. 185). Promoting their participation and contribution in class could increase their self-esteem and assimilation.
- Lo-Philip and Park (2015) gave a report on a DLI school where the administrators defined the school’s goals as “enhanced learning capacity and intellectual flexibility from studying in two languages” and “an international perspective that transcends national boundaries” (p. 194).
- Studies have demonstrated that Hispanic students in DLI earn about the same or even better grades in English standardized tests than their monolinguals counterpart (Cloud, et al., 2000; Genesee, 2008; Pearson, 2007). The achievements are in all subjects including mathematics (Watzinger-Tharp, et al., 2016).
- Mehrabi (2014), who analyzed whether or not the writing skills from L1 could transfer to L2, found that “L2 abilities are transferred from L1 when both languages are developed to a high degree. It means that thinking and language abilities are developed in one language and transferred to the other” (p. 1688).
- DLI helps students become bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural. According to Cloud, et al. (2000) fully proficient bilingual persons enjoy educational,

cognitive advantages (Roberts and Wade, 2012), socio-cultural, and economic benefits. Bilingual students have shown better achievement than monolingual students “on tasks that call for divergent thinking, pattern recognition, and problem solving” (Cloud, et al., 2000, p. 3).

The Utah State Office of Education (USOE), in its website, provides these proven benefits:

- Students achieve high proficiency in the immersion language.
- Improved Performance on Standardized Tests: Immersion students perform as well as or better than non-immersion students on standardized tests of English and math administered in English.
- Enhanced Cognitive Skills: Immersion students typically develop greater cognitive flexibility, demonstrating increased attention control, better memory, and superior problem solving skills as well as an enhanced understanding of their primary language.
- Increased Cultural Sensitivity: Immersion students are more aware of and show more positive attitudes towards other cultures and an appreciation of other people.
- Long Term Benefits: Immersion students are better prepared for the global community and job markets where a second language is an asset.

## **BENEFITS OF DLI FOR HISPANIC STUDENTS**

DLI is beneficial even for students who come from poor families or have lower grades, as Cloud, et al. (2000) states, “immersion programs are effective for students who often struggle in school because they come from low socio-economic background or they have low levels of academic achievement” (p. 3). DLI can help students achieve academic success independently of their social status, which is a common factor in academic failure. Students who keep studying in DLI until 12<sup>th</sup> grade can also earn university credits toward a minor in Spanish.

Another benefit is that DLI could break segregation and help children get to know each other and their cultures. "...leaders and teachers of two-way dual immersion programs (those that enroll roughly half English learners and half English speakers) are thriving and providing a 'natural' way to break down the isolation of English learners and provide a major benefit for both groups." "Beyond the benefits of learning in two languages, the program also positively influential intergroup relations" (Gándara and Aldana, 2014, p. 743).

### **A SUCCESSFUL STORY WITH DLI**

Eaton (2016) portrays an example of DLI success in a community in Heber City, Utah, where the Hispanic population is 35% of about 500 students, and half of those 35% are English learners. Also, 55% of the Hispanic population in Heber City are families that are living below the federal poverty line. The outstanding number of Hispanic students could predict a bigger problem for the schools, because "As is true in schools across the nation, a climbing poverty rate correlated with declining test scores" (Eaton, 2016, p. 15).

"There must be a better way to reach students who were struggling," (Eaton, 2016, p.15) said Mr. Campbell, one of the principals in elementary school in Heber City. He knew about the DLI program and decided to have it implemented in kindergarten and first grade. Heber City is a conservative place and the opposition towards Mr. Campbell's decision was strong. Many Heber City families despised the program, saying, "We are going to fight against this because you are destroying our community" (Eaton, 2016, p. 17).

Despite the opposition, the program was established and the results could not be better. The achievement gap is still in progress, but the most important part is that leaders have considered Hispanics as an asset to their community instead of a problem. This opportunity for Mexicans and Anglo to interact has bridged the community. “We have all these birthday parties going on all the time with kids from different cultures speaking in two languages with each other. That’s the future right there, these kids working together and creating good things” (Eaton, 2016, p. 16).

The DLI program has promoted acceptance, friendship, and a smaller gap. Heber City is helping children integrate without sacrificing their language. This is just one example, but throughout the state of Utah, DLI has been increasing exponentially. Eaton (2016) says that “Educators in search of ways to improve the achievement of English language learners, to enhance language learning, or to increase social cohesion in culturally diverse school have flocked to Utah in recent years with the hope of replicating the state’s progress”. (p. 16)

## **THE FUTURE FOR DLI**

Since DLI’s initial implementation for grades K-8 in Utah has been growing steadily.

As of the academic year 2016-2017, the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) offers 162 DLI programs, 87 of which are in Spanish, 47 in Chinese, 20 in French, 6 in Portuguese, and 2 in German. These programs currently serve over 32,000 students at the elementary and high school levels. (Spicer-Escalante, 2017, p. 3).

In the Foundation of DLI class, Jill Landes-Lee (Landes-Lee, 2018), the Dual Language Immersion Coordinator, visited us and gave a presentation about how the Bridge Program could prepare every student to be ready for college with the advantage for them to have college credits with a minor in Spanish. DLI's success in Utah is the result of a collaborating effort between school administrators, teachers, and government officials. Now, colleges and universities are adding theirs to the formation of the Bridge Program so that the students have higher opportunities. The Utah's Bridge program was established in 2016 for grades 9-12, and according to their website the program:

...offers an advanced language pathway for high school students who have passed the Advanced Placement (AP) Language and Culture Exam, "bridging" the gap between completion of the exam and higher education.

Students begin upper division university language course work in the high school setting, where each 3-credit college course extends over a full academic year of high school. This rigorous and supportive environment establishes a university and career pathway in two languages, and seeks to promote access to bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural citizenship in Utah. Bridge Program- Advanced Language Pathway.

