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Learning: A Teaching Philosophy

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Learning: A teaching philosophy

by

Stephen Allen Warren

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

MASTER OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

Learning: A teaching philosophy

by

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Utah State University, 2012

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Department: Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies

This portfolio presents the author's current understanding of second language teaching. The main section of the portfolio consists of a teaching philosophy that expresses the author's believe that definitions of learning direct second language teaching. Three artifacts explore language, culture, and literature and express the development of the author's teaching philosophy. An annotated bibliography covers the essential readings done in the course of study and provides the foundations for the author's ontological arguments.

113 pages

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I would like thank Dr. Karin de Jonge-Kannan for her professionalism, patience, devotion to her students, and her love of language, all of which have guided me through this program. Also, Dr. Jim Roger's instruction in Vygotsky's learning theory has been critical to the development of my philosophy. I would like to thank Dr. Maria Luisa Spicer-Escalante for insisting that I pursue my interest in student-centered teaching. I would like to acknowledge the contributions of Dr. John Lackstrom, Dr. Joshua Thoms, and Dr. Kay Camperell to my studies.

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INTRODUCTION

Second language acquisition is a field with a rich variety of methods to use in second language instruction. I have studied the social aspect of language because I am convinced that to learn a second language is to learn a new way of doing things beyond language. In my studies of the social aspects of second language study, I came across Vygotsky. He takes a new stance in the ontology of learning. Vygotsky's learning model addresses the complex nature of the human mind and language use. The need to use language in communicative approaches and the need to internalize language rules, either implicit or explicit are encompassed. What I do in the classroom is determined by what I believe learning to be, however I can't not ignore what students perceive as learning. Much of the research presents a varied approach to second language learning where a variety of methods and practices are used in the classroom. Vygotsky's learning model accounts for this type of approach but gives instruction a measurement device in what students have internalized and only after this internalization can development begin. Humans use language because they live in societies. A society can be viewed as a complex organism. There are many different types of activities and language to accompany these activities. Vygotsky's model allows me to address this wide variety by informing instruction that allows for a working model of what to do in in second language instruction in relation to the student.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Apprenticeship of Observation

My first realization that there was more than one language occurred when I was in grade school. I sat next to students who didn't speak English. We communicated through hand gestures and head movements, but it didn't take long for most of these students to start using English. I enjoyed listening to my friends speak to their parents in a strange language and then discover the meaning from my friend.

In high school, I watched my sister, who was enrolled in Spanish; memorize hundreds of words which she never could recall. Thus, I rejected foreign language study in high school. I figured understanding Shakespeare or academic language was enough for me. Why subject myself to hours of mindless memorization when I could use my time in developing my English?

Shortly after high school I found myself learning Korean as part of an intensely focused endeavor. My Korean was to be used to express a belief system. To my dismay, I found that my intensive language study failed to enable me to meet the demands of speaking Korean outside a religious context. The culture of Korea was not the primary focus of my language acquisition and while I became skilled at ordering food, haggling, introductions, and my intended message, I did not develop the ability to speak with people outside these limited contexts. It was during my time in Korea that I discovered the joys of teaching English. Many Koreans were interested in learning English and I enjoyed the hours spent in such interactions.

Upon returning from Korea, I enrolled at Utah State. I took some Korean classes in which I found myself lost in memorizing phrases. During my under graduate

program, most of my efforts were directed to my History major and my Secondary Education courses.

Soon after I finished my bachelor's degree at Utah State, a group of friends talked me into returning to Korea. The Korean government was developing a teacher-training program with native speaker instructors of English. I was put in charge of teaching 35 English teachers. This was a rewarding experience. I was able to apply educational theory and a science-based measurement of language skills to develop interactions that enabled teachers to become more effective in class. This was an amazing time of personal and professional growth for me.

I returned to Utah, but soon after found employment with a private English school in Korea. This time I was in Seoul and thrived in exploring this major modern city. The company I worked for had me instructing children initially but later switched my assignment to teaching adult classes. I was able to enjoy all kinds of cultural exchanges with my adult students.

I enjoyed working in Korea. My Korean was improving but my desire for more stability in money, housing, and other areas led me to join the U.S. Army. Here I became trained as a Korean Linguist. I attended a Defense Department language school but found the methods did not meet my learning style, neither were they flexible enough to change to my needs.

My focus on communication and language was an important part of the social studies classes I taught for nine years at an alternative high school. My students were sent from the regular high school for various reasons. It didn't take me long to notice

the lack of language skills and abilities on the part of many of my students, whether ESL learners or native speakers.

Following my keen interest in language and my desire to become a more effective language teacher, I enrolled in the MSLT program.

Professional Environment

Language learning and teaching experiences in which I have found myself have always been personally rewarding. To work in the effort to share meaning and careful communication has always been enjoyable for me. I hope to develop as a teacher and student of second language teaching to enrich my life and the lives of others. I have enjoyed working with high school aged students, adult learners, university language clubs, and voluntary language learners. I hope to work with students in EFL/ESL at the university level either overseas or in the United States. In the summer of 2012 I was able to use what I had learned to that point to have a very rewarding professional and personal experience in the Global Academy program at Utah State University. I am addicted to the experience of seeing a new perspective in the world. I would agree with those who say each individual creates the world and while we all are on the same planet we all have a different perspective of this planet. I see this profession and working at the university level as an opportunity to continue to discover new worlds.

PERSONAL TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

How do people acquire a second language? This might also be asked by stating, how does one teach a second language? These are not easy questions to answer; there are more than a few methods and practices well known in acquiring or teaching a second language (Shrum & Glisan, 2009).

It is impossible not to consider the role of individuals in second language learning (Skehan, 1998). How students think they acquire a second language or how a teacher thinks second language acquisition occurs will manifest in the classroom (Brown, 2009). The answer to the question of what is learning a second language becomes the foundation of how second language learning and teaching are carried out (Borg, 2003).

How a language is taught is based on how the institution, instructor, and students view second language learning. This affects and is affected by how a language classroom functions. A traditional classroom consists of a teacher who holds all the knowledge and textbooks that back up that knowledge. This type of instruction sees learning as the transfer of knowledge from a teacher who must give it to the learners (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001; Lee & Van Patten, 2003). It is based in the ideas of how our society presently views learning. These views shape the way in which second language instruction occurs today. By contrast, the Vygotsky model of how learning occurs reshapes the view of learning and thus the way teaching is manifested in a second language classroom.

I also think the Vygotsky model of learning addresses many of the perceived limitations in second language teaching. While each approach to second language teaching receives criticism, the question remains, how are these different methods able to produce second language users? There are learners who have used the existing approaches to second language acquisition and emerged with second language proficiency at academic levels. Vygotsky's perspective on learning provides explanations for individual variation across second language acquisition models.

Vygotsky's thinking, as expressed in *Mind in Society*, presents a model of learning that changes the way I see learning and teaching in a second language classroom. His model accounts for the variation in individual acquisition of a second language across methods. It removes the passive nature of present models of instruction. This learning theory presents a model of learning that empowers students in their second language study. It also allows existing methods in second language acquisition to be placed in a learning context and empowers the students in what they have learned (John-Steiner, Panofsky, & Smith, 1994; Lantolf, 2006; Lantolf & Poehner, 2008; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Smagorinsky, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978; Zuengler & Miller, 2006). I will explain how I see Vygotsky's learning theory guiding my second language instruction

Vygotsky

Vygotsky developed his theory during the first part of the twentieth century. His work was based in his belief that no single theory of the human mind at the time could explain human higher psychological processes. Other models of the time,

which have shaped the way leaning is viewed today, presented the mind in two different models. One of these models is stimulus – response theory. Classroom instruction using this model states for every stimulus there is a response. A good example of this can be seen in a lesson about greetings where a greeting is met with a response to that greeting. This exchange can then be assessed; if students give the response as expected in the lesson, then they have passed the test (Skinner, 1984). However, this type of exchange is commonly seen as problematic in second language instruction today.

In Vygotsky’s time Gestalt theory was the second model of the mind, however today another model of the mind is expressed as mind as computer; with input and output. The five senses are seen as allowing for input. The input is then placed in the memory to be recalled in output. This model of the mind accounts for the multiple ways in which language is more than a singular stimulus and response. However this does not change much in the classroom, the idea of input being placed in the memory to be recalled for output maintains the teacher as the source of what is to be learned. Output is then assessed and if enough correct responses occur we have language learning (Pica, Lincoln-Porter, Paninos, & Linnell, 1996).

Neither stimulus-response nor input- memory- output can fully account for the human mind. Because we live in a social world, our minds and learning are constructed from interactions with those in the world around us. While this appears to be stimulus and input followed by response and output, Vygotsky found the mind dynamic and able to act in ways not explained by other ideas about how the mind works. Language occurs in four forms, speaking, listening, reading and writing. To

focus on only one aspect of language is commonly accepted as a limited view of language. However, just as looking at one aspect of language is limiting, explaining the mind with one process would not clearly direct an understanding of how the human higher functions are developed.

I take the time to present what learning is not because it is in my opinion so commonly expressed in the two theories presented that attention needs to be drawn to these theories. The existing constructions of learning are so well entrenched in our society that we hardly see them. Vygotsky's learning theory was developed from questioning these models.

Vygotsky's model

To present this I will use Vygotsky's model (figure 1). This model will be used as a psychological tool in completing my objective. My object is to explain Vygotsky's learning model and how it will change the classroom in second language leaning.

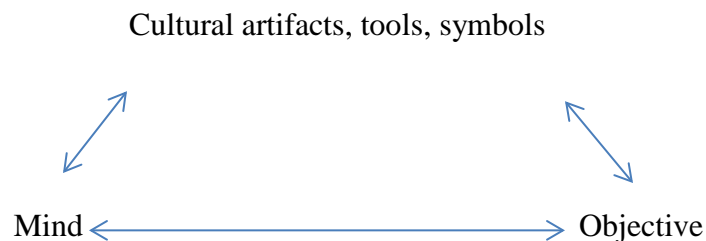


Figure 1. Vygotsky's model

The model begins with the mind, which is student or learner. The cultural artifacts, tools, and symbols make up the world around the mind. Groups of people created ways of remembering and interacting. For the second-language student this is where the second language develops. It is the result of interactions about objective in that society. There are many parts to culture that are not language. For example, the cement A on campus is a cultural artifact, as are the U.S. flag, and the bike racks. However for this paper, I will focus on language as a cultural artifact. Both the mind and the cultural artifact (language) are connected to objectives, which are the things people want to do or accomplish. The arrows connect mind, language, and objectives. Notice that the arrows go both ways. This is a clear difference from the unidirectional nature of stimulus-response approaches and input and output models. These arrows represent activity and interaction (Vygotsky, 1978).

Internalization and Development

Stimulus-response and the input-output models of learning expect predictable responses that can be measured. They are rather simple to assess. The teacher provides the stimulus or the input and then checks for the response or output. This approach is the foundation of most education. However, it does not capture what really happens when people learn. This is where Vygotsky's concepts of internalization and development are needed.

Internalization is a process of moving what is in the cultural artifacts (i.e. language) into the mind (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). If the learners interact with the teacher using cultural artifacts (such as language) it looks a

bit like the other models, however there is interaction between the learner and the teacher; not a stimulus and then response, but an negotiation of meaning (Long, 1985).

Through interaction with the world outside of self, the learner can connect the language with the objective. As learners interact with the language and objectives, they internalize the abstract (language) to objects. Thus, what Vygotsky calls internalization occurs in interaction. The teacher has become someone who knows the language aspect of the learning model and through interaction joins the learner in a conversation.

Take a child who has eaten an orange. She has eaten an orange and enjoyed the taste and feel but has not yet connected the word 'orange' to the experience. While the child is in the activity of eating the orange, she might also interact with her mother who is saying the word 'orange'. Now this looks a lot like the input-output model, however the acquisition of the word 'orange' by the child is now internalized. Imagine the child and her mother sitting in a room playing and the child wants to eat an orange. Since the word 'orange' has been internalized it now can be used to get the object by using language. There is not an orange in the room that produces the stimulus of the word and then a response, rather the word 'orange' has been internalized through interaction and now has been returned into use by achieving an objective. At this point many people might see this as recall or output. However, learning starts with the process of internalization. When language that is outside the learner is internalized it can be used by the learner in activity to achieve objectives, goals, and purposes. In my example the child is able to use the word 'orange'

(language) because the child has internalized, or moved the language from the social world to the internal world and paired it with the activity with the orange.

