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BREAKING TRADITIONAL WAYS OF TEACHING: COMMUNICATIVE
SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

by

Nadiya M Gifford

A portfolio submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

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2015

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ABSTRACT

Breaking Traditional Ways of Teaching:
Communicative Language Teaching

by

Nadiya M Gifford: Master of Second Language Teaching
Utah State University, 2015

Major Professor: Dr. Maria Luisa Spicer-Escalante

Department: Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies

This portfolio is a collection of the author's beliefs about second language teaching that represent the change of the author's views about teaching. The first section of this portfolio contains the author's teaching philosophy statements, which include a description of a communicative classroom, the role of input, and brain-based research. Three artifacts support the teaching philosophy and reflect what the author had learned during the MSLT program. First, the language artifact is a collection of technological ideas that can be helpful in teaching Russian to different level students. Second, the literacy artifact is a literature review regarding benefits of authentic materials in development of language skills, cultural awareness, and critical thinking. Last one, the cultural artifact provides research on declining an offer in a polite way. The last section is the annotated bibliography which presents the main themes of this portfolio.

(155 pages)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Studying in the MSLT program has been one of the greatest blessings in my life. This experience has been helpful and wonderful because of opportunities, hard work, and the good example of other people. I cannot express enough my appreciation to those special people who helped me learn and grow.

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their mother's other responsibilities. I really love and appreciate them for being patient and strong for me.

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INTRODUCTION

When I began the MSLT program, I had already been teaching Russian language classes to non-native speakers for several semesters. I entered the MSLT program to develop my own understanding of language teaching and learning. This portfolio is the reflection of changes to my personal views on teaching, particularly on second language teaching and development of new perspectives about teaching. Having grown up in an environment that featured only traditional ways of teaching, I learned in the MSLT program about the communicative approach, which I believe is more beneficial in language learning. The MSLT program helped me understand communicative ways of language teaching and the benefits of this approach.

This portfolio is the description of my journey to become a better teacher and is a collection of the work that I completed during my studies in the MSLT program. The first part of the portfolio is the teaching philosophy section that consists of three main pedagogical aspects that helped me develop core ideas about teaching: the communicative classroom, the role of input, and brain-based research for second language (L2) learning. The middle part of this portfolio includes three artifacts: the Language artifact describes technological tools that can help make input richer, more engaging, and effective in a L2 classroom; the Literacy artifact offers my perspectives on the use of authentic materials that can dramatically enrich input and promote the development of students' cultural competence and critical thinking; and the Culture artifact is an example of the pragmatics teaching, specifically how to decline an offer to drink alcohol without damaging the relationships with Russian business associates. The last part of my portfolio contains annotated bibliographies that summarize key books and articles I have read during the MSLT program.

During the past two years I have learned much and acquired many helpful ideas about L2 teaching. This portfolio is a summary of the main ideas that I believe will help me become an effective teacher who will give students many learning benefits and good experiences.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

APPRENTICESHIP OF OBSERVATION

I was raised in a bilingual environment. The Russian language was dominant in Ukraine, with the overwhelming majority of schools and universities offering programs only in the Russian language and the majority of Soviet media outlets publishing only in Russian. Nevertheless, my parents spoke the Ukrainian language frequently at home. I also heard other people speak it (mostly those who came from Ukrainian villages and who kept the language and traditions of Ukraine). I also learned some Ukrainian at school from second to eighth grades. In the Soviet schools of Ukraine, we had two classes in Ukrainian language: Ukrainian Grammar and Literacy. Thus, I grew up bilingual.

My first memory about a foreign language begins with Soviet movies about the Second World War. While watching those movies I could hear a completely new language I had never heard before and could not understand. I often heard the words “*Achtung*” or “*Schnell*” and I was able to understand the meaning of some words from the content without translation. In that way I learned a little German. I had the opportunity to learn a foreign language beginning in fourth grade at my school. I really wanted to learn German, but students were not allowed to choose a language. The only option was English, so I began my journey to the world of the English language and culture.

I was taught English by traditional methods, in other words, every course was taught straight from a textbook that focused on reading, translating new words, and doing a series of boring exercises. Teachers mostly taught English through Russian, i.e., primarily using the Russian language in the class. All speech in class was from a teacher, while students were

passive listeners. As a result, the majority of students did not speak any English. As for me, I only learned some English words, main sentence structures, and simple tenses of verbs.

In general, I did not enjoy attending school as a youth. I was a shy girl who worried about a lot of different things. Most teachers in the Soviet schools did not seem concerned with students' success and development, but only with following the programs. As a result, when I graduated from high school I did not want to continue studying.

After high school graduation, I continued studying English for many years by myself, focusing on grammar rules, vocabulary, and reading, but it did not help me learn much, regardless of the regularity of my studying. I did not have anyone to practice English with for real-life communication. Nevertheless, I felt it was important to continue learning English which is a primary international language.

My first job as an editor's assistant was in a publishing house of scientific literature. This position normally required special higher education, but I was doing the work well and they were happy to have me there. Some of the editors encouraged me to go study at the university, but my negative experiences in high school and lack of plans for my future kept me from enrolling. While working at the publishing house, I learned how to work with documents and people. My work as an editor helped me improve my knowledge of Russian grammar and writing skills.

Later, I took a manager job at a travel agency, where I learned to work with people and most importantly, I learned about the importance of education. Therefore, I went to study at the University of Tourism. Unfortunately, as in high school, I was not really satisfied with the methods of teaching English at this university. The same boring and barely effective traditional

methods of teaching the language were used. The professors used only outdated text books and made us do a lot of dull exercises. No real English communication was used in the classroom. We followed mostly the Grammar-Translation method. I did not learn much English during that time.

I continued to work at a travel agency while attending the University of Tourism. Sometimes, I communicated with foreign tourists; my knowledge of English at that time was enough for basic communication. Everything changed after I met my English-speaking American husband. First, I understood how poor my English really was. Second, during daily communication in English with my husband and other Americans, my real learning of English finally began. At last, after I came to the USA, I began learning English even more intensively. I was learning grammar rules and vocabulary at home and plus through real-life communication by talking to my family and neighbors. It was a big difference from studying the language in Ukraine for many years.

I decided to study at USU when I felt more confident with my English. It was one of the best decisions of my life. It was a little scary to attend the university where I had to use and study in my third language. However, regardless of my worries, it was a wonderful and helpful experience. I liked many things about USU, but most importantly, I liked the methods of teaching languages at USU: working in groups, preparing and giving different presentations, using new materials, learning to do research, and a lot of communication in the classroom. I also loved and appreciated the teachers' attitudes towards students. They actually cared about students' development and success. They were always willing to offer advice and support.

After these wonderful new experiences as a student at USU, I was really blessed with an opportunity to work for the department of Languages as a Russian instructor. What a wonderful experience it has been! I had never worked as a teacher before, so it was scary at first, but at the same time quite exciting. I have tried to be a teacher who inspires the students to learn and who cares about their success, development, and growth. I tried to apply the best I have learned from the professors at USU while I was a student.

Being a part of the MSLT program has been another great blessing for me. This program teaches the simple truth that the best way to teach or learn a L2 is not only by repetition and by writing exercises, but through real-life communication. I derived this principle through my own experience of learning English. I have learned about many effective and interesting materials and methods. I also have learned from the example of teaching from wonderful people in this program; from my professors as well from my classmates. They helped me to learn what it means to be a good teacher. I also realized another truth: that our students are temporary students, but a good teacher is a perpetual student who learns from students, other teachers, and grows together with the students. This process never ends!

PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT

I plan to teach Russian as a foreign language at a university in the USA. I love teaching university students because most of them are interested in learning a foreign language and a new culture. Most of them already have their own motives for learning the language and plans for how they will use it. Through teaching Russian at the university level, I also have an opportunity to grow in knowledge of theories as well as in practice.

I enjoy working at the university because I like the environment and the people who work there. They have been a great support and example to me. It is great to work in a professional environment with colleagues who love to teach, share their methods and ideas, and have a desire to help students succeed and grow in a L2.

As a teacher of Russian as a foreign language at the university, I seek to provide my students with opportunities to speak and use the language and not be afraid of making errors, but to use those errors to learn and improve. In this way, they will build their knowledge of the target language (TL) and respect for other cultures. I also hope my students will create many friendships and acquire good memories for the rest of their lives.

This portfolio is dedicated to my pursuit of becoming a more proficient language teacher in an American university.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

Every person from early age has to learn how to speak or communicate in different ways to achieve various goals and express him or herself in order to associate with other humans. That is why learning a first language (L1) is essential for communication and learning a second language (L2) is important and beneficial for expansion of communication abilities, development of knowledge of other cultures, widening one's opportunities, and growth of understanding of the world and its different societies. "Language is a fundamental part of total human behavior" (Brown, 2007, p. 26); therefore, teaching/learning a language is essential for humans and their societies. According to Ortega (2009), language is one of the most important and unique "human capacities that our species possesses, and one that is involved in all others, including consciousness, sociality and culture" (p. 1). I chose the profession of L2 instructor because I want to help my students develop their knowledge and understanding of the Russian language and culture in addition to Ukrainian and other Slavic cultures and help learners grow in understanding of the world around them. Learning a foreign language and understanding other cultures provide new perspectives and opportunities. I want to teach every student not just vocabulary and sentence structure, but also knowledge about cultural beliefs and norms so they can understand the lives and behaviors of the people and improve their own proficiency.

In this teaching philosophy, I describe the three most important aspects I have learned during the MSLT program that I believe have helped me become an effective teacher and understand the nature of L2 teaching: a communicative classroom with communicative activities, the role of input and output in language acquisition, and brain-based research for L2 learning. I

believe that the main goal to be an effective teacher always will be in process because there is too much to learn, apply, and grow in this profession.

Communicative Classroom and Communicative Activities

Various methods and approaches to L2 teaching have been proposed. Among these, two are essential for me. One makes students mostly as robots that have to repeat and memorize after a teacher without thinking and often without understanding what they are saying and another one that helps students learn, practice, and think through a language. Freire (1995) explains two opposite ways of teaching. The one of those ways is *Banking education*. According to Freire (1995), *Banking education* is one where students are taught without any meaning and as a result such teaching disconnects them from reality. Students have to receive input, memorize, and repeat it. Such approach in education was established on *behaviorism* and *reinforcement encourages* theories (VanPatten & Williams, 2007). *Behaviorism* is a theory of human behavior that is involved in language learning and can be achieved by creating of correct language behavior. *Reinforcement encourages* building that correct language behavior through responses as punishment and rewards methods (VanPatten & Williams, 2007). In other words, reinforcement encourages are mental processes that result in “the association of events, a response to environmental stimuli” (p. 19). *Reinforcement encourages* are a response behavior, if a reward encourages to do and repeat correct actions, on the other hand, punishment discourages to do what is wrong and incorrect.

Such education has other names. For example, *audio-lingual Method (ALM)* is the method that was used in teaching the U.S. military (Lee & VanPatten, 2003) in 1950 and 1960. *ALM* also stressed creation of correct language behavior by memorizing, a lot of repetition, and

avoiding errors. Many other countries of the world use so called *traditional methods* in teaching L2, where a teacher is the only one who speaks in the class and students simply listen to the teacher receive input. There is no communication in such classes but only teaching L2 through instruction and exercising “drill and kill” methods.

For many years, traditional models were used in L2 teaching in many countries, including my birthplace, Ukraine. The way I was taught reminds me of *the Atlas Complex*, as Lee and VanPatten (2003) refer to the dynamic in which “authoritative transmitter of knowledge and receptive vessels are the primary roles, respectively, that instructors and students play in many traditional classrooms” (p. 6). *The Atlas Complex* is a teacher-centered method of teaching and has a knowledge-transmitting focus. *Communicative language teaching* is the exact opposite of *traditional teaching* and I believe it to be more effective.

1) Communicative classroom

In Ukrainian schools and at the university I was taught by *the traditional approach*. In *traditional classrooms*, students learn by memorization, repetition, and drills. Learners also are not allowed to make errors (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). In *traditional instruction*, a teacher talks more than students, teacher’s instruction appears often, and takes most of the class time; in *traditional classroom* a teacher builds curriculum according to the textbook (Relan & Gillani, 1998). My memories about my school experience were that my classmates and I were only allowed to ask questions and answer those of the teacher, all other amount of lesson time we stayed quiet and listened to the teacher.

Learning is not about memorizing or repetition, but about the ability to find, evaluate, and apply information (Lujan & DiCarlo, 2005). I was first exposed to the *communicative way of learning* as an undergraduate student at USU. I really loved this approach; I was studying through interaction with other students through group and pair work, discussions, presentations, and creating messages in different ways. All these activities were enjoyable to me. According to Ranta (2002), *communicative language teaching* is “the playing field for all learners” (p. 160). Students learn and practice the L2 by interacting with each other and practicing the language for real-world purposes through communicative activities. That is why I really like and support teaching by this approach and I have been excited to learn more about communicative teaching in order to apply it consistently to my teaching.

According to *the communicative approach*, I have learned the good news that language teaching has moved from *teacher-centered approaches* that emphasize grammar structures and linguistic competence to learner-centered approaches that emphasize learning strategies and communicative competence. Lee and VanPatten (2003) describe how the roles of teachers as well as students have been changed in the communicative classroom. *Instruction in the communicative classroom* is student-centered and focuses on communication. In such a class, the instructor is no longer the drill leader. According to Freire (1995), *the role of a teacher* is “to organize a process which already occurs spontaneously” (p.57) during classroom activities, involve students to share their background knowledge, and help students develop knowledge about the world and daily life.

Students in the communicative classroom receive more responsibility than students in the traditional classroom. Relan and Gillani (1998) describe *communicative classroom practices* in

which students' speaking takes priority over teacher's speaking in the class. Students also have more freedom to choose "the content to be organized and learned" (p. 42). Sometimes a teacher allows students to define the rules of behavior. Instructional materials are varied and are used in small groups. The teacher provides students with opportunities for communication and creation of real-life messages. *The student's role* is not to repeat what the teacher says but rather to practice a language through creation of utterances by using the language (Lee & VanPatten, 2003).

2) Communicative activities

Teaching is not only about getting students to learn what teachers know, and for the students to memorize, but rather to inspire students to interact and communicate (Lujan & DiCarlo, 2005). In a L2 classroom, *communicative activities* play an important role in engaging students through interaction, practice of the TL, and learning from each other. Lui and Dall'Alba (2012) explain how group work and group projects enhance learning outcomes. According to their study, students improved their communicative skills by learning from others' perspectives and developing their cultural competence, resulting in higher grades.

As a student at USU, I appreciated the opportunity to communicate during the lessons through different activities. AlKandari (2012) claims that students are more interested in participating in class when they are motivated and when the course work requires more involvement. *In the communicative classroom* the teachers have to provide communicative instruction and activities which have communicative goals related to *real-life situations* (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001). This purpose may be achieved by using task-

based activities, which are described in the book *The Communicative Classroom* (Ballman et al., 2001). According to this book, *task-based activities* have a communicative goal and ensure communication. For these types of activities, students should have a reason for doing something and understanding why they do it. *Task-based activities* should be related to each other; the steps of such activities should be connected to the same goal, and should be relevant to real-life situations. I applied these types of activities in my class and noticed that my students really enjoyed them. When students participate, they find it enjoyable since they can role-play, pretend, and learn about topics related to real-life situations.

Ballman et al. (2001) describe *interview activities* as a type of student interaction that promotes communication. During these types of activities “students are paired up to use a series of questions to interview each other” (p. 71). *Interview activities* help create a meaningful context for TL use. According to Chen and Li (2010), *context* is an important component in L2 learning and can increase student interest and competence.

In my class, students often report to the class what they have learned from an activity or from their partner. Sometimes I may ask students to report back to the class, develop a chart, or fill in a table so that students will be more focused on doing something concrete with the information they collect. *Interview activities* guide students to collect comparable types of information, following a design which “incorporates a form to be completed as the students fulfill the purpose of gathering information about their classmates while conducting the interview” (Ballman et al., 2001, p. 73). I often use interview activities at the beginning of each semester to help students get to know each other and communicate as they collect information.

Interview activities offer students opportunities for transmission and reception of messages and negotiation of meaning.

Ballman et al. (2001) also propose *information gap activities* in communicative classrooms to provide students with opportunities for negotiation, “with different but complementary pieces of information that must be combined to successfully accomplish the goal of the activity” (p. 74). This type of activity puts students to work in teams because they cannot complete the task without meaningful interaction with each other. Examples of the focus of such activities are many, including schedules, maps, form completions, drawing comparisons, etc. In my Business Russian class, students worked together as a team to create a company. Following my instructions, they had to choose the type of business and each student chose a role in that company. In class, they gave a presentation during which each student explained the importance of their role in the company and how they benefit the company. They needed to prove that they can make the company successful as a whole business by working together. In this activity, every student has an important role and opportunity to work together as a team.

AlKandari (2012) also describes *classroom participation activities*. The most popular among such activities are discussion, based activities where the teacher and the students are involved in discussing a topic related to a communicative goal. Usually, the instructor leads the discussion by asking questions in order to motivate students to share their ideas and involve students in communication and interaction. Classroom activities also include *group work*. According to Cunningham-Atkins, Powell and Moore (2004), working in groups positively affects students’ participation and encourages students to share their ideas.

Acquiring communication skills is only possible “if students develop skills in understanding and producing oral and written texts” (Narciss & Koerndle, 2008, p. 281).

Through communication, learners develop comprehension and interpretation. Shrum and Glisan (2010) define communication by *three communicative modes* – interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational - that are involved in the context of communication. *The Interpersonal Mode* is characterized as two-way oral and written communication that involves negotiation of meaning among individuals. *The Interpretive Mode* “focuses on the interpretation of meaning in oral and printed texts when there is no possibility of negotiation of meaning with the writer or speaker” (p. 179). Lastly, *the Presentational Mode* refers to one-way communication from a speaker to an audience or a writer to a reader. Practicing these three communicative modes help learners develop their different language skills.

Those four main language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are shaped by cultural contexts (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). Narciss and Koerndle (2008) state that computer-based technology offers a variety of tools that support students’ sharing and negotiating that can help develop students’ skills. As was mentioned above, the context of the communication affects the four language skills through three modes: the Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). Those modes can be used wider through technology. *The Interpersonal Mode* involves communication and negotiation of meaning while students observe and monitor each other through conversation and written correspondence. This mode is helpful for all four skills. On the other hand, *the Interpretive Mode* does not provide active interaction; nevertheless, this mode focuses on the cultural context in which students learn the language by listening to authentic materials or reading authentic texts. This mode helps develop listening and reading skills. Last one is the *Presentational Mode* which is “one-way communication to an audience of

listeners or readers” (p. 181) and involves speaking and writing skills. Technology in the L2 classroom has allowed teachers to widen their methods of teaching, change their way of teaching, and help students to develop a variety of language skills.