Roberts and Wade (2012) say that it is expected for students to take the Advanced Placement language classes and take the exam. The students in grades 10-12 can take university courses, and they are encouraged that they take a third language class in high school (2012).

## **CONCLUSION**

Dual Language immersion may be one of the answers to help Hispanic students enrich their language, be academically successful, and reach higher education regardless their socio-economic status. This might be the turning point for a group that has been

segregated and stereotyped with a long history of academic, social, and economic struggle. “We need to establish and put into practice high standards for all our students, including Hispanics; they need to be prepared to be successful in life” (Spicer-Escalante, 2011, p. 1456).

Eaton says, “...many mayors, state legislators, and governors have joined civic leaders, educators, advocates, and millions of everyday citizens in a bipartisan ‘immigration integration’ movement aimed at assisted newcomers in becoming full, participating members in the civic, political, economic, and social lives of their American communities” (2016, p. 12). Obama (2014) says, “Our success as a nation... is rooted in our ongoing commitment to welcoming and integrating newcomers into the fabric of our country” (as quoted in Eaton, 2016, p. 76) and not in attacking them and making them live in fear and isolation.

DLI in Utah has been growing considerably, giving opportunities to students that no other program has offered them. Hispanic students have been integrated without sacrificing their language or their culture. The student population is 24% Hispanic, meaning that close to one out of every four students is Hispanic. If we continue segregating Hispanic students and making them feel less smart than their white peers, the chances for them to go college would decrease dramatically because they would not have the motivation or self-esteem to continue pursuing a higher education. Without a college degree, the probability of them getting a higher paying job is lower, and they could become dependent on welfare programs. However, if they get a college degree they could become contributors to the economy. DLI offers support to Hispanic students by making them feel better about their identity, their culture, and language. In addition, DLI also



helps them by providing a path of acceptance, integration, and interaction between cultures. Moreover, students can obtain college credits before high school graduation allowing them to become more familiar with the idea of going to a university.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES

## DIALOGUE JOURNALS

As learning an additional language is not an easy task, language teachers are constantly in search for strategies and methods that foster language acquisition. As a language teacher myself, I have been looking for ways to help my students make connections between vocabulary, grammar concepts, and sentence formation. Initially, I thought that asking them to write simple sentences would help. As part of their tests, I asked them to write short compositions. However, I observed that it took them a long time even when the requirement was to write a short paragraph. Because I had been sharing my concerns with my peers and professors, someone gave me a book about dialogue journals. After reading the book and doing some research, I decided to use dialogue journals in my classes. I have been very happy to see the positive results. The strategy requires students to write and then share their writing with their classmates who, in turn, need to read and sometimes write a response regarding the content.

**Greenwood and Walters (2005)** have been studying the effects of dialogue journals for many years in their own classes and in collaboration with other teachers. The outcome that they have seen with these journals is encouraging even for students who do not like to read and write. “Through our experience with literature-based dialogue journal, we have witnessed its power to engage students in building comprehension and improving written expression” (p. vii). They are using dialogue journals in literature-based instruction for which students have to read a book and share their insights with their classmates. The authors give an example of a student who was not able to pass a

standardized test because of his lack of reading and writing skills, and after he worked with dialogue journals he was able to write more cohesively. In addition, the length of his writing improved dramatically.

Greenwood and Walters (2005) say that dialogue journals can be used at any grade level. They share the good results from teachers who implemented the strategy. For example, a 2nd grade teacher said: “Without exception the students in this class demonstrated increased skill in using writing as a tool for learning. Especially strong was their use of writing to question, to respond, to extend the experience of literature, and to form and express opinions.” A teacher from a junior high said “Students, when given permission to think, challenge the text.” And a pre-service teacher said that using dialogue journals was a productive experience for students regarding reading and sharing with others. So, what is the magic of the dialogue journals? Staton (1988) claims

For writing to be a natural process it must take place under the same conditions which are essential for any meaningful communication. These basic conditions are that the writer must have real reason to write, and the freedom to construct messages about topics which are important, as well as self-chosen. There must be a functional relationship between writer and audience, and the audience must interact or respond to the message and its purpose in a direct and concrete way. (As quoted in Greenwood and Walters, 2005, p. 61)

Teachers need to implement the journals in a methodical way in the classroom and let the students have the freedom to write their points of view for the journals to be effective. Even though Greenwood and Walters’ book aimed at first language (L1) literacy, I believe that dialogue journals can improve second language teaching, as well.

Second language learners are found in every age group **Kim (2011)** claims that dialogue journals can help second language learners to learn English even at a very young

age. This article focuses on Anthony, a first-grade student who recently came to the USA from Korea and started using a dialogue journal with his teacher. “Anthony’s journals reflected his reading and revealed his L2 literacy development. After seven months of writing in his journals, Anthony used approximately 80-100 different words and formed complex sentences (e.g. using “because”) as he explored various genres” (p. 30). The author recommends that, at this age, students should use drawings because it can be a way to express their ideas, emotions, and thoughts. Kim says that “drawings lead children’s thinking to reading” (p. 28). Journals require students to think about how to express their message; as Kim states “dialogue is an invitation to think and to produce meaning” (p. 28). The article emphasizes that the activity was done on a daily basis, and therefore, gave Anthony the opportunity to internalize what he was learning. Also, it offered him an audience, which in this case was his teacher. There is another positive aspect about journals because they create a sense of community in the class since students get to know each other better through the dialogues.

**Stillman, Anderson, and Struthers (2014)** state that “dialogue journaling can create space for students to express themselves and approximate linguistic conventions (e.g., spelling, grammar, idiom, etc.)” (p. 148). The authors promote free writing about the student’s experiences. They say that dialogue journals can build a sense of community and can be a great way to know each other. They also state that “dialogue journal entries do not arise in response to prompts. Rather, they arise out of and foment relationships; they are spaces where students write about what they care about and know, and where teachers and peers serve as communications partners” (pp. 146-147).

