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Broadening Perspectives: Using Multiple Teaching Approaches to Meet the Needs of Language Students

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BROADENING PERSPECTIVES:

USING MULTIPLE TEACHING APPROACHES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF

LANGUAGE STUDENTS

by

Kalen Taylor

A portfolio submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

Approved:

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

Logan, Utah

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ABSTRACT

Broadening Perspectives:

Using Multiple Teaching Approaches to Meet the Needs of Language Students

by

Kalen Taylor: Master of Second Language Teaching

Utah State University, 2020

Major Professor: Dr. Abdulkafi Albirini

Department: Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies

This portfolio is comprised of research, opinions, and ideas that the author has learned during the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program at Utah State University (USU). It is a representation of experiences gained through teaching lower division Spanish courses at USU. In addition to experiences, it is also comprised of research perspectives which were furthered by coursework in the MSLT program.

Contained within the pages is a road map of the author's journey of learning and research. The portfolio begins with the author's perspectives on teaching including his philosophy on teaching and how he has developed by observing other instructors. Next is a section containing research focused on language learning and culture. Lastly, the portfolio has an annotated bibliography exploring recent research on student assessment.

(106 pages)

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CONTENTS

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AFL = Assessment for Learning

BP = Border Pedagogy

C2 = Second Culture / Target Culture

CA = Cultural Awareness

C-DA = Computerized Dynamic Assessment

CLIL = Content and Language Integrated Learning

CLT = Communicative Language Teaching

DA = Dynamic Assessment

EFL = English as a Foreign Language

ESL = English as a Second Language

G-DA = Group Dynamic Assessment

ICA = Intercultural Awareness

ICC = Intercultural Competence

L1 = First Language / Native Language

L2 = Second Language

MML = Multimodal Learning

MSLT = Master of Second Language Teaching

NEST = Native-English-Speaker Teacher

NST = Native-Speaker Teacher

NNEST = Non-Native-English-Speaker Teacher

NNST = Non-Native Speaker Teacher

SCT = Sociocultural Theory

TBL = Task-Based Learning

TPS = Teaching Philosophy Statement

TESOL = Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

USU = Utah State University

ZPD = Zone of Proximal Development

LIST OF APPENDICES

Introduction

This portfolio is a culmination of the work I have put into the MSLT program. The papers, philosophies, and ideas contained in my portfolio show what I have learned and how I have grown in my teaching over the last two years. While it does not contain everything that I have learned, it focuses on some of the things that I think are most important when it comes to language teaching.

The portfolio is divided into two main sections. First, the teaching perspectives and second, research perspectives. Contained within the teaching perspectives is my personal teaching philosophy and some of what I have learned from my observations of other instructors. My teaching philosophy statement (TPS) contains different theories related to language learning and how I believe those theories could be applied in the classroom.

The research portion contains two papers that demonstrate my learning in the areas of culture, equality, and communication. The first paper provides insight on teacher and student perceptions of native speaker teachers of English in the border region of the United States and Mexico. It highlights the complex relationship between language and power between the U.S. and Mexico, and by extension, between English and Spanish. The second paper is a compilation of what I learned about myself and other cultures as a result of completing a type of ethnographic interviews for a class assignment. Additionally, I have included an annotated bibliography that displays what I have learned about dynamic assessment.

TEACHING PERSPECTIVES

Professional Environment

      Taking a language class in grade school was never something that interested me, and so, without so much as setting foot in a foreign language classroom, I graduated from high school. In college, I was a Spanish major, and many of my classes were taught in Spanish, my L2. The experience of being in a second-language classroom was impactful and enjoyable; I decided I wanted to keep working with Spanish after college graduation. The best way for me to stay immersed in Spanish is to make my professional career in a language classroom. Currently, I am undecided on the exact level; however, I would like to work at a junior college or university teaching lower-division Spanish courses. My experience teaching so far has shown me how rewarding it is when students grasp an understanding of another language. Many of my former teachers worked hard to help me be successful and it is my opinion that every student deserves to have someone who pushes them towards success. Wherever my teaching career takes me, I will lend support to my students to give them opportunities for acquiring a second language.

Teaching Philosophy Statement

Introduction

During my time teaching, I learned about many different theories of instruction and methods of teaching. Every teacher I observed used slightly different practices in the classroom, subscribed to different theories they thought were best, and had opinions on what makes a good class. During most of my classes it seemed many instructors wanted to push us to choose a theory to prescribe to and then teach according to that theory. However, something I noticed is that the students do not get caught up in the theories and practices. They want to learn by whatever means necessary. To most students, it matters not if the teacher prescribes to one specific theory or none, it looks the same to them. I believe it is important to understand many theories, methods, and classroom practices but I do not think it is necessary to choose one.

This teaching philosophy statement will express my opinions on why I teach the way that I do and present research to back up my views. One of the reasons we use language is to communicate, so I posit that communication is an absolute must for a language classroom. In VanPatten's (2017) work, communication is defined as "the expression, interpretation, and sometimes negotiation of meaning in a given context. What is more, communication is also purposeful" (p. 3). I believe that communication is one of the keys for someone to acquire language. This is why I like communicative language teaching (CLT), which "focuses on 'communicative proficiency rather than mere mastery of structures'" (Chung, 2017, p. 34). However, I do not believe that CLT should be the only instructional approach. Other teaching pedagogies such as multiliteracies, multimodal learning (MML) and task-based learning (TBL) are all viable options.

Students do not all learn the same way, so I do not believe my teaching should all be done following one theory of language teaching. I am interested in giving my students an

opportunity to acquire language. This could fall under any multiple different teaching theories and classroom practices. I postulate that teaching to the needs of students while understanding many theories and methods gives a teacher the best opportunity for success. In this teaching philosophy I will explain my personal interpretation of some popular teaching approaches including CLT, multiliteracies, TBL, MML and the sociocultural theory (SCT) of learning. Furthermore, I will expound on my belief that a language teacher need not choose one theory to use in the classroom. I posit that teachers should be familiar with different theories, methods, and practices but need not rely on one.

Kumaravadivelu (1994,2001) wrote about a "Post Method Pedagogy" which is similar to what I describe. Post method teaching relies on the teacher autonomy to build and implement their own theory of practice. The autonomy of a teacher is formed by their knowledge and experiences teaching. Kumaravadivelu (2001) claims that most teachers are educated on certain methods which pressures them to teach a certain way.

> They learn that the supposedly objective knowledge of language learning and teaching has been inextricably linked to a particular method, which, in turn, is linked to a particular school of thought in psychology, linguistics, and other related disciplines. When they begin to teach, however, they quickly recognize the need to break away from such a constraining concept of method. In order to do that, they have to rely increasingly on their personal knowledge of learning and teaching. (p. 548)

It is important to have an educational base of methods to pull from but to me it is important to use my experience and focus on the needs of the students to continually be developing as a teacher. My teaching philosophy will evolve and change over time as I continue

to grow in my educational knowledge and experience. I am not limited to one method or teaching approach that I have chosen as my path. This TPS shows some of the theories of teaching I learned in the course of my education and therefore provides a glimpse of some of the ideas I use to construct the methods with which I teach.

The Communicative Approach

Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, and Mandell (2001) write, "Our collective experience of teaching and observing in foreign language classrooms shows us that the traditional paradigm of teacher centered grammar instruction is a continuing reality in many language programs" (p. i). This came as a surprise to me. Due to my unfamiliarity of the L2 classroom growing up, I wrongly assumed that language classes were mostly communicative, because that is what I have experienced since being in college. Communication is an important part of learning a second language. VanPatten (2015) says "Adult learners use language in the service of communication, so making (and expressing) meaning is the main process underlying acquisition" (p. 57). In other words, using the language is one of the ways the L2 is acquired. Even though the focus is on communication, there are times that students need to learn grammar rules and apply them to make their communication more precise, and that is an acceptable time to teach them. However, a class should not be focused solely on grammar.

Shrum and Glisan, (2016) agree with this point. "The evidence convincingly indicates that the ability to verbalize a language rule does not signify that the language learner can use it in communication" (p. 21). Knowing a rule is one thing but in language acquisition, it is important to be able to use it. To learn how to use language rules, the students need to first hear it used correctly and have a chance to process that input. That means learners must have comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982, 1985) in the target language in order for there to be a chance at language

acquisition. Input is defined by Gass and Mackey (2007) as "language that a learner is exposed to" (p. 177). More specifically, VanPatten (2017) claims input is "Language embedded in a communicative event that the learner attends to for its meaning" (p. 59). I would add to VanPatten's claim that while input is language in a communicative event, this is not the only form of input. Input can come in many forms that are not part of communicative events.

What most authors, and myself, agree on is what Gass (2013) proposes, that "The concept of input is perhaps the single most important concept of second language acquisition. It is trivial to point out that no individual can learn a second language without input of some sort" (p. 11). I agree with this idea that a student needs input in order to learn, however I think that they can receive the input necessary to learn in a number of different teaching approaches, not only CLT. One alternative is the multiliteracies method of teaching.

Multiliteracies Approach

The multiliteracies approach was made famous by the New London Group's 1996 manifesto titled *A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures.* Warner and Dupuy (2017) summarized the main points of the manifesto as follows. "(1) reflect the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of the contemporary globalized world, and (2) account for the new kinds of texts and textual engagement that have emerged in the wake of new information and multimedia technologies" (p. 119). This means that the term multiliteracies includes new types of media and uses of language.

