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Balancing the Double-Edged Sword of Implementation: An Eclectic Approach

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BALANCING THE DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD OF IMPLEMENTATION:

AN ECLECTIC APPROACH

by

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A portfolio submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

Balancing the Double-Edged Sword of Implementation: An Eclectic Approach

by

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Utah State University, 2021

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This portfolio is a compilation which expresses the author's perspective on necessary considerations for teachers when implementing ideas in the classroom. The thoughts and perspectives showed in this portfolio have been shaped by the author's previous formal and informal teaching experiences and the opportunities to further his understanding of teaching and research during his time in the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program at Utah State University (USU).

This portfolio is comprised of two sections: The first section consists of Teaching perspectives, which include the author's desired professional environment, his teaching philosophy statement, and observations obtained through observing other teachers. The second consists of two research papers and an annotated bibliography, which discuss an eclectic approach to foreign language classroom implementation in an effort to mitigate the drawbacks inherent in any idea.

(86 pages)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

3DE = 3-D Environment
ACTFL = American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
AHC = At Home Classroom
ASL = American Sign Language
CALL = Computer-Assisted Language Teaching
ELL = English Language Learner
ESL = English as a Second Language
FL = Foreign Language
FLA = Foreign Language Anxiety
FLC = Foreign Language Classroom
FSI = Foreign Service Institute
GPI = Global Perspectives Inventory
L1 = First Language / Native Language
L2 = Second Language
MSLT = Master of Second Language Teaching
NPC = Non-Player Character
SA = Study Abroad
SCT = Sociocultural Theory
SLA = Second Language Acquisition
TL = Target Language
USU = Utah State University
VLE = Virtual Learning Environment
VR = Virtual Reality

INTRODUCTION

This portfolio is a collection of my work and experiences during my time in the MSLT program at USU. This portfolio reflects my thoughts and ideas that have developed during this time of professional development and my growth in the realm of research and analysis. The completion of this portfolio is deeply meaningful to me as it represents my success in this step of my process of bettering myself as a professional educator.

This portfolio contains two sections: My teaching perspectives and my research perspectives. The first section contains my teaching philosophy statement, which is the centerpiece of the entire portfolio. This outlines my thoughts on being an educator, specifically in the context of teaching a foreign language, and discusses the use of an eclectic approach to implementation to help mitigate the drawbacks inherent therein.

The second section contains my research perspectives. These contain two papers discussing the considerations of benefits and drawbacks inherent in implementing methods and tools into the foreign language classroom. This section also contains an annotated bibliography that specifically focuses on the benefits and drawbacks inherent in immersive CALL tools used in the foreign language classroom.

TEACHING PERSPECTIVES

PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT

My anticipated teaching environment will be teaching Spanish at the high school level. The combination of class time, maturity, and overall attitude of the students is what really draws me to this conclusion. My first draw is the attitude towards foreign language. Almost all of the high school students I have taught found the idea of studying a foreign language exciting, and therefore they are excited about being in the classroom. When that excitement is correctly channeled, the class is extremely rewarding. High school students are more mature than elementary or middle school-age students, which I find helps them be more articulate and provide better insights into their learning. University-level courses would also be considered in regard to maturity; however, the teaching schedule of high school is much more enticing to me than at a university. Some high schools in the United States where I would prefer to work at allow for instruction five days a week for 55 minutes with students, as opposed to 50 minutes three days a week. I find the extra minutes to be extremely valuable as they allow more involved project work, better access to verification of learning, and more time to establish rapport with the students.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

Informal Background

My language education started immediately because of the rather unique culture in my home. My father is Hawaiian Chinese, and my mother of Dutch, German, and English descent. I didn't have grandmothers and grandfathers, I had a Kungkung, Puna, Opa, and Oma. I grew up in a suburb of southern California with my mom while also spending time with my dad who lived in Los Angeles. I knew how to roll with the rich, walk around in Compton[1] without getting mugged at night, say all the Mexican slang, and just be a normal American teenager. I knew that when speaking to a Hawaiian who was older than me, I needed to show respect by being calling them Uncle or Aunty. This rich cultural diversity of my early life laid the groundwork for my language education.

As I spent two years in Peru as a missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, I learned the nuances of Peruvian life. This was yet another view of the world with its accompanying rules. Experiencing and learning new cultures was easy for me; I had done it from birth, and I knew the game. Language learning, on the other hand, was difficult and required so much more than just an aptitude for adaptation. Having grown up in Southern California, I knew how to imitate a Mexican accent--I had been doing this for most of my life, but putting that to actual Spanish words demanded study, practice, and dedication. I devoted myself to perfecting the language as best I could, without really knowing what I was doing at all. After three months, I could read and write Spanish without checking my dictionary. After five months, I could finally begin to understand what the people around me were saying, and at six months, I began to really

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[1] Compton is an area in Los Angeles, California that is well-known for being very dangerous.

have conversations with others. After a year and a half of dedication to the language, the people I talked to only realized I wasn't a native speaker when I told them, or they heard me speak English. This is definitely not to suggest that having a native-like accent is necessary for fluency or competence in a language, but a personally important benefit I gained from this was people feeling comfortable enough to treat me just like any other person in their community.

Formal Background

The nature and quality of my instruction has been varied throughout my language learning experience. My first language teachers in middle school focused heavily on culture and introducing us to some of the countries in which the languages were spoken. These teachers showed me that there was so much more to language than just words. Each word carried a different culture and worldview behind why it was used. My next language teacher helped me understand what should not happen in a classroom. She was focused solely on correctness and any student who started to fall behind was left behind (Rhaman, Singh, & Pandian, 2018). Luckily in college, my American Sign Language (ASL) teacher was the exact opposite. His focus was completely on helping the students develop the ability to use the language to communicate with others (Rhaman et al., 2018). Even though my teacher was deaf and chose not to speak, he taught me how to be dynamic in my teaching, even when the students did not understand a lot of what was being communicated. A key component of this teacher's class was the projects assigned during the semester. Each project was perfectly suited for practicing and mastering the current skill (Bakar, Noordin, & Razali, 2019). Completing these projects taught me the value of well-constructed assignments.

After having formal teachers, immersion became my teacher for Spanish. My experience in Peru was the harshest teacher of all. No sympathy or scaffolding, but all the opportunity I

could ever have wanted. My teacher expected me to be a master, and there wasn't an excuse I could use to sway those expectations. Through my various teachers in the classroom and the immersive environment, I have learned that while hard work is the key to language learning, a dedicated teacher who provides appropriate scaffolding can ease, and even make enjoyable, that journey.

Basis of Eclecticism

These experiences gave me a desire to help others taking a similar journey as my own and were essential in giving me the understanding I needed to relate to my students. This desire led me to study language education so that I could learn how to utilize my experiences to benefit my students. I learned a great deal in my undergraduate degree in Spanish education and have continued to learn and refine my teaching as a graduate student studying second language acquisition (SLA). After years of study and practice where I learned many different second language teaching methods, theories, and views, I came to what I refer to as "the simple truth." The simple truth is that the best way to approach language instruction simply depends on the situation. Simultaneous to this realization, I also came to understand that if I only knew one way, I didn't know enough. These realizations were the foundation for my eclectic teaching style. The ultimate purpose for using this eclectic teaching style is to provide and environment that is conducive to the learning of each individual student I teach.

Each new perspective I learned became important as it added to my understanding of functional and effective language instruction. I came to see it as my responsibility as a teacher to competently choose and apply each perspective when needed to best facilitate the learning of any given student in any given situation. Students carry the responsibility to be engaged in the

material, willing to learn, focused on the task at hand, and completing the assigned work. As the teacher, I need to make sure they have what they need to do that.

The Double-Edged Sword

The key component to eclecticism is the understanding that many perspectives can be used to the benefit of my students. Every perspective is a double-edged sword that carries its own strengths and weaknesses. In essence, each time a teacher chooses to implement anything in their classroom, they are bringing the good and the bad of that implementation. If only a single method is used, teaching can become one-sided, and the drawbacks of the method go unaddressed. This is also not to say that the good in *any* method is viable and therefore should be implemented. For example, it has been observed that while corporal punishment from a teacher elicits more immediate obedience from students than other forms of discipline, scholastic performance, deviant behaviors, engagement, and overall attentiveness of students worsen (Arif & Rafi, 2007). This is not to mention the ethical and legal implications of corporal punishment in a given classroom. Eclecticism is about mitigating negative effects mentioned that are produced by corporal punishment, which is why, based on the evidence, I do not consider it a viable option. I, instead, find perspectives, methods, strategies, and tools that enhance student engagement and motivation, reduce foreign language anxiety and classroom anxiety in general, and provide many other benefits. The consideration of what is best for the student in all aspects of what that entails need to be considered carefully when implementing new perspectives, strategies, and methods; otherwise, eclecticism itself becomes the double-edged sword.

There is much evidence to suggest the potential benefits for many perspectives, though they differ greatly in their application. For the purposes of this discussion, I relate a personal example from my own teaching experience in which I found the benefits of using both

interactionist and sociocultural perspectives while teaching over the course of a semester. The interactionist perspective considers interaction and negotiation of meaning, which have been given special attention as essential elements of language acquisition in SLA (Patterson & Trabaldo, 2006). The other aspect of the sociocultural perspective considers the use of L1 Private speech, which is defined as "speech that is not directed at an interlocutor but is intended for the speaker himself or herself" (Lantolf, 2000, p. 88). This speech was observed to help students reduce anxiety and confirm information they were recollecting (Yaghobian, Samuel, & Mahmoudi, 2017). The following is my experience as a teacher which illustrates this eclectic implementation of both interactionist and socioculturally informed teaching methods to mitigate the drawbacks that affected my students when used separately.

Eclectic Implementation of Perspectives

During my first year as a teacher, I found that most students responded very well to activities reflecting the tenets of an interactionist perspective. They thrived in situations where they could interact, negotiate meaning, see negative and positive evidence in real time, and come to a conclusion together. After a few weeks, I noticed some of my students who did not participate very well in these interactions, and eventually some of them completely removed themselves. With further observation, I noticed many of these students were much more interested in activities that reflected the tenets of sociocultural theory dealing with private and inner speech. Instead of thriving in these situations of interaction with those around them, they thrived in situations wherein they could reflect individually without having the pressure to interact with someone else in the target language. They were much more participative in these activities, which allowed them time to think to themselves and process.

This is not to suggest that these students didn't gain anything from the interaction activities, initially anyway, or that the students who thrived on interaction activities didn't gain from the activities that gave opportunities for private speech. My observations and implementations of both methods simply made evident the benefits of both an interactionist and a sociocultural perspective in serving my students. The eclectic teaching approach extends beyond the implementation of perspectives into the use of tools within those implementations as well.

Eclectic Implementation of Tools

The use of a variety of tools within perspectives and methods is an essential component of an eclectic teaching style. This perspective of eclecticism is already a widely accepted notion, which is evidenced in textbooks that provide multimodalities with video and audio recordings, or the website teacherspayteacher.com which has hundreds of thousands of tools, activities and resources for sale. The reasonings behind this range from simply maintaining students' attention by "changing it up" with a different activity to attacking learning from different angles to help solidify the information or concepts. While there is an obvious wealth of options to choose from, I will discuss only a couple as a model for the deliberation required when selecting tools.