Several studies support the effectiveness and benefits of dialogue journals when students use them to learn a second language (L2) at a high school and university levels. For example, Mahn (2014) gathered quotes of his high school and university students describing their experiences with dialogue journals in ESL classes. The students explain how the dialogue journals have helped them: “overcoming their fear of writing in English, and being offered an opportunity to engage in sustained, meaningful writing, helped them to develop their writing fluency and deepen their thinking” (p. 13). According to Mahn, journal writing helps students develop confidence in writing because they write their ideas without being worried about grammar or having perfect sentences, which enables students to increase their fluency and overcome their fears when trying to write in English. The author emphasizes that journals allow students to “get their ideas on paper first and deal with the form and structure after production. When they experience writing as meaningful communication, students are motivated to attend to mechanics in their writing as they realize that errors interfere with their intended meaning” (p. 51). Therefore, dialogue journals can be used as a low-anxiety tool to develop students’ writing as well as their accuracy in the message and form. The versatility of this tool allows teachers to use it with learners of English as a second language (ESL) to expand their vocabulary, writing and even oral skills.

**Kim (2005)** states that “journaling writing has been one of the most popular strategies used among educators and teacher in the area of adult literacy education and English as a second language” (p. 21). Journals can be an exciting opportunity for adults to share their own stories because they have a lot of experiences. This way, not only can they practice their second language writing skills but also their oral skills when sharing

their writing. Kim says that when the adults write and share their experiences with others, they can be an inspiration by telling them how to overcome problems or offering wisdom for situations that others might be facing at the moment. “Adult learners can expand their knowledge and explore things more in depth by listening to the voices of those who share and understand their life experiences” (p. 27). In addition, Kim expresses that journals can let students use all the vocabulary that they know and realize specific gaps. Because journals challenge students to say what they want to say, they need to find ways to tell their story.

The adult learners needed to be involved in the learning process that is not merely exciting and fun, but challenging, encouraging, as well as meaningful. More importantly, language learning should involve the process of constructing and negotiating meanings and knowledge in a new language, not as mastery of discrete skills. (p. 24)

Dialogue journals help ESL students improve fluency, meaning, and content of their writing as well as their vocabulary and oral skills.

There is another factor that can be used to improve the student’s writing abilities and that is when dialogue is fostered through feedback. This feedback must be focused on content and can be supplied by peers as well as the teacher.

**Kosaka (2016)** reports on the journey of an English language learner who saw how her English improved through journal writing because she knew that her teacher would read it. She said that she became a better writer because she reviewed the notes of her teacher and tried to improve the clarity of her writing. Thus, she increased in vocabulary and she became more comfortable writing in English. She said

I have more confidence when writing than before. I think that writing a journal is a great idea for all English learners. It helps them to improve not only their writing ability, but also their speaking ability because it is an incentive to produce good English. (p. 498)

Even though giving feedback might be a time-consuming task for teachers, it is important to invest in their students' language acquisition. When considering the resources, they have at hand to accomplish this goal, teachers should bear in mind that some students have found that writing with paper and pen is not as appealing or engaging as modern technology is such as blogging.

**Lin, Li, Hung, and Huang (2014)** examined whether journal writing could improve writing in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Instead of paper and pen, their students used blogging. Technology is pervasive in modern life, and therefore, can be considered as an option to engage students as long as the goal of improving writing can be achieved. Some previous studies had demonstrated that blogging was less effective than pen-and-paper journals. However, Lin, Li, Hung, and Huang studied this precise difference and found that “The great majority of participants in both groups [the experimental and control group] held positive attitudes to journal writing in English and provide almost similar reasons: ‘developing the habit of writing is good’. ‘Writing journals help me practice English writing and [in turn] improve my English’ (p. 427). The study showed that both groups improved, but the researchers “recommend blog use to EFL student writers if they want to improve writing skills and enhanced learning attitudes toward writing” (p. 430). Teachers should consider blogging as an alternative to a pen-and-paper journal to motivate students who are more technologically inclined, if they see that students could benefit from it.

After reviewing several articles about dialogue journals, I started implementing them in my beginner-level Spanish course at the university. The way I have been doing it



is to show a picture involving people, and the objective is for students to imagine what is happening in the picture and to write it down using the vocabulary that has been covered in the course. We have been doing this every day for 3-4 minutes. The students are now able to write several sentences that form a story. They even give names to the people in the picture to make it more interesting. Then, the students share their stories with a classmate. I have found that because of this, they can write with more confidence during the test, and they feel more secure when giving a presentation to the class. “People who do not have the ability to transform thoughts, experiences, and ideas into written words are in danger of losing touch with the joy of inquiry, the sense of intellectual curiosity, and the inestimable satisfaction of acquiring wisdom that are the touchstones of humanity” (Gregorian foreword in Graham and Perin, 2007, p. 1). Dialogue journals can be used as a tool in any grade level and proficiency level, not only to improve retention of vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, and fluency, but also to develop the ‘joy of inquiry and the sense of intellectual curiosity’ of those who are engaged in the adventure of learning a second language.

## COLLABORATIVE WRITING IN SECOND LANGUAGE THROUGH WIKIS

Technology, with its constant development, influences the daily lives of students and teachers. Consequently, educators would do well to embrace technology as a tool for teaching and learning. Trying to avoid the use of technology in teaching is like trying to stop a wave in the sea. Both efforts are futile because there are always more waves coming, some even bigger and more powerful than the first ones. The students of this generation were born in the middle of the ocean of technology and it is impossible to ignore or reduce its presence. Technology is part of young people's daily lives and even permeates the lives of older generations of people who are trying to adjust to technology to assimilate and sometimes to retain their jobs. Teachers can take advantage of technology's variety and appeal so that it can enhance teaching and promote understanding and learning. However, effectively teaching this generation of digital natives requires adapting to their culture of innovation while promoting deeper understanding.