The second part of learning is development of what is internalized. If a learner has the word 'orange' internalized and connected to the fruit, there is still room for the development of the color orange. While the word or language part of the model remains unchanged, the object is different. This makes it possible to make a statement like the following, "I was eating an orange when my brother walked in wearing orange socks."

Internalization and development can be teased apart in the following example. A young child can draw a picture and upon seeing the picture can name it, but a child that has internalized can name the picture and then draw it (Vygotsky, 1978). Here the child that can only name the picture after it is drawn is internalizing. What is outside of the learner has to be moved to the mind. Once in the mind, what has been internalized can now be named then drawn. This is what the child who asks for an 'orange' is able to do; the child can use the language to produce the object.

The complex nature of 'apple'

An apple can be seen as a fruit for consumption. As an abstract representation 'apple' is not singular in its meaning and multiple meanings are often understood in relation to different objects through activity (Gill, 1981; Hymers, 2009). This meaning making in different contexts is part of developing what has been internalized. This is the second part of learning, according to Vygotsky. Once a word has been internalized it can be used in more activity. I recall the 'apple' as 'missile'

example from my youth. My friends and I would pick up apples and throw them at various objects. The physical sense of the apple changed from the idea of consumption to a projectile or missile in the objective of activity. Language develops across interaction with the world.

Often in language what is internalized is also developed beyond one abstract use. I have observed that in academics there is a continuous process of defining exactly how a word is being used or the meaning of the word in the context of study (objective). I think this very process enters second language study in the following manner. At first, a second-language student may internalize a word and assign it meaning in the sense of 'apple' for consumption, only to encounter 'apple' as missile in an interaction with a native speaker. If a learner sees language as an 'academic exercise', the sense of language as a 'negotiation of meaning' might not be understood, or as captured in the Vygotsky model, the interactions in achieving an objective through cultural artifacts (language) might not occur.

Second Language Perspective

Adult second language learners have internalized and continue to develop in their first language (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008). A language has already been internalized and developed when an adult learner begins second language study. Such learners are already achieving objectives and interacting with a language when they come to study a second language. What they internalize from interaction in the L2 with others is often confused with the well-developed language they have in their mind. In other words the words, concepts in the L2 are internalized and connected to

an existing language system. This existing L1 system is referenced to a culture that may contain many similarities and differences compared to how things are done in the L2. Sometimes, words that are the result of interactions with a second language community get adopted in the native language. For example, the word 'computer' has been internalized and become part of many languages that are not English.

English second language learners don't have to develop an understanding of the world like a child. For example, 'apple' as consumption and 'apple' as projectile are already in place. If the process of learning is seen as purely connecting words to an already existing language, learners are likely to cling to the old models of learning and simply think it is a matter of inputting the new language with the old. However, with the Vygotsky model the need for activity and interaction are clear. First the learner must internalize and then develop for learning to occur. It is not a matter of discovering the best methods but a matter of including the aspects of internalization and development in second language learning.

Perspective on other methods

While it is important to learn linguistic functions (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973), they need to be seen in a larger context. If I entered a standard grammar class of English where the object of learning is the concept of adjective, then that is what I am learning. Learning about adjectives comes from the objective of comparative language study. It is a way of talking about language. The psychological tools of grammar are used in the activity to achieve the objective of talking about language. Many students of English as a foreign language can speak about English grammar for

hours. This is what they have internalized and developed. They are surprised when they can't have a conversation outside of what has been internalized and developed about grammar because they mistake it for all of English. At the same time, native speakers cannot talk about subjects they have not internalized nor can we say they have developed what has been internalized. They have the words but struggle to express what they have internalized due to a lack of development. This struggle to explain what has been internalized is in fact development and part of learning.

The above can be contrasted with an English as a second language learner who lives in an English language community where there are no grammar lessons. The learner is interacting with the community. Now if the community interacts with the person, learning starts with internalization and then development of what is internalized. An example would be learning to hear prices and hand over the correct amount of money. While learners who can do this might not be able to articulate the grammar of the communication, they can complete the objective of buying things through language and activity.

Both of these examples follow the learning process. What is internalized is what is developed. Having been internalized, language can be used in the social world for further development. If we put it back in the model, the part called 'language' is different depending of the objective. In the grammar class the objective is different than in the person learning to use money.

A student who has sat through three years of grammar study in college decides to go to the target language speaking community. The grammar has been internalized.

There are language and symbols in place ready for development in a community. This person has internalized symbols and now is about to engage in development of what is internalized.

This student goes with a friend who has never studied the language of the host community. Unlike what the first student has internalized, the second student will be engaging in internalization and development in a different manner than the first student.

How Vygotsky's learning model directs my instruction

As an instructor of ESL/EFL how will I be guided by Vygotsky's learning model? I claim that no matter what type of method an employer is using, I can use Vygotsky's leaning model to instruct. I say this because I am constantly looking at the parts of the model I have presented and the concept of internalization and development. As an example of how I will use this in my future instruction, I will draw upon a teaching job I had in Korea at a private institute.

The learners in one of the classes I taught in the afternoon numbered five. I will only use three here to express the differences in the learners, the learning as I saw it then and what I think my present understanding of Vygotsky's learning model allows.

The three students I taught were a house wife, a middle school student, and a secretary from the school. The school provided a set of lessons for each class. Each class we covered the lessons, followed by a quiz and then a test at the end of each unit. The students dutifully did the lesson but complained they were not learning

English. I designed some lessons based on songs and other authentic materials but these activities were viewed as 'extra' and not 'learning'.

By investigating the objective of each student, I learned that the housewife was going on a trip to Austria, the middle school student wanted to pass an English exam, and the secretary had a relative who only spoke English and she wanted to talk about her life with her.

The next step was determining what had been internalized by each student. In each lesson it became clear that many of the words were already internalized. Each one of these students was ready for development. I could still conduct my lesson, which these students viewed as learning, but I could shift the use of the words to the objectives of each student. Once I saw what had been internalized I could develop in activity toward the objective. A conversation about how to rent a car would work for the traveler, the grammar required to pass the test can be developed over all the lessons, and what kinds of things one likes to do would meet the needs of all my students. I am not suggesting I do this in every class but I think once I see what is internalized I can develop those internalizations for the objectives of the learners.

The classroom

Most second language instruction occurs in a classroom. The classroom presents its own objectives and has its own language. However, when a language lesson is looked at from an internalization and development perspective, the classroom can become a space for internalization or development.

My lessons should make the language (cultural artifacts, tools, symbols) available for interaction. A word list, pictures, or any kind of presentation of the language can be used in the class. In this part of the instruction the students that may have already internalized the language for the class can interact with the other students. The next step in instruction is development of what has been internalized. Here students are presented an objective which will cause them to engage in activity and interactions with what they have internalized.

Imagine a lesson called 'opening my backpack'. I want to create some kind of artifact with the parts of the backpack. The zipper, the pockets, snaps, straps, and any other parts of the backpack would appear for the students to interact with during the class. The first exercise directed at internalization might be an interview activity where two students interact about parts of the back pack. How many zippers are there on your backpack? These exchanges will relate to the existing internalization and development of each student. The next part of the lesson will require them to engage in some activity with the backpack. Student in small groups interacting about the back pack with the physical artifacts (word list, pictures, a backpack chart) in front of them. They could design their own backpacks and compare and discuss differences in their designs.

Conclusion

To open this paper, I asked how a second language can be acquired or taught. I think the answer to this question manifests itself in any type of language classroom. How we think language students learn and how they think they learn is present in

second language acquisition. This is why I have focused on the aspect of learning so intensely.

Vygotsky's model of learning is far too complex for me to explain in this paper. However, using the model represented in Fig. 1 and realizing the need for interaction between its three components informs my ideas of internalization and development. This model allows the classroom to become a vital space for learning.

It clarifies that what I do in the class (objective) informs the kinds of activities I do in learning. It directs me to provide interaction with the language and those that use the language. It leads to practices of use by the learners of the language but shows that what is used needs to be internalized and developed. It erases the passive-receiver-of-information model that comes from well-established models of learning and places learners at the center of interacting with the world around them.

RFELECTIONS ON TEACHING

Reflection of Summer Teaching Experience

Introduction

The teaching philosophy will be used to reflect on my teaching experience in Global Academy during the summer of 2012. I was the “Speaking” instructor for three classes composed of English language learners. All of the students had prior English language instruction; they were placed in Global Academy classes according to a reading, writing, and speaking test upon their arrival at Utah State.

What students think is learning will manifest in the class

Introductions made up the first learning objectives and lessons. A model of how to do an introduction in an university classroom providing: name, major, reason for taking the class, and what they hoped to learn, were transcribed on the board and demonstrated by me. This took about ten minutes of class. The students practiced with the model on the board and others in the class. The following day, each student was asked to give a brief introduction following the model presented the day before. Students followed the lesson guide lines of name, major, reason for taking the class and what they hoped to learn. I was stunned when all three classes commented in feedback after the activity, that they enjoyed the introductions but couldn't wait to learn some English. Despite many students' questions about how to say things differently than presented, the introductions were not seen as learning.

The rest of the week the class discussed how they thought a person learned English. The students expected a book and lessons about grammar points. Language

learning to these students was about learning about the English language through grammar study, while conversation was viewed as fun outside of lessons. Even in the speaking class they expected detailed explanations from an expert about how to do speaking and viewed their exchanges the first day and the class time spent giving introductions as something fun to do but not as language learning.

Vygotsky and Vygotsky's Model

I decided to discuss leaning in the second week. I needed to explain my approach and method to English instruction. I took one class period and presented the Vygotsky model roughly as presented on pages 10 – 15 of my teaching philosophy. I went on to explain that the objective of the course work was talking about human rights with English. Each week in class we were to talk about different aspects of human rights. These lessons were not focused on study of the English language but on the use of English to co-construct a definition of human rights and to discuss the manifestation of human rights or lack of human rights in the world.

The lesson about the Vygotsky model was a matter of discussion for the remainder of the program with many students at different times in class and outside of class. In essence, I convinced many students that the way they had studied English prepared them for the method to be used in class and that using English to discuss human rights was learning English.

Each lesson provided students with cultural artifacts, tools, and symbols, written on the board and introduced at the beginning of class. They were then used in a communicative activity in each class.

Without exception every class allowed every member of the class to speak in English using the English cultural artifacts, tools, and symbols provided. I heard every member of the classes speak daily (20-22 students in three classes). I was able to have a short conversation with all students daily and extended conversations from time to time. Daily questions about how to use English words and other features of English to clearly express their ideas about the object of the daily lesson were asked of me and other students during discussions. One example of this can be seen when a student asked me how to say, "People had free choice to do things they choice". I produced in writing for the student, "People are free to choose what they want in life". This student said, "No", "I mean, People were free to choose but now they are not free to choose". These types of exchanges occurred several times a class period. I will offer one more example. A student asked me, "How can I say, women are not the same part as men in rights". I wrote this statement on the board and then wrote underneath it, "Women don't have the same rights as men". The students in the group looked at the two sentences on the board and starting talking about the two sentences. "Could we say, Women should be equal to men in rights"? I found these types of interactions evidence of negotiation of meaning and student-generated language learning.

Internalization and Development (The complex nature of apple)

In one of the classes we talked about a trip the students took to a rodeo. This lesson was about whether they liked or disliked the rodeo. I presented ten to fifteen phrases of like and dislike. At the most advanced level I used 'You couldn't pay me to do that again' and 'I can't wait for another opportunity to see a rodeo'. Students were asked to define which one would indicate a like or dislike of the rodeo. There was a discussion

and the two phrases matched to dislike and like. What was interesting as the summer moved on students started using, 'You couldn't pay me enough to do that again' in conversations in class. I heard this almost daily after this class.

Not everything that was presented in class was used as the example above but once students had the Vygotsky model explained and they had discussed it, the class members began to see this style of class as learning.

Not all members of the class bought into the method but by the end of the summer I noted many of these students were upset that I would have them change speaking partners every fifteen minutes. They would complain that I was breaking up interesting conversations about human rights.

Conclusion

The summer classes were not an exact application of my teaching philosophy. In the area of lesson objectives the scope was conceptual but I do think my philosophy can be used in more specific language lessons. For example my classes were all able to engage in conversations and this did lead to discussions about meaning making with English grammar features; however I think a lesson with the objective of a grammar feature in English can then be used in talking about objectives.