The first tool I will discuss is the use of virtually immersive technologies, which falls under the wider scope of tools know as computer assisted language learning (CALL) tools. CALL tools have been widely researched in the field and have shown to be extremely beneficial (Watson & Agawa, 2013). The importance of CALL's ability to bring realia into the classroom cannot be overstated. Using the internet via a computer, projector, and speakers to actually let the students see, hear, and experience the target language and culture is nothing short of a miracle. CALL tools' ability to allow students to see, hear, and experience the target language and culture

is continuously developing and being advanced. These advancements have led to the development of virtually immersive technologies. The use of virtually immersive technologies, like virtual and augmented realities, have shown benefits similar to actual immersion (Berti, 2019; Blake, 2013; Blyth, 2018; Chung, 2012; Lin & Lan, 2015). These technologies and their benefits, such as reduction of situational anxiety and many others, will be discussed in much greater detail later on in this portfolio.

The second tool I will discuss is games which is a favored tool of mine to use in the classroom. Games offer an environment in which the player/learner finds an engaging motivation to repeat, revise, and reformulate in an effort to participate (Godwin-Jones, 2014). Another benefit is the interaction of students amongst themselves since student-to-student interactive teaching strategies have a significant effect on the language skills of students (Türkben, 2019), and cooperative learning is beneficial to students of all levels (Ismail, 2019). I acknowledge, as stated above in the example in my own classroom, interpersonal interaction where a student is required to interact with another student can be a stressful situation for some students. This is compounded in the foreign language classroom where a student is now required to accomplish this interaction in the target language. Using a form of mediation, students can psychologically distance themselves from a stressful task, while still being able to process and participate in the given task (Van Kerrebroeck, Brengman, & Willems, 2017). Garneli, Giannakos, and Chorianopoulos (2017) observe that games can be such a medium for these students because "they create malleable contexts" (p. 844) wherein students can perform these tasks without being confronted by the full-fledged rigid context of simply having the task itself.

Though every teacher uses tools to aid their students, tools do not escape the dangers of the double-edged sword. The use of CALL, for example, while beneficial, can be overused.

Students can begin to get lost in the technology itself and their language learning can start to suffer, which defeats the purpose of using the tool in the first place. The same can be said of games. If not implemented properly, the focus can be shifted too heavily on the game itself, and the learning can suffer. While tools themselves must be carefully vetted for their basic effectiveness, a teacher must also carefully plan their implementation into each lesson in which they are being used.

Student-Focused Instruction

Another vital component to this eclectic teaching style is learning who my students are, so that I know which student will benefit most from any given perspective. To effectively implement this perspective, it is not only necessary to have knowledge of a variety of teaching methods, but to have a comprehensive knowledge of my students. Getting to know students requires a significant amount of time, effort, and focus from the teacher. The base level is simply gathering the statistics from the students' grades. The real focus and attention with grades come in recognizing grade trends. Have the grades a particular student has been receiving changed lately? Why are they receiving the grades they are on their work? If they are receiving lower grades, are they making specific errors or simply not completing the assignments? All of these can give indications into what the teacher can do to better help the student with their work. Beyond this, there is getting to know the students' individual personalities and learning styles. Do they prefer group work? Do they prefer a specific learning method? Are they a hard worker regardless of how much they actually comprehend?

All of these aspects inform me as the teacher on how to best approach helping the student learn. Getting to know the students' background is vital as well. What kind of loads are they bearing outside of the classroom? Do they go straight from school to work because they are a

main breadwinner for their family? Are they heavily involved in an extracurricular activity like a sport or an instrument that demands a great deal of time and energy, especially at specific times during the year? Do they have foreign language anxiety? Again, all of these factors play into how each student is going to be acting during class and responding to teaching during any given day. It is important to note that there are many more considerations in knowing a student, but for this portfolio these specific questions and considerations merely provide a few examples. By knowing my students, I can better understand the learning style they are most comfortable with, which will give me a better outlook on how they learn (Malacapay, 2019). I do my best to facilitate individualized learning through various techniques and methods, and then let the students use their strengths to thrive (Chen, Jones, & Xu, 2018). After learning more about all of the students in my class, I can then base my strategies on what will be most effective for the class as a whole in any given situation (Griffiths & Parr, 2001).

Conclusion

Since students use learning strategies better when they are less anxious (Marashi & Assgar, 2019), I can use my knowledge of my students in combination with my knowledge of a variety of perspectives, methods, strategies, and tools to construct the optimal learning environment for my students. Students who see themselves as successful or thriving language learners are more motivated and invest greater efforts (Moratinos-Johnson, Ballester Brage, Juan-Garau, & Salazar-Noguera, 2019). By achieving the optimal learning environment for each of my students and giving them the best chance to be successful language learners, I also give them the best chance to be motivated. The opposite is also sadly true as not "much learning can happen when a learner is unmotivated to learn" (deJonge-Kannan, 2017, p. 75). As the field opens up into new avenues of research and development, I look forward to seeing what other

effective methods and tools can be used to help students learn foreign languages, and I plan on implementing the best of each of them. This takes a lot of focus, practice, and knowledge of teaching strategies, but in my opinion, it is the way to be most effective as a teacher.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TEACHING OBSERVATIONS

Professional development is an essential part of being a relevant professional in any field. Those who choose not to continue to develop will eventually be left behind by those who do. Without continuing to increase understanding and incorporate new data, instructors who choose not to continue to develop will lose their relevancy because they do not have all of the information to inform their teaching. Aided by professors and fellow instructors, I have had many opportunities to observe other classrooms in an effort to develop and refine my skills as an instructor. My observations began during my undergraduate degree in Spanish Education. It was difficult at first to gain something significant from my observations. I did not know what I was looking for, and I wasn't able to recognize good or effective teaching, and even when I did, I did not understand how to recreate effective teaching. These early observations were not a waste though, as I learned a lot from the very kind and willing teachers who I was able to observe. I will discuss a number of these observations and how they have informed my teaching. These reflections take place at various times throughout my teaching career and follow the topics discussed in my teaching philosophy statement. To aid in orientation, the order is as follows: My first two years as a professional teaching at the high school level, my second semester as a graduate instructor at USU, my first semester as a graduate instructor at USU, my third semester as a graduate instructor at USU where I was also employed as an ESL aide at a local high school, and finally my first teaching observation which occurred during the last semester of my undergraduate degree at Brigham Young University-Idaho.

The Double-Edged Sword

While observing effective teaching perspectives and methods is an essential part of an observation, sometimes one of the biggest benefits is simply getting new ideas. As a high school

teacher in a 3A (or Division 3 in some states) high school, I was the entire foreign language and ESL department myself. I had no one to collaborate with and no one I could observe for those two years I taught there. It was very easy to get stuck in my ways and to keep using the same ideas I had that had worked before. Without collaboration and an effort on continuing to develop my teaching however, I was running the risk of falling behind. I needed to learn about what has been proven to be effective in order to better help my students. My lack of development became a double-edged sword as some of my students thrived off of my activities because they worked for them, while other students were not so enthusiastic, and some of them struggled, and even expressed that these activities were not working for them. When I began my master's degree at Utah State University, I found myself surrounded by other instructors with so many different ideas and activities. I was able to develop my teaching again with a variety of perspectives and come to the new double-edged sword of deciding which of these ideas to implement and when to implement them. I decided on an eclectic implementation of new perspectives, methods, theories, ideas, activities, strategies, and tools in order to give my students the best chance to gain from my teaching.

Eclectic Implementation of Activities

While considering which activities to implement, it is essential to consider the benefits and drawbacks of each of them. An eclectic approach to implementing activities requires a variety of different styles of activities so that the students are able to draw from the benefits of each, and do not consistently suffer the same drawbacks from only one style. Exposure to many different styles of activities is necessary for a teacher who hopes to eclectically implement them. An example of my exposure to such an activity occurred when I was observing a colleague who was a fellow a Spanish teacher. During the class I observed he used an extremely simple activity

to great effect. He had half of the students sit in a semi-circle facing the projector screen. The other half of the students faced them in an inner semi-circle. The students facing the screen were shown a picture, and they had to describe that picture to their partners who were facing them, with their backs to the screen. The activity began a little slow as some of the students were getting over the initial shock of trying to describe something using the target language, but as they settled into the activity, they started to excel. The students readily recognized everything in the picture, as it featured common things found in the students' schemata. Students were not only describing and identifying the things that were in the picture, but they were also describing things they did not know how to say. That is, the students used negotiation of meaning to talk around the things they did not know the words for, and their partners were able to recognize what they were talking about. After about 5 minutes, they switched, and the other partner was the one describing what they saw. It was amazing to see the students producing and understanding the target language and being able to have hard proof that they were both producing and understanding.

I have used this activity in my classroom several times over now, and it has gone well every time. My students collaborated in a negotiation of meaning with their peers where I have observed them gain new vocabulary, and subsequently use that new vocabulary gained later on in the conversation, and again in another conversation with different peer. My students also have also used multimodal means during these negotiations of meanings to bridge the gaps in understanding through pictures, drawings, and gestures.

Eclectic Implementation of Tools

My observations became more effective for me as the observer after having teaching experiences of my own. I was able to better recognize the big picture, and what I should be

looking for. I also felt that it was important to understand my own teaching style; that way as I observed others, I could see how to apply what they did into my own style of teaching. An example of this was the use of a simple slideshow presentation employed by a first semester graduate instructor teaching Chinese 1010. The information each slide contained was well structured, and everything the students needed to see was up there, but the slides were still brief enough that the students did not get lost in a sea of words on a screen. She had obviously practiced using her presentation as well because she was able to jump to different slides seemingly without a second thought. Near the end of the presentation her student asked her a question about something earlier and she immediately jumped back 6 or 7 slides to the exact one she needed to help the student better understand. Overall, her presentation was incredible. Through the use of these slides she was able to deliver an effective lesson even though she seemed pretty nervous, and she struggled a little to explain things in English when she tried to help her students. While I use slides to present most of my lessons and feel like they are well done, her slides were on a completely different level.

Her ability to effectively use a slide presentation inspired me to adjust my own slides. I started to think differently about how to structure them and choose my words much more carefully. I didn't use the exact same way of presenting the language that she did, but I was able to take the important pieces of what happened and apply them to my own teaching. Having an improved presentation also allows me to focus more on my students and be more accommodating to their specific needs in the moment. I find it much easier to answer questions about my presentations when I have structured them more effectively and practiced my presentation beforehand.

Student-Focused Instruction

Another valuable lesson I learned in terms of student focused instruction came after I had been teaching at the university level for two semesters. These classes consisted of students wherein the majority of them were motivated to learn and be engaged in class. I was able to return to a high school setting and observe a classroom where part of the requirement of the teacher was to try to motivate their students to want to learn and try in general. I was able to observe ESL classes at the beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels. Some of the students there were very attentive and engaged, others of the students not only didn't engage in the lesson but were purposefully disruptive in the classroom. I learned a lot about student engagement from this ESL teacher. For this example, we will call the teacher "Mr. Haili" and we'll call the student who was repeatedly the most disruptive, "Albert." The advanced ESL class was reading the book "Animal Farm" by George Orwell. Mr. Haili knew that since Albert's previous class was very close to his, he usually arrived before the other students. Mr. Haili handed each student a role from the book as they walked in, the first ones in the classroom were given the role of "pig" who were the leaders of the farm. Albert loved having the power of being the leader. By the end of the lesson, he was quoting lines from the book as he told the other students what to do. This simple example showed me the power of finding ways to keep students engaged. Not only was Albert not disruptive, but he was using the knowledge he was gaining effectively, in context. As I have reflected on this experience, I realized that Mr. Haili effectively used his knowledge of Albert's personality and habits to tailor make a lesson that would be best suited for him. This has informed my teaching approach to include dedicating time, focus, and energy into getting to know specific details about my students so that I can know how to best instruct them. While

personality and habits are just a couple of such details, they do offer an example from which I was able to inform my own perspective.