Students can have unlimited access to information with just a click on their mobile devices. In the past, obtaining information was more limited to libraries or academic institutions. If all the information that people need and want is available to individuals anywhere in a matter of seconds, then what are teachers for? Thinking that there is no need for teachers because smartphones exist is like thinking that a football team does not need a coach just because there is a football available. In a similar way, even though students have easy access to technology, they need to be coached in how to use it effectively to acquire knowledge. While teachers used to be the source of

information sharing, now they need to be like sport coaches because unstoppable advances in technology demand changes in how to approach education.

Educators can use technology to help students learn the content of a particular subject in a more efficient way. However, technology is not in and of itself an educational pedagogy, but a tool that can enhance learning. According to **Bowen (2012)** “...any course strategy needs to consider the connections among learning goals, activities, and assessments.” In this light, “technology can be an integral part of a broader learning strategy... that can be considered merely as a content delivery technique...” (p. 104). Second language (L2) teaching is not an exception to the effect of technology; to the contrary, using this tool will increase the exposure to the target language.

My experience as an English learner, my education with a minor in TESOL, my experience as a Spanish teacher, and my classes in the Masters in Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program have given me a wide view of how to use technology in a second language classroom. I am particularly interested in writing improvement because instructors often assess students’ progress through their written performance during tests. My interest in teaching writing in an effective way and the urgency for me to use educational technology in my teaching have motivated me to learn more about facilitated collaborative writing in the English as a Second Language/English as a Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) fields through wikis. Once students achieve more accurate production in the second language, they can become active participants in the creation of wikis, websites, and blogs. These platforms allow any person to be authors of online content. However, wikis are unique in that they facilitate collaborative writing because every participant can

contribute by revising and editing the product to improve its quality. Providing students opportunities to work collaboratively in class prepares them for their future careers.

**O’Leary (2008)** explains that the word “wiki” means “quick” in Hawaiian, and initially, wikis were created to quickly add something to the web. However, now the purpose of wikis is so versatile that there are various objectives for their use. However, in general terms, “wikis are designed to facilitate quick and easy content: generation, collaboration, and distribution” (p. 34). One of the benefits of wikis is that several people can be connected at the same time, and this has been very beneficial in business. O’Leary says that in 2004 using wikis invited the public to share stories about one of the presidential candidates, which turn into a success because many people share a good story about the candidate.

Wikis allow people to share knowledge with others, while others can add, edit, organize, structure content and view content. Some wikis are programmed for everything to be recorded. Wikis are a resource for businesses to display relevant and current information to customers through simple edits.

Another use of wiki is Wikipedia where contributors from around the world can add, edit or delete information to provide more accurate information, and Wikipedia has been the precursor of many similar platforms.

O’Leary, in his article, acknowledges that although there are many advantages to wikis, there are also many limitations, and those should be balanced to see if wikis could be effective in business. Still, for the purpose of collaboration and language learning in a classroom could be a useful tool. O’Leary explains that the use of wikis in business is due to their increasing need for collaboration. Teachers could bring up the collaborative

nature of business, evidenced through wikis, to show students that teamwork is a necessary skill for their future carriers. Perhaps this could encourage students to work hard to acquire social skills and a second language.

**Bush and Zuidema (2010)** emphasize that collaborative writing is vital because of the increasing collaboration seen in the professional writing environment, and it is expected that the new employees adapt to the collaborative system of the business. While writing individually used to be the norm, the authors claim that if we consider "...writing only as an individual act, we are missing a large part of what it means to write professionally. We find that more and more of our high-stakes writing tends to be collaborative" (p. 107). Which makes more important to promote collaboration in classrooms.

Writing is ever-present in technology. Websites are full of information in written form, about services, and products, and ideas. If we want to participate as creators and not just users, we need to write properly, because public writing demands more accuracy than ever. The authors of this article say that collaborative writing gives professional results. Companies, universities, and businesses see collaborative writing as advantageous to their needs. "Professional writing is often explicitly representative of an organization" (p. 107). The written information of an organization needs to be almost perfect, free of errors, and of high quality because it can be seen as the face of the company. A mistake in a technical document can result in serious consequences, such as a lawsuit. Therefore, Bush and Zuidema emphasize the importance of collaboration. As Bush and Zuidema put it, collaborative writing gives the students "...the chance to experience how much writing is done in the professional world –written together, with

multiple voices, multiple viewpoints, and (sometimes) significant conflict” (p. 110). As university students prepare to enter various professions, collaborative writing will give them a foundation for success. However, collaborative writing requires time and effort. Furthermore, it is indispensable that students have a strong knowledge of appropriate forms of the target language, especially in second language (L2) learning. Therefore, I need the proper environment for students to learn.

**Bowen (2012)** advocates for a change in the learning process using technology outside the classroom instead of delivering the content in the classroom. In this way, teachers can use classroom time to create a deeper understanding of concepts, and more engaging and higher thinking tasks to promote learning. Learning a L2 is very multifaceted. If teachers attempt to teach vocabulary, grammar, semantics, phonology, morphology, and pragmatics, and then also want students to practice to improve their communicative skills during class time, it would be overwhelming, inefficient, and boring. In addition, Bowen emphasizes that we want to engage our students in critical thinking, exploring, and discovering, even in the L2. He highlights the paradox that “...although we say we want to develop critical thinking skills, we structure most of higher education around delivery of content” (p. 20). Changing the direction of the traditional method of teaching would create favorable conditions to learn the content outside the class, while allowing the students to use class time to engage in discussion, analysis, evaluation, and creation. Bowen advocates for teachers to be literate in technology so they can use it in the classroom, and to enhance communication with students. Finally, teachers who are competent users of technology might be more trusted by tech-savvy students who don’t feel that they know more than the instructor.