I was able to have the students engage in interactions to achieve objectives. Many students complained they didn't have enough time and wanted to continue conversations. I don't think every moment of these conversations was used in the class objectives but by moving around the room and listening to the group conversations and joining them when

invited, I was able to determine that students were talking about human rights and were generating language questions.

I look forward to the challenge of instructing a beginning class with my philosophy. I am not sure of all the challenges but I know I have to provide language on the board to be internalized and activities in the class that allow all the students to use the language in achieving an objective.

LANGUAGE ARTIFACT

The Whole Story

INTRODUCTION

This artifact marks my beginnings in development of my present understanding of second language instruction. The artifact was first developed in Dr. Lackstrom's LING 6510 class. This paper reflects where I started my studies of second language study and debunks many of the ideas that I had about being a second language instructor. Linguistics is used in comparative language analysis and provides terms to describe language as it is used in communication. While linguistics and grammar are part of the second language experience, how they are taught and used in instruction is key to developing language use by students. Phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics are all examined in this paper as parts of language, however all of these parts are combined to make up the whole and as long as the parts are seen in the whole of language they can prove a great tool for the study of language.

Language Artifact: The Whole Story

Language is a vast topic. English alone is a vast topic that I want to spend a lifetime investigating. When teaching English as a foreign language there is value in mastering some understanding of the vast topic of language. I will present in this paper some ideas of how I will go about using my understanding of linguistics to guide my teaching.

Introduction

Language is complex. Made up of multiple parts, it has wholeness but can be explored in its parts. Vygotsky states that when one looks at water in chemistry it is hydrogen and oxygen and not water (Moll, 1990). This is the trouble with taking apart the whole of something. In relation to physical materials, taking them apart has proven useful in modern life in terms of comfort, safety, and ease. However, efforts to break language down to parts provide neither comfort nor ease in acquiring a second language but such efforts can be used in conversations about the complex nature of language (Vygotsky, 1978).

I would like to look at some of these parts through the lens of linguistics. I don't claim to have completed linguistic training but in using the terms and categories of phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics to describe language, I can help empower students to study the wholeness that is language through its parts. In fact, I have encountered many students who express a desire to talk about the parts that make up the whole of a language. As their teacher, I should be familiar with the terms and concepts they're interested in discussing.

Using terms and categories I will discuss the wholeness of English and its relationship to a given context. While my focus will be on the wholeness of language use in instruction, I think continued study in linguistics and development of my knowledge of these terms and categories allow me entrance into the conversation about language being held by linguists and usher my students into such conversations, if they desire to have them.

Phonetics

One of the parts of language is phonetics, which deals with the sounds of language and how these sounds are made. Knowledge of phonetics is very useful for a language teacher. While direct instruction about phonetics will not be part of my regular instruction, it can be useful to understand how to make a sound in a certain language.

In Korea there is not an “R” as in English ‘road’ or an “L” as in English ‘land’. Through Romanization of Korean, the sound “ㄹ” which has no corresponding sound in English, has been represented by “R” and “L”. This causes great confusion when Korean speakers are faced with a word such as ‘girl’. This word requires that the “R” sound is made with the tongue root bunched toward the back of the throat and the “L” sound with the blade of the tongue. The Korean sound “ㄹ” is made by placing the tip of the tongue to the roof of the mouth. This causes Koreans learning English great difficulty in pronunciation of “R” and “L”.

So how would I approach such a pronunciation problem? There are web sites that teach phonetics, such as <http://www.unc.edu/~jlsmith/pht-url.html> and

<http://www.fon.hum.uva.nl/praat/>. I think students should be directed to study phonetics if interested and some class time should be spent on introducing students to resources for such study. However, neither spending time in class beyond introduction of resources nor drilling on phonetics will be a focus of my instruction. My direction with any student in this area will be driven by the student.

Phonology

Individual speech sounds are strung together and blended to pronounce words, phrases, and sentences. Sounds in language relate to each other in many ways when put next to each other. The elongation or brevity of a sound in speech is determined by where the sound occurs in relation to a syllable or utterance. Phonology can be used to show students the different sounds in the target language and it can show them similar sounds that native and target language have in common. Korean has “ㅂ” and “ㅃ”, which are represented respectively by English “p” or “b” (for “ㅂ”), and English “t” or “d” (for “ㅃ”), depending on neighboring sounds and the location of “ㅂ” and “ㅃ” in the syllable or word. This leads to frustrating situations for English-speaking learners of Korean as well. For example, the city name “부산” can be romanized as “Pusan” and “Busan”. The “ㅂ” sound is neither exactly the same as English “b” or “p” nor completely different.

My efforts in phonology instruction will be in listening lessons. Through use of authentic material in listening exercises, ways of making complex sounds and their differences will be heard in class. I will cover these as they arise and again direct students to web resources such as

<http://mockingbird.creighton.edu/english/fajardo/teaching/eng520/phonology.htm>.

Directed instruction in the area of phonology will be minimal.

Morphology

Pinker (1994) entitled a chapter in his book *Words, Words, Words*. Morphology refers to the structure of words, which is a subfield of linguistics. In many languages a single word can hold volumes of meaning by combinations of prefixes and suffixes. In Swahili, *Ninasema* (Ni-na-sema) is combined in what becomes 'I am speaking' in English. Changing Ni, to A creates *Anasema* (A-na-sema) which is 'He is speaking or She is speaking' (Fromkin, 2000, p.36).

Dictionaries represent morphology with alphabetical lists of words, where they come from, and related matters. One can find the phonemes listed in the dictionary and how these phonemes are pronounced to make the word. Dictionaries will certainly be part of my language teaching experience. I like a solid dictionary in book form but there are endless resources on the internet that students can use such as <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/go> and <http://dictionary.reference.com/>.

My approach with morphology is the same as my approach with phonetics and phonology. In my experience as a teacher and a student of a second language, new words are always useful in communication but learning those words out of context proves less useful than gathering words from the real world. Creating activities where words are presented in authentic use is my standard for vocabulary instruction (Adair-Hauck & Donato, 2002).

Syntax

Syntax is the combination of words to form a sentence. English uses word order in syntax and the importance of this order can be seen in the following two sentences: ‘The girl chased the boy’ and ‘The boy chased the girl’. Who is chasing whom is indicated by the location of the noun phrases. The location of a verb relative to its subject noun phrase also signals meaning: ‘Are you busy?’ and ‘You are busy’ mean two different things. This is an important feature in speaking English. The order in which words are placed is important to meaning in English.

In Korean the basic word order is subject – object – verb. The equivalent of the English sentence ‘Gorillas eat bananas’ is rendered ‘Gorillas bananas eat’ in Korean. With my intention to teach English in Korea, understanding this difference in putting words together allows me to show this difference to students.

In considering syntax, my instruction will be limited to student-directed questions. It is clear to me in my years of teaching English and my years of language study that, while syntax allows for the breaking down of words placed together to form a sentence, teaching syntax requires connecting the parts with the whole. I would not prevent its study in my class but I will not plan lessons in which we spend class time breaking apart sentences.

Semantics

Semantics is the study of meaning. Here again this is a part of language and not the whole but it looks like the whole. For example, ‘I am a good writer’ is only meaningful if you know ‘I am a writer’ to be true. Pinker (1994) expressed semantics

as a “discrete combinatorial system”, where the meaning of ‘I am a good writer’ in combination is different than any of the words separate. The separate parts are combined in a sentence in a way that allows us to make meaning of the separate parts.

My study of how sentences are put together has not made me fluent in Korean and for many other second language learners the study of semantics fails to lead to communication, however it can be used to show how the parts are combined to create meaning.

The whole experience

Building something through a gradual combining of the above parts does not result in language proficiency (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002). Language occurs in an environment, which provides contextual information. To gain some insight to its importance, a look at the word “go” will prove useful. The word “go” is presented with fifty eight definitions on wiktionary. By comparing three of these definitions the necessity of context in language use can be seen.

I will start with “go” meaning to ‘break down’ or ‘decay’. Examples from wiktionary: “This meat is starting to go” and “My mind is going.” In both examples the meat and the mind are in a state of breaking down or decaying. The next example is “go” in the context of ‘to lead’ (in a direction). In the example from wiktionary: “Does this road go to Fort Smith?” So, a road takes me somewhere. I can use “go” to mean lead in any context where there is a place to be lead. In a third example the word “go” means to belong (somewhere). The wiktionary examples: “My shirts go on this side of the wardrobe” and “This piece of the jigsaw goes on the other side.” Here

again the context in which the word “go” is used determines its meaning. I could continue this exercise fifty eight more times but I think the importance of context has been made clear. Just learning the word will not result in using the word meaningfully in conversation.

If language is tied to context, then what is the purpose of linguistic analysis? I would say that language was in place long before the science of linguistics appeared. Linguistics developed as a way for people to talk about language. This is the activity or application of linguistics. Further, it means that linguistics is not language. Linguistics is to talk about the human activity of language but is only a part of the activity and not the whole of language.

Implications for teaching English as a foreign language

Going to teach English in Korea, I arrived in a world replete with linguistic study of English. To be in an English class was to be in syntax class, in which each sentence was viewed by its parts. This seems to be the vision of many second language teachers, students, and programs. It seems only too natural to study language as we study the rest of the world. Yet how many people would call a leaf a tree. While it is easy to see a leaf as part of a concrete structure of nature, the disembodied nature of language parts causes language learners to see a phoneme (a leaf) as the whole tree. Unlike the leaf which has broken away from the tree, the phoneme is still part of the whole.

Here is how I see the value of linguistics. The ability to see any of the parts more clearly allows a better understanding of the whole. While focus on the parts separately ignores the whole, understanding the parts in connection to the whole can

serve as a tool for language learning. In my days as a student I have experienced looking at the whole as well as investigating the parts (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973).

For example, I experienced a focus on the parts in Korean class where a lesson was presented on past tense (-았, 한). The written form of present (하), past (한), and future tense (할 것) were all shown to the class. Written examples of each were presented and copied and repeated after the teacher. The next day in class we reviewed the past tense in a similar manner (영화는 갔다 and 일을 한). After class we asked each other how the rules worked. We never discussed saying things in the past tense. The focus on the part never zoomed out to the whole.

Months later on the streets of Pusan, Korea, I was talking to someone about an event that had occurred a day before. In the conversation I was not using the past tense (I used 하) and the listener kept asking me if it had happened before by using the past tense morphology in the Korean verb (-았, 한). It was clear in the context of the conversation that we were talking about the past (-았, 한). Upon returning home I looked up past tense in my notes from class, (-았, 한) and in one of my grammar books and now with real world exchange the grammar feature was clear and I could see the whole picture. A combining of both the grammar lesson and the exchange in the street to form the linguistic skill of the whole and not just the parts (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001; Fromkin, 2000; Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973).

Metaphors

A metaphor is a word that represents something that is not concrete but with which it shares some similarity. Consider the metaphor, *argument is war*. Arguments

are like wars if you see a winner and a loser as the final destination of argument. However in other cultures *argument is dance*. So, in the one metaphor the idea is to *defeat the opponent*, while in the other metaphor the idea is to *move gracefully with a partner*. In these two metaphors the views and direction of an argument will be different. This illustrates that the interpretation of metaphor occurs in a cultural context (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002; Lakoff, 1984; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; 1999).

Language not only occurs in an environment but shows the social opinions or views of the activity in the environment. Language can be seen as the keeper of the culture or way things are done. Language is the material of exchange connecting people in the world with activities found in the world.

Conclusion

The trouble with taking apart the whole of something is that one is left with separate parts. Phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics are all parts of language as seen by linguists. However, all the parts make up the whole and as long as the parts are seen in the whole of language they can prove a great tool for the study of language.

To teach the parts is a common practice in second language study but this approach misses the whole use of language to communicate about the world. However, when communication needs clarification the ability to identify the part needed to create clearer communication is an invaluable resource in language study.

Direct instruction in linguistics should serve to be part of second language instruction but not become the center of language learning. The study of language,

linguistics, comes after language is in place for native speakers and should be part of the learners' experience, not the whole experience.