3) The role of technology

In these endeavors, technology cannot be ignored. *Technology* can help learners develop their language skills and gives greater access to authentic materials and interaction for the communicative approach. I found great benefits in using technology in my class. Through the internet my students can read authentic material, watch videos, and listen to music to improve their various language skills in class. Technology also can be used for homework. For example, beyond reading articles in internet for class assignments, students additionally can be engaged as in individual as well as in team work on-line to accomplish the task (wikispaces) or they can develop language skills and practice grammar rules through various games (voki, arisgames), and other language programs like prezi and owtoon can be used.

According to Blake (2013), talented teachers provide students with opportunities for communicative interactions in the class as well as for interactions within the context of computer-mediated communication. Students can develop their writing skills by using different programs and improve their oral (speaking) skill by communicating with native speakers on line. In the future I plan to try different technological tools to provide students with opportunities for such communications. For example, telecollaboration that I describe below.

I understood the benefits of using technology in classroom; therefore, I use more technological tools now than I did when I began my teaching at USU. For example, I use more USU Canvas in order to communicate with my students and post files and materials to help

students be better prepared for tests and quizzes and for their home reading. I have begun using more Power Point slides during my lessons to combine instruction, activities, and videos. In order to use more authentic materials, I show students different videos; interviews with native speakers, and different types of folklore, such as fairy tales and films, and other video material related to the topic of a lesson. I believe that there is great potential in using technologies today and in the future for L2 teaching.

Rubio (2013) describes and compares three ways of teaching; face-to-face (F2F), hybrid/blended, and online approaches. This research study shows no significant differences in these approaches, only differences in aspects of fluency. On the other hand, these different ways of teaching help satisfy the needs of a wider range of students each with unique abilities and situations. *Traditional F2F instruction* refers to courses that “only minimally use technology for either instruction or practice components of a course (Goertler, 2011, p. 472). Students meet only in person and the use of technology is limited. A *F2F course* in a communicative classroom is full of activities, where a teacher and students meet according to the academic schedule and interact according to the course’ planning.

Distance learning has been applied to several approaches, including blended or hybrid, teleconferencing, and virtual (Blake, 2013). An *online or distance course* enables learners to take a class entirely online, and a teacher and students may never meet in real life. This way of teaching / learning a L2 can be helpful or even necessary for students that have to work and cannot attend regular lectures or students who live far away from the university.

The one I like the most and plan to apply is *a hybrid or blended approach* which is a mix of F2F and online courses. According to Goertler (2011), this approach refers to the course that keeps a balance between F2F and online instruction. This course allows students to learn a language through different technological tools and F2F activities. I believe that this method can help students learn a L2 in diverse ways and can satisfy a wider range of students with varying abilities and needs. This approach can also offer students *telecollaborative activities*. Belz defines *telecollaboration* in the language classroom as

internationally-dispersed learners in parallel language classes using Internet communication tools such as e-mail, synchronous chat, and threaded discussion, (as well as other forms of electronically mediated communication), in order to support social interaction, dialogue, debate, and intercultural exchange (Belz, 2003, as cited in Boston, 2009, p. 29).

Through telecollaboration, students can not only learn the language but also develop *intercultural competence (ICC)*. In my understanding, *the competence* means knowledge, understanding, and proficiency. Therefore, *ICC* is a knowledge and understanding of other culture/s. According to Karnyshev, Karnysheva, and Ivanova (2014), *ICC* is united “essential knowledge, abilities, skills, and etiquette norms” (p. 4) that are related to other countries and cultures. *ICC* can be developed particularly through student-to-student interactions. Through such interaction students develop thinking skills including respect and understanding of other cultures. Some people with various problems and reasons for their intolerance and even anger towards cultural differences after on-line interactions usually cannot understand the reason for such negative feelings (Weasenforth & Meloni, 2002).

According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, issued by the European Council (as cited in Velescu, 2011), *ICC* is “the ability to establish a relationship between the native culture and a foreign culture” (p. 286) and “the capacity to recognize and use varied strategies in order to establish contact with people from another culture” (p. 286). The development of this ability enables a person to handle situations where cultural misunderstanding may occur. I would like to try this approach because it gives a number of benefits as for students as well for a teacher. It provides the opportunity for instruction, teaching the language and culture, and practicing drills online and releasing time in F2F class for more interactive communication.

The main benefit of *computer-mediated communication (CMC)* and using telecollaboration is the development of *ICC*; students become intercultural speakers (O’Dowd, 2007). Under intercultural speakers O’Dowd (2007) means students who alone with the language develop “intercultural negotiation skills and an understanding of the role of differing cultural perspectives in intercultural communication” (p. 4). Besides cultural benefits, students can achieve additional learning benefits from CMC and telecollaboration. Gonglewski, Meloni, and Brant (2001) describe pedagogical benefits of language learning by e-mail. The authors name such benefits as expansion of topics beyond classroom-based ones, promotion of student-centered learning, connection of different speakers, and an opportunity for all to participate. Lord and Lomicka (2004) mention the benefit of receiving feedback from more people, not just from one professor in a telecollaboration study. Such benefits as the improvement of written communication skills and increased learner motivation (Ware, 2005), and learning about cultural behaviors, beliefs, and concepts that enrich the learners’ understanding of their own and other

cultures (Liaw, 2006). As a result, cross-cultural growth develops (Ware & Kramersch, 2005). CMC and telecollaboration combined can provide cultural benefits that students gain through interactions with students from other cultures.

The MSLT program helped me to see the great benefits of communicative ways of teaching. The communicative approach to teaching a second language is more effective than traditional models. I have found that the communicative way of L2 teaching enables students to learn vocabulary and sentence structure as they develop different skills in more engaging and interesting ways. The communicative approach also includes the growth of intercultural competence while students learn to communicate in real-life situations in achieving the communicative goal. Along the way, the students are able to write, understand, speak, and use the language.

The role of input and output in language learning

One of the main roles of teachers is providing input. I have learned that it is important to give the students meaningful and comprehensible input instead of filling the lesson time with information, activities, and drills that do not have any connection and goal. Input is very important in L2 acquisition because clear and interesting input will engage students' attention and improve students' learning process more than any drills and memorization. LoCastro (2012) mentions that

Input has been recognized as a vital dimension of the instructional environment and language educators promote appropriate language samples and activities to use the L2 in meaningful context by both teachers and learners (p. 245).

I have begun to plan my lessons according to this principle. Now I try to build the lesson where all parts are connected to each other and the topic of each lesson is connected to my students' background and makes it meaningful to them.

In a grammar course, I prepare each lesson according to the topics my students already know. Haratmeh (2012) investigates the relative effectiveness of lesson tasks on students' vocabulary knowledge. According to this study, the output production tasks should encourage students' attention to form and meaning and help learners make and learn through form-meaning connections. I have come to realize that teachers need to use what their students already know and improve their vocabulary and other knowledge. Chen and Li (2010) underline that meaningful vocabulary learning occurs only when the learning process is integrated with social, cultural, and real-life relating contexts. Chen and Li's study (2010) displays how teaching "appropriate English vocabulary associated with providing context-awareness information to individual learners, to support effective English vocabulary learning" (p. 362). This approach uses learner "back-propagation neural networks" (p. 362) and develops context-aware daily used TL vocabulary learning. In both Haratmeh (2012) and Chen and Li (2010) studies, the authors underline the importance of using students' background knowledge and teaching students new vocabulary through meaningful context.

In my class, for example, most of my students spent nearly two years in Russia or Ukraine; a few of them came from there as heritage students. In order to prepare them for writing an essay, I usually find topics that they already know well (like differences and similarities in daily life of Russia and the USA, differences in holidays, food, traditions, etc.). Sometimes, I show students a video or a cartoon related to the topic as part of the input. Then, I divide them into

groups of four or five to discuss different topics, such as the differences and similarities of various cultural features, and share their experiences and opinions. After that, each group gives a report of their ideas and thoughts and I write them on the white board. Next, I give them some grammar instruction (e.g., how to use past tense) and examples of how to use past tense with verbs in different sentences. They practice in their groups. As a result, they have a topic, ideas, instruction, and practice to write their essays. Narciss and Koerndle (2008) mention “as students share their background knowledge and participate in the give and take of collaborative and cooperative activities, they are negotiating meaning and building knowledge (p. 281).” I found this approach very helpful and effective.

I believe understanding input and its role is extremely important in language teaching. According to Susanne (2005), some research studies are dealing with “input” as provided descriptions of what a teacher says to learners. Maybe such definition of input is okay in the widest sense of the meaning, but in the teaching process input is much more than what the instructor gives to the students.

It is obvious that without input, learning cannot happen. Lee and VanPatten (2003) also underline the importance of the role of input. They compare input for language acquisition to gas for a car:

An engine needs gas to run; without gas, the car would not move an inch. Likewise, input in language learning is what gets the engine of acquisition going. Without it, acquisition simply doesn't happen. (p. 26)

In order to make input meaningful and comprehensible (Hatch, 1975; Krashen, 1985), teachers need to use certain techniques. As mentioned above, I try to use themes that students already know something about. That way, my students participate better in discussions and share their own experiences about things or events with which they are already familiar. They also learn more and understand better new information about topics of which they have some background knowledge. I have learned that building background knowledge with input is very helpful in L2 teaching.

One of my responsibilities as a language teacher is to guide students in acquiring new cultural knowledge and improve L2 skills. To enhance my input, I rely on various materials such as articles, textbooks, stories, videos, etc. It is important to choose appropriate materials. According to LoCastro (2012), the wrong choice of materials may misrepresent the TL and its culture. The materials should be related to students' daily life and their background. Students themselves can also enrich classroom input by sharing their experiences, participating in presentations, and other classroom activities through interaction with each other. In my advanced-level class, I think it is easy to involve students in discussions, presentations, and higher communicative level activities because students readily add their input to the lesson. On the other hand, I believe that lower-level students, especially beginners, cannot be fully involved in adding learners' input during a lesson comparing to advanced-level students. Beginners can be involved in different activities and while developing and practicing the TL, they increase their ability communicate and add their input in class.

I must add that simplifying input can be an effective way to teach a new language, especially to beginners. According to Lee and VanPatten (2003), the research on input shows

that children and L2 beginners are taught by simplified input (Hatch, 1983; Ellis, 1993). The level of simplifying depends on the level of students' language knowledge. In my class, I try to avoid the temptation to talk too much to the students because I know they cannot remember too much input and it can even confuse them. I also have learned that simple and clear input will help students to focus better and thus learn more fully.

In my class, I use visual help such as Power Point slides, videos, pictures, etc., in order to help my students comprehend my instructions. I believe this visual support helps them remember new material better. In this way, I make input more meaningful and understandable for students. I found an interesting approach in Met (2008), who explains the importance of comprehension in working with new words in input. In order to help students to notice new words, Met (2008) lists a few ways of teaching: "teacher voice used for emphasis, pausing and repetition (or boldface / highlights in text), calling attention to specific words, or using visuals to emphasize particular words" (p. 61). There are some other ways to distinguish new words in lesson input – writing the words on the board, stopping to define and explain a word, or telling a story can all help students to notice and remember new words.

In Ukraine, I was taught English through Russian. In other words, my teachers explained English words, texts, grammar, lexicon, and other rules for English in Russian. This way of learning a TL as a foreign language and living in the environment of native language does not help to achieve proficiency in the L2. As a result, the majority of students taught with this approach do not speak English and often forget what they have learned in school. Therefore, using only a TL is an important part in L2 acquisition. Shrum and Glisan (2010) underline this importance, students "must have maximum opportunities to hear the target language at a level a

little beyond their current range of competence” (p.80). In this case, the input in TL can be understandable through students’ background knowledge, context, negotiation of meaning, etc. (Haratmeh, 2012; Chen & Li, 2010; Shrum & Glisan, 2010).

In order to improve their current proficiency level, students also need to receive input that is challenging. They learn best when they receive comprehensible input, but it must be input that is at a slightly higher level than their current language level (Blake, 2013). According to Krashen’s reference (1982), the classroom should provide comprehensible input at the $i+1$ level, when i expresses the learner’s current language competence and 1 expresses the next level of the language learning that learners may achieve. Students move from i to $i+1$ when they understand, and they understand when they focus on the meaning not on the form (Krashen, 1982). In order to help students learn, teachers need to start with what the students already know and then add newer and higher level materials. This is called $i+1$ level. This approach helps students learn the TL and avoid anxieties.

Krashen (1982) admitted that learning anxieties can block language acquisition. According to *Affective Filter Hypothesis* (VanPatten & Williams, 2007), students who are “comfortable and have a positive attitude toward language learning have their filters low, allowing unfettered access to comprehensible input” (p. 28). On the other hand, a class where students “are forced to produce before they feel ready, raises the affective filter, blocking the learners’ processing of input” (p. 28). In an environment in which learners are fully engaged in activities and not afraid of making errors or asking questions is a *low-anxiety environment*. Such classroom atmosphere has a positive effect on learners’ participation (AlKandari, 2012) and learning process.

Grammar instruction in communicative classroom should be a part of input as well. The question is how should grammar be taught? Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandell (2001) discuss this issue by comparing the course where grammar has no role in the class to the course where grammar is a goal. According to the authors, the best option is a L2 course where grammar is taught only to support a specific communicative goal, “grammar instruction in support of communication” (p. 35). I also have learned about story-based language approach (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). This approach connects grammar discourse with meaningful texts that learners can comprehend. In this approach, a teacher uses the grammar context in a meaningful way to clarify for students’ grammar function. In this way, learners comprehend the meaning of the text and function of the grammar by working with a story. Lee and VanPatten (2003) also see grammar instruction as a part of processed input in connection with correct form-meaning. In other words, grammar instruction should be taught by meaningful activities.

If there is a connection between grammatical forms and their meanings, students are involved in *input processing* (VanPatten, 2004). *Input processing (IP)* is concerned with how students receive intake from input (VanPatten, 2002). According to VanPatten (2004), *intake* is a subset of the input “that has been processed in working memory and made available for further processing” (p. 7). During different interactions, students mostly are focused on the meaning from input, noticing new things in the input, and get ready to accumulate, practice, and develop the language. In such way, L2 acquisition happens.

Well-prepared and interesting input that has connection of forms and meanings will foster good quality output and result in successful studying, “one of the roles of output in acquisition becomes evident” (VanPatten, 2004, p. 17). *Input* is a necessary condition for the language

learning process and *output* is the result of paying attention to input and doing something with the input. According to Swain (2000), *output* creates an ability to use or speak a language for the purpose of communication and also helps students to discover gaps between what they want to say and what they are able to say, thus, output forces students to work with language more deeply and with more mental effort.

I am trying to apply the research on input and output in my classroom. In my class, advanced-level students willingly participate in different communicative activities such as group and pair work, interviews, task-based activities, discussion, presentations, and other interactions. They share their background knowledge and learn from each other and are happy to have an opportunity to practice new vocabulary by interaction and working with new input and creating new output in a friendly learning environment. My future expectations are to build the lessons where all parts will be connected to each other and support the communicative goal, and where the next lesson will continue the previous lesson. In such lessons, students will receive meaningful input and through communicative activities, they will practice the L2 to use it in the future.

Brain-based research for students learning second language

I believe that students' attitudes and feelings about studying, the class environment, and motivation are very important factors which can affect the whole learning process. Therefore, I regard Brain-Based Research for Student Learning in the *Teacher's Handbook* (Shrum & Glisan, 2010) as very important for teachers to know. When I was a student, I learned that the behavior and attitudes of teachers affect the attitudes of students and influence their learning success.

Instructors who keep students in fear and criticize their errors or even their appearance and behavior, can create a negative impact on students' learning process. Also, strong and harsh reactions to students' behavior can create problems. For example, I once saw an instructor yelling in anger because a student could not complete her homework. Such teacher behavior will distract students from what they want and need to study, may decrease their motivation to study, and can even destroy the students' desire and interest to take the course or study in general.

1) Students' attitudes

Students' attitudes towards learning are an essential factor in L2 learning. According to Cetin (2006), *attitude* is "a tendency which is attributed to individuals and creates ideas, feelings, and behaviors about a psychological object" (p. 37). Students' positive attitudes help them comprehend, be more open to learning, increase their expectations from learning, and reduce their anxiety levels (Sen, 2013). On the other hand, if a teacher does not require students to work hard, students can lose motivation and interest. There should be a balance.

2) Class environment

I have learned that the creation of a friendly environment in the class where students are encouraged to share and work together will help students to study and succeed. The "Classroom atmosphere has an effect on students' participation; therefore, faculty should consider the importance of keeping the classroom climate suitable for students' participation" (AlKandari, 2012, p. 21). I have seen that students enjoy attending a class if they feel secure when they are sharing their own experiences and feelings; if they build friendly relationship with each other, and if they are willing to interact with and help each other. The class size also affects students'

participation. According to AlKandari (2012), a small class size gives students more opportunity for communication and increases their participation. I believe that in a small class, students will be motivated to work more and learn more freely, thus raising their knowledge of the new language as well as their self-confidence. In order to create a friendly and positive environment for effective learning, an instructor should know how the human brain works.

3) Using the TL and negotiation for meaning

Using the TL as well helps create a good learning environment in the class. Using only the TL for different classroom activities and instruction also benefits students (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). If students listen to a teacher who uses only the TL in class, they in their mind are ready to turn on the L2 during every lesson and this method forces a learner to learn the language faster. In my classroom, I use only the target language and require students to communicate in the TL. Students sometimes forget to use the language in our class because they live and study in an English language environment. Consequently, I remind them that there is no English in our classroom and students usually change to the TL. Using only the TL in our class helps learners focus on the language, to use, and to develop it further.

Using the TL in a studying environment is essential for second language acquisition (SLA). In order to help, students have to practice the L2. For this purpose, Long (1996) proposes *Interaction Hypothesis* which posits that “environmental contributions to acquisition are mediated by selective attention and the learner’s developing L2 processing capacity, and that these resources are brought together most usefully” (p. 414) during negotiation for meaning. According to Long (1996), *negotiation for meaning* is a process through which students provide

and explain their own and a partner's signals in order to comprehend each other's communication. During such interaction, students make adjustments to different linguistic forms, messages, and conversational structures to achieve understanding. In such environment, students bring together selective attention and development of L2 processing capacity (Mitchell, Myles, & Marsden, 2013). Negotiation for meaning involves repetitions, reformulations, comprehension, and confirmation checks, clarification requests, etc. (Long, 1996) as tools for activating language abilities, building memory, and developing the TL.

4) Second language acquisition

Saville-Troike (2006) discusses the approaches to SLA that focus on language and the brain. She offers an overview about the location and organization of language in the brains of people who study second languages at different ages and under different circumstances. I have learned that the organization of the brain for studying a second language in relation to the primary language differs according to age of acquisition. Therefore, the level of simplicity and the whole planning of a course closely depend on the age and language level of the learners. For example, I cannot teach advanced-level students in the same ways as I could teach students in the first grade or beginners. This is a good thing to keep in mind as I plan to teach different levels of students at the university level. For example, the input and activities for beginners should be simplified; there should be additional visual support such as pictures, videos, gestures, etc. Also, how a TL is used by the teacher with beginners should be different compared to teaching advanced-level students; for example, a teacher of beginners must speak more slowly and clearly.

