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SUPPORTING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS THROUGH COLLABORATION, COMPASSION, AND ENGAGEMENT

by

Lora Ann Stead

A portfolio submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

Approved:

Dr. Abdulkafi Albirini Major Professor	Dr. Karin deJonge-Kannan Committee Member
Dr. Elena Shvidko Committee Member	Dr. Bradford J. Hall Department Head

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

Logan, Utah

2018

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ABSTRACT

Supporting English Language Learners Through Collaboration, Compassion, and Engagement

by

Lora Ann Stead: Master of Second Language Teaching
Utah State University, 2018

Major Professor: Dr. Abdulkafi Albirini
Department: Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies

This portfolio illustrates the student's academic work completed while in the Master of Second Language Teaching program at Utah State University. The project is centered around the student's philosophy on teaching English language learners (ELLs) as drawn from personal experience and second language acquisition research. The author seeks to provide awareness into best practices for teaching ELLs.

The portfolio is divided into three sections: 1) teaching perspectives, 2) research perspectives, and 3) annotated bibliographies. Within these sections, the author explores themes related to ELL teaching that highlight the importance of collaboration, compassion, and engagement. These topics include politely closing a conversation in English, embracing diversity in the ELL classroom, teaching ELLs in a general education setting, communicative language teaching, oral corrective feedback, and methods for engaging ELLs.

(179 pages)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Completing the Master of Second Language Teaching degree has been one of the most influential decisions of my life. I am deeply grateful for those who have helped make this dream possible. First, I would like to thank my dedicated and talented committee members. My committee chair, Dr. Abdulkafi Albirini, has provided a welcome balance of humor and expertise in his mentorship. Committee member Dr. Karin deJonge-Kannan has been an unwavering support, championing both my scholarship and my character in ways that made me feel priceless. Committee member Dr. Elena Shvidko helped me see professional strengths I did not know I possessed, creating a lasting confidence that will serve me indelibly. Dr. Shvidko also provided much feedback on lesson plans and teaching instruction, and she encouraged me to present at the International TESOL Convention which was a highlight of my MSLT experience. I am a better educator and person because of these inspiring professors.

A special thanks to my husband who sacrificed much to support me through this process, including postponing reading the third installment in the *Stormlight Archive Series* by Brandon Sanderson that has been sitting on his dresser for months. You are amazing. *Grazie mille* to our baby boy who became a toddler during this journey. He handled the juggling of our busy lives with grace. I also greatly appreciate my parents who continually support me, and my brother, Mike, who champions education. Finally, a shout out to my incredible MSLT colleagues who will always be some of my dearest friends. An important lesson I learned in this program is the value of relationships, and everyone mentioned here contributed to that understanding and so much more.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACTFL = American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

ALM = Audiolingual Method

BICS = Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills

CALL = Computer-Assisted Language Teaching

CALP = Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

CBI = Concept-Based Instruction

CF = Corrective Feedback

CLT = Communicative Language Teaching

ELC = Cache Valley's English Language Center

EFL = English as a Foreign Language

EIL = English as an International Language

ELLs = English Language Learners

ESL = English as a Second Language

ELT = English Language Teaching

IELI = Intensive English Language Institute

L1 = First/Native Language

L2 = Second Language

LING = Linguistics

MSLT = Master of Second Language Teaching

NCSSFL = The National Council of State Supervisors for Languages

NNSs = Non-Native Speakers

NSs = Native Speakers

PACE Model = Model of Grammatical Instruction

SATS = Self-assessment of Teaching Statement

SDAIE = Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English

SIOP = Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol

SLA = Second Language Acquisition

TBLL = Task-Based Language Learning

TESOL = Teaching English as a Second or Other Language

USU = Utah State University

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INTRODUCTION TO THE PORTFOLIO

The Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) portfolio is a tangible representation of knowledge gained while completing this master's degree. The invaluable insight gained in my courses, feedback from observers, and experience as a graduate instructor with Utah State University's Intensive English Language Institute (IELI) cannot be measured. This collection outlines what I believe is most important in second language teaching according to theory and personal experience and is organized around creating a safe classroom environment where students are engaged in the learning process and working together to maximize language acquisition.

The portfolio is broken up into three sections: 1) teaching perspectives, 2) research perspectives, and 3) annotated bibliographies. In the teaching perspectives section, I include the cornerstone of the portfolio, my teaching philosophy statement. My teaching philosophy is based on facilitating language acquisition through communicative language teaching and student collaboration, establishing an engaging, student-centered classroom, and creating a compassionate and safe environment for language learners. In the research perspectives section, I include a language paper, a literacy paper, and a culture paper. For the language paper, I discuss how to politely close conversations in English which includes collaborative practice of the speech act. The literacy paper explores ways to welcome diversity into the ELL classroom, grounded on helping students feel safe and valued in class. The culture paper focuses on two strategies for teaching ELLs in a mainstream classroom: peer interaction and use of native resources. Following the research perspectives are three annotated bibliographies which discuss communicative language teaching, oral corrective feedback, and strategies for engaging

ELLs. Within the individual papers, various aspects of the importance of creating an empathetic classroom that engages students in collaborative learning is addressed.

Exploring and analyzing these topics in tandem with my graduate student teaching have been invaluable in my growth as an educator. Embarking on this educational journey has been a turning point in my professional development and personal growth. As I continue implementing the principles discussed in this portfolio, I hope to make a difference in the lives of my students as my professors, advisor, and IELI mentor have made on mine.

TEACHING PERSPECTIVES

APPRENTICESHIP OF OBSERVATION

"Lora, you will go on to do great things one day," my third grade teacher wrote to me one day on a small square of cardstock. That message, placed in a childhood scrapbook, has been engraved in my mind ever since. Though I have not always felt worthy of the praise, it was during those times of discouragement and frustration that I most held on to the compliment. If Mrs. Cook saw something special in me, maybe it really was there. An extra minute of time spent by a past teacher has positively impacted me for decades, helping me achieve and become more than I might have otherwise. I am grateful for how Mrs. Cook's encouragement shaped my life and especially how it has shaped who I am as a teacher. I have since gone on to communicate similar messages to my students, not knowing the possible impact, but hoping it will empower them. And although we may never know the influence we have as teachers, it can be significant. I believe that the impact of a single invested teacher can have a domino effect on the community and even the world.

During my journey learning Italian, I discovered that language scholarship is a place where genuine encouragement and praise are valuable. Acquiring a second language was one of my most vulnerable experiences. Unlike my previous educational efforts, learning a language was personal, rooted to my core hopes, fears, and insecurities about my progress. The times someone looked confused when I spoke, the moments when I could not understand someone or express myself fully, and the occasional, "Sorry, I don't speak English," when I greeted someone in Italian, were crushing. These experiences deflated my confidence in communicating with the people in Italy.

Contrarily, the times someone expressed admiration that I had only been in the country a handful of months, the sincere compliments on my growth, and even when people poured their hearts out to me, trusting I would comprehend, helped me soldier on in my quest to communicate proficiently in Italian. The highly emotional and personal journey of learning a language is considerably more manageable and enjoyable when accompanied by encouragement and praise. For language learners in a classroom, this encouragement and praise comes largely from the instructor. It is our duty as teachers to support and empower our students on this vulnerable and important path of language acquisition.

We can also bless the lives of our students by caring about each one. My 7th grade band teacher singled me out when he noticed I was not on his roster for the following year. He asked me why I was quitting the band and pleaded with me to continue when I replied, "I am taking private lessons instead." This teacher shared his wisdom that without a band, people quit playing. He even called my mom and spoke to her about his concern. Although I enjoyed the saxophone I was embarrassed to bring the large instrument on the bus every day. I was confident I would still carry on my talent in the secrecy of private lessons, where I did not have to be labeled "a band girl". However, after a few months of private lessons, I indeed quit, a decision I regret to this day. My middle school band teacher did the best he could to help me avoid an unhappy outcome that he anticipated from his knowledge and experience. Although I did not heed his advice, he was right to notice me and take pains to try and further my progress.

As language teachers, we can similarly impact the lives of our students by recognizing and guiding them individually. For example, when students are not doing

homework, teachers can pull them aside and ask them if they have questions or talk to them about why they are not performing well, rather than simply giving them a low grade and moving on to other tasks. Teachers should take similar strides when it seems students may be giving up on the language altogether, which can happen for a variety of reasons including fear, anxiety, frustration, embarrassment, time management immaturity, and personal issues. Naturally, these outcomes can motivate students to quit learning the target language, a choice they could regret for a lifetime. But teachers can help students avoid missing out on being bilingual, like I unfortunately missed out on being a musician. Teachers can and should impart wisdom to students who may not be able to see the bigger picture for themselves and support them individually. With this approach to teaching, teachers can have a lasting positive impact on students' language acquisition and consequently their entire lives.

Finally, language acquisition is more effective when students can see the value of their efforts to communicate with others. Learning a language is difficult, complex, vulnerable, and gradual and it is important that students have a clear vision of how important communicating can be interpersonally, professionally, and educationally. In addition to being charged with helping students acquire a new language, it is the role of the language teacher to help students gain an appreciation of its benefits. With the knowledge that their efforts will be worthwhile, students can stay dedicated to their language acquisition. My mother, one of my greatest teachers, helped me understand the importance of language and how it opens doors.

A professional storyteller, my mother introduced me to oral language early on in my life. I grew up listening to folk tales, autobiographical stories, and fables. Some of

these stories had the audience holding their breath or looking over their shoulders. Others invoked tears, laughter, or a call to action. By experiencing a variety of stories in my youth, I came to understand the power of language. As a result, I have used the oral English language extensively in my life for teaching, acting, public speaking, and interpersonal relationships. When I learned my second language, it was thrilling to be able to communicate with a whole new population of people that would otherwise be distanced from me. I experienced the benefit of moving beyond a proficiency in only my native language in order to create relationships, communicate messages, and come to know new cultures in a deep way. As we increase understanding of others, we better understand our world and ourselves, a gift that language teachers have the privilege of providing their students.

Through my years as a student of languages and general education, I have come to learn that some of the most important aspects of education are not found in textbooks, academic content, or perfectly planned lessons. A central component to education is dedicated mentors who encourage and guide students in their journey while demonstrating the value of their efforts. My hope is to be a teacher as inspiring as Mrs. Cook, as dedicated as my band teacher, and as impactful as my beautiful mother.

PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The focus of this portfolio is for ELL instructors. My professional experience includes educating elementary children, teenagers, and adults; consequently, discussions about ELLs of various ages are found throughout this collection. Overall, much of the portfolio contents could apply to learners both abroad or within the United States in a university or public school, private tutoring, or a community English language program.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

The Art of Teaching: From Research to Personal Philosophy

Introduction

Writer Antoine de Saint-Exupéry is known to have said, “If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people together to collect wood…but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.” Similarly, a language instructor’s privilege is the opportunity to move beyond lesson plans and assignments and focus on instilling a love of the target language among students and helping them see the value of their efforts. Engaging students in meaningful, communicative tasks is central to learning enjoyment and appreciation for language. Students are also more likely to appreciate their language learning experience when included in an environment of safety, encouragement, and support. Learners with an understanding of what their hard work can accomplish and who feel comfortable in class will be more likely to stay motivated when the learning process becomes difficult. From my experience learning Italian and Spanish and teaching dozens of ELLs, I know that learning a language can be highly vulnerable, frustrating, and emotional. It can also be one of the most rewarding, beneficial, and valuable achievements possible. Language acquisition can transform the lives of individuals and their families and even unite cultures and nations. Reflective teachers who base instruction on effective pedagogy in a safe environment can help students realize their language goals.

In the MSLT program, I have learned about effective language teaching methodologies and strategies from participation in courses, researching experts in the field, attending professional conferences, and teaching a low-intermediate English as a

Second Language (ESL) reading class with IELI. These valuable learning opportunities, combined with several years of previous teaching experience in elementary through high school, a private language institution, a community English as a foreign language (EFL) class in Italy, and Cache Valley's English Language Center (ELC), have helped me identify and refine my beliefs about what creates an effective teaching approach. This teaching philosophy outlines the principles I believe best facilitate second language acquisition.

Methodology Matters

Prior to the MSLT program, I had ideas about what made language teaching effective but I knew nothing about language acquisition theory. The language teaching methods taught in the MSLT program have proved useful in my classroom. I learned that research no longer supports a traditional approach such as the Audiolingual Method (ALM) or the Atlas Method. Although I did not have a name for ALM, I was familiar with the method from personal experience as a language student. ALM concentrates on the instructor providing explicit instruction while the student takes notes, with the outcome of students learning grammar perfectly (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). With ALM, students use language to drill, memorize, and repeat grammar without emphasis on meaning. Language mistakes are discouraged for fear of creating bad habits. I was a student in a French class based on audiolingualism and it was ineffective in achieving even low level language proficiency. A more successful approach is Communicative Language Teaching, or CLT (Ellis, 1996, 2012; Lee & VanPatten, 2003; VanPatten, 2017) that equips learners with valuable communication skills in the language versus simply being able to fill in the correct verb tense on an exam (VanPatten, 2017). I have

observed that a focus on communicative teaching can provide students the language skills to *use* the language communicatively in their lives instead of just *knowing* it on paper.

One my favorite parts about CLT is that the instructor and students become a dynamic team in achieving language-learning outcomes. Instructors create a space for students to take the lead in their learning development as they collaboratively engage with their classmates in meaningful language tasks, or those that are useful and natural. In this way, the roles of student and teacher shift dramatically from what is standard in ALM. Teachers become mentors and guides; students are leaders and active thinkers. When they are responsible for their learning, students stay more engaged, learn better, and are more likely to feel valued. Through my experiences as both a student and instructor of language, I have seen that these student and teacher roles not only enhance language development, but also create a safe and trusting classroom environment.

It is important to note that the shift of roles from teacher-centered to student-centered does not mean that the instructor takes a backseat in the class. Contrarily, when I have facilitated communicative, student-centered tasks with my students, some of my strongest teaching moments have come from monitoring student work and providing feedback. One such experience came in an ESL job skills lesson where students worked in pairs to create help wanted ads that matched their professional skills. As I observed a student pair, I noticed confusion about the conditional tense. I monitored other students' work and noticed a similar knowledge gap. In response to my observations of student performance, I was able to provide necessary supplemental instruction. I believe that the shift in student and instructor roles from a traditional approach to CLT is an evolution in language teaching that leads to an increase of second language (L2) learners who are

capable of using the target language in their everyday lives.

A student-centered, communicative classroom is also full of rich opportunities for students to explore the language and use it for a variety of purposes. Students in my ELL classes stay engaged as they participate in communicative exchanges with peers and develop language skills. I enjoy observing my students learning together which creates an energetic and dynamic classroom environment. Additionally, language errors are accepted as part of the learning process and students are encouraged to participate, even if they make mistakes (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001). My English ELLs often appear afraid of making mistakes and speaking in English when they first arrive in class. As they grow accustomed to a classroom format that welcomes the learning process, errors included, I see them open up and take risks. Through their courage to try, students start to make improvement in their language skills. Each of these characteristics of CLT aid in its ultimate goal of equipping students to use the target language for communication.

When teaching for IELI, I sought to create a communicative classroom. Some might perceive a disconnect between communicative teaching and a course focused on reading comprehension and vocabulary development, but I found that CLT was natural and straightforward to implement. For example, I was able to use class time largely for communicative tasks among students by saving longer readings for homework and avoiding extensive explanations about strategies and vocabulary. In class, students received brief, yet valuable, instruction on the reading strategies and vocabulary that correlated with homework assignments. Following instruction, students spent much of class time interacting with peers to complete worthwhile tasks which helped them

understand the reading strategies learned and engaging in group discussions about literature topics and themes.

One specific example of a communicative lesson from my course was organized around a textbook article called, “The Sacred Realm of Art” (Hartmann, 2007). In the context of this reading, student pairs rotated between three learning centers with the respective objectives to 1) identify and organize details that supported the main idea of a text; 2) engage in a vocabulary organization game that required negotiation of meaning; and 3) compare and contrast two works of art. Student engagement was high during this activity and I was able to formatively assess my students as they completed the tasks, thus preparing me to better meet their language development needs.

Another communicative task that my students completed was taken from the presentation, “Engaging L2 learners: Communicative activities for the reading/writing classroom,” at the 2018 International TESOL Convention (Warfield, 2018). My IELI students took turns being the *runner* and approaching me to retrieve a comprehension question about a class reading. The runner would then relay the question to the rest of his or her group who would work together to find the answer. Another student runner would come back and hear the next question until all reading comprehension questions were successfully answered. The students negotiated meaning as they relayed the question back to the group, clarified that each student understood the question, and then worked together to determine the correct answer. This task helped students develop listening, speaking, and reading skills. Some of my students informally reported that they enjoyed the course and that they valued what they learned about reading skills and the world around them. Without having applied the CLT framework, I believe my class would have

been much less engaging and worthwhile for my students.

Comprehensible Input is Key

By creating a communicative classroom, instructors provide students a forum in which to engage with comprehensible input, or oral and written language that they can understand (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). Opportunities for comprehensible input are important because they facilitate language acquisition (Krashen, 1981; Krashen 1982). When learners do not understand what they hear and see, they are not able to process the the input. Additionally, from personal experience as a Spanish language student, I know that learners can become anxious and frustrated when they do not understand what is happening in class. It can be difficult to help beginning ELLs understand my output, but researchers provide suggestions that have worked in my classrooms. Lee and VanPatten (2003) suggest slowing down speech, using total physical response (TPR), articulating words, simplifying syntax, adding emphasis to key points, and using visual aids. When working with English learners online, I commonly display objects of food, animals, or other content-related items to supplement the lesson. I have discovered that this practice not only develops vocabulary, but it also engages students by providing a variety of classroom materials. Another useful practice in my teaching is pulling up websites or Google images to promote understanding. Finally, using TPR often leads to nods and expressions of understanding more effectively and quickly than a verbal explanation. Overall, based on my teaching experience, I believe that comprehensible input is crucial in successful language instruction.

Instructors can also make written language comprehensible by structuring it with bullet points, colors, and highlighting (VanPatten, 2017), strategies that have proven

effective in my classes. One specific exercise that boosted my upper beginning students' text comprehension was guiding them to highlight parts of speech in different colors, such as verbs in orange and nouns in pink. I could follow up with that activity by brainstorming a list of verbs and nouns that related to our lesson and writing the verbs in orange and the nouns in pink. Another helpful strategy is to use texts and materials that bold important or difficult words, thus cueing students in their reading. With my IELI students, it was also helpful to draw attention to bolded words and discuss them to best facilitate understanding. These methods, especially when combined with student interactions, can be useful in helping students understand input.

When students interact with the input in communication, they can better understand what they read and hear (VanPatten, 2017). For example, when I engage students in an information gap activity that utilizes specific linguistic structures instead of a non-communicative worksheet, I offer them a greater chance for comprehension. Students have better language results when they internalize language input by using it for communication rather than simply hearing or memorizing it. My experience as a French language student in middle school attests to the poor results of receiving input from the instructor without an expectation of using the language to communicate. In that class, we read from the textbook, repeated words and phrases, and took written tests, but were never expected to use the language for real-world purposes. The language we discussed in the textbook never left the page. Though partially due to my lack of studying, the traditional method of memorization and repetition was a large factor in my nonexistent French skills despite taking two years of classes.

Later, when learning Italian in a communicative context, my eyes were opened to

the possibilities of language acquisition. As I interacted with people in Italian, the language transformed from existing in translated phrases in a textbook to being a medium in which I was able to interact with other people in a variety of contexts and topics. From my experience as a learner, and through my observations as a teacher, I believe that language learners' results are directly comparable with the effectiveness of the pedagogy they receive. It is the responsibility of instructors to set learners up for success.

Communicative Tasks Triumph

Instructors can facilitate comprehensible input and language development by incorporating communicative tasks which allow students to develop proficiency using the target language for real-world purposes. A task is a learner-centered act of communication that honors the classroom setting and includes multiple steps of information gathering (VanPatten, 2017). In the CLT approach, the lesson is planned around the task and grammar is taught with the consideration of how, what, and when to teach it, versus a focus on it (Ballman, et al., 2001). In other words, grammar instruction supports communication, but is not the goal. In my experience, this relationship between tasks and grammar provides a successful recipe for language development.

For example, when giving a mini Italian lesson in LING 6400, Second Language Teaching: Theory and Practice, I began planning considering what task students would complete and then identified important grammatical features needed for successful task completion. The main objective was for students to ask and respond about one another's families and the grammar taught supported the task but was not the lesson objective. Through this task-based approach, students were able to carry out discussions about their families in Italian, instead of simply learning phrases and vocabulary. Additionally, I was

able to assess students' understanding of the lesson as they completed the task and provide needed clarification in some areas. Engaging in tasks helps students develop knowledge about how to use the language versus simply what aspects comprise its formation (Field, 2008). In this way, incorporating learning tasks into the classroom may lead to true language acquisition, as I have seen in my professional and education experiences.

When learning Spanish at Brigham Young University's Foreign Language Housing—a residential language learning program that requires total communication in the target language—I was in charge of coordinating and overseeing dinner for the other Spanish language students once a semester. I was terrified as I explained to the other four students on my team, in Spanish, how to make a Carbonara pasta, even with the help of my pre-written instructions. However, as the other students asked me clarifying questions and I was able to provide spontaneous answers in Spanish, I felt a sense of pride and happiness in my ability to complete the daunting task of co-hosting a meal for 40 people in a foreign language. Additionally, students outside of my team asked for the recipe and I felt that my dinner idea contributed something meaningful to their lives. The feeling of satisfaction I got when organizing a community meal in Spanish has never been replicated by filling out worksheets or clicking responses on a computer. In turn, I seek to give my students as many opportunities to use English in real-life circumstances as possible.

Although cooking a group meal in class might not be feasible, instructors can certainly incorporate effective criteria in the tasks they plan. Allowing for negotiation of meaning and variety are important factors of effectively-structured tasks. VanPatten

(2017) says, "[Instructors] must structure activities and tasks such that learners constantly indicate comprehension and react to the messages they hear" (p. 59). It is not sufficient for students to interact, they must demonstrate that they are working towards understanding the communication through clarifying, questioning, and responding to one another. As students negotiate meaning, they develop necessary L2 skills. Additionally, Brandl (2008) discusses the importance of offering students a range of tasks and providing support to students as they complete them, which will help learners gradually build up their language skills. I agree that a variety of tasks is crucial in the classroom both for language development and engagement. My students get excited when I introduce a new type of task or learning activity and seem more interested in repeating previous ones after some time has lapsed. Engaging students in language learning tasks facilitates a focused, interactive, and meaningful language journey for students.