Reflecting on all of the principles I have mentioned thus far, I will come full circle to relate my very first observation, which was of a fifth-grade geography teacher. Her classroom had a very comfortable atmosphere and most of the students got up and moved around the classroom freely during most of the lesson. At first, I thought the teacher needed to get a hold of her classroom, but at the end of the lesson when each student produced a map of exactly what the teacher wanted, I realized that this free-flowing movement was carefully orchestrated by the teacher and the students' movements were to get needed supplies and collaborate with other students about filling in pieces they were missing. I also noticed that the teacher knew her students very well. Some students were reminded to stay on task when they were around fellow students while others did not receive these reminders. Reflecting on this observation I came to realize that the students receiving the reminders probably had a history of getting off task while around other students. It was an incredible lesson to learn early on that learning does not necessarily need to happen in complete silence while a teacher lectures, and that different students need reminders, help, left to themselves, or any other number of things in a given situation. I feel this was an extremely essential lesson for me to learn, especially going into second language education where students need to be communicating with each other often, producing and hearing the target language.

I feel there is an opportunity for improvement with each and every observation performed. Of course, the opportunity to improve is better the more experience one has, but there can be pieces picked up along the way that can have an impact on instruction, which can then have an impact on student learning. This requires a mentality of constant improvement as well as

a willingness to evolve and adapt which can be difficult to maintain, but in my opinion, this is

the way to become the most effective teacher possible.

RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES

LANGUAGE PAPER #1

The Double-Edged Sword of L1 Use in the Foreign Language Classroom

INTRODUCTION AND REFELCTION

During the Fall 2019 semester, I took an introductory research course taught by Dr. Abdulkafi Albirini called *Research in Second Language Learning.* This class was simply an introduction into what research is, how research is done, how research should be done, and how to conduct our own research, all in the context of second language learning. During this class, we looked at current research and dissected and analyzed it to see what the researchers had been doing well, and what the researchers could have done to improve it in some way. Dr. Albirini encouraged us to continuously question and not be satisfied with what the authors of the articles were saying, but to make sure their data supported their claims and that these results were corroborated by other research and authors. This spirit of critical curiosity led me to consider Vyn, Wesely, & Neubauer's 2018 article that we were discussing in class, which discussed measuring proficiency among students in a classroom where the teacher used the TL the vast majority of class time. The authors concluded that the results from their study provided evidence against the "common belief" (p. 59) that beginning level teachers need to limit their L1 use in the classroom because it makes it too difficult for the students to understand. This led me to consider what the hinderance of the L1 during the language learning experience actually was, and if it was actually a hinderance at all.

This paper discusses the drawbacks related to L1 use in the foreign language classroom which I found from my research of the topic. During the research I conducted, I also found strong cases for the benefits that L1 use could provide, which led me into a substantial amount of research into multilingual practices and their benefits. A principal theme I learned during my research was the authentic use of multilingual practices widely employed by speakers who spoke

two or more languages proficiently. Many authors conclude that since multilingualism is an authentic practice among language communities, it should be modeled in the classroom.

This paper specifically relates to the two subsections, *Eclectic implementation of perspectives* and *Student-focused instruction,* found in my teaching philosophy statement. The literature has contained, and many contemporary authors continue to discuss, evidence against use of the L1 in the foreign language classroom and pushes for exclusive use of the target language. While multilingual education has been discussed as early as 1975 in workshops, an example is the series of such workshops that were summarized by Rado (1976), it was not widely researched. Since the late 1990's however, there has been an increasing amount of research that discusses the benefits of using the L1 and multilingual practices in the FLC. This has led to a conflict between the different perspectives on L1 use in the FLC. I propose a solution by using an eclectic approach when considering these perspectives. This has informed and affected my teaching philosophy and practices as I have learned how to benefit my current and future students through the combination of mono- and multi-lingual policies considering the specific needs of my students as individuals and as an entire class.

Using the L1

The consideration of first language (L1) use in the foreign language classroom (FLC) is an important one for FL teachers. This has been a disputed topic, which Gabrielatos (2001) referred to as a "bone of contention" (p. 6) and has had many arguments for both perspectives (Gabrielitos, 2001; Shuchi & Islam, 2016). The purpose of this paper is to discuss potential benefits of multilingual practices like translanguaging, while also considering arguments on both sides of L1 use in the FLC. This paper is in the perspective of a typical foreign language class within the United States, though because of the lack of research done therein, evidence will be drawn from other foreign language contexts. I will first discuss said arguments, consider the implications specifically on student comprehension and motivation, and then discuss multilingual practices.

The Benefits of Maximizing Target Language Use

In many foreign language class settings, the teacher is the only consistent exposure students have to the target language. It has therefore been assumed that in the foreign language classroom that more is better, when it comes to the percentage of a teacher's speech that is done in the TL (Ghobadi & Ghasemi, 2015). Salmona Madriñan (2014) states that the more students are exposed to a new language, the easier they learn it. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) suggests that the TL should be used as much as possible (90% plus) during instruction and as much as possible outside of the FLC (ACTFL, 2019). This 90% plus guideline, and that learners acquire language through large quantities of input, is supported with various articles ranging from 1982-1995 from authors such as Stephen Krashen and Michael Long.

Because students are to reach proficiency through language acquisition, they must receive enough input for that to take place. The FLC therefore needs to provide a sufficient amount of comprehensible input to achieve that goal. A study by Isabelli-García and Lacorte (2016) suggested that an intensive domestic immersion context provides ample opportunity for students to hear good examples of TL use. When the L1 is overused, this can inhibit the amount of TL input provided. Beisenbayeva (2020) even concludes that overuse of the L1 has resulted in English classes in Kazakhstani secondary schools not having "enough positive results in terms of reaching the main goal" (p. 612) to be considered effective. Thus the overuse of the L1, which leads to a lack of positive results in foreign language instruction, makes it one of the biggest potential dangers in the foreign language classroom (Beisenbayeva, 2020; Littlewood & Yu, 2011).

Avoiding this overuse is a key to offering many benefits in language learning. A 2016 study by Isabelli-García and Lacorte wherein students were put into an intensive 7-week program showed significant gains in the students' proficiencies. These students were able to maximize opportunities in which they used language with the greatest possible frequency, particularly with more proficient users, across a range of contexts, tasks, and topics, which effectively supported their linguistic development. The benefits of sufficient comprehensible input for a language learner are implicit in that no one can learn a foreign language with no exposure to it. While this paper will continue on to discuss the benefits of multilingual practices, it is important to recognize the benefits of maximizing target language use, even within the context of multilingual practices.

The Benefits of L1 Use

The L1 can be a detriment in the foreign language classroom if overused, but it can also provide a number of benefits to foreign language students. It has been shown that large amounts of input are necessary for acquisition (Krashen, 1982; Long, 1981; Swain, 1995); it has not, however, been shown that less than 90% of target language use, by the instructor is insufficient. While this is simply the recommendation of one professional entity, the implied ideology remains in force. For a fair evaluation of practice, it is essential to note that the majority of research done in favor of no L1 use fails to offer meaningful comparisons to classrooms that use the L1 for instructional, efficiency, or motivational purposes and that the argument itself against the use of the L1 language in teaching the second language (L2) has been mere theorizing, with little empirical evidence to support it (Ghobadi & Ghasemi, 2015). Inbar-Lourie (2010) observed that L1 use, even from teachers who exhibited "massive L1 use" (p. 364), was not seen as a detriment and concluded that L1 use in the FLC is something that needs to be discussed and corroborated, not rejected outright. Leeming (2011) found no evidence of the students' use of their L1 hindering their abilities to perform tasks in the target language in a Japanese ESL class. The author conceded that "My fear that Japanese [The students' L1] is used extensively and is undermining the effectiveness of tasks does not seem well founded" (p. 375) and continues on to state that there is no evidence to support the explicit forbidding of the L1.

The Benefits of L1 Use on Student Comprehension

The first consideration of beneficial L1 use is for the purpose of administrative considerations, providing necessary clarifications, and classroom discipline. In a 2008 study by Bateman, teachers in the FLC admitted that the use of the L1 was quite necessary for dealing with complications that occur in the classroom such as providing clarification, offering

individual help to struggling students, and addressing discipline problems. Although an instructional task in itself may be simple, the actual explanation or accompanying instructions may be overly complex for the students' current level (Bateman, 2008; Littlewood & Yu, 2011). This becomes apparent when considering the linguistic abilities required for instructions of even a basic task. The students' knowledge of vocabulary, verb tenses, which while using instructions often include the imperative mood, and other possible aspects need to all be taken into account. Therefore, within the assumption that the L1 should be used as little as possible in the FLC, there is a danger of students not comprehending the teacher because 100% L2 use poses a problem at lower levels of proficiency, since students still need to rely on their L1 for further explanations of classroom procedures, activities, tasks, or assignments (Bateman, 2008; Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Radic-Bojanic et al., 2015). The L1 allows teachers to give these more complex instructions in a way the students will understand, so they can focus on the language development at the lower level where they are currently at.

Student comprehension is a necessary element of teaching, not only in regard to the students learning the material being taught, but also tenets so basic as simply class structure. Bateman (2008), for example, observed that some teachers believed they would lose control of the classroom by refusing to speak in the L1 and thus causing a lack of comprehension for the students. On the other hand, some studies observed that students of teachers who do not exclusively use the target language are able to understand much more of the instruction and better understand how to produce the target language (Butzkamm, 2003; Radic-Bojanic et al., 2015).

This danger of a lack of student comprehension can also continue past the beginning level. As the complexity of the target language increases, students who do not acquire a high

enough level of proficiency to keep up with the teacher's instruction in time are often left behind.

The use of the L1 can be beneficial at all levels of language learning, not just the beginning

levels (Auerbach, 1993; Cummins, 2007). Culligan (2015) observed in a French immersion math

class the struggles that students sometimes had when trying to explain a concept, or formulate a

question, even when they knew the terms, in French, they were asking about. This is further

described by Butzkamm (2003) who relates the following:

> "Look at the sky, it's going to rain" was a textbook sentence accompanied by a picture.
>
> Half of the class understood "sky" as the foreign language word for the dark cloud in the
>
> picture. This is how a misconception nests itself in the mind, especially as "cloud" would
>
> also fit perfectly, if not better, in the original sentence. But as soon as the pupils want to
>
> make up their own sentences and use "sky" when they mean "cloud," all is lost. Precision
>
> of meaning is important; rough comprehension is simply not good enough. (p. 5)

This view does not necessarily contradict the view that a large amount of the target

language can still be used in the FLC since any teacher can still use the FL a majority of the

time, but some aspects of the instruction may be clearer to the students when it is given in the

students' L1. This clarity can be a motivational factor for students working through the

difficulties of learning a foreign language. Keaney (2012) observed that students can accept

difficult tasks if they feel a sense of clarity associated with the given task. In an interview

conducted in this study, one student states that they are willing to do something challenging if "I

realize exactly what I need to know, what I am to do, and what I'm being asked" (p. 125). While

many techniques can be employed to scaffold for the student, if in that moment the student does

not understand what the teacher is saying to them, their willingness to work and therefore learn,

diminishes.