CULTURE ARTIFACT

Exchanges in Culture

INTRODUCTION

This artifact was written as a result of independent study done with Dr. Karin de Jonge-Kannan in the area of Sociolinguistics. It marks the second stage of developing my present understanding of second language teaching. Who we are in a society is collaboratively constructed concept. The notion of the self, defined by the actions and deeds of an individual, runs into the perspectives of a society. Here it became clear to me that language is not in and of itself what is being studied. Vygotsky and Wittgenstein lead to an understanding of language developing from interactions in a society. Second language acquisition goes beyond language and enters a need to become aware of the society in which the second language is used.

Cultural Artifact: Exchanges in Culture

By relating my personal experiences in language study and teaching to sociocultural theories, I will present my approach to the role of culture in teaching a second language. My basic premise is that language is not just words but a way of doing things. I will illustrate this with a story of a class I taught in Korea. From there I will show that building a community of interaction is key to developing a classroom community where students grow into competent second-language users who interact and participate in authentic target language communities.

Background story

As a student of Korean in two different programs, a life-long learner, and a teacher of English as a foreign language, my experiences have always been rooted in language and influenced by culture. A simple example of this is greetings. In Korean I was taught the words used in a greeting but not where, when, or whom to greet. Another example is my experience teaching English conversation to English teachers in Korea. Most teachers had a command of vocabulary and grammar but could not hold a basic conversation in English with the exception of one teacher. Unlike her peers this teacher had spent time living with English speakers. She had been accepted into a social group that used English to negotiate meaning. I was reminded of this when I read, “Language is both the foundation and the instrumentality of the social construction of reality” (Riley, 2008, p. 18). Furthermore, the ways of doing, seeing, and behaving in a group are expressed in language.

Language is the principal means by which an individual is socialized to become an inhabitant of the world shared with others and also provides the means by which, in conversation with others, the common world becomes plausible to him. On this linguistic base is erected the edifice of interpretive schemes, cognitive and moral norms, value systems and, finally, theoretical-articulated 'world views' which, in their totality, form the world of 'collective representations' [...] of any given society.

(Riley, 2008, pp. 18-19)

Interpretive schemes, cognitive and moral norms, value systems, and theoretical-articulated 'world views' are expressed in language. The teachers in my class had placed English words and grammar in the schemes, norms, values, and world view of the Korean context. The context in which the teachers had been taught English was grammar study and reading of English texts. In this Korean culture, I worked with about seventy-five teachers of English. The teachers could read any English text but the conversation with others about the topics of the text occurred in Korean. This had been the approach for decades. However, when the English teaching professionals in Korea came into contact with English-speaking foreigners, conversation was a struggle and the professionals moved to include conversational English to the existing grammar and text reading curriculum.

Sociocultural perspective

Conversational English was not part of the vocabulary, grammar, and translation of texts curriculum (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001). In learning English, teachers had translated English texts and vocabulary into Korean

conversation. English conversation was not an active part of English study. The social part of language was not part of their language study. “From a sociocultural perspective ...learning is an active social and collaborative process, through which learners use a system of symbols (e.g., language) [...] to perform a task (Lee, 2009, pp. 427-428). The translation of English texts was the task for which the teachers had studied English. Conversational English demanded active communication in English and this was a task not required by the translation of texts.

Language learning is not a simple task. Divided into listening, speaking, reading, and writing, language proficiency involves four skills. For most Korean English teachers, reading was how they studied English, while the one teacher mentioned above had expanded her experience and performed in the areas of listening and speaking. Her conversational abilities were developed in active collaboration with English speakers. It was clear that she had understood the schemes, norms, and values of those with whom she had collaborated. This raised issues with her identity as a teacher. Being a Korean teacher carries status in the community and in a very conservative part of Korea she was concerned that her character would be called into question. In other words, if her skills were outside of the norm, maybe she had not followed the correct path of study.

In my own experiences with learning Korean, communicating with others seemed to happen after a long period of studying books and memorizing phrases. I can say that my first conversation in Korean took place a year after my studies began. During that first year, the Korean language had been my focus, I was not in a collaborative process with others (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001).

Interactions with native speakers enable learners to develop an understanding of the ways of doing things in a second language and are a fundamental aspect of second language learning (Vygotsky, 1978). My studies in Korean were limited to books and memorization and not related to others and their points of views. However, I have since learned that;

Vygotskian sociocultural theory [...] reflects the fundamental idea that motives for learning a particular setting are intertwined with socially and institutionally defined beliefs; and mediation, which proposes that human mental activity is mediated by tools and signs, the foremost tool being language (Sullivan, 2006, p.115).

I can clearly see this in my experiences. For the Korean English teachers, the socially and institutionally defined beliefs that were expressed in their studies were focused on vocabulary and English grammar with the expressed purpose of reading academic texts in English. These vocabulary words and readings were discussed in Korean and were not used for meaningful interaction. The belief system did not call for conversations with foreigners or an exploration of culture. The system was challenged when successful Korean English students (according to the Korean system) found themselves unable to take part in English conversation on an international level. The act of collaborating with others outside of their system caused the construction of new beliefs about English in the Korean educational system.

Language is part of something bigger

During my study of Korean, I too dedicated myself to memorizing vocabulary and analyzing grammar. Alone and isolated with my books and tapes, I studied away. About a year into living in Korea I began to understand there was a different order to Korean social structures. Interestingly enough this understanding came about after I met a Korean man who had lived in America for twenty years. I was able to access Korean interpretive schemes, cognitive and moral norms, value system, and 'world views' through conversations with this man. My daily experiences now could be interpreted by a member of the Korean-speaking culture. Suddenly words were part of a way of seeing the world with the social constructs of a different group. The way things were done and the thinking behind those ways of doing things were negotiated.

The way things are done in Korea and the reasons behind these conventions are all part of the Korean language. Korean life is full of social structures that are reflected in how one speaks and when one speaks to others. A Korean speaker is not free to speak at just any time or place, there is an environment and a way to see others and speak to others in Korea culture (Gumperz, 1979).

Sociocultural knowledge is not necessarily encapsulated in the language. This was illustrated by my interactions with my brother-in-law, an English speaker from Australia. Our first communications provided keys to differences in background and sociocultural knowledge. Even though we both spoke English, many questions about meaning and ways of doing things arose on both sides. Things are done differently in

Australia than in the USA; each environment produces its own way of speaking about the world, yet both use English (Tejedor, 2011).

Shared knowledge or conventions about how things are done is part of speaking a language. The man I met in Korea provided me insight into his Korean world, a world that he shared in common with many others. The insights gained from my interactions with him into the way things were done in Korea opened the door for more interactions. Slowly, I gained the ability to carry out these interactions in Korean. While I could not interact with everyone, I was able to gain access to interactions I would not have had otherwise.

Sociocultural perspective and the classroom

In my study of Korean and the Korean teachers' study of English, we had been acquiring knowledge about words and grammar. This type of study lacks participation through the use of the target language. To acquire is to gather language while participation is to use language to communicate with others.

One glance at the current discourse on learning should be enough to realize that nowadays educational research is caught between two metaphors [...] the *acquisition metaphor* and the *participation metaphor*. Both of these metaphors are simultaneously present in most recent texts, but while the *acquisition metaphor* is likely to be more prominent in older writings, more recent studies are often dominated by the *participation metaphor*. (Sfard, 1998, p. 5)

The passive student while sitting consuming the knowledge of an expert represents the acquisition metaphor while an active participation in an expert

community represents the participation metaphor. I would say that the things we do are the things we acquire.

In my experience the Korean English teachers had acquired translation skills from reading texts. They would talk about English texts in Korean. They had not participated in English conversation to acquire their English skill set. They seemed to think that, having acquired great skill in reading, they should be able to participate in English conversation.

One of the first language skills I learned in Korea was looking up Korean words in the dictionary. I carried a pocket dictionary. Often in my interactions with Korean speakers, they would reduce the communication to one word. I could look the word up in my dictionary. Slowly I learned words used in the market, bank, post office, restaurants, and school. However, I did not participate in formal Korean conversations or in the interactions that occur in a family. Both the formal context and the family context shape the way things are done in Korea. I acquired Korean in contexts in which I was a participant. While I have acquired knowledge about formal Korean and family interactions, I did not participate and don't have those language skills. My skills reflect what I have done.

[...] activity based learning, collaborative learning, experiential learning, problem solving activities, and ethnographic approaches.[...] When learning takes place through participation and practice and through explorations in the sociocultural environment, the active learner is afforded with multiple possibilities of meaningful

action and interaction, and with possibilities to study the world and to acquire the language while participating. (Lund, 2006, p. 81)

The key terms *active, collaborative, experience, problem solving*, and *ethnographic approaches* reflect the need to do things with language. Sociocultural perspective is one of action and interaction. What one does with the target language should be done by the learner (VanPatten & Lee, 1990). Language use is the act of participation in and exchange of an experience in participation is the lesson plan for the sociocultural classroom.

Build a methodology of the Sociocultural Classroom

The Korean English teacher's method worked in developing English learners for the purpose of the Korean context. The skill learned allowed for reading of English text and limited English conversations. The context of the knowledge gained from the readings was talked about in Korean and shared. If we call it method KET (Korean English Teacher), then KET comes from one set of perspectives. However when the KET perspective was replaced by KET 2 perspective, the conversational model, not all things in KET perspective are incorrect or useless. In fact I would argue they just need to be made communicative. The KET method is using English but fails to make it communicative.

The community model

Participation with others in communication requires a community. A learner placed in a community, in this case a classroom, can take part in interactions and participate in the target language (Stevick, 1976).

I view community as being a group of people who have developed some sort of activity together. I have argued that we learn by doing. Groups of people share their doing with each other and develop a way of doing things, which rests on a way of seeing things. Therefore, second language learners should be given the opportunity to interact with native speakers. Putting second language learners into interactions with native speakers requires the establishment of “[...] people who talk to each other, are ‘on speaking terms’, [...] those who speak are worthy to speak [...]” (Lund 2006, pp. 71-72).

This is a key point in the rationale for constructing a classroom environment in a sociocultural perspective. People need a place to feel worthy, to be “accepted” as listeners and speakers. This relates to the one Korean English teacher who was able to hold a conversation. She had found among native English speakers a place to be accepted, “on speaking terms”. However, she found she would not be accepted in the Korean English group if she used here English communication skills.

I developed an “on speaking terms” relationship with a Korean speaker, which in turn allowed me to be accepted by other speakers. It is in these stories that I see the need to develop a community in a classroom setting that develops the chances to meet and be accepted into others’ “speaking terms.” After this is done the process of interaction will take its course.

A lesson in Korean English Class transformed to a sociocultural experience

One of the most popular lines shared with me in Korea by people who wished to speak to me in English is as follows: “Korea, as you know, has four distinct

seasons, Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter.” I can’t tell you how many times I heard this but it was often.

I had been living in Korea for about three years when I found myself in front of a group of seven English teachers. I looked over the textbook these teachers used to teach English, and found this much heard line of the seasons on the first page.

I asked the teachers if the sentence had been translated from Korean. They confirmed it had indeed been translated directly from Korean to English. This was the culture of English study in Korea: how to express Korean culture in English, not to learn English. (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Stevick, 1976; VanPatten & Lee, 1990)

With this new insight I asked about the phrase: “as you know”. It seemed to me the sentence should read: “Korea has four distinct seasons, Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter”. However, I learned then that “as you know” is a phrase used to soften the blow to the listener’s pride over not knowing something. It is a way of being polite.

My efforts to convince the teachers that “as you know” was not needed in English were met with resistance, until I suggested that it would be polite to ask if the listener knew how many seasons Korea experienced. This was still met with resistance, but it became clear that being polite was part of the social agreement in educated Korean and would remain so in the translation. If I wanted to be part of the group, polite words in Korean would be translated into English.

I then inquired about the word “distinct.” Just saying “Korea has four seasons, Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter” seemed to express the point. The word “distinct” struck me as out of place in the sentence. It seemed to have more meaning than just

emphasis. Through talking with the Korean teachers, I learned that the expression “distinct season”, like alarm clocks going off at the set hour, explained the even periods between seasons. The word “distinct” was expressing the precise timing of the seasons by the solstices and the equinoxes. This single word expressed that Korea used science. The old lunar system of time had been replaced with the solar system of time. I was astounded to uncover all of this meaning in one word.