Another way that task-based learning promotes language development is by engaging students. The classes I have observed that are focused on grammar instruction and repetition have yielded bored students who rarely use the language in class. I watch these students speak to each other in their native languages during class and as they are leaving class, having hardly dipped into English at all. Time was not spent developing L2 proficiency in these classrooms. Students were not empowered in their ability to meet their goals. From my experience, engaging students in communicative tasks that incorporate grammar taught in class has been an effective way to help students stay engaged while they develop language proficiency.

Additionally, students who are engaged are more motivated than bored and passive students. Instructors can put hours of time into planning lessons, but if students

are bored, time planning, and class time, was unproductive. Pretorius, van Mourik, and Barratt (2017) explain, “One of the most important elements of student engagement is participation in learning” (p. 389). When students work together successfully, they are active participants in the learning process. Participation in learning can also include creative work, games, and student choice. In each course I teach, I frequently plan choices for my students in their projects, assignments, and homework to engage and interest them. The results are that students are generally motivated, enthusiastic, and high achieving. With collaboration, instructors can allow students choices as well, including options about what text to read or what task to accomplish. When I envision a successful classroom, I see students engaged in meaningful tasks as they move around the classroom, work together in small groups, and demonstrate high energy. This type of classroom creates a space for students to get to know and understand one another, a valuable part in helping them feel safe and supported in their learning goals.

Classroom Environment: The Foundation

Communicative learning is a way to help students become part of a classroom community. Friendships can be made. Trust can be developed. However, the instructor has a duty to help students achieve these positive results when misunderstandings or fears may reside between students initially. Helping students appreciate one another for their differences is vital for creating a safe classroom environment. Coyle (2017) explains:

> Creating an empathetic classroom atmosphere is perhaps the most significant investment a teacher can make toward understanding others and building relationships. When you understand others, they’ll want to understand you; and this is how you can start to build cooperation, collaboration and teamwork. (p. 42)

Learning that is engaging and collaborative springboards compassion. As students work together, they can form connections and appreciation for what others offer the learning process. Additionally, instructors set the stage for how students are expected to treat one another. Acknowledging and recognizing diversity in the class is one way instructors can demonstrate they value all backgrounds and identities.

Messages of acceptance can be communicated by teachers through material selection. Selecting images for presentations should be a strategic choice, not just an arbitrary selection of the first image that comes up on a Google search. When selecting images, I often consider the nationalities of my students, their lifestyles, and their professed beliefs to make the visuals even more personal to them. An interactive game I created to assess mixed-level ELLs on vocabulary about body parts included images of dark Indian female eyes, a man's back covered in tattoos, and many shades of arms and legs, based on an effort to acknowledge my students. In order to affirm my students, I also consider the authors and subjects of the texts we read. It is imperative to me that characteristics of my students are represented in presentations and texts so they feel included and important. Dörnyei (2009) affirms that the way in which students visualize themselves largely impacts who they can or might become. If students cannot see themselves included in society as role models or as professionals in their desired fields their motivation to succeed can drop. I strive to make sure that my students feel seen, valued, and able to succeed in anything they want to do with their language skills and otherwise.

Furthermore, as students work together in a safe environment to accomplish tasks and goals, their understanding of the world and of themselves expands. Kincheloe (2006)

asserts, “Humans are ultimately the constructs of relationships, not fragmented monads or abstract individuals” (p. 199). Providing students chances to form connections with their peers offers them a chance to grow as individuals in addition to thrive in their learning goals. I experienced much interpersonal and academic growth through classrooms interactions and subsequent relationships formed with MSLT colleagues. As a result of these exchanges, my understanding of cultures and identities has grown in a profound way which helps me better reach my diverse student populations. I have learned more about myself as I considered new perspectives and juxtaposed my understanding with views of others. Most importantly, I gained an awareness of the importance of relationships in general. These relationships helped me grow as a person and learn more about successful language teaching through observations, scholastic collaboration, and discussions about teaching practices. Without those interactions, I would not know as much about myself, the world, or effective teaching. I have seen similar knowledge shared among students in each of the classes I have taught, their knowledge of cultures and the course content growing through their interactions with one another.

Collaborative learning can also help students value working with others to achieve personal and collective goals. Hooks (2010) explains, “Expounding both heart and mind, engaged pedagogy makes us better learners because it asks us to embrace and explore the practice of knowing together, to see intelligence as a resource that can strengthen our common good” (p. 22). As students collaborate in class, they learn the value of others’ strengths. Additionally, language skills uniquely benefit society as a whole because they provide opportunities to interact with others that would otherwise be impossible. Naturally some of these interactions might not be enjoyable or positive, but

working through differences is also a valuable skill. Students of language need to understand the importance and value of human relationships; what better way than to allow them to learn together and experience the results firsthand.

Supportive relationships between the teacher and student are also valuable in creating a successful learning environment. From my experiences teaching, I have observed that my rapport with students correlates with attendance and motivation. When I have succeeded in building a respectful relationship among my students, they are far more eager to perform well. On the flip side, I once took over a level 3 ESL class halfway through the term and decided to skip over my usual practice of in-depth introductions. The remainder of that course proved difficult to teach in terms of student motivation, punctuality, and classroom management because the students and I did not have a relationship foundation. Learning is a vulnerable process and students need to feel that they are supported and cared for by their teachers.

Fortunately, in a subsequent term, I was able to teach that same group of Level 3 students again with drastically different results. The first day, we did a communicative Getting-to-Know-You activity that I participated in as well. I interacted with my students personally as we circulated the classroom trying to find people who fit specific criteria such as having a summer birthday or working full-time. I enjoyed learning about students' lives and experiences; they seemed to enjoy sharing this information with me. This activity set the foundation for a safe classroom environment. Additionally, for the rest of the term, I made sure we were building relationships through our language development such as discussing life experiences and opinions in relation to the course content. Another helpful approach in building relationships was conversing with students

who came early instead of finishing up lesson preparations and saying goodbye to them at the door when class ended instead of packing up. These customs transformed the classroom energy, likely because students felt important and valued. I also enjoyed getting to know more about the students and felt more comfortable with them. Putting students before the lessons will continue to be central to my teaching practice.

Another goal of mine to is to create a classroom that empowers students in their L2 learning journey. Learning a language is a complex and slow process (VanPatten, 2017), and students will be more likely to persevere if they feel capable of succeeding. In a mixed-level ESL class I taught, I sensed great frustration from the beginning students who continually compared their abilities to those who were more advanced. One student even shut down several times and avoided participating. After receiving one-on-one instruction and encouragement, this student was able to complete language tasks. From this experience, I learned the value of creating a classroom dynamic that provides as much individualized attention as possible, whether in the form of an instructor, a teacher's aid, a volunteer, or a student helper. In addition to doing my best to differentiate according to abilities, I frequently, though sincerely, praised the students verbally and with thumbs up and high fives. At the end of each class in that course, we all put our hands in a circle and did a cheer of encouragement, such as *we are awesome!* The student who had shut down earlier thanked me for the class and committed to reading in English for 20 minutes that evening. My goal was that no matter what the students were able to learn in that class, they would continue to attend class, put forth effort, and believe that their ambitions were possible.

Conclusion

My teaching philosophy has evolved since I started teaching 10 years ago, though much of the core remains constant. Before I knew about communicative teaching, I delivered lessons the best that I knew how, but always with the aim of engaging students. Although I have grown substantially as an educator, I still stand by the importance of student engagement. The classes I took as a student that were interesting, hands-on, and meaningful to my life have stuck with me for years afterward. Those are the types of experiences I want my students to have. With the help of the MSLT program, I have learned even more about the importance of using effective teaching methodology and how to create lessons that are not only engaging, but also beneficial for language acquisition. From my recent experience teaching ELLs, I recognize that incorporating communicative tasks in a student-centered classroom instead of focusing on repetition or memorization is a solid way to engage students and help them develop language skills.

Fostering relationships has also been a longstanding component of my teaching practice. Part of the joy I find in teaching is derived from personal connections. The relationships I developed with some of my first students have remained intact after a decade. I know that many of my former students are also still in contact with one another. Fostering these interpersonal relationships and helping students achieve their goals are the reasons I am in this field. A central way to foster these relationships is by implementing communicative tasks which not only lead to language acquisition but also help students learn more about one another and unify through hard work. I strive to connect the world one class at a time.

As I continue to teach and learn about effective teaching, I know that my teaching

practice will continue to evolve. I seek to be a reflective educator and consistently consider what could have gone better in a lesson and what I would like to do again. Regardless of what I learn in the future, I will always believe that instructors can help students value and appreciate language acquisition by incorporating a student-centered, communicative classroom that promotes task-based language development, student collaboration, and content engagement. Additionally, instructors who acknowledge diversity can create a safe environment where students feel confident about who they are and what they can achieve. These second language learners will be motivated and prepared to set sail on a lasting journey of meaningful communication with others.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TEACHING OBSERVATIONS

Joining the MSLT program as part of a group of talented teachers was not a journey I expected as a new mom. The first day of class I entered LING 6900, Culture Teaching and Learning, to find a half circle of strangers. There was one empty seat that I snuck into with hopes of remaining there unnoticed. Little did I know that those students would become some of my greatest mentors, teachers, and friends. We began with introductions, and I was intimidated to hear about the professional goals and experience the others had. I was also unaware at that time that I would have the opportunity to teach at Utah State University and implement many strategies and teaching practices of this group. Observing these talented teachers has been a valuable component of my professional development.

Each of the four MSLT students and two IELI faculty I observed were gracious to let me sit in on their classes, often encouraging me to send them my feedback. Their desires to refine their teaching skills align with my belief that the basis of great teaching is consistently improving the practice. When I had the opportunity to observe their classes, I knew I was in a space built on instructor preparation, concern for each student, and sound pedagogy because I had seen them preparing lessons diligently, conversing in the graduate instructor office about problems and questions, and studying carefully. I observed a low-intermediate IELI writing class, a low-intermediate IELI integrated skills class, an IELI conversation class, two Spanish 1010 classes, and a Chinese 1010 class.

Most applicable to my work with adult ELLs was observing the IELI classes. In those classes I was able to get many useful ideas about student interactions and content instruction. First, the writing instructor started the class by making connections to

students such as mentioning where they were from, bringing up what they enjoy doing, and talking about their majors. This approach helped me focus on creating personal connections among class members and reflecting on how much I know about my students. It was obvious this instructor made a specific effort to learn about his students. I also observed that this instructor gave students time in class to work on a writing assignment. In a college setting, it is not in my nature to use class time to work on assignments. I have more of a flipped classroom approach, saving class time for brief instruction and communicative tasks and expecting students to complete assignments at home; however, this instructor's decision caused me to reflect and reconsider.

I thought about how overwhelmed the IELI students are and how giving them some additional time to complete assignments in class instead of at home could be helpful for their stress levels. I believe that students perform better academically when they are not stressed, and I will consider allowing some time during class to work on assignments. Additionally, assignments worked on during class can give students a chance to ask questions and for the instructor to monitor their progress, which he did. When teaching elementary, I often took advantage of class time for providing student feedback, and realized I can incorporate this method into university classes too, even though there is much less time. I appreciated reflecting on my classroom organization decisions and believe I will be a better educator for my increased awareness.

In addition to what I learned from this instructor, there were a few areas of his teaching that I would have done differently. First, he explained several words and phrases without writing them on the board. Making use of the white board and other visuals for ELLs is a goal of mine because language learning is better when supported visually.

Also, the instructor gave the students five minutes to complete an individual writing activity that I think would have been ideal for pair or group work. The class was not particularly communicative, and I saw missed opportunities that could have improved the students' learning experiences. Each instructor has unique strengths, and I was grateful to learn from his and also solidify personal current practices I believe are important.

The Integrated Skills instructor demonstrated experience and knowledge in his teaching practices. He took every opportunity to help the students make meaning of words, phrases, and text. He stopped to ask about words students might not know and defined them accordingly. I support making input comprehensible, and this instructor was skilled in this approach. I want to be better about scaffolding assignments. Sometimes I take for granted that these rather proficient English learners will know the vocabulary we are working with, unless it is part of an academic word list or highlighted in the textbook. This instructor also constantly scanned his students' expressions and assessed their understanding of course content. I watched as he adjusted activities to best support students' learning. For example, when students were unsure about a question from the film, he rewound the film and prompted discussion about what had happened. Through his pedagogical choices, the instructor created a safe, supported classroom environment which is the type of classroom I strive to build.

One way I would have taught the Integrated Skills class differently is by making the lesson topics more meaningful to the students. Part of engaging students is by helping them create connections with the material. For example, two of the video themes were gender and culture and the lesson centered around students responding to dry video comprehension questions related to these topics. Instead, I wanted to hear what the

students knew and thought about gender and culture. Engagement would have been heightened through brief discussions of students' opinions and experiences. I realize that time is limited in classrooms, but I believe that making time for meaningful and collaborative learning is a priority.

The third IELI teacher demonstrated commendable rapport with her beginning conversation students. She showed genuine interest in her students' lives, opinions, and comments. She was also very patient with her students and their developing language skills. I admire the ease, respect, and trust in which classroom interactions took place and commend the compassionate classroom environment. Aligned with my conviction toward student engagement, this teacher chose a relevant topic to discuss that students would be interested in—plans for the upcoming spring break. However, I would have liked to see her organize the whole group discussion differently because several students dominated the conversation. Incorporating partner discussions is one way to balance speaking opportunities and provide extra scaffolding for language development. Lower level or shy students could be apprehensive to speak out spontaneously in a group format, but working with just one person can be less intimidating. Within partners, the instructor could have distributed a list of predetermined questions related to the lesson that students could have chosen to discuss. Providing written questions is also a way for instructors to promote reading skills and to springboard a discussion. My belief is that a class focused on one specific skill such as conversation or listening should still incorporate all four language skills at some points and to some degree.

Another way the conversation instructor could have incorporated literacy skills in her class would have been to use authentic texts in the discussion. Students could have

learned about events occurring during Spring Break by pulling up an events calendar from a local newspaper or magazine such as the *Utah Statesman*. Students could have discussed which events looked interesting and asked questions. In addition to strengthening students' literacy skills, this activity could have provided them with a resource they might not have known about, and encouraged cultural experiences with additional opportunities to converse in English. With a classroom environment clearly conducive to learning, a few pedagogical adjustments could provide a space even more effective for language learners.

The language teachers of 1010 level courses that I observed reinforced my appreciation for communicative language teaching. I was impressed at their ability to fit in several communicative tasks in a 50-minute class. Each of these instructors used PowerPoint presentations to organize their information which was an effective way to instruct language visually while organizing the material. Additionally, several of them distributed handouts with the grammar components of the class which the students referred to often while completing the communicative activities. I learned that the more resources an instructor can provide students to strengthen understanding, the better. I also really enjoyed the classes that had a mixed of pair work, group work, class work, games, and tasks. Engaging students using multiple methods of tasks is an effective way to maximize learning.

The final area of observation I will discuss is the impact of unique and engaging touches the instructors included in their lessons. One Spanish instructor handed out name tags to each student at the beginning of class with either "tu" or "usted" written on them. This was a brilliant way to immediately engage students and allow them to practice both

forms when completing tasks. The Chinese teacher conducted a game where students swatted correct answers projected on the board with fly swatters. Students enjoyed getting out of their chairs and competing against one another. It was also a way for the instructor to formatively assess her students which is important. I used this activity in a mixed-level ESL class and it was a hit. These instructors supported my teaching philosophy by organizing the class around communicative tasks and engaging them through multiple methods.

A rich part of my professional development during the MSLT program was observing colleagues and seasoned teachers in action. I am pleased that the master's program offers a supportive, collaborative environment where graduate student instructors can work together to best support their current students and continue shaping their practice for future students. What a great opportunity it was to observe these talented and dedicated teachers. I will continue observing other teachers in my future teaching opportunities. I recognize that this master's program is only one benchmark in what will be a lifelong journey of learning, growing, and adjusting as an educator.

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING STATEMENT

Introduction

Teaching is far from an isolated profession. Not only is interacting with students the heart of the job, but collaborating with other teachers is a valuable way to improve our practice. Crandall and Finn Miller (2014) maintain that new teachers ought to seek more experienced teachers for advice and help. I believe all teachers, regardless of level of experience, can benefit from collaborating with other teachers to get ideas and feedback. Mentors and colleagues at various stages of my teaching career have provided invaluable support that helped replace apprehension with confidence and questions with answers. Much of this support has come in the form of ideas, feedback, and suggestions about my lessons that teachers have provided through observing a class.

In addition to requesting observations from other teachers, Harmer (2007) suggests that teachers record themselves and conduct self-assessments about their lesson, an idea supported by Spicer-Escalante and deJonge-Kannan (2016) who developed the Self-Assessment of Teaching Statement (SATS). SATS combines a video recording of the class, self-reflection, and peer feedback to create a multi-layered approach to improving teaching skills. The purpose of SATS is to give teachers a reflection framework to follow that combines the benefit of self-reflection with feedback from other instructors who can provide a fresh perspective on the lesson. Through my experience with SATS, I was able to improve the pedagogy, planning, and content knowledge of my future lessons.

Background

My SATS comes from a lesson I taught in a low-intermediate ESL reading class in the Intensive English Language Institute. The lesson was planned around communicative language teaching and task based language learning. My personal goal of the class was that students would be exposed to a practical application within the language that they could use in their everyday lives. I chose the reading strategy scanning in the context of finding specific information about food items. The learner outcomes for the ESL course stated that students would use level-appropriate texts to demonstrate enhanced comprehension skills and that students would demonstrate increased vocabulary knowledge.

The lesson-specific goals that supported both the course outcomes and the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Can-Do Statements (ACTFL, 2015) indicated that students would be able to scan food labels to find specific information, and that students would be able to learn new vocabulary words in the context of learning North American culture. The purpose of aligning the lesson objectives with Can-Do Statements in this lesson was to help students have smaller, measurable goals to guide them in their greater-picture proficiency ambitions, both in the context of reading comprehension skills and in real-world situations. Prior to teaching this lesson, an observer reviewed the lesson plan and provided feedback. When it was time to teach the lesson, I felt quite comfortable that it would be successful.

ESL Class Experience

As the six international students in the reading class filed into class a few minutes early, I asked them about their weekends. The discussion ran about 5 minutes into class. That part went a little longer than it needed to. I could have mitigated that by having students share with one another what they did over the weekend and joining in on a few discussions, rather than making it a lengthier whole class discussion. At the beginning of the semester, I often did warm ups to start class and found the approach effective so that the class gets going with purpose. Although it is important for me to build rapport with students, I need to do so strategically, considering when to do it and how much time is spent. Using time well in class is an important part of my teaching philosophy.

Following the weekend discussion, I introduced the reading strategies of skimming and scanning. I wrote those words on the board and then briefly explained the strategies verbally. To improve this pedagogy, I could have made a few slides to introduce the reading strategies rather than explaining them without any contexts or visuals with which to connect the words. There was a written explanation on their handout, but I did not give it out until the activity started. However, I am glad I kept the explanation of the strategy brief because I do not think lengthy explanations are effective for students.

The students did an activity and scanned for information about food items I brought to class (protein, carbs, sugar, brand of food, and serving size). I modeled the activity using a bottle of lemonade. Then the students predicted how many grams of carbs, sugar, and protein would be in the food items. I should have defined those words before beginning the activity. It is always important to assess students' understanding of

vocabulary that we will be working with in the lesson. The overall lesson would have been more meaningful for the students if they understood the vocabulary, which they might have, but I did not assess beforehand to know for sure. Some students in the class seem to feel comfortable interrupting and asking about a word but some do not, so it is my responsibility to ask. On the same line, the observer of my class commented:

> Not sure if students knew the words "carbs" "protein" (these are some very difficult words): perhaps you could have given them examples (i.e., a list of foods that contain these nutrients). They surely know these concepts in their native languages, but not in English, so examples would have given them the direct way to the meaning of the words. (lesson observer, personal communication, November 15, 2017)

Such scaffolding would have made the activity more meaningful and contributed to achieving the course's learner outcome of students increasing their vocabulary knowledge.

Through my observer's feedback and my personal reflection, I noted several other lesson components that went well and some that could have been improved. The prediction component that students did on individual white boards engaged them and got them thinking. During the activity, the students circulated in pairs between the oatmeal, cake mix, and pasta they and retrieved specific information from a graphic organizer within a time frame. Additionally, my observer and I both agreed that my modeling activity of using a bottle of lemonade was helpful for clarity. After the activity was over, I asked what questions the students had, which was effective but did not give them any

time to ask which was a missed opportunity. Allowing students to contribute and negotiate meaning in class is crucial.

Overall, I liked this scanning activity and thought it was a quick and effective way to teach students the value of this reading strategy. My observer agreed that the lesson was effective in teaching scanning, including the assigned homework which was to find specific information from last year's IELI class schedule such as who teaches a conversation class or where the Topics class is held. The biggest area I revised the next time I taught the lesson was a suggestion from my observer. She recommended following the food item activity with an activity where students scan and skim in the context of a selected text since it is a reading class. At the time, I completely agreed that it would have further solidified the concept to have students find or skim information from a text. When I taught the lesson the next semester and concluded with a text from the book, I was pleased to see how much more students appreciated and understood the opportunities for scanning.

After the activity was over, I wrapped up the scanning part of the lesson with a discussion. First, I asked the students a follow up question: "Did we do this activity just to see about food and nutrition?" Students were busy comparing their predictions to the actual information they found so they were not listening to my question. I should have waited until they were ready and then asked them. It is important to read our students and make adjustments to the lesson based on their reactions and need. However, I thought it was effective to give students time to compare their predictions to the actual findings. Student-made connections are a huge part of their learning process. Next, I asked the students a few scanning questions about a story they read for homework to further

solidify the skill, but this would have been a great time to also delve into the text or pick a new one they had not read. Finally, I asked the students if they could use these reading strategies in their studies. My observer and I agreed that it was an effective question to help them make a connection. She said, “It’s important to reiterate the skill students practice each time you do an activity targeting a certain skill.” I could also have asked when they might use the strategy and when it would not be helpful or appropriate.

With this scanning lesson, I tried to make the material useful to their lives as well as to their studies. I think the strategy was relevant to them and that the students were satisfied with what they learned. To help make up for the lost opportunity to strengthen their understanding of the skill, we continued practicing the reading strategy in the next class two days later using an article from our course textbook. The students seemed to deepen their understanding of scanning as they applied it to a textbook reading, evidenced by their ability to scan the text to correctly answer comprehension questions about the text’s content.