The Benefits of L1 Use on Student Motivation

A majority of the literature focuses on students who can be considered "highly motivated" in regard to putting in the necessary work to achieve proficiency in the target language, with little evidence to inform teaching of students who are not a part of that classification. While Isabelli-García and Lacorte's 2016 study observed the benefits of students who the authors specifically noted fall within the parameter of being "highly motivated language learners" (p. 533) who reported a desire to improve their proficiency, students who are on the other end of the motivation spectrum can be left behind. The literature is full of evidence that motivation is not only the determining factor for achieving success in a foreign language, but maintaining the language as well (Nicholson, 2013; Tepfenhart, 2011). I would consider students who learn and maintain the FL as successful, which necessitates my consideration of eliminating practices that lower motivation. Student motivation is a particularly important variable that affects oral participation, which is a vital element in language acquisition (Tepfenhart, 2011).

Despite the essential role motivation has in the classroom, there is very little research done on the motivation of students who receive language instruction where the teacher uses 100% target language use in the typical high school foreign language classroom in the United States. A possible motivation for many high school students in the United States is that many desirable universities require two years of a foreign language for admission, and Spanish is the language course most offered in high schools in the United States, taking up 69.21% of all foreign language classes taught around the country (Mitchell, 2017). This, however, may not be sufficient motivation for the average high school student in the United States to put forth the necessary effort to understand material presented by a teacher speaking a foreign language.

Many of these students have no foreign language experience at all before they enter a beginning

Spanish, or other foreign language, class in high school and are therefore completely

unacquainted with the process. Teachers in these non-immersion classrooms often receive

resistance to their efforts to have students engage in the target language (Parks, 2015). Since

motivation is key to language use in the classroom, and therefore success, it is essential for

students to not show this resistance.

This resistance can come from a variety of sources. An example of this comes from

Butzkamm's (2003) study. The author relates the experience of a student who expressed

confusion caused by incomprehension. The student was asked to speak in front of the class but

was unable to complete the elicited utterance correctly. The student had simply mixed up a word

which was a false cognate between the students' L1 and the TL. Without an adequate

explanation from the teacher to bridge the gap in comprehension, the student became frustrated

and stated, "I was deeply embarrassed and I hated the teacher for that" (p. 5). The author

concludes that these feelings could have been avoided if a simple explanation in the L1 would

have been provided. Student perception of a lack of teacher support has important implications

for student motivation since students who perceive a lack of support from teachers, because they

would not offer explanations, become unmotivated to learn (Keaney, 2012). At that point, there

is little reason to continue to instruct the unmotivated students if the goal is for them to learn

(deJonge-Kannan, 2017).

Students expressing a lack of motivation not only stem from a perceived lack of support

from a teacher, but also from a negative view of the TL itself. While the example from

Butzkamm was an isolated incident in a single classroom where the student expressed negative

feelings for a particular teacher, in regard to foreign language classes in general, students have

been found to even have negative views of the target language itself in the foreign language classroom (Beisenbayeva, 2020; Parks, 2015; Tuncel et al., 2020). Parks's 2015 study done in Canada, in similar foreign language classes to that of the United States, revealed that there were negative views of the TL and very low levels of motivation among students because of the requirement in the classroom to use the TL. This is further reflected in Swain and Lapkin's (2000) findings that teachers were "unwilling to engage their students in group work" because their students would avoid using the TL during their interactions and instead heavily favor the L1. While a number of students can have very strong negative feelings, others may simply not view the TL as something important enough for them to spend their time on.

This array of feelings from the students makes it important to recognize the term "negative" as a relative term that can cover an array of aspects and can come from a variety of sources. Another example of a source of these negative views of the target language has been observed at times to stem from foreign language anxiety (FLA) (Tuncel et al., 2020). An interesting consideration in this discussion as well is Aydin & Ustuk's (2020) study in which 156 EFL teachers across 15 different countries participated revealed that more than a quarter of these teachers suffered similar anxieties which made it difficult for them to actually use the target language in the classroom during moments when they felt anxious. These disconnected feelings from the foreign language caused by FLA "has become an obstacle in language learning" (Tuncel et al., 2020, p. 166). FLA is a situation-specific anxiety, which means it only occurs within the FL classroom. As a foreign language teacher, it becomes an essential consideration for me to find effective ways to help students connect to the TL and reduce their feelings of FLA. A viable option is the use of multilingual practices since language learners feel more affiliated with the L2 if their L1 is used in the foreign language classroom (Ghobadil & Ghasemi, 2015). While

there is a wealth of options to be considered for a truly eclectic approach in helping students identify with the foreign language, multilingual practices will the option explored in detail below.

Multilingual Practices: Identity and Authenticity

Multilingual practices are defined as negotiations of cultural and linguistic meaning in a "hybrid" way instead of simply using each language in "singular modes" (Dumitrescu, 2013, p. 436). Speakers who engage in these practices are referred to as "multilinguals." The use of multiple languages in a single interaction or even a single phrase is to enhance, enrich, or display an understanding of the given context by a speaker. As Paquet-Gauthier and Beaulieu (2016) stated, "The resources of multinguals are not neatly separated in different linguistic systems, but rather form a complete repertoire where constituents present combination regularities and affinities, according to the individual's linguistic experiences" (p. 174). Albirini (2011) observed that bilingual speakers use different languages in given contexts because of pre-assigned functions that speakers have associated each language with. Dumitrescu (2013) also noted this among Hispanic-American populations in the United States where multilinguals used multilingual practices to "deal with complex linguistic and ethical issues in a creative manner" (p. 436). This ability to navigate these complexities is a part of these speakers' linguistic identities. Linguistic identity is a comprehensive makeup of a speaker's "capabilities and characteristics that determine the person's creation and perception of speech acts, which differ in their degree of structural and linguistic complexity, the depth and accuracy of reflected reality, as well as their specific target orientation" (Nechaev, 2016 p. 92).

Speakers use their personal sense of identity to determine which language to use depending on their situation. This falls within the realm of pragmatic competence, but not that of

any single language or culture, rather another level of pragmatic competence in which the speakers navigate not only multiple languages and cultures separately, but the relationships and effects each of those have with and on each other in the given context (Albirini, 2011; Caruso, 2018; Dumitrescu, 2013). This language use takes on terms such as "a mixture of two codes" (Albirini, 2011), "multicompetence" (Paquet-Gauthier & Beaulieu, 2016), "a powerful communicative resource" (Dumitrescu, 2013), "dynamic bilingualism" (Flores, 2014), or "translanguaging" (Sayer, 2012).

The understanding of what authentic language interactions outside of the classroom actually look like informs teachers as to possible teaching practices within the classroom. This understanding brings an opportunity to transcend language boundaries and allow students to utilize all semiotic resources for meaning making (Hungwe, 2019). Multilingual practices in the L2 classroom approximate authentic interactions among multilinguals, and therefore if the foreign language classroom is to offer authentic input to the students, acknowledging the reality of what multilingual communities actually do is essential (Bahrani & Sim, 2012; Paquet-Gauthier & Beaulieu, 2016). Practicing multilingualism in the classroom helps students establish their identities as "plurilingual people" (Caruso, 2018, p. 88), and encourages students to continue to develop these identities through language use (Gort & Sembiante, 2015). These practices reflect authentic speech acts students can encounter when they are in the multilingual speech communities that exist which use the target language as a part of their repertoire. Permitting flexible multilingualism helps students to not only view themselves as a speaker of their L1, or a learner/speaker of their L2, but also as a speaker of both. When a teacher allows multilingual practices in the classroom, it legitimizes everyone's identities as multilinguals (Gort & Sembiante, 2015; Sayer, 2013).

Multilingual Practices: Positive Learning Experiences and Teacher Affordances

Feeling a connection to the target language by developing one's linguistic identity is but one of many benefits of multilingual practices. An essential consideration is that the benefits of multilingual use in the classroom have been acknowledged historically (Butzkamm, 2003), and an ever-increasing amount of evidence suggests that students are more likely to be successful in a language learning context when the class setting allows for some sort of flexible miltilingualism (Barlett & García, 2011; Cahyani et al., 2016; Durán & Palmer; 2014; García-Mateus & Palmer, 2017; Gort & Sembiante, 2015; Palmer & Martínez, 2013; Palmer, Martínez, Mateus, & Henderson, 2014; Sayer; 2013).

Positive impacts that come from having flexible multilingual policies can be seen within the context of even a single activity. An example of one such positive impact was observed by Behan and Turnbull in their 1997 study. Students were divided into 2 sections: One in which they were unmonitored during preparation and allowed to speak English (their L1), and another in which they were closely monitored to use only the target language during their preparation. Students were further divided into groups of four and tasked with preparing an oral presentation in the target language. The researchers found the presentations of the unmonitored groups, which were allowed to use their L1, received higher scores than the closely monitored groups that were only allowed to use the target language. It should be noted that while a benefit of multilingual practices can be seen, this does not automatically preclude the use of some monolingual policies in the FL classroom which have been mentioned previously in this paper. As was evident in this example, the presentations themselves were completely in the target language, reflecting such a monolingual policy.

The understanding of the benefits of different language policies allows for an eclectic approach to best suit a given classroom. This eclecticism opens new opportunities for "situated mono- and multilingual usage" (Paquet-Gauthier & Beaulieu, 2016, p. 178). One example of a flexible language policy to aid in comprehension was Flores and Schissel's (2014) observation of a teacher who began the lesson using both the target language and the students' L1 for explanation and clarification. The teacher repeatedly emphasized that the test they were preparing for would only be in the target language. Though the students began the class using both languages, as they got more and more into the test preparation, they all switched into only speaking the target language. This transition into mostly usage of the target language shows that students can be willing to use the target language when they first establish comprehension. Another example of a flexible language policy to build meaning for the students was found in a 2015 study by Gort and Sembiante. This class they studied had two teachers, each of whom spoke a single language. The students themselves were able to use whichever language they preferred in the moment, often employing translanguaging. The authors described a "classroom in which students and teachers collaboratively, flexibly, and purposefully moved among English and Spanish in the co-construction of shared meaning" (Gort & Sembiante, 2015, p. 17). The students were able to benefit from a flexible language policy while having the examples of teachers who practiced monolingualism in the classroom themselves. The benefits of a flexible language policy can reach into different learning settings as well. Nichols and Colón (2000) observed the academic success a U.S. high school experienced when the high school began allowing groups of Latino students help each other in their classes (which were completely in English). These students were all at differing levels of proficiency in both English and Spanish and would help each other in their English proficiency as well as their literacy in Spanish. While

the use of multilingual practices was present, they were aimed at the goal of aiding the students in monolingual situations. These examples show that it is definitely important to consider the authentic multilingual situations students can find themselves in, but this should not be done at the expense of the authentic monolingual situations they can also find themselves in.

Multilingual practices can offer teacher affordances in the classroom as well. Each item I will discuss can obviously be seen as a benefit for the students, and they can aid teachers in all of the considerations they need to make in a given day when preparing for and teaching a class. For example, multilingual practices can allow teachers to support participation, co-construction, and engagement in the target language among the students (Cahyani et al., 2016; Flores & Schissel, 2014; Gort & Sembiante, 2014). Code-switching specifically, which is defined as "the systematic alternate use of two or more languages in a single utterance or conversational exchange for communicative purposes" (Cahyani et al., 2016, p. 466), can be helpful when there is a word or concept in the target language that does not have a good translation to the students' L1 (Cahyani et al., 2016).