I then asked the class to follow me outside. We came to a tree. I asked if I could use the tree to tell the seasons. The teachers looked confused. I said, the leaves are changing color and falling off the trees. I think this means it is Fall. I asked how the tree might appear in the Spring. One student muttered it would be budding. I was excited, we had talked about trees and changes to them in seasons, but the class demanded that I return to the sentence, insisting that I had missed the point of the sentence. One teacher wrote four Chinese symbols on the board, the symbols for the four seasons. She explained that the blending of the old and the new was the point of the sentence. I asked if the statement, “Korea is an ancient country and a modern country”, was her interpretation of the sentence. The class exploded with glee. I had realized the meaning of “Korea, as you know, has four distinct seasons, Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter.”

It was a statement about Korea, yet I had taken the sentence to be English. I had placed it in an English context and world view. As we interacted, I discovered a completely different meaning to the same words. A meaning developed in a Korean conversation. The teachers said that many people don't know the real meaning but the educated person would know. I stated that there were lots of educated people in

Korea. The teachers laughed and as we talked I came to realize that most people were uttering the line about the seasons as a way of expressing what they knew in English.

Building a communicative classroom community

Taking a sociocultural approach in teaching a second language requires a participation metaphor. It requires that students become part of a conversation. They must be active in using the language to do things, to explore others' ways of seeing things. They must be invited and encouraged to redefine themselves and to explore the different ways people see the world.

The classroom must be a community of acceptance for students, a place where they can speak and listen as accepted participants in the process (Lund, 2006). They must be able to explore things in their interest or the things that motivate their language study (Sullivan, 2000). Take my Korean English teachers as an example. Their doing was all in the books and a community of translation. Shortly after our communications about the four seasons, members of the class perceived I had an interest in seasons, and I was taken to three different season celebrations. I was able to participate in authentic Korean holidays and these served as a platform for more communication. This resulted from investigating together (Sfard, 1998).

Conclusion

A community is a place where people gather and exchange views of the world with language. These communities continuously shape the way we see and behave in the world (Riley, 2008). My experiences and research show that words are used in

communicating ideas held by a group. Translation is not just grabbing the meaning of the words but what is meant by those words in a community. To build a community that allows for members to participate in the construction of meaning is the goal of a sociocultural approach to teaching. The methodology is to allow the student to explore, interact, solve problems solve and do things in the target language. Building such a community provides a place for students to participate with the target language.

LITERACY ARTIFACT

Students' perspectives through literature

INTRODUCTION

This artifact was written at the end of my course work and after teaching in the Global Academy in the summer of 2012. It provided me with further opportunity to develop Vygotsky's learning model through my studies with Dr. Jim Rogers. It reflects my development in Vygotsky's learning theory and my direction of student-based instruction. A work of literature or a cultural literature item provides a common text for conversation and activity, but how students perceive a work of literature and their interaction with the ideas in it are of far greater concern to me than what piece of literature they are reading. The question of why and what an author is saying directs my instruction as I discover what the students think the author is saying.

Literacy Artifact: Students' perspectives through literature

I used to think of the word literature as defining a special set of written works that belong to a unique club. While hundreds of articles and books are produced in a year, a piece of literature that is valued is one of these hundreds of writings. It is a work that remains valid through time. It captures something that is human and never changing. However, in recent years, I have come to reject this notion of literature for second language teaching. While I admit that literature includes what I have stated above and I will not exclude it from my instruction, I will not limit my definition of literature to such a narrow set of works (Morrell, 2004; Osborn, 2006).

On the surface the word *literature* holds a simple meaning. It seems to hold the quality of written words in some organized manner that is seen by a larger community as valuable. This would take the form of books in a very classic sense. However, being part of language, literature is not free from context. Time and place matter in language and while something that was written fifty years ago is still around to be read it might not be part of the present community still using the language (Smagorinsky, 2011).

I will use a text to discuss both the trouble of using a text to teach a second language and the value of undertaking the task with all its troubles. I will build a definition of literature and literacy along the way and show how both are part of second language instruction. Language that is written down is often surrounded by context. However, this context is couched in cultural norms and assumptions

(Kramsch, 1993). The battle cry for authentic material should be combined with the call for culturally relevant material. Let me start this discussion with the following.

“ Wittgenstein [...] suggests that one and the same sentence – one and the same specific arrangement of words – can be used to make a variety of statements about possible states of reality” (Tejedor, 2011, p. 9). In other words, what is written can convey more than one meaning. Checking any dictionary will show that words hold more than one meaning based on context and often the meaning of a word is constructed by events around it.

“Consider, for instance, the sentence: ‘The bald eagle expert is on the television’. The arrangement of words (where the word ‘The’ comes first, the word ‘bald’, then the word ‘eagle’, and so forth) can be used to make a statement about an expert in bald eagles – but it can also be used to make a statement about an expert in eagles who happens to be bald” (Tejedor, p. 9). Herein lies the trouble with literature. What is being written about is not seen by the reader and therefore there are not contextual clues to determine what the sentence means. In other words, literature becomes a context in and of itself.

Five possible meanings could be taken from the sentence: ‘The bald eagle expert is on the television’. Is the expert bald and knowledgeable about eagles or is the expert knowledgeable about bald eagles? Is this expert balancing on the television or is the expert appearing on a television program? It could also be a code used to disguise a top secret message. Texts are open for interpretation and often fail to clearly convey the message of the writer to those in the native language. I think it is

important to make this clear before moving to the next part of this paper: a text means to the reader whatever meaning the reader can get from a text.

Above there are five different interpretations of one sentence. Which of the five will second language students perceive? Maybe they will find a meaning outside of the five stated. This is not unique to just this sentence but to all sentences. A text might appear to be a single idea but what is seen and understood is still based in culture, namely the culture of the reader (Samway, 2001).

If a piece of literature holds meaning to readers, it could hold a similar meaning or as seen above a different meaning from the same text. Despite this, a text does provide a reference from which to discuss and negotiate meaning (Long, 1985).

Vygotsky's model of learning brings a new perspective to literature. Literature is a cultural artifact, and can be used in interaction by the learner. The cultural artifact can be internalized but can also work in the development of what has been internalized. A literary text provides a model for internalization. Internalization of the sentence, 'The bald eagle expert is on the television' moves it into the mind. The five different perceptions, all perceived would be examples of development. However, if left at internalization and not developed to where the other senses of meaning can be used by the learner, literature can become a hindrance to discovering how language works. If only one contextual meaning is known when others exist, there is room for development. Many English as second language learner are taught to use, "How are you?" with the response, "I am fine, and how are you?" This greeting is only one type of exchange using "how are you?" "How are you/" is also used in the sense of

condition. This joke demonstrates the point. After being hit by a car, an English as a second language victim, is asked by a paramedic, “How are you?” and the speaker responding “Fine thanks and you?”

Sentences are not the only literature with more than one meaning. Many second language teachers talk about using songs in class. The standard is to present a written text of the lyrics and then to listen to the song. The words to the song become literature by being presented in written form. Songs are often an expression of complex feelings and meaning in a society. This is the core of literacy: understanding the meanings and messages found in a culture (Morrell, 2004). Literature is commonly defined as the writings about many dimensions of the culture in which people making meaning of life. However, writing comes from language which is a social act done with sounds.

What is seen as literature by one culture might not be seen as literature by another culture. How people come to understand the value of any given text is not clear. Some cultures, one being the Piraha culture, don't embrace writing but hold meaning-making devices outside of literature. In Piraha culture they watch others act out plays or spirits for meaning (Everett, 2008).

I see in literature and literacy a great debate regarding instruction. Is instruction a well-developed set of lessons that tell and talk to students about what it is they need to know? Or is instruction the ability to use students' interests and motivations to foster a well-developed approach to the world around the student. I think the standard selection of a book for the class and lessons covering the chapters in that book ignore

the language student. I think this type of approach makes instructors and programs feel good about their product or course of study but it misses the opportunity to engage students in their interests and at the same time provide accountability for material covered (Hall, 2005).

Accountability can take shape from the text that the students are using. Students can show that they are learning or developing with the text by what they can communicate about the subject of interest over time. Written weekly journals, essays or any other form of written expression can show the students' interactions with a given text.

Imagine a student in a language class. They are presented with the assignment of finding texts to match their interests. This seems easy for the instructor but in fact requires that the instructor will have to show many students how to select a text. It is so easy to decide what text is being read in class on a given day but to help students find texts that they want to read and can in fact read is a challenge.

If the internet and a printer are available then this becomes less of a problem. Alternatively, if met with limited resources, the method moves to self-generated topics meeting what is available for use in the classroom. If I were to find myself in a place where there was only a grammar text book and nothing else to use for text then the task of the class would be to construct a text about the subject of interest. I might ask students to bring in their own resources if necessary.

This past summer as I taught in the Global Academy, I discovered the topic of interest was rap songs. Students were constantly singing and talking about rap songs.

Often when they could not understand the meaning of words used in the song, we could write out the text and construct a meaning. For example: “The bigger the bill, the harder you ball” was a constant refrain from twenty or so students. I asked them what they took it to mean. I was met with silence and confusion. By writing out the words of the song and placing them on the board, we were able to discuss each part of this very abstract statement.

The reading of “The bigger the bill”, by the class was interesting. We discussed a duck’s bill, the bill of a hat, and the bill you pay, however we came to see ‘bill’ as money. So, we came up with, “The more money you have”. Then we approached “the harder you ball”. Again various responses to the meaning of the word were given. In the end we agreed the meaning was “the more you do.” So, “The more money you have, the more you can do.” We then returned to another line in the song, “Work hard, play hard.” The students were thrilled with this exercise of collaboratively figuring out plausible meanings (Morrell, 2004; Samway 2001).

I think I can say this is literature. The song is the result of publishing, not a book in this case but a song. Whether it will become what is seen as valid through the decades remains to be seen, but in the moment of my class it was a message being heard and explored. The result was a text to be used outside of the learner that could possibly lead to internalization. This exercise clearly expresses that the use of words is not a simple matter of a singular meaning.

I would return again to Vygotsky’s model of learning in which development of language requires a concept to be internalized and then developed. Literature provides

the writing of a culture and also holds the cultural message of the author to be used over and over until internalized but the student (Vygotsky, 1978).

English professors deliver lessons on meaning of the canons of literature in English culture. Yet, many English professors do not agree on the meaning of the canon of literature. This returns to my first point in this paper. What the students see in a text is what it means to them. What holds the interest of students and what kinds of texts are there to instruct their interest is seldom offered by the canon. Many teachers and institutions see students as unable to select texts that match a well-structured systematic instruction. But it is my belief that it is naive to assume that students are going to be able to understand a text because the instructor thinks it is meaningful. What is at the heart of education for me as an instructor with any text is its source or origin, who is saying what and why are they saying it? I think these questions can instruct any type of literature.

If I return to my rap song example, the students were not in agreement on this issue. Many thought the author was trying to make a song that people like and would want to listen to so he could make money. Others felt the text pointed to a message of a work ethic and making an effort to make the world you want. Those who took the second stance were able to produce evidence from the song while the first group was calling on an idea not in the words of the song. This discussion was not only heard but many students wished to continue to explore what the rapper's motivations were in the song (Razfar, Licón Khisty, & Chval, 2011).

I can list movies, comics, newspapers, blogs, music, signs in fact any type of text or recording can be seen as literature. The message or content is not equal but literature provides a source of reference that is common to both the student and instructor for development on the students' level of language ability.

What a text provides is a chance for a student to see words and play with words that are specific to an area of interest. I would like to present an experience I had while teaching English as a foreign language. Here I would like to show in more detail how I will use literature in my instruction. This was an English as a foreign language class. It was held weekly for instruction a three-hour block of time. The goal of the class was to develop speaking skills and afforded little time for anything but speaking.

Students were asked to conduct a thirty-minute discussion on a topic of their choice on a rotating basis. At first the students talked about hobbies and complained about school, but one student asked for help in conducting her section of discussion. I suggested that she pick a topic in which she had great interest and give a brief introduction about her interest in the topic and why it is so meaningful to her. This student opened the discussion with a brief statement about her interest. Many of the students asked questions and when the thirty minutes had expired I had to pry the students away from their discussion to do the next activity.

The following week a different student, who I couldn't remember speaking in class, wrote and read a short paragraph expressing his interest in hiking. The class erupted again with questions and discussion. In this activity the student answered her

fellow students' questions in English. The text had served as a catalyst to speaking. This discussion led to a group hiking trip, with the planning and activities all done in English. I didn't assign any of it nor did I make one requirement (Razfar, Licón Khisty, & Chval, 2011). In retrospect, the worst part for me was that at no time did I realize it was literature and powerful language learning.