Aside from improving the particular lesson, the SATS experience helped me identify an overall weakness of sometimes not being clear in my teaching or instructions. Before class started, I gave some slightly disjointed instructions about turning in home work. In the moment it felt awkward and sure enough looked awkward when watching the video later. Fortunately, I sensed the students’ confusion and repeated the instructions which clarified what was being asked. Overall, I thought there were several components of the lesson that went well and several that could have been better which I discussed in this section and summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Combined Self-Reflection and Peer Comments

Effective Lesson Components	**Areas for Improvement**
Used the board for a visual aid	Make the most of class time
Solicited predictions of the answers before task	Provide context for reading strategy instruction
Engaged students in a real-world scanning task	Define new words before beginning task
Asked students if they had questions	Allow students more time to consider questions
Students compared predictions with answers	Apply the reading strategy to an actual text
Helped students make a connection between the strategy and their academic studies	Be clear in instructions
Concept-based learning of strategy and vocab	Ensure that students are listening before asking a question

Final Thoughts

Being a teacher is an art that when honed and practiced can lead to phenomenal results. The CLT approach, language tasks, comprehensible input, and peer observation can lead to a richer and more effective canvas in which our students can hone their language acquisition. Since teaching is my art form, I can be overly hard on myself if something does not go well. However, I feel that I am generally able to match my teaching philosophy when I teach, demonstrated by the lesson I recorded and reflected upon for the SATS and many others I have taught. The process of completing the SATS

helped me improve my practice as well as gain confidence as an instructor because of the encouragement of my wonderful mentor. She was generous with praise and succinct in constructive criticism. I will implement both peer and self-reflective feedback as I continue to teach, and hope that the result will be successful language acquisition for many ELLs to come.

RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES

LANGUAGE PAPER

So Long, Farewell: Ending on the Right Note in L2 Conversations

INTRODUCTION AND REFLECTION

My first semester in the MSLT program, I took LING 6900, Culture Teaching and Learning, with Karin deJonge-Kannan. I did not know it then, but Dr. deJonge-Kannan would become one of my greatest life mentors and inspirations. The opportunity to observe her teaching choices every week was the first step in understanding what an expert teacher she is. This course set the stage for my appreciation of communicative language teaching and fostering a compassionate classroom environment. It also helped me understand a component of language instruction which I had been unaware of: pragmatics, or the social-cultural factors of language. This course enthralled and interested me and helped me feel confident with my decision to begin the master's program.

Writing this paper was quite intimidating for me after an eight-year absence from academic writing. Although I had written a lot of personal and creative pieces in that timeframe, APA format or Academic Search Premier were not part of my daily landscape. Dr. deJonge-Kannan encouraged us to find a partner and co-write our final paper for the class. Another new student, Losa Acuña, and I decided to give it a try. We both had goals of teaching ELLs and had both studied English in college so our backgrounds aligned well. Neither of us had co-written anything before and it was a positive experience, easing our fears of tackling an entire academic paper and allowing us to gain added ideas and insights about the topic.

Losa and I brainstormed several subjects and decided on closing a conversation because it was somewhat unexplored but important. We had both experienced blunders in

finishing conversations in our second languages and we recognized the importance of understanding the speech act and knowing how to teach it. We researched extensively and recognized even more blatantly that there was a gap in this topic in published literature. However, we were able to find several solid sources and form an understanding of how to provide students a clear context in which to learn and many opportunities to practice the skill.

A highlight of completing this paper was going deeper into the writing process. First, I conducted field samples of personal conversational closings. The process of analyzing my own conversations helped me reflect on this speech act in greater depth and understand it more. Second, Losa and I presented our paper at Utah State University's Student Research Symposium. Planning for the presentation helped me identify holes in my understanding of the topic and solidify my written ideas. Both of these experiences taught me how important hands-on experiences are in education. When students can combine various forms of learning such as reading, writing, creating, and teaching, they are able to reach higher levels of learning.

Without having taken Culture Teaching and Learning, pragmatic skills such as politely closing a conversation, would not have been on my radar. I look forward to including pragmatic skills in the curriculum of my language teaching career and know that my students will be at an advantage because of this choice.

Abstract

To be considered proficient in another language, speakers need to master more than linguistic form (LoCastro, 2012). In addition to linguistic proficiency, pragmatic proficiency is a key area of concern (Celce-Murcia, 2007). Appropriate enactment of pragmatic norms enables language learners to interact effectively in the target-language community. Some challenges associated with the development of pragmatic competence involve learners relying on norms from their native language/culture, having a lack of grammatical knowledge, and being unaware of the target culture. This research investigates why a particular speech act, closing a conversation, can be difficult for L2 learners of American English. Next, the authors propose a sociopragmatic approach to teaching language learners how to politely negotiate this task. This approach integrates raising awareness, practice, and analysis. The authors argue that through this type of direct instruction, second-language learners can acquire the conceptual and pragmatic skills for closing a conversation appropriately.

Keywords: conversational closing, L2 teaching, sociopragmatics

Introduction

Saying “goodbye” is not often an easy task. But closing a conversation in a culturally acceptable manner within a particular social context can prove even trickier. Adding the correct phrasing in the right sequence, finding an appropriate tone relative to the relationship with a co-interactant, and the multi-step closing itself can be absolutely befuddling. This sociopragmatic conundrum of how to close a conversation politely and without offense plagues most people, native speakers or non-native speakers. Now imagine navigating these social maneuvers while learning a second language. Takami (2002) states, “Furthermore, studies on the closing from different languages and/or different cultures show that partings are cross-culturally different” (p. 69). Because of such variations in social norms across cultures, second language acquisition (SLA) instructors should incorporate sociopragmatic lessons to teach how to politely close a conversation in the L2 classroom.

Despite the difficulty of the task, Tajeddin and Pezeshki (2014) argue that politeness in speech acts is a teachable skill. The authors of this paper extend Tajeddin and Pezeshki’s idea of pragmatic teachability to closing a conversation. More specifically, we argue that ideas from Gal’perin (1979) about concept-based instruction (CBI) that begins with teaching the student how to close a conversation, is followed by practicing the speech act, and concludes with reflection on the performance prepares ELLs to succeed in their personal interactions by developing their sociopragmatic skills. Nicholas (2015) explains, “In [CBI], the emphasis is on helping learners develop a deep, conceptual understanding of a skill or knowledge

area, so that this knowledge can then be applied in a variety of situations" (p. 383). Gal'perin's three step CBI process could provide language learners with the foundation to successfully execute various types of conversation closings in their daily lives.

Knowing how to close a conversation is crucial because each interaction, regardless of its nature, will ultimately require this function. Notably, the English language as taught in the United States has a challenging approach to politely closing a conversation which includes several steps and consideration of each participant's desires. Kellerman, Reynolds, and Chen (1991) state that a successful conversation closing puts distance between interlocutors without the act demonstrating dislike from either party. Fortunately, teaching L2 students the pragmatics of closing a conversation will help them achieve this successful outcome by avoiding face threats (Brown & Levinson, 1987) to the interlocutor. LoCastro (2012) defines two types of face: "Positive face needs concern the desire to be liked, involved, and included in the category of being the 'right' kind of person. Negative face wants involve the wish to remain undisturbed, not imposed upon, in one's action" (p. 137-138). Closing a conversation is a high-stakes situation in many cultures, including American English, due to its potential risks (Coppock, 2005), which include threats to negative face if one interlocutor wants to continue the conversation and the other needs to end it, or positive face if one party is disinterested in interacting with the other person but does not want to appear rude. Given the potential difficulty in closing a conversation, L2 learners of English will benefit from specific instruction on how to succeed in closing the conversation in a natural way that maintains positive face and rapport.

What is Known

Socially acceptable conversation closings are dependent upon individual cultures. Due to cultural variations, politeness strategies for closing a conversation in face-to-face interactions will differ according to L2 social norms. For example, some cultures may have little- to-no closings while others have quite extensive strategies for retreat (Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1991). Sociopragmatic differences between a student's first/native language (L1) and target language often cause confusion. Additionally, L2 students may inadvertently incorporate native-speaking strategies which will not translate culturally within the target language (Wong, 2010). For example, in Italian it is common to end a conversation with a series of *ciao*, a salutation which could quite easily be said several times sequentially before the interlocutors part ways. In American English[1], it could be uncomfortable to hear *bye, bye, bye, bye, bye* from another person before being granted a polite retreat. It is important for L2 learners to understand what is socially acceptable in closing a target language conversation in order to differentiate expectations between cultures.

A central characteristic of American English L2 learners should understand is that it often employs elaborate conversation closings with both interlocutors working together toward a completion of the interaction (Takami, 2002). For example, it is not customary in the United States for someone to simply say, *okay, bye,* without both interlocutors having first acknowledged the upcoming conversational close. However, it is customary for conversational closings in American English to include a sentiment of gladness in

[1] For the purpose of this paper, "American English" refers to English as spoken and taught in the United States.

having had the privilege of corresponding with the other party, an element that is not expected in every culture (Okamoto, 1990). This example only begins to address the intricacies in American English conversational closings. Because of the complex nature of English conversation closings, it is crucial for ELLs to examine and understand not only the various parts to a polite closing, but also the applicable sociocultural context. For example, ending a conversation between a boss and his or her employee would usually be different than between a husband and wife. The speech act would also look different among people who want to continue talking and those who feel obligated to chat. Because of its complexities, ELLs require instruction on how to close a conversation in American English.

Instruction on closing a conversation should include what to do and how to do it. Researcher Al-Almoudi (2013) asserts, “speakers should not leave a conversation before negotiating a closing which is a delicate matter both technically and socially” (p. 138). In terms of procedure, Cohen and Ishihara (2010/2014) designate three parts to closing a conversation: the shut-down, the pre-closing, and the terminal exchange. In a successful closing, a speaker uses a shut-down to shift the topic of discussion toward an ending (Cohen & Ishihara, 2010/2014). At this point, a pre-closing is initiated to verify the discourse is coming to a close. During both shut-down and pre-closing, the interlocutor will be given a chance to continue the dialogue (Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1992). Finally, a terminal exchange signals the true end to the conversation, dissolving the social interaction (Cohen & Ishihara, 2010/2014). While these stages describe the standard turns in an English conversational ending, not all conversations will consist of all stages (Cohen & Ishihara, 2010/2014). If ELLs do not know how these phases of conversation

indicate intention of retreat, they may be perceived as rude by their co-interactant by needlessly continuing the conversation (Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1992). The risk to face and rapport is what begs this act to be taught in terms of technicality and social art.

There are various types of threats that arise with closing a conversation, adding to its complexity. Coppock (2005) discusses three social risks that pose threats specifically to face. The threat to positive face lies in the closer appearing rude or disinterested in the other person by wanting to leave the conversation. The risk of offence by leaving the conversation, or by not respecting the interlocutor's wish for it to end (Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1992), is what makes closing the conversation particularly risky for positive face. Takami (2002) stresses the joint responsibility of both speaker and interlocutor to preserve each other's face when one retreats from a conversation thereby preventing threats to the co-interactant's positive face. The threat to negative face happens because the closer disallows the interlocutor to finish the desired conversation (Coppock, 2005). Cutting a conversation short takes away the co-participant's need for autonomy and control of the situation. Additionally, timing could threaten the interlocutor's negative face who would like to end a conversation and is being held hostage. There is also a risk to the interlocutors' relationship in general because they no longer have the opportunity to build their solidarity, the latter point cited in Coppock (2005) and taken from Goffman (1967). The need to consider which steps to take when closing a conversation, combined with the risks of threatening face that vary culture-to-culture, are what make closing the conversation a delicate act that should be taught to ELLs.

Societies across the world have unique methods to convey politeness; cultural

preference for negative or positive face will heavily influence politeness strategies in social interaction. Positive politeness cultures tend toward directness in speech acts while negative politeness cultures may use indirect politeness strategies to reflect deference to individualism (Ogiermann, 2009). Acknowledging the importance of negative face in American culture will help ELLs execute polite closings in face-to-face interactions. Indirect linguistic structures, known as politeness markers, may be particularly confusing to L2 learners in regards to English closings. Instruction on politeness markers clarifies how indirectness can soften a retreat from conversation (Tajeddin & Pezeshki, 2014). Politeness markers (*please* and *if it's not too much trouble*), hedging (*kind of*), or downtoners (*just*, *simply*) are a small sample of such strategic linguistic structures (Tajeddin & Pezeshki, 2014).

Culture plays a significant role in raising student awareness of politeness strategies within a specific pragmatic context. According to Takami (2002), "In other words, people [within a speech community] have the knowledge of what is appropriate to say or not to say as well as the well-formedness of the rules of the language" (p. 70). Without proper instruction, a second language English speaker might unknowingly end a conversation too abruptly or with the wrong exit strategy, causing a social misstep. L2 students may also be in danger of using expressions of gratitude without indication of their intent to leave the conversation in a mistaken attempt to execute a polite closing (Wong, 2010). This strategy may seem quite logical but expressions of gratitude do not always translate as intended. For example, while *thank you* may be used as a discourse marker to signal intention to end a conversation, certain L2 speakers may use it indiscriminately in a variety of social contexts (Wong, 2010). Communicative competence grows as the ELL

progresses in awareness of the target language's cultural norms. ELLs who study the mechanics and sociopragmatics of politely closing a conversation within the L2 culture will have an easier entrance into the American English speech community.

For the scope of this paper we examined the most relevant lines of inquiry in conversational retreat, politeness, pragmatics, and language acquisition teaching methods to suggest the necessity of teaching L2 students how to politely close a conversation in English and how to best teach it. For instance, Quian (2016) concentrates on function content in secondary school textbooks and how teachers have taught language function in their classrooms. Another study investigates students from China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Indonesia, and Thailand, ages 18-35, who took an ESL course in North America. They used authentic videos from other ELLs to raise pragmatic awareness (Cheng, 2016). Nguyen (2011) also explored how textbooks designed for Vietnam's upper secondary schools facilitated the development of intercultural pragmatic competence. A common research thread studies Asian L2 learners and how they can succeed pragmatically when carrying out various English speech acts. Studies which examine teaching strategies and lessons on conversational endings in English would also be advantageous for second language teachers and learners.

Data Analysis

The below research, conducted by the authors, illustrates the multi-tiered, delicate act of closing a conversation. The first example demonstrates the end of a conversation that stemmed from an unexpected meeting at a restaurant between Stead and a cashier from a local grocery store where Stead usually shops. The risks of negative and positive face threats are inherent in this scenario. Since the cashier, Rachel (R), is heading into the

restaurant with her family, she may not desire to speak to Stead (S), who has already eaten. This portion of the conversation happen after an initial greeting.

Example 1.

	1	S Are you going to Cafe Sabor?
	2	R Yes, it's our favorite.
	3	S Yeah, it’s so good. What's your name? *(asking daughter)*
	4	H Harper.
	5	S It’s so good to meet you.
	6	H Heheh
Shut-down	7	S Great, well what do you like here?
	8	R Bean and cheese burrito. I'm a simple type of person.
	9	S Bean and cheese is great. What does Harper get?
	10	R She doesn’t like Café Sabor so she brought her own.
	11	S Nice, well as long as everyone gets what they want.
	12	R Ha, yeah.
Pre-closing	13	S Great, well enjoy your dinner.
	14	R Thanks! We will.
	15	S Well, fun to run into you!
	16	R Yeah, you too.
	17	S It was fun to meet your family.
	18	R Thanks. That was fun.
	19	S Okay, well I'm sure I’ll be seeing you at the store.
	20	R Yeah, see you soon.
	21	S Bye.
Terminal Exchange	22	R Bye.

In this example, we see each of the closing phases outlined by Cohen and

Ishihara (2010/2014). Stead initiated both the shut-down and the pre-closing, wanting to respect Rachel's time with her family and intention of going to eat, while still allowing Rachel a chance to continue the conversation, if desired. She employed the softener *well* several times to hint the discussion could close at any time, and then used a compliment to ease into it. As to be expected in the context, Rachel did not take the chance for the conversation to continue, though she demonstrates politeness in reciprocating compliments and acknowledging a future meeting. The latter comment avoids Goffman's (1967) threat to solidarity (cited in Coppock, 2005) since it is expected that the two will have future opportunities to converse. The terminal exchange was marked with *bye* from both parties, and Rachel and her family walking away.

Stead and Rachel's relationship is also taken into account in this scenario, Stead being Rachel's customer when they usually meet. Consequently, it appears that Rachel allowed Stead to lead the conversation. Without pragmatic knowledge of closing the conversation, Stead could have threatened Rachel's negative face by carrying on the conversation too long, not realizing the difficulty it would have put Rachel in since she would not want to offend a customer. In this authentic scenario, the complex nature of ending conversations in regards to relationship, context, and inherent face threats is illustrated.

Example 2.

In the second example, Stead and her family are finishing a hike in Green Canyon. Stead is anxious to get her child into the car and out of the cold when another hiker, (H), approaches them.

1 H Your baby is so beautiful! All that hair!

	2	S Ha, yeah, and we just cut it.
	3	H Wow, my granddaughter would love him.
	4	S How old is she?
	5	H I have 6! But the one I'm thinking of is…ha…6.
	6	S Oh fun.
	7	H Yeah she loves babies.
	8	S Awww
	9	H Wow this baby is really so adorable. At first, I thought, 'what is she holding?' (*the baby was wrapped in his father's shirt*) And then, wow.
	10	S Thanks. Yeah he's great.
	11	H (reaches to touch baby's hair) Oh, can I touch it?
	12	S Heh sure, go ahead.
	13	H Oh wow, wow.
	14	S Ha, yeah.
Pre-closing	15	S Well have a good walk.
Terminal exchange	16	H See ya.

In this brief exchange, there is a pre-closing and terminal exchange, but not a definite shut down. The pre-closing occurs with "Well, have a good walk," a polite way to wish the hiker well while simultaneously signaling the end of the conversation. This line also functions as a type of excuse, indirectly indicating that since H is just beginning her walk she ought to get going. Stead also uses the strategy of keeping her responses brief, hinting that there is no need to continue talking. This reflects nonresponsiveness (Kellermann & Reynolds, 1991) where an interlocutor uses little-to-no verbal back channeling, which signals disinterest. Stead also shows nonresponsiveness through restlessness signals, a non-verbal strategy, to point toward an end (Kellermann &

Reynolds, 1991). Such non-verbal strategies can be introduced to ELLs, though the focus of this paper is on oral strategies for retreat. Line 16, “See ya,” is what Kellermann and Reynolds (1991) call a departure announcement, making it clear that the conversation is done. It appears that H followed the line of conversational closing well, understanding the “have a good walk” hint and pre-close. Through this dialogue, it is clear closing a conversation has many layers and requires careful execution.

Suggestions

L2 learners need to facilitate a deeper understanding of the pragmatics of language. Nicholas (2015) concludes that L2 instruction must go beyond the limitations of teaching lists of set phrases, expressions, or language rules without any reference to sociocultural context. He supports Gal’perin’s (1979) concept-based instruction (CBI) that includes three phases: orientation (planning), review (practice), and control (self-evaluation). Nicholas explains that in this approach, “concepts are taught with the specific aim of promoting understanding; while abstract, they must be functional and practical, concretely linked to authentic language use” (p. 386). We propose that concept-based instruction, with an emphasis on planning, practice, and self-reflection, helps teach ELLs the elaborate American English conversational closing. Within this conceptual approach, an emphasis on cultural awareness is key in helping L2 students succeed.

During the orientation, or planning phase, instructors will introduce the conceptual and pragmatic components of closing a conversation. During this beginning phase, students will look at the speech act of closing a conversation within the language learning classroom. Planning requires that the ELL conceptualizes closing a conversation in a chosen social interaction. Authentic text dialogues or examples created by students of

conversational closings could be useful models for teaching this speech act. According to Nicholas (2015), authentic conversation gives language instructors an unfiltered way to teach speech acts by avoiding the stilted or manufactured discourse of many course textbooks. Additionally, Nicholas (2015) proposes that audio/visual aids may be an applicable tool to orientation. Authentic audio/visual materials serve as a "vehicle" (Murray, 2009, p. 295) of comparison between the L1 and target language, allowing student to realize the different cultural treatments of closing a conversation. Regardless of the chosen tool, the focus is scaffolding students to later perform the task by creating a solid conceptual understanding of how the speech act works. Although the scope of this paper focuses on the sociopragmatic aspect of closing a conversation, it is worth noting that instructors should also consider teaching students the necessary language skills in order to accomplish the task prior to the practice phase.

A central part of the orientation phase is analysis of model texts and videos to promote understanding of conversational closings. Analysis can include using the authentic models to identify where the conversational closing steps happened, whether or not they were effective, and the general feeling involved. This analysis should consider the entirety of the dialogue surrounding a speech act to understand its function, including what is said before and after it (Nicholas, 2015). For example, students can complete graphic organizers to identify what was being said and potentially felt in the dialogue from the beginning until it started to close, what and who triggered the closing, and the perceived feeling after it ended. In this way, students are tuned in to both the words spoken and the effect of those words on the interlocutors. Politely closing a conversation is particularly sensitive to co-construction as interlocutors work together toward a

completion of dialogue (Takami, 2002). Providing samples of naturally occurring conversational closings to ELLs that they can analyze reinforces the idea of speech acts as components of a mutually negotiated sequence that requires pragmatic awareness. Analysis of both successful and ineffective examples can help students develop deeper understanding by identifying and comparing what works and what fails in conversation closings.

After gaining an understanding of the conceptual and pragmatic workings of closing a conversation, students can plan for the next stage where they will practice what they have learned in the first phase of instruction. Practice is a vital component of L2 instruction that supports conceptual and pragmatic acquisition of closing the conversation. This practice phase acts as a stepping stone for ELLs to role-play spontaneous interactions which could occur outside the classroom. They may use concepts discovered during orientation to practice avoiding the potential pragmatic pitfalls involved in ending a conversation. This portion is best facilitated when students video record their demonstrations so they can most effectively self-reflect in the next and final phase. Instructors can help set up the video recordings if needed, or students can be in charge of their own recordings.

Instructors can supply situational examples of ending a conversation and practice activities which encourage reflection and discussion. As these examples will be in English, instructors should do plenty of scaffolding and target vocabulary building for students according to their language proficiency both to understand these models and to engage in the speech act. Tatsuki and Houck (2010) advocate for L2 students rehearsing what they learn about speech acts to gain greater sociopragmatic awareness. The authors

provide a range of practical, individual and collaborative activities to support this approach. Instructors can also use their own ideas when creating and conducting practice activities. Students may even have input on what common scenarios they are involved in that the instructor can apply in the practice phase (Murray, 2009). The practice phase is central to student's acquisition of the pragmatic skill and instructors have many options for successfully facilitating student practice.