Shrum and Glisan say that “the human brain seeks patterns in its search for meaning” (p. 77). As I mentioned above, students will learn more effectively if input is connected to their background knowledge and is meaningful to them. We know that, “learners process input for meaning before they process it for form” (Lee & VanPatten, 2003, p. 139). In order to make input meaningful to students and connected to their background knowledge, teachers need to know how to manage their lesson time.

5) Time management

Genesse’s view on *time management* is “time must be translated into effective learning opportunities” (p. 38). The lesson has to have combinations of instruction, examples, and practice through various activities and communication that are connected to students’ background knowledge. In this way, students will learn and practice the language in a better way. The time of instruction and the level of students’ communication depend on the students’ language level. According to Blake (2013), students in the first year need nearly 200+ hours of instruction to increase their L2 level to the next level. First-year students usually have limited vocabulary and some linguistic difficulties. Therefore, teachers need to keep in mind how to use lesson time appropriately and connected lesson activities to students’ abilities.

I think it is essential to use an approach that will maximally benefit our students according to brain-based research. While learning a L2, “the brain is overwhelmed with processing issues that mitigate against the short-term memory, holding items long enough in memory so as to convert them into permanent knowledge” (Blake, 2013, pp. 139-140). Therefore, I must make wise use of class time, activities, technology tools, and assignments.

Planning appropriate and effective lessons will benefit students and is a key to accelerating the L2 learning of my students.

According to Kennedy (2006), language processing should involve many different senses and an enriched environment (for example: comprehensible input, oral interaction, and feedback) to promote neuronal development. Our brain perceives information differently depending on the length of the lesson. For example, Sousa (2006) has noticed that the brain's working memory has a limited capacity that works for a maximum of about twenty minutes. According to the primacy-recency effect, students remember best the information that comes at the first part of the lesson, then second best "that which comes last" (in other words, the information that is given at the end of the lesson), and least that which comes just the past middle (Sousa, 2006). Based on these studies, I try to plan my lessons as follows: to teach the new material first, use the middle of the lesson for practice and discussions, and reserve the last part for conclusion and summarizing lesson material. For me, Sousa's research is a very important one that helps me to better understand the functions and timing of the human brain and how to plan a lesson in the most effective way.

6) Motivations for L2 learning

I also believe that well-planned lessons, which are oriented towards students' background, interests, and motivations, will more likely be successful. I presume that every student has a reason (motivation) for studying L2. *Motivations for L2 learning* are important and varied. According to Horwitz (1990), *motivation in L2 studying* is individual student's feelings toward the TL, its culture, and the personal pragmatic reasons and desires for L2 learning. For

example, some students learn a L2 because of academic requirements, while others want to learn a particular language for other reasons such as heritage, the environment where students live, and economic benefits (Cloud, Genesee & Hamayan, 2000). The students in my class also have different motivations. Some of them, for example, prefer to learn Russian language and culture to improve their language skills and communication abilities. Others desire to improve their proficiency for a job where they will use Russian. There are two main types of motivation for L2 studying; ‘integrative’ and ‘instrumental’ (Gardner, 2000). ‘*Integrative*’ motivation is related to a students’ desire to learn the language in order to gain the ability to interact with members of the TL. ‘*Instrumental*’ motivation is involved when students believe that learning the L2 can help them in finding a job or continuing education. According to Al-Qahtani (2013) research, both types of motivation (‘integrative’ and ‘instrumental’) were scored similarly, i.e. learners of a L2 have both types of motivation or an equal number of students with one or another type of motivation.

Foreign language (FL) teachers can use different motivations to engage students more in the learning process. I believe that understanding students’ motivations can help teachers to plan helpful and interesting topics for their lessons in order to engage students more and give them the knowledge they desire and will use in the future. For example, as a student at USU, I have benefited from learning about resumes and cover letters to aid in my search for employment. It was helpful to learn about particular details of these documents and how they differed in the USA compared to Ukrainian resumes.

I believe that teachers must love to teach and have a positive attitude towards teaching and towards students. In this way, teachers will be able to create positive students’ attitudes towards

learning a L2, a pleasant classroom environment for learning, and encourage motivations for learning.

Conclusion

As a language teacher, I try to help my students learn and improve the language in the best learning environment through effective and engaging activities. I know that traditional ways of language teaching are not able to offer it. Therefore, I believe that through a communicative approach, my students learn the language through various interactions and communications that will allow them apply the language to real-life situations in the future. Comprehensive but challenging input is important in order to develop students' various language skills. The positive classroom environment is also important to ensure students will not feel anxiety, but will be engaged and motivated to learn.

Being a teacher is a responsibility because a teacher's attitude towards teaching and students affects students' desire to study and grow. I would like to be a teacher who will open the door to the Russian language and culture and will promote students' desire to learn more and be prepared for real-life success.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TEACHING OBSERVATION

Being professional does not mean being perfect. There is always room to learn and improve, especially in the teaching field. Being flexible in learning new methods, trying technological novelty, and applying new ideas in class are practices that help teachers develop. Every teacher has an original way of teaching, interesting ideas, and secrets of success; on the other hand, every teacher has something new to learn, change, and improve. Learning from each other can be very beneficial. Observation is one of the tools for such learning and improving as teachers.

Observation of my colleagues helped me learn a lot about the communicative approach in practice and various methods of teaching different levels of students, including first-year students. I have observed various language classes (Chinese, Spanish, Arabic, and German), mostly lessons for first and second-year students. It was great to see how every teacher used the TL 90-100 % of the time, even in classes for beginners. Teaching entirely in the TL can be scary, even for some experienced teachers. Nevertheless, using the TL from the beginning of the semester and even in a first-year class is important. This approach may be difficult, but using the TL and learning by immersion helps guide students to the world of the language and its culture faster than any other method or exercise. Students will develop a taste of the language through different communicative activities and a teacher in such a class will be not just an instructor, but a model of the language.

One time, I observed a class during which the teacher used mostly English; the TL was used only for some examples after instruction. All conversations, teacher to students and students to students in class, answering questions, instructions, and all explanations were in English.

Students seemed to be happy and even I, who came to this class for the first time and did not speak the TL, understood every activity and action in the class. This type of teaching could be fun. On the other hand, I think that through using the students' L1 for most of the lesson time, and not allowing students to practice the TL, they would not be prepared sufficiently for the next level. The TL should be used at least 90-95 percent of the time in the class. Teachers must make sure that students understand the most important points in class and sometimes use English for some explanations, but all activities, instructions, examples, etc., should be as much as possible in the TL.

I really appreciated when an instructor had a lesson plan and shared it with me before the observation. Having a lesson plan helped me to follow the activities in the class, understand better what was going on during the lesson, and see participation and reaction of the students. A clear and well-planned lesson is one of the most important and helpful tools for successful teaching. A lesson plan supports the communicative goal and helps the observer see the connection of the activities in class. It also helps a teacher clarify a lesson's objectives. If students understand what they are doing in class and why, it will help them participate better in activities and learn the language more fully.

Observation of first-year classes was really impressive. Most teachers successfully used only the TL (mostly 90-99 %). From what I could tell of the students' reactions, they more or less understood the routine of the lessons and main tasks the teacher gave them. During the observation, I saw that every teacher mixed instruction, examples, and practice through group or pair work. In every class, first-year students mostly used English during group or pair work, but they usually reported to the class in the TL. The topic for each lesson was familiar and connected

to students' comprehension; family, human body parts, rooms in a house, and its furniture, the weather, etc. This approach uses the topics that are the most comprehensible for students and helps students learn new vocabulary and grammar, lets students practice new words through communicative activities, decreases their stress, and involves them more in learning.

The first class I observed was for beginners. The teacher prepared all necessary materials that he was going to use according to the lesson plan. The warm-up activity was a game that helped students to repeat words they had learned previously and prepared them for the learning and activities of this lesson. In game-like activities, students also repeated the vocabulary they learned during previous lessons and practiced new words and sentences. The instructor engaged students well in communicative activities after each instructional segment. One problem I saw in that lesson was that the teacher seemed overly worried. Students can feel negative emotions that come from a teacher. If they sense the teacher's hesitancy or anxiety in the class, it may create some negative feelings that could affect students' attitude and learning capability.

In another class, an instructor used a series of various methods. For the warm-up activity, she used a video with music and written text. In this way, students could see the written words they learned during previous lessons. The teacher also used the textbook to help students repeat and refresh the grammar rules they already learned. During the lesson, the teacher used pair-work activities in which students helped each other accomplish assignments and work with the textbook. After that, students wrote their sentences on the white board and the teacher showed and explained the errors in those sentences. Students also learned by watching videos. The instructor taught new material by using short videos that she repeatedly showed to the students.

In this way, students could see and hear through authentic material how to build and use phrases. In one pair-work activity, students worked with words. Each student received an envelope with words and the students needed to separate the words they already knew from those they did not. After that, students worked with new words by putting them in sentences. Then, the instructor checked what students were able to accomplish. During this activity, the instructor showed the same video many times. I think it was a great technique that pushes students to use various language skills. Even though the students mostly spoke English with each other and the teacher, the teacher herself used the 100 percent of the time the TL! She was a great example of teaching first-year students through the TL.

Another teacher showed the best example of using technology in the class of beginners. Every instruction was given through many clear and bright visuals full of illustrations and relating to them words. The students went through different topics during one lesson such as the weather, dates, and the body. The lesson was full of activities, but it was difficult to see the connection between the parts of the lesson as well as the communicative goal in this lesson. Each lesson must have a communicative goal and objectives and be related to the activities. I think it would be better if a teacher in a first-year class would choose one topic for one lesson in which each part is connected to the other under one communicative goal. The best option is when the topic of previous lesson is connected to the next (*Bridging method*). For example, after students have learned about parts of body, the next lesson can be about visiting the doctor during which students can repeat words which they already learned, using those words to describe different symptoms, such as “my throat hurts” or “I have a headache”. In this way, students will use the words they learned and know in new ways while learning new vocabulary.

I also observed a lesson where all parts of the lesson were connected, the communicative goal was clear, and the class fully involved activities and games. The students in this class learned about furniture for specific rooms and its use. The learners were divided into groups and did the same procedure over and over again. The teacher showed different rooms with a variety of furniture and the students worked in the same groups discussing the items in the picture and guessing the prices. The students played with number cubes and envelopes. Every time after group work the instructor invited two students to the white board from the group that won at price guessing. In my opinion, the lesson could have been more interesting and engaging if the teacher had rotated students in groups in order to give them an opportunity to communicate with a wider array of peers. The activities could be more diverse to make the lesson livelier instead of repeating the same activities for the whole lesson.

I have also observed other levels of classes. In one Spanish class, the teacher did a great job with group work activities. The students in this class were rotated many times. In this way, every student had the opportunity to communicate with almost each classmate, practice new words and grammar rules, and develop their language skills. I really like this method that helps students pay attention, be engaged in activities, and practice the language, which makes the lesson more interesting and engaging.

The last observation I would like to mention was a second-year course. The teacher taught the students about the weather, months, and holidays, and related them to adjectives. The students learned the language by writing new words and sentences, using their textbook to see new examples, and listening to the teacher's instruction. The method that the teacher used in this class reminded me more of the traditional method. The teacher talked most of the lesson time

and the students did not have much opportunity to talk and practice communication. To improve this kind of lesson, I would advise the teacher to use a more communicative approach in her class and allow the students to communicate and use the TL more in class. Thus, they will learn the language through communication and will be better prepared for the next level and real-life communication.

Observation is a good tool to learn from others and grow as a teacher. Every teacher has interesting teaching ideas. Seeing colleagues' strengths in teaching and noticing things that I would like to improve or change and use are really helpful. For me, being relatively new to university-level teaching, observation helps me see how various approaches work and benefit students. Another important aspect for me to learn through observation is how those approaches benefit students' learning. The last significant thing for me to learn is the relationship between a teacher and students in a classroom. All these parts are substantial in L2 teaching and help make a class beneficial and enjoyable for students and helpful for a teacher to grow and become successful.

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING

This section of my teaching philosophy is a reflection on my teaching. In this paper I describe and reflect on two of my lessons. The first was recorded and analyzed in the fall semester of 2014, the second - in the spring semester of 2015.

Lesson 1: Household chores

(A lesson on Pragmatics)

The first recorded lesson was in RUSS 3040. It is a grammar course for advanced-level students. The communicative goal of this particular lesson enabled students to build their understanding of vocabulary and expressions related to household chores in order to help their families or roommates and to build good relationships with people they live under the same roof with. Students were involved in a series of communicative activities to fulfill this linguistic goal.

Before this lesson, students learned the vocabulary that is related to household chores and the people with whom they live. In addition, the class practiced building various phrases and learned about differences between polite and rude types of requests and responses. This observed lesson had pragmatic principles. During the lesson, students learned about positive and negative examples of requests from parents about chores and positive and negative responses by children and how it can affect behavior of children and their attitude towards their responsibilities. They practiced different attitudes and responses towards chores.

The first part of my teaching philosophy is about communicative classroom and communicative activities. Therefore, this lesson was meant to be communicative, and so the activities were based upon student interaction. For this purpose, students interacted with each

other from the beginning of the lesson. During the lesson, students watched short videos, had instruction through Power Point where they repeated new vocabulary and phrases related to the lesson topic, worked in groups, and at the end of the lesson students played roles to practice what they learned. The lesson included a focus on pragmatics, instruction of different questions and responses, and models of different phrases that were supposed to help students learn new vocabulary. Through communicative activities students practiced new vocabulary and real-life communication.

In this paper, I describe my own reflections and the reflections of my advisor on this lesson. In essence, I write about improvements that could be made regarding to this lesson. First, I would like to mention positive aspects of that lesson that I believe were good and helpful for learning. The environment in class was friendly and prepossessing for activities and communication. Students felt comfortable to participate in different activities and be involved in different discussions. Regardless that some students felt shy and might be afraid that their proficiency level might be lower than that of their classmates and prevent them from active communication, the friendly environment and communicative activities helped them overcome the fear of communication and feeling uncertain about their L2. I think I did well in involving students in various interactions during communicative activities that helped them feel confident in practicing the language.

Another positive aspect I think was good was the use of authentic materials as warm-up activities. This method helped to prepare students for further activities and the advisor also mentioned that those videos activated students' background knowledge. Additionally, a positive aspect I noticed was that in all activities and discussions students used the L2. I strongly believe

that only the TL should be used in L2 class because it promotes deeper learning of the language during interactions in the classroom. I teach an advanced-level class and it is a requirement to communicate in class only in the TL. This aspect is very important in L2 teaching; students must hear the TL from a teacher as a model of the language and use it with each other during class activities.

Lastly, a positive aspect that the advisor noticed was how quickly attendance was taken. While students got to work on a short assignment, I used that time to take attendance without interrupting them or wasting time by calling roll. Regardless how many students are in class, it is always good to learn as fast as possible their names and address them accordingly. It will save precious time for other learning activities. During this lesson, the advisor noticed that lesson time was used effectively and after taking attendance I was ready to listen to students while they worked in pairs and groups and to assist them.

This lesson was new for me in that I never used a pragmatics topic in my class before. Therefore, this lesson had a few areas that must be further elaborated and improved. The lesson was full of activities but, even though we had time to accomplish everything I had planned for this lesson, it seemed to me that we rushed through it. For example, if most students had time to complete a task, some of them were still not ready or did not have time to think and participate fully in class activities. The advisor also mentioned that during group work some groups finished their assignments and just waited by chatting with each other in their L1, while other groups were still working. In order to improve this situation, I can check written assignments of students that work faster than their classmates and give them the next task or involve them in helping others. Another way is to divide students to work in pairs to involve them more fully in

practicing the language with each other. I also can put students in pairs, stronger with weaker students so that stronger students can help their weaker partners to practice.

Another area of this lesson that requires improvement was group work, particularly with activity design. As far as gender of my students, I have many more male students than female. Asking my students to practice interactions and relationships in the family was awkward. In my class, there are usually not enough female students to play the roles of mothers or sisters and some young men can make inappropriate jokes if they have to play such roles in classroom activities. To fix this problem, instead of working with home chores and family relationship, I can ask students to work and pretend to deal with roommates or siblings in order to avoid inappropriate behavior in class.

The advisor's strong comment was about some students' behavior. Some students overplayed their roles and became kind of rude. In order to avoid this problem, I should involve students in a discussion before the lesson's activities about acceptable and respectful actions and attitude that are welcome in our class as well as about rude behavior that is unacceptable in class and about consequences of such behavior. Another comment was about the students who arrive late to class. To fix this problem, I put some attendance polices in the syllabus and let students know that tardies will affect their final grade.

In conclusion, I would like to underline the main ideas for improvement of this lesson. First, when planning my lesson activities, I must be mindful of students' genders and interests. Engaging students in activities is only half the deal; students need to practice language in respectful ways. In addition, I should establish rules and discuss them with students that during

interactions in class students will be respectful to each other and to me as well. Another aspect for improvement is students' attendance of lessons and being on time. In order to improve this issue, I need to make stronger attendance rules and participation during lessons. At first, these rules should be in the syllabus and at the beginning of each semester during the first lesson students and I must discuss those rules. Taking attendance is also important so I must emphasize to students that this is a serious point and they must follow this rule. As far as students who do not come to class on time without valid reasons, I can talk separately and warn them about consequences of such habits. These policies of using appropriate language and appropriate and polite behavior as well as being fully present and on time are meant to help students develop various competences in the TL and respect to the teacher and to each other.

Lesson 2: How to write an article?

This lesson took place during the spring of 2015 semester. The goal of this lesson was to help students practice grammar instruction by building their communicative skills in collecting data and describing the topics they are interested in. Students were involved in different series of communicative activities to fulfill this goal. Additionally, students were able to learn about the Russian prepositional case in practice. This case typically answers the questions:

Talking about whom? (for a living subject) or

Talking about what? (for inanimate object)

Grammar instruction relevant to the task was done prior to this lesson. Also, during the previous lesson, students worked together in groups and discussed different topics they could address in their articles (essays). However, this lesson was meant to be communicative and so the activities

were based upon students' interaction. For this purpose, students interacted with each other from the beginning of the lesson. During this lesson, students watched videos, learned new vocabulary and phrases related to the lesson topic, and worked in groups and pairs. Students also learned how to be journalists and collect information. The goal of this lesson was to use prepositional case in practice, teach students through communication to collect and use information, and then put pieces of information in written form as a report in an essay as homework.

As was done above in this paper, I describe my own reflections and the reflections of my advisor on this lesson. At the end, I write about possible improvements to this lesson. The specific positive aspects of this lesson in my opinion were several. Only the L2 was used by me and my students during this class. I followed the lesson plan and was able to involve students in different discussions. I prepared videos, activities, response sheets, questions for discussion, all of which helped students think more carefully about different aspects of the topics for their essays. The students were polite and active during the lesson and participated well in class activities.