New media and language include email, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, any other social media, and new forms of communication. The methods of communication change quickly with technology and this teaching style works to integrate the new media into the classroom instead of just relying on books and speaking. The focus of the multiliteracies

approach is helpful for students to know "what it takes to communicate capably across, or for that matter, even within cultures" (Warford & White, 2012, p. 401). Different cultures and styles of Spanish are found all over the world, making the idea of communicating across and within other cultures very important in my Spanish classroom.

In addition to communicating across and within other cultures, multiliteracies also emphasize the four knowledge processes. Kaur, Ganapathy, and Sidhu (2012) explain that "The knowledge processes encompass cognitive skills such as conceptualizing, experiencing, applying and analyzing" (p. 121). This means teachers focus on developing these processes through different activities and different uses of media types. The goal is for students to become better at using the language to make meaning, which is to say to make it personal to the learner and those who they communicate with. As students accept various forms of input they construct what it means to them. That meaning might change depending on the context, the method of delivery or the personal ideology of the student. When produce language, they construct something that has a specific meaning to them.

Cope and Kalantzis (2009) posit that "The logic of multiliteracies is one that recognizes that meaning making is an active, transformative process, and a pedagogy based on that recognition is more likely to open up viable life courses for a world of change and diversity" (p. 175). One way that I incorporated multiliteracies into my classroom is through a writing assignment. I had each student write a cover letter for a job that they would like to have in the future. These were second semester students and they were very nervous about writing a full page of text in a their L2 because it was not something they had done in the past. The results were incredible. The students rose to the challenge and produced great written content that

helped them to use Spanish in a way they had not used it previously. It helped them to understand one of the potential uses of the target language and made it personal to them.

The focus of multiliteracies is to build on the way students think and process information while empowering them to become better communicators in different contexts along the way. This is one of the goals that I have for students in my class. In theory, multiliteracies should help students be better prepared for using language in the real world, not just the classroom. Another way to help teach students and prepare them for solving problems in the world is task-based learning.

Task-Based Learning

Ellis (2017) lists four different forms that tasks take in the classroom, however they can intersect with each other. The four types are: 1) Input-based - tasks that do not require but do not prohibit production. 2) Output-based – tasks that require speaking and/or writing to achieve the outcome. 3) Unfocused – tasks involving general samples of language. 4) Focused – tasks designed to elicit the processing of specific, predetermined linguistic domains (list adapted from p. 4). Calvert and Sheen (2015) add that "Essential for the success of task-based instruction is the ability of teachers to design and implement language learning tasks at an appropriate level of difficulty so that students can engage with and learn effectively from the materials provided" (p. 227). In TBL, the teacher's main duty is to decide what type of task to assign and provide directions. This creates the conditions in which the students learn to communicate through one of the four task types mentioned previously.

In my class, I use TBL to give students projects throughout the semester. One example is an output-based, focused task I assign to record a video of themselves cooking. I give them instructions with certain vocabulary they should try to incorporate and each student is

responsible for making a five-minute video of themselves giving directions on how to prepare a food item. Calvert and Sheen (2015) highlight several benefits of using tasks. "Tasks offer a greater understanding of learners' needs and limitations and how best to address those needs…Tasks can serve as a means of incorporating enjoyable, beneficial, and communicative activities in the L2 classroom." (p. 241). Just as Calvert & Sheen point out, the food-making video assignment gives me a chance to see what my students are good at and where they are making mistakes. It also gives the students an opportunity to use the language outside of class and they all seem to enjoy completing the project. While the video is an example of TBL it also fits into the MML pedagogy.

Multimodal Learning

Multimodal leaning focuses on communicating the way students communicate in the world today: words, images, sounds, graphs, video and much more. Magana, Serrano, and Rebello (2019) say "The theory of multimedia learning refers to the process of learning from words and picture" (p. 1). According to Cloonan (2008) a MML pedagogy will "require students to develop proficiency in meaning-making in linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial and multimodal designs; with multimodal being a combination of the other modes" (p. 159). Using all these modes for activities in the classroom gives students the chance to receive and respond to input and make meaning in many different contexts. I believe this is beneficial for the students because it mimics the real world. We do not simply use language to talk but we take in many different modes of communication every day.

Knowing that we use many different modes of communication leads me to believe that multiple ways to communicate should be part of the classroom. Albers and Harste (2007) claim "A multimodal approach in teaching acknowledges that language is only partial, and that many

modes are involved in meaning-making, even though one mode may be chosen to represent meaning (language, visual, spatial, digital, and so on)" (p. 11). One way I have found to incorporate MML into my classroom is YouTube videos and LibriVox recordings. Whenever we read or even discuss books or stories, I can find short videos on the internet and often a five- or ten-minute audio recording on LibriVox. I share those resources with my students, offering them an opportunity to interpret and experience language in different contexts for themselves. I believe MML will become increasingly important as more and more types of media and uses for language arise with new technology.

Sociocultural Theory

SCT is a learning theory first proposed by Vygotsky in *Mind in Society (1978)*. Vygotsky focused his research on social learning, as he noticed that children learn from their social interactions with others. His research was not focused on language learning or adults but his ideas on how children learn have been adopted by linguistic researchers to use in the L2 classroom. It looks a little different in every classroom but Lantolf, Thorne and Poehner (2015) claim that mediation is the core concept that unites all varieties of SCT. They explain that mediation is one way that people interact with the world.

> Their cognitive and material activities are mediated by symbolic artifacts (such as
>
> languages, literacy, numeracy, concepts, and forms of logic and rationality) as
>
> well as by material artifacts and technologies. (p. 20)

The claim of SCT is that thinking, reading, learning, speaking and anything else related to how humans mediate, are brought about through social and cultural activities. I agree that learning is a social activity and have seen it many times in my class.

An example of SCT in my class is group reading activities. I divide the students into groups and give them each a children's book to read. I try to group some of the more advanced students with some lower level students. I give them a task to read the book out loud as a group and find examples of certain grammar constructions. As they read, I roam the classroom and provide help where needed. I have noticed that students of a lower level are often able to communicate better after they have been paired with higher level students. Van Compernolle and Williams (2013) clarify that although a teacher may mediate in SCT, L2 teaching in SCT covers any type of learning activity meant to "promote the internalization of, and control over, the language that learners are studying whether or not a human mediator (e.g. a teacher) is physically present and overtly teaching" (p. 279). In my example, student learning is mediated by other students as they learn during the activity. This shows how students learn socially through interacting with others.

Conclusion

I want to make the best use of limited teaching time so the students in my class can acquire language. Learning to communicate through different modes and across many cultures is what I consider to be a successful language classroom. Whether that classroom is focused on CLT, multiliteracies, TBL, MML or SCT does not matter to me. Crandall (2000) warns that, "Decontextualized theory fails to consider the multidimensionality and unpredictability of the classroom environment" (p. 35). I agree and would add that teachers should be familiar with many different kinds of theories although I do not find it necessary to specialize or rely only on one. The purpose of knowing more theories and implementing them in the classroom serves the goal of meeting the instructional needs of as many students as possible. Ideally, a teacher could incorporate all of these different methods and approaches that I have highlighted, and more that I

did not cover. Using all of these teaching theories together creates what I consider to be the optimal climate that leads to possible acquisition of the target language by the students.

I measure success in an L2 classroom by whether or not the students are communicating, learning, and thinking in the second language. Finding the right mix of all the tools accessible to language teachers and learners is a delicate balancing act done so that students can acquire language. Darhower (2014) concludes,

> It is generally accepted that a speaker should be at least advanced to be able to live or work comfortably with a population who speaks that language. Yet research shows that many undergraduate language majors do not reach advanced upon graduation (p. 398).

By using a mixture to the principles laid out in this teaching philosophy, I can help to reverse this trend of students graduating without knowing their target language well enough to use it. My class may not have a specific theoretical focus but that would not matter to my students anyways. What it will be, is a room where students have the opportunity to acquire a second language.

Professional Development through Teaching Observation

As part of my development as an instructor and a student in the MSLT program, I have had the opportunity to observe multiple classes of different languages and levels. This experience allowed me to learn from the instructors around me and grow as a teacher. The classes I observed were all university level, most were beginning or intermediate courses while one was an upper-division literature class. The bulk of classes I have observed were Spanish classes, since that is the language I speak, and I will be focusing on Spanish in my professional career. I also observed a mandarin Chinese class and a French class. One of my favorite experiences to see growth was to observe the same instructor in back-to-back semesters. Observations and coursework have taught me that there are many different practices of teaching and learning involved in second-language instruction. In this paper, I will explain what I learned in my observations and how those things helped me to become a better instructor.

My experience in observing Chinese and French was extremely valuable, even though I did not understand all of what was being said. I found Chinese very disorienting and confusing to follow everything in the lesson. That provided understanding as to what some of my students might feel during class. It reminded me to slow down, repeat myself and make sure I give clear directions to help my students progress and become comfortable. What both lessons did teach me was that the structure for language classes needs to include a good warm-up activity, have clear lesson objectives and be taught mainly in the target language.