The third student in my story had been an English literature student at her University. The class was composed of English teachers. One day, they had a discussion about novels they had read while attending university as English majors. An amazing number of these teachers admitted that they could not understand the novel and had used the native language to understand the complex nature of the text. I again failed to see the powerful nature of what was being said in this group. They had found a way to get around meaningless novels used in their education. The novel had not instructed meaning but driven what I would label; 'How to survive literature classes while an English as a second language major'.

I present these stories to show that meaning comes from the interaction with the literature. If literature does not connect with a student it seems like sitting through a presentation one does not understand.

I am not opposed to classic forms of literature instruction with second language learners if that is what they are interested in and can find meaning in and communicate with me. Literature that speaks to the culture and the values of a given place are of great value in instruction (Parkinson & Thomas, 2000). I also see value

in selected text for classroom instruction but I think in approaching such text it is important to be aware of length and relevance to perceptions.

Conclusion

Literature is both the canon of a language and the cultural artifacts found in Vygotsky's model of learning. What learners see in literature or what the learner takes literature to mean is what will be internalized. Once internalized the literature can serve to develop the language, cultural awareness, and other messages learners find in literature.

Literature aids learners in their second language development if it has some meaning to them. I also think part of instruction is to identify the meaning the learner holds and to consider the other views. Like the sentence; 'The bald eagle expert is on the television', I need to take into account the many meanings that come from literature. When students have developed one sense of literature, then I can also develop other perspectives about that literature.

When language learners take interest in a piece of literature generated by a native speaker, the second language learner has a cultural artifact from which to interact and build meaning from internal motivation. When students' discussions are driven by interest a negation of meaning can occur that is not scripted.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION

The annotated bibliography opens with four annotations that structured my present understanding of Vygotsky's learning model and research done with this perspective in second language teaching. The following four annotations are the foundations of language as an artifact used in cultural communities. The next three annotations are about the origins of meaning in context and its expression by language. These readings establish that language is based in cultural meaning and cultural metaphors. Cultures share some of these metaphors but also contain differences. Three annotations that follow form the foundations of teaching--technology, research, and contextual instruction—and include a wide variety of methodologies in the field of second language acquisition. The final annotations are resources for classroom teaching.

Vygotsky's learning model

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman (Eds.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Summary

The eight chapters that comprise this book cover what became a new way of viewing how the human mind works. Vygotsky sets out to find a scientific approach to how humans develop what he calls the “higher psychological functions of the human mind.” The result is a new model based in perception, mediation, and internalization.

This model frames language as a psychological tool that is internalized and then used to mediate perception. This model replaces cognitive and behavioral explanations of how the human mind learns language. Language is one of the cultural artifacts generated in a society. The cultural artifact of language has to be internalized through exchanges with the society of use and once internalized used to mediate the mind.

While this book does not explicitly address second language learning, its model for how language is learned and used is applicable and in some ways revolutionary. Following Vygotsky, L2 students can be seen as needing to internalize cultural artifacts different from their native language. Once these artifacts are internalized they can be developed through use.

Vygotsky's method is referred to as Sociocultural Theory and while he never fully developed a final polished work on his theory, this edited book lays the foundation and provides the material for many who quote Vygotsky in second language literature.

Reaction

This book is the foundation of my approach to second language instruction. Sociocultural Theory is a unique model that presents a model for learning in general. This approach to learning a second language focuses on the students' interaction with the cultures contained in the target language. Cultures contain the symbols, sounds, and other features of language that need to be internalized by the language learner. Non-commutative second language classrooms can be transformed by allowing second language instruction to use the cultural feature being presented in class in an activity.

What I take away from this book forms the foundation of my teaching style and my ability to access the needed approach in all the varieties of second language teaching classrooms. In detail, language has to be internalized by students. It then has to be used in exchanges with others. Through use it develops. As a teacher of a second language I can focus on the needs of the students in the class with an eye to use of language in activity.

This book also makes it clear that Sociocultural Theory is not a supplemental approach to language learning but is a whole and separate approach to language teaching. It provides the foundations of an approach that has students act in the world of the language they are acquiring.

Lantolf, J. P., & Thorne, S. L. (2006). *Sociocultural theory and the genesis of second language development*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Summary

Lantolf and Thorne cover the systematic investigation of cognition within the social context from which it is constructed. Dense in content and detail, second language

development from the tradition of Vygotsky's desire to create a science of the mind is presented. Lantolf and Thorne have written a book that lives up to the scientific tradition of investigation without conclusion in sight. Mediation, symbolic mediation, internalization, activity theory, zone of proximal development, and pedagogy are examined in great detail, often leaving volumes of information to consider. The authors often refer to other forms or methods being used in the field to demonstrate the point of the reading and at times I got lost in the extensive examination of each concept. Internalization and mediation of cultural artifacts can be mastered in their use by students of a second language. The challenge is in the vast and endless ways in which societies communicate about the world.

Reaction

I could not have begun to use this text without the solid direction and reading from other sociocultural instruction. The chapters are varied in their approaches to language teaching in a sociocultural context. The variation provides insight into the many types of cultural artifacts that can be used in teaching culture. The basic idea is to get students using what they know in a language to learn more through communicating in the cultural activity from which the language is created. The two chapters on dynamic assessment are windows into the different way people perceive the world. The underlying premise and pervasive theme of this book is that language acquisition is an individual process that occurs in a social world.

Lantolf, J. P., & Poehner, M. E. (Eds.)(2008). *Sociocultural theory and the teaching of second languages*. London, England: Equinox Publishing.

Summary

The concepts of sociocultural theory in teaching second language are presented with each chapter covering a particular aspect of sociocultural theory. The book shows how different researchers and instructors have used dynamic assessment in the second language classroom and based instruction on the needs of students. Dynamic assessment examples are based in interactions between instructor and student in second language instruction. The first chapters are about mediation and the zone of proximal development in second language instruction. Various researchers in the sociocultural field write about sociocultural theory applied in interaction and in the classroom. Each chapter explores a different lesson and the activities in that lesson in second language teaching. The variety of instructional options seems limitless and challenging to develop.

The book also includes chapters on concept-based instruction. The idea of service learning and the use of the second language outside of the classroom setting where interactions between native speakers and second language learners occur in a social environment is explored.

Reaction

This book takes sociocultural theory from the theoretical into practice. Each chapter provides a chance to see the many and varied ways that sociocultural theory can be used in second language instruction. Sociocultural theory is an approach to teach a second language founded in Vygotsky's mediation, perception, and internalization.

Two chapters in particular have contributed to my development of the use of sociocultural theory in the classroom. Rumia Ableeva looks at L2 listening

comprehension in French. This chapter provides examples of the differences in each language learner's development and the need to provide individualized instruction based on dynamic assessment. The second chapter is on Maria Serrano-Lopez and Matthew Poehner's use of clay models for students to see the differences in cultural concepts as expressed in visual models made of clay. Spanish prepositions are expressed in models showing the actions expressed by the preposition. This allows the differences in preposition use to be seen by students.

This book is full of applications of sociocultural theory. I think this book will serve as resource throughout my teacher career. Each chapter is dense in information and examples and they can be read many times for ideas of application of concept-based instruction.

Razfar, A., Licón Khisty, L., & Chval, K. (2011). Re-mediating second language acquisition: A sociocultural perspective for language development. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 18(3), 195–215. doi:10.1080/10749030903494427

Summary

This article explores the increase of English proficiency as measured by standardized testing. What is unique about the result is that no attempt was made to improve the proficiency of the students. The students were in a class where the teacher developed lessons of activity. She was not concerned with the answers to the problems presented to the class but with the process by which the students attempted to solve the problems. No attempt was made to improve test scores. However, an analysis of the teacher's study of sociocultural theory presents the activities and approach used in the

classroom as a model for teaching in a sociocultural context. The authors show that the process of solving a problem or how something is done is what should be instruction for students. They don't need to get the correct answer or even master the method of problem solving step by step. Students in this class were allowed to play and interact with each other and the teacher. The breakdown of the interactions shows the students co-construct answers and naturally ask the teacher for instruction where needed.

Reaction

This is everything I ever wanted to hear. I was so amazed to read this article that I did things I never thought I would do, like present to my peers. I was a bit eager and overly excited but I will return to this article the rest of my career or until I can disprove its claims. I didn't come to this article a novice to teaching and have a very similar experience in my teaching career. I found that by letting students solve a problem they ask all the right questions they need to solve the problem. I admit my bias toward this article and hope to expand on focusing on the process and not the answer.

Language is used in cultural communities

Cole, M. (1996). *Cultural psychology: A once and future discipline*. Cambridge, MA:

Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Summary

This book explains the development of Cultural Psychology. Human life or experience is based in the world in which we live. Cole's experiences in Africa convinced him that human behavior cannot be studied in a vacuum. European-style schools in Africa were measured as failing. The types of skills and system being taught in

school did not match the conventions being used in daily life. While the exact conventions taught in school were not being used in the market places and day-to-day lives, concepts of measurement, math, stories and every type of system used in European-style schools were in full use in the lives of students.

Modern psychology and comparative cultural studies don't cover the context of the culture in use. The methods used focus on parts of a culture and separate the parts, missing the reality of the whole culture. Individuals can be understood in relation to the context of the whole culture they live in, while European deconstruction looks at the individuals as being the creation of the whole culture. The shift in focus in this type of study is to see the individual in a culture.

This method or argument calls for research that studies humans in activity. Humans are born into a culture, which develops them and those around them. Culture is presented as being a major factor in the development of the individual.

Reaction

This book defines what it is to speak a language. It is to interact with others about the world in which we live. In our activity is our culture. Western schools have great value in their disciplines and deconstruction of the world. The great weakness of this approach is that it is a fish in water. People in a culture can't see the limits of the view it creates. Cultures create a way of seeing the world and there are many ways to see the world outside of a single culture.

I think of how lost I am in the middle of a conversation about Harry Potter or many popular movies and books, but how able I am to discuss the ideas and concepts explored in those books with other words or cultural references.

Cultural Psychology merges with the ideas found in sociocultural theory. Both look at the exchanges or activities in a group as a way to understand individuals and identity.

Hymers, M. (2009). *Wittgenstein and the practice of philosophy*. Buffalo, NY:

Broadview Press.

Summary

This book covers Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and its conclusions that language is a social convention for the exchange of shared language games, as well as his later work *Some Remarks of Logical Form Philosophical Investigations*. While the author probes whether Wittgenstein changes his mind about his stance in the *Tractatus*, the book ultimately serves as an excellent exploration of Wittgenstein's philosophy and his view of language as a social convention and not a means to some ultimate philosophical truth. There are seven chapters in total in this work that cover in great detail Wittgenstein's arguments about the limitations of using language for truth seeking but also show how language serves a social function of communication and exchange of practical information.

Some sections of particular interest include language games, proper names, meaning and use, and contextualism. The author gives detailed comparisons of other philosophers' work in relation to Wittgenstein's early work and then gives a relative answer the question of whether Wittgenstein shifted his thinking in any way that changes the conclusion of the *Tractatus*. Most importantly, this book lays out the essence of

Wittgenstein's argument of language as a social convention or a way of communicating in a context.

Reaction

The author clearly defines Wittgenstein's argument against any kind of truth being found in language use. By having to express what language can and cannot do, the author's arguments make clear where language comes from and how it is used in human communication. The author defines language as a social event or exchange and backs Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of language as a socially created tool in activity. The value in this reading is the foundation it gives me in looking at language and its social functions between people.

Language is used for communication and is a representative system of the physical world and keeper of abstract ideas. These are simply names to be learned and used to communicate with others.

Morrell, E. (2004). *Linking literacy and popular culture: Finding connections for lifelong learning*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordan Publishers, Inc.

Summary

The use of critical literacy, civic literacy, academic literacy, and professional literacy are some of the literacy goals of teachers and academics. These literacy applications to popular culture are the subject of this work. Literacy is defined as literacy skills that promote students to construct knowledge for individual definition in popular culture. Popular culture is defined as what is left after high culture is defined and

the political struggles defined. All materials are seen as having messages. Popular culture as well as high culture is viewed as constructed by perspectives. Academics are according to Morrell, mainly versed in high culture and often are not comfortable in popular culture. However, issues of being human can be found in popular culture and high culture. Exploring the ideal and expression of either high or popular culture is best combined and analyzed side by side. A model of what people actually do and the reason for the actions are defined as Ethnography. This model understands both cultures as constructions of meaning. Ethnography is then expressed as a method that leads to discovery and new constructions. Three chapters cover the issues that the author sees in high culture, moving to his model for using popular culture in literacy. The discovery model is mastered in the author's argument that teachers need to become researchers. The nature of the research would differ from present models of detached research to a model of active research. The expected outcome of this method would be critical research leading to knowledge construction by both student and teacher in a co-construction model.