Specific things I believe that could be improved were related to the use of technology and classroom organization. During the lesson, one unexpected technology problem occurred. One video did not work (a few hours before this lesson I checked it and it worked). In order to avoid such problem, I might prepare an additional video to replace the deleted or banned one. Another problem, there were too many students in a small classroom. The distance between students' desks was minimal and it was difficult at best to move between rows to get closer to the students. Somebody was kind enough to fix this problem – now in the same classroom instead of 7 rows of desks, there were only 6. It gave more space between rows, enough for me to walk and get closer to each student, if I needed to. Because of many students in a small classroom, it was too noisy in

class during discussions and communicative activities, and it was difficult to hear the questions from the students during interaction activities when all students were talking to each other to participate in activities.

Some positive aspects of this lesson that my adviser and one of my classmates mentioned; before the class started, the adviser was glad to hear students' conversation in the TL. Also, during the entire class time, the students and I used only the L2. The use of the TL is one aspect of my teaching philosophy concerning the role of input. The teacher should be a model of the language and should encourage students to use the TL in class. In order to make input comprehensive in the TL teachers can use students' background knowledge, context, negotiation of meaning, etc.

Another good aspect of this lesson that the adviser mentioned was how I handled the technology problem. I had handed out half-sheets with prompts and blank lines for students to take notes while watching the video. When the video did not load, I asked assistance from someone in the class. A few students tried to help with the video while I asked other students in class to talk to each other about possible difficulties that journalists might face on their job. Students filled out their half-sheet paper with their ideas. Instead of getting the information from the video, they came up with their own ideas. After that, the class discussed various issues that can occur in a journalist's job. Students shared their perspectives and offered many suggestions and contributions. Students watched another video; they followed the video well, listened carefully and then actively participated. During all activities, students participated and worked well together in groups and as a class.

The adviser suggested some aspects to think about changing or improving. The goal of this lesson was not really a communicative one because I had not articulated a specific real-

world task that students were able to do at the end of the period. I mentioned in my Professional development through teaching observation paper about the importance of a communicative goal: “A lesson plan supports the communicative goal and helps the observer see the connection of the activities in class.” In order to improve my lesson planning, I need to find everyday related communicative goal that will be more connected to students’ daily activities or life situations.

Another issue was that the classroom was overcrowded (28 students). This problem did not help with settling students into groups. I usually like to rotate students in their groups so that they have an opportunity to work and practice the language with different classmates, but if the class is overloaded it becomes more difficult. One more thing I realize is that I need to give students more instructions for each task. Even if it is an advanced-level class, there are some students who catch and learn everything faster than others. Therefore, before each activity, I need to make sure that each student understands the task and what each needs to do.

In order to improve this lesson I have a few suggestions. To make the goal of the lesson communicative, I must plan real-world tasks that are related to everyday activities. Such activities can be helpful in developing students’ language skills which they may use in the future. Next, I need to spend more time explaining tasks for each activity to ensure that all students understand what they must do regardless of their language levels and abilities. Another improvement for a large class with many students might be in the logistics of setting up groups. Students can be rotated with students close to them in the class or in some cases, students can work in pairs. This tactic will help save lesson time.

LANGUAGE ARTIFACT

Using Technology for Different Levels of Russian Classes

to Develop Various Language Skills

INTRODUCTION

For me, learning a language is more than just gaining knowledge about vocabulary, grammar rules, and verb conjugations; language is much more than those elements. Language learning involves development of understanding of many aspects related to the TL, such as culture, pragmatics, attitudes, etc. In my opinion, if a teacher uses a varied array of methods and tools in teaching a L2 it will benefit students with various abilities, skills, needs, interests, and situations. Using technology can help greatly with this.

This part of my portfolio was written to reflect on what I have learned in LING 6520 class. In my teaching philosophy, I described the important role of input in L2 acquisition. I believe technology tools can make input more comprehensible, engaging, and effective. I plan to teach different level students after graduation. Therefore, in this paper, I present the technology tools I have found especially interesting and I believe effective to use in different L2 classes. I have tried some of these tools in advanced-level classes and I describe how they benefit student learning.

Technology is a helpful and useful tool in many aspects of our life today. In particular, many people in the younger generation widely use technology on a daily basis. Use of the internet has become a daily practice for many people. According to Thorne, Black, and Sykes (2009), the Internet-user population is growing dramatically “in just two decades, the global Internet-user population has expanded to approximately 1.6 billion, approaching one fourth of the world’s population” (p. 802). Therefore, I see using technology in L2 teaching/learning as an essential part of the curriculum. In retrospect, when I began teaching Russian, I used mostly

paper handouts in class. With time, I came to understand the benefits of using technology in my teaching and I included more technological tools such as videos and cartoons from YouTube, electronic services of USU Canvas, Power Point, online communication with students through email, etc. *Technology* can support SLA and help teachers create an environment in which students can build their language skills. In this paper, I bring examples of use of Wikis, Youtube, and Facebook and their results in a second year and advanced Russian classes. I also describe other technological tools, for example, the programs Wordles, Powtoon, Duolingo, Prezi, WeChat, MOOCs, etc. I have not applied the latter in my classes yet, but I found them interesting and helpful for language beginners or for other level students.

I have learned that *technology* can help make input and communicative activities in L2 teaching more engaging, interesting, varied, and effective. *Technology* allows teachers to teach different levels of students, helping them develop different language skills. Input and communicative activities are primary points in my teaching philosophy. In this paper, I will describe how the use of technology and different technological tools can help teach different level students, develop the three modes of communication, and make input and class activities more effective.

Abstract

Learning a L2, including Russian, is not an easy task, especially for individuals of adult age, i.e., university and college students. Technology may help with this task. In this paper, I describe the development of my understanding of the role of technology in L2 teaching. I write about various programs as examples and their input in the learning process of students at different levels and their impact on the development of language skills (writing, reading, and listening comprehension). I believe technology is a tool that can enrich L2 teaching.

Teaching a language to beginners

In Dr. Joshua J. Thoms's class (LING 6520), I have learned about many different technological tools and how to use them to support and enrich L2 teaching/learning. According to Blake (2013), technology is a series of "tools that support many language activities, from the most mechanical drill-and-kill exercises to the fully communicative real-time conversations" (p. 15). In this part of my paper, I would like to write about a few tools that I found most interesting and effective to use in L2 teaching.

For beginners, I found the program *Wordles* interesting and helpful to use. This tool displays the words found in a particular text from largest to smallest according to importance and frequency of use, from most to the least used ("Mad Wordle," 2009). Baralt, Pennistri, and Selvandin (2011) describe this program as a visualization tool that helps when teaching foreign language writing. Beginners do not have a large background in the language and their vocabulary is fairly small, therefore, they cannot comprehend a lot of input in the TL; I think this tool can help them learn vocabulary and improve their writing skills. *Wordles* presents learners with

visual input and helps them to process vocabulary (Baralt, et al., 2011). *Wordles* may be used as a visual tool and involve students in writing and discussion about writing. Through this program, learners can see the words they use often in their writing and learn to replace them with synonyms. In this way, learners can improve their writing and expand their L2 vocabulary knowledge. Learning through *Wordles* can go further than that. For example, according to McDonough (2011), through *Wordles*, students can also create “word art from the lyrics of their favorite” (p. 9) songs, poetry, and news articles.

In the technology class, I have learned about some other tools that can be effective in L2 teaching for beginners. The tool *Powtoon* can be effective and helpful for first and second year students. This tool has a lot of pictures, examples of simple texts of the TL, and animations that are related to various topics, relevant to daily life. Students can start from scratch to learn the L2 and learn how to prepare simple presentations. Students can create their own presentation (depending on their language level), work in groups, and “demonstrate in a creative way their knowledge on a particular topic from the unit” (Weber, 2014, p. 8). This tool can help develop students’ creativity, knowledge about the topics they are interested in, and their speaking and other language skills.

Also interesting for beginners is the tool *Memorize*. This tool helps learn a language from the beginning; alphabet letters, words, sounds, and pronunciation of each word, building simple sentences, etc. The tool *Vine* has the same capabilities for beginners; with the help of these tools, students can learn letters, words, listen to the sounds of new words, etc. The tool *Duolingo* also starts teaching a L2 with vocabulary and writing simple sentences. This tool was created by science professor Luis von Ahn as a free language-learning site to help students in online studies

(*The Cleverest Business Model*, 2013). This tool has a dictionary that can help with translation of new words. There is also a function that allows students to hear sounds of letters and words. This tool gives grammar instructions, opportunities for self-expression and/or interactions with other students, and feedback. This tool is like a game that rewards or makes participants repeat a lesson.

Overall, I believe that all these technological tools can be used as additional activities in L2 teaching in order to develop some language skills and make learning a L2 more fun. Beginners need additional help in L2 learning from studying alphabet and vocabulary to building a sentence structure. The teachers of beginners can use these tools as additional assignments and/or homework to involve students in various types of studying activities that help develop their different language abilities.

Teaching second-year students

For second-year students the tool that got my attention was *wikis*. According to Morgan and Smith (2008), *wikis* is a website that is “collaboratively authored, has searchable documents linked internally and externally” (p. 80), and is designed for more than one student to create, read, and search. *Wikipedia* (the online encyclopedia www.wikipedia.org) is one of the most popular examples of a *wiki*. The authors can create their own links. In a L2 classroom, this tool helps with developing reading (Farabaugh, 2007), writing (Morgan & Smith, 2008; Woo, Chu, Ho, & Li, 2011), comprehension skills, and increasing students’ engagement in class (Workman, 2008).

I see this tool as effective for teaching second and third-year students. I tried *wikis* as homework assignment in my advanced-level class. I divided students into different groups and gave each group only the first sentence. Each group received just first sentences and each sentence had an interesting clue to develop. Students needed to create the story that began from given sentences. Every student had to write at least two to three sentences for the story. After stories of the groups were ready, groups exchanged their stories to correct errors on-line and discuss the stories as in class as well in comments. I believe the activity puts students to work together in order to accomplish the task and improve their writing. For sure, this assignment was fun for students and helped them learn the language, and interact with each other.

Through *wikis*, students can also learn to create their own blog-pages, communicate through written messages, give each other feedback, etc. According to Elola and Oskoz (2011), anyone can edit and participate in writing because of *the collaborative environment of wikis*. Therefore, students also improve their communication skill (*Wikis and Work*, 2007). Students may focus on grammar, editing, and new vocabulary (Elola & Oskoz, 2011). They also can receive feedback from their classmates as well as from native speakers (NSs). Since *wikis* allow learners to work in a collaborative environment, students can create their own input or get input from NSs. Online communicative activities and collaborative assignments may help make L2 learning more interesting, engaging, and effective.

In recent years, social networking sites have become especially popular worldwide. L2 teachers can use them, too. For example, *Facebook* can involve communication with NSs and can help develop social and emotional learning and language skills (Panag, 2010). Students can experience a happy or sad emotional expression and become more comfortable with expressing

themselves. According to Shaltry, Henriksen, Lun Wu, and Dickson (2013), students use the Facebook Group forum with great frequency. Facebook language teaching groups as well can help students with developing communication and other language skills.

My students created a Russian club page on *Facebook*. They exchange news and activity plans there, they also help each other with assignments for the class, and keep connected with each other after graduation. *Facebook* has become a very popular website not just in the U.S. but around the world. Therefore, I plan to use this program in the future as a tool for interaction between my students and students in Russia or Ukraine.

Some other technological tools I have learned about that I think can be used in teaching second-year students are *Prezi* and *WeChat*. *Prezi* is a digital zooming presentational tool that helps students to work with different topics just like *Powtoon*. This tool allows work with this program individually or in pairs; it also develops reading and writing skills. On the other hand, *WeChat* mostly requires group communications. Students may create different messages, pictures, and discussions while corresponding and communicating with each other. This tool helps them develop different language skills.

Some tools that are effective for second-year students can also be helpful for advanced students, but with more complicated tasks and more intensive communication. I also found some additional programs that can be helpful in teaching advanced students.

Teaching advanced-level students

Advanced-level students already have significant language knowledge and skills which can be further developed. Engaging methods and tools can be used such as communicative

activities with different communicative goals, authentic digital materials (including videos, cartoons, etc.), interviews, technological tools, games, etc. In my class, I try to use diverse methods and tools to enrich teaching. Students watch videos related to the topic of a lesson, then they write their ideas about the topic, and through various communicative activities they share what they know. All these methods are helpful, but technology can offer much more.

Recently, technologies developers have come up with a new and interesting tool, *MOOC*, which offers many possibilities of learning L2 through collaboration. In my opinion, this tool can be more effectively used with advanced-level students. *MOOCs* can help improve students' writing and communicative skills as well as their pronunciation (Rubio, 2014). Regardless of some of the limitations of this platform, such as the massive number of participants (Knox, 2014; Russell, 2014) or the source of the data (Rubio, 2014), I believe this tool has a good potential for teaching/learning the L2 individually or through collaboration. *MOOCs* can offer students a wide range of topics to read (Russell, 2014) as well as many other people's ideas and allow students to share their own ideas and receive feedback from more people. Students can develop their linguistic skills, and in addition, through communication, their pragmatic and cultural competencies.

Many research studies address various aspects of teaching language, culture, and pragmatics through online collaboration to advanced-level students. The best way to learn about one's own culture as well as about other cultures is through interactions with natives of another culture (Schenker, 2012). Schenker describes a six-week telecollaborative email project focused on intercultural competence between American and German students. In this project, students sent their partners two emails per week to discuss different cultural topics. The results showed

that through this activity American students' understanding of their own culture and German culture was increased as well as their interest in cultural learning.

Most of my advanced-level students spent two years in Russia or Ukraine, therefore, they bring to class not just the linguistic skills they need to improve but also their background knowledge. Learning about different aspects of Russian life and culture, my students compare the life and culture of American people to Russian people, thus gaining more understanding of both cultures. In addition, those two years they spent among Russian NSs helped my students develop pragmatic and cultural awareness. My students understand many details of Russian people's behavior.

O'Down (2007) also reports findings according to comparison of two cultures. This study is about *communicative telecollaboration* of students from three classes at a German university. The three classes used different combinations of communication technologies - email, web-based message boards, and video conferencing - to engage in online interactions with various partner classes in Ireland and the USA. The study was designed to establish virtual intercultural contact in order to develop intercultural competence and determine what kind of skills and knowledge students and teachers need in these complex online activities. This study revealed that *telecollaboration* can best benefit in the development of cultural awareness through dialogue comparison of the two cultures and exchange of reactions between partners.

In conclusion, in teaching advanced-level students, teachers can use a variety of methods and technological tools to develop various language skills and knowledge. Students may learn more than language alone; they also expand their cultural awareness, competence, and

pragmatics. In the remainder of this paper, I describe how technology can help develop three main language skills; writing, reading, and listening comprehension.

Development of writing productive language skills through technology

I believe that writing is a very important skill in SLA. Of course, teachers can teach writing through instruction of grammar rules and students can learn through grammar exercises and essays. However, the question is whether this way of teaching writing would be sufficient or effective? I, for example, was taught English writing through drill-and-kill grammar exercises and I can say I learned some basic writing, but I could not develop my writing by this method. Moreover, the relentless focus on grammar was neither interesting nor engaging. Through technology, teachers can make writing assignments more engaging and interesting for students. Concerning this point, I have learned about such tools as *Blogs* and *Wikis*. There are many opportunities for students to learn writing including *reading blogs*. According to Ducate and Lomicla (2005), *blogs* originated as online travel journals where writers could post their ideas and thoughts. At the same time, readers could also write comments and provide feedback to an author's writing. As I mentioned above, my students used *Wikis* to create their stories in telecollaborative activity. Students also corrected each other's work and wrote comments about content. I could see that using *Wikis* encouraged students to work together, help each other, and practice writing in an enjoyable way.

The technological tool *Wikis* is designed for students to create their pages and work with writing and reading as an individual as well as collaboratively. *Wikis* are "collaborative web-based environments that potentially any individual can edit" (Elola, 2011, p. 175). This tool can form the basis of an online distance course. Regardless of some students' negative responses

about the use of a wiki for collaborative writing (Allwardt, 2011), learners can share and shape their language knowledge through written interaction. Students can create their own pages according to different topics, write text in a collaborative manner with input from other students, and discuss those topics through commentary. *Wikis* record all the changes made to documents, and can support learner self-assessment as well as teacher assessment. Therefore, *wikis* allow students to focus on grammar, editing, and vocabulary (Elola, 2011). With wikis, any error can be fixed and any previous version can be recovered (Morgan & Smith, 2008). The *collaborative nature of Wikis* encourages students to polish their writing during the course through multiple drafts.

The younger generation is using technology a lot. Most students send and receive multiple texts every day. Whether *text messaging* helps in developing writing skills or has a negative impact has been investigated through a number of research studies. One such study (Wood, Kemp, Waldron, & Hart, 2013), demonstrated “that use of texting slang when text messaging does not appear to impact negatively on children and young people’s literacy” (p. 281). What is more, texting improved children’s spelling. This study focused on violations of grammatical conventions, the spelling of words in texting, and reading as well as knowledge of grammar. The authors found that all students violated grammatical conventions and made word-based grammatical errors as well as errors in punctuation and capitalization while texting. The results showed that children of primary and secondary school made the most grammatical violations. On the other hand, this tendency was not to follow grammatical conversions while texting was not related to students’ reading, spelling, and grammatical skills. Young adult students made fewer such violations in texting than school age children.

Another study (Swartzwelder, 2014) that looked at *text messaging* as an instructional tool brought a lot of positive results. Most participants in this study mentioned that they liked easy access to texting, but some students were concerned, at first, that texting would add to their workload. However, “they were surprised at how much they enjoyed it” (p. 406). Some students mentioned that the texting engaged them in the course and increased their critical thinking. Most learners enjoyed the opportunity of having something new in the online classroom. Teaching writing through text messaging is another opportunity to engage students in writing, but this technique needs further research.

I believe it is easier to learn something interesting and engaging rather than something boring and monotonous. Teachers can use students’ technology preferences like texting (Wood, Kemp, Waldron, & Hart, 2013; Swartzwelder, 2014). Teachers can ask students to write *emails* only in the TL. Greater expectation for students helps them to improve any skill by working harder. In the next part of this paper, I present my ideas on how technological tools can help improve students’ reading.

Developing reading skills in L2 learning

Reading skills are important in SLA. Authentic materials play the main role in developing this skill. In my classroom, I have learned that in order to support lesson activities, *YouTube* offers many videos that can be used according to a particular topic of the lesson and the communicative goal. For example, students can read words of a song and learn new vocabulary; subsequently, learners can listen to *the song on YouTube* and afterwards sing it karaoke. In this way, students learn new words almost without effort.