When students prepare for the class by learning the content before the lesson is delivered, it is called flipped learning or flipped teaching. Flipped learning is appropriate for ESL/EFL classrooms due to the large amount of vocabulary, grammatical rules, and concepts that students need to learn but there is insufficient time to do it in class. It is exciting for me to see how the integration of technology in education as Bowen (2012) proposes goes hand in hand with the flipped teaching model, which is another part of my research.

**Webb and Doman (2016)** argue that in the flipped model in ESL/EFL contexts, "...students receive extensive and intensive language input and are able to work at their own pace" (p. 40). Flipped learning allows students to receive more individualized instruction. Also, it favors peer-interaction and collaboration, and creative projects to gain a greater understanding of the learning goals. Teachers' time for lecturing is minimized, and grammar, a vital concept in the production of spoken and written language, is learned outside the classroom. Another benefit of the flipped classroom is that it requires students to be prepared before coming to class. Technology offers students various advantages, such as watching videos or listening to podcasts as many times as they want in order to understand the concept, increasing or decreasing the speed of videos or audios to understand the topic, and using closed captions in the L2 while they are listening and reading simultaneously.

The authors of the article conducted a study that took place in four classrooms: two EFL classrooms in Macau, China, and two ESL classrooms in the USA. All participants were at an intermediate level. In both locations, one classroom used a flipped approach while the other used the traditional approach. The study focused on whether the

students in a flipped ESL/EFL classroom make greater gains in students learning outcomes (SLOs) on grammar, especially writing, in comparison with students in a traditional classroom. Also, the authors wanted to know if there was a difference in these two groups, regarding students' attitude towards their grammar skills and their perception of change in their grammar skills. Moreover, they investigated whether students in the flipped classes were convinced about the effectiveness of flipped methodology.

The lessons focused on critical-thinking skills and essay writing. The flipped classroom students studied grammar outside the classroom, while the control group studied grammar in mini-lessons during class. The students took a pre-test and post-test to objectively measure the progress all four groups of students.

The findings suggest that the flipped classrooms aided students in achieving their SLO's in applied grammar. Both the flipped and not flipped groups improved and felt more confident in their grammar, but the post-test revealed the flipped classrooms developed better grammar skills in writing skills application than the non-flipped classrooms. Flipped classrooms helped students improve their grammar skills and develop greater confidence. They also felt comfortable using the method by taking charge and investing in their own knowledge. Web and Doman (2016) conclude that flipped classrooms can contribute to the development of writing skills especially in an EFL environment: "...the flipped approach is a viable methodology and can be an effective approach in ESL/EFL classrooms around the world" (p. 57).

**Leis, Cooke, and Tohei (2015)** performed a similar study but focused on students' composition skills in a flipped classroom. One of their objectives was to find if the flipped method was appropriate for an EFL classroom. Also, they wanted to discover



if students tend to study longer and produce longer compositions in a flipped classroom environment, and if they show an increase in proficiency. The experiment was conducted at a Japanese university.

The flipped approach gives students the advantage of learning at their own pace according to their individual needs and allows them to have personalized instruction to be able to produce written language and reach the learning objectives for the course. One advantage of tablets, laptops, and smartphones is that they allow students to study anytime, anywhere.

The authors claim that with the use of technology and flipped learning the “teachers have the opportunity to provide students with individualized instruction and feedback [and] their learning progress may be achieved” (p. 38). Previous authors had reported better listening skills, vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, and ability to understand contractions in EFL students using the flipped method. Adding to that body of literature, Leis, Cooke, and Tohei found that the flipped method was effective in increasing the quality and quantity in the students’ writing production in an EFL classroom. The implementation of collaborative writing using technology in a flipped learning environment can be achieved through wikis.

**Wang’s (2015)** study’s objective was to find if a collaborative learning environment through wikis has a positive effect on EFL students’ business writing skills, and what the experiences, attitudes, and perceptions in learning business writing with wikis would be. The study, which focuses on business students in Taiwan, found that students who participated in collaborative writing developed “mastery in business writing and enjoyed the challenge of this new learning experience” (p. 499). Also, the use of

wikis increased the students' interest in English, their second language, and improved their writing aptitudes while developing their collaboration skills required for professional environments. Wikis can support language teaching because they encourage students to engage in collaborative work with the possibility of producing a superior result compared to individual writing. Web 2.0 technological tools can increase student's motivation, give them higher satisfaction with their contributions, and make them aware that their audience is bigger than the classroom.

The findings of this study suggest that collaborative writing through wikis is engaging and that wikis are effective tools in improving EFL students' business English writing. Moreover, wikis facilitate careful coordination, communication, and collaboration between students. With this approach, students are set up to feel comfortable and have a positive attitude toward this writing platform.

**Kessler and Bikowski (2010)** did an experiment for one semester in a university to analyze the behavior, autonomy, and collaboration of students using wikis to increase language learning in an online course. The results matched the authors' hypothesis that students would collaborate through adding, deleting, clarifying/elaborating on information. In those activities, "the students were able to contribute their own information to the group product, thus acting both independently and as a collaborative team member" (p. 46). Showing the collaboration without encouragement from the teacher, most of the students acted independently to be part of the collaborative work. The final work was not perfect, but Kessler and Bikowsky found that each student developed "abilities to perform autonomously as a collaborative learner" (p. 49). The authors also say that one of the advantages of wiki technology is to be able to edit the

contributions and later return to the original state in case something is wrong. However, the students did not use this feature, instead using wikis mainly to add, edit, and clarify information. In addition, since students were using their second language to contribute to the wikis, the platform allowed them ample time to add their contributions and pay attention to the language. Kessler and Bikowsky propose that the nature of wiki contributions could facilitate deeper thinking. “This type of space could allow students to more completely examine their ideas before making changes to the wiki, perhaps leading to higher-level critical thinking” (p. 53). The authors say in their conclusions that “collaboration leads to a sense of ownership that encourages extensive utilization of the learning space” (p. 55). In this article, the results indicated that the majority of students were engaged in the task, acting autonomously, and made important contributions in their second language that were unanticipated by the researchers.