The Chinese course was taught in a very communicative way, meaning the focus was on the L2 and the amount of input the students would get during their class. The structure was very similar to communicative language teaching ideas that I learned about in my coursework. Chinese class included a very good warm-up activity with Quizlet Live, clear learning objectives

and stayed in the target language the whole time. Even though it was challenging, students rose

to the challenge and seemed excited with what they learned. There were still some students that

did not participate. However, I learned that happens in almost every class.

French on the other hand, did not have a warm up activity and fluctuated in and out of the

target language much of the class. French class seemed to implement the multiliteracies

approach. Students watched videos, read and gave presentations in the L2. However, less

emphasis was put on only speaking in the L2. For example, if students had language questions or

problems understanding directions, those were often in the L1. The focus of the class was

slightly different from the Chinese class which was all about communicating in the L2. Having a

little more flexibility on the language spoken in the class was simpler for most of the students

and the instructor spent less time trying to get the point across. Although perhaps easier for the

students in French class, there seemed to be more motivation for improvement in the Chinese

class. My instruction was influenced by this in my efforts to stay in the target language and do a

better job of starting class off with a quick game or warm-up activity. It seems to help the

students stay on task for the rest of class.

While observing classes in my language of instruction, I was able to observe one

instructor twice in back-to-back semesters. This showed me how important it is to continually be

developing as an instructor. I have seen many professors get into a habit of teaching a class the

same way year after year. I have sat through many lectures and taken many tests that I am certain

were put together or written at least ten years prior to my receiving them. This is not the kind of

teacher I want to be. Recycling old materials and ideas is fine, but my observations showed me it

is important and possible to improve ourselves, along with the materials we use to teach. The

instructor I observed made changes and improved. They added can-do statements to lesson plans

while incorporating methods and ideas I had heard discussed in the office or classes. This showed me that, regardless of my theoretical approach, I too can make constant changes and become better every single time I teach instead of just using all my old materials and getting stuck in a rut.

One of the biggest takeaways I had from every class is that no matter the level, language or teaching approach, it is important to keep the class busy and moving. In the upper-division literature class I observed, students did a lot of pair and share work or small group work that led to class discussion. These courses seemed designed based on more of a sociocultural background in learning. Instead of letting the students stay in the same pairs and groups all the time, the professor moved them around and made them work with other students. This exposes students to other opinions and backgrounds and keeps them busy and moving in class.

Some instructors did not move the students around but allowed them to work with the same people for the whole class. I found that this leads to students losing interest as class goes on. If students are not moving, they get too comfortable with the situation and stop putting in an effort to learn. They also tend to get bored if they are not moving. This is easy to see when observing but can sometimes be hard to spot during instruction. As a result of my observations, I try to always move students around to keep them actively participating in the class.

Along with physical movement, it is important to move the lesson along as well. I learned in all classes that sometimes you must end an activity and move on to something else. People finish things at different times and I often want to wait and give everyone a chance to complete the activity. The problem is everyone else gets bored. Observing classes gives me a better perspective of what is happening with the students as they finish activities. They love to go back to the L1 and start having their own conversations. Most of the instructors I observed did a great

job at only letting a couple groups finish and then moved on. If they wait too long, the advanced groups' attention is gone, and they have a hard time regaining control of the lesson. It is important to keep all the learners busy in the classroom, not only the quicker or slower ones.

Overall, I think the most important thing I learned from observations is that every instructor does things differently but they can all be successful. Seeing things from the students' point of view showed me that they do not know what theories the instructor is using, they come to classes to be challenged and learn new things. In classes where the content seemed a little more challenging, students were very engaged regardless of whether that course was taught from a sociocultural or communicative perspective. As an instructor, it is important to continually be learning how we can teach more effectively but still remember to be focused on the needs of our students. It is important to give my students a chance to show me what they are capable of and not put limits on what they can do. By providing learners challenging opportunities and focusing on their needs they will have a better opportunity to grow.

RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES

LANGUAGE PAPER

Implications of Student and Teacher Perspectives of NSTs and NNSTs in the U.S. and Mexico

Orientation and Reflection

I originally wrote this paper for a course titled "Teaching English in a Global Context." The focus of my paper is native and non-native speakers of English as teachers and what students prefer. As I learned about practices and problems relating to teaching English in different areas in the world, I started to think about students who were expected to speak English in order to receive an education in the United States. While researching native speakership and teaching, I encountered challenging questions about race and the value of knowing a language. It seems that the culture our society has created, there is only value in knowing English. The message seems to be, if a native English speaker learns a foreign language, good for them. However, a native speaker of Spanish in the United States is often looked down on for not knowing English and no or very little value is given to his or her native language of Spanish.

This paper is about the connection between language and power in the education system. In my teaching philosophy, I discuss different ways that education can be effective regardless of the theoretical perspectives of teachers. I focused on the relationship between the educational systems in the United States and Mexico, along with the students and teachers that participate in both. My concentration was on English and Spanish because I teach Spanish and speak both. What I found out is that the native language of the teacher is not the most important factor for students. However, perhaps more importantly, I discovered varying degrees of institutionalized racism that are very common in the education system. I hope this paper provides some ways to perhaps help students and teachers who find themselves learning and wondering how their language is affecting education.

A contributing factor to me writing this paper was that I have seen this notion of linguistic superiority first hand. I found many examples of people who felt that being a native

speaker of Spanish was seen as a negative. I would venture to guess that multilinguals living in the U.S. have seen how English is prioritized over other languages. Those who have a first language other than English have not only seen it but experienced some sort of negative prejudice or feelings of not belonging at some point because of it (Borijan, 2015; Delgado, 2010; Pablo, 2015; Silva, 2014). I wish this were not the case. The idea that English has a higher value than another language is nothing short of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992). Not wanting to contribute to such linguistic imperialism, I decided to further research the problem so that during my educational career, I do not further perpetuate it.

The class provided a lot of opportunity for reflection and sharing. As I learned more and more in the course and from doing my own research, I became convinced that as a native speaker of English, at some point I had probably contributed to the problem. I hope that this paper can shed some light on the topic and help people be more thoughtful about the connection between language and power in the future. Educators need to look at their hiring practices and value system to make sure they are not contributing to the linguistic imperialism of English. As an educator, I want the same amount of importance that is placed on knowing English to be placed on knowing Spanish. If someone is a native speaker of Spanish, that should be celebrated, not looked upon as something that must be overcome.

What I found very interesting is that even though these systemic challenges are present, students themselves do not show a preference for having a native speaker teacher or a non-native speaker teacher. They show a preference for having a teacher that is well prepared and committed to being a good instructor. That is something that school districts and individual teachers can control and work on. Better prepared teachers, regardless of what language is being spoken, will help students more than trying to hire only teachers who are native speakers.

As a result of writing this paper, my first thought is that I need to be better. I am more aware of some of the biases that I might have as a native speaker of English. All I can do is work on that for the future. If I am ever teaching in a context where I have students who are not native speakers of English, I need to value their native language and contributions. Likewise, if I work as a school administrator, I will work to equalize the power and hire well-prepared teachers instead of defaulting to solely native speakers of English. This is important because sometimes non-native speakers of English are passed up for jobs even if they are more experienced teachers. This type of action will be very helpful and set a good example. Leading by doing is a viable way to solve this issue.

Implications of Student and Teacher Perspectives of NSTs and NNSTs in the U.S. and Mexico

Introduction

Perceptions about native-speaker teachers (NSTs) and non-native-speaker teachers (NNSTs) of English vary greatly between students and teachers. The focus is on teaching English to L1 speakers of Spanish mainly in the borderlands of the United States and Mexico. In the U.S. and Mexico, the perspectives and perceptions from students and teachers provide an interesting view towards the attitudes about language and power. Due to their different locations and social practices, students who are learning English in the U.S. have different views of their teachers than students who are learning English in Mexico. The same goes for teachers' views, which not only vary from place to place but also differ from the students' views.

Part of the reason for such different ideas about language learning and teaching is the place of instruction. In the United States, much less emphasis is placed on learning a foreign language and to a certain extent even teaching English. Even though many citizens in the U.S. do not learn another language or help teach English they still believe everyone should speak English. However, in Mexico, learning English is often considered very important if students want to continue on to receive more education. Due to the political power and hegemony of the United States, a power struggle has been infused between the English and Spanish languages just as a struggle transpires between the border of the two countries. Language however has transcended the borders and both English and Spanish crop up on both sides of the border, including inside the education system.

This review of qualitative research shows students' and teachers' perceptions about native speakership in a learning context. Through this process, discoveries are also made about how students view language as it relates to political power. After the viewpoints of the different

groups are better established, the perspectives will be compared to show to what extent the views from both groups overlap. These comparisons are used to show the complex connection between language and power in the United States and Mexico. Lastly, implications for language teachers are shared. Understanding how both students and teachers think will help inform teachers of English how to be effective instructors to L1 Spanish speakers in the unique context of the U.S. borderlands and beyond.

I. Student Perspectives

Student perspectives on NSTs and NNSTs vary greatly depending on which studies are examined. For example, Arvizu (2014) shows that students prefer NSTs at the beginning stages of learning and then shift to preferring a NNST for learning skills such as reading and shift again to a preference for NSTs at a higher level. The author reasons that students can identify better with NNSTs because of a similar background, which then leads to greater comfort in the classroom. However, the students also feel NSTs can teach them things that a NNST might not be able to at a higher level. Herrera (2015), who declares, "You cannot just put anybody who speaks English in a classroom; they also need the pedagogical skills that a professional possesses in order to deliver a sound class" (p. 116). What Herrera claims is that the student preferences have more to do with teacher preparedness or teacher training than native speakership of the language.