“Reading is good if it puts people and their ideas and feelings together” (Borgia & Owles, 2009, p. 44). According to a Buzzetto-More’s (2014) study about YouTube, use of YouTube was second after Facebook when it comes to Web. 2.0 tools that students prefer to use. The author recommends including this tool in L2 teaching/learning. Of course, the choice of authentic materials depends on the students’ level, reading abilities, vocabulary level as well as approaches to reading, such as bottom-up, top-down and interactive reading instruction (Chun, 2011). Regardless of students’ language level, teachers can use students’ preferences and interests for engagement in the learning process.

In order to learn vocabulary as well as improve comprehension abilities, students can be allowed to use print and electronic dictionaries during class activities. Chun (2001) also mentions text-based glossaries and electronic and media ones which may help readers “in performing the bottom-up function of recognizing and/or understanding individual lexical item” (p. 135), develop memory capacity, and help with reading comprehension. I mentioned above that *Wordles* (Baralt, Pennistri, & Selvandin, 2011) may help with learning new words and improving writing, especially of first-year students. I believe this tool can help as well with teaching reading and vocabulary.

Wikis can help improve reading skills as well as writing, when some students create their pages, while others read them in order to comprehend and comment, and vice versa. This way, all students can be involved in discussion. Student responses to questions on pre-class reading assignments can be used for *wikis* and *blogs* (Higdon & Topaz, 2009) to develop reading and comprehension abilities.

In my class, students do some on-line research about assigned topics or topics interesting to them. Then, students bring reports about what they found, read, understood, and learned from their research in class. In addition, students bring me lists of new words. I use most of those words in class explaining to students how to use them in different contexts. That way, students improve their reading skills together with comprehension.

Developing L2 listening comprehension

In the last part of this paper, I will offer my ideas about the development of listening comprehension skills. I believe these two are most difficult ones to improve because they require a greater level of language proficiency. In L2 learning, students often experience difficulties in comprehending audio materials with a large percentage of unknown vocabulary and much unknown information (Hsu, Hwang, & Chang, 2014). To develop students' listening comprehension, teachers can now easily use authentic media according to the students' language level. Today, students have access to audio and video on most any topic (Robin, 2011). Also, students can record themselves and do self-assessment or ask for assessment from NSs (Rubio, 2014). All these and other capabilities became possible through specialized programs (such as *Skype*, *Google Talk*, *Facebook chatting*, *YouTube*, etc.). Through these technological tools, learners have opportunities to engage in direct conversation with each other or with learners from the TL culture. These tools can supplement traditional F2F communication which involved only listening to the teacher or each other in the classroom.

I frequently use *YouTube* in my classroom to demonstrate authentic materials related to the topic of the lesson or to make some connections to students' background knowledge and a new topic. *YouTube* can also help with development of listening comprehension by using

authentic videos. For example, students can listen to the news, the weather, sport reports, talks, speeches, and interviews with NSs. According to Krashen (1982), comprehensible input is the “true cause of second language acquisition” (p. 34). For L2 beginners, authentic materials can be simplified and adapted to make these materials more comprehensible (Crossley, Louwse, McCarthy, & McNamara, 2007), and the visual support aid can help with developing listening comprehension (Hsu, Hwang, & Chang, 2014) of first and second-year students.

Just listening would not help because it lacks comprehension checking. *Metacognitive strategies* are task management devices that include planning, pacing, verification, etc. (Robin, 2011). Teachers must ensure that listening tasks are beneficial to all learners. For this goal, teachers need to use additional communicative activities in order to practice what students learned from videos or other materials and do observation of comprehension. In my class, students often discuss what they learned and understood from a video and that helps me recognize the students’ level of comprehension. *Cognitive strategies* are “procedural and go to the specifics of the passage to be understood” (p. 105). Teachers have to make sure that material is comprehensible and that learners are not merely wasting classroom time but learn from received input.

Telecollaboration can improve listening comprehension. Belz defines telecollaboration in the language classroom as

internationally-dispersed learners in parallel language classes using Internet communication tools such as e-mail, synchronous chat, and threaded discussion, (as well as other forms of electronically mediated communication), in order to support social

interaction, dialogue, debate, and intercultural exchange (Belz, 2003, as cited in Boston, 2009, p. 29).

Regardless of various problems that may arise, including organizing and scheduling conversations, assessment, difference in time zones, and control of appropriateness of conversation topics in planning or during telecollaborative activities (O'Dowd & Ritter, 2006; Robin, 2011), *telecollaboration* is an advanced tool for on-line students interactions. *Telecollaboration* helps with the development of listening comprehension, speaking skills, and intercultural communicative competence (O'Dowd, 2007).

Conclusion

In this paper, I described how the use of technology can benefit students learning a L2 at different levels and how technology can help in developing main language skills. Students use technology for various daily activities. I believe L2 teachers must use this students' area of interests to make L2 learning more interesting and engaging. The success of each lesson as well as use of technology in the classroom depends on the professor's ability to use different teaching methods and technological tools to help manage, engage, and motivate students (Allwardt, 2011). Technology can widen learners' communicative interactions in L2 class as well as connect students to NSs. Therefore, technology can be an effective addition to the communicative approach which is main topic of my portfolio.

LITERACY ARTIFACT

Development of Cultural Competence and Critical Thinking

by Teaching through Authentic Materials

INTRODUCTION

Parts of this paper were derived from the final paper which my classmate Tarin Griswold and I wrote together for LING 6500. In this paper, I focus on the importance of using *authentic materials* (i.e., made by fluent speakers of the TL for consumption by the TL population) as a primary vehicle for developing students' literacy, cultural competence, and critical thinking. In my teaching philosophy, I wrote about the role of input and the communicative approach in L2 acquisition. The use of authentic materials can dramatically enrich input in a L2 classroom. The development of cultural competence and critical thinking of students are enabled through communicative teaching. In this paper, I describe various aspects that make authentic materials valuable pedagogical tools for teaching and learning foreign languages, particularly the Russian language.

The terms *authentic materials* and *authentic texts* are used interchangeably in this work. By *authentic materials*, I mean both written and non-written materials, including magazines, poems, songs, video clips, etc. I also analyze different types of *authentic texts* and their roles in L2 acquisition. According to Crossley, Louwse, McCarthy, and McNamara (2007), *authentic texts* are written materials "originally created to fulfill a social purpose" (p. 17) in the TL environment. However, in my view, authentic materials contain written and/or spoken language for consumption by fluent speakers of the TL, making my definition broader than the one offered by Crossley et al. (2007).

In this paper, I also use the terms *critical thinking* which is reflective thinking that leads to decision making on what to think, do, and believe (Yang, Gamble, Hung, & Lin, 2014), and *cultural competence* which is a skill set and worldview that are useful in different situations and

in interaction with people from various cultural groups (Povenmire-Kirk, Bethune, Alverson, & Kahn, 2015).

Yang, Gamble, Hung, and Lin (2014) define *critical thinking* as a *combination of critical thinking skills (CTSs)*. According to Yang et al. (2014), *CTSs* include deductive reasoning (deriving examples from general thinking), inductive reasoning (building a general preposition from specific examples), analysis (determining significance and relationships), inference (putting together the elements to build conclusions), and evaluation (assessing the statements and arguments). Naturally, L2 learning is strongly influenced by the L1 and its cultural frameworks and ways of thinking. Davis (1997) defines *cultural competence (CC)* as the ability to use knowledge about groups of people as well as their beliefs, attitudes, life standards, etc., in order to integrate such knowledge into practices that help people establish respectful relationships and display appropriate behavior.

In this paper, I describe some specific benefits of the use of authentic materials in a L2 classroom. I believe that this paper will help clarify how different types of authentic texts can push students to higher levels in reading competence by developing their comprehension and critical thinking.

Abstract

Various United States Government agencies have methods for rating foreign language difficulty for native English speakers. The Defense Language Institute (DLI) rates difficulty from Category I (easiest) through Category IV (hardest). The Russian language is rated as a Category III language (DLI language categories, 2015). Examples of challenges of Russian language learning are described in Appendix A. Therefore, teaching Russian requires a diversity of methods including use of authentic materials, discussion of various topics, and student interaction to develop students' understanding of the language, culture, and critical thinking. In this literature review, I describe what I have learned about authentic materials and explain how such materials can help in development of students' cultural competence and critical thinking.

Authentic Materials in Teaching Russian

Authentic materials are helpful in SLA. The benefits of using authentic texts, for example, go beyond the development of oral and writing L2 performance; reading success can help in the development of grammatical and communicative competence (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). The benefits of using authentic materials are not limited to the main language skills; they can also be used for development of cultural competence, understanding the world, and critical thinking. Therefore, in the context of a multi-literacies framework, students develop their knowledge of related cultures and societies.

In order to succeed in SLA, the input must be comprehensible for students. Therefore, in L2 teaching, the language level of students, including comprehension abilities, is very important. Krashen (1982) mentions that: "comprehensible input is the true cause of second language

acquisition” (p. 34). To ensure that input is comprehensible, authentic materials may need to be replaced by *simplified and adapted texts*. Simensen (1987, as cited in Crossley, et al., 2007), defines *simplified texts* as written texts that illustrate “a specific language feature, such as the use of modals or the third-person singular verb form” (p. 16). *Adapted authentic texts* (texts that are adapted according to the language level and students’ abilities to comprehend) can be used for teaching beginning and intermediate L2 students.

Authentic (for second and third level students) and *simplified* (for first-year students) *materials* can play an important role in L2 acquisition. According to Sharoff, Kurella and Harley (2008), *authentic texts* help students more effectively to learn grammar and achieve better use of Russian cases. I have noticed in my advanced level Russian classes at Utah State University that students have greater connectedness to the topic when they listen to real-life interviews with NSs, or when watching a video that is related to the lesson’s topics and objectives.

Pemberton, Fallahkhair, and Masthoff (2005) describe the effect of authentic materials broadcast on television via the use of mobile phones on the development of L2. According to this study, “participants were enthusiastic about authentic materials of all kinds. Reading novels, watching films and listening to the radio were mentioned as ways of getting the brain to “tune in” (p. 56). Participants noted the importance of learning about the target culture as well as the language and appreciated the fact that the authentic material delivered by television was itself engaging.

In my experience, authentic materials sometimes need to be adapted according to students’ language level and comprehensive abilities. To better understand this need, I examined relevant literature for evidence that authentic texts can be improved by some type of modification with the goal of making authentic texts more readable and comprehensible.

However, I found that the use of simplified and adapted materials (texts) in L2 teaching is not without controversy.

Crossley, Louwse, McCarthy, and McNamara (2007) focus on differences between the linguistic structures of simplified texts and authentic reading texts to provide a better comprehension of the linguistic qualities of these kinds of texts. The authors analyzed supporters' and critics' theoretical points of view about the use of simplified vs. authentic texts in L2 teaching/learning. For example, the proponents of authentic texts in L2 teaching support their views that authentic texts provide students with more natural language, and they argue that the simplification of texts may create unnatural discourse. Supporters of simplified texts argue that L2 beginners "benefit from texts that are lexically, syntactically, and rhetorically less dense than authentic texts" (p. 18). According to Crossley et al. (2007), neither side can provide sufficient proof to support their arguments.

Crossley, Louwse, McCarthy, and McNamara (2007) probe the differences between various linguistic structures of simplified and authentic texts to provide explanation of the linguistic features of these types of texts and their influences on L2 reading. One hundred and five texts were used in this study from seven textbooks for beginning learners of English as a L2. In addition, reading samples from grammar textbooks were included because they helped learners in reading materials related to "human interest stories," (p. 21), science articles, biographies, and children's literature that are similar to authentic texts.

The results of this study showed that authentic and simplified texts differed, as "authentic texts were more likely to have a higher ratio of causal verbs to causal particles than were simplified texts" (p. 22). The authors found that simplified texts offer students more "coreferential cohesion and more common connectives and rely more on frequent and familiar

words than do authentic texts” (p. 27). In addition, simplified texts show less diversity in the parts of speech. On the other hand, the results suggest that “no significant differences exist between simplified and authentic texts in their abstractness and ambiguity” (p. 27). This study helps to better understand the different roles of reading simplified texts and authentic texts in L2 teaching and learning, and how each type may benefit students at different levels.

Shrum and Glisan (2010) also criticize the use of simplified and edited texts. While such texts are easier for students (especially the first and second year) to comprehend the meaning of a text, on the other hand, learners demonstrate a higher level of comprehension if they read unedited authentic texts. According to Shrum and Glisan (2010), this tendency was demonstrated in a number of research studies. However, the choice of simplified vs. authentic materials should be related to age- and level-appropriate patterns.

Fisher and Frey (2012) investigated L2 teaching through *leveled texts*, which are a series of texts that are sequenced by linguistic complexity according to students’ levels of reading comprehension. The authors reviewed various studies about teaching reading through leveled texts and they found studies that suggest that learners “learn more when taught with texts that were above their instructional level” (p. 348). The authors also found that learners can read and understand increasingly complex informational texts. They recommend that teachers support learners as they progress in increasing levels of complexity of texts. The practice of “limited access to complex texts ... may oversimplify what readers are able to do even when decoding accuracy and comprehension is not nearly perfect” (p. 348).

The authors also describe ways of working with *complex informational texts* to support the learning of students and the small group work that will promote comprehension and critical thinking. According to the authors, complex informational texts are texts that require “a wide

range of instructional routines” (p. 349). When students read such texts, teachers should provide additional help to students to comprehend the texts and develop their vocabulary, and increase students’ cultural, emotional, and intellectual understanding. For example, a teacher should read aloud such texts and model for students how to think about text structure, word order, and meaning to help students build their language skills and habits.

This study helps clarify how different types of texts can push students to higher levels in reading competence by developing their comprehension and critical thinking. In some cases (teaching beginners), use of simplified or adapted texts may be necessary in order to make texts comprehensible and meaningful for students. Anyhow, the level of texts should be to some degree higher than learners’ reading comprehension in order to improve their language proficiency and develop language skills.

Language Skills and Critical Thinking Development from Authentic Texts

As I mentioned above, the benefits of teaching L2 through authentic texts go beyond developing the four main L2 skills. Comer (2012) focuses on developing reading skills of students in meaningful ways. The author emphasizes the use of texts that are connected to students’ background knowledge and their understanding of textual features and the text’s language. In this study, the author also chose to use only authentic and relatively short texts. There were four texts on two topics; “each topic was represented by one text drawn from a school-age children’s book” (p. 235) and another one “was drawn from adult encyclopedia entries” (p. 235). The children’s texts were used in full variant without changes and included illustrations, captions, and sidebar text. On the other hand, the encyclopedia entries were shortened and adjusted so that they would be connected to the topic of the children’s texts. The

participants “had learned some information from the text and all but one recalled more correct ideas than incorrect ones” (p. 236). This study analyzes how students of different levels can learn about different grammar features (nominal, passive constructions, third-person plurals, reflexive verbs, etc.) through meaningful reading that is connected to students’ background knowledge in authentic texts.

Rather than focusing on informational texts, as Comer (2012) did, Flint and Laman (2012) studied teaching through poems in a curriculum that is authentic and meaningful for students. The poetry was chosen to connect to social justice topics in two elementary schools. The authors collected students’ materials to analyze how critical literacy affects students’ development. At both schools, using “the unit of study on poetry and social justice, the teachers compiled text sets that contained a wide array of free verse poetry for children to read and draw upon as mentor texts” (p. 14). In addition, the teachers from both schools read critical literacy texts to their students that reflect significant problems in societies and in the world as a whole. The teachers read and noticed key features of poetry.

According to the authors, an authentic approach in teaching poetry and writing helps students reflect on language, culture, and their background knowledge. Flint and Laman (2012) demonstrate that poetry is a great tool “for developing language and literacy skills because of unique qualities: brevity, rhythm, focused content, strong emotional connection, and powerful imagery” (p. 14). Poetry also can be used as a tool that allows students to be themselves and express their own experiences and understanding(s) of the world.

The authors claim that the use of poetry can work as an authentic approach to teaching critical writing. In other words, teachers should use topics that are close and understandable to students so that they can share their own life experiences and feeling. The students will reflect as

they combine the language, culture, experiences, and memories, especially when students are encouraged to write about their own concerns and the world's (for example, bullying or wars). This study explains the effect of poetry on the development of critical thinking.

In addition to poetry, I believe that fairy tales and fables can be used to develop first-year students' comprehension skills and critical thinking. Every language has fairy tales and fables that have interesting meanings that are easy to understand. For example, for teaching English, Jacobs (2002) offers a collection of fables where the author compares situations and some behaviors of animals to the human world. Similarly, in Russian L2 teaching, Krylov's fables and Pushkin's poems and fairy tales can be used to develop linguistic skills, promote comprehension, and facilitate discussions that can improve speaking skills and critical thinking. L2 learners can develop their opinion and understanding from simple daily situations to the serious world events.

Cultural Benefits of Teaching through Authentic Materials

Authentic materials can help students develop cross-cultural insights. Specifically, well-chosen materials not only provide an expanded knowledge of the target culture, but also increase student motivation by making learning fun and engaging, while encouraging students to use the language with fluent speakers that will help them cultivate pragmatics.

In Novoselova's (2012) study, the author writes about the methods of teaching learners modern everyday Russian vocabulary and expressions. The author describes the stages in the program for studying Russian as a foreign language at Maritime State University in Vladivostok, Russia. All foreign students had "to pass tests of elementary, then basic and the first certification levels" (p. 118). Novoselova mentions some special books for beginners to learn conversational Russian that were used as a combination in the study process in order to pass the above

mentioned tests necessary for further study. Students in the exchange programs learned the language by listening to lectures about local history as a part of their course on modern Russian speech. Students built their knowledge by reading together with teachers “documentary works connected with complex and therefore contradictory history pages” (p. 120), and working with dictionaries, books, and the internet to learn various word combinations related to cultural context.

The students in this program not only learned the language but also developed their cultural knowledge and understanding of values of life in this area of Russia. They read diaries and memorials of historically popular Russian writers, such as Dostoevsky, Chekhov, and Gorky. These writers reflected on the Russia of their time and its everyday culture, traditions, and celebrations for different holidays and events. The students, who came to the university with different levels of Russian, learned the language together with culture during this program.

While Novoselova focuses on literary works, Dykstra (2012) investigates the impact of video clips from Russian and Soviet films on pragmatics. Specifically, Dykstra focuses on students’ ability to understand the sociocultural use of two personal pronouns for ‘you’ (‘ty’ as more informal or intimate, versus formal and more polite ‘vy’) while students listen to native speech. Dykstra first gives a short explanation of pronoun use according to historical, modern, pragmatic perspectives. Then, the author focuses on different students’ strategies and abilities to listen according to gender and the impact of students’ grammatical proficiency and pragmatic competence. The results of this study show that the use of the pronouns through listening and watching videos is not really dependent on proficiency levels; beginners and advanced students displayed the same abilities to understand the use of the pronouns.

This study helps recognize the role of authentic materials such as videos in SLA and shows the way of teaching/learning one of the grammar components (use of personal pronouns) in a pragmatic context.