Reaction

Critical thinking and organized methods of expression are the focus of this book. Students of English as a second language are frequently provided with a text, and all texts are products of a culture. Will that culture reflect a society from a thousand years ago or will it be the latest comic book. The key idea is that the student's interest or dialog with the world forms the foundation of cultural study. Co-constructing English language knowledge as a frame for teaching is the model I will practice. The appeal to popular culture seems to be an appeal to interests of students. By using student interest, the

critical skills of English can be constructed by the student with the teacher. I tend to teach the critical skill of asking why things are the way they are before embarking on political change. Application of popular culture as a tool for teaching self-construction of knowledge will be part of my instruction. The key idea I am taking away from this book is that there are materials that students interact with daily that can be used in the classroom to achieve second language construction.

Riley, P. (2007). *Language, culture and identity: An ethnolinguistic perspective*. New York, NY: Continuum.

Summary

This book explores who people are in society. Who we are is the result of who society says we are. Several stories illustrate these socially defined identities and how they affect what can be done in the social world. The ideas of culture, identity, and language are presented as being a combination of one entity. Who we are (identity) is not clear but who we are is found in the way we speak to each other and what value we place on a speaker (community), and this is done with language. A social knowledge system provides the setting for this intertwining of the three concepts. The concept of a stranger and reactions by communities to strangers is peppered throughout the text, including a whole chapter dedicated to the concept of “the stranger”. The final chapter looks at reconfiguring identities.

Reaction

This book has shaped my thinking about what it is to be a language teacher. Before reading this book I thought language study was about words and grammar. After

reading this book I think learning a language is the process of learning a culture and developing a new identity. This book explores the nature of being in society, how that society communicates to individuals who they are and who they can be in the world.

I am convinced that teaching a language is a varied experience. Learning a new word or combination of words can be an introduction to a whole new way of being in the world.

Cultural metaphors

Lakoff, G. (1987). *Women, fire, and dangerous things: What categories reveal about the mind*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Summary

This work focuses on categories of the mind. It compares traditional views of thought as abstract with the alternative view of thought as embodied. The idea that thought is external or imaginative is connected to experience. It is in metaphor or representative language that the mind is able to imagine. The idea of the mind as machine is fully deconstructed, which leads to the argument that the mind does not build brick by brick constructions of the world. Thoughts are based on concepts, which are created through interactions with the world. Everything in the mind does not have to be rebuilt from nothing. The concepts of other things help us understand new things. The idea of metaphor is part of the function of the mind. It is the basis of thought. Many examples of the connection of categories are presented in case studies.

Reaction

Lakoff's work is really my cup of tea. I think I could sit and read and reread his works for the rest of my life. In relation to language study, Lakoff illuminates the connections the mind has to make in order to use language. Not all people have experienced the same kind of categories. This is an argument for the introduction of culture and the contextual constructions used in metaphorical language. This work is packed with many arguments that I think can be worked into wonderful language lessons.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Summary

Metaphors are well known in the art of English writing. One topic is replaced by another to express some meaning. A simple example would be to say that someone is smart like a fox. However, the metaphor is part of everyday speech. We speak of the world using many concepts as basis for communication. In the conduit metaphor the sentence; "Try to *pack* more thought *into* fewer words" there is no real space or something to be packed. The physical concept of packing a bag of some kind is used in expressing an idea metaphorically. The authors claim that what we use as metaphor is then the basis of understanding the world. A culture that uses a "war metaphor" in an argument will look very different than a culture that uses a "dance metaphor" to conduct arguments. Metaphors are common in everyday language and not solely the stuff of writers. A key argument made by the authors is the subjective nature of the knowledge that rests in metaphors. Language depends on representations in the construction of some

other context. It is in the metaphors a society uses that the nature of communication can be explored.

Reaction

This line of thinking is what I want to study. If I knew how, I would major in this field. The ideas here are in line with Vygotsky and Wittgenstein. I think this book is a third piece of evidence in the need for language study to move in new directions of study. Metaphorical realities are useful for communication but don't hold universal knowledge. I would like to develop lesson plans based on the metaphorical systems expressed in this book. I think this type of investigation is the direction I want to move in the future.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the flesh: The embodied mind and its challenge to western thought*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Summary

Lakoff and Johnson explore what it is to be human. We are not boundless being without form. We are encased in a physical world. Our ability to reason does not free us from the physical world. It is our ability to make metaphor from the physical world that separates us from the rest of animal life. However, we are still bound in the physical world. It is argued that most of what we do is unconscious. Our reason and thought are subjective and captured in metaphorical language. This view is a direct opposite from Chomsky's perspective, which is based on a Cartesian view of the mind as separate from the body. What we know about the world is connected to the world either through direct

experience or metaphorical representation. There is no separation from the physical world. Working from this reference calls into question much of Western thought.

Reaction

The authors replace the classic definition of metaphor, with something more compelling. In their definition, I find the foundations of communications. How people live and act in the world is directly related to their place in the world. Teachers use all kinds of metaphors related to the world in which they work. Just next door is someone who speaks the same language that I speak but is in a different physical reality. There are things I can't translate into English from Korean because the physical realities that created the words or metaphor are absent in English. Lakoff and Johnson show me the direction I wish to take in language teaching and for possible further study.

Instruction and research

Arnold, N., & Ducate, L. (2011)(Eds.). *Present and future promises of CALL: From theory and research to new directions in language teaching. CALICO monograph series volume 5 (2nd ed.). San Marcos, TX: Calico.*

Summary

Fifteen chapters cover the implementation of technology and its use in second language learning. Many authors in the field provide an exhaustive look at the use of technology in areas in second language study from acquisition and pedagogy to second life games. The chapters lead readers to the conclusion that technology is a very useful tool for language teaching. Technology presents many issues in and of itself ranging from

access to usage competence in a given application. Use of technology must be planned and structured into quality instructional practices. Technology can't teach a language but can be a versatile supplement to language activities and offer access to authentic materials. Access to the culture of a target language through technology is now a reality and can be structured into language instruction. Technology has created a culture of social networking in which students communicate. This networking culture can be used in language instruction. Thus, technology creates a place of interactions in a real context that, if not understood by teachers of second language, will leave them outside the reality of students' lives and their reasons for second language study.

The reality is that teaching with technology is expected the present educational environment. However, technology itself cannot account for language instruction. It is a tool to be incorporated into instruction.

Reaction

I have already been presented with technology as a cure-all approach to language instruction. I found technology to be intriguing to students but there needs to be instruction or activity done with technology. Access to authentic materials can be utilized in instruction. Technology is a culture unto itself. Technology has become an integrated part of communication and therefore a focus of language study. Consideration of access is key in planning to use technology in instruction.

I expect that ways of communication will continue to change in my life-time and I think research points to the importance of staying up to date on all the changes that occur.

Perry, F.L.Jr., (2011). *Research in applied linguistics: Becoming a discerning consumer*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Summary

The author walks the reader through the vast subject of applied linguistics. An extensive amount of research is produced daily and the methods and approaches vary greatly. The author takes readers through the vastness of research and shows its purpose and intent, to allow them to use research for their purposes. There is clearly more than one approach to research in this field and the author covers many research methods ranging from completely subjective observations of self to the detailed world of statistics. A good portion of the book covers research design and presents models that allow for a general overview of what types of research are undertaken. It is clear that a good research report explains the process and method as well as the reasons behind it. Research that is unclear in its conception will result in unclear results. The author demonstrates that not all research is equal and one must become aware of every detail of a claim made by researchers.

Reaction

This was a difficult read for me. I was challenged in my thinking and had to conclude that my worship of research was unfounded. This allowed me to see that there are many possibilities but most of what we know is not based in some clearly definable way. I have been convinced of the value in reading scholarship in that it opens my mind

to others' point of view and conventions of knowledge making. Science is a conversation in which ideas are shared and tested. Claims made in a research report are presented so that others can gain perspective and test results reported in the research report. For this reason I think it is important to consider recording my experiences as a second language instructor for my own reflection and to develop dialogs with other second language instructors.

Shrum, J. L., & Glisan, E. W. (2009). *Teacher's handbook: Contextualized language instruction*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.

Summary

This textbook covers second language study in a contextualized format. There are thirteen chapters including a preliminary chapter that covers professional organizations for second language teachers. This text exhaustively covers many types of instruction. Conversational models in both cognitive and social contexts are presented. A standards-based model in education, when placed in a contextual framework, allows teachers to organize content and plan lessons in a communicative framework. Technology in the classroom, which can provide access to authentic materials, is presented as a useful resource. Teaching culture through photos is offered as an example of how to incorporate culture teaching in second language instruction.

A text of this size covers many topics in the world of second language teaching. By the end of the text the reader has been introduced to professional organizations, standards in the field of second language teaching, and a variety of methods and approaches used in second language teaching.

Reaction

This text serves as an overview of the field of second language teaching. It led me to research about story and moved me toward the sociocultural approach to teaching a second language. Mention of the zone of proximal development and Vygotsky sparked my interest in this area of sociocultural theory and sociolinguistic readings.

I view this text as an overview and introduction to many methods and approaches used in second language teaching. Its contents provided volumes of information that show the many different approaches in teaching a second language.

The foundations of inquiry

Adair-Hauck, B., & Donato, R. (2002). The PACE model-Actualizing the Standards through Storytelling: “Le Bras, la Jambe et le Vetre”. *The French Review*, 76(2), 278-296.

Summary

PACE lessons integrate the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning*. This directs instruction that uses concepts like foreshadowing the story with geographical location to establish the setting of a story to a physical location. Further development of context for learner with direct instruction of the culture in which the story is told, allowing for learners to connect with the culture in the literature. Expanding further, reading preparation is done by various exercises centered on vocabulary in the literature. An example of a teacher’s uses of props and animating behaviors while telling the story are presented as possibly augmenting the negotiation of meaning. Covering the material more than once can be seen in the story telling occurring more than twice. In what is

called the attention phase the students are now directed to look at the grammar features of the story after seeing the language in the story or whole form. The final phase is called the extension phase. Graphic organizers and story mapping are used with students to reconstruct the meaning of the story. A explanation of cultural features finishes up the article.

Reaction

Second language instruction needs to have students involved in their learning. In other words it serves as evidence that in the second-language learning community, students need to construct meaning. I find this method a blend of many ideas that inform quality instruction. However, I find the approach very automatic as presented in this article and still based in the foundations of teacher centered instruction. Co-creation of meaning and student constructed meaning is not based in defining the meanings as I think this model constructs teacher instructed meaning. I think the role of the teacher as story teller being shifted to students as story teller is makes this model more co-constructive.

Adair-Hauck, B., & Donato, R. (2002). The PACE model: A story based approach to meaning and form for standards-based language learning. *The French Review*, 76(2), 265-276.

Summary

There seems to be a conflict in second language teaching created by a focus on meaning and communication which appears in contradiction to grammar-focused teaching. The grammar teacher is presented in the Atlas complex as distributing language to be used in drills. This is contrasted to an approach of plenty of comprehensible input

that through use and personal interest will allow students to comprehend the structure of the second language. Vygotsky is used to show that learning a language is a dynamic and interactive process outside of instruction. What is presented as a solution to this conflict is a story-based and guided participation method. This method includes: implicit explanations, guided participation, and explicit explanations. The foundation of this method is a whole approach or a top-down approach to instruction with authentic texts. Five critical components are presented in selecting a story for instruction: time and setting, characters with personality, a major problem, attempted solutions to a problem with outcomes that build to a climax, and a quick resolution and ending.

Reaction

In considering both the complex nature of language but also the divisions in the second language field, a rich use of authentic texts and grammar textbooks that meet the time requirement of class and are matched to student ability provide a vast amount of recourses for second language instruction. The discussion on student interest is presented on the side of the communicative approach, however I think student interest is vital in selection of any material to be used in second language study. I think the section on Vygotsky is indicative of invoking his name in most second language teaching discussions: his theory is only partially presented to support social interaction as a learning approach.

Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research of what language teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language Teaching*, 36(2), 81-109. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0261444803001903>

Summary

In the introduction, Borg states that there is a clear lack of unity in the field of language teaching. Teachers hold beliefs about teaching that are developed from experiences as students. Teacher training programs need to challenge these beliefs. Even after going through teacher training programs, if the beliefs developed as students are not challenged, these experiences will serve as the foundation for instruction. Sixty four articles were read and compared in the area of beliefs that direct teachers of language. The comparison shows the vast number and variety of terms used to express the same concepts, and other terms used in multiple meanings, leading to definitional confusion. Language teacher belief can be studied; however in order to study language teacher's beliefs a consolidation and clarification of terms needs to be considered. Areas of study in the language field and the vast amount of variation in method and the lack of term agreement make the study of teacher's beliefs and practices non-repeatable for verification. Many disciplines and field examine teacher's beliefs and show vast amount of perspective in teachers' beliefs.

Reaction

After reading this article I realized the complexity and scope of ideas and methods found in language teaching. This article left me confused as to the science or measurement to be found in the field of second language study. I think the state of affairs presented in the article has led me to my present use of Vygotsky's learning model. With

this model I am able to find the value in all the differences presented in this article. It is easy to get lost in all the differences and the vast amount of research in this field.

Brown, A. B. (2009). Students' and teachers' perceptions. *The Modern Language Journal*, 93(1), 46-60. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00827.x

Summary

The author investigates whether teachers and students hold similar perceptions about language learning. First-year second language students are reported as having unrealistic expectations and poorly developed perspectives about language learning. Students believed they could learn a language in less than two years and by directly translating from English. Teachers held a wide variety of perspectives on second language instruction. This was thought to reflect the wide variety of opinion of how to teach a second language. Results show that students want and expect to receive grammar instruction. Grammar instruction appears to students to be instruction while more communicative approaches are not seen as instruction by students. This article is a call for an exploration of how teachers and students think they learn a language. This is done by looking at how learning occurs in all academic areas and a close look at why teachers use the practices they use in instruction.

Reaction

I find the focus on student and teacher beliefs about instruction the core of second language instruction: What is learning and how do students and teacher define it. If learning occurs in a way that is not thought to be learning then what is learned is not attributed to learning by the one that learned it. An amazing phenomenon to consider, that

what we think is learning is learning. I spend most of my time considering why I think what I think and therefore find the subject of this article central to language instruction, however the content left me unsatisfied. This type of inquiry lead me to Vygotsky but this article informs the need to talk about how language is learned and developed as part of language instruction.

Duff, P. A., & Uchida, Y. (1997). The negotiation of teachers' sociocultural identities and practices in postsecondary EFL classrooms. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31, 451 – 486.

Summary

This study followed four EFL teachers in Japan who submitted journal entries and participated in interviews that explored their identities as teachers. Their views of teacher identity are contrasted with students' reactions to their teaching. The practices of the teachers are shown to vary over time in relation to student feedback and issues of control. While none of the teachers expressed a teacher identity as an instructor of culture, all of the teachers expressed complex culture ideas through their interactions in the classroom. The expressions of complex cultural ideas were not explicitly taught to students in lessons, they occurred in implicit exchanges in the course of interacting with students. The nature of researching sociocultural identities is expressed as difficult due to a constant change in the researcher's sociocultural identity while interacting with the research subjects. The exchanges between student and instructor are constantly shaping new identities causing the collection of data to be difficult. The authors conclude that the nature of identity is constantly shifting due to interaction. This conclusion warrants further research.

Reaction

This article calls attention to the complex nature of human interaction. Each instructor expresses her/his identity as a teacher. Each of these identities is confronted with others' views of this teaching identity, which results in changes in and out of the classroom by the teachers. The changes in identity are not the result of measured action but occur due to the teaching process. In the interactions of teachers and students a process of shifting identity seems to manifest itself. The need to research language study in the Vygotsky model is made clear by the complex nature of identity shifts due to interactions. The whole must be considered in doing language research. I do think the journal writing process of noteworthy experiences in the teacher's experience allows the teacher to reflect on the second language learning experience.

Kozol, J. (2007). *Letters to a young teacher*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.

Summary

The author (Jonathan) wrote this book based on a series of exchanges with a first-year teacher (Francesca). The exchanges explore many issues in education with personal stories from the novice teacher's experience. The author demonstrates the systematic removal of humanity in education. He claims that people are treated poorly by the system and in many ways abused out of education. Teachers are shown to be cogs in a machine that has lost connection with the personal needs of students and fails to reward or promote a caring and open environment. A human approach to building communities is a

central argument of the author. Students are living beings and not numbers or stats or problems to be resolved in some systematic approach to achievement. He views an educated population as one that is free to make choices that foster a life time of development. This book is a call to not give up hope and keep at making changes in a political environment that is ever pushing for a business model of competition and test results.

Reaction

At times reading this book was too upsetting for me. I have certainly been part of the madness and I have also been part of the solution. I hope to become a champion of human development. I find that kind of spirit in this book. It addresses what I would like to accomplish as a teacher. If I can help students discover self-confidence that allows them to act and be in the world in a positive way, I can seek no higher goal as a teacher. However, in reading this book I am convinced that fundamental change will take a model that others can see and recognize as successful. Kozol's emphasis on humanity and his call for the creation of an educational system of growth versus achievement have taken root in my teaching.

Peirce, B.N. (1995). Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29, 9-31.

Summary

Social identity is presented as a major factor in day-to-day language use. According to Peirce, Second Language Acquisition theory lacks an explanation of social identity. Social identity outside of the classroom determines when people feel they have

the right to speak. Furthermore, social identity changes over time and is dependent on a person's roles. Two immigrant women in Canada were asked to record their experiences outside of the classroom. The journals show social identity shifts for both women. The right to speak is connected with shifting social identity and the perceived right to speak that a particular identity carries.

One subject moves from immigrant identity to mother identity, while the other subject moves from migrant worker to Canadian citizen. "Do I have to right to speak, and to whom can I speak" is viewed as being defined by social identities. Peirce claims that being aware of this as teachers and students is useful in the second language acquisition experience.

Reaction

My personal experience supports this perspective. In Korea when I felt I had a friend identity or a student identity I felt the right to speak. In places where I had the foreigner identity I would not feel the right to speak. Taking it a step further, I look at my right-to-speak identities in my native language. There are clearly outlined realms in my own life where I can speak. Application and awareness of this interests me in my teaching. I like the journal model presented in the paper and think this way of looking at the learning of a second language can open many meaningful and personal experiences for the student of the second language.

Zuengler, J., & Miller, E. R. (2006). Cognitive and sociocultural perspectives: Two parallel SLA worlds? *TESOL Quarterly*, 40(1), 35–58. doi:10.2307/40264510

Summery

Ontology is the practice of asking questions about the nature of reality. According to the authors, developments in the field of language study over the last fifteen years can be attributed to ontology. Cognitive ontology has dominated the field and continues to be the focus of much of the discussion in second language acquisition. A very brief introduction to Vygotsky, Cole, and Lantolf are covered. Discussion of ZPD, private speech, and inner speech are the focus of many researchers looking at Vygotsky's perspective of the mind. Language socialization is briefly introduced as an exploration of social practices and how children are socialized. Situated learning theory as defined by Lave and Wenger is built on the concept of "community of practice". The concept necessitates looking at status and acculturation as important factors in SLA. The field of second language acquisition is not clear internally about the ontology of what learning a second language constitutes. A study of language versus a study of society is at the heart of the difference but this is also too narrow a dichotomy as there are other ontologies.

Reaction

This article gets at the heart of the ability of science to deconstruct the physical world and create a level of meaning that can be measured and agreed upon. I look to Wittgenstein to answer my question of ontology. Language is an activity that is not precise and does not consist of separately identifiable and measurable components, therefore language cannot be analyzed in the same way as fields of science can be analyzed. Language carries its meaning in context alone. The ontology of learning is vital to instructing a student in second language. This article encourages a closer examination of Vygotsky and his learning model.

Instruction materials

Baker, L.R., & Tanka, J. (1996). *Interactions two: A listening /speaking skills book* (3rd ed.).

New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Summary

This textbook was designed for low-intermediate students to improve their English skills. It contains communicative lessons and activities designed for a classroom setting. The lessons require students to be active in class, negotiating meaning and using language in the classroom. A similar pattern is followed from lesson to lesson without becoming repetitive. Each lesson clearly states what type of speaking activity is being studied. For example, chapter seven focuses on contradicting politely. The chapter has the students listen to people who contradict politely and then has them practice this type of interaction. The methods of the lessons focus on use of the language presented in the lesson. Activities like listening to conversations, getting someone's attention, listening to lectures, and speaking activities are found in every chapter. The method of each lesson is based in the philosophy that selective listening better develops listening skills. This text presents a structured approach to language learning that has students act in relation to specific tasks. The text covers a variety of topics that are encountered in daily life and much of the content is conversationally based.

Reaction

I am using this kind of text to develop lessons in which speech acts are presented to students. From there the kinds of words and contexts in which the speech act is done can be practiced in class. While the text is dated by the cassette tapes that are seen on every page and the structure is clearly not open to self-generated language it provides a clear list of speaking activities. So, in the development of a lesson I can identify the skill to be learned and then

provide language to be internalized or developed in classroom or out of class interactions. I don't want to copy the lessons but learn how to identify speaking acts.

Biber, D. (2006). *University language: A corpus-based study of spoken and written registers.*

Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.

Summary

This study presents a look at the differences between the spoken language used in a university setting and the written language used in the same setting. Biber uses countless examples of the differences in written academic language and the spoken language used in the classroom. The book draws on Biber's examples of the ongoing work to gather data about the language needed to attend a university. The book is full of examples of the kinds of speech used in lectures and writings students encounter in a university classroom. The text presents the meaning of a single word in different contexts. The amount of work required for this project is immense and detailed.

Reaction

This book will serve as a reference book for me as a student of language. I will mine it for insights into culture and metaphor. The nature of the research provides authentic material for study. I realize this research can easily be seen outside of a cultural perspective by eager students who want to know everything that is known about words and then can't understand why they can't communicate. I do think there is cultural knowledge in this work that I can use to construct communicative activities and be aware of the arguments of word learners.

Rickerson, E.M., & Hilton, B. (Eds.)(2006). *The five-minute linguist: Bite-sized essays*

on language and languages. Oakville, CT: Equinox.

Summary

In this collection of sixty short articles on a wide range of topics in linguistics, each article addresses a different point of view on the study and meaning of language. The editors never set out to write the book but found themselves doing so as a result of a series of responses to a radio program. The number of topics covered gives the reader access to lots of issues in linguistics. The book covers a vast amount of material and presents clear information about the topics. Despite the articles being about three pages in length, the articles are brimming with linguistic content. Each reading provides information about the author and includes recommendations for further reading.

Reaction

I think this book is a masterpiece. It is the perfect overview of the subject of language. I was able to use two chapters in teaching my ESL classes this summer: “What is the right way to put words together” (Chapter 17), and “Does language influence the way we think” (Chapter 16). I had the students read chapter 17 and discuss it in groups. It was perfect for their abilities; they liked the article and they wouldn’t stop talking at the end of class. I had to make them go to the next class. I think this book is a great resource for higher-level language students.

LOOKING FORWARD

As I complete the MSLT program I am awaiting the chance to put into practice what I have learned. My short-term professional goal is to work as an EFL instructor. My experience teaching English in the Global Academy left me eager to be a classroom instructor overseas, however, I am open to any opportunity that would allow me to work with university level students in English as a second language.

In my studies in second language learning I have come to value insights that have come out of qualitative research. In my instruction I plan to maintain a teaching journal. In this journal I will record events and lesson as I teach. I expect that this journal will lead me in my interest in doing research while teaching.

I consider my time in the MSLT program a beginning of my studies in second language learning. I leave with a strong interest in the works of Vygotsky, Lakoff, and Wittgenstein. I plan to continue to develop their works in my instruction and studies. I am assured of my life-long learning status. There is nothing more rewarding than exploring the vast educated opinions and not so educated views of the world that exist. I hope to narrow my vast variety of interests in pursuing a Ph.D. I seek out this environment for my own enrichment as well the opportunity to empower students with English to achieve their dreams.

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