After students practice closing a conversation, self-analysis of performance can increase pragmatic competence in conversational closings. During this final phase, the instructor could guide students to watch their recordings and then answer the following questions individually or with their conversation partners:

- What went well in our interaction and why?
- What could have gone better and why?
- When and how did the shut down occur? What was the result?
- When and how did the pre-closing occur? What was the result?
- How did I feel at the terminal exchange? How did my partner react?

After answering the questions, students can share insights with partners or the whole group and set individual goals about how to improve their conversational closings. Instructors should allow sufficient time in class for the self-reflection phase. It is a critical part of helping students go deeper in their learning. Cline and Necochea explain the relationship between language acquisition and reflection:

> Since the construction of knowledge and language development is a dynamic collaborative negotiated process, to improve the rate of language and conceptual

> acquisition, students need to engage in an interactive process that includes discussion, dialogue, and reflection of the information presented. (p. 22)

Self-reflection is an important part of all learning, including L2 speech acts. Moll, Amanti, Neff, Gonzalez (1992) agree that the reflection process of learning cannot be glossed over because it is not only what people say that matters, but how they said the words, and how the words were received by others. The self-reflection phase is a chance for students to consider the pragmatic efficacy of their conversational closing. Reflection on cultural differences or reactions to the models can happen before this final phase, but it is important that students reflect on their own performance at this point. As students individually and collectively consider whether or not their closing was socially acceptable, they will be more prepared to succeed in politely closing a conversation outside of class.

Conclusion

Closing a conversation is a complex, potentially risky speech act that should be taught to L2 learners of American English. To avoid threatening face and hurting relationships, ELLs will benefit from specific instruction on politely carrying out this speech act. The authors of this paper recommend that ELL instructors teach the technical process and sociopragmatics of closing the conversation using a concept-based approach adapted from Nicholas (2015). Through this approach, explicit instruction lends to building knowledge of the topic, provides ample practice opportunities, and guides students in analysis of authentic conversations to solidify the speech act. Through these instructional strategies, ELLs of broad cultural backgrounds can acquire the pragmatic skills needed to say farewell in American English without offending. Additional research

questions that could be pursued are 1) What are additional methods to specifically teach closing the conversation to ELLs? 2) What are common blunders ELLs make when closing a conversation?

Research that specifically explores teaching closing the conversation to L2 learners of English would be beneficial since most of the authors' suggestions are based on general L2 instruction adapted to this speech act. The second question would be helpful so instructors could specifically address the most common mistakes among L2 learners who are trying to master the art of closing the conversation. These additional research questions, combined with the research and suggestions in this paper, would create a solid foundation for L2 learners in mastering how to politely close a conversation, thus furthering their language acquisition and minimizing threats to face.

LITERACY PAPER

Strengthening ELL Literacy Skills in the Mainstream Classroom

INTRODUCTION AND REFLECTION

My last semester in the MSLT program, I had the opportunity to take LING 6010, Research in Second Language Learning, with Abdulkafi Albirini. Because he had been on sabbatical, I had never met Dr. Albirini prior to taking this class but his reputation proceeded him. I had heard that this course was very useful and that Dr. Albirini would provide a wealth of information. These assertions proved to be understatements. To take a class about researching from a professor who is renowned for his contributions to the second language teaching field through his research was a priceless opportunity. Dr. Albirini supported and guided the students throughout the study of this extensive and complex subject. I am honored that Dr. Albirini accepted the request to be my portfolio committee chair and am grateful for his encouragement, suggestions, and humor.

Even before learning about the course requirement to complete a research project, I knew I wanted to explore teaching ELLs in the mainstream classroom. Much of what we learn in the MSLT program is geared toward teaching a language-specific class, and I wanted to learn about supporting students learning English in a traditional classroom. In my experience as an elementary teacher, I observed that many schools do not provide teachers with training on how to succeed in teaching this vulnerable student population. I wanted to identify several suggestions I could implement and share with other educators.

The scope of my research project was originally too large and had to be narrowed down. I wanted to investigate all notable ways shown to help ELLs in a mainstream class. Some of these strategies included establishing a safe teaching environment, using the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol Model (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2008), focusing on comprehensible input, encouraging students to use native language resources,

and implementing group work. Dr. Albirini supported and guided me throughout the process of this paper and helped me identify several workable strategies for a potential research study. These strategies included incorporating native language resources and facilitating group work.

Before writing this paper, I had heard conflicting claims about which was better: establishing English-only policies or making space for the native language. Through my research, I better understand the instructional and psychological value of L2 students using native language resources. I already believed that group work is a crucial strategy in engaging students and aiding in their language acquisition and my research for this paper only strengthened that belief.

Writing a paper set up to be a potential research study was a challenge for me. By this point, I had grown accustomed to writing literature reviews and annotated bibliographies, but planning a research study was a new undertaking. Dr. Albirini helped me to see the niches of my plan I needed to consider, to assess what would work and what would not, and to look at the bigger picture of my proposed project. I am unsure if I will ever execute this particular research plan, but I am now highly interested and more equipped to prepare and carry out future research in the TESOL field.

Abstract

The increasing number of ELLs in public schools in the United States begs for trained teachers who can meet the unique academic needs of these students. Unfortunately, many teachers are unprepared to help ELLs progress academically (Regalla, 2012). This study will examine the effectiveness of two strategies to teach reading comprehension to ELLs: using the native language as a tool and incorporating group work. The author will compare these teaching strategies to a traditional teaching approach that focuses on an "English only" policy and students working independently. The author will examine the efficacy of each strategy by comparing the progress of three groups of English language students and their performance on comprehension questions about *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. All students will have similar language proficiency and background knowledge of the text selection. Group 1 will use native language resources to complete the assignment. Group 2 will collaborate with the rest of their group members. Group 3 will work independently and without native resources. Results are expected to indicate that a traditional teaching approach is least effective in teaching English literacy to ELLs and suggest that there are simple changes teachers can make in their pedagogy to address the specific needs of ELLs.

Keywords: English language learner, literacy instruction, bilingualism, collaborative pedagogy

Introduction

Before beginning the MSLT program, I taught elementary education for two years. This was a rich and rewarding experience where I worked with incredible teachers and students. While teaching, I observed the need for teacher training in how to help ELLs succeed in the mainstream classroom. Neither of the schools where I taught had any kind of ELL training while I was there, despite having professional development trainings several times a year. Additionally, two teachers I interviewed personally expressed similar experiences, one who works in a school with an ELL population of 50%. The latter explained that his school has a “newcomer” program for recent immigrants or refugees taught by teachers who then transition into general education classes within a few years. He reports that although they make a decent overall transition, few make a successful academic transition (B. Pacini, personal communication, April 9, 2018). All students need to receive adequate instruction to succeed academically. In this paper, I will further explain the problems ELLs are facing and provide a review of two strategies for public school instructors in the mainstream classroom seeking to academically support ELLs: utilizing the native language and facilitating group work. Though unrelated in terms of execution, these strategies share the common ground of being easy to execute and targeting the unique needs of ELLs.

An understanding of effective strategies for teaching ELLs in the mainstream public school classroom is needed because the educational landscape described previously is not unusual. With an estimated 4.6 million ELLs in K-12 public schools, comprising 9.4 percent of the total student population in 2014-2015 (UDOE), more ELLs come into schools than the schools are prepared to receive. Regalla (2012) explains,

"Because of their large number, ELLs are often mainstreamed into classes taught by teachers who are licensed in subject areas other than…(ESL) and may be unprepared to meet the needs of these culturally and linguistically diverse students" (p. 210). Although good pedagogy is helpful for all students, specialized support is required for unique needs. One teacher, who has a 30-40% ESL population in her middle and high school classes but has received no training, describes her classroom experience:

> Sometimes it's incredibly frustrating and challenging…I think any teacher who works with as high of a number of ESL students as I do should have some sort of [professional development] about planning for them, or differentiating for them. Something to help us. Right now, I am kind of on my own. (M. Horton, personal communication, April 6, 2018)

It is unacceptable that teachers are receiving ELLs without training to support them. These teachers are dedicated. They are genuinely interested in their students' success. They work long hours to create quality lesson plans aimed to help students learn. But without the necessary training to understand how to work with the special needs of ELLs, these untrained instructors cannot possibly fill the gap that urgently needs attention.

The students suffer as a result. Echevarria, Short, and Powers (2013) comment, "While the number of students with limited proficiency in English has grown exponentially across the United States, their level of academic achievement has lagged significantly behind that of their language-majority peers" (p. 6). A specific example of this disparity is provided by Batt (2008) who explains, "Recent school reports in [Idaho] clearly indicate that a gap exists between academic achievement rates of Idaho's Latino students and majority students" (p. 39). This disparity is representative of classrooms

across the nation, classrooms with both students and teachers growing frustrated and discouraged.

Not surprisingly, the educational gap between native and nonnative speakers can bleed over into likelihood of them graduating from high school. Dropout rates among minority students, or non-Caucasian students, are higher than their non-natives peers (Callahan, 2013; Ream & Rumburger, 2008). Although a portion of minority students do speak English, others do not. These vulnerable students need support and informed instruction to help secure lasting benefits for them and their communities. Callahan (2013) further discusses the problem:

> The costs of dropping out of high school are steep, both to the individual who must navigate the adult labor market without a base of academic credentials, and to the society at large that must incorporate an inadequately prepared individual into its academic and civic spheres. (p. 12)

The crisis among ELLs in US public schools has a domino effect upon individuals, families, schools, and communities. More efforts are needed by educators to help ELLs rise above their current limitations.

Though the inequality between the success of native speakers and ELLs is not the exclusive responsibly of the instructors, training teachers in ELL instruction is an identifiable and realistic place to start in solving the problem. Echevarria et al. (2008) advise, “If instruction is to meet the needs of all students, regardless of English proficiency level or academic background, substantial changes need to be made in the way that ELLs are educated” (p. 46). Changes can begin with educating instructors about how to address the unique needs of ELLs so they are better able to learn content and

language.

The strategies discussed in this paper are considered in the context of language arts instruction because “the foundation of school success is academic language and literacy in English” (Echevarria et al., 2013, p. 9). As students develop their academic reading and writing skills, their literacy skills will provide better opportunities to succeed in other core classes like science and social studies because they have the language skills to keep up with the content. Furthermore, a strong foundation in academic reading and writing helps language students move from a level of basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) to cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), as explained by Cummins (1979, 1981, 2017). Although the ability to converse in English can help people interpersonally and in the workplace, language learners who also achieve an academic proficiency likely have more options in their professional and educational endeavors.

Literature Review

Bilingualism and Native Language Resources

In the TESOL field, perspectives vary on whether class should be strictly English or allow for some native language support. ELLs in two public secondary classrooms were divided regarding the use of the L1 as appropriate and effective (Dsagari & Diakou, 2015). Half of the students believed the use of L1 was helpful and the other half preferred only English. Others suggest establishing an English-only policy in class from the first day (Duff & Polio, 1990). Similarly, the students in the School of Leadership in Afghanistan take a pledge to speak only English in class (Basij-Rasikh, 2018). When first learning Italian as a second language, my colleagues and I tried to speak only Italian for

several days. It was a difficult experience for novice learners and we did not succeed because we simply did not have the vocabulary or linguistic knowledge to do so. Sometimes relying on an English word or phrase was all it took for us to continue navigating our dialogue in Italian. From my experience, a strategic use of the L1 can be a benefit, not a hindrance.

Also in favor of using the L1, Protheroe (2011) explains, "Explicit support for ELL students' use of their native languages can help—not hinder—their capacity to use and understand English" (p. 28). As instructors accept and welcome their students' native language in class, they help students attain greater English skills and build on their background knowledge. Gallagher and Colohan (2017) also support bilingualism in a study conducted that showed students felt like using their bilingual skills was a transferable life skill and helpful in class. Discussing results from their study, Gallagher and Colohan (2017) say, "…the use of codeswitching or translanguaging, when done in a targeted way, can be a very useful language teaching and learning tool, particularly as a technique to develop a way of…raising awareness of certain features of the language…" (p. 494). However, some instructors have the misconception that young ELLs should avoid their native language to better support their English acquisition (Espinosa, 2008). A middle school math teacher I interviewed expresses her views on using native language tools:

> When I was teaching [an] ELL math lab I didn't have other native speakers in the room. I would have two siblings that spoke Swahili, another who spoke Mandarin, another who spoke Arabic, and maybe a handful of Spanish. I won't lie, a few times we would have to break out Google translate because I knew if I

> could just say divide or add in their native language they would know exactly what to do. (L. Smith, personal communication, March 16, 2018)

Despite educational training and experience teaching ELLs, this teacher was embarrassed at having used native language tools to aid her students. Instructors should move away from the fear of their students not using English 100% of the time in class, and allow students to benefit from scaffolding in their native languages.

Though it is not realistic, or even beneficial, that large amounts of class time be spent facilitating students' native languages, instructors can take advantage of spontaneous L1 moments and allow reasonable blocks of time for such purposes. Espinosa (2008) comments, "These dual language learning opportunities can occur during designated classroom instructional time throughout the day in each language, in addition to extended activities conducted in the home by family members in the child's first language" (p. 5). Some ideas for incorporating students' native languages are allowing dual language texts and technology tools, incorporating music from the respective languages, allowing those that share a native language to work together, and bringing in community members that can aid in students' native languages to assist. While exploring ideas for collaboration with family outside of the classroom to facilitate English skills is beyond the scope of this paper, it is noteworthy to address that working closely with students' family members can be a powerful way to help students succeed academically.

Collaborative Pedagogy

Despite the growing support of collaborative pedagogy in education, many instructors worldwide are still stuck in a traditional, teacher-centered approach. In my

volunteer work at Cache Valley's English Language Center (ELC), I observed instructors using both methods. These instructors work at the same organization, likely receive the same professional development opportunities and are held to the same expectations, yet some are choosing to forego communicative opportunities for fill-in-the-blank workbooks. Richards and Lockhart (1996) provide a possible explanation to this occurrence, "For many teachers, experience is the primary source of beliefs about teaching" (p. 31). Perhaps one reason that some instructors maintain outdated methods is that they are more familiar with this approach both from their educational and professional experiences.

The ELC instructors who lean toward a traditional approach are not alone. Richards and Lockhart (1996) say, "Individual work, or 'seatwork,' is generally the second most frequently used teaching pattern in classrooms" (p. 149). The authors go on to say that some disadvantages to teacher-centered teaching are that (1) students do not have the chance to interact; (2) it's difficult to monitor student work; and (3) students can finish at different times which wastes their time and can present behavioral challenges. When I have participated in a class or presentation that is teacher-centered, I find it very difficult to concentrate or grasp the information. To truly learn, students need to be engaged; sitting quietly in a seat does not foster consistent engagement. Cline and Necochea (2003) say, "optimum learning for language development occurs when the instructional setting is highly interactive and 'buzzing' with activity" (p. 22). When students are communicating in the target language with other students or the teacher, they are engaged. This student-centered approach is juxtaposed with a traditional approach to scholarship that can lead to the appearance of language learning but not L2 competence

(Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Though many language instructors are still choosing outdated methods, there are more effective ways to teach, such as through collaborative learning.

Through collaboration, ELL students acquire language and all classroom students have a greater chance to think critically and gain a deeper perspective about the world around them, two skills which are crucial to literacy. Kincheloe (2006) compares human collaboration to using binoculars. Binoculars help people see more clearly and achieve a more complete viewpoint. Similarly, connecting with others helps people have a fuller life perspective and access to more information. Independent learning brings limitations, but together people have the ability to understand more than they would on their own, creating a whole perspective.

There are strength and power in connections between humans, and greater opportunities to acquire a second language through interaction. The discussions between my ESL reading students about various topics from the texts we read have been some of the most rewarding moments of the semester. They are able to consider different opinions, better understand concepts, and think about the world in a new way, all while improving their English proficiency. Regardless of backgrounds, identities, views, and native languages, students can become richer individuals through collaborative learning. ELLs in particular have much to offer native-born students in terms of experiences, traditions, and customs. Instructors can greatly benefit students by incorporating collaborative learning.

Solidarity in classes can also motivate students to stay in school. There is a direct correlation between how safe, valued, and included students feel at school and their

choice to graduate (Callahan, 2013; McNeal, 1997; Ream & Rumburger, 2008). Students are happier when they have a tribe, a place, a community. I taught a very unhappy student whose autism made it hard for him to connect with others. Mark[2] complained of not having friends, being frustrated with math, and feeling isolated. After asking a student who demonstrated general kindness and responsibility to befriend Mark, much changed for the struggling student. The two boys did not hang out after school, nor did they become best friends, but a friendly face and a place to sit at lunch transformed Mark before my eyes. He looked forward to coming to school, he participated in class, and his behavior improved. By facilitating meaningful opportunities for students to collaborate in a safe classroom environment, instructors can help students create friendships and find a sense of belonging.

Instructors can use a variety of approaches to aid this connection between students. Turkan (2012) said, “Teachers should design collaborative activities to provide ELLs with opportunities to fill in gaps in their comprehension of text and to construct meaning” (p. 25). Interactive activities centered around reading strategies, vocabulary development, and texts can help students identify the discrepancies in their understanding and negotiate meaning to find answers. As students work together to determine correct responses, ELLs have an opportunity to directly improve their language skills. When they collaborate, students are negotiating meaning through asking each other questions, finding answers, and solving problems.

[2] Name has been changed.

Negotiation of meaning is central to students' ability to communicate. It is needed when communication has not been successful and is the process students go through to clear up miscommunication (VanPatten, 2017). This type of communication involves authentic and meaningful language use—not just copying down words and definitions. It is what students will experience in their everyday lives. Cline and Necochea (2003) assert, "Since the construction of…language development is a dynamic collaborative negotiated process, to improve the rate of…acquisition, students need to engage in an interactive process that includes discussion, dialogue, and reflection of the information presented" (p. 22). Instructors have the ability to incorporate these strategies regardless of topic or skill level, and students' literacy can improve as a result. As students work together in the classroom, overall learning is higher, language development opportunities are increased as students negotiate meaning, and students get a chance to learn more about the world around them as they work with others.

The Purpose of the Proposed Study

Considering the literature discussed, it is crucial that ELLs in mainstream classes receive more effective instruction in order to succeed academically, professionally, and to benefit the community as a whole. Due to demands of time and resources teachers face, I will examine several straightforward and practical strategies that mainstream classroom teachers can easily implement to help their ELLs; additionally, I will test the use of these tactics, despite some research criticizing their effectiveness. My goal with this study is to equip teachers with simple and effective tools to help their ELLs in English Language Arts and other content areas.

Research Question

Will using the native language as a resource or implementing group work have higher gains in helping students understand the main idea of a text than a traditional approach to teaching?

Methodology

In order to determine if the support of native language resources, collaborative work, or a traditional teaching approach is most beneficial in boosting reading comprehension in elementary ELLs, I will conduct a cross-sectional experimental study. Since the cornerstone of academic English success lies in strengthening literacy skills, this study will investigate gains in reading comprehension in the context of a single task completed in one class period. Post-task tests will be used to determine improvement in reading comprehension of a selected text.

Participants

The study sample will consist of 45 ELLs in a United States coastal elementary school. Participants will be randomly assigned to one of three groups, with 15 students in each group. A pretest will determine which students have equal reading proficiency in their native language and in English. A second pretest will determine students' understanding of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Only students with a low-intermediate English reading proficiency and little-to-no understanding of the contents of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will be analyzed for the study. Any students outside of these criteria will complete the assignment in a separate room with a teacher's aid as to not alter the study outcome.

General Procedures

Next, each of the three groups will go through the same instructional process for testing the efficiency of the SLA strategies. The instructor will be given a prepared 15-minute lesson to introduce the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from which they are instructed not to deviate or alter. The lesson will begin by building background knowledge about the history of the document. The instructor will give the students time to skim the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—a reading strategy to which they will have had significant exposure—provide a verbal summary, and define several higher-level vocabulary words.

After the direct instruction portion of the lesson, students will be given 45 minutes to answer comprehension questions about the first five articles in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights.* The students will use a graphic organizer provided by the instructor to complete this portion of the lesson. The variable is the strategy used to complete the assigned task. One student group will complete the task individually, with access to resources in their native language (i.e. bilingual dictionaries or online translators). The second group will complete the task in small groups of three students each, speaking only in English to determine their answers. The third group (the control group) will receive neither native language resources nor engage in group work as they independently complete the assignment. Each student within the three test groups will be responsible to complete the comprehension questions on their own paper. During this portion of class, students should not elicit help from the instructor to understand the content of the text, although they may get help navigating to a web site or understanding instructions.

Post-Task Assessment

After the task is complete, accuracy of text comprehension will be assessed through grading the comprehension questions by three blind scorers to determine if bilingual resources or group work is more effective in helping students understand a text than the control group. The author's hypothesis is that the students who engage in group work will have the highest gains of the three groups, that the use of native languages will also demonstrate notable gains, and that the control group will have the lowest gains. Despite contradicting research, my belief is that the use of native resources as a tool and engaging in group work better promotes language acquisition than a monolingual teacher-centered classroom.

Implications

Public school instructors have a notably complex job that includes meeting the needs of diverse student backgrounds, preparing for high-stakes testing, working with parents, planning effective lessons, attending meetings, and grading. Time is limited. Other resources like funds and supplies are often sparse. Many instructors are not trained to meet the unique needs of ELLs, and this gap adds to their burden and that of the students. The ELL disparity is dire in terms of lasting consequences for the individuals and the community; effective support for these students is urgent. ELLs must learn academic English in order to succeed in school and have more professional opportunities.

Despite the small sample size and single test for comprehension, the results of this study are expected to indicate that instructors can indeed improve reading comprehension of ELLs by making simple changes. Taking advantage of native language resources to benefit students and incorporating collaborative learning are two ideas similar in regards

to ease of implementation and positive effect on second language acquisition. These suggestions may show preference over a traditional, teacher-focused classroom where students are expected to work silently and avoid their native language. Although there are dozens of additional strategies to help ELLs, these two approaches are expected to provide research-supported direction that are practical in a wide variety of situations. The hope with this study is that instructors can feel capable implementing these simple strategies into the classroom without spending extra money or large amounts of time.

The proposed tools are anticipated to help ELLs not only gain the ability to converse with others, but more importantly to use and understand academic English in their speech, reading, and writing. Literacy in English is a crucial skill to help students continue to succeed academically. Furthermore, acquiring skills in academic English will help learners have more educational and professional opportunities down the road than limiting their skills to conversational English. If carried out, this study could suggest that assessing students in terms of their English literacy growth is possible, measurable, and crucial. Evaluating academic growth should be a component of every student's scholastic plan.