**Kear, Woodthorpe, Robertons, and Hutchison (2010)** study the transition from forums to wikis in an online course from a university in the UK. These courses have been using forums to encourage collaboration between students that in another way cannot have interaction with their peers and tutors. Having some communication with peers and tutors is important, especially for students who view higher education as a new concept, and it is necessary that they have some kind of support. The administrators of the course decided to switch from forum to wiki as a trial and to encourage collaboration between students through editing each other entries.

The transfer to using wikis had mixed results for the study group. The idea of implementing wikis in classes is to engage students in a more independent and student centered collaboration, a goal which worked for some students but not others. While

some students adapted to wikis easily, other found them difficult to use. Participation in wikis could be unbalanced since some students are going to participate more than others, and those who add information that is edited could feel discouraged when their work is modified by a peer. Kear et al. (2010) explain, “This can cause frustration for some students, who may feel that their own work is no longer represented in the wiki” (p. 219). Another potential drawback arose with this study where, “some students were uncomfortable with the prospect of editing each others’ work in the wiki” (p. 218).

In addition, some problems students can face is that wikis need fast connection speed and because students are using their own devices at home, some students might not have access to the internet requirements to participate in wikis. Other problems that students and tutors encountered was even though wikis can be very useful “there were usability problems with the wiki, which were frustrating and time-consuming for students and tutors” (p. 223).

Kear et al. (2010) explain that wikis were accepted by less than half of the students, while more than half wanted to keep working with forums probably because they were used to forums. However, one issue that was important was the social aspect of editing other works and another edit the work of a person. In this case, before implementing wikis, the teachers should establish some rules or norms. Kear et al. “highlights the need to attend to both sociability and usability when implementing new technologies for online collaboration in an education context” (p. 224). Therefore, new programs are not always convenient for every class, teachers should evaluate if the new program is applicable to their classroom and their students, and explain the norms such respect, politeness when we deal with each other’s contribution.

## **Conclusion**

According to several studies conducted among ESL and EFL groups, flipped learning appears to be an effective way to increase students' achievement. The studies show that students who participate in a flipped learning environment have improved in vocabulary, listening, comprehension, grammar, and writing skills. Besides this effective teaching approach, technology can be a tool to enhance every aspect of the teaching-learning process in the classroom and especially outside of the classroom so that the time in class can be used to promote deeper understanding of concepts Bowen (2012). At the same time, students can use technology for individualized instruction outside of class.

As teachers, we should keep looking for engaging but purposeful activities to develop collaborative writing skills among language learners. Technology provides many venues to accomplish the goals for our students, and teachers should use those tools to guide and promote effective learning. We should be savvy technology users ourselves, becoming fluent in new programs and evaluating if those programs could promote learning or only provide a meaningless activity. One program that researchers have found useful is wikis. Since wikis could increase organization, communication and collaboration skills in students, why not use them to develop not only writing skills but also skills that our students could apply to their academic and professional journeys? However, teachers should be proficient in using wikis and aware of the problems that students could face when using them. When used effectively, Wikis are a powerful tool that can promote target language writing skills in a collaborative way.

## CONTENT-BASED LEARNING

The Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program at Utah State University has opened my eyes to multiple aspects of second language (L2) learning and teaching. It has helped me to reflect on my own journey of learning English and to develop a vision for how to be a better teacher based on my studies and experiences.

Before starting the program, I was expecting that the academic instruction would help me become knowledgeable about the systems and parts of the English language, such as syntax, semantics, morphology, phonetics, and pragmatics, among others. However, it was a big surprise when I discovered that what we were going to learn was not the system of one language, but the study of theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). I was confused initially, but through the study of our assigned materials and articles, I discovered that what we are learning is preparing us to be better teachers to teach any language.

I understood the significance of the curriculum of the MSLT program when I read a quote by **Corder (1967)** “We have been reminded recently of Von Humboldt’s statement that we cannot really teach language, we can only create conditions in which it will develop spontaneously in the mind in its own way. We shall never improve our ability to create such favourable conditions until we learn more about the way a learner learns...” (p. 169). This is the reason I am learning theories, and now I understand that in order to be a better teacher, I need a strong foundation in theories of SLA to know how “learners learn.”

Since the beginning of the program, I have tried to find connections between my own experiences as a language learner, the perspectives contained in the MSLT course assignments and extra readings, and the implications of my own experience as a language teacher. One source that I have found fascinating is the *Teacher's Handbook* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.) by **Shrum and Glisan (2016)**. This book got my attention because it talks about an approach that has a lot to do with my own learning experience compared with my husband's. The approach is called Content-Based Instruction (CBI). Shrum and Glisan say that "CBI uses the content, learning objectives, and activities from the school curriculum as the vehicle for teaching language skills" (p. 88). I wanted to learn more about CBI because I have seen the positive results when it is used while learning English as a second language (ESL). Shrum and Glisan refer to research in second language teaching that explains the success of this concept "...content-based approaches promote L2 proficiency and facilitate skill learning in relevant ways for second language learners" (p. 88). This is what I witnessed in my own and my husband's experience while learning English.