According to Beckett and Stiefvater (2009), "students rated pronunciation/accent in teachers' speech as very important, but … such ratings did not result in negative attitudes toward NNESTs [non-native English speaker teachers]" (p. 31). The authors continue on to make the same point as Herrera (2015) by saying "preparedness, humor, qualifications, and professionalism inferred from teachers' speech seemed to play a role in students' preferences"

(p. 31). While accents were noted, they did not have a negative effect on students' attitudes. When considering the instructors, results show that the students tend to prefer a well-prepared NNST to an unprepared NST.

Aguilar and Rodríguez (2012) investigated student perceptions of teachers, this time at a Spanish university using content and language integrated learning (CLIL). The results echo those of Herrera (2015). Although not set in Mexico like the last two studies, Aguilar and Rodríguez found that students prefer a teacher who is prepared, the native language of the teacher had little consequence. Students felt that they were often let down by teachers but not necessarily due to them being NNSTs. "A lecturer trained in CLIL methodology might not have fallen short of expectations" (p. 194). In other words, even in a different setting the students' perception towards their instructors being capable aligned with how much training and experience the instructors had. The students did not know how much training the teachers had but their blind preferences showed that they preferred teachers who had received more training. The native speakership of the instructor did not matter as much to the students. Nuñez Asomoza (2015) shows the same results at a Mexican university. "Having expertise in teaching strategies, methods of assessment, and material design would give teachers more tools to provide students with what they need in order to acquire deeper knowledge" (p. 122). Once again, teachers have the responsibility to plan lessons in advance and hone their craft to have a positive impact on their students.

The research in most studies shows students do not show a preference for a NST over a NNST (Aguilar, 2012; Calderon, 2016; Herrera, Richter, Colunga, & Espejel, 2016). This finding holds true in CLIL contexts as well. What CLIL and traditional language students have in common is that they prefer a well-trained teacher. In the articles listed previously, students show

a preference for well-prepared instructor and less concern over the native or non-native speaker background of the teacher. Yet, some authors such as Arvizu (2014), show that students do have a clear preference for NSTs. This seems to have more to do with the proficiency level of students and the phrasing of the research questions rather than the actual views of the learners. In the studies where students show a preference for NSTs, they are generally higher proficiency level students. Another mark of the studies is that the survey questions use the words native and non-native. Asking if students prefer a NST over a NNST could bring the students bias into the answer. Studies that students do not show a preference usually ask about specific teachers or seek to compare two teachers, one being NST, and one a NNST. Students in Gonzalez and Llurda (2016) and Javier (2016) say that they do not think either is preferable. Some students at higher proficiency levels think that they learn more from NSTs. This is very similar to preferences due to level shared by students in the Arvizu study. As students get to higher levels, they believe a NST can teach them things a NNST might not know or understand fully.

It is important to note that the research indicating that students have a clear preference used the words "native" and/or "non-native" in the survey questions. Research design plays a large role in the way the questions are answered. For example, instead of asking students if they preferred their instructor from last semester or this semester, they just ask whether students prefer a NST or NNST. This is the case with any study reviewed where students show a clear preference for NSTs over NNSTs (Arvizu, 2014; Gonzalez, 2016; Javier, 2016). In the majority of surveys designed without the words "native" or "non-native" in their questions, students simply showed a preference for the teacher who prepared appropriate lessons for class.

II. Teacher Perspectives

Although most researchers report that students do not express a preference for a NST over a NNST, the perspectives of many teachers do not reflect the same beliefs. Armenta-Delgado (2010), presenting interview data from NNSTs of English in Mexico, quotes teachers as saying "because they see I am Mexican they probably think that I do not know much English" and "many students think that native teachers are better than non-native teachers" (p. 317). However, the interview quotes here are only what teachers *believe* the students think about them. Another common theme in the teachers' responses was that students grew to like them. While teachers in this study felt being a NST was initially valued by students, professionalism and teacher preparedness eventually emerged as the deciding factor for what students preferred (Delgado, 2018).

Wood (2017) writes about her work as a language instructor who has taught English in Mexico as a NST and Spanish in the U.S. as a NNST. She touts the advantages to lower level learners starting with a NNST who shares the same background. "A NNST from the same culture (speaking the same language) as his or her students may be best suited to build meaningful relationships with them. Not only do they share the same language, but they also possibly share the same ideals, may have similar backgrounds, and can relate to the same cultural phenomena" (p. 1). Instructors can build relationships and help students because they will understand what students are going through. If teachers recognize their L1 influences on their L2, they can help head off some of the problems at the beginning. While many teachers may share Woods' perspectives, some teachers may have different ideas.

Aboshiha (2015), for example, studies NST communities and says, "The 'native speaker' teachers in the community also insisted they had superior language proficiency and classroom pedagogy compared to their 'non-native speaker' teaching colleagues" (p. 57). Although in most

of the research, the idea of strong superiority of NSTs is not as common, it does still exist in some areas. That notion of superiority, even as it has no basis in reality, seems to influence the attitude of a NST. Similarly, Pablo (2015) claims that "Mexican teachers feel they need to establish their credibility as legitimate speakers and teachers of English because they seem to keep believing that only the 'native speakers' are the ideal English teachers to serve as role models for students" (p. 118). The attitude of NSTs can be detrimental to the confidence and success of NNSTs even when they are doing the right things as educators.

In another study with teachers from Mexico, Borijan (2015) displayed what Mexican teachers think about teaching English. The results show that they believe NNSTs can be highly effective English teachers if they are proficient in the language and they have professional development and support from their institution. This is consistent with the data reviewed previously about the perceptions of teachers from the students' point of view. Ramirez-Romero and Pamplón (2012) also suggest that both NSTs and NNSTs can be effective with proper education. However, they point to the following about teacher preparedness in Mexico, "From what we do know, their working conditions and academic preparation are far from advantageous" (p. 13). Although there are attitudes that only NSTs are qualified or ready for the job, the real factor of concern is teacher training. If institutions are providing their teachers with opportunities to advance and get better, it should not matter whether someone is a NST or NNST. Nevertheless, this status distinction does appear to matter in terms of the relationship between language and power.

III. Language and Power

Students and teachers alike notice the power of language. Vajda (2016) gathers perspectives from teachers and students. One NNST in Mexico says, "I must say that due to the

fact that I lived in California for many years made it easy to get a job. Even though I was not a native speaker, I had a good pronunciation and my employers liked it" (p. 65). This shows the influence that English and the U.S. have currently in Mexico, especially when it comes to employment as an English teacher. Even just the influence of living in the United States for a little while was enough to get this instructor a job.

Aboshiha (2015) shows that native speakers may use their native speakership to keep a position of power. She characterizes the group of NSTs she studied as

> a community of teachers who continued to view themselves as possessing
>
> superior educational backgrounds, linguistic ability and pedagogy compared to
>
> their 'non-native' speaker colleagues. These factors, it appeared, legitimized and
>
> maintained their 'native speaker' privilege internationally, both in their own eyes
>
> and in terms of the institutions they worked for. (p. 46)

When their viewpoints affect the institutions they work for, challenges are created for NNSTs trying to get jobs. Mahboob (2004) did a study on who gets hired for jobs teaching English in the United States. While asking administrators, Mahboob found that nearly 60% of the administrators polled thought that being a native English speaker was an important part of being an ESL instructor. The research showed that there was a correlation between what administrators consider important and who gets hired, meaning there is a low number of NNESTs in ESL programs in the United States. In a later study on job advertisements, Mahboob and Golden (2013) found that out of 79 job advertisements for English teachers, only 13 percent did not mention native speakership or nationality as a job requirement.

The results from these studies show that the more important an administrator thinks being a native speaker is, the less likely a NNST is to get a job, even if they are well-trained

professionals. Mahboob and Golden (2013) indicate, "discrimination against NNESTs in hiring remains rampant" (p. 78). This is something that needs to change in educational institutions. Being a NST or NNST should not be the determining factor for getting a job, yet nearly 60 percent of those in charge of hiring place a great value on native speakership. Selvi (2014) writes about the movement to get more non-native speakers hired for teaching jobs. The philosophies come from teachers of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) and can be traced back to the 1980's idea about the "idealized native speaker-hearer" (p. 576). The goal of the NNEST movement in TESOL is to "replace the circle of native speakerism…with an all-encompassing one, which takes everybody in and welcomes diverse uses, users, functions, and contexts of the English(es) around the world." (p. 598). The discrimination against NNEST must end in order for teachers to be treated fairly and replace the circle of native speakerism as mentioned above.