As instructors implement ways to support their ELLs and prepare for future students, they will likely be better prepared educators, see increased student achievement, and provide more ELLs with the tools to build a successful future. These changes can be simple, economical, and beneficial to the entire class, not only to ELLs. Studies examining the efficacy of other teaching strategies could also prove helpful in achieving these goals. Likewise, studies examining students' progress in multiple reading assignments over several weeks or semesters could provide rich and valuable insight into

the research question. Despite the limitations of this possible study, it is suggested that instructors can make simple changes in their pedagogy that will help students improve in their academic English skills, some of which are expected to include using the native language as a tool and incorporating group work.

CULTURE PAPER

Five Ways to Embrace Diversity in the ELL Classroom

INTRODUCTION AND REFLECTION

I wrote “Five Ways to Embrace Diversity in the ELL Classroom” as part of an independent study class with Dr. deJonge-Kannan. I chose this paper in response to a personal interest I have in recognizing and celebrating the differences of others. While growing up in a predominantly white elementary school, I wished I was black. I wanted to be different from the other students. In middle school I was the girl who wore a Hawaiian lei to school until several other students started wearing one too. In high school, I deviated from my preppy look and embraced a punk rock image with black hair, black combat boots, and a skull wristband. As a child and youth I simply felt too ordinary.

I have since accepted myself for my own unique differences which do not include ethnicity, fashion, or image, but I am still fascinated with diversity in all of its forms. I chose the right profession. As an ELL instructor, I get to teach students from all over the world. Although I have traveled to four continents and taught dozens of students from many countries, I feel that I know very little about the world. What I do know comes from interacting with others, a process which is at the heart of this paper. I look forward to creating many more classrooms based on appreciation for diversity and continually learning more about others along the way.

Abstract

The ELL classroom is commonly a community of people with unique and broad backgrounds. It is also a concrete forum to help unify diverse groups. Kambutu and Thompson (2005) argue, “culturally responsive educators make a conscious effort to create learning environments that are empowering to all learners” (p. 7). ELL classrooms are full of rich diversity that includes observable differences such as ethnic background and gender and extends to less noticeable differences like religion, mental health, learning styles, beliefs, and socioeconomic status (Faitar, 2011). The author maintains that ESL instructors have the opportunity to break down stereotypes, increase students’ self-esteem, and promote language acquisition by actively seeking to create a compassionate classroom. Five ways to embrace diversity in the ELL classroom are through: 1) text selection, 2) pop culture, 3) storytelling, 4) meditation, and 5) group work. By creating a classroom community that embraces all learners, ESL instructors can make lasting changes in society.

Keywords: English language learner, compassionate classroom, diversity matters

Making Contact
I believe
The greatest gift
I can conceive of having
from anyone
is
to be seen by them,
heard by them,
to be understood
and
touched by them.
The greatest gift
I can give
is
to see, hear, understand
and to touch
another person.
When this is done
I feel
contact has been made.
Virginia Satir (1916-1988)

Introduction

My first year of teaching I adopted a dog who could not bark. The Yorkshire terrier, Tiramisu, spent her first years of life in a puppy mill and was then taken in by a hoarder who adopted and removed the vocal cords of 11 other Yorkies. By the time she got to me, Tiramisu was afraid, powerless, and terminally ill. On the outside, she might have been classified as a typical purebred dog, perfectly groomed and sporting a bedazzled pink collar. Yet Tiramusu's past affected the more complex parts of who Tiramisu was emotionally and physically. On a parallel note, one can step into an ELL classroom, take a look at the students, and make observations based on their ethnic background, gender, or outward appearance. But people often hold unseen and unspoken

differences and similarities as well. Faitar (2011) observes that diversity involves more than just ethnicity and gender. It is a concept that is far more complex and can include, "academic ability, multiple intelligences, learning styles, thinking styles, attitudes, socioeconomic status, home language and developmental readiness" (p. 7). Additional possibly concealed differences are sexual orientation, religion, mental health, personal experiences, and family structure (Vandrick, 1997). Classrooms are mini-communities and the members are complex and unique. Students need to be accepted and feel safe in their ELL classrooms. Diaz-Rico said, "Students who…have enhanced images of self, family, and culture are better language learners" (p. 48). The language skills students develop can help them acculturate into their communities and provide them with increased opportunities in life.

ELL teachers can learn to recognize and embrace the vast diversity that can lie in a single classroom. Morrell (2004) maintains, "public school students are becoming increasingly diverse with respect to culture, ethnicity, primary language, and socioeconomic status, while the diversity among the pool of prospective teachers diminishes" (p. 5). While this fact may change in the future, and is not applicable to every classroom, it can apply in many ways in my teaching practice. My ELLs may not feel that they can relate to or connect to me: a white, heterosexual, middle-class American woman. In order to help break down this barrier, I seek to acknowledge and respect the diversity my students offer and share ways that I am unique in order to model that diversity is appreciated in our classroom.

Benefits of a classroom that welcomes everyone can have individual and global results. By embracing diversity in the classroom, instructors can address, and hopefully

even remove, explicit or implicit biases. Blair, Steiner, and Havranek (2011) discuss the difference between implicit and explicit biases saying that implicit bias is unconscious and unintended versus explicit bias where people are aware of and even accepting of their bias. People may not even realize that they have prejudice or fears toward certain groups of people. Hidden as well as apparent stereotypes can be removed as diverse individuals have positive interactions with one another.

As misperceptions are broken down, students can feel valued for who they are and where they come from. Faitar (2011) believes, "Cultural identity—defined as having a positive self-concept or evaluation of oneself and one's culture—promotes self-esteem" (p. 7). From my teaching experience, I have observed that students with positive self-image collaborate better with peers and succeed better academically. Diaz-Rico (2004) discusses the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement in the statement, "One's *attitude toward the self* involves self-esteem and related emotions, what one believes about one's ability in general as well as the ability to learn language" (p. 52). Students who have poor self-image, including shame of their background or culture, will surely find it harder to achieve their goals.

While teaching elementary school and a university ESL course, many of the students who voluntarily and cheerfully interacted with one another tended to consistently complete assignments and had better grades than those who isolated themselves and appeared insecure. Furthermore, when students feel safe and comfortable in a classroom, their affective filters decrease and enable them to better acquire language (Krashen, 1985). To help achieve the goal of becoming a competent English communicator, it is critical that each student feel welcome in the classroom.

Additionally, celebrating diversity helps students understand the world and integrate better into society. Morrell (2004) claims, “What can happen, what needs to happen, is that teachers create environments in which students can learn from each other’s diverse language and literacy experiences how to see the world differently and how to participate more fully as critical citizens in a multicultural democracy” (p. 4). ELL instructors can help students go beyond learning just the language, but also about the unique world around them in such a way that they can better interact socially. For example, by engaging in a class discussion about a multicultural narrative, students develop speaking skills while exchanging opinions and beliefs about important cultural and societal issues which helps each student broaden their understanding of the world. Culturally responsive educators facilitate this and similar types of learning processes. Kambutu and Thompson (2005) maintain, “culturally responsive educators make a conscious effort to create learning environments that are empowering to all learners” (p. 7). A better understanding of one another helps students feel included and equips them to be more culturally sensitive. In an ELL class, instructors are presented with a rich opportunity to help a diverse student group connect with one another and gain a wide range of cultural awareness. Five ways that ELL instructors can create classroom environments that embrace diversity are through text selection, pop culture, storytelling, meditation, and collaborative student work.

Text Selection

Textbooks are a typical component of most language classrooms. Shardakova and Pavlenko (2004) describe textbooks as influenced sources of information that portray messages about appropriate behavior in society. These messages can be overt or implied

and can affect students' beliefs and perceptions. Dörnyei (2009) theorizes that the messages communicated in ELL classrooms can even impact the personal identity of students by suggesting what is appropriate or not. A problem is that many textbooks and images portray only a small portion of identities, ideas, and groups. This occurrence could lead students to believe that underrepresented groups are not valuable or acceptable, influencing their perceptions of self or others.

Furthermore, researchers have found blatant stereotyping in textbooks used in English language teaching (ELT) classrooms in the United States. Gulliver (2010) maintains, "As obligatory parts of the curriculum, textbooks carry the status of official discourses, making any nationalizing, racializing, and gendered representations of these textbooks deserving of critical attention" (p. 726). Imbalanced and biased representations of sexuality, gender, and nationality are among some of the stereotyping found in ESL/EFL textbooks.

Paiz (2015) discusses that LGBT examples in 45 ESL textbooks from major publishers were underrepresented compared to heterosexual examples and that those used often strengthened negative stereotypes. When students are unable to see themselves or specific groups in classroom materials, it can create alienation, misunderstanding, and fear. Paiz (2017) cites Greytek et al. (2016) stating, "a queer-informed pedagogy may help students see the intrinsic value of all peoples and of diversity…" (pp. 14-15). The more instructors recognize and celebrate diversity, the more it aids the ultimate goal of universal acceptance.

Regarding gender imbalances, Hall (2014) studied two EFL textbooks used in Iranian secondary schools, investigating gender representation. Hall compared the

findings with similar studies done on EFL textbooks since 1970. The article demonstrates a long history of gender biases that continues to the present. Although some EFL textbooks have demonstrated improvements in areas of gender representation, the discrepancies continue to subsist overall. The gender imbalances noted in Hall's study are demonstrated in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Gender stereotypes in some ELL textbooks

Men	**Women**
More often represented in reading passages	Represented less often in reading passages
Generally referred to first	Mentioned second or not at all
Depicted more often in illustrations	Depicted less often in illustrations
Completed only driving and shopping in regards to mentioned household duties	Completed the majority of mentioned household duties such as cooking, cleaning, and tending children
Displayed in a wider capacity of professions than females	Displayed in a more restricted number of professions than males
Displayed as healthier than females	Displayed as sick more often than males and suffering from harsher illnesses

Finally, nationality stereotypes can be found in EFL textbooks. First, Gulliver (2010) explored 24 ESL textbooks that discuss stories of immigrants to Canada. Study results discovers that some ESL textbooks portray immigrants' countries of origin as

inferior to Canada. The textbooks also largely portray the immigrants becoming wealthy and reuniting with their families through hard work and a positive attitude. On the few instances that failure is represented, it is associated with a lack of personal merit. Both of these depictions could create a false sense of reality for readers and misrepresent immigrants who have worked hard but who have not realized their dreams. Next, Shin, Eslami, and Chen (2011) investigated cultural perspectives of English as an international language (EIL) in seven series of ELT textbooks. The authors studied cultural representations in textbooks of inner circle English-speaking countries such as United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada compared to outer circle countries like India, the Philippines, and Nigeria where English is an official language through colonization. Their findings reveal that the textbooks more often represented inner-circle culture than outer circle culture, implying that the former is more valuable. Additionally, facts about cultures remained superficial. The authors argue that, "ELT textbooks and curricula should provide a lens through which learners expand their cultural awareness to include global and multicultural perspectives" (p. 265). Such trite portrayals of culture do not support a deep and accurate viewpoint of people. The imbalances and shortcomings in portrayals of sexual orientation, gender, and nationality show a concrete problem in the viewpoints and ideals to which students are exposed through textbooks. Instructors can avoid sending such messages in their classrooms through self-reflection, careful planning and awareness while teaching.

The goal of schooling students in open-mindedness and acceptance can be carried out through selection of textbooks or texts that avoid stereotypes and include diverse people and ideas. Unfortunately, some instructors do not have power in the selection of

their textbooks, but even those instructors can use supplementary texts and readings which incorporate multiple identities and viewpoints. Instructors can also assign students to locate texts that represent specific identities and use them in assignments. If such dated and biased texts are mandatory in classroom use, instructors can address the limitations in those selections. For example, in a cultural lesson about Thanksgiving dinner, the Powerpoint I was using from the website *EL Civics for ESL Students* (Niven, 2007) explained that in American families the dad carves the turkey and the mom does the dishes. I explained to my students that any responsible adult can carve the turkey and that anyone can help with the dishes. Instructors can use these stereotypical examples in materials to have a discussion with students about the problem with stereotypes and the importance of inclusion. With the abundance of public texts available, instructors have ample opportunities to incorporate classroom materials that represent and welcome diverse groups.

Popular Culture

Engagement is central to effective teaching and the use of popular culture can effectively interest students in course content while promoting a culturally sensitive classroom. The abundance of free media through libraries, online, and apps makes using pop culture in the classroom realistic. Storey (2015) explains that pop culture can be enjoyed and accepted by many people, is left over from what has been deemed high culture, and is mass produced and consumed. Pop culture can include videos, TV, music, and books that are widely embraced, especially among youth. Within the broad spectrum of pop culture, instructors can take advantage of the diverse characters, themes, and

situations that students are seeking out and incorporate them into classroom materials and discussions.

There are many ways to use pop culture to create a classroom that welcomes diversity. One example is incorporating popular songs into lessons that have a variety of themes and are performed by various artists. Another example is using a TV clip, an advertisement, or a comic strip to demonstrate a linguistic concept that also showcases a blended family, a child with a mental illness, or a nontraditional student. Simply by showing media that includes a variety of people, situations, or themes, these differences are normalized. Instructors can also go deeper into those topics by facilitating discussion. Similar to textbooks, pop culture can be used to create a compassionate class overtly or more discretely, depending on the instructor's objectives.

In my classroom, I have incorporated pop culture to promote diversity with success. After reading and discussing the Oxford Bookworms abridged book of *Rabbit-Proof Fence* by Doris Pilkington Garimara (2008), my students asked if we could watch the movie too. The story is about three girls in Western Australia who were taken from their families and put into a government settlement because they were part aborigine and part white. The prior reading and corresponding discussions were poignant, emotional, and meaningful and the movie offered an even greater understanding of the racial prejudice in Western Australia in the early 1900s. Although reading and discussing the book without watching the movie would have still been a memorable experience for the students, the movie added additional power and perspective, driving home the messages of racism and courage.

Additionally, I supplemented an International Business unit by showing humorous commercials from HSBC bank that demonstrated cultural differences between Asian and British business people. The students reacted with laughter and appreciation and we had a productive discussion about why it is important to understand other cultures when doing business. Some students also shared background knowledge they had about the cultural customs represented. The commercials were a valuable addition to reading about international business, creating a memorable learning experience both on the course topic and about cultures.

In pop culture, students can see themselves mirrored and included in the lesson through materials they already value and accept. Students who may often feel alienated and out of place in school or society can connect to the lesson content and better understand it because it is connected to familiar media. An effective practice would be selecting media that represents students in that particular class, to the instructor's best knowledge. By doing so, instructors are applying a powerful tool to help students feel personally recognized and valued. The reason I incorporated *Rabbit-Proof Fence* into my course curriculum is because I realized that all of the prior narratives we had read were written by white males. I considered what message I was unintentionally sending my students each time I introduced the author of our next book—that this exclusive demographic is who writes valuable literature. Adding a biographical narrative written by a mixed-race woman seemed to change the class dynamic and embrace diversity among the African and Asian students in class and among the world around us.

Weaving diverse pop culture into a course can also help students relate to classroom material as they make connections with each other through a medium familiar to them. Korson and Kusek (2017) claim:

> Teaching in American university classrooms often requires working with a diverse student population…In this distinct academic environment, popular culture and the use of social media can become a unifying factor, a method of inquiry that can facilitate discussion among students because it is a shared part of their everyday experience. (p. 105)

It is precisely that shared community and belonging that students crave and that instructors have the power to create through strategic selection of popular culture. Through establishing common ground, stereotypes can break apart and acceptance can abound. If instructors are not sure what pop culture materials to use, they can elicit help from students to know what media they enjoy and that resonates with them. An additional benefit of providing students choice in class is that they are more motivated and engaged (Howard, 2016). My students did not express interest in watching the film version of the narratives read prior to *Rabbit-Proof Fence*. Acknowledging and incorporating their suggestion led to the most meaningful discussion we had all semester, one that addressed significant issues in society and that helped students connect through personal experiences.

An inherent limitation to using popular culture is a lack of time. To combat the time issue, instructors can also use pop culture outside of the classroom in the capacity of homework. Morrell (2004) gathers, "…by building upon students' literacy experiences with popular culture in non-school settings, teachers can make authentic and powerful

connections between students' worlds and the demands of the classroom" (p. 7). Instructors could upload movie clips, comics, or song lyrics to their online classroom management system to be viewed as part of an assignment. Through innovation and creativity, instructors can incorporate many ways to include diversity into the classroom.

Storytelling

Central to a culturally sensitive classroom is students understanding and respecting one another. Encouraging the sharing of personal stories in formal and informal situations is a clear way to help students connect through shared ideas and experiences. Storytelling is also a useful sociopragmatic language acquisition tool (Holmes & Marra, 2011) that can facilitate language learning and a unified classroom. The powerful results of storytelling among ELLs is described by Ndura (2004):

> They bring with them a wealth of experiences…Listening to their stories about their home culture and their acculturation experiences would not only empower them but also enrich their teachers and classmates. This will help dispel some biases and misconceptions about their lives and those of other immigrants. (p. 151)

I have similarly seen the benefits of ELLs sharing their experiences in class. In one class, the students and I represented Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity. Within the context of a cultural article selection assignment, we shared customs and practices in our religions. Reactions from the students and me toward one another were of interest, curiosity, and respect. It was an enlightening experience to sit together in a circle and learn more about the world through the experiences of a few. In this case, each of us in the group practiced

religion, but it would have been equally valuable to learn from those who do not associate with any faith.

One organized approach to utilizing storytelling in the classroom is the Language Experience Approach (LEA) to literacy instruction (Renaud & Tannenbaum, 2013). LEA focuses on pairs or small group work where students write stories about a similar experience they have had. Next, students make connections with each other and see that although they have differences, they have similarities too. Instructors can scaffold LEA so students first find common ground about small things like music or food, and eventually come together about core beliefs, ideas, or experiences about themselves or the world (Renaud and Tannenbaum, 2013). These stories could also be paired with topics and themes in the course curriculum. As little as minutes to entire lessons could be spent helping students identify and share experiences and find common ground. LEA helps students practice literacy skills, make connections, and can educate about the layers of diversity within the classroom.

Another method of using stories for language acquisition is the PACE model which uses stories to teach grammar through (P) presentation of meaningful language, (A) attention, (C) co-construction, and (E) extension activities (Adair-Hauck, Donato, & Cumo-Johannsen, 2015). The stories act as a vehicle to teach specific grammatical concepts in a meaningful, interesting, and conceptual way. PACE allows students to be active participants in the learning of grammar as student and instructor work together to discuss and examine grammar principles in the context of a story. Adair-Hauck et al. (2015) claim, “Emphasis needs to be placed on meaning before a focus on form can be a productive instructional activity” (p. 21). Students are able to learn grammar as it pertains

to the significance of the story, and instructors can maximize learning by choosing stories that teach about different cultures and identities. Another option is that students can choose stories that represent them in a specific way. Sharing a written story, authored either by the student or a third party, can help students share aspects of themselves in a potentially less intimidating format than commenting spontaneously or in class. Incorporating storytelling in a variety of capacities can be a powerful tool in achieving an inclusive classroom; LEA and the PACE model are two ways to achieve this end and instructors can experiment with what works with their class and personalities.

Meditation

The benefits derived from culturally responsive texts, pop culture inclusion, and storytelling will be more powerful if students are open minded and reflective. Meditation can increase awareness among students, thus opening the doors for greater classroom acceptance. Although not commonly practiced in schools, meditation is not a new practice. Brady (2007) writes, “Contemplation, the act of attending with nonjudgmental awareness or being open to things just as they are, has long been practiced and cultivated in the world’s wisdom traditions” (p. 372-373). A place of knowledge and learning, the classroom is an ideal place to incorporate contemplative practice.

Although meditation includes a variety of approaches and interpretations, in its core is mindfulness. Buchanan (2017) explains, “Being mindful means becoming aware of the moment and choosing to dwell in the present” (p. 70). As students and instructors learn to focus on what is happening in that moment, they can let go of preconceived biases or stereotypes and embrace their differences and the differences of those around them. Practicing mindfulness in class can also help students stay present and avoid

distractions. An aspect of meditation is clearing the mind, and in that space instructors can encourage students to invite kindness, acceptance, and compassion for others while staying focused on the lesson.

Additionally, the use of meditation in the classroom helps students learn about various cultures and models the value of worldwide ideas. Ramsburg and Youmans (2014) suggest that incorporating meditation in the classroom gives students an opportunity to compare Eastern and Western thought processes. Instructors can facilitate content instruction while implicitly teaching about culture and modeling the value of non-Western ideas and approaches. The more diverse an instructor can be in terms of pedagogy, the better modeling he or she is doing in terms of open-mindedness. In this way, instructors can encourage a sympathetic classroom environment among peers and help students improve their self-esteem.

Several ideas for incorporating meditation in the classroom come from research and personal experience. First, Brady (2007) explains how he incorporates a *ringong*, which is a Japanese bell, in his math class to increase student performance. He rings it at the beginning of class and sometimes throughout class to change the pace and re-center the students. Brady also incorporates guided meditations before quizzes and tests, allowing students to acknowledge their current feelings and then visualize an academic accomplishment. I have similarly given students time to breathe deeply, recite positive affirmations, and visualize success before tests or an oral presentation. Students in my classes who practiced these exercises seemed more willing to share in discussions and writing than classes where I did not incorporate forms of meditation. Experiencing these unique classroom practices together seemed to unify students and help them feel

comfortable. As students grow accustomed to various and personal classroom experiences, they may be more likely to share personal thoughts and opinions which can help unify the class. One way that instructors can introduce the practice of meditation into their classrooms is by assessing students' background and personal beliefs toward mindfulness, explaining its benefits, and modeling it during instruction to make it familiar and natural for students, before guiding them to participate.

One drawback is that some students may be uncomfortable meditating in class. The act of mindfulness can be vulnerable or awkward. Some students may associate meditation with religion which could make them uncomfortable. Buchanan (2017) asserts, "Essentially, contemplative practice is the process of cultivating acceptance and gratitude..." (p. 69). The focus of meditation can be on whatever the student wants to achieve. Instructors can help students see that meditation is a personal tool that they can approach and view individually to receive educational and interpersonal benefits.

Collaborative Work

Student collaboration is the glue that holds all of the previously discussed strategies together. As students experience meaningful interactions with peers, they have front row seats to better understanding others and the world. Kincheloe (2006) compares working together to using binoculars which provides access to multiple viewpoints and a deeper, fuller understanding of what is being seen. These perspectives can help groups of people unify and absolve labels. ELL classrooms in particular can house a significant variety of student identities whose interactions have the potential to create lasting harmony among classmates, cultures, and even nations when carried out in an environment of respect. As students find trust and respect among people who are

different, they can find courage to accept themselves too. The benefits of collaborative pedagogy run deep.