Jorge, my husband, and I are from México, and we came to the USA to study English. Jorge attended the English Language Center (ELC) at Brigham Young University, while I studied at Nomen Global, both schools in Provo, Utah. Both of us had taken some English courses in México, and we were practically at the same level of proficiency, Intermediate Low. However, after two semesters of instruction here in the USA, the difference in proficiency between us was remarkable. My husband's English skills improved in great measure while mine were essentially the same as before. I knew

this difference had to do with the programs we attended, and I confirmed this idea when I started to learn about CBI during the MSLT program.

I understood that the program that my husband attended was based on CBI. Students there had to read, write, talk, and discuss about the culture, the laws of the country and American history, slavery in particular, which was completely unfamiliar to us. The vocabulary was implicit in the assignments because he had to find the meaning of some unfamiliar words either by context or in a dictionary, and everything was related to the same theme.

I remember that Jorge's conversations were full of interesting information. With excitement, he shared with me his reflections, opinions, and feelings about how African-Americans were treated. I noticed that even though our conversations were in Spanish, Jorge began to use some English terms related to the slavery history. **Rodgers Daryl (2006)** says that "learners acquire necessary language forms in conjunction with the functional skills required to communicate the concepts of the content they are acquiring." (p. 374). That was exactly what was happening here. Jorge was learning the content and the language at the same time.

On the other hand, my English instruction was vague. The readings were hand-outs that talk about something interesting, like short stories, but I did not see any organization at all. There was no sequence, no continuation. I shared some of those readings with my husband, but there was no engaging information to promote reflection over on them. One of my assignments was to read a book of my preference for 20 minutes every day.



Reflecting on this difference in progress between two language learning situations and finding it interesting, I kept looking for more information about CBI. I have found several articles that have given clearer explanations of the variance in progress between my husband and me. For example, **Dueñas (2004)** explains the history, the methods, and the research behind CBI. According to Dueñas, the CBI framework provides the most favorable conditions for SLA "...when both the target language and some meaningful content are integrated in the classroom, the language therefore being both an immediate object of study in itself, and a medium for learning a particular subject matter" (p. 74).

Dueñas (2004) mentions that CBI derives from the framework of CLT and instead of being a "...fixed, immovable method; quite contrarily, it is commonly perceived as a flexible operational framework for language instruction..." (p. 74). The flexibility in CBI can go from immersion education where content has a heavy weight, to methods where the main focus is language.

In her article, Dueñas (2004) also mentions that in Europe, where the same approach is commonly known as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), the methodology has been described by the European Commission as "an excellent way of making progress in a foreign language" (p. 76). This note is relevant since there are many countries in Europe that excel in the teaching of second or third languages to their population. Dueñas also states that there is "...evidence that reading of coherent extended materials promotes language development and content learning" (p. 78). Jorge's program was rigorous in reading assignments that had a sequence on the same topic, and the most important part was that my husband's ability to read in English kept improving.

Following the same line of research, I found a TESOL presentation given by **Stoller (2002)**, who is a strong promoter of CBI. She explains:

...as students master language, they are able to learn more content, and as students learn more content, they're able to improve their language skills. When we hold our students accountable for both language and content learning, think about what we're able to accomplish. Think about what our students are able to do when leaving our classrooms... I'd prefer to send a student out of the classroom able to talk about rainforest than relative clauses *any day of the week!*

I saw this occur in my husband's program when we met after our classes. He talked about the history of slavery and how some slaves obtained their freedom. He was learning above and beyond the language. Also, all his classes were very inclusive in the sense that every skill was practiced with a focus on the same topic. In his classes, they had to analyze and had discussions in groups. In addition, they had to make presentations and write essays about American history. Stoller (2002) mentions that "...when we send our students out of the classroom with enhanced abilities, critical thinking skill, and collaboration skills, we send them out with the ability to apply knowledge to real world problems and we send them out with enhanced self-confidence and motivation. ...Essentially we're preparing the students to be life-long learners..."

My husband had the goal to study at an American university and acquiring the skills of critical thinking and collaboration was the first step to his higher education at an American university. Another important skill to be successful is to write in an academic context.

While in México, academic writing is often an elective course and had low importance certain students, it is essential to succeed in an American university.

Furthermore, in an American university there are several kinds of writing. As **Shih**

(1986) states, “to prepare students for university courses, it is important to have information about the types of writing tasks actually required across academic disciplines...” (p. 618).

Many language classes encourage writing skills by giving prompts to write about personal experiences. This is important for building narrative skills. But Shih cautions that regarding “There is evidence that academic discourse is different, more cognitively demanding, and requiring different skills from personal writing” (p. 628).

Also, Shih says regarding writing tasks in CBI:

[they] require students to restate and recast information and ideas from readings, lectures, and discussions on a topic and possibly also to report on results of independent or group research on related topics. Thus, students develop strategies for collecting, synthesizing, and interpreting new information from external sources as well as for connecting such new information to previous knowledge and beliefs. As in real academic writing, writing [in CBI] serves to help students consolidate and extend their understanding of the topics under study. (p. 629)

While Jorge’s studies were preparing him for college under a CBI program, mine was not supporting those skills. The only writing topics I had were my own life experiences. Shih (1986) explains that in CBI “...writing is a tool for assessing and promoting student understanding and independent thinking of specific subject matter; [teachers] seek to give developing student writers the same experience of “writing to learn”” (p. 641). Writing on an academic subject requires cognitive skills: reading the material, understanding the topic, analyzing it, processing it, and finally writing our thoughts and conclusion about the subject. This is the essence of “writing to learn.”

Furthermore, Shih states that writing is “integrated with reading, listening and discussion about the core content and about collaborative and independent research growing from the core material” (p. 618). As we can, see all the skills necessary for understanding a subject such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, critical thinking, and collaboration, have to do with language. Therefore, it seems logical that language and content go together.