Similar to the teachers, students also see a higher academic value placed upon English by administrators rather than Spanish. Christiansen, Trejo Guzmán and Mora-Pablo (2018) interviewed bilinguals with experience living in both the U.S. and Mexico. One student said, "when I was over there (U.S.) … it made no big difference in my life knowing Spanish because it was something that I would use in my house and I … that's it" (p. 88). Instead of continuing education and studying Spanish in school or even seeing the L2 as a skill, it was essentially ignored. Mackinney (2016) studied ESL students in Miami and noted that "English is the dominant language of student placement and assessment" (p. 309). In order to advance and make progress at the school, the students must pass tests written in English. In the view of the students in Mackinney's study, this is unfair. "It's just based on a test, it supposedly tells you if you know English or not, why can't a teacher just tell, 'Oh she knows how to speak English,' … just because you get an F in a test, it doesn't mean you're stupid" (p. 311). In the U.S., the power of

education is linked to knowing English. Not only speaking English, as many students in the study do, but being able to pass tests that contain academic language is the key to unlocking the potential of education.

Students in both the United States and Mexico have experiences not only with NSTs but also with learning subject matter in a foreign language. Nuñez Asomoza (2015) says, "Although they feel positive about learning school contents in English, some of them are concerned about this language threatening their Mexican pride" (p. 122). Students in Herrera (2015) who were learning Mexican history in English shared this sentiment. "Students viewed Mexican history in English as being "weird" and seemingly "illogical." Indeed, one group of students viewed English as an imposition because the foreign language "invaded" their culture and traditions" (p. 116). These student perspectives illustrate a pushback to learning English due to a perceived loss of cultural identity and possibly a feeling of imposition of power, which comes from English.

Kleyn (2017) builds upon the idea of language being related to power by providing examples of transborder students, a term denoting learners who have experience in both U.S. and Mexican schools. Kleyn finds that these students often lack a feeling of identity. In the United States, they are viewed as needing to learn English and in Mexico they are left out or marginalized because they are too American. These descriptions of students' feelings create a situation for that can lead to a loss of identity. Diminishing someone's identity in the name of education can happen in either the U.S. or Mexico. The situation described is unfair because there is no alternative for the student to gain an education, if they want to learn they have to be part of the system.

The realities rooted in language, power, and identity are not only felt by transborder students, but also by instructors. Teachers from other countries deal with many of the same

issues as the students do. First, they may be unfamiliar with the education system and expectations. Second, teachers of foreign origin might have questions about community standards. Lastly, teachers and students question their control of the language. Rajagopalan (2005) declares it is possible that NNSTs "have been literally brainwashed into believing that their highest goal should be to be so proficient in the language as to be welcomed into the community of native speakers as 'regular' members" (p. 286). Feeling the need to constantly try and fit in and be part of the community is draining to teachers. Focusing more on the schools, Diniz de Figueiredo (2011) articulates that "NNESTs feel at least a certain level of threat and insecurity in relation to their confidence and authority" (p. 430). Not belonging to a community and feeling challenged for authority can result in teacher burnout and lead to a lack of confidence and loss of identity by the teacher.

Kleyn suggests that "Only when they [transborder students] are a valued part of each nation's fabric will they be seen for the ways they can contribute transnationally and become positioned to be the leaders who can impact positive changes that build bridges rather than borders" (p. 83). While what Kleyn suggests is true, the Mahboob studies and Diniz de Figueiredo article show that NNSTs need to be seen in the same way. Currently NNSTs and transborder students are out of place in both the United States and Mexico. If the two nations could learn to accept and nurture them, both students and teachers could have a sense of belonging and a better educational experience. In order for that to happen, transborder students and NNSTs must be, as Kleyn says, a "valued part" of the country.

Implications

I. Influence of English/Spanish

As far as language and power are concerned, a large theme in the literature is the way Spanish seems to be devalued by speakers of English. Whether by an institution or an individual instructor, English is given a much higher value. Petron (2009) points out how Spanish does not have the same importance in the U.S. even though English is valued very highly in Mexico.

> Many heritage language students of Spanish possess a higher degree of fluency
> and communicative ability than the average Spanish-as-a-foreign language
> learner. Nonetheless, they receive a message from both educational institutions
> and society as a whole that what they possess is not valuable. I would argue that
> the Spanish that heritage language individuals in the U.S. possess is every bit as
> valuable, economically and otherwise, as the English spoken by these participants
> in Mexico. (p. 126)

Although Spanish is not given the same amount of importance in the United States as English is in Mexico, perhaps it should be. The first step to change and building bridges to connect cultures and groups of people is acceptance. Kleyn (2017) suggests that giving equal value to foreign languages can help make changes and create a leader out of someone who at one point might have been overlooked. Until equal value to languages is achieved in the U.S. there will be a feeling of "otherness" as described by Pablo (2015). Kidd (2002) suggests that there are feelings of tension and otherness between native speakers of Spanish and native speakers of English in the United States. Kidd submits that if organizations and institutions change some of their practices, there is hope for unity between Spanish speakers and English speakers.

> 'Them' are not 'Us', and 'We' are not 'Them'. 'We' and 'They' can be
> understood only together, in their mutual conflict. I see a group as 'Us' only
> because I distinguish another group as 'Them'. The two opposite groups

sediment, as it were, in my map of the world on the two poles of an antagonistic

relationship. It is this antagonism which makes the two groups 'real' to me and

makes credible that inner unity and coherence I imagine they possess. (p. 203)

When read by a citizen of the United States with reference to U.S. and Mexico relations

of power that include language, this quote really shows how separate these two countries can be.

Even though they are neighbors and so many on both sides of the border have deep connections

to both countries, there is a visible "Them are not Us" culture. Although not necessarily the root

of the problem, language is part of the solution. The othering culture will likely not change until

Spanish is given the same sort of status that English is. Gutierrez Estrada and Schecter (2018)

show how powerful English is in their research about language among indigenous peoples in

Mexico. Community members where the study was conducted "viewed English as a symbolic

and material resource that would provide their children with access to future opportunities such

as employment, higher education, and upward social mobility" (p. 131). English is perceived as

the key to education, providing the vision for more money in life and thus, English has all the

power.

In contrast, in the United States, Spanish, or any second language for that matter, is seen

as a positive for native speakers of English to know but not helpful if someone is a native

speaker of a language that is not English. Chistofferson and Shin (2017) posit that "Knowing

Spanish is culturally valuable for non-Latinos, although it is often associated with costs for

Latinos" (p. 169). This type of attitude is unfair and unacceptable. Likewise, Guerrero and

Guerrero (2017) claim "[a student's] use of Spanish in the context of PK–12 schooling in the

United States has a long history of subordination, including psychological and physical violence"

(p. 8). The authors also mention that even the term "bilingual education" is still focused

primarily on English. It comes down to how much someone deems a language is worth. Historically and still today, Spanish is viewed as a benefit only if the speaker already speaks English. A higher value must be placed upon Spanish in the education system. Until that happens it will always be the "Us vs. Them, We and They" mentioned by Kidd (2002).

II. Collaboration Among Educators

Hamman, Perez, Gallo and Zuñiga (2017) authored a paper titled "The students we share." This title is key because as students move back and forth between countries, it is important that educators on both sides take responsibility to help these students succeed. The authors say, "We taught them, mentored and advised them, and shaped their dreams and aspirations. We have invested in them a great deal and owe them our continued support to help them develop their full potential" (p. 4). While border restrictions may make it impossible for teachers in the U.S. and Mexico to meet in person, technology could be used to conduct digital meetings.

If teachers of English and Spanish in the U.S. and Mexican borderlands could share their ideas, methods, and student histories, it would be very helpful in schools. Knowing what a student has previously accomplished in the classroom is an enormous benefit because it gives the current teacher a place to start. Hamman, Perez, Gallo and Zuñiga agree with this idea: "US educators must engage in a dialogue with their Mexican counterparts to develop strategies to support returnees. We need to recognize transborder Mexican students with American sensibilities as an opportunity for strong US-Mexico relations" (p. 4). Educators in both countries have to take responsibility for the students they share. This means collaboration should happen at all levels. Parents, students, teachers and anyone involved at a school from part-time assistants to full-time administration should all be connected and working together.

The main responsibility of teachers is to teach. Although instructors share the responsibility to collaborate, administration has the responsibility for generating an inclusive school culture. It should be the charge of the administrators to create a receptive school environment and effective community ties, even if that community includes overlapping borders. Border pedagogy (BP) is mentioned by Garza (2007) as a way to help educators in the borderlands. BP is defined by Reyes (2005) as "a set of multifaceted, complex, and interactive factors; educational policies; curriculum; instructional practices; that educators need to consider to increase the academic achievement of diverse students in the border region" (p. 149). Garza not only attends BP events as a professor but also takes her university students with her. "I realized that when they are given the opportunity … students in education programs can challenge social injustice and make instructional decisions that reflect a commitment to equity" (p. 6). Teachers and administrators at all levels can follow Garza's lead and involve more students in BP events. This will lead to better understanding and a new vision of the future of education among borderlands students and educators.

III. Teacher Preparation

The last implication from the studies and research on NST and NNSTs is that native speakership should not matter. Not only can the terms create a sense of otherness, the students and teachers have both shown through multiple reviews that it does not matter in classroom. Beckett and Stiefvater (2009) conclude that,

> teachers, professors, and administrators may be overly sensitive when it comes to
> how students perceive NNESTs. That is, all the reflections of teachers and
> professors reviewed here indicate anticipation of discrimination, prejudice,
> disrespect, and underappreciation by students; yet the studies of students'

perceptions of their NNESTs paint a much more positive picture, with no

perception that NESTs are superior to NNESTs and no preference for NESTs in

general. (p. 32)

When instructors and administrators believe that there might be a problem, the

belief itself may create a problem. Instead of spending time concerned with a problem

that might not exist, instructors can focus on preparing better classes and administrators

should give opportunities to capable instructors regardless of their native language.