Instructors can use several strategies to facilitate meaningful group work. One effective technique is the CLT method (see Teaching Philosophy Statement) that is centered around students acquiring language while working collaboratively on tasks. In CLT, students become architects of their learning as they work together to complete meaningful and real-world tasks facilitated by the instructor (VanPatten, 2017). Because CLT focuses on authentic communication between students instead of role plays or fill-in-the-blank worksheets, students have the opportunity to interact authentically while learning language. Consequently, instructors can again maximize classroom time to facilitate language learning and connections among students. In my reading class, I strive to facilitate communicative tasks for students each class period. Some of these tasks have been answering comprehension questions about a text as a group, completing graphic organizers about the main idea in pairs, deciding on the best summary for a text as a group, or scanning food items for specific information in pairs. These experiences have made our discussions about important themes and narratives more meaningful because students have already begun to get to know each other through nonthreatening academic tasks and are consequently more prepared to open up about personal opinions and beliefs.

However, CLT has some limitations when it comes to group work. One caveat with the approach is that some students may not be comfortable working in groups because language classes are structured differently in their homelands (Hiep, 2007; Lin & Wu, 2012; Spicer-Escalante & deJonge-Kannan, 2014; Sreehari, 2012). Additionally, some students may not feel comfortable working with certain students for personal

reasons. One idea for teachers is to scaffold by starting with pair work and then moving to group work. Another idea is that students can choose who they work with, at least at the beginning. Students might be more relaxed about making mistakes or sharing information with people they know or with whom they are comfortable. Additionally, as instructors continue to foster a loving, inclusive classroom culture, shy students might open up and get used to the set up. It is also important to consider that a portion of communication is done nonverbally so even students who are less inclined to speak can still be heard if their peers are willing to listen. Despite its drawbacks, CLT can be an effective way to get students working together meaningfully.

Another idea to facilitate collaborative work is through interactive student presentations. Students can either co-present, sharing differences and similarities between their cultures or they can present individually but in an interactive format with peers asking questions and making connections. Presentations can be a part of an assignment or a standalone assignment. They can fit in with the course curriculum or have a unique objective. Johnson and Chang (2012) discuss the importance of allowing students to present specifically about their cultures. In my USU reading class, I assigned a culture-based presentation where students presented individually, asked each other questions afterward, then exchanged articles or stories that related to their culture. Students were excited about the assignment and had a meaningful discussion about one another's cultures. They asked each other questions and expressed interest in what they learned. The cultural article assignment was engaging and motivating and one I will repeat. For homework, students wrote a summary and reflection of the peer's cultural article which they then discussed in pairs the next class period. As instructors get creative in finding

ways for student to interact regardless of proficiency level or topic, they are taking powerful steps in creating an inclusive classroom.

Conclusion

Keating (2007) believes, “Classrooms are, potentially, places of change” (p. 9). Instructors have the power to move past the potential for change and truly impact the lives of their students and even the world. Since all learners deserve to feel safe in the classroom community, a goal of creating a compassionate classroom is a powerful catalyst for change. Instructors who take conscious efforts to create culturally sensitive classrooms help acknowledge and accept their students as valuable individuals. In such a classroom, peers can learn about one another’s differences and similarities and develop compassion and appreciation for both. Like Tiramisu, a Yorkshire Terrier with differences hidden under the guise of a “designer” breed, students can learn about and appreciate each other for their layers of diversity. Consequently, as stereotypes, biases, and ignorance are reduced through awareness, students can better integrate as informed and confident citizens of society.

Creating a compassionate classroom need not be an afterthought to lesson planning, curriculum development, and team meetings. Teachers have the responsibility to help learners accept and appreciate diversity (Faitar, 2011). Five ways that instructors can accomplish this goal is through text selection, popular culture, storytelling, meditation, and student collaboration. By including diverse cultures and identities into course materials, instructors can help students feel valued, comfortable, and secure, which promotes language acquisition. Storytelling allows students to reflect on who they are and share those qualities with others. Mindfulness and meditation can help students

explore who they are in relation to the world around them (Keating, 2007) and be more open to new ideas. Group work provides an effective format to integrate the ideas discussed in this paper as students are given the chance to engage in authentic, safe interactions with others. As these interactions happen, students can give each other the gift poet Virginia Satir[3] describes: to see, hear, understand, and touch someone else, making a contact. Instructors who create a compassionate classroom focused on acceptance of all identities, groups, and cultures have the power to make a lasting difference for good.

[3] Poem listed at the beginning of this paper.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES

INTRODUCTION

The following three annotated bibliographies, or reflections on published research, represent my findings and reactions to several second language acquisition topics. The first piece, “A look at communicative language teaching in various contexts” was written for LING 6400, Second Language Teaching: Theory and Practice. Exploring CLT through the lenses of various authors helped me better understand how to create a communicative classroom. The second work, “Oral corrective feedback in the online EFL classroom”, was written for LING 6520, Technology for Language Teaching, and was inspired by my online teaching job to Chinese children. The third selection, “Tips for engaging ESL learners” was part of my final project LING 6940, an internship with Cache Valley’s English Language Center. Learning more about the topics of CLT, oral corrective feedback, and engaging ELLs was meaningful for my scholarship and professional development.

A Look at Communicative Language Teaching in Various Contexts

Introduction

Before coming in to the MSLT program I was a proponent of second language acquisition and celebrated its ability to enrich the lives of language learners, but I had limited understanding of effective pedagogy. I had never heard of traditional methods like the Atlas Method (Lee & VanPatten, 2003) or the Grammar Translation Method (Sreehari, P., 2012) or Communicative Language Teaching (Ellis, 1996, 2012; Lee & VanPatten, 2003, VanPatten, 2017), task-based activities (TBA), or task-based language teaching (TBLT) (Ellis, 2009). In preparation for LING 6350, the knowledge gained about communicative classrooms filled with task-based activities was enlightening. I can picture the times I have lectured students versus the times they were engaged in meaningful tasks and how much more effective the latter approach was. Through my research, I have learned what CLT and TBLT are, why these approaches are crucial for language acquisition, how a communicative classroom translates into non-Western cultures, the effectiveness of CLT and TBLT when applied specifically to listening skills, how well tasks transfer, and how CLT can be used in an online classroom. My broad research on CLT has instilled in me a deep belief in its effectiveness and how I can best implement it in a variety of contexts.

Literature Review

Reading *Making communicative language teaching happen* by **Lee and VanPatten (2003)** was the foundation of my CLT and TBA knowledge and understanding. Through reading chapters 1-3 of the book, I became aware of traditional versus communicative methods and what comprised each. I learned the roles of student

and teacher in both traditional and CLT methods and was able to juxtapose the differences, making an informed decision that students learn best when they are architects of their education and not passive learners. Proponents of a communicative classroom, Lee and VanPatten use data to back up their claims.

The authors list the retention rates for students who hear information, see it, discuss it, practice it, and teach it to others. Students remember 90% of what they learn if they teach it to others and 75% if they practice using the content, the other approaches demonstrating considerably lower retention rates. Since teaching is an authentic communicative activity, Lee and VanPatten (2003) propose that communicative activities are the most effective way to acquire a language, even more than practicing the language, which is an artificial language experience with lower retention rates. Although I strongly support CLT, I also find value in practicing the language in the classroom, even if those activities are not considered communicative according to Lee and VanPatten. Since a classroom is a fixed space and limits truly communicative opportunities, I think it's also important to have students practice speech acts that they will use in the real world.

Lee and VanPatten (2003) also discuss the qualities of comprehensible input. Since all input is not comprehensible, students need exposure to input that is at a correct rate of speed, volume, lexical level, and context for them to understand it. A percentage of comprehensible input will then become internalized as intake. It is a teacher's responsibility to provide students with comprehensible input. Making input comprehensible for my students has already benefitted them since I have a tendency to talk and move quickly through the material. I've learned to slow down and take time to write words on the board or show pictures so that students can understand.

Lee and VanPatten (2003) also discuss the areas of communicative competence (Hymes, 1966) and argue that only CLT can help students become fluent in each area. The areas include grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, strategic competence. I agree that through interaction, students can develop acquisition in all of the areas of communicative competence. However, I also believe that direct instruction in grammar will help students learn it well, although it does not need to be the focus of the class. Lee and VanPatten (2003) discuss many aspects and implications of CLT with the claim that it's the most effective way to teach and acquire a language. After reading this book with increasing interest in CLT, I was able to read another book that supporting and expanded upon Lee's and VanPatten's research.

The communicative classroom by **Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro and Mandell (2001)** supplemented Lee and VanPatten (2003). I learned why some teachers do not teach communicatively and some specific activities to incorporate. The authors explain that some teachers do not teach communicatively because they are afraid of students not learning the language accurately and think that grammar drills are the only way to solidify and assess grammatical perfection. These teachers believe that 100% accuracy is possible, though the authors of this book maintain that errors ultimately help facilitate language proficiency. According to the authors, a third reason that teachers stick to the traditional approach of language teaching is that they believe they must choose between communication opportunities and covering the course material. I believe that through professional development, teachers can learn how to teach communicatively while teaching important language concepts. Teachers can overcome these fears and become more effective language teachers.

Ballman, et al. (2001) discuss grammar teaching in the classroom. They argue that there is a place for grammar instruction, although it should not be the focus of the lesson. I side with the authors on this viewpoint. Without learning grammar, students have no direction in which to engage in communicative activities. But giving students a short grammar lesson and having them use that language when engaging in task-based activities is highly effective. In other words, grammar should support communication. The authors also maintain that the grammar lessons should start very simply and get increasingly more difficult as students progress through the language. This claim seems reasonable to me.

Finally, Ballman, et al. (2001) offer worthwhile examples and ideas to implement communicative teaching activities that focus on task-based activities. These activities include information gap activities where students in a group participate in negotiation of meaning as they work together to share and gather the information that one another possesses, ultimately solving a problem. Other useful activities that allow student interaction are surveys and interview activities. This book was helpful in learning more about CLT and learning some applicable activities and approaches to implementing CLT in the classroom. From here, I was able to read another book about CLT, this time a much more recent one, to see what has evolved in CLT research since 2001.

While we're on the topic: BVP on language, acquisition, and classroom practice by **VanPatten (2017)** was helpful in allowing me to assess what I knew about CLT before reading each chapter and realize there was still much to retain about the concept despite my previous reading. However, I discovered that the book does not necessarily provide innovative CLT research, but rather reinforces the previous claims. What is

innovative is the quiz-like format that provides a semblance of communicative teaching in a book format, an approach that helped me identify holes in what I knew about CLT and absorb the information better, further promoting the effectiveness of CLT in my mind.

VanPatten (2017) opens the book with the claim that language teachers need to know what communication means in order to teach communicatively. This was an idea I had not thought about before but makes sense. VanPatten also explains how classrooms provide a limited context for communication but can still be communicative if the instructor gives the students an opportunity to engage in meaningful tasks. According to him, these types of tasks do not include practice activities or role plays, which are not actually communicative since they are not genuine. For VanPatten, communication happens when "each entity is expecting to understand the message or intent (p. 12)." I am a proponent of many of VanPatten's ideas but disagree that his definition of a communicative activities excludes role plays. Although the intent may not be happening in an authentic context, each speaker relies on the other to respond, and this makes it an effective communicative activity in my mind.

Additionally, VanPatten (2017) rephrases his previous claims about CLT being a necessary approach by putting it in the context of the internal nature of language. Since both L1 and L2 learners learn a language in a similar pattern and order, VanPatten maintains that language is internal and not based on external factors. For this reason, language cannot be learned from a textbook or by memorizing rules, but by engaging in language that involves expression and interpretation of meaning. I agree that learning a language is very different than learning another subject, and needs to be an interactive

experience, but based on my language teaching and learning experiences, I still claim that grammar is valuable in the classroom and affects acquisition. Overall, VanPatten's new book, with its casual style and real-world examples, was helpful in solidifying what I knew about CLT and filling in gaps about some of its characteristics.

Teacher's handbook: contextualized language instruction (4th ed.) by **Shrum and Glisan (2010)** provided insight into the nature of a task, including the definitions, characteristics of, a collection of examples adopted from many different authors, and ways in which to carry out effective task-based activities. Shrum and Glisan cite Lee (1995) that tasks are much more than students' responses to questions posed by the teacher but should be "meaningful, contextualized, and engage students in offering diverse responses and opinions" (p. 267). This definition resonates with me because it affirms that role play activities can be communicative when contextualized within a meaningful task. Also, I form the conclusion that there are many types of tasks I can implement in the classroom, which gives me freedom and autonomy as an instructor.

Shrum and Glisan (2010) expound on the importance of using cooperative learning tasks in the classroom. Naturally, a task is not communicative if there is not cooperation involved. The authors say that, "In cooperative learning tasks, each person in the group has a responsibility, and students depend on one another as they work to complete their task" (p. 268). The visual of students "depending" on one another is poignant and represents a crucial element of communication. The authors explain that students can engage in task sequences as well as individual tasks. They lay out how a task sequence would look, which follows this sequences:

1) A teacher-led introduction that sets the stage for the new topic (Willis &

Willis, 2007).

2) Students carry out the task and share their products with others.

3) The lesson concludes with a capstone practical task.

The research by Shrum and Glisan (2010) backs up the concept of TBA students of the MSLT program learned in LING 6350 which began with instruction on a specific concept, students carrying out the task, and ending with feedback from the instructor to the students. Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro and Mandell (2001) also suggest introducing a concept and providing feedback after the tasks. This fourth book in my research was beneficial in creating a mental picture of how to create and execute an entire task-based lesson. After consulting these books that champion CLT, I knew I needed a fresh perspective and researched what potential issues there might be when using the approach in the classroom.

Reading **Sreehari's (2012)** article, "Communicative language teaching: Possibilities and problems," I learned about additional scholars of the CLT method and limited research about difficulties implementing the approach in non-native speaking countries, presumably with non-native speaking teachers. The author discusses what CLT is, the need for implementing the approach in the Indian classroom, and conducts a study to gain empirical evidence of the types of teaching approaches happening in India to suggest what needs to improve. The study consists of 1,500 Indian students in five universities and the data is collected through a questionnaire and classroom observations.

The reason that CLT is needed in India is that Indians value English proficiency for business but recognize the need for a better method. Sreehari (2012) explains that traditional methods are not providing students practical application and that many

teachers are turning to CLT as a solution. Despite this claim, the author does not give specific data or evidence supporting that students are not able to communicate in English as a result of traditional language teaching methods.

Sreehari (2012) goes on to argue that because CLT was developed in native English-speaking countries, its application to non-native English countries will prove difficult. Some of these difficulties are addressed later in the study and include larger class sizes, a lack of textbooks, and a shortage of facilities in which to instruct. The author argues that teachers will consequently need to be flexible when incorporating CLT into certain countries. Within the study, about half of the instructors were able to overcome these difficulties. I wonder if this data is representative of attempts at implementing CLT around the world or if the success rates might be generally higher or lower in other countries. It would have been informative to learn more about the limitations in teaching CLT abroad and which ones listed in the study proved to be the most challenging. Overall, despite the claim that the article will discuss possibilities and problems of CLT, there is limited mention of either. Since I am already familiar with how to execute a CLT lesson and classroom, I was disappointed not to learn more about some of the benefits and drawbacks of the approach.

However, I did find it interesting to examine student preference regarding learning styles. The majority of students wanted the teacher lecture format of learning and working individually, versus working in pairs, groups, role plays, or participating in group discussions. The findings also noted that the instructors focused largely on developing subject knowledge, not on communication. I can infer that more training is needed for instructors in India about why communicative activities are important for

language acquisition. I also agreed with Sreehari (2012) stating that, “Communication in the classroom that simulates real-life contexts such as how to shop or book tickets offers great motivation to learners. Moreover, language learning simulations provide students with the opportunity to learn the pragmatic skills of using language appropriately” (p. 90). This idea supports my beliefs about the importance of practicing real-life situations in the context of the classroom.

Most of the study focused on aspects of CLT that were important to implement in the Indian classrooms such as writing instruction, simulations of real-life experiences, and group work and what pedagogy teachers should focus on to create communicative classrooms. Despite providing some valuable information, the article lacked in organization and I would have wanted more information about the limitations of CLT in the Indian classroom as the title suggests, so I further researched the topic.

In “Communicative language teaching: Unity within diversity,” **Hiep (2007)** addresses several potential issues with CLT in the non-Western classroom but argues that the theory is still worthwhile. Hiep begins the article outlining CLT, including its history and characteristics. Hiep explains that CLT dates back to 1972 when Hymes (1972) said that language acquisition is more than knowing grammar but obtaining communicative competence which is a learner’s ability to appropriately use the language in a social situation. Canale and Swain (1980) added to Hymes’ theory by saying there are several competencies that a learner must attain to be a competent communicator. These competencies encompass “grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence” (p. 194). It is insightful to recognize that language is complex and multi-dimensional and students should strive for each

competency in order to be truly fluent in the language. CLT is one method to achieve these goals.

However, CLT may look different in its implementation across countries and cultures. Hiep (2007) explains, “While North American scholars focused on communicative competence as the goal of second language learning, British educators tended to view CLT in terms of syllabus and methodology” (p. 194). Because of the innate differences within classrooms, Hiep claims that though the theory of CLT is the same, it will function differently in various classrooms. For example, Hiep explains that countries like Vietnam and China vary from the USA or the UK socioculturally, politically and with classroom conditions; these differences inherently pose problems in implementing CLT uniformly in each country. In Vietnam, classrooms have 40-60 students which makes group or pair work difficult. Furthermore, when non-native speakers engage, there is the question as to whether or not their interaction could be considered authentic material. Additionally, in classrooms where students and teacher share the same mother tongue, there is less motivation or need to speak only English. Additional difficulties with CLT is that people in many countries use written exams to measure language proficiency, some teachers lack expertise in creating communicative activities, and teacher and student roles may vary.

Hiep (2007) claims that considering these valid cultural differences, it is appropriate to make respective adaptions to CLT. He argues, “the definition of ‘good teaching’ is socially constructed. In this way, assuming that what is appropriate in one particular educational setting will naturally be appropriate in another is to ignore the fact that [English language teaching] methodology is grounded in an Anglo-Saxon view of

education" (p. 196). However, despite these cultural and logistical issues, the author maintains that most teachers have the same goal: that their students will be able to communicate in English. world. Hiep states, "Thus, while teachers in many parts of the world may reject the CLT techniques transferred from the West, it is doubtful that they reject the spirit of CLT" (p. 196). The author concludes that CLT is valued and useful and should be adapted to fit the needs of various cultures, contexts, and resources but that teachers should find support from people and research when making these adaptations in their classrooms.

This article was excellent in pointing out issues regarding CLT in non-Western classrooms and presenting the idea that CLT could and should be adapted when needed, but not ignored. The idea of cultural impact creating issues with CLT in the classroom was my biggest takeaway from this article. Not only do some educators in different continents such as North America and Europe view CLT differently, but there are potential limitations for students in various countries that cannot be ignored.

Spicer-Escalante and deJonge-Kannan (2014) also recognize the limitations in globalized implementation of CLT. In their article, "Cultural mismatch in pedagogy workshops: Training non-native teachers in communicative language teaching," the authors maintain that more teachers need training to carry out the best methodologies throughout the world, regardless of culture. They attest that because of the importance of English worldwide, students must receive the most effective language instruction.

DeJonge-Kannan and Spicer-Ecalante (2014) conducted workshops on CLT and TBLT to university-level EFL instructors from China, Iraq, and Kurdistan. The authors explain that the objective of the workshops was to model how EFL could be taught if

language proficiency were the goal and not to show teachers how they should be teaching. The findings showed that the instructors expressed concerns with the ability to use the methodology in their home countries because of resources and beliefs and objectives regarding ELL. The authors state, “it is teachers’ responsibility to assess these methodologies and to make the necessary adjustments to better suit their local and national traditions while also responding to global needs” (p. 2443). The fusion between the framework of the CLT methodology and local traditions is the way to carry out the principles of a communicative classroom worldwide.

This article caused me to ponder about several aspects of English language teaching. First, the authors’ discussion on the global importance of English personally, professionally, and academically helped me understand how important my role as an English teacher is. Helping my students achieve English proficiency could benefit their lives more than I previously realized and I am further committed to providing them with quality instruction. Additionally, it was thought-provoking to learn that although the instructors in this study believed they understood the methodology, putting it into practice in a communicative lesson plan revealed otherwise. MSLT requirement, LING 6350, sounds like a similar workshop to what these instructors participated in, and I feel that I was able to create a successful CLT lesson plan in that course. Was my achievement because I have more instructional freedom than instructors in non-Western cultures? Was it because I had experienced the CLT method as a language student myself? Was it because I grew up in the United States and am familiar with a certain learning approach in general? Overall, this article provided me with valuable research

and information that allowed me to contemplate the implementation of CLT globally more than I had before.

After learning about difficulties in implementing CLT in some cultures, I sought more research about teachers' experiences using communicative language teaching abroad. In response to this questions, I found the article, "Teacher's perceptions of task-based language teaching in English classrooms in Taiwanese junior high schools," by **Lin and Wu (2012).** As the title suggests, this article addresses the view of teachers in implementing TBLT in Taiwan. The authors argue that similar obstacles arise from implementing communicative language tasks in the Taiwanese classroom as in the Vietnamese classrooms discussed by Hiep (2007).

The issues faced in Taiwan classrooms with TBLT include large class size, constraints on time to teach, an emphasis on content-knowledge exams, and fixed curriculum. However, the Taiwanese government recognizes a need for a fresh approach to the traditional English teaching methods and teachers are attempting to use the TBLT method. Many teachers declare that they want to implement the method and think it is efficient but feel inadequate due to the aforementioned limitations. Furthermore, none of students in TBLT classrooms that were interviewed "could describe a task, task cycle, or TBLT in a substantial way with the support of examples" (p. 605). The authors perceive the lack of student achievement could be because teachers are not correctly implementing TBLT. Another problem is that the teachers interviewed who were supposed to be using TBLT demonstrated a lack of understanding about what the approach is. Most teachers admitted to using the traditional grammar translation method most often and occasionally adding in group work.

Lin and Wu (2012) suggest three solutions to making TBLT more effective in Taiwan: 1) the Ministry of Education offer more professional development courses and 2) the junior high system be reconstructed to TBLT is a reasonable option and 3) teachers are supplied with more resources. I enjoyed reading this article after Hiep's (2007) because I could see similarities and differences between the authors' claims. Based on my reading, Eastern education provides a poor forum for implementing TBLT, which is a shame since Asia puts demands on their citizens to learn English. If I were to obtain employment in Asia, I would be nervous about the limitations on the way I could teach, which might affect my decision. The threat that trained TBLT teachers might not choose to teach in Asia shows a perpetuation to the lack of TBTL classrooms in Asia.