These two examples show the impact of authentic materials on development of cultural and historical context, literary knowledge, and sociocultural pragmatics in communication.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have described the efficacy of authentic materials as pedagogical resources in the foreign language classroom. I have provided a brief overview of some of many challenges associated with learning Russian in Appendix A, and illustrated how authentic materials may facilitate L2 acquisition, in addition to promoting sociocultural understanding and critical thinking. The literature examined also supports the notion that authentic materials cultivate an expanded definition of learning, which moves FL pedagogy beyond communicative language teaching (CLT) toward a multi-literacies framework (Allen & Paesani, 2010).

It is not the conclusion of this paper that multi-literacies or authentic materials ought to be the only pedagogical resource or method. Correspondingly, Allen and Paesani (2010) state: “Although a multi-literacies approach does not prescribe specific content appropriate for introductory FL courses, it foregrounds the role of authentic texts of all types – both literary and non-literary – as the core element of instruction” (p. 129). Allen and Paesani (2010), in their claims about college FL learning, state that “multi-literacies instruction is not just feasible but essential to the relevance and intellectual rigor of undergraduate FL programs” (p. 137). Kern (2005) similarly asserts that FL teaching must meet “contemporary multicultural and multimodal literacy needs” (p. 384), implying that an expanded definition of literacy is not a mere luxury.

Kern (2005) also emphasizes the importance of learning the “sociocultural and political contexts in which texts are situated” (p. 384). This is a task naturally connected with the consumption of authentic materials, as questions about the sociocultural and political realms naturally spawn from the topics and ideas which they contain.

I also explored the merits of modified versus simplified authentic materials and texts. While the debate over modified versus non-modified input is still ongoing, there are certainly clear advantages of text modifications which, when used appropriately, can de-obfuscate texts or otherwise make them more accessible and more comprehensible. However, that is not to say that there aren't advantages of using unaltered authentic materials, as also discussed in this paper.

In conclusion, authentic materials are indeed a valuable resource that should be employed in all modalities and should be readily implemented in tandem with the full spectrum of language teaching materials and methods if the ultimate goal of an effective FL program is promoting native-like characteristics. In Appendix B, I attach a lesson plan showing how authentic materials can be used.

CULTURE ARTIFACT

Declining an Offer to Drink Alcohol at a Business Party

INTRODUCTION

In my opinion, the teaching and learning of pragmatics are important in the L2 classroom. By learning about differences in culture, students will understand behavior of NSs and will be able to avoid stereotypes and unpleasant situations in interactions with people from L2 culture. Students who learn a L2, especially those who are going to work and/or live in a L2 environment, must know some main pragmatic rules and ways of behavior of NSs in order to avoid awkward situations, save face, and maintain a good relationship. Some native speakers' habits and traditions can be difficult to comprehend and students need to know how to deal with some situations and interactions with NSs.

According to DeCapua and Wintergerst (2004), miscommunications and/or breakdowns occur “when members of different cultures do not share the same organizational and pragmatic competencies” (p. 246). The authors give definitions of organizational and pragmatic competencies. They define organizational competence as one that refers to speakers' grammar and linguistic knowledge and how they function together. The pragmatic competence is learning and understanding how to communicate effectively and appropriately. Students must adjust their language to the social context in interactions in a L2. Therefore, I have chosen to discuss two topics in this paper. The first topic is the role of alcohol in Russian life and business. This topic is supposed to help readers understand the roots of the tradition of drinking alcoholic beverages during different celebrations and how this tradition affects life and business. The second one is linguistic and pragmatic strategies for declining an offer to drink without damaging the relationship.

The example of the lesson about declining an offer to drink alcohol is in Appendix C.

Abstract

Learning a L2 is not just studying about sentence structure and vocabulary. Students learn more than the language, they learn about people's interactions and communications, in other words, pragmatics. Most people would like to look good in the eyes of others and to be considered likable. This desire pushes people to learn the roles of good behavior, manners, and interaction. This knowledge is important in the acquisition of a FL and culture. This knowledge of pragmatics can bring success in various types of interaction with NSs, including business. In this paper, I examine the Russian tradition of alcohol consumption and ways of politely declining an offer to drink alcohol. I also examine why there is the invitation to drink alcohol in Russian business. Another matter I explore is how to decline an offer to drink alcohol during business meetings and still preserve a good business relationship. The content offered here can be useful when teaching advanced-level students in cultural, pragmatic, and business classes.

The Role of Alcohol in Russian Life and Business

The Russian tradition of drinking alcohol takes its roots from the period of Kievan Rus, roughly in the IX to XII centuries. The princes of Kievan Rus often held feasts to celebrate different events where people drank a lot of wine and other alcoholic beverages and ate a lot of food. In the tenth century, Prince Vladimir of Kiev supposedly referred to the alcoholic drink as the "joy of the Rus" (Herlihy, 1991, p. 131). Several centuries later, liquor was introduced into Russia and the people called it vodka. The tradition of celebrating by drinking alcohol was continued by Russian tsars and became an important part of Russian life (Russian Drinking Traditions, n. d.). This tradition has continued for centuries and drinking alcoholic beverages has

become an integral part of Russian society. Therefore, it is common to offer and drink alcohol in Russian business meetings, presentations, different celebrations, and/or leisure time. Some Russian people like these celebrations and satisfied feelings so much that as a result, there has long been a high rate of alcoholism in Russia: Russians usually drink a lot of alcohol ([WHO](#) 2014 report).

1) Drinking as a Russian tradition

This Russian tradition is used in many spheres of Russian life, in business as well as in people's private lives. There is a great variety of alcoholic beverages in Russia today. While I lived in Ukraine and during my visits to Russia, I witnessed the great varieties of alcoholic drinks people use for different reasons. Russian people drink specific alcoholic beverages according to the character of the event or situation. For example, for celebration of New Year, people prefer to drink champagne, but while dating, couples mostly choose to drink sweet red wine for a more romantic mood. Genevra (2012) also describes the wide variety of alcoholic beverages in Russia and how they are used for different events. In business events such as presentations, negotiations, and celebrations, wine, champagne, and cognac are typically served. It is traditional in Russia to invite people to celebrate something with drinking often heavy alcoholic beverages with light appetizers. The declining of an offer might be perceived as disrespectful. Therefore, understanding the niceties of pragmatics is very important in order to save face and maintain a good business relationship.

While celebrating, Russians propose a toast before each new round of drinks (Mikheev, 2013). The performance of toasts is of outstanding importance in Russia. The toasts "follow a

variable set of canonic themes, but the canon is adapted to the situation” (Kotthoff, 2007, p. 180). A toast is a wish to the hero/s of the occasion. For example, during a birthday party, all toasts go to the birthday person. The first toast is usually a wish of health and long life, and then they can change to wishes of love, success, etc. Russians give a sequence of standard toasts to each other during holiday celebrations or special events in business. This cultural tradition of good wishes usually creates good feelings and plays a role in establishing friendships.

Most Russians have special sets of glasses for wine, vodka, beer, liquor and so on (Jiang, 2011). The first, second, and third glass are usually drunk together by people who wish for health, love, success, etc. Later, when everyone becomes intoxicated, they may “pour the alcohol according to one’s own will” (Jiang, 2011, p. 253). Therefore, most of the participants or guests usually are drunk when they leave. Also, some parties can end with scandals, conflicts, or even fighting if people lose self-control.

For foreign people who prefer not to drink at all or wish to limit how much they drink, it is important to know some pragmatic strategies to avoid unpleasantness during interactions with native Russian speakers who enjoy drinking alcohol. Without this knowledge, relationships can be damaged.

2) The ways and reasons for drinking

There are different ways of life and habits in different cultures. According to Jiang (2011), drinking is related to cultural aspects, however, drinking can also be a psychological satisfaction (Nemtsov, 2011) as well as an “esthetic aspect demand” (Jiang, 2011, p. 256). Jiang (2011) compares Chinese and Western differences in their respective drinking cultures. The

author mentions that the Russian people usually drink casually and may drink as long as they want to drink. Russians may sit in the bar or “even may walk on the side of an avenue with a beverage bottle in hand, walking and drinking” (p. 253). Regarding food, if Russians celebrate a holiday or special event they usually eat various foods while drinking. On the other hand, if Russians drink just to get drunk, they may eat only a piece of bread or a sausage or a pickle, for example. Sometimes, Russian people get so drunk that they cannot find their way home and end up sleeping somewhere on the street or in a park. This behavior can end in death during winter when a person sleeps outdoors; he/she may be found frozen to death (Jiang, 2011).

Nemtsov (2011) describes three main psychological motivations for alcohol use. People may drink in order to gain a sense of self-worth, for psychotropic reduction of real-life problems and challenges, and to gain a false sense of satisfaction. For some Russians, drinking alcohol helps “overcome barriers to socializing and eases contacts between people” (pp. 180-181). Getting drunk helps people to create a friendlier and more attractive self-image, or defend themselves from responsibilities. In other words, drinking alcohol creates another reality where a drinking person feels the illusion of happiness. That is why Russians usually say afterwards “We sat well” (Nemtsov, 2011, p. 181).

Linguistic and Pragmatic Strategies for Declining the Offer of a Drink

In many situations, people cannot avoid communication. Through communication, people exchange meanings about themselves and how they want others to see them (LoCastro, 2012). Students must be competent in the use of a L2 as well as in “the cultural practices of a community to avoid negative stereotyping” (p. 136), and understand what it means to be polite

according to the TL culture. In other words, students must develop intercultural competence. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, issued by the European Council (as cited in Velescu, 2011), *ICC* is “the ability to establish a relationship between the native culture and a foreign culture” (p. 286) and “the capacity to recognize and use varied strategies in order to establish contact with people from another culture” (p. 286). The development of such ability and capacity enables a person to handle situations where cultural misunderstanding may occur.

LoCastro (2012) defines the meaning of “positive” and “negative” face according to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) model. People’s desire to be liked and be the “right” kind of person (p. 137), which is related to positive face needs. Simultaneously, people are also concerned with negative face by wanting to remain “undisturbed, not imposed upon, in one’s actions” (pp. 137-138). A speaker may choose the type of behavior according to the face needs of the speaker and addressee. Some linguistic acts can be defined as face-threatening acts; those acts that make people feel uncomfortable during interactions. Offering or declining the offer to drink alcohol are both examples of face-threatening acts.

In order to build good relationships in business, people must understand cultural and behavioral differences. Manfred, Kets de Vries, Shekshina, Korotov, and Florent-Treacy (2005) describe how culture influences behavior in building relationships in Russian business, “culture embodies the ideals, values, and assumptions about life that are widely shared among a population and that guide specific behavior patterns” (p. 6). Because of cultural differences, business relationships can sometimes be affected negatively. Charles (2009) mentions that “it is difficult to find a foreign businessperson who has not experienced difficulty in doing business in

Russia” (p. 9). Historical and political factors are also involved. In recent years, for example, Russia has gone through political and economic changes and there are still a lot of political and economic challenges that influence Russian life, business, and culture. Because of the transition from a Soviet-communist system (that was mostly related to collectivist culture) to modern capitalism (that is turning more into individualist culture), there is much confusion and chaos in the cultural transformation happening in Russia today.

With an eye to understanding how to build successful relationships with Russian business partners, business professionals need to know some cultural details and features of Russian society. “Today, international businessmen and businesswomen increasingly find themselves working in multi-cultural environments, dealing with real differences in everything from communication styles to social etiquette to core values” (Charles, 2009, p. 1). Therefore, learning and understanding the cultural context of foreign business partners can help in developing effective strategies for business negotiations and deal-making while avoiding confusion.

1) Two main types of pragmatic failures in communicative competence

Daily communicative practice enables people to deal “with grammar and semantics as they enter into situated interpretation, along with cultural presuppositions” (Kotthoff, 2007, p. 18). Therefore, during communication different types of pragmatic failures may accrue. Bergelson (2003) compares communication styles of Russians and Americans. The author describes two main types of pragmatic failures in communicative competence. The first includes *sociopragmatic failures* that are the wrong type of communication pattern chosen or the wrong politeness strategy, e.g., the wrong type of speech act such as criticizing someone or something

instead of complaining. There can also be confusion because of misunderstanding of the real meaning. The author also describes a second reason for failure, *the linguapragmatic failures* that can happen in culturally conditioned contexts or scenarios. This type of failure is related to “choosing some linguistic devices appropriate for carrying out a given strategy in one language/culture and inappropriate in another” (Bergelson, 2003, para. 3). For example, communication style is not always targeted in reaching consensus; in taking turns in conversation, Russians usually start with “no” – “njet” regardless of agreeing or disagreeing with the speaker’s point before (Bergelson, 2003).

In this paper, I write about an issue that is related to *the linguapragmatic failures* that may occur in cross-cultural interaction with Russians. I have already written above about the tradition of drinking alcoholic beverages in Russia and it is essential to know how to decline such offer. It is especially important for those who plan to work in Russian business because of the Russian tradition of celebrating everything may create some pragmatic problems for those people who do not drink alcohol or wish to limit their intake for some reasons.

According to DeCapua and Wintergerst (2004), in conversational exchanges miscommunication often takes place between native and nonnative speakers. This misunderstanding in communication arises because speakers do not share the same cultural beliefs, norms of behavior, etc. Speakers from different cultures usually expect reactions and behaviors according to their own culture’s norms and rules of behavior. DeCapua and Wintergerst (2004) discuss the direct “no” response in Russia. At first, a “no” response by non NS to a Russian “will not necessarily be interpreted as a refusal” (p. 250) by a Russian. As was mentioned above, Russians usually start with “no” any conversation (Bergelson, 2003).

Therefore, Russian people may see the “no” response not as a refusal but as a sign of modesty or indecision. As a result, they can offer again, and/or even insist. Therefore, according to DeCapua and Wintergerst (2004), the response “no” must “often be repeated several times in order for Russians to accept the refusal as definite and not as something still open to negotiation” (p. 250). Also, “no” should be explained or supported by serious reasons.

2) Main pragmatic strategies for refusal

According to my own experience, working among Russian business people, I have learned that in Russian business, to decline an offer to drink an alcoholic beverage and save positive face, the best way to decline an offer is to express thanks for the offer, then politely refuse the offer (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2004), and give an explanation for the refusal (Archer, 2010). In this way, I found the effect of refusal will be softened as well as the reaction of the inviter/s. The authors of the website “Doing Business in Russia” offer an important insight. They state that in a situation when a Russian counterpart invites someone out, it is rude to refuse. According to the authors, Russians like to drink alcohol and refusing is unacceptable unless an invitee gives them a strong excuse, such as explaining health or religious reasons, which Russian people can usually understand and accept.

For most Russian people, to offer alcoholic beverages in order to celebrate something or to get know each other better is a sign of courtesy, respect, and friendship. On the other hand, for foreign people this offer can be an uncomfortable face-threatening act if they do not know how to decline. Likewise, if a foreign business partner accepts the offer and does not know about the heavy drinking habits of Russians they can get into unpleasant situations such as

getting too drunk, losing self-control, and getting involved in conflicts which can affect the future of the relationship. The negative impact of using alcohol in business that can create some hazards and negative impact in relationships is described by Schweitzer and Kerr (2000). In this study, authors describe results from research studies that investigated the role and influence of alcohol on business negotiations in many cross-cultural settings.

Declining an offer can be an unpleasant and face-threatening act. The main problem is in how declining the offer of a drink is viewed in different cultures. Archer (2010) gives examples of different refusal strategies and the reasons for using them in her lesson's activities. Among those refusal strategies are direct refusals such as "no", "I won't be able to"; the next strategy is reason or explanation "I have to work" or "I am not feeling well"; offering an alternative might be "maybe next week"; an expression of apology or regret "I am sorry" (p. 182). A request for forgiveness is also important while declining the offer.

The most used request for forgiveness in Russia is performed by the verbs "izvinite" and "prostite" that mean asking for forgiveness (Ogiermann, 2008). The verb "izvinite" contains the word "vina" that means guilt, therefore, by using this verb the speaker asks to be freed from guilt. The verb "prostite" means asking for permission to be forgiven and it is "associated with religious contexts and forgiving sins" (p. 266). These linguistic components (direct refusals, reason or explanation, asking for forgiveness) soften any refusal and make declining more polite and acceptable. The use of requests for forgiveness confirms the politeness in Russian culture (Rathmayr, 1996, as cited in Ogiermann, 2008).

According to Archer (2010), a person who does not want to accept an offer needs to give reasons for not accepting as it is “especially important because it demonstrates that your refusal of the invitation is not a rejection of the inviter” (p. 183). Therefore, the author describes additional strategies such as positive statements, expressions of gratitude, and statements of empathy. Ogiermann (2008) offers three positive politeness apology strategies: “offer of repair”, “promise of forbearance”, and “concern for hearer” (p. 267). All these softening strategies may help mitigate the reaction of the inviter, thus saving the hearer’s face and maintaining good relationships.

Being polite in responses to an offer, regardless of situations and power levels, is always beneficial. Felix-Brasdefer (2003) has studied the use of strategies of politeness (direct and indirect) in declining an invitation. The participants were native and advanced non-native speakers of Spanish. They learned about declining an invitation through role-playing activities in three levels of social status – lower, equal, and higher. The results of this study “showed different preferences for politeness strategies when declining an invitation among the three groups” (p. 238) of participants. Participants reported that they use more direct refusal in conversation with people on the same power level (friends and classmates), while native speakers of English more often used direct refusal than Spanish speakers. The results of this study showed that “an indirect refusal disguised as a justified excuse saves face for both parties” and as a result, “contributes to a mutual understanding between the two parties” (p. 246). Therefore, being polite in giving indirect refusal may serve two important goals, i.e., saving positive face and preserving the relationship.

Conclusion

In Russian culture, the offer to drink alcohol during different events, celebrations, and parties in most cases is seen as an offer of friendship. Russian people use this tradition as a sign of good relationship, good hospitality, generosity, and welcome. That is why Russians drink alcohol with members of family, friends, neighbors, and business associates. While drinking alcohol during celebrations, Russians offer a lot of good wishes in the form of toasts (Kotthoff, 2007; Mikheev, 2013;). This Russian tradition helps to establish good relationships. On the other hand, this tradition can create conflicts, if people cannot control their drinking habits (Jiang, 2011) or do not have enough knowledge in pragmatic and linguistic competence to decline politely (Bergelson, 2003; DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2004).

Therefore, students need to develop intercultural and pragmatic competence in order to understand Russian ways. Students also have to learn how to pragmatically and linguistically decline an offer in Russia.

Being polite is never out of place, but the understanding of politeness may be different in different cultures. Particularly, it is hard to know how to be polite during face-threatening acts (LoCastro, 2012). Making a request that an addressee does not want to accept is one of the examples of a face-threatening act. Therefore, declining an offer requires some pragmatic and linguistic knowledge.