Munro (2010) says, "Intelligibility is the single most important aspect of all

communication. If there is no intelligibility, communication has failed" (p.13). The

education and preparedness of the teacher is what will affect intelligibility and the

communication in a classroom, not the native language of the instructor.

In teacher education it is also important to practice what is being taught. If the

goal of the teacher education is to promote NNSTs but there are no NNSTs involved, the

wrong message is being sent. Gutierrez Estrada and Schecter (2018) advise "those

working within teacher education circles to incorporate space within their teacher

preparation programs and other institutional venues for minority language educators

representing subaltern communities" (p. 140). When conferences are being planned,

NNSTs need to be given a space to present their views. These instructors should be

considered equally important and valid language teachers just as NSTs would be.

It is important that teachers have the chance to continually develop their skills. However,

learning is not enough. Patton, Parker, and Tannehill (2015) say "Learning in professional

development needs support for teams of teachers to learn to teach together; they need social

capital" (p. 39). Anhier, Gerhards and Romo (1995) define social capital as "the sum of the

actual and potential resources that can be mobilized through membership in social networks of actors and organizations" (p. 862). Social capital is, in principle, the power that comes from being part of a group. If there is only one well-developed teacher at a school it will not be enough to bring everyone up to a higher level of teaching. There must be a powerful network of well-trained teachers to move the education forward. Hargreaves and Fullan corroborate the idea that social capital is important in a learning context. "The key variable that determines success in any innovation . . . is the degree of social capital in your own school. Learning is the work, and social capital is the fuel. If social capital is weak everything is destined to failure" (p. 92). Without a large cohort of well-developed professionals, educational systems will not be successful. Sending a teacher to a conference is a great first step but without continual support to implement changes, it will not matter.

In addition to developing continually as a teacher, language teachers also have the responsibility to keep their language skills strong. Armenta-Delgado (2010) wrote that one of the most important jobs of an NNST is to always be working on their language skills. No matter the proficiency level of a language learner, they can always improve. Armenta-Delgado points out that making an investment in one's language skills leads to greater competence as an instructor and more self-confidence. Some of the best L2 speakers have the mindset of always learning something new and never reaching a point where they are finished learning. If NST and NNST can keep the same attitude towards improvement, in the end, students will be well-taught regardless of native speakership.

Conclusion

By researching student and teacher perspectives on NSTs and NNSTs, greater insight toward the different ways students and teachers think has come as a result. Student and teacher

perspectives are further built upon by the connections between language and power. Language and power then provide a window into three things educators can try to focus on to help balance the scale of language and power. 1) With regards to power, Spanish as a first language in the United States should be treated as having equal value to English as a first language in Mexico. Doing this can create a sense of belonging for bilingual students and help build up both the United States and Mexico together. 2) There needs to be better collaboration between borderland educators in the U.S. and Mexico. Greater collaboration can help students on both sides of the border to receive a good education. 3) Teachers need to worry less about their native speakership and focus more on their methods and preparation. By keeping their teaching and language skills sharp, it will not be important whether the instructor is a NNST or NST, the students will be happy to have them.

Although much research has been done in the area of NNST and NST in many different contexts, there is room for more to be learned, especially in relation to the U.S. and Mexico. A good area of focus for continued research would be specific student experiences with NST and NNSTs relating just to English and Spanish. At present, a lot more research is carried out on the perspective of administrators and teachers than on the students' point of view. Understanding how language relates to what job someone gets or how a student can be helped is important. It is the first step in helping borderland students and educators improve. Similarly, it provides an indicator of how society might overcome some of the institutionalized racist norms centered around the English language.

CULTURE PAPER

Expanding Cultural Awareness through Ethnographic Interviews: A Spanish

Instructor's Experience

Orientation and Reflection

All of my formal schooling took place in the same geographical location: I grew up in Utah, did my undergraduate work at Utah State University and stayed for my master's degree. I think in part because I have experienced just one particular culture, I am curious about other cultures and how my life would be different if I had grown up somewhere else. I have taken classes from international instructors, worked alongside international colleagues in the department, and supervised international teaching assistants in my Spanish classes. I have enjoyed learning about our similarities and differences. For this paper, I conducted informative conversations and learned more about other cultures, which was enlightening.

I learned about ethnography and ethnographic interviews for a paper I wrote for a culture class in the MSLT program. The purpose was to learn more about others' experiences regarding language and culture but I think I ended up learning just as much about myself. We were assigned to interview a student and a teacher who had different language and cultural backgrounds than ourselves. Both the teacher and the student that I interviewed pointed things out that they found peculiar about being in Utah. They mentioned things that I had never considered or noticed before. However, as I stopped to ponder them, I noticed how they could be difficult to understand. The interviews and my reflection helped me become more aware of cultural practices and ideals of visiting students and teachers that are different from my own culture. I learned a lot about their home cultures that I did not know before and the experience made me more self-aware.

Becoming more self-aware is a process that is now started but which will never be completed. I am continually learning more about my own culture, my own way of acting and communicating. This leads me to constantly adapting and changing my actions as I notice ways

that I might be causing problems or offending others. Not only does it affect the way that I live my life every day and how I interact with people from different cultures, but it also has an effect on how I teach in the classroom. If I have an interaction with someone from a different culture than my own, it can sometimes provide learning opportunities which expands my awareness of other cultures. I have had international students in my classes as students, classmates, and teaching assistants. I now realize there may be some cultural differences that explain certain behaviors that maybe did not make sense to me at the time. My engagement with cultural differences is key in helping my students to acquire more knowledge about the target culture in the classroom.

As an instructor, I think it is important to help international students find friends. Spending time in a foreign culture is very difficult, especially if someone feels like they are doing it alone. Conducting these interviews has made me more aware of cultural differences between others and me. This awareness now influences the way that I treat international students and colleagues in the United States. Taking the time to realize my cultural tendencies and how they affect me in the classroom will improve my teaching. When I implement better teaching practices, my students have a better opportunity to acquire the target culture. In the future, when I get the chance to work with more people from other countries, I will be better prepared to make them feel more comfortable in a foreign environment.

Expanding Cultural Awareness through Ethnographic Interviews: A Spanish

Instructor's experience

Background and Introduction

There is much to be learned by living and working in a culture that is different from one's own. Language teachers have the responsibility not only to teach their students the language skills they need to operate in a different environment but also the culture that matches the language. This is called the target culture or C2. Allen (2000) notes that in order to be an effective instructor of both language and culture, teachers "must first have a deep understanding of the target culture and an awareness of their own culturally conditioned and individually formed beliefs, attitudes, and values" (p. 51). This means that as teachers learn more about other cultures and themselves, they can better teach their students the target language and target culture.

The content of this paper can help second-language Spanish teachers and English-as-a-second language (ESL) instructors in the U.S. It could also be important for English-as-a-foreign (EFL) language teachers going abroad to know how they might need to adjust for teaching in a different culture. As will be shown in the literature review, exposure to new cultural norms can be difficult and challenging. It can, however, also be rewarding and a vital learning experience which empowers those who go through it. Cultural experiences can be difficult to understand unless they have been lived, for that reason this writing focuses on ethnography.

Ethnography is defined by Spradley (2016) as "the work of describing a culture" (p.3). Reeves, Kuper, and Hodges (2008) add that ethnography is "the study of social interactions, behaviors, and perceptions that occur within groups, teams, organizations, and communities" (p.512). This paper shows how my own cultural awareness was expanded through simple

conversational interviews with   an instructor and a student of Spanish origin. By learning more about their experiences in the United States, I gained new insights into my own cultural norms.[1] Research will be reviewed and presented that shows how being a part of university life abroad can help students and teachers have greater cultural awareness.

Literature Review

a. Ethnography and autoethnography

Ethnography is the study of culture and social interactions within a specific group or culture (Reeves, Kuper, and Hodges 2008; Spradley 2016). According to Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011) this type of research is "for the purpose of helping insiders (cultural members) and outsiders (cultural strangers) better understand the culture" (p. 274). Ethnography is a valuable means to help two distinct groups better understand each other. Ethnographic interviews for this paper are performed in order to increase the understanding between the interviewer and interviewees. This type of research can help people from different backgrounds and cultures have a better understanding of each other. In addition to the ethnographic interviews that were conducted, the writing was done from an autoethnographic perspective.

Autoethnography is a branch of ethnographic research in which the researcher evaluates themselves through and ethnographic lens. Ellis, Adams and Boucher (2011) say that the researchers "retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity" (p. 276). Adams, Ellis and Jones (2017) define autoethnography as "a research method that uses personal experience ('auto') to describe and interpret ('graphy') cultural texts, experiences, beliefs, and

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[1] This research was conducted as part of IRB-approved protocol #10625 at Utah State University, under Principal Investigator Dr. Matthew Sanders in the Department of Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies.

practices ('ethno')" (p. 1). If a researcher is just looking at the "ethno" portion there is no comparative base on which to situate the information. Examining one's own personal experiences in comparison with other cultures can help the researcher become more culturally aware.