My next research interest was the effect of task-based learning specifically on comprehension, since this skill can get overshadowed by a focus on oral production. In the article, "A task-based language teaching approach to developing metacognitive strategies for listening comprehension," **Chou (2017)** examines 88 second-year university Chinese students who received a comprehension lesson. The experimental group (EG) received a task-based instruction and the control group (CG) received strategy-based instruction. The results showed that the EG outperformed the CG in the listening posttest and even demonstrated greater metacognitive awareness for strategy use. Chou attributes the outperformance of the EG over the CG to the task-based application. Chou claims:

> The task-based design of the listening activities in the EG, in other words, reduced the cognitive load required when using a large number of strategies during listening by offering the participants opportunities to use/practice

> strategies before listening, which potentially automatized the process of strategy retrieval (p. 63).

Chou is another researcher who claims that actually using language, not just learning about it, helps it to become an automatic, internalize process.

Chou (2017) references Field (2008) who claimed that the TBLT approach helps student develop their procedural knowledge (the how) versus the declarative knowledge (the what). She discusses that one-way listening approaches, or ones in which learners focus on understanding input, has proved effective for listening comprehension because learners are focused solely on listening. However, with TBLT, learners were able to engage in two-way listening activities, or ones that are interactive, and still perform as well on their listening tests as those participating in listening-only tests. For me, the strong results of task-based learning on comprehension supports the importance of TBLT in the classroom as a way for students to become fluent in all areas of the target language.

My next research interest was studying to what degree skills learned through TBA are transferrable to similar tasks. Can instructors hope that students will be able to use the language learned for a variety of tasks, or will we need to teach each possible scenario individually? **Benson (2016)** explores this topic in her article, "Task-based language teaching: An empirical study of task transfer." The study conducted by the researcher aims to investigate whether an ELL who acquires one language task can transfer that skill to another similar task. The author chose the meaningful tasks based on a needs analysis for an ESL community program. She explains, "The target tasks were classified into two target task types: *following directions to a destination* and *evaluating product information* in a store" (p. 347, emphasis in original). Each of the tasks was intended to

be equally difficult to complete.

48 low-level ESL participants were analyzed to see if after they 1) learned to follow directions to the grocery store could they then follow directions to the post office and 2) after learning to evaluate information to purchase the best dishwasher could they then evaluate information to purchase the best kitchen sink? The author used an online learning management system to carry out the tasks to ensure that students would have equal time, exposure to the task, and assessment procedures. The author explains how she kept each task uniform within the learning management system.

The conclusion of Benson's (2016) study is that task-based training for one objective did not transfer to equate to a significantly better performance on dissimilar objectives (directions to purchasing a product), but it did lead to significantly better results for tasks within the same sphere (directions to different places or purchasing different products). Another conclusion is that the experimental group who received task-based instruction outperformed the control group who did not. However, the highest indicator of ability to perform any tasks was a student's listening ability, not the 45 minutes of task-based training. Although this final piece of data does not advocate strongly for communicative classrooms, we can pair Chou's (2017) study that TBL aids in learner comprehension, and conclude that TBL will ultimately help students achieve success in having the listening ability and the oral production. Benson (2016) sought to create an impartial, accurate study and to me seemed to achieve this goal, despite the fact that it could have had more participants and each participant could have displayed the exact same proficiencies.

My final research area of interest was the effects of CLT in an online environment. Having formally taught EFL online and with interest in teaching online university courses in the future, it is valuable for me to learn about the relationship between CLT and online teaching. In, "The implementation of task-based teaching in an online Chinese class through web conferencing," **Guo and Mollering (2016)** report findings from their research study.

The study consisted of eight students placed into two groups, who would alternate between the main room with the instructor and one breakout session with peers with a focus on information-gap and jigsaw tasks. These students were enrolled in an on-campus beginner Chinese course and knew each other from that. They volunteered out of 68 students in the class to participate in this study. In the breakout sessions, the instructor only interacted if a hand was raised (an online tool). Negotiation of meaning was included in both groups. The authors note that the students did not use the webcam very often, and hypothesize that 1) because students knew each other in person they did not need to see each other online, 2) there could have been poor internet connection, or 3) there could have been nervousness about being seen or exposed on the camera.

Another finding was that students seemed more interested in using the text box or raise hand feature than the microphone, possibly because they did not want to talk over another student. Guo and Mollering (2016) discovered that students were more likely to use the webcam and text chat in the main room with the instructor and stopped using it when communicating with their group members. The whiteboard was the key feature during the breakout groups while students completed their tasks. The authors suggest the implication that students perceive audio as the key feature and video and text as "back-up

functions" (p. 36). Finally, the authors found that the textbox was most used by the teacher in general and students may have viewed it as the realm of the teacher. This is interesting to note because in my webcam EFL teaching to students in China, I commonly use the chat box versus students who rarely use it unless they are saying hi to me before I enter the classroom. My experience backs up the theory of the authors that students see the text box as the teacher's domain, observing that it is used by students primarily for reporting technical issues or greeting others. The authors observed that students relied on their native languages to negotiate meaning when communication hiccups arrived.

The authors conclude that task based learning may have had a positive effect on online learners' language acquisition and has noteworthy potential if used for a more in-depth study. The benefit is that the multimodal interactions unique to a web-conferencing forum complement each other and TBLT could be carried out well in that capacity. They admit several shortcomings with the study, especially the small focus group, the limit of only two online sessions, and the fact that the students were chosen from an on-campus classroom. I was disappointed with the limitations to this study and not learning more empirical evidence on the subject of TBLT in an online classroom. However, I can interpret the potential of implementing TBLT online by considering how students responded to the interactive tools available such as raising a hand, the chat feature, the webcam, the whiteboard, and the microphone. Using these tools to interact would arguably be more effective than students learning language online completely independent of peer interaction and I can consider students' response to each type when in an online teaching environment. More research needs to done on this topic with an

online course and over several weeks or a semester, but this research was a commendable step in that direction and one-of-its kind.

Conclusion

My research on CLT in the context of its overall approach, its inherent difficulties in non-Western classrooms, the transfer of tasks, its effect on comprehension, and its implementation in an online classroom has instilled in me a broad understanding and appreciation of CLT. I enjoyed considering the four books I read about CLT and seeing the method put into different contexts. My own experiencing teaching ELLs has helped me understand CLT even more. I have had the opportunity to try CLT in an ESL classroom in the United States with several non-Western students. Many of the proposed limitations in the research are not a factor since there is a classroom available, there is a small class size, there is not a focus on assessments because I get to create the goals, and the students come with a variety of mother tongues. However, I have observed that the South Korean and Chinese students tend to be more reluctant to engage in group discussions, dramas, or other task-based activities than the students from Columbia, Senegal, or Somalia. I have also had the opportunity to try some task-based approaches in my online EFL classroom and have noted how much richer the experience is for students when I ask them questions about the language topic rather than simply follow the provided PPT with drills and memorization. The students seem nervous to go beyond the slides at first, but are empowered when they can understand and respond. Through continued research and especially by using CLT in various classrooms, I will continue to gain greater perspectives and beliefs about the method.

Oral Corrective Feedback in the Online EFL Classroom

Introduction

Online learning is a valuable tool for second language acquisition, particularly because it unifies native and non-native speakers. Gass (2003) champions online learning for its unique value in education by bringing together interactions between native and non-native speakers. The parents of my Chinese students from the online language platform, VIPKID, support the value of English lessons with native speakers, evidenced by their spending hundreds of dollars a month for 25-minute English tutoring sessions for their children. Teacher autonomy is limited in these online classes since VIPKID provides the curriculum and specific pedagogical instructions. One way I can personally add to the learning experience of my students is by providing effective oral feedback. Additionally, knowing the criteria for effective oral feedback is also valuable for a traditional classroom setting. The aforementioned reasons were my motivation for learning more about oral corrective feedback.

Oral feedback is vital in language learning. Gass (1997), Long (1996), and Pica (1994) each conclude that the interaction alone is not what promotes language acquisition, but the supplementary feedback given. Students must know what they are doing well and the mistakes they are making in order to gain proficiency. Even students who are naturally more inclined to self-correct benefit from specific corrective feedback (CF). Many CF strategies that apply to a physical classroom can also be successfully executed in an online classroom where both student and teacher use webcams. The following annotated bibliography discusses the several researchers' findings about the most effective approaches for oral feedback in terms of proficiency, timing, age, content,

and student differences.

Literature Review

Lee (2013) investigates which type of corrective feedback is most commonly preferred and used in advanced-level ESL classrooms with adult students. In the article, "Corrective feedback preferences and learner repair among advanced ESL students," Lee explains the feedback taxonomy created by Lyster and Ranta (1997) which includes recasts, explicit correction, elicitation, clarification, repetition of error, and meta-linguistic feedback. See Table 3 for explanations of each of these types of feedback, adapted from Lyster and Ranta, which will be referred to throughout this paper.

Table 3

Corrective feedback descriptions and examples

Type	**Description**	**Example** (Responding to, *"The woman went to store.")*
Recasts	Rephrases the word or sentence without specifically pointing out the error.	"The woman went to the store."
Explicit corrections	Points out the students' error and how to fix it	"Not 'went to store' but 'went to the store.'"
Clarification requests	Acknowledges confusion in what the student said.	"Sorry?" or "Excuse me"
Repetition	Repeats the mistake with a questioning voice.	"The woman went to store?"
Elicitation	Pauses to prompt student self-correction by filling in the blank.	"The woman went to…."
Metalinguistic	Provides specific information about grammar that needs correction.	"In this sentence, the object needs an article."

Research conducted prior to Lee's field work shows that recasts are a prominent feedback form used by language teachers overall (Han & Jung, 2007; Panove & Lyster, 2002; Suzuki, 2004). However, beginning students did better with elicitation and repetition than recasts (Panove & Lyster, 2002). Overall, Lee's literature review suggests that the best feedback strategies vary by language proficiency.

To further explore which feedback types are most effective for advanced proficiency ELLs, Lee (2013) observed 60 ELL graduate students in the US. These participants were doctoral students training to teach courses in their various areas of expertise. The students came from Asian countries, mostly China and Korea. Four native speakers also participated and comprised the instructor focus group. The data were gathered through the researcher observing the ESL class for 12 hours over four weeks.

The results yield several suggestions. First, CF is intrinsically valuable, regardless of type, since each type lead to a high rate of error repair. However, the quantity of oral feedback used did not always match the effectiveness. For example, explicit corrections were among the most commonly used but had the lowest rate of repair, suggesting their overlooked value. Recasts were the most frequent but fell behind repetition and clarification in terms of effectiveness. This could suggest that instructors mistakenly lean toward recasts when other types might be better suited for the situation. Metalinguistic feedback was altogether unused which might indicate that it is difficult for instructors to implement or that it does not come naturally to use.

As far as student perception, all students in Lee's (2013) study preferred that their teachers correct them every time, most desiring explicit and immediate corrections; however, the instructors preferred recasts and avoided correcting each mistake. Despite

student preference, instructors cannot possibly correct each mistake, every time. Besides, 100% correction would mentally overload the students and surely be counterproductive. Error correction is not the focus or end goal of my language instruction. Furthermore, notwithstanding its high repair rate, students most disliked clarification requests because they perceived that an instructor responding with “Sorry?” or “Excuse me” seemed too vague to facilitate meaningful correction. As demonstrated by these results, student preference and best practices do not always align, although I still believe it is important to acknowledge students’ opinions.

From this research, I feel confident increasing the amount of CF I use overall because I better understand its value in promoting language development. Because recasting comes naturally to me and it shows high repair rates in this study, I will continue using that type when the situation seems fitting. However, considering the high rate of repair for repetition and elicitation, I will start using those more often. Though clarification requests and explicit corrections have the lowest repair, they still demonstrate value, and I will also try using them in my classroom to compare effectiveness. I am also curious about how metalinguistic feedback will fare among my students. Will they have the linguistic knowledge to understand metalinguistic feedback? Will it create cognitive overload as they consider how to fix the error and the rules behind it? Because this is only one study with a limited sample size, I am highly interested in conducting some of my own observations. After reading this study, I sought additional research about which feedback types were most effective in order to get a more complete picture.

In response to my question, I read **Lyster and Saito’s (2010)** study, “Oral

feedback in classroom SLA," which studied recasts, prompts, and explicit feedback. These three types of feedback were analyzed for overall value and in the context of language skills measured, second language versus foreign language classroom, length of treatment, and age of learner. This study analyzed quantitative data from fifteen qualifying studies to determine results. Included studies had to be published (not dissertations or conference papers) after 1980 in a major academic journal. Additionally, the selected studies all passed reviews by other scholars prior to examination. No laboratory-based studies were included because the authors wanted to focus on authentic, spontaneous results in a classroom setting.

Results of the study concluded that oral corrective feedback notably contributes to L2 development. However, it was clear that prompts were more helpful than recasts overall and that the effectiveness of explicit correction varied among setting and learner. Results also showed that CF provided much higher gains for younger learners than older learners, suggesting that instructors of children should make CF a priority in language teaching. Additionally, CF is most helpful in improving spontaneous conversation skills which suggests CF is useful for form-focused instruction. The relationships of CF to length of treatment was inconclusive.

I found this study valuable for several reasons. First, the method of synthesizing valid research of other scholars was something I had not seen done before and it helped me better understand research options. Also, I was glad to read contradictory data to Lee's (2003) study that suggests recasts are the most effective feedback option, because I now have a more accurate perspective of CF types. In regards to the findings about age of students, it was interesting to learn that young learners have higher gains. Unfortunately,

it was unclear what age was being discussed since the authors refer to age as a continuum instead of focusing on specific years of age. Because of the significant gains for all students from receiving CF, I will continue to use feedback for students of all ages. Overall, I found this article useful in better understanding the intrinsic value of giving feedback in my L2 instruction. After learning more about the effectiveness of feedback types, I sought research explaining when and how to provide CF to best support learners.

The nature of effective feedback and its components is explored by **Fagan (2015)** in the article**, "**Managing language errors in real-time: A microanalysis of teacher practices." The author explores an Initiation-Response-Feedback structure where the instructor begins the discourse, the student responds, and the instructor provides feedback. This study's data come from a community adult ESL course in the United States. A master's student, Ann, was chosen to be the teacher participant because of her 35 years of teaching experience. She taught advanced students from various backgrounds. Twenty-six hours of classroom interactions were recorded via cell phones. The study focuses on authentic interaction data.

Findings from the recordings showed that valuable oral feedback practices both empower the learner and correct language. According to Fagan (2015), the best practice for partial errors, or errors that have some correct language components, is to address student success as well as the error. For complete errors, meaning, "those that have no definitively correct portions or are not relatively close to the correct language use," it is helpful to provide encouragement and correction (p. 80). Both practices consider students' affective filter which reflects my personal teaching philosophy and practices. For partial errors during conversation activities, Ann provided explicit feedback to

individual students. For other types of activities, she chose to address the entire class so as not to isolate one learner's mistakes. Since my online classes are conversation based, I will focus on the individual feedback approach, although I will use both for traditional classroom settings. For complete errors, Ann used explicit feedback if the learner did not have access to the correct language, but also brought in other students for help when appropriate. Learning how to best carry out corrective feedback for both partial and complete errors is valuable to consider in my teaching practice.

My biggest takeaway from this article is when Fagan (2015) proposes that teachers must go beyond the research and analyze each situation when deciding what feedback to implement. Students are unique, complex human beings; therefore, no CF is generically effective for each student in each circumstance. It is important for the instructor to consider the needs of the student in each decision to use CF. The author also argues that teachers should consider how feedback will affect not just the current mistake, but also further interactions. For this reason, feedback should not have a negative focus. A positive feedback approach will affect the overall classroom environment as well because students will feel comfortable, valued, and encouraged. There are many elements in providing effective oral feedback, and teachers should consider not only the current situation, but the overall needs of the student and their learning journey. After gleaning valuable research about feedback types and results in a traditional classroom from Lee (2013) and Fagan (2015), I wanted to know more about feedback specific to an online environment.

Guichon, Bétrancourt and Prié (2012) investigated how teachers give written and oral negative feedback in a synchronous online environment. In their article,

"Managing written and oral negative feedback in a synchronous online teaching situation," the researchers report on their study of eight Master of French as a Foreign Language students who are learning to teach upper-intermediate French online. As part of the study, the teachers instruct eighteen University of California, Berkeley French students. The course utilized a specific web-conferencing tool called Visu which allows for markers, or time-coded notes, that teachers can use as a reference in providing accurate feedback during the class without interrupting the conversation. Results indicated that feedback from teachers largely consisted of verbal and written recasts. The authors argue that recasts are more effective immediately than delayed so that learners can practice the repair for the remainder of class. Guichon et al. also cite Gass (2003) who explains that feedback can be implied or explicit and vary in timing. It is reassuring to consider teacher's autonomy in how and when to give feedback and motivates me to learn more about effective feedback so I can make successful choices when giving it.

Results also showed that synchronous feedback is preferred to asynchronous, that recasts are most commonly used among teachers, and that the most natural way to give feedback was orally and in the chat function, not focusing heavily on Visu's marking system. The system proved difficult for new teachers to utilize while trying to maintain focus on the student. However, the researchers argue that with more practice, an error-tracking system could be effective for language teachers. This idea of a marking system reflects a version of my own error-tracking system, though mine is handwritten. Notating errors, especially frequent ones, during a one-on-one online teaching environment is helpful in providing delayed feedback. My next research interest was about the

effectiveness of computer-mediated feedback so I could compare it with teacher-provided feedback.

In her dissertation, **Moreno (2007)** provides a valuable contribution to the limited field of oral feedback within CALL. She investigates the results of task and feedback types in L2 Spanish classrooms in the context of CALL. Moreno's study included 59 participants, L1 English college students in an introductory Spanish class. The students were assigned to one of four groups that had specific tasks and feedback types conducted through CALL. The tasks were to play various online games or complete interactive multiple-choice exercises. Feedback compared was explicit versus implicit and students were placed in groups accordingly. When errors were made among the explicit feedback group, students received a pop up box on their screen explaining the language rules behind their mistakes. When they chose the correct responses, they were awarded a congratulations message on their screen that included grammatical explanations of their correct choices. On the other hand, the implicit feedback group received only flashing red lights on their screen when they made errors or were able to move forward in the computer-based activities when they responded correctly. Although I am skeptical about using a computer to provide feedback to students, I knew it would be important to understand implications in this growing area of instructional design.

Results indicated several implications. First, the task in practice did not make a difference in learner outcome, but the type of feedback received did. The implicit feedback group that received a "right/wrong" indicator performed better than the explicit feedback group that received metalinguistic corrections. Additionally, the participants receiving explicit feedback did not retain the information as long as those receiving

implicit feedback. However, Moreno (2007) discovered that explicit feedback does have a place, which is to help beginner language students learn simple tasks. From these results, I can gather that trying to understand grammatical explanations in the context of focused language work is not helpful for students. Knowing they made a mistake can be helpful, but since their attention is focused on producing language, it can be a cognitive overload to try and consider the specifics of the mistake in that moment. With a better understanding of the most effectives types of feedback and their usefulness in an online classroom, the next step was learning more about what student-based factors might influence the value of CF.

Ellis (2010a) addresses several factors that can influence student receptiveness to feedback in his article, "A framework for investigating oral and written corrective feedback." These variables include 1) whether feedback is oral or written, 2) individual learning factors among students, 3) contextual factors, 4) student engagement in the feedback, and 5) learning outcomes of the lesson. Ellis explains that individual student learning factors can include "learning style, personality, motivation, language anxiety, and learner beliefs" (p. 339). I had never considered how much students' emotions or mental state could also impact how well they receive corrective feedback given. After learning about effective oral corrective feedback, I want to make sure I assess my students' readiness and ability to learn before providing feedback.

Additional areas of interest in CF is considering the goal of the lesson or student. Ellis (2010a) explains that feedback can be input providing or output pushing. I had never considered using feedback to target a specific language skill or task objective. If students are focusing on a speaking task, output pushing feedback such as elicitation could be

most beneficial. If a student is struggling with listening skills, an input providing feedback type such as a recast could be better in assessing and strengthening that skill. Another consideration with feedback is in student and teacher communication. Ellis maintains, “Problems can arise when there is a mismatch between the teacher’s and the learners’ goals” (p. 340). Instructors can make the greatest impact by communicating with students about their language goals and where they are in the learning process, rather than pushing only what is important to the lesson or making assumptions on what students want to achieve.

Ellis (2010a) makes a strong argument that corrective feedback is an individualized matter. His claim reaffirms that though oral corrective feedback is valuable, there is no fill-in-the-blank correct answer for each student in each situation. Corrective feedback research can give instructors a better idea of how to use corrective feedback effectively, but it will not replace assessing each student in each scenario to truly make the most of this teaching strategy. My final question was what to consider in future research about corrective feedback for language learners.

Pawlak (2013) discusses several important research criteria in the chapter “Conclusions, implications, future directions” of his book, *Error correcting in the foreign language classroom.* The author suggests that more research be done in clustering feedback types rather than studying each type as its own island. He explains that teachers might use several feedback types for one error, or combine them, so it can be difficult to conduct research in an isolated way. This idea is insightful since the previous authors discussed the feedback types as separate to one another, but indeed they can become joined to take on a new shape and feel.

Pawlak (2013) also attests that future research would be most valuable when considered in the context of computer-mediated feedback because of the direction of education. As earlier mentioned, the thought of computer-mediated feedback automatically seems less ineffective to me than a trained human providing individualized feedback, especially because that type of feedback would surely be given out of a communicative context. However, I know that CALL can be beneficial for language learners when used effectively, and perhaps feedback through a computer is no different. I am still unconvinced but open to the idea.

Finally, the author suggests that both qualitative and quantitative research plans would be effective because the topic is complex and requires various angles to see the most accurate picture. Another way to understand the whole picture of effective corrective feedback would be through examining psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic factors. Pawlak (2013) maintains that future studies should explore effects of CF in relation to linguistic and contextual variables and the complex individual learner. Although psychological learner-based research projects seem difficult to conduct based on the personal nature of the criteria, I agree that the results would be beneficial in better understanding CF efficacy. This article was useful in showing me some of the holes in current research, important factors involved in oral corrective feedback, and helping me reflect on what I can consider when evaluating the oral corrective feedback that I provide to students.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, I will approach giving oral feedback for each student based on their particular needs and abilities. Since no two students or situations are the same, I will not set rules to follow or feedback types to which I default in every situation. Instead, I will consider a series of guidelines that I gleaned from the findings. The guidelines I will follow include 1) using a variety of feedback types (Lee, 2013); 2) giving feedback during form-focused instruction and tasks versus conversation (Lyster & Saito, 2010; Moreno, 2007); 3) prompting students to self-correct before I jump in with the correct response (Ellis, 2010b); 4) empowering students and providing language correction through CF (Fagan, 2015); and 5) considering students' emotions and other personal factors when providing CF (Ellis, 2010b; Pawlak, 2013). Following these guidelines, I will always use my best judgment in deciding when and how to carry out CF with my students to best meet their individual needs.