According to the research studies cited in this paper, declining an offer to drink alcohol at a business party in Russia should have the following components:

Table 1

Declining an offer

Important	Important	Important	Alternative
Direct response	Reason/Explanation	Excuse	Offer of repair
“no” - “njet”	“I cannot because ...” (health condition or religious beliefs are most acceptable) Example, “I am not feeling well”.	“I am sorry” “Izvinite” “Prostite”	“Maybe next time” “Next time I will pay for drinks”

Table 1 Declining an offer

Unfortunately, there are not enough research studies concerning interactions between Russian students and students (participants) from other cultures even in the wider area of different topics in interaction and communication. Also, there are few studies on how to decline an offer to drink alcoholic beverages in Russian business.

Teaching in Classroom

I chose these topics because they can be interesting, important, and helpful for USU students. The advanced-level students are a special group at USU. Most of them are returned missionaries who spent two years in target language countries. They have special motivations to learn the Russian language and some of them plan to work with Russian companies in the USA or find a job in Russia in the future. Since most advanced students in my class are associated with a religious group, they do not drink alcohol in accordance to their beliefs which is explained in a religious document known as “The Word of Wisdom”.

Therefore, there are the clashing beliefs on this topic. For most Russian people, the tradition to celebrate everything by drinking alcohol is related to a desire to build or continue good relations. For my students, as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) drinking any alcoholic beverages is forbidden by God.

Therefore, refusal is a good topic for researching and building a lesson plan in order to teach students how to use linguistic and pragmatic strategies to avoid unpleasant situations. The communicative goal of such a lesson can be: students will be able to build their understanding of Russian cultural traditions related to drinking alcohol and the reasons why drinking alcohol usually occurs in Russian business life. Students will learn about different ways that alcoholic beverages are offered. They will learn the linguistically appropriate refusals of such offers in order to save face and maintain a good relationship with Russian business partners. Students will be involved in different series of communicative activities to fulfill this communicative goal. This lesson is planned for advanced-level students; therefore, students will use only the target language.

According to the lesson plan, students will be able to learn about Russian tradition to drink alcoholic beverages. They will learn about the polite offers to drink alcohol at a business party and how to politely decline such an offer. Students will learn about different linguistic declining responses to such offers in order to save positive face and maintain good relationships.

This lesson is meant to be communicative, and so the activities are based upon student interaction. For this purpose, students interact with each other from the beginning of the lesson. During the lesson, students will watch authentic videos and will have instruction through Power Point where they will learn new vocabulary and phrases related to the lesson topic. Students will

work in class discussions, group and pair work, and role-play activity. There will be materials associated with pragmatics, instruction about different requests and replays, and models of different expressions that will help students learn new vocabulary. Through communicative activities students will practice new vocabulary in real-life communication.

The role of the teacher in this lesson is to provide comprehensible input, model the target language, and be a resource for students. The students are responsible for carrying out the activities through communication.

There are possible problems that may arise in this lesson. There may be some students who may overplay their roles. Therefore, a teacher can give some instructions regarding rules and limits at the beginning of the lesson and control students' responses and interactions. Another problem can also occur because some students work actively in the groups while others may remain silent. The reasons can be varied; students may be shy or are lacking in knowledge. The problem can be alleviated by the instructor watching and participating in the group work and by asking silent or passive students about their opinions or inviting them to represent the group or to play the role. The plan of this lesson is in Appendix C.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Introduction

This annotated bibliography is devoted to the articles and books that I found especially helpful during my studies in the MSLT program and that helped me better understand the principles of the two parts of my teaching philosophy: a communicative classroom with communicative activities and the role of input and output in language acquisition. In addition, I have included a section on the cultural and learning benefits of telecollaborative exchanges in L2 learning.

Communicative Classroom and Communicative Activities

For many years, I was learning English. In the schools and the university I attended, only traditional teaching models were used in second language teaching. Even today the *Atlas Complex* approach is the predominant method of teaching in Ukrainian schools and many other countries of the world. This approach definitely helps study about the language, but students who are taught by traditional methods usually cannot use the language in real-life communication. Being a student at USU, I have learned about another way of teaching/learning a FL: the *Communicative Approach*. I believe that the communicative way is one of the best approaches because it gives students the opportunity to learn a L2 not just by memorization and repetition but through real-life communication. Therefore, I have focused on teaching the communicative way. The communicative approach helps students learn the TL through engaging and meaningful activities to practice the language, and as a result, it enables them to use the language in real-life communication.

The first book I read in the MSLT program about different approaches to language study was **Lee and VanPatten (2003)**, who describe the *Atlas Complex* as the approach that refers to the dynamic in which the “authoritative transmitter of knowledge” and “receptive vessels” are the primary roles, respectively, that instructors and students play in many traditional classrooms. The *Atlas Complex* is a teacher-centered and knowledge-transmitting classroom. According to this book and my own learning experience, the *Atlas Complex* is not the most effective way of teaching or learning a L2. This complex robs students of the opportunity to use the TL. Therefore, it is very common that students are not able to use the L2 for actual communication and often forget the language if they do not use it after Atlas Complex studying.

I was taught through traditional methods which led me to limited knowledge of the language, a fear of making mistakes especially in writing, and an inability to communicate orally. I believe many FL learners have experienced such traditional models of learning and have the same frustrations. In traditional approaches to L2 teaching, teachers are experts who seek to share their expertise. Teachers who use traditional models think that improving their explanations, correcting students' errors, and using grammar and structural drills will improve students' learning. The students in such classes learn rules, try to avoid making errors, and focus on grammar but they cannot communicate in real-life situations.

It was interesting to learn how the *communicative approach* improved L2 learning in the *Dual Language Immersion (DLI) programs* in Finland. **Björklund and Mård-Miettinen (2011)** report that the change to a more communicative approach in second, third, and fourth language teaching started when teachers understood that students were more confused and even resistant to learning when teachers used two languages in their classrooms and traditional methods in their teaching. The authors describe how a communicative approach in the schools of Finland helps students learn languages with greater success and also helps in students' L1 development.

Likewise, **Lee and VanPatten (2003)** place importance on a communicative classroom. The teacher in the communicative classroom provides students with opportunities for communication and creation of real-life messages. Reading this book helped me understand that in the communicative approach, the student's role was changed dramatically; it is not about repeating after the teacher anymore but about creating answers and exchanging messages among students and between students and teacher. This approach caught my attention when I first enrolled as a student in USU's IELI program. I thrived and my proficiency greatly improved in the environment of the communicative classroom where the teacher gives the students an

opportunity to discuss topics or to solve a problem together, or just to practice and use the language in a friendly environment.

Teaching a L2 in a communicative classroom is characterized by many different features. **Shrum and Glisan (2010)** address various important topics for L2 teaching under the communicative approach, especially practical aspects of teaching and learning under the perspectives of the Standards for Foreign Language Learning. Among those aspects are topics about the 5C's of communication, developing interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational communication, etc. This book offers good and helpful information for L2 teachers, which helps them become more effective in developing students' communicative competence.

Kissling and O'Donnell (2015) in the ACTFL proficiency guidelines are important because they provide the framework for teaching a FL, increasing students' language awareness, and creating a communicative classroom in order to improve student learning. Reading these standards helped me to understand the communicative way of teaching and how to create a communicative classroom. In such classroom, students learn a L2 through self-analysis; they begin to notice different aspects of their speech and are better able to use their language abilities. These standards gave me more understanding about what a communicative curriculum classroom should look like. In my classroom, I give students opportunities to work in pairs, groups, and as a whole class by engaging them in conversations and discussions, practicing new material with each other, asking or answering questions, and expressing themselves and their opinions in class.

I also found **The ACTFL standards (2001)** as important ones. According to standard 1.1, in order to create a communicative classroom, instructors have to plan lessons that will

engage students in conversations, help them exchange opinions and feelings, and understand new material. Standard 1.2 also is interesting and helpful in creating a more communicative environment in the classroom. According to this standard, teachers need to involve students in interpretation of written and spoken material in order to help them understand a variety of topics. I try to promote this standard by asking my students to read authentic materials on various topics each semester. They have to understand the text and work with vocabulary in preparation, so that in class they can explain their perspective and discuss it. We work with new words and practice using them in sentences, which I think is effective practice.

Another standard gives helpful ideas about involving students in presentations. I learned to give presentations at USU and found them helpful for developing my reading and speaking skills. Therefore, every semester I involve my students in different inquiry in order to prepare presentations. I believe it helps them to learn new material by themselves or as a group and practice oral skills. The students have a great learning and communicative experience by using the presentational mode.

Shrum and Glisan's (2010) book also helped me to learn that in order to engage students to communicate successfully and practice the target language; teachers should take the role of "coach" in the communicative classroom. A teacher's goal is to help students become more proficient in the TL. Teachers have to provide communicative instruction and activities that have a communicative goal and are related to real-life situations. For this purpose, using task-based activities in a communicative classroom is most effective. This book describes effective ways and methods for L2 teaching.

From early childhood, everyone uses communication skills as a part of daily life. In order to prepare our students for real-life communication, teachers have to give them an opportunity to

interact with each other through classroom activities. Successful L2 acquisition requires active engagement. **Saville-Troike (2006)** describes receptive and productive activities. During receptive activities “students must actively participate in creating meaning from input” (p. 153). On the other hand, productive activities “require prior knowledge of vocabulary, morphology, phonology, syntax, and discourse structure to access words and combine them into phrases, clauses, and longer units of text” (p. 162). Comprehensive competence involves both knowledge of linguistic elements and pragmatic knowledge.

While reading **Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandell (2001)**, I understood that grammar instruction should support communication in class. I have learned that giving the students an opportunity to practice and use the grammar through communication and communicative activities will improve their learning. This book helped me understand that the L2 teacher should find a balance in terms of grammar instruction. The class in which grammar has no role does not satisfy the students who have already achieved a basic proficiency level and who want and need to know some grammar instruction and sentences structures. But neither does the *Atlas Complex* class with only grammar drills help students learn to communicate. Therefore, a communicative classroom where grammar instruction supports communication and where the students can interact with each other through communicative activities will be most successful for students’ proficiency development. I think both form-focused exercises and a communicative approach are important, and Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandell (2001) make the claim that the combination of these two approaches benefits students the most: students will learn grammar to improve their ability to communicate.

This book *The Communicative Classroom* had a profound impact on my understanding of the communicative approach and gave me many ideas for communicative activities. Ballman,

Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandell (2001) provide the reader with a detailed description of different types of communicative activities. *Interviews activities* are the type of students interaction where they are assumed to foster with each other in sharing and collecting information. They help create a meaningful context for target language use. During these types of activities, students are paired up to ask each other a series of questions and negotiate meaning with each other. Also, after the interview, students are expected to do something with the information they gathered in the interview.

Information Gap Activities provide students with opportunities for negotiation “with different but complementary pieces of information that must be combined” (p. 74) in order to accomplish the goal of the activity. *Task-Based Activities* are activities which relate to the communicative goal and ensure communication. During these activities students should have a reason or goal and understand what they are supposed to do and why. These activities should be related to one topic and to each other and connected to real-life situations. I understood that this type of activities should give students ideas, practice, and skills they will be able to use in real life. *Task-Based Instruction* has three characteristics. First, task-based instruction is “learner-centered” and requires student-to-student interaction for successful completion. Second, task-based instruction requires an activity “that focuses upon a meaningful exchange of information on the part of the participants” (p.77). Finally, task-based instruction guides students through steps that culminate in a concrete representation of the information shared or gathered.

I have learned a lot of details about different types of activities from this. Task-Based Instruction, as part of the communicative classroom, is learner-centered. In the learner-centered activities, the students interact with one another for completion of a task. The students work together in pairs or small groups to accomplish a particular task in order to attain a specific goal.

In summary, these textbooks and articles helped me understand better what communicative language teaching is and how to create a communicative classroom by using task-based activities for interaction.

The role of input and output in language learning

Most people can learn something new every day if they pay attention and have a desire to learn. As a L2 instructor, I always look for opportunities to improve my instructional skills, knowledge, and understanding of the teaching and learning processes. Many books and articles with information and research studies have helped me to learn and shape my teaching. As a L2 teacher, I have learned the importance of input in teaching. Without input, language learning will never happen. The main role of a teacher is to provide input and interactive activities to students. Through the different types of materials, activities, and assignments that a teacher uses in the classroom, students receive input. The importance of input was emphasized in the textbook *Making Communicative Language Teaching Happen*. In this book **Lee and VanPatten (2003)** compare the importance of input in language acquisition to the importance of gas to a car. Input is very important in L2 learning because clear, comprehensive, and interesting input will engage students in learning more deeply than any drill or forced studying. My goal for each lesson is to prepare comprehensible and interesting input which will promote good-quality output, and as a result success in learning.

In Lee and VanPatten's (2003) book, I learned that input has to be meaning bearing. The language that the students listen to or read should contain messages that learners are able to negotiate and exchange. Therefore, meaning-bearing input has some communicative intent. This book gave me important ideas on how to make the language classroom communicative and input comprehensible to the students. This book taught me much about teaching different levels of students and how to make input simple, meaningful, and therefore more comprehensible to

students of different levels. The resources from this book are interesting and important for me because I plan to teach different levels of students in the future.

Lee and VanPatten (2003) compare input for young children acquiring their L1 to input for L2 learning beginners: “Most children get some kind of simplified input when learning their first language” (p. 27), and “the research on input addressed to children prompted second language researchers to examine second language input in the same way” (p. 29). I think it makes sense, little children as well as most beginners cannot read nor could they understand the language through listening to the news or watching movies, so beginners need simplified input and additional help such as visuals and Total Physical Response (TPR). Working with familiar and interesting situations is also effective in FL learning for children as well as adults.

By learning English as a FL myself, I came to understand the importance of connecting input to background knowledge. **Chun (2011)** defines the importance of background knowledge in reading comprehension in L2 learning. The author underlines that prior knowledge and students’ interest and curiosity help with more complete understanding of the new topic. I believe that students of all levels of L2 and especially beginners need to have some knowledge and interest about the topic in order to understand new material.

Arnold and Ducate (2011) also underline the importance of students’ background knowledge. According to this research studies that review in their textbook, students with prior knowledge will “fill the gaps in their already existing schemata and therefore to get a more complete understanding of the topic” (p. 143). I would like to use simple, daily-life topics to teach first-year students in my teaching career, in order to use their background knowledge and

help them comprehend the input. The use of students' background knowledge is also important in teaching other levels' learners, but according to their levels, input should be more advanced.

I have learned that input connected to students' prior knowledge should also be full of diverse topics and grammar language features. I read an interesting study about the role of variable input in **Eidsvåg, Austad, Plante, and Asbjørnsen (2015)** research. In this study the authors describe the effect of various presentations in the TL about learning Russian noun-gender subcategories and related them to other grammatical forms. No participant spoke Russian or any other Slavic language. This study "was designed to manipulate variability in a Russian gender paradigm by increasing the number of root words elements presented in the high-variability condition (32 root words) relative to the high-repetition condition" (p. 829). The results showed a high degree of benefit of high-variability input to grammatical features in combination with double-marked nouns (multiple cues). This study helped me understand that input must be variable even in the first-year students' class and according to the language level of students (in this study not actually language speakers) can be repeated and practice through different forms of input.

Input can help improve students' vocabulary. **Met (2008)** explains another important and interesting element of teaching L2. She describes how students improve their recognition of words in input by hearing and reading them in different contexts many times (receptive retrieval) and by speaking and writing (productive retrieval). Teachers promote students' vocabulary acquisition through different classroom activities. For example, in my class of Russian Culture or Russian Business, students have to read authentic Russian sources and write a list of new words and their English translation. In class we discuss the article/s and I read their lists of new words. From those lists, I choose a number of frequently used words in a specific area (Culture or

Business) and we work with those words through explanation of their meaning and use them through different activities. Students learn to use these words and apply them in other assignments. I believe this context-rich way of learning new vocabulary is more effective than making students just memorize lists of new words.

Regarding to teaching/learning new vocabulary, I learned about the program Wordles that can help students with use of new words. In article by **Baralt, Pennistri, and Selvandin (2011)**, I read about the technological tool Wordles. This tool helps L2 learners, especially beginners, to learn vocabulary. I remember while I was learning English writing, I had the same problem described in this study: I used the same words repeatedly in my English writing because I felt comfortable with those words. In my English courses, I learned how to avoid using the same words repeatedly in writing. The Wordles tool addresses this tendency by showing the most often used words in students' essays. In this way, students learn to replace some words and use others which are close to their meaning. This program can help students learn new vocabulary and improve their writing skill.

With learning new words students must learn materials that are beyond students' current proficiency level. Indeed, students must learn new and a little higher level material. I know that teaching students by using only comprehensible and simplified input would not help students to learn a lot and make progress in second language acquisition. According to **Cloud, Genesee, and Hamayan (2000)**, the language we teach must be meaningful to our students and must also be just beyond the student's current level in order to develop their L2. In this study, I found many interesting ideas about development students' oral proficiency in L2 teaching.

I also read in the *Teacher's Handbook* that through Krashen's perspectives on classroom instruction the language classroom has to provide comprehensible input at the $i+1$ level (i expresses the learner's current language competence and I expresses the next level of the language learning that learners may achieve) and "input should be interesting, relevant, and not grammatically sequenced; error correction should be minimal in the classroom since it is not useful when the goal is acquisition" (p. 15). Therefore, I have learned that input has to be comprehensible but to go beyond the students' current level of language competence.

Also, according to **Blake (2013)**, students must develop understanding that "there is something to be learned, that there is a gap between what the learner already knows and what there is to know" (p. 19). In this book Blake (2013) describes the input that will be helpful to L2 students as comprehensible that is both challenging and assessable.

In order to achieve these requirements and make input more comprehensible, interesting, and relevant, I believe that L2 teachers need to create an acquisition-rich environment where students are able to communicate and exchange comprehensible messages. I have learned about communicative methods of teaching/learning L2 only at USU (as an IELI student) and I really liked this way of learning a L2. As a teacher, I was interested to learn more about this approach and apply it in my class. Blake (2013) says that students interact in order to solve specific tasks (task-based activities) with other L2 learners, they learn through practice with new vocabulary and syntax, improve their incomplete understandings, and analyze their own language. In classrooms where students learn TL through different interactions, communications, and activities, a student-centered environment will be created, where students practice the

meaningful and comprehensible input. In this way, I believe when teachers make input meaningful and comprehensible, students will improve their output.

Every lesson should have its own goal. I try to plan my lessons according to particular goals. The goals depend on what I want my students be able to do and learn during each lesson, and use what they may already know. I learned the key role of background knowledge and strategic objectives in the work of **Hamayan, Marler, Sanchez-Lopez, and Damico (2013)**. According to this author, making decisions about teaching planning and strategies, teachers must first determine the background knowledge of their learners, next include general skills which teachers want to improve in students, and last, decide about strategies objectives in instruction. I believe these components are very important in lesson planning in order to create professional and good input.