Another aspect of teacher affordances offered through the use of multilingual practices is engagement. Flores & Schissel (2014) observed a beginning-level Spanish teacher who used the students' L1 to explain an activity to the students. The language used to explain the activity would have been too advanced for the students if spoken in the target language. The use of the students' L1 allowed them to be engaged in the activity that used the target language at their level, because they understood. Caruso (2018) also found that students were more engaged and involved in creating co-learning environments when they were permitted to use translanguaging, even among students who were in their third year of a bachelor's degree majoring in the target language. The students reported the use of multiple languages to be a more engaging way for

them to be involved in the activity and considered multiple language use to be "very relevant" (p. 84). This, of course, is not to suggest that multilingual practices are the only way to help participation, and there is certainly evidence for other methods.

Multilingual Practices: Literacy

The use of multilingual practices, policies, and strategies also allow students to use a wider variety of resources to assist in their learning. When a bilingual is pigeonholed into only being able to use a single language, they are unable to "use their entire linguistic repertoire in ways that empower them" (Flores & Schissel, 2014, p. 475). This does not allow a student to draw on their existing schemata to aid in their learning process and build comprehension. Speaking to the realm of literacy specifically, a student's first language is an essential bridge because the second language will always activate first language associations when reading and writing (Salmona Mandriñan, 2014). Students in high school classrooms, and a majority in universities for that matter, are still developing their literacy skills, but these skills are there and available to be taken advantage of. When a student has developed literacy in their first language, this knowledge can be drawn upon for developing literacy in a second language (Salmona Mandriñan, 2014; Swain & Lapkin, 2000). This statement indicates that allowing students to use their L1 literacy schemata can aid them in their development of their L2 literacy because they can make connections to similar literacy aspects and skills.

Allowing students to make meaning of a text in whichever language(s) they can aids in comprehension. Therefore, a teacher legitimizing and strategically employing multilingual practices can have positive effects on students' literary comprehension and literacy development (Carroll, 2016; Hungwe, 2019; Nichols & Colón, 2000; Salmona Mandriñan, 2014; Sayer, 2015). Such comprehension benefits were observed by Hungwe (2019) in an ESL class where students

were given a text in the TL to read, and then were allowed to employ translanguaging to negotiate meaning of the text as a class. Hungwe observed that the level of comprehension displayed by the students in their L1 suggested they understood the text. This is reaffirmed by a Carroll (2016), who found that wherein students provided written reflections in Spanish, English, or both, to sections of a novel they were reading in an English as a Second Language class. The author concluded that "the use of a flexible language policy, which permitted students to write in the language they felt most comfortable in, allowed students to focus on demonstrating their comprehension of the reading by not limiting their answers as a result of their language proficiency" (Carroll, 2016, p. 258). This study indicates that allowing students to focus on the process of writing itself without needing to worry about minor spelling and grammar errors can help them show deeper amounts of understanding than if they are simply trying to make all of their sentences "correct." These expressions and confirmations of understanding can, in turn, help students develop confidence in their skills.

Conclusion

The resources available to students through multilingual practices would not be unutilized if students were required to only use the TL at any given time during their learning experience. Having rigid monolingual policies restricts access to these multilingual resources. As a teacher, based on the evidence I have found, I must conclude that multilingual practices can open new teaching strategies previously unavailable when maintaining a monolingual policy (Palmer et al., 2014). As the students acquire the TL, and become multilingual, the multilingual resources they have developed will help them in real situations that they may encounter wherein they can collaboratively create meaning using multiple languages. This reflects real situations since most multilingual speakers engage more or less regularly in communicative situations

involving some kind of code-meshing where they show greater tolerance towards 'non-standard' usage, be it in their Lx or native language (Paquet-Gauthier & Beaulieu, 2016). Butzkamm (2003) boldly concludes that in order to best serve our students, we should use the beneficial relationship between the L1 and L2 in the FL classroom. I agree that the successes observed over many studies warrant my consideration for the implementation of multilingual practices into my classroom, while maintaining an understanding of how the overuse of the L1 can lead to a lack of positive results.

LANGUAGE PAPER #2

The Benefits of CALL on L2 Pragmatic Competence and Student Engagement

INTRODUCTION AND REFLECTION

This paper was originally a research paper written as part of the requirements for a class that I took during my third semester in the MSLT program taught by Dr. Joshua Thoms called *Technology for Language Teaching.* The original idea was to simply have the paper be an extension of my annotated bibliography, which discussed the use of immersive CALL tools like virtual reality and is included after this section in this portfolio. As I began my research, however, Dr. Thoms required each member of the class to discuss how technology affected a specific part of language development. During the same semester, I was also taking a class from Dr. Abdulkafi Albirini called *Sociolinguistics, Sociolinguistic Competence and SLA.* As I researched both topics, I found that sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence is considered a deprived aspect of language learning inside of the foreign language classroom because of the lack of authenticity during classroom interactions, practices, instruction, and activities. Continued research into the subject of CALL tools themselves also revealed benefits in the realm of student engagement during their implementation in the learning process.

This paper is the result of my inquiries into these subjects and discusses what I have learned in regard to the use of CALL tools to promote pragmatic competence and engagement among foreign language learners. This paper relates to the subsection *Eclectic implementation of tools* found in my philosophy of teaching statement and has informed my teaching as I consider the use of CALL tools within my classroom to help motivate my students and develop their pragmatic competence.

Introduction

The year 2020 has become the year of digital learning where students and teachers have seen the necessity of relocating the teaching-learning process into various virtual learning settings. These settings include simple video chats, written communication, virtual reality (VR), and second life (SL) formats, among others. Hence, computer-assisted language learning (CALL) has shifted and shaped second language learning toward a wired virtual scenario that will continue into future education systems. As a teacher, I consider CALL tools essential to maximizing teaching potential in the classroom since CALL tools have been shown to increase student engagement (Lin & Lan, 2015). Immersive CALL tools, which consist of platforms like VR, augmented reality, and SL are tools that provide a digitally immersive environment for the user. These tools are especially useful for their ability to provide an immersive environment through telepresence for students. These immersive environments have similarities to study abroad (SA) experiences by providing authentic situations which allow students to develop pragmatic competence, and in some aspects surpass the benefits of traditional SA because of increased learner engagement and teacher availability. This paper will consider how CALL technologies can provide a medium that increases student engagement and can be used to replicate authentic immersive environments to increase pragmatic competence gains in the target language (TL).

The first consideration will be how CALL can affect the pragmatic gains of language learners. Pragmatics is set apart from other skill sets by "its attention to language users and to the context in which language users interact" (Shively, 2013, p. 331). An important aspect of pragmatics is its focus on language rules in a given context as determined by the users of the language within a given society or group (Mey, 2001). Pragmatic competence is not merely an

understanding of grammatical rules or a knowledge of vocabulary, but also how to appropriately use this information in a given social situation. While Shively (2013) observes that pragmatics can be an umbrella with linguistic aspects underneath it, the most discussed of which are "speech acts, politeness, implicature, presupposition, indexicals, addressivity, deictics, and conversational structure" (p. 331), the author also suggests that one can look at a number of linguistic aspects through a pragmatic lens. Pragmatic competence is directly linked to student engagement since students need to be engaged in the learning process in order to gain pragmatic competence.

The second consideration will be how student engagement is affected through the use of CALL tools. Abas (2015) discusses the notion that while the term "student engagement" has been widely used in the education field and has been defined in different ways to include different aspects and perspectives, it has nonetheless "been found to predict learning gains" (p. 6). For the purposes of this portfolio, student engagement is defined as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the students devote to the academic experience" (Astin, 1999, p. 518). Student engagement is a vital aspect of the learning process because those students who are engaged will do better than those who are not (Abas, 2015; Prasetyawati & Ardi, 2020).

The use of CALL tools has been observed to have benefits for both student engagement and pragmatic competence. The combination of benefits for both of these aspects makes the implementation of CALL tools an important consideration. First, I will discuss study abroad experiences, which provide learners with authentic language-learning situations, and compare them with the inherent lack of authenticity found within the foreign language classroom. Second, I will discuss the use of CALL to simulate these authentic immersive situations achieved by study abroad experiences. Third, I will discuss student engagement within virtual environments, with an emphasis on gaming within these environments, and their tendency to lead learners into

more authentic communicative interactions. Finally, I will discuss the inherent drawbacks with the use of CALL tools and the needs for further studies. This paper was originally written by myself, Spencer R. K. Chun, and my colleague Lucía Martin, and since has been changed and added to for the purpose of this portfolio.

Study Abroad Experiences and Authenticity

Study abroad (SA) experiences have been used as a means to further language learning and experience other cultures among other things, because of the immersive environment one gets in the SA experience. This is in direct contrast to the traditional at-home classroom (AHC) experience one finds in FL classrooms throughout the world. While the classroom provides the benefit of having a teacher for explanations and a guided learning experience, immersion offers a multitude of input that cannot be obtained otherwise. This input is not limited to merely vocabulary and pronunciation, but also to the aforementioned aspects of life such as social rules, etiquettes, gender norms, or social backgrounds.

While some smaller-scale authentic experiences can be replicated to some degree in the classroom, the authentic experience of immersion provides ample opportunity for language learners in all aspects. Some static elements of the language learning experience such as classifiable information and learnable knowledge like objects, people, or occurrences can be simply explained or related, but more dynamic elements of the language learning experience such as nuance, norms, or social rules are obtained from others—i.e., those who actually belong to the target culture or community (Shih, 2015). The ability to only provide static elements is, in part, due to the lack of authenticity in the classroom setting. Authenticity in language learning is defined as the "resemblance between what learners are exposed to in learning and what their future language use practices will be like" (Liao & Lu, 2018, p. 21). This leads to the conclusion

that while the classroom can create scripted examples of replicated situations, there is a lack of actual authenticity.

Along with providing the more dynamic elements of the language learning experience, authentic immersive environments also allow students to observe different aspects of authentic culture and language. Llanes and Muñoz (2013) explain that this authentic immersive environment is considered "an ideal opportunity to acquire the language" (p. 64). The goal of a SA experience is to provide an immersion experience which will "allow learners to gain cultural knowledge by observing, participating in experiential learning activities, and engaging with a culture" (Shih, 2015, p. 407). Shih's observations show that practice in the FL does not need to be limited to merely speaking the language itself, but also having authentic experiences in societal and cultural norms that surround the language. This is further evidenced by Anderson, Hubbard, and Lawton (2015) who found that though the students had different motivations for participating in the SA experiences, all of them made improvements on the GPI (Global Perspectives Inventory). The GPI is an assessment of cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal aspects of global learning, which include understanding of both "big C" and "little c" cultural items. "Big C" items refer to products of a target culture, while "little c" items refer to the practices of a target culture. While the big C items are of importance, they are merely the obviously seen tip of the iceberg, whereas aspects like cultural norms are harder to observe and understand, but are more important for actual communication (Shih, 2015). Anderson et al. (2015) observed gains in both cultural aspects among students who participated in a study abroad experience. Using this evidence, it can be concluded that approaching as closely as possible the authenticity, which makes a language-learning experience successful, an important consideration for foreign language teachers.