Learning about these six different types of feedback has already been very helpful for me in my online teaching. The support of recasts among researchers (Guichon, Bétrancourt & Prié, 2012; Lee, 2013; Moreno, 2007) demonstrates that this form of implicit feedback can be natural for teachers and useful for students. Recasts seem beneficial to my students, and I am encouraged to know that this approach is supported by some research. Additionally, I now have an awareness of what types of feedback are more helpful for different learner levels, such as beginner students benefitting from explicit feedback (Moreno, 2007) and elicitation and repetition (Lee, 2013). However, I am even more conscious that the student and the particular context within the lesson play a significant part in how to deliver feedback, regardless of language proficiency.

Finally, I found that the majority of the research geared toward a traditional classroom is transferable to online classrooms and vice versa since the approaches focus on verbal teacher-to-student interactions. The only research that was not transferrable from a traditional to a private online platform was from Fagan (2015) where the instructor sometimes utilized peers when giving feedback to save positive face of the learner who made a mistake. When I start my own language school, I may have multiple language learners in one classroom so I can better apply that particular feedback approach down the road. For now, in my one-on-one teaching environment I am able to meaningfully choose when to use which type of feedback for each student. As I implement the guidelines and feedback types from my research, I can gain even more awareness of what works for my instruction and what seems the most effective for the growth of my students. Though research regarding oral feedback for children learning a second language is limited, I will apply what I learned based on studies with adult participants and adapt the strategies accordingly.

Strategies for Engaging English Language Learners

Introduction

When I was a child, my color code personality test results indicated that I was a yellow, or the fun-loving personality type, according to Harman (1987). Although I have supposedly evolved into a blue, or a "do-gooder," that need for fun still burns inside me in social and academic settings (p. 40). When I am stuck in a boring class where I am expected to listen quietly to the instructor and take notes, waves of anger, frustration, and annoyance pulse through me. I stop listening and cannot help but wonder, *Why is this instructor wasting my time?* In response to my need for interesting lessons, I make a point to try and actively engage my students in every class, in every phase of instruction. When my students seem bored or disinterested, I take it very hard. But it does happen. My students get bored. I have also observed bored students in the classrooms of others. As mentioned earlier, I have been a bored student.

In response to the ubiquitous issue of student disengagement in lessons, this annotated bibliography was born from a desire to better engage students in active, effective language learning. I sought resources explaining what I could do as an instructor to engage students. Student-based factors such as health, stress, and willingness to learn were beyond the scope of this paper although some of these issues are influenced by instructional techniques. Through my reading, I learned that a variety of factors influence student engagement, some of which include teaching tasks and activities, teaching materials, the physical classroom space, and student collaboration.

Literature Review

Student Reflection, Music, Movement, and Themes

Tominey, O'Bryon, and Díaz, (2017) discuss several ways to engage language learners in their book, *45 strategies that support young dual language learners.* First, the authors maintain that continually reflecting on successes and mistakes helps learners engage in instruction. This idea caused me to reflect on what opportunities I am providing my students to analyze their own progress. From my experience, formative and summative assessments effectively engage students because they want to perform well and are interested in seeing their results. However, I will also like to start involving students more in assessments so they are considering their own growth rather than only being told how they are doing by me. It makes sense that students who are conscious of their language development progress are actively involved in the learning process.

Next, the authors suggest that incorporating music into the lessons is a useful tool for language learners of all ages. According to the authors, music can integrate students' cultures and enhance language learning through vocabulary development and repetition. Music also helps students connect with other cultures and build relationships. In my teaching, I occasionally use music as an engagement and instructional tool and would like to incorporate it more. Most recently, I have used upbeat songs in English to energize as they walk into class and expose them language to input. Students appear to enjoy hearing the music as they settle in to their seats; they sometimes sing along or bob their heads in time with the beat. In my EILI reading class, I also used songs to supplement literature we read which demonstrated significant student interest. However, instructors need to be aware of their students' backgrounds when planning to use music as an engagement or

language development tool. For example, I had several students tell me that in their religion listening to instrumental music is prohibited, so I chose to forego music-based pedagogy in those classes. Despite its limitations, I value using music to engage students and would like to find more ways to use it in my teaching.

Third, the authors suggest using movement in the classroom. According to the authors, movement can happen during learning activity transitions so students can move physically between tasks and shift focus mentally. Additionally, pairing movement within instruction can help solidify concepts. For example, I supplemented pronunciation instruction of short vowels sounds with actions such as feigning eating an apple while saying the soft *A* sound and making a thumbs-up sign while saying the short *U*. This idea, taken from a colleague at the ELC, helped students produce the correct sounds. During this instruction, each student was focused and involved in learning pronunciation. The actions have also acted as prompts in later lessons to correct pronunciation errors. Frequent movement is critical for engaging learners of all ages and instructors should incorporate as much of it as possible.

Finally, the authors suggest incorporating a classroom theme that aligns with student interest. I have used this tactic in elementary school and have also seen its benefit for secondary students. One of my middle school colleagues created a classroom theme around the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling in her Honors English Language Arts class. I observed that the students were excited about the classroom which was decorated in Harry Potter memorabilia, being sorted into Hogwarts school houses, and earning the wizarding money Knuts, Sickles, and Galleons for classroom achievement. Most students in the younger grades hoped to get into that sixth-grade class, a desire which may have

motivated them to work harder so they could place into it. Certainly other factors were included in making the Honors Language Arts class desirable, but it appeared that the class theme contributed significantly.

I am unsure how effective themes would be in engaging adult students but I imagine that the right idea executed well might prove effective. I would enjoy talking with other instructors of adults who have implemented classroom themes to gauge their efficacy in piquing adults' interest. However, I do not think instructors need to incorporate every single engagement strategy in every situation. In summary, this book was full of great ideas for maximizing language development through engagement and helped me reflect on how I can better engage my students. I look forward to trying out the ideas in classes and learning more about how to best implement these ideas.

Output, Scaffolding, and Visuals

The ideas of student reflection, music, movement, and themes to engage learners triggered interest in further research about other general ideas to involve students in language development. **Gonzalez (2017)** discusses additional approaches for engaging ELLs in, "Secrets for ELL success: Four effective techniques for engaging English language learners." She suggests making output, or what students say and write, comprehensible to them by incorporating collaborative groups, sentence stems, word banks, and paragraph frames that include sentence stems and transition words for beginning to intermediate students. These tools can help language learners stay engaged by making expectations of their performance realistic and by offering support in task production. As a student of Spanish, when I was expected to produce language that I did

not understand, it was easy to disengage with the task and shut down. On the flip side, when I felt confident in how to complete a task, I enjoyed participating.

Although I have limited experience using sentence stems, I look forward to trying this tool. Paragraph frames also seem like a great way to teach paragraph organization such as topic sentences. With paragraph frames, students could see how each of the sentences after the transition words support the content in the topic sentence. The idea of helping students create comprehensible output strongly supplements my previous views on making language comprehensible for students.

In addition to comprehensible output as a factor in engaging language students, Gonzalez (2017) suggests modeling academic and everyday language tasks for students. These tasks include think alouds in reading, observations about text structure of a book, and how to do commonplace language tasks such as checking out a library book or helping a friend with a problem. From my experience, modeling has proven effective in drawing students' attention to what their upcoming task will be. Especially when modeling an everyday task, students watch with intent, eager to learn how to perform that process. In regards to think alouds, I have found it most effective when ELLs have access to the text and can follow along. I have observed that too much teacher talk without enough support disengages students.

Gonzalez (2017) explains two final strategies to increase student engagement which are to scaffold tasks and to use visuals in instruction. First, scaffolding provides students with necessary support when first completing a task and gradually gives them the opportunity to complete it on their own, thus increasing confidence in their abilities. Prior to reading this article, I had not considered scaffolding as a form of engagement.

However, I learned that engaging language learners does not only mean piquing their interest through exciting and catchy methods, but also providing them with the tools they need to stay afloat in their acquisition journey. Second, the author suggests using visuals, especially those that involve the learner. For example, instead of having language charts filled and displayed the first day of class, instructors can allow students to participate in completing the charts so that they are interacting with the content in meaningful ways. In conclusion, this article was helpful in both providing student engagement ideas and in showing me what constitutes student engagement. My next area of interest was to explore how to make textbook instruction more engaging since textbooks are a critical foundation of teaching the curriculum in many teaching institutions.

Textbooks

When used artfully, textbooks can be valuable tools in teaching language learners. However, limiting language instruction exclusively to a textbook is typically not engaging teaching pedagogy for language learners. In the chapter, "Using coursebooks," of the book, *How to Teach English*, **Harmer (2012)** discusses several ways to make the textbook more engaging to learners. Some suggestions are skipping lessons, replacing lessons with those developed by the instructor, and adding to what is in the book. Although it can be more work up front to supplement textbook instruction with outside materials, the payback for learners can be great. The author explains:

> If the lesson is rather boring, too controlled, or if it gives no chance for students to use what they are learning in a personal kind of way, the teacher may want to add activities and exercises which extend the students' *engagement* with the language or topic." (p. 146)

Regardless of textbook quality, it is important to add variety to instruction. Even with quality textbooks founded on developing communication skills, students still benefit from exposure to learning activities outside of the book. Fortunately, many instructors have the freedom to move away from the textbook when needed. I know instructors who have even chosen to select all of their own materials instead of using a textbook. For me, I find it helpful to have a quality textbook as a guide and use it concurrently with supplementary sources for classwork and homework.

Some supplementary sources I have used are short stories, folk tales, poetry, comics, magazines, newspapers, activities, games, and videos. One resource that was particularly useful in my low-intermediate IELI reading class was Oxford Bookworms (2018) which provides a simplified classics series ranging from level 1-6. I have also found several level-appropriate texts online that my students seemed to enjoy. In addition to supplementing the textbook with outside materials, I also seek to make non-communicative textbook content interactive to further engage students. For example, if there is a written dialogue with spaces to fill in the correct grammatical responses, I will guide my students to read the completed dialogue in pairs. Furthermore, students could use the textbook dialogue example as a model to have an authentic conversation with a partner. In sum, this book chapter was straightforward and relevant for language instructors who are willing to be creative and take extra time up front to plan new materials in order to better engage their language students. Considering the suggestions on textbook supplementation, I wanted to learn more about how technology can be a helpful supplement since I want to use this medium most effectively in class.

Technology

Technology can be a powerful tool inside and outside of the classroom to engage students in language learning. In the 21st century in the United States, technology is an integral part of daily life. In regards to technology and teaching, **Gaugler (2016)** wrote a chapter in Shrum and Glisan's *Teacher's Handbook* which discusses the use and trends of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in the classroom. The author maintains that CALL is an effective means for student communication in the digital world in which they live and to achieve the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (ACTFL) which help language students develop worldwide cultural and communicative competence. I agree that using CALL to engage and teach students is an effective strategy. Gaugler (2016) further maintains, "Language instructors should be aware of the shifting landscape that is occurring in the field of education and how such fundamental change is transforming language teaching and learning" (p. 427). Language learning should not be static or one-dimensional and technology helps bring energy and depth to the experience.

I believe that teachers who embrace technology in the classroom are appealing to the landscape of their students' lives and are creating greater opportunities for engagement. The author discusses research that shows how technology can be advantageous for students across all language skill areas. In my teaching, I have experienced the benefits of using technology and I appreciated the research discussed in this chapter to back up my practice. My experience teaching in an online classroom to EFL learners in China has also given me heightened appreciation for the technology tools that make global learning possible. Not only was technology vital in providing the ability

to reach those students, but it allowed me to pull up online images if students did not know a vocabulary word or use Google translate in cases where communication was struggling. Students' interest is also peaked when I put my phone up to the webcam with an instructional image or to show their performance time for a sight word activity. Instructors working with students in person or online can take advantage of technology to enhance student engagement.

A specific idea for enhancing engagement through technology is discussed in **Sadik's (2008)** article, "Digital storytelling: a meaningful technology-integrated approach for engaged student learning." According to the author, digital storytelling is a modern variety of traditional, oral storytelling that uses multimedia instead of a live speaker. In this study, student groups worked together to plan and carry out digital stories using MS Photo Story. Two private schools in Egypt were identified to participate. Classes of English, math, science, and social studies integrated digital storytelling into their curriculum as part of the study. The students learned how to create digital stories on the computer and then completed the task based on their authentic thoughts about assigned topics. The students were assessed on their engagement in language tasks using this medium.

Findings revealed that students were indeed involved in higher-order thinking through the creation of their stories. They enjoyed using digital cameras, researching online, and using editing tools. The author also suggests that digital stories can also help connect schools together to create collaborative learning environments, which is a way to engage students on a larger scale. Even within the context of technology, peer collaboration is recognized as crucial to student engagement and language development.

Even within the study, students worked together to plan for and develop digital storytelling; it does not need to be an individual experience. Overall, the author maintains that digital storytelling is effective and valuable in engaging students in English language learning.

Although I have never used digital storytelling as an instructional strategy, I am familiar with using iMovie to create photo-based movies and can see why students would enjoy making a digital story as classroom assignment. I have not used MS Photo Story but since it is a free application, it could be a realistic medium with which to try out digital storytelling in my classroom. However, from my experience with iMovie, I know that video editing programs take time to learn which could prove a major drawback in a classroom setting. An additional challenge with complicated software is the imbalance of technological proficiency among students. Besides, not all classrooms have access to computers and this type of assignment would need to be supervised because of its potential complexity. Depending on the class objectives, the students, and the classroom resources, digital storytelling could be a useful tool for engaging students. Overall, this article proved helpful in better understanding digital storytelling and how it can boost student engagement.

To better understand the overall impact of technology in engaging language learners, I sought one additional source in the field. The last text I read that discusses the use of technology as an engagement tool in the language classroom is a *Brave new digital classroom* by **Blake (2013).** The book outlines how CALL can be helpful instructionally and in engaging digital natives, or students born into the era of instant technology. Blake describes the place for CALL in language acquisition theoretically and practically,

including its benefits and misconceptions. I found useful information and ideas about how I can use technology to help my students engage in English language learning, including through social media and games. Within the CALL field, social media and games are areas I have not explored much as an educator and I valued learning more about these tools.

Blake (2013) maintains that it is in the best interest of teachers to embrace CALL in the classroom to enhance pedagogy, engagement, and student relationships. I agree with the author that the stakes are high for teachers in regards to technology implementation. Instructors who choose not to supplement materials with technology are doing themselves and their students a disservice. The author explains, "students remember 90% of what they learn if they "engage in a job themselves" (p. 164). As teachers supplement textbooks with materials that provide hands-on learning, including technology tools, they can help students stay interested in the material. The author does note that technology tools are not better than other language-learning tools; the effectiveness of any tool lies in how well it engages the student's agency. In other words, instructors need to use technology, and other learning tools, effectively, not just to keep students busy or quiet. With an increased understanding of how to engage students through technology, I wanted to learn more about how an entirely different area of instruction, classroom set up, could impact student engagement.

Physical Classroom Space

In response to my question, I reviewed information from **Brown and Lee (2015)** that discusses several ways classroom space impacts student engagement and subsequent achievement. In the chapter, "Classroom management," of their book, *Teaching by*

principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy, the authors explain the importance of arranging desks so that students can easily collaborate and stay actively involved in learning. Determined by instructional objectives, number of students, and classroom size, the seating arrangement could include a circle, a horseshoe, pairs of desks, or small groups of desks. From experience, I know that classes in these patterns can sometimes be harder to control than a traditional format of rows of desks, but it is well worth the rewards of student engagement and enhanced language development. Additionally, the second semester teaching my IELI reading course, the students sat in a small circle to complete the weekly literature discussion instead of sitting in rows at tables as they did the first semester. This set up affected student engagement, quality of responses, and the balance of speakers more drastically than I could have imagined. Another important consideration with seating arrangements is that if a student cannot see the board their engagement and learning will be hindered. Instructors should consider physical classroom layout to ensure that students are comfortable and easily able to interact, thus helping them actively participate in class.

The authors address several additional physical factors that could affect student learning and engagement. First, they explain the impact that an instructor's voice can have on class success. If students cannot hear the instructor, they will have a much harder time staying engaged. Also, if the instructor's voice is too loud it can distract from learning. Next, the authors suggest that body language impacts learning. Instructors' awareness of body language in other cultures, and how their body language is represented, can affect how comfortable students feel in class and their level of performance. It is important that instructors demonstrate positive, welcoming body

language that matches cultural practices and expectations. Overall, this chapter was helpful in providing insight into how classroom space and dynamics can affect student engagement. With themes of collaboration interwoven into the discussions of technology and classroom space, I felt it was important to explore more about student collaboration in relation to student engagement.

Collaborative Learning

A teaching model designed for ELLs in mainstream classes explores the importance of collaboration for language engagement and development. In the article, "Specially designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE): More than just good instruction," **Cline and Necochea (2003)** discuss how instructors can use the SDAIE model to engage ELLs in academic content. Central to the model is making the learning process interactive which creates a safe classroom environment in which students are engaged in language development. The authors claim, "optimum learning for language development occurs when the instructional setting is highly interactive and 'buzzing' with activity" (p. 22). Language development hinges on students interacting in a communicative way where they can actively negotiate meaning and participate in their language learning.

Cline and Necochea (2003) also discuss the energizing strength of collaborative pedagogy and how it can engage students in deep learning. As the authors suggest, I agree that cooperative learning is most engaging when facilitated through a variety of approaches such as pair work, group work, skits, writing, and games. Their article supports the importance of using collaborative work in the classroom to help students learn language and content in tandem, rather than sacrificing one for another. Instructors

best serve ELLs when they are set up not only to converse in English, but to learn academic English as well. It makes sense to me that students will be most engaged in learning when they are getting their needs meet in areas of interpersonal learning and academic skills. Collaborative work in the classroom that is organized around understanding key content is an effective way for students to engage in developing academic language skills and knowledge in the course curriculum.

Conclusion

My conviction that nothing is worse than a boring class continues to motivate me to engage my language students. However, contrary to my prior perspective, engagement in the classroom need not be limited to entertainment or dazzle. Instead, student engagement focuses on promoting active learning and achieving. Any class can be engaging when it is properly set up for students to participate in communicative language tasks and when the instructor has appropriate body language and voice volume which helps students see, hear, and feel comfortable. When the physical space supports effective pedagogy, instructors are on the right track. Such pedagogy includes supplementing textbooks in various ways to support all types of learning styles and preferences. Additionally, an engaging lesson is filled with energy, higher-order thinking, and comprehension that happens as students reflect on and improve their developing language skills. Although I still enjoy using catchy ways like videos and games to engage students, I now have a deeper understanding of the purpose behind student engagement and how to measure that students are truly learning. I look forward to teaching classroom upon classroom of truly engaged students who are able to achieve their language learning goals.

LOOKING FORWARD

My ELL teaching journey is diverse with experience abroad, online, with adults and children, and at the university level. Aside from the online setting, most of this experience has been working with low-intermediate to advanced ELLs. Consequently, I have developed skills helping students think critically, learn reading strategies, gain native-like pronunciation, and converse about a broad range of topics but do not feel as confident planning for or teaching beginning students, especially in a group setting. When teaching English online, I work individually with the student, using a lesson prepared by the company. As a result, I have not had a chance to gain experience preparing curriculum for beginning students or working with them in a group setting. The handful of times I have taught a small group of beginning students in a brick and mortar classroom was quite intimidating. The blank stares and looks of fear I received from the students as I spoke to them in English were likely met with apprehension in my own eyes. I would like to feel as confident preparing for and teaching a group of beginning students as I do working with advanced students.

Another area I would like to learn more about teaching is writing instruction. This skill is something I have little experience in with language learners of any level of proficiency. I did some writing instruction in my IELI reading class, but not nearly enough to feel confident teaching it extensively. Through an effective writing strategies course at the end of the MSLT program, I learned a lot of pedagogy and research about best practices for teaching writing instruction. Now I need to get my feet wet by doing it.

To aid in these goals, I have begun teaching a mixed-level and Level 3 class at Cache Valley's English Language Center (ELC). Despite the additional challenges of

working with beginning and advanced students simultaneously in the mixed level class, I look forward to learning through experience. Already I have been able to draw from pedagogy learned in the MSLT program so I feel I am at least somewhat on the right track in my planning and teaching. Fortunately, I have complete autonomy in the ELC so I can also incorporate some writing instruction into the classes. Trial and error will help me hone my skills in the area of writing instruction, supplementing my academic knowledge with real-world experience. Part of maximizing my learning-by-teaching experience is writing down reflections on how each lesson went, how students responded, and what I would like to revise. Self-reflection is important in long-term teacher improvement and I will continue to implement this practice in the future.

To continually improve, I will supplement my mindful classroom teaching experience with observations of colleagues and participation in professional conferences. I know that the more background knowledge and modeling I have to draw from, the more ideas I will glean. Observing teachers in the MSLT program has been valuable for my professional development and I plan on continuing that pattern as long as I teach. Similarly, I will welcome observers and request their feedback so I can learn from their observations. Finally, presenting in and attending professional conferences were some of the most valuable learning experiences I had while in the MSLT program, and I have a goal to attend at least one professional development conference or workshop annually. I already have my sights set on the 2019 TESOL International Convention and a workshop I saw advertised about the SIOP Model (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2008) that I read about while in the program. I believe that continued education will help me continually have new ideas and stay fresh in my profession.

As I continue to learn and grow as a practitioner, I would also like to put some of my experiences and research into writing and publish them. From what I learned in LING 6010, Research Methods, I have direction on how to successfully carry out this goal when I am ready to do so. Every time I teach, I am given the opportunity to meaningfully impact the lives of individuals; through publications I can add to the teaching profession at large. I want to contribute to the teaching field and the world in every way that I can. Sharing ideas in professional conferences has been rewarding and I anticipate that publishing research would have a similar effect. I have learned a great deal from those who have published and I hope to give back to the field.

Just as I seek to encourage life-long learners, I look forward to embarking on a never-ending journey of learning and growing as a teacher. The MSLT program has taught me a great deal, not just about how to teach L2 learners effectively but also that there is always more to learn. I appreciate dedicated professors, advisors, mentors, and colleagues who have shared their love of knowledge and some of what they know with me for the past five semesters. They have set the example of the value of continual learning through their achievements and passions. I know that many classrooms of students, and consequently their families and communities, will benefit from what I have learned in the MSLT program and will continue to learn in my professional pursuits.

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