Good input usually leads to good intake. Through various assessments, the instructor can see the students' intake. For example, through my students' tests and essays I see what they were able to learn, where they still have grammatical and other language problems. Also students' work shows how they are able to use particular knowledge and develop their writing skill. Lee and VanPatten (2003) define *intake* as "the language that the learner actually attends to and that gets processed in working memory in some way" (p.31). Thus, *intake* is the part of input that "makes its way into the learner's head" (p.31). Therefore, *intake* is the amount of filtered knowledge (input) that the students were able to receive.

In the *Teacher's Handbook*, **Shrum and Glisan (2010)** define *intake* as the "language that is comprehended and used by learners to develop a linguistic system that they then use to

produce output in the language” (p. 17). As I mentioned above, to make input more comprehensive which will improve intake, the input should be simplified, connected to background knowledge, understood as familiar in some vocabulary and structure to the students. Also, I have learned that by using additional aid such as pictures, gestures, TPR, interactions of students, and negotiation of meaning in class, students improve their intake. Comprehensive input will increase learners’ intake and create output.

I found Shrum and Glisan’s (2010) as a very useful book for L2 teachers to study because it covers in depth all the important aspects of teaching and learning under the perspective of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning*. This book helped me to build better perspectives on L2 teaching, understand the role of contextualized input, output, and interaction in language learning. It has helped me understand the failures of traditional methods for language teaching. Any traditional methods regardless of how many years students study the FL unable students to communicate in real life. Only through communicative language teaching the students are able to practice the language by using real-life situations, get effective output, and as a result they are able to communicate.

I was taught in traditional class years ago, where a teacher talks most of the lesson time and students usually only listen. As a student at USU, I have learned that when students are involved in interactions with each other and use the TL, the output of students will be improved and promote further TL development. According to **Christian (2010)**, student interactions such as pair and group work is one of most importance sites for L2 learning, by providing opportunities for meaningful collaboration and output. In such interactions, students will improve their language learning and develop output.

Acquisition occurs only when students receive interesting, comprehensible, and familiar input connected to background knowledge. I try to create a nice classroom environment open for discussion and interactions where students will feel welcome to share their thoughts and like to be and learn. In friendly, appropriately organized learning environment (with low level of anxiety and competition, for example) students more easily acquire the TL. Shrum and Glisan (2010) define acquisition as a subconscious “picking up” of rules characteristic of the L1 acquisition process. On the other hand, learning is a conscious focus on knowing and applying rules in L2. Only acquisition, not learning leads to spontaneous, unplanned communication and creation of real-life messages.

**Technology: The cultural and learning benefits
of telecollaborative exchanges in L2 learning**

While learning a L2, learners have to gain ICC; otherwise, students may have problems interacting with NSs in real-life communication. In this part of annotated bibliography I explain cultural and learning benefits students can gain during telecollaboration. From the sources I have read, I conclude that telecollaboration helps students develop cultural awareness and competence in addition to language learning.

I found important benefits of telecollaboration in **O’Dowd (2007)**. The author emphasizes that as a result of their development of ICC, students become intercultural speakers. O’Dowd (2007) reports on findings from a study on communicative telecollaboration between students from three classes at a German University. The three classes used different combinations of communication technologies; namely, email, web-based message boards, and video conferencing to engage in online interactions with various partner classes in Ireland and the USA. This research was looking to establish virtual intercultural contact in order to develop ICC to see what kind of skills and knowledge students and teachers need in these complex online activities.

From this study, I learned about three important findings that gave me additional perspectives about planning my instruction to include telecollaboration. First, telecollaborative activities support the development of learners’ intercultural communicative competence in a way “that traditional culture learning materials would not be able to achieve” (p. 146). The results of this study revealed that the success of such interactions and exchanges depends on appropriate integration into the language classroom and the role of the teacher in telecollaboration.

The second finding of this study was that telecollaboration can best promote development of cultural awareness through dialogue comparison of the two cultures and exchange of reactions between partners. The third and last finding was that telecollaboration supports the development of ICC through a combination of various online tools. Consequently, students learned appropriate pragmatics and developed ICC by telecollaboration with NSs. These results showed that students can develop ICC and enrich L2 learning that's impossible to achieve in a traditional classroom.

In my Russian Culture course, students learn about various elements of Russian culture and unique details of Russian life. In **Schenker (2012)** I found that learning about the culture of other people, students improve knowledge and understanding of their own culture. Therefore, the best way to learn about your own culture as well as about cultures of other is through interactions with carriers of the other culture. Schenker (2012) describes a six-week telecollaborative email project focusing on ICC between American and German students. In this project, students sent their partners two emails per week to discuss cultural topics. This study showed that American students' understanding of their own culture and German culture was increased as well as their interest in cultural learning. This study reminded me that my students often discuss differences in life and culture of Russia. By doing so, they improve knowledge about their own culture.

According to **DeCapua and Wintergerst (2004)**, miscommunication and/or breakdowns occur "when members of different cultures do not share the same organizational and pragmatic competencies" (p. 246). From their chapter, I learned definitions of organizational and pragmatic competencies. The authors define *organizational competence* as one that refers to speakers' grammatical and linguistic knowledge and how they function together. *Pragmatic competence* is

learning and understanding how to communicate effectively and appropriately in the TL environment. Thus, in order to avoid miscommunications, students must adjust their language to the social context in interactions in the L2.

In telecollaboration, students learn how to use the language in a pragmatically appropriate manner in different situations with NSs. **Chun's (2011)** study showed me how culture applies in a language course, and how students learn to negotiate in new ways by gaining interactional pragmatics. In this study, students learned basic rules of pragmatics by asking questions in online chatting in order to make the chat successful. The results of this study illustrate that “students from the two classes interacted according to their own pragmatic norms, sometimes resulting in a clash of expectations” (p. 416). Nevertheless, students did demonstrate ICC. They were able to use knowledge, attitudes, and skills to build appropriate ways to interact with their partners from a different culture.

I believe that learning about each other's cultures through interaction in telecollaboration will enrich students' pragmatic and cultural competence and improve their knowledge of the TL. In addition, it will help them with understanding the nature of the people who speak those languages and their lives. **Yang, Kinshuk, Chen, and Huang (2014)** identify strategies for effective cross-cultural online collaborative learning and compare the outcomes of students from two different cultures. Students at a Chinese and an American University were involved in the study. The research method included a questionnaire, interview, and content analysis. In addition to significant differences between the responses of the Chinese and American students, the study revealed “that students from both sides were interested to learn about each other's culture, that they had positive attitudes towards cross-cultural online collaborative learning, and that culture

had an influence on learning methods” (p. 208). Students specified that they would like to have prior knowledge of each other’s cultures and backgrounds. They also were involved in more individual conversations as a result of this collaboration. To conclude the article, several strategies are proposed for the most effective implementation of cross-cultural collaborative learning.

Communicative skills in L2 can be developed through telecollaboration also. Students can improve their communicative abilities through presentations, activities, and interactions in a traditional classroom. Nevertheless, I learned that through telecollaboration, students can also achieve communicative competence, including a number of communicative skills. According to **Jo, Kang, and Yoon (2014)**, communicative competence is a combination of skills that contribute to a person’s ability “to manage interpersonal relationships in communication setting” (p. 109). Jo, et al. (2014) described the process of development communication competence through collaborative learning, where students are exposed to different ways of communications, such as dialogue, collaborations, and social exchange. Therefore, another benefit of telecollaboration is students’ development of necessary communicative abilities by telecollaborative learning activities.

The article by **Belz and Kinginger (2002)** helped me better understand specific aspects of linguistic development and intercultural learning in telecollaboration. The author proposed two case studies of students involved in telecollaborative L2 learning and electronic interaction with NSs. This study demonstrates that L2 study through telecollaboration provides opportunities for social interaction which are different from interactions in traditional classrooms. Students

improve their L2 linguistic abilities and increase their ICC. Therefore, telecollaboration helps develop the language through speaking to a greater variety of authentic contexts.

Varela and Westman (2014) helped me understand better some learning benefits of telecollaboration. The authors describe the results of an online course to be compared with F2F teaching of a topics course entitled Gender and Popular Culture. This study took place at the University of Texas in El Paso. Several positive results were found from the online course such as - “the online class filled up easily, the internet and library sources fit nicely into the course, and animated class discussions occurred online” (p. 42). The online students demonstrated a mastery of the material that was not found in the F2F class; these students were defined as “self-starters,” and were more “motivated to do better.” The students were required to summarize and analyze what they were studying, and they had to demonstrate through quizzes, discussion boards, presentations, and written assignments that they understood the course material and could lead a discussion on the main points of the material. As a result, the online students showed a deeper understanding of the course material than F2F students. The teachers discovered that they connected more with students online than in the traditional classroom. While student participation in the F2F class was required as well, the online environment seemed to provide an added measure of autonomy and safety.

The collaborative work in the online Gender and Popular Culture course “enhanced not only that course, but many of the other courses we teach as colleagues” (p. 52). This study shows the transformation of all courses in that it suggests that the online format offers many tools and strategies to increase learning as well as to promote more active engagement in the classroom.

Therefore, besides cultural benefits, telecollaboration brings some different learning benefits that students achieve through telecollaboration. I found additional learning benefits in email telecollaboration in **Gonglewski, Meloni, and Brant (2001)** study. They described pedagogical benefits of language learning by e-mail. The authors named such benefits as expansion of topics beyond classroom-based ones, promotion of student-centered learning, connection of different speakers, and opportunity for all to participate.

Finally, **Harris (2002)** underlines the learning benefits in telecollaboration. The author examined a number of projects according to the telecollaborative activities. Students from different countries were involved in discussion, debating, and learning from each other. In total, there were 9 interpersonal exchange projects, 41 information collection and analysis projects, and 29 problem solving projects posted by K-12 teachers from around the world during a three-month period. Seven online classes were involved in writing a novel. Each class created a different chapter. Other classes read those chapters and sent comments helping with revisions. This telecollaborative activity engaged students from different classes in the writing and reading process. Parallel problem solving activity helped with developing students' debate skills. Students chose a position on one of the topics, and then they sent a message of intent to participate. Therefore, this study helped me understand that telecollaborative activities can offer more than classroom activities. Through telecollaboration students can improve their primary language skills (as receptive language skills such as reading and listening as well as productive language speaking and writing). In addition, students can develop communicative and debate skills.

In summary, I have learned a lot about communicative classrooms and activities, the role of input, and various benefits of telecollaboration in L2 acquisition. All these books and articles helped me widen my understanding about L2 teaching and learning and how to make my teaching richer, more engaging, and beneficial for my students.

LOOKING FORWARD

It is important to plan the future, but it is hard to know what will happen tomorrow. In my business management degree, I did not plan to be a language teacher. Therefore, after I began teaching at USU I understood I needed to improve myself as a teacher to be better prepared for my teaching career. The MSLT program has been a good place for me. This is a well-designed program that helps new teachers to develop their understanding of what L2 acquisition is and to learn about various methods of L2 teaching.

After graduation I plan to continue teaching advanced-level university students. I look forward to applying new teaching methods and technology tools that I learned about in the MSLT program and then see how those innovations will benefit my students' learning. I would like to explore teaching other level students in order to understand and see L2 acquisition from the beginning.

I would like to attend seminars and conferences to improve my teaching skills and share what I have learned in my teaching practice.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

This appendix describes the unique challenges associated with learning Russian for L1 English learners.

The use of Russian cases is the most difficult part of learning Russian for L1 English speakers. English language grammar does not have any cases, nevertheless, there are six different cases in Russian grammar. In Russian language without understanding Russian cases and their usage, a student never will be fluent in the language. Russian cases affect a number of parts of speech such as nouns, pronouns, adjectives, numbers, etc.

Table 2. *Russian cases and examples of use*

Cases	Questions	Examples
Nominative	Who? What?	Студент (Student) Школа (school)
Genitive	Whom? What?	Студента Школы
Dative	To whom?	Студенту Школе
	To what?	
Accusative	Whom? What?	Студента Школу
Instrumental	By whom?	Студентом Школой
	By what?	
Prepositional	Talking about whom?	Студенте Школе
	Talking about what?	

Table 2. Russian cases and examples of use

Furthermore, Russian grammar has three genders and some letters and sounds are extremely difficult for L1 English speakers to use. For example, English speaking students have problems with use soft sign Ъ, or letters like Ц and Ч, or letters Ъ and И, students cannot recognize the differences in pronunciation and make errors in their written works.

Appendix B

Lesson Plan 1

How to be a journalist and write an article?

I planned this lesson for a Russian grammar class RUSS 3050. According to this lesson plan, students will be able to learn the Russian prepositional case in practice. This case typically answers the questions:

Talking about whom? (for a lively subject)

Talking about what? (for inanimate object)

The grammar instruction was done prior to this lesson. I would like to show how authentic materials can be used and be helpful in learning and practicing the Russian language during a lesson. During lesson students will watch videos, read articles in the TL, learn new vocabulary and phrases related to the lesson topic, work in groups and pairs, and plan their own articles. During this lesson students will learn how to be journalists and collect information.

Communicative Goal: Students will be able to practice grammar by building their communicative skills in working with each other. Students will be involved in a series of different of communicative activities with use of authentic materials to fulfill this linguistic goal. Students will use only the TL.

Level: Advanced Russian as a Second Language. Students have a high ability in all four main language skills; reading, writing, speaking, and listening. In this lesson plan students are supposed to utilize and develop all four skills.

Time Allotted: 75 minutes

Materials: Videos, magazine articles, and activities.

Warm-up activity

Work with an article. I will give students different Russian magazines from the “Sputnik” series.

Objective: Students will learn about different styles of texts and structures.

Students will receive instruction about different styles and structures of various texts. After that, students will choose one article from one magazine. Then students must read it and comprehend it. I, as the teacher, will help them with new words and meanings. At addition, students must pay attention to the style and structure of the texts. Finally, students will give a short report to the class about their articles’ main ideas, styles, and reasons for their interests.

Work with videos.

Objective: Students will learn about conducting an interview, communicating with different people in different situations, and how to avoid making journalistic mistakes.

Video 1. Students will watch a funny video about how to be a journalist and about different difficulties in this job. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7gZjub-A10>

Students will watch the video and then will discuss in groups of 3 different challenges to being journalists. After that, students will share their discussion with the class and how they can act in different situations to avoid those challenges.

Video 2. Students will watch another video about journalists’ different mistakes during taking the interview <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4QyQRbeT1zg>

After this video students will try to find these mistakes and discuss them in pairs. Then students will discuss in class those mistakes and share how to improve or avoid the mistakes.

Follow-up activity or Home work:

Students will write their ideas about what they would write in their articles if they were journalists.

Conclusion. In this lesson students will work with authentic texts in order to develop their reading and comprehension skills and practice the prepositional case. Giving a short report to the class will help students work on their speaking skills. Videos will help students to be more involved in the topic and be more connected to NSs. The activities with videos will help students improve their listening skills. All activities in this lesson will involve students in different types of discussions (group and pair work, and class discussions) and help students improve their speaking skills. Finally, during homework students will write their ideas and topics they would like to investigate and use for their articles if they were journalist and this homework activity will help students practice prepositional case and work with their writing skills.

Appendix C

Lesson plan 2

In this appendix I gave an example of my lesson that is related to this topic.

Declining an Offer to Drink Alcohol

Lesson overview

According to this lesson plan, students will be able to learn about Russian tradition to drink alcoholic beverages. They will learn about possible offers at a business party and how to decline such an offer. Students will learn about different linguistic declining responses to such offers in order to save face and good relationship.

This lesson is meant to be communicative, and so the activities are based upon student interaction. For this purpose students interact with each other from the beginning of the lesson. During lesson students will watch videos, will have instruction through power point where they will learn new vocabulary and phrases related to the lesson topic, will work in groups, and play roles. There will be materials associated with pragmatics, instruction of different questions and responses, and models of different phrases will help students to learn new vocabulary. Through communicative activities students will practice new vocabulary in real-life communication.

The role of the teacher in this lesson is to provide comprehensive input, model the target language, and to be a resource for students. The students are responsible for carrying out the activities through communication.

There are possible problems that may arise in this lesson. There may be some students who may overplay their roles. Therefore, a teacher can give some instructions regarding rules and limits at the beginning of the lesson and control students' responses and interactions. Another

problem can occur because some students work actively in the groups while others may remain silent. The reasons can be different; students may be shy or are lacking in knowledge. The problem can be helped by the instructor watching and participating in the group work and by asking silent passive students about their opinion or inviting them to represent the group or to play the role.

Communicative Goal: Students will be able to build their understanding of Russian cultural tradition related to drinking alcohol and the reasons why drinking alcohol usually occurs in business life. Students will learn about different ways that alcoholic beverages are offered. They will learn the linguistically appropriate refusals of such offers in order to save face and maintain a good relationship with Russian business partners. Students will be involved in different series of communicative activities to fulfill this linguistic goal. Students will only use the TL.

Level: Advanced Russian as a Second Language

Time Allotted: 50 minutes

Materials: Power point slides, videos, and activities.

Activity 1: Warm-up (10 minutes total)

Discussion

(5 min) Class discussion. Students will discuss what they already know about Russian traditional alcohol use during Russian holidays and other events.

Objective: I will ask the questions about their experiences in Russia/Ukraine and what they know about Russian traditional alcohol use.

Procedures:

1. I will ask students questions about this tradition.
2. Students will share what they already know and saw.

Video

(5 min) Students will watch a short video about history of this tradition.

Group or Paired Activities (40 minutes total)

Activity 2: Class work

(10 min)

Objective: Students will learn about different types of offers to drink alcohol in Russia

Procedures:

1. I will show them video examples of different offers to drink alcohol.
2. After every video students will try to respond to such offers politely refusing the offer.

Activity 3: Instruction

(5 min) Teacher-Centered Activity

Objective: Students will learn correct declining phrases.

Procedures:

1. I will show power point slides that explain the main forms of refusal phrases. Students may use to decline an offer in Russian business interactions.

Activity 4: Request reactions

(10 min) Paired Exchange Activity

Objective: Students will work in pairs and practice giving an offer to drink alcohol and declining an offer.

Procedures:

1. Students will be divided in pairs.
3. Students will receive materials describing different ways to offer and decline an offer.
4. Students will discuss their reactions and write answers.

Activity 5: Class work

(5 min)

Objective: Students will report to the class how they would decline different offers.

Procedures:

1. In class students will discuss different ways of declining an offer and choose the best ones. We will pay attention to the declining methods that will help to save face and relationship.

Activity 6: Interaction

(10 min) Role play Activity

Objective: Students will practice how to decline an offer in this activity. They will use what they have learned and try to use the most appropriate and polite ways to decline an offer.

Procedures:

1. Volunteer Students will stand before the class.
2. One student will play the role of a Russian businessman who invites another student playing the role of his foreign business partner.
3. Russian businessman will do his best to offer a drink of some alcoholic beverage to him proposing best wishes for their business deal. The foreign business partner will have to refuse in a polite way in order to maintain the best relationship.

4. There will be a few pairs and after every interaction the class will give a short reaction.

Follow-up activity or Home work:

Objective: at home students will write their personal declining of an offer with an explanation why they believe it would work.