Using CALL to Simulate Authenticity

The literature has an increasing number of studies dedicated to the use of immersive CALL tools that approach the desired authenticity. The use of VR tools has the ability to transport students to various learning environments rapidly, offering a variety of authentic communication opportunities and realistic contents. These two aspects have been recognized as the biggest pedagogical benefits of using VR tools for foreign language learning (Xie, Ryder, & Chen, 2019). These authors also observed an improvement in students' vocabulary when they were required to immerse in "realistic scenes where virtual tour guides facilitated both active and discovery learning" (p. 255). Van Kerrebroeck et al. (2017) observed that while many virtual interactions can be oral, virtual reality also allows the user to experience other ways this interaction can occur such as through the use of gestures or writing. The authors give an example of how the expression on another person's face can provide nonverbal cues to meaning. A confused expression on the listener's face can signal to the speaker that they did not understand what was said, just like in an authentic immersive interaction with another human. Thus, immersive CALL tools can provide the medium in which such interaction can take place.

Immersive CALL tools also allow students to receive authentic language input as well as authentic pressures and emotions, present in an immersive learning environment. This was observed in Zimotti's (2018) study, wherein VR was used to simulate an arrival to Spain prior to a study abroad visit period. Participants were immersed in a Spanish-speaking country without leaving the classroom. In this study, students were exposed to linguistic and pragmatic situations for the first time with the intention of them experiencing discomfort with the new vocabulary and were then observed to see what strategies they implemented to overcome these situations. These situations were presented to the students by in-game virtual characters. The students exhibited

such authentic emotions to this context that some of them began to isolate themselves from the target culture as much as possible within the virtual context. Studets exhibiting authentic emotions is also discussed by Sykes (2008), who observed that immersive environments elicited high levels of emotions from the participants which "produced emotions of 'real' consequence" (p. 538). Though the students knew the characters were not actually real people, they still experienced similar "real" pressures and emotions. Using the observations from Zimotti (2018) and Sykes (2008), I conclude that though the immersive environments were virtual, the participants in their studies perceived these immersive environments as a reality and were engaged in a very real way.

Using CALL as a Medium

While there are similarities to authentic physical immersive environments, immersive technologies offer additional benefits due to their use as a medium through which learners can experience these environments. In a study by Van Kerrebroeck et al. (2017), subjects reported the overall stress in a normally stressful situation lessened when VR was used as a medium. The authors conclude that one of the factors that contributed to the reduction of stress was the use of "escapism," or the ability to perceive an escape from the normal pressures of a situation to create a less stressful one. A stressor seen among some SA participants is that of culture shock; however, Zimotti (2018) found that students who use VR before a traditional SA experience recognize it as a powerful tool to adjust themselves to the new culture. Marijuan (2017) also observed that the use of CALL before a SA experience helped students overcome feelings of not being able to communicate with native speakers and not feeling welcome in the target country. The author attributed this to students using CALL before a SA experience wherein they were

able to "practice key pragmatic norms of the host culture, such as greetings, requests, or invitations" (p. 31) to gain confidence in the skills before leaving.

Learners can use CALL tools to mediate their experiences and provide increased motivation. Lin and Lan (2015) support this by concluding that the positive results obtained using VR in their study provided evidence that VR has an advantage of multichannel communication, which can effectively reduce learning barriers that reduce motivation to continue in learning environments. The authors also state that the use of virtual learning environments "which involve authenticity and collaborative elements, had a direct impact on learner participation, engagement, and the amount of negotiation" (p. 493). This shows that the use of technology to enhance engagement can be achieved by using immersive CALL tools as a medium. This was further evidenced by Shih (2015), who observed that students were more interested and placed a higher value on the target culture when using a virtual platform. I conclude that the use of CALL as a medium can break down learning barriers that could otherwise be a hinderance for these learners. A similar conclusion was made by Sykes (2012), who observed that the opportunity to interact with native speakers in a non-threatening virtual environment allowed language learners to have lower stress and greater continued motivation to keep returning to the environment and continue to establish connections with other users. This has been seen within the classroom as the proper use of CALL has been shown to be a motivating factor for students (Oliveira, 2012; Prasetyawati & Priyatno, 2020), as well as out of the classroom through online gaming and other virtual environments (Ryu, 2013).

In addition to using CALL tools as a medium to prove a non-threatening immersive environment, they can also provide support in structuring and organizing the language. Chen (2020) observed that providing support in the structuring and organization of language helps

students develop their language skills. The author used VIRTLANTIS, a 3D visual island in the online platform Second Life, to investigate how the preorganization of the language that will be used in the game could positively develop the academic language of the participants. Participants in the study created their own avatar, dressed it up to represent the target culture, and acted as a virtual tour guide. The author observed that with the use of the virtually immersive environment as a medium, the participants demonstrated both an increase in confidence and appropriate use of grammar. This study shows the beneficial use of immersive CALL tools within specified planned language learning experiences.

Gaming

One medium that has become the subject of an increasing amount of research is that of the use of virtual gaming because of its propensity to help learners gain pragmatic competence in a target language in unplanned language learning experiences, while also fostering learner engagement. Similar to the process of language learning, various games require many hours of dedication and consistency to progress in and master. They are often long and challenging. Game designers could make the games shorter and simpler, but players actually enjoy these games that require more of them. In response, game designers keep making games that are longer and more challenging, and still manage to have them learned and mastered, thus proving that if the activity is engaging enough, people will put forth the necessary effort (Sykes, 2012). Xie et al. (2019) observed that as these technologies have improved to make the gameplay more engaging and streamlined, the users' motivation to use them has increased.

The Benefits of Gaming on Pragmatic Competence

Using gaming as a medium allows learners to establish themselves in communities where they have a role and responsibilities, and therefore a perceived necessity to interact with

other members of the community. Zheng, Newgarden, and Young (2012) recorded the most common uses of language between such players as "Coordinating, expressing need, distributing gameplay knowledge, understanding others' perspective, reporting on actions, seeking help, and responding with language and/or action" (p. 350). These players were able to establish themselves as a community with rules and a division of labor and take on roles in these communities, which give them a meaningful way to participate with each other and provide the motivation to do so. Meaningful ways to participate in a community offer learners the opportunity to connect with other speakers of the language and develop their pragmatic competence. According to Sykes (2012), these connections established through online social and gaming worlds then allow users to experiment and interact with a wide variety of norms of communication and social interaction. Utilizing a variety of roles in a mediated experience can allow the language learner to expand these interactions even further. The author was also able to observe that through the use of roles within the games, participants were able to involve themselves in social interactions that included appropriate levels of personal space, appropriate ways of meeting someone and taking leave, aspects of identity, apologizing, emotional connectivity, political actions, and even sexual encounters.

These meaningful interactions were also discussed by Godwin-Jones (2014) who observed that through assuming community roles within a virtual environment, players would use the TL in socially appropriate ways. The author also specifically noticed pragmatic gains as players were exposed to aspects of culture and linguistics that are not usually present in a typical FL classroom since "in the game context, pragmatic appropriateness is more important than grammatical accuracy" (p. 10). Godwin-Jones concludes that pragmatic gains are more expected while gaming rather than narrowly focused language goals because of the unplanned nature.

While gaming lends itself more to pragmatic gains, this does not preclude gains in other areas. For example, when a learner participates in a game, words and phrases are repeated regularly, and with increasing complexity, which can lead to the situated learning of these words and phrases during game play which the learners then use to communicate with other speakers of the language (Godwin-Jones, 2014; Ryu, 2013). The learners who participate in these games often come to the encounters, where words and phrases are repeated regularly with increasing complexity, accompanied by other players. This is importantly similar to true immersive environments like study abroad experiences, where language learning comes from interaction with native speakers or more fluent peers (Godwin-Jones 2014; Peterson 2010; Ryu 2013).

The Benefits of Gaming on Learner Motivation

Games are structured to motivate engagement, and in some online gaming formats learning English can enhance or may even be necessary to progress in the game. Ryu (2013) observed how players of World of Warcraft dedicated themselves to the long and difficult process of digitally learning English through authentic interactions with native speakers to better their gaming experience. The author observed that as these players progressed through the game, and they found it essential to begin to learn English to better participate in the game. Players would learn English to play the game, and eventually started to play the game to learn English. For many players, this process began with them learning English from non-player characters included within the game itself. These completely automated characters were able to help the non-native English speakers learn language through the meaningful context of gameplay, and subsequently use this newly learned language to better interact with native English speakers both within the game, and outside of the game in online communities. The author observed that many users of these technologies begin making contacts with native speakers outside of the virtual

setting they meet them in and have authentic virtual interactions with them online beyond game

communities. Participation in these online communities is referred to by the author as "beyond

game culture" (p. 286). Players who participate in games often find other players outside of the

game with whom they can interact. Godwin-Jones (2014) observed that players have a

propensity to visit affinity spaces, which are websites that discuss the game, and through these

connect and interact with native speakers of the target language. These examples of learners

engaging themselves in the language learning process with little or no formal instruction

provides evidence for the view that immersive CALL tools not only match the benefits of

traditional SA experiences, but actually surpasses them.

Inherent Drawbacks

An inherent drawback found within the use of CALL tools is the mismatch between what

the aim of the environment is, and what the technology can actually provide. Though more

recently the use of CALL tools has shown promise, the use of these virtual environments has not

always been optimal. Lin and Lan (2015) observed that when virtual communication first began,

there were disparities and missing pieces due to the lack of nonverbal cues which have proven to

be vital for many who are trying to communicate with each other when one or both of them have

limited proficiency in the language being spoken. These gaps would eventually be overcome as

more 3D technologies were developed and as they advance, communicative abilities in all

aspects also improve, but these developing technologies always take time. It is essential to

consider what affordances a technology offers at the time of use, and not rely on potential.

Another aspect of not relying on potential alone is in the consideration that all of the

studies found in this paper discuss adults who use their free time to develop a second language

with applicable, but untested, insights to primary and secondary foreign language education.

Further studies are needed in which the uses of CALL to facilitate immersive environments for these students as well. Traditional foreign language classrooms as well as Dual Language Immersion programs can be benefited from testing and studying planned and unplanned virtual resources to provide an authentic experience for students not physically present in the target cultures.

An obvious limitation in this consideration is school funding. While individual studies could privately fund such technology themselves, the use of school resources would be needed for those students unable to do so. The practicality of securing the required technology in some school districts may be an issue. There is also the consideration of the appropriateness of a given task in regard to the age of the student. More free, unplanned language use in some of the immersive environments may need to be heavily monitored and protections would need to be in place for the students. This in itself may disqualify some possible CALL tools. Another key consideration for classroom implementation is the propensity for immersive CALL tools to promote learner autonomy, which can reduce teacher presence. Xie et al. (2019) conclude that though newer technologies should be used to increase learners' language production and enhance motivation, it should never replace teachers or other language learning experiences.

Conclusion

Study abroad experiences have been repeatedly observed to be have benefits for language learners. While there is evidence for these benefits, the experience itself may not be feasible for many language learners due to a lack of time and resources. These hinderances of time and resources leave a gap for language learners who are missing out on the benefits of an immersive study abroad experience. This paper has discussed the literature regarding the use of virtual tools

to simulate such immersive language learning environments for students within a traditional classroom.

Immersive environments can, for example, provide benefits for pragmatic competence. Acquiring this competency is much more difficult in a classroom where the majority of interactions are not genuine, and therefore do not lend themselves to pragmatic acquisition which presents the need for an authentic learning environment where pragmatic competency can be gained. A true immersive environment, however, is a rather unrealistic option for many language learning students. The time and resources required make it all but impossible for some. A proposed solution to this dilemma is the use of technological tools to create telepresence. This overcomes the drawbacks of study abroad experiences while maintaining many of the benefits.