Chang (2016) explains that autoethnography is a tool that can lead teachers to having a deeper self-awareness and being better equipped to work with students from diverse backgrounds (p. 13). Reed-Dannahay (2017) claims that autoethnography shows what it is like to be "lying at the intersection of insider and outsider perspectives" (p. 146). The interview data I present later in this paper follow an autoethnographic approach as I compare my experiences to those of the interviewees. This paper will borrow the definition of autoethnography offered by Boylorn and Orbe (2016), which is "cultural analysis through personal narrative" (p. 17). By interviewing both a student and an instructor from similar backgrounds, I gained a broader understanding of their cultures. I compare their experiences and common practices of their country to the cultural norms I am used to. Reflecting on these comparisons enhances my cultural awareness and assists in the development of my intercultural competence.

b. Researcher positionality and reflexivity

In addition to the ethnographic undertones contained in the short conversations that follow, the paper contains comparisons to my own background. According to social science researchers, the position of the researcher is made up of the personal experiences, gender, race, language, beliefs and any other factors or stances that might affect how the research is conducted (Finlay, 2000; Horseburgh, 2003; Bradbury-Jones, 2007; Berger, 2015). Reflexivity is defined by Berger (2015) as the researcher's process of "continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of researcher's positionality as well as active acknowledgement and explicit

recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome" (p. 220). In the case

of this paper, I use my own position as a comparison to what I learned from the participants that I

interviewed. Yazan (2019) claims that "researcher positionality becomes a central piece in

autoethnography, which explores the ways we influence and are influenced by the cultural

discourses surrounding us" (p. 41). The experience that my ethnographic interviews provided,

promotes a greater self-awareness of my own culture and expanded my intercultural competence.

c. Cultural awareness and intercultural competence

So that one may better understand cultural awareness (CA), it is vital first to have a

working definition of both culture and awareness. Awareness is defined by Merriam-Webster

dictionary as "knowledge and understanding that something is happening or exists." Culture is

much more difficult to define. Culture consists of many parts within a constantly changing group

of individuals. Barrett, Huber, and Reynolds (2014) say that culture consists of material, social,

and subjective aspects. Material includes food, tools, and clothes. Within the social category are

language, folklore, and typical social conduct. The subjective area of culture deals with attitudes,

values, and collective memories (p. 5). When those pieces are all put together, a culture is

formed. "Each individual member of the group appropriates and uses only a subset of the total

set of cultural resources potentially available to them" (p. 5). This means that although there is an

understanding of everything that belongs to the culture throughout the group, specific members

of the culture only do what makes sense for them within the norms of the group. This is why

there is still a large degree of variability among community members who belong to the same

cultural group.

With a better understanding of culture and awareness, it is feasible to say that CA means

knowing and recognizing one's own culture. Included in that might be realizing biases or norms

that people besides oneself may not have. CA and intercultural awareness (ICA) are defined by

Baker (2015) as "an awareness of the role of culture in communication, with CA focused on

national cultures and ICA on more dynamic and flexible relationships between languages and

cultures" (p. 1). ICA is being aware of the differences and similarities that exist in other cultures,

not just ones' own culture. Intercultural competence (ICC) is not only being aware of differences

but also as Morley et al. (2010) add "the ability to function effectively in another culture" (p.

811). Competence in working with other cultures is more than being aware. It takes time and

effort to become competent.

ICC and CA are different but they are related in the sense that in order to be

interculturally competent, it is also necessary to be interculturally aware. Fenner (2016) reiterates

this by saying, "awareness of differences as well as of similarities between the native culture and

the target culture is essential" (p. 6). According to Nugent and Catalaon (2015), instructors can

help language learners communicate with members of other cultures by "addressing the attitudes,

knowledge, and skills needed for effective intercultural communication" (p. 17). One way to

develop ICC is through ethnography and autoethnography, described earlier. While Fenner is

referring specifically to students, CA and ICC are essential for instructors as well. In second

language teaching, the focus is not only on the target language but also on the awareness of

differences between the target culture and the culture of the learners.

d. Foreign-born instructors

Language instructors of foreign origin bring a great deal of valuable experience to their

classroom. Kramsch, Zhang and Jessner (2015) explain that "Foreign born, native speaker

instructors enjoy a great deal of de facto symbolic capital. They are hired precisely because of

their native-speakership" (p.89). Native speakership in a language is taken as evidence that the

applicant truly knows the language. While this may be true, Mercado and Trumbull (2018) suggest that being a foreign-born professor can also contribute to confusion. "Instructors, students and parents may all experience continual cross-cultural misunderstandings based on different tacit views of roles and relations" (p.47). Ironically, while the foreign-born teacher is hired for their culture and language skills, those in turn may lead to miscommunication due to differences. It is thus quite possible for an instructor to be both misunderstood and highly sought after due to their first language.

Spradley (2016) claims that ethnography can help people change their culturally bound theories on human behavior, which can lead to better communication (p. 12). The drawbacks of misunderstandings that might accompany having a foreign-born instructor can be minimized if people take the opportunity to understand each other. Time alone is not the answer, however. Baker (2016) says "It has also been recognized that intercultural exchanges do not by themselves guarantee growth... Appropriate support, evaluation and reflection are crucial" (p. 438). Instructors of foreign origin as well as students, parents, and school administrators can develop cross-cultural competence with time and, crucially, the support mentioned by Baker.

Intercultural competence is more than just a nice idea to help instructors and students however. Shively and Misco (2012) say instructors need it: "It is logical that instructors be asked to add global competence to the increasing list of skills necessary to be a successful teacher" (p.52). As more instructors move around the world for opportunities to teach, ICC becomes an essential part of what they must know. Much has been written over the years concerning teaching culture to students (Byram & Feng, 2004; Kramsch 1993, 1995; Thanasoulas 2001); now, more is being written about instructors learning culture. According to Atay et al. (2009), "to support the intercultural learning process, foreign language instructors need additional knowledge,

attitudes, competencies and skills" (p. 125). Ward and Ward (2003) add that "today's teacher education programs must prepare instructors for working with culturally and linguistically diverse students" (p. 533). While new skills are important for instructors in a more globalized world, Young and Sachdev (2011) claim that a lack of training in these areas is part of the reason there is not more ICC among instructors. As instructors increase their ICC, they can help their students to better acquire the target language and target culture.

e. International students

Nieto and Booth (2010) conducted a study with international students and instructors about cross-cultural communication. This type of communication happens when the speaker uses their CA and ICC to communicate with someone who belongs to a different culture. The authors found that "international students appreciated teachers who worked toward cross-cultural communication in the classroom" (p. 417). Communicating in cross culturally helped the students to be more comfortable and perform better. Instructors who try to communicate better with their students can be very beneficial for the development of the students. Another way that students can develop CA and ICC is through study abroad or exchange programs.

Most students who participate in a study-abroad program feel like they gain some understanding of the target culture. Lee (2011) states that of students who participated in study abroad, "nearly 90% agreed that they gained cross-cultural perspectives from interacting with L1s [locals]" (p.97). While students may feel that they are improving there is some debate as to how much time this actually takes. Study abroad programs range from one week to one year. Dwyer (2004) found that programs of at least six weeks had a statistically significant impact on students' ICC and linguistic competency but that "the greatest gains across all outcome

categories are made by full year students" (p. 161). As noted previously, it is a lengthy endeavor to gain ICC. That is not to say that short term programs are useless however.

According to Martinsen (2011) claim, "short-term programs can play a positive role in the overall goal of secondary and postsecondary foreign language education of increasing students' cultural sensitivity" (p. 131). Students who spent even a short time abroad still made improvements to help them become more competent in their interactions with other cultures. Behrnd and Porzlet (2012) found that students who had studied abroad were also more receptive to further training and learning about ICC than students who hadn't studied abroad. Students with experiences abroad benefited more from subsequent intercultural training … showing higher problem solving, social, individual, and strategic intercultural competence after training" (p. 221). Even if students do not get the full year of experience in a study abroad, they may still have enough beneficial experiences to make a difference in their ICC. Along with the length of the study, target language proficiency and past experiences can also impact how much a student learns while abroad. Martinsen (2011) explains how language level can affect study abroad experience.

> Lower levels of starting language proficiency correlate with greater improvements in language skills than students who began with higher levels of proficiency. On the other hand, higher starting levels of proficiency may predict more growth in terms of cultural sensitivity because more-proficient students are more likely to spend time with members of the target culture (p. 124).

Although language levels can to a certain extent impact the students' experience in general, those who study abroad generally develop greater cultural awareness than those who do not participate

in such a program (Martinsen, 2011). Many factors influence exactly what and how much each student can learn.

Methodology

For the present study, two participants were selected for interviewing by a sample of convenience; they were my professional acquaintances, both from Spain, and working or studying at Utah State University at the time of the interviews. One interviewee was a language instructor and the other a study-abroad student. To protect their identities, pseudonyms will be used: the instructor will be called Xavier and the student Carlos. The purpose of the ethnographic interviews was to learn about the culture and experiences of the participants and compare those to my own experiences.

The interviews were conducted in Spanish in a one-on-one, face-to-face setting. Quotes from the interview are presented in English translation, with the original Spanish interview transcripts included in the Appendices. All translations are my own. *Appendix A* contains Xavier's interview and Carlos' transcript is presented in *Appendix B*.