The reality undergirding CBI, that content and language are intertwined, is clear. Even in classes for native speakers, students need to learn the vocabulary, the organization of the text, the format of writing, and the particularities of writing for that subject. For that reason, if we implement CBI in our language classroom we are exposing our students to the language and the content in a fluid and interconnected way.

**Shleppegrell, Achugar, and Oteiza (2004)** emphasize that “CBI can be enriched through an understanding that language and content are never separate, that content in school contexts is always presented and assessed through language... No language is ever taught in isolation from content” (p. 67) However, as fascinating as CBI seems to be, researchers have wondered about its application in real classrooms.

To that end, **Pessoa, Hendry, Donato, Tucker and Lee (2007)** tested CBI empirically in two classrooms. They say that some researchers “...have promoted the benefits of content-based instruction, stating that such instruction fosters academic growth while also developing language proficiency” (p. 103). To test this premise, they adopted the research question: “How is content-based instruction carried out discursively in two sixth grade Spanish classes?” While this was a small scale study, it did confirm some of my ideas that I have encountered during my research and from comparing my

husband's experience with my own. I wanted to know for myself: is CBI good? Is it possible to implement CBI in a classroom? Is it conducive to learning a language? Does it really help students? What are the requirements for putting CBI into practice?

One of the participant teachers in the study said that she enjoyed the of experience teaching CBI in her classroom. She said that everything was incorporated like in real life "...and not just a small isolated piece of their day." Besides, she prefers to "...have a kid who speaks enthusiastically and with mistakes about something in Spanish than a kid who knows how to conjugate verbs perfectly" (Pessoa et al., 2007, p. 115).

The authors' conclusion was that CBI is an effective method to teach L2 along with a subject. However, the study also brought to light some aspects that we need to consider before implementing CBI into any classroom, such as teacher's training, the need for dual certification in "academic subject-matter" and language teaching, or at least knowledge of the "content-specific pedagogy" and language teaching, collaboration and support between teachers in the program, and the use of the target language (TL) in the classroom (Pessoa et al., 2007, p. 115-118).

Regarding the use of the TL, I want to mention that my husband's program was exclusively in English, while mine was mostly in English, but sometimes the teachers spoke in Spanish. In the seminar preparatory to the MSLT program, we discussed that the use of the first language (L1) in the L2 classroom reduces the students' effort to understand the meaning of the content. Pessoa et al. (2007) found that the use of L1 and translation of L2 into L1

...signal a focus on decontextualized vocabulary recognition rather than contextualized academic content knowledge. The continual use of oral translation may

undermine students' ability to make meaning in context by emphasizing to students that language is composed of discrete vocabulary... (p. 111)

Another consideration worth mentioning is that all the materials that Jorge was using for his classes were textbooks that American students would use for a history class. Authentic text is defined by **Crossley, Louwse, McCarthy, and McNamara (2007)** as “a text originally created to fulfill a social purpose in the language community for which it was intended” (p. 17). Crossley et al. say that there is “an overwhelming pedagogical trend toward communicative language teaching that emphasizes the use of authentic language whenever possible so that students can be introduced to real context and natural examples of languages” (p. 17). Jorge was exposed to real language while my reading material was modified or simplified, directed to non-native speakers.

CBI is a great framework for teaching a second language. Content and language are connected and there is no way to divide them. However, we face challenges. Language teachers don't always have sufficient knowledge of different subjects. For effective CBI, language teachers need to be prepared in language teaching as well as in another subject. The ideal could be for the teacher to obtain dual certification, or at least to be knowledgeable of a subject. The use of L1 should be limited to brief moments, and the use of authentic material should increase to expose language learners to vocabulary and information that are directed to native speakers exposed. I witnessed the benefits of CBI to learn a L2, and I saw how a learner can effectively improve his/her language skills and learn a subject at the same time. I think CBI is an excellent option for teaching a second language.

## LOOKING FORWARD

I am grateful to the program for the multiple opportunities that I had during my time in it. Teaching while I was studying was the most remarkable experience that I have, and it could not have been possible in any other way.

Once I complete the MSLT program, I plan to teach in a public school. I want to take what I have been learning and apply in my teaching because I believe that students deserve good programs.

Even though I have learned so much, I recognize that keep learning either formal or informal it is necessary to keep growing as a teacher, and I am going to find opportunities to enhance my teaching.

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APPENDICES

## Appendix A

RESOURCES TO TEACH PRAMATICS IN SECOND LANGUAGE  
TEACHING

Some of the sources that we have at hand to obtain examples about pragmatics are movies, radio announcers, TV shows, TV news, textbooks, roleplay, English teachers, advice columns, and interaction with English Native Speakers. Cohen (2008), in his article, gives also some technological resources to teach pragmatics in a Second Language Class.

- The Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR). It has a series of interactive multimedia modules for language learning, practice, and assessment. The videos portray interactions with native and not native speakers in Arabic, Chinese, German, Korean, Russian, and Vietnamese for beginners, intermediate and advanced students. <http://mimea.clear.msu.edu/>
- The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA). It has three websites dedicated to L2 pragmatics: a general one (<http://carla.umn.edu/speechacts/>), a second website that focuses on an intermediate course in Japanese (<http://www.iles.umn.edu/IntroToSpeechActs>), and a third one focusing on Spanish ([http://www.carla.umn.edu/speechacts/sp\\_pragmatics/home.html](http://www.carla.umn.edu/speechacts/sp_pragmatics/home.html)).

- Another resource from CARLA, that was funded from the Office of International Education to the Language Resource Center, provides pragmatic information for teachers, curriculum writers, and learners with detailed information about six speech acts (requests, refusals, apologies, complaints, compliments, and thanking) in as many as ten different languages.
- Cohen, also, recommends that students should put together their digital speech act portfolios.