CALL tools have also been shown to increase student motivation and provide a medium through which students can experience immersive environments. These mediated experiences place learners on an equal playing field with native speakers of the target language and provide other motivations which can aid student engagement. The implementation of both CALL methodologies, the planned and the unplanned, can aid students in their language learning endeavors. Unplanned language use frees up cognitive use and creativity, as well as allows for situations that can foster pragmatic gains, while planned language use allows time for self-correction, which results in accuracy, quality, and quantity of language.

All of these benefits combined demonstrate that the use of CALL is a viable replacement for traditional SA experiences for those who are not able to participate in them for whatever reason, and offer unique advantages not seen in a true SA setting. While it has been recognized that CALL can in many ways replace the need for SA experiences, it should not devalue them in

any way. I would propose instead that the use of CALL be a benefit, and hopefully a motivation,

for those unable to participate in some form of SA experience at the time.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Mitigating Drawbacks in Foreign Language Classes Using Virtually Immersive

Environments

Introduction

Second language (L2) learners face a myriad of challenges as they work their way

through the process that is known as second language acquisition (SLA). These challenges are

related to, motivation, confusion, cultural differences, obtaining useful and authentic input,

producing unstructured output (this is especially true in a classroom learning environment) and

finding other speakers of their target language (TL) with whom they may interact on a regular

basis. This last point is the one on which I will focus in this annotated bibliography because as

both a language learner and teacher, I have found it extremely difficult to find other speakers of a

target language with whom I or my students can interact with on a regular basis in an authentic

way. I will discuss the eclectic use of computer assisted language learning (CALL) tools as a

method to overcome this obstacle. This work was originally a collaboration with my colleague

Joshua R. Lamping, but sections have been altered, removed, and added to better fit the topics

discussed in my portfolio.

Most learners, oftentimes due to economic limitations, are not able to move to a foreign

country where they would be immersed and have continuous opportunities for social interaction

in the TL. This is true even for those learners who choose to study language formally in high

school or university classes where study abroad opportunities are often offered on a frequent

basis. Blake (2013) cites data showing that less than one percent of university L2 students in the

United States actually participate in study abroad opportunities and immerse themselves in their

chosen TL and culture in a foreign country. Further restrictions lie in that most are only able to remain abroad for a few weeks to a couple of months at best. This is not enough time for students to gain a high level of fluency in the target language. "The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) has estimated that high levels of fluency in a foreign language can require as much as 1,320 hours of instruction. (Blake, 2013).When considering the actual amount of practice hours a given student needs, the actual implementation problem becomes the implementation of foreign language classes in general. While teaching students in their home country without access to speakers with whom to interact, most students are simply unable to put in the necessary hours to reach a high level of fluency. Blake (2013) uses the data collected that report the necessary practice hours to support the purpose of his book which is to justify the use of technology in second language acquisition and teaching. I agree and propose that an eclectic implementation of tools is a viable means to mitigating this problem facing foreign language classes.

I have discussed eclecticism and its considerations in other sections of my portfolio. This annotated bibliography is an attempt at modeling the deep and intensive process that is necessary when considering any new aspect for implementation. Thus, I will be discussing CALL tools with an emphasis on virtual reality (VR) specifically as one of many possibly suitable options in the attempt to mitigate existing drawbacks like the difficulties of finding speakers of the target language with whom to practice. VR is defined as the use of "computer-based technology that allows for the simulation of a real environment in which the user can experience the feeling of being present" (Van Kerrebroeck, Brengman & Willems, 2017, p. 439). While a brief amount of discussion will consider other types of virtually immersive environments due to the lack of research done specifically on VR, these other types of virtually immersive environments will supplement the considerations of VR. To further specify these considerations, I will be analyzing

VR using sociocultural theory (SCT) as a theoretical framework with which to view it because its use follows principles of mediation, regulation, and scaffolding.

Theoretical Orientation: Mediation, Regulation, and Scaffolding

SCT views learning as being mediated by language (Mitchell, Myles, & Marsden, 2013). This naturally implies social interaction with others and learning a second language is no different in this aspect than learning anything else. This is especially applicable to second language learning because "from a sociocultural point of view, [. . .] having internalized the symbolic tools of the first language system, the second language learner has further opportunities to create yet more tools and new ways of meaning, through collaborative L2 activity" (Mitchell et al., 2013, p. 227). I posit that this collaborative L2 activity can be achieved through implementation of VR. Various SCT constructs lend themselves particularly well to this idea. Some of those constructs include: mediation, self-regulation, and scaffolding. I will proceed by briefly explaining the potential that exists for the application of each of these constructs in the use of VR in the field of SLA and teaching. The definitions of the following terms have been adapted from Mitchell et al. (2013).

Mediation

While some learners may have opportunities to practice their L2 through social interactions in their community (i.e., depending on the demographic of their community), many, if not most, lack these opportunities for authentic interactions with proficient speakers of their chosen L2. If learning an L2 is socially mediated, and through the lens of SCT it most certainly is, then students clearly must continuously participate in social interaction through the L2. Where those chances are limited, VR can help by providing opportunities for social interaction, thus facilitating students' language acquisition.

Regulation

Using VR to learn a second language can help students move from other-regulation, where they must rely on others to help them progress through the language-learning process, to self-regulation, where learners are able to regulate their own learning process. Through access to a VR system which immerses learners in authentic social interactions in the L2, learners can guide themselves through the different possible interactions and try out new words, phrases, or grammatical structures. Then, based on the responses from another interlocutor with whom they are interacting virtually, they can determine whether the words or concepts attempted were understood correctly, thus achieving self-regulation.

Scaffolding

When learners engage in social interactions with other, more proficient speakers of the TL, scaffolding is able to occur naturally. Scaffolding refers to "the process of supportive dialogue which directs the attention of the learner to key features of the environment, and which prompts them through successive steps of a problem" (p. 222). When an L2 learner (considered a novice in the language) interacts with someone more proficient (considered an expert in the language), the expert in the interaction must provide this kind of support to the learner to help them understand the expert's words and follow the conversation successfully. VR has the potential to provide scaffolding to learners who seek this type of unstructured, authentic interaction. Having reviewed some of the key constructs of SCT and the potential that VR has to apply these constructs, I will now review the existing literature on the use of VR for SLA.

Annotated Bibliography

Blyth (2018) offers a very important definition for the term "immersion." He states that *immersion* is the perception of being surrounded by a substance or liquid, and language

specialists employ this term metaphorically, referring to a person being surrounded by language and culture, and that this typically describes a kind of enhanced language learning that one experiences. This has given rise to the term *virtual immersion*, which Blyth (2018) defines as a process through which a person can be physically present in a non-physical immersive environment. Presence is an essential tenet in SCT because, according to SCT, thinking, cognition, and learning are tied to their socially formed environment, and therefore require the learner to be in said environment to share in the experience.

Before the advent of the capability to virtually place someone in an environment, the actual presence of the person was the only way for a learner to be in any given environment. Blyth (2018) explains that this has now evolved into a phenomenon known as "telepresence," which occurs when learners feel as though they were sharing a "real" space with co-present interlocutors. This has resulted in a shift among language educators in the thought of what actually constitutes immersion, which is now simply defined as any stimuli that surround a user and provide an engrossing total environment.

The author keeps in line with eclectic principles of implementation and not only discusses some of the opportunities and defines some essential terms to my topic, but also discusses some essential considerations of possible drawbacks. One example is the need for teachers and researchers to ask the question: What can humans do that smart machines cannot? The author asserts that smart machines lack the human pragmatic competence to interpret context. This relates to the SCT principle of negotiating meaning. Humans have the capacity to negotiate meaning "on the fly with others" (Blyth, 2018, p. 229); therefore, it is not only important to understand the potential benefits of integrating this technology, but it is also important to understand its limitations and not present it as a universal and infallible solution.

Chung (2012) studied the effects on students' autonomous learning motivation produced by playing the online game *Second Life.* Second Life is an online world where one may create an avatar and participate in "real-world-like audiovisual simulations" (p. 249). Although this game is not as highly immersive as other forms of VR (*Second Life* realms may be viewed using VR goggles, which creates a more life-like, 3-dimensional experience, but the actual game is played on a computer), many elements of the game that contribute to students' learning are consistent with constructs of SCT.

The study consisted of two groups. The experimental group was a freshman-level English class that had *Second Life* incorporated into their learning materials. The control group was the other class, which used all the same materials except for *Second Life.* Results showed that the use of *Second Life* led the experimental group to "have a higher willingness to participate in class, and higher motivation for autonomous learning" (p. 254). Motivation for autonomous learning is related to the SCT constructs of self-regulation and mediation. When students possess increased motivation to learn on their own, they will effectively regulate and mediate their own language learning process. The experimental group also outperformed the control in all three proficiency categories measured: vocabulary, grammar and reading comprehension. The author attributed this to the experimental group having received more environmental stimuli and interaction opportunities. This relates to how SCT views acquisition as taking place in and through interaction and claims that the environment is instrumental in this process. For learners who do not have the ability to move to a foreign country, such a game may provide them with crucial, authentic opportunities to immerse themselves in the TL and culture via interactions with proficient speakers of their L2.

Peterson (2011) also researched a type of modified immersive environment that he referred to as "text-based virtual worlds" (p. 67). The author observed how these network-based environments facilitated real-time interactions between users in a 3-D environment (3DE). Again, though this is not technically VR, there are enough similarities to the facilitation within SCT of SLA to make this applicable in this bibliography. One of the distinguishing factors of this format pushing it toward VR and away from temporary virtual venues for communications like chat rooms is that these 3DEs provide permanent venues for communication, just like in a real-life immersive environment. This accomplishes the same goal of using VR to simulate an immersive environment to establish "actual presence, which is a key feature in SCT theory. It is important to note that the author umbrellas all virtual interactions under (CALL), regardless of the exact type of technology being utilized.

Peterson (2011) also noted that while the most used versions of this program employ completely text-based communications, newer versions are being utilized to allow users to communicate through auditory means. This combination of different modalities of communication provides more mediums that users can utilize to communicate. Easily accessible text communication could help those students struggling with understanding due to a speaker's accent or other communication problems due to pronunciation in general.

Another key feature that Peterson reported, which can greatly inform VR from the platform of text-based virtual worlds, is the ability for a user to "teleport" their avatar between the immersive environments known as "worlds." This allows users to instantaneously and seamlessly transport their presence to any given 3DE that they find will best suit their needs in the moment. Peterson observed that not only does the user have the crucial access they need to an immersive environment for language learning but utilizing the ability to teleport in

conjunction with VR technology also allows users access to multiple 3DE's. Teachers can utilize this aspect to scaffold the learning of their students, teleporting between environments as needed. These technologies are in sync with the SCT principle of mediation, where the learners use tools to mediate their learning. These tools can also provide multiple facets of scaffolding employing both real people and artificial intelligence (AI) for the learner to interact with.

Mirzaei, Zhang, Van der Struijk, and Nishida (2018) proposed a VR platform that supports "real-time conversation between learners or with AI" (p. 208) with the end of developing the students' cross-cultural competence. They conducted a study to test the effectiveness of such a platform and analyzed the results from a sociocultural perspective.