Results

a. Xavier's Experience

At the time of the interview, Xavier was in his third year of teaching Spanish in the U.S. Prior to arrival, Xavier had little teaching experience, limited knowledge of English, and few interactions with English speakers. Since he was teaching his Spanish classes entirely in Spanish, he had little trouble with the language aspect but getting used to teaching took some time. "When you are giving class for the first time, the students' grades and wellbeing are more important…Now after more time, I leave it up to them. I don't connect myself to them as much as before." Xavier said this change came about for two reasons. First more classroom experience

and second more interaction with students in the United States. Xavier's experiences are not much different from what many beginning instructors experience.

Pillen, Beijaard and Brok (2013) compiled a list of some of the most common problems for beginning instructors in developing an identity. Among them are two of the things Xavier dealt with. First, "Wanting to care for students versus being expected to be tough" (p. 244). Xavier wanted to be honest grading students' work but he also had a desire to care about them and be nice. Related to this is a difficulty in maintaining emotional distance. "Beginning instructors may be closely involved in the lives of their students as they want to show their students that they care about them" (p. 245). When it comes to assessments and grading, the close relationships can strain a new teacher's emotions.

Xavier explained his progression by stating, "Now after more time, I leave it up to them, I don't connect myself to them as much as before." This account is similar to what Kanno and Stuart (2011) found in their case study about teacher identities. They claim that "Novices became more comfortable with their teacher identity and authority it implied, they also began to hold students more accountable for their own learning" (p.247). Interestingly, this is the same type of progression that I noticed in my own teaching. At first, I experienced some shock or surprise when I realized that students respected my authority to teach. Although instructors come from many different backgrounds, they can find similar experiences in their development.

One of the main areas of adjustment for Xavier was with personal relationships. "The relationship that all the instructors have in Spain, every month they would do something with all the professors. Social acts are very important in Spain, here it is less important." This social difference is something that culturally is not as important for co-workers in the United States. I have had many jobs that include very little interaction with workplace associates outside of

work. Xavier was used to socializing with co-workers regularly. Not having those same interactions or opportunities could lead to loneliness. This showed that social interaction with co-workers outside of work could help someone from a different culture to feel more welcome and included.

Aside from relationships with co-workers and social life overall, for Xavier, student-teacher relationships were also different. "I have to tell them, 'Kids, I am Latino. If I ask you how you are, it's because I actually want you to answer. I want them respond" (Xavier, personal conversation, February 2019). From my perspective, walking past someone and saying "How are you?" in passing was polite. However, Xavier felt that someone asking and then continuing to walk and not waiting for an answer was rude. Xavier interprets the phrase as an actual question whereas here in the U.S. it works as a greeting. Xavier also felt it rude when asking how someone was and getting the typical U.S. response of "good" and nothing more. These are both very common interactions in Utah but were not the cultural norms for Xavier.

Another change noted by Xavier came from how students act in class. "I have also gotten used to people eating in class and wearing hats but at the beginning, that was a culture clash" (Xavier, personal conversation, February 2019). Although I have seen people wearing hats or eating in my class, I did not think of them as out of the ordinary. I was totally used to these behaviors because I grew up participating in them. While they were normal for me, these behaviors were challenging for Xavier to deal with, because he was used to a more formal classroom setting. Keeping the focus on the lesson while trying to ignore something that is perceived as not normal is a difficult task for a new teacher.

Xavier mentioned that this is his final year teaching in the United States, however he wants to continue teaching when he returns to Spain. "I will have to change everything culture

wise because my students will be different. First off, I will be teaching younger students. The older students here are much more respectful. I will have to put in a lot of effort to control my class" (Xavier, personal conversation, February 2019). Adjusting to the students helps instructors be successful. It is good for instructors to adjust to their students not only in the context of different countries but also with each class.

However, not everything that Xavier has learned teaching abroad will have to change once he is back home. "Above all else the teaching methods I learned here, like the communicative method. I haven't seen that in Spain. I want to keep the methods, even though the clientele I'll be teaching is completely different" (Xavier, personal conversation). Overall, Xavier made his instructional approach fit the culture of the students he was teaching. While his approach may need to change when he, he nevertheless plans to keep certain aspects of the method he learned in Utah.

b. Carlos' Experience

It should be noted from the beginning that Carlos is not a typical SA student as far as language learning goes. He had a lot of prior experience in the target language before his study abroad. Although he grew up in Spain and completed his schooling there, Carlos' father is from the United States. Carlos has spent summers visiting family in Miami. "Before I came, I spoke English....I haven't had a problem communicating with anyone" (Carlos, personal communication, February 2019). Although Carlos had prior experience with the language there was still a big change in culture, primarily within education, compared to what he was used to in Spain.

The most important change for Carlos came in the form of school life. "In Spain it is more strict. You take a test and depending on your grade they tell you what career you can

study... It's rigid" (Carlos, personal communication, February, 2019). This falls in line with the stricter type of classroom that Xavier was expecting in his teaching. However, along with the rigidity and strictness of the school system, Carlos oddly experienced less homework. "You work much less. There aren't as many assignments and tests, no. You have a final exam and that's it." The idea of more work outside of school was tough for Carlos. For me, this type of workload was completely normal. However, if one was not used to assignments that had to be completed outside of class, it would be very difficult to balance social life and school work.

I expected that Carlos would mention a difference in the amount of school work but I had imagined the workload to be less and lighter in the United States. Carlos was expecting this as well. He had not thought that more work would be assigned at an American university. That difference in school practices led to a change in social norms. Instead of going out every night and spending time bonding, American students are more likely to go home and do homework. This made Carlos feel as though relationships were "cold" and slightly unauthentic. Recalling that I had teaching assistants from Spain twice in my first two years of teaching, and that I never spent time outside of class with them, I now realize this may have been interpreted as unfriendly.

It took Carlos some time to adjust to the workload of an American classroom and the schedule of class in the United States. "Now, I'm adjusted but in Spain, it was go to class together, leave school eat lunch together. Then, go back finish and class together, eat together, go to the gym, have a beer and hang out. Here, relationships are colder. People are your friends, but they aren't really." Carlos does not feel like he has the same type of friends as he does in Spain due to the difference in culture. Similar to what Xavier experienced with co-workers, Carlos felt like there was less social interaction and meaningful relationships with schoolmates than there was in Spain.

I am used to having classmates or co-workers as well as a separate group of friends to do things with regularly. In some cases, classmates and close friends overlap but not always. This is not typical in other settings around the world. Seeing the lack of social interactions with classmates or colleagues in the United States compared to what the participants experienced in Spain was eye opening for me. Although I am not actively trying to be rude or exclude someone who is from another culture, it could still be happening. Not only are they away from their normal friends, family, and food, nobody seems to be including them in the same ways that they were included at home. Alternatively, should someone from the U.S. go work in Spain, they should be prepared for much more in the way of social interactions. Simply going home after school or work might not be acceptable to those around and could be offensive. Students visiting Spain should plan on spending more time with their classmates.

Elliot, Reid and Baumfield (2016) note that "a crucial element of acculturation, both culturally and academically, involved being socially attached, either with their significant others or to their newfound friends in the host country" (p. 2209). Not spending significant time with classmates or co-workers made it difficult for Carlos and Xavier to feel socially attached. Luckily, they both made friends and eventually found a way to become connected to the new culture and a social network. If international students are not socially attached to new friends, the adjustment to a new place and style can be so difficult that they do not adjust well (Elliot, Reid and Baumfield, 2016). This can negatively affect the personal life, experiences abroad, and education of both a student and an instructor in a new place (Nieto & Booth, 2010).

Another remarkable difference that Carlos noted in culture was the religious aspect of life. Carlos feels that religion is much more powerful in the United States, in particular in Utah, than it was in Spain. "I said 'Oh, wow, it's (religion) strong here.' But, compared with my life, I

like to go out, have a beer, drink, go to parties. Here, the people don't do that. That took some getting used to" (Carlos, personal communication, February 2019). The predominant religion in Utah is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. The standards of the church include not drinking alcohol, coffee and some teas, which for Carlos was the normal way of socializing. This is a common surprising theme for visitors to Utah. I grew up in Utah and am completely used to this unique cultural aspect. I hardly give it thought at this point. However, for a new visitor trying to makes friends, this is something that could be difficult to understand. After some time in the U.S., Carlos did feel like he found his place but at the beginning, he experienced significant culture clash.

Implications for Teaching and Learning

While conducting the interviews for this particular research, I was surprised at how lonely working or studying in a new place can be. While working, I often get caught up with going into the office to lesson plan and do my work before hurrying out to go home. I realized that for some of my colleagues that were in the U.S. for a limited time, they did not have the luxury to go home to family every night. They sometimes missed specific foods or social practices with friends and family. This led me to spend more time with them outside of work. I had them over to my house, played card games, and enjoyed their company. Without doing the research, I may have never taken the opportunity to develop those friendships and learn more about their culture while sharing some of my own.

In addition to making new friends, I learned that what I perceive as someone's experience might be totally different than what they are actually going through. The only real way of knowing is by asking and talking to them. This gave me a good understanding of why qualitative research like ethnography can be so impactful. What I learned from a couple of short interviews

impacted my social actions, the way that I teach, and helped me learn more about a culture I was unfamiliar with. Yazan (2019) declares that "the act of autoethnography writing is a concentrated and profound experience of identity negotiation" (p. 41). I agree and would