Participants were upper-intermediate-level language learners from various cultural backgrounds. Each was paired with another learner whose cultural background was significantly different than their own. The task of each pair was to role-play an everyday situation (such as a job interview) and then to separately listen to their own recorded dialogue and analyze it. Everything the students did while engaging in the role-play was mimicked by their avatars in the VR system, including any and all gestures. Following the role-play task, students were asked to watch the interaction over again and make notes about the meaning that they intended to convey with certain phrases and how they felt when they said certain things; a process that the authors called "envisioning." Once the learners had completed the envisioning phase, they exchanged notes and read the explanations made by the other interlocutor. These exchanges revealed stark contrasts in cultural misunderstandings such as a direct question which was viewed by one student as a simple question, but by another student was viewed as "an instance of galling one's pride" (p. 211).

The authors found that the activities carried out by the participants provided for "collaboration, assistance, and co-construction such as negotiation of meaning, asking for clarification, resolving misunderstandings, and receiving support from more proficient peers, that are conducive to the operation of zones of proximal development" (p. 212). The zone of proximal development is a Vygotskyan concept of SCT that refers to the difference between what a learner can do without help compared to what a learner can do with help from more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978). This implies that scaffolding took place. Additionally, and as mentioned by Mirzaei et al. (2018), students could also interact in the VR system with virtual interlocutors. The ability to move from different interlocutors allowed for learner autonomy, or in SCT terms, moving students from other-regulation to self-regulation. Learner autonomy can affect how the learner perceives the environment they're in and the tools they are using.

Berti, Maranzana, and Monzingo (2020) researched students' attitudes toward the use of VR in the L2 classroom, and how the VR platform itself affected the students' learning of the foreign culture and its people. They explain that highly immersive VR utilizes a headset and fully immerses the user in a virtual world where they are free to walk or turn in any direction. This is in contrast to low immersive VR, which refers to less immersive virtual worlds accessed by a computer or other device, such as Second Life. Benefits of using highly immersive VR include a more learner-centered, learner-driven pedagogy, which allows learners to choose where to focus their attention during the experience.

This study viewed the use of VR in the L2 classroom through the lens of experiential learning theory (ELT). ELT is defined as when a student "experiences something, reflects upon it, thinks about the experience in an abstract way, and then acts upon the experience" (Berti et al., 2020, p. 49). This series of tasks includes stages where the teacher uses guiding questions

(this can be seen as scaffolding from an SCT perspective) and group discussions (where interaction takes place and foments language acquisition) to help the students reflect on their learning experiences.

      Participants in the study (19 undergraduate students of Italian) viewed two-minute video clips filmed with a 360-degree camera in various settings in a non-tourist town in Italy. The students watched each video clip twice under guidance from the researchers to know what things to pay most attention to. The videos were viewed using Google Cardboard, which allowed the students to have a highly immersive VR experience. After viewing the videos in VR, the learners then participated in a group discussion led by a researcher to help them reflect on the cultural experience they had undergone. This example shows that these discussions can provide ample opportunity for interaction and scaffolding, especially in regard to cultural aspects that may be easily misunderstood. Although only one of the videos used in this study contained oral language that was discernible by the participants, there is clearly much potential to use this technology to allow learners to interact in the L2 with others during the experience as well as after it. The authors found that through the VR experience and the reflections that followed, participants were able to expand their understanding about the target culture. The main limitation acknowledged by the authors was the lack of interaction in the VR experience, although it was acknowledged that as the technology advances, so will the opportunities for interaction. This study shows that VR has much potential for providing students with meaningful interaction, scaffolding, and self-regulated learning, and that students overall find VR engaging. The elements of interaction, scaffolding, and self-regulated learning that can be provided with VR need to be further researched.

According to **Shih (2015),** there is a dearth of literature on the subject, as well as a perceived "lack of a rich cultural learning environment" (p. 407) present in foreign language learning. The author also studied the effects of immersion in a virtual environment on students' acquisition of L2 culture. Four students of English in Taiwan participated in the longitudinal study in which they were virtually immersed in the TL and culture of London through the integration of "Google Street View into a three-dimensional environment" (p. 407). Although the author did not approach the experiment through an SCT lens specifically, the study did treat "the learning of culture as an ongoing social activity" (p. 414), consistent with the SCT notion of acquisition occurring in and through social interactions.

Participants in the study included four Taiwanese students of English ranging from the intermediate to superior levels on the General English Proficiency test. This test is used in Taiwan to test students' English abilities in the four areas of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. These students walked the streets of London virtually, receiving cultural information from their instructor (who would be seen as the expert in the SCT dichotomy of expert-novice). They also participated in interactions with proficient speakers of the TL, role-plays and various other activities such as giving directions. These activities provide excellent opportunities for scaffolding and socially mediated language learning. Following their immersive experience in the virtual streets of London, participants then wrote about these experiences in blogs.

The study found that the virtually experienced interactions and immersion had a positive impact on the learners' attitudes toward the target culture. The experiment also resulted in higher English proficiency levels and motivation for two of the students. The author concluded that learners could benefit by virtual cultural immersion in similar ways as actual cultural immersion (i.e., through study abroad) because "virtual environments also allow learners to experience

culture through observation, interaction, and immersion" (p. 424). This conclusion, that telepresence approximates actual presence well enough to provide similar benefits, supports my claim that VR can be used to afford students opportunities for interaction that are essential for SLA from an SCT perspective.

  Lia and Lu (2018) further discussed this approximation in their study conducted with telepresence robots, which they defined as "a remote-controlled, wheeled device with a display camera" (p. 20). These robots allowed FL learners to explore an authentic environment in real time. The authors discussed the necessity of authentic environments that facilitate the use of the target language for real-life communicative purposes, instead of fabricated situations. They argued that the environment allows the FL learner to not only experience the language itself, but also the background and setting in which the language is used. Because of the added elements within these situations, they were better suited to aid students in their development of sociolingual and pragmatic competencies.

  To conduct this study, Lia and Lu observed 4 English-as-a-foreign-language participants who used telepresence robots during a campus tour of a public university in the Eastern United States. The authors found five themes that emerged after their observations. The first was that of the emotions felt by the participants. Participants reported feeling excited, relaxed, and challenged all at the same time. The second theme was the participants' recognition of the authentic environment, and how they really felt like they were present at the university. The third was related to the second, in that the participants felt the autonomy of having this learner-centered experience wherein they felt the responsibility of directing themselves around the campus, but also feelings of disorientation because they were not familiar with the campus, just like if they had actually been there walking around in person. The fourth theme was the struggle

with technical issues related to the robots themselves, and the fifth theme was practical concerns the students had about this way of using technology like privacy concerns. Another key feature that was part of these practical concerns was the lack of a teacher presence. The students expressed a desire for a teacher to facilitate parts of learning to help them gain as much as they could from the experience. This perceived drawback identified by the students themselves relates to the SCT principle of scaffolding provided by a teacher to help the students achieve their zone of proximal development. These observations highlight the considerations that need to be made when a teacher considers implementing CALL tools as part of the curriculum.

The crucial role of the teacher in facilitation and instruction is further discussed in **Lin and Lan (2015)**. They reviewed 29 articles that discussed CALL in relation to impact of the teacher, learner differences, learning task, and environment. The authors noted that the necessary roles of a teacher include aspects like decision-making on how to integrate pedagogical activities into virtual learning environments (VLEs) by utilizing the strengths of VR. The authors continued by stating that though interactive simulations have shown to promote self-directed learning, just like in a traditional classroom, the set-up of those simulations is constructed and organized by the teacher. The observed teachers were able to create learning environments that were differentiated to a specific learner. This provides evidence for the conclusion that while a traditional teacher would be limited by the classroom environment they are in, a teacher using VR would have a wider array of options at their disposal to help learners have the most appropriate interactive simulation according to their learning needs.

Lin and Lan (2015) noted that another example of a teacher's role is the organization of the learners within the environment itself. The teachers' choices of groupings and the specific students interacting with each other can have effects on the learners' experience. The study

mentions the use of VR to help students with disabilities, such as autism. This has implications for teachers considering the use of CALL tools in the classroom because the teacher's ability to create an environment that is less stressful than a traditional classroom could be beneficial as it could lead to a better response. Specific students could also be given more time in specific situations to help them master tasks. These accommodations could greatly increase learning from a SCT perspective. With the scaffolding provided by the teacher, students will feel more comfortable in their environments, which can lead to an increase in their willingness to interact. Lin and Lan (2015) also reported that not only did the interactive simulations promote self-directed learning, but they also provided what the authors described as "fail-safe learning environments" (p. 487). With the fear and anxiety abated, the learners were able to feel more comfortable learning the same material.

In the effort to mitigate drawbacks with the implementation of CALL tools, it is always essential to remember the inherent drawbacks of the implementation itself. **Canto, Jauregi, and Bergh (2013)** discuss the many challenges that confront language teaching professionals in the endeavor to integrate VR and other technologies into foreign language curricula. Their study was conducted with 36 language students in a university in the Netherlands who were collaboratively working with native Spanish speakers who were attending a university in Spain. The participants were placed in one of three research groups. The first used video communications to collaboratively work with the native Spanish speakers, the second used the Second Life platform to collaboratively work with the native Spanish speakers, and the third was a control group using neither of these nor not collaborating with the native Spanish speakers. The participants in all groups were given the same tasks to complete. While the students reported positive overall experiences with the technology, the authors note the challenges like overcoming technical

difficulties and the huge organizational burdens placed on teachers which add extra pedagogical intervention to actual make the interactions beneficial need to be considered by teachers who want to implement such collaborations in their classroom.

The authors identified these challenges as the motivations behind the reluctance of many educators to integrate interactive technologies into their teaching. They also identified the need for studies regarding individual learners at different stages of their language learning process and studies done for much longer periods of time as their study was conducted over a relatively short amount of time. Despite these drawbacks, the authors did remain optimistic stating that findings indicated added virtual, linguistic, interpersonal, and motivational aspects through the use of virtual interactions. These findings are in line with the sociocultural perspectives of interaction, other-regulation, and mediation.

Conclusion

This bibliography outlines much of the empirical data already collected that indicate the benefits of integrating VR into SLA through an SCT lens. A central tenet of SCT discussed in this paper is how VR increases the opportunities for teachers to scaffold their students' learning experiences. Teachers can transport their students to completely immersive environments via telepresence, thus allowing students to experience authentic, socially formed environments. This scaffolding is also enhanced by the fact that the vast majority of students today are digital natives, who are very familiar with these types of tools, and should therefore indicate to educators their potential educational value (Lan, 2015; Prensky 2003).

Though the discussed considerations have been thorough, there are entire elements that can still be analyzed such as the natural tendency VR and other virtually immersive environments lend themselves to multimodality (Liang, 2012), or that VR is a medium that

students can use to experience scaffolding through real presence (Berti, 2019). While there are

many considerations of the benefits and drawbacks that each teacher needs to recognize while

implementing VR into their teaching, it cannot be disputed that VR and other immersive

technologies provide "language learners with virtual access to authentic physical and

sociocultural contexts in a target language community" (Liao & Lu, 2018, p. 30).

LOOKING FORWARD

Language learning is an opportunity for the expansion of the mind. As I look forward, I plan on giving this opportunity to youth at the high school level. I will continue learning and developing myself as a teacher each year as I improve lessons and continue to eclectically implement new perspectives, ideas, tools, methods, activities, and strategies I learn. I plan on continuing to read and analyze current literature to inform my teaching as I help students experience Spanish language and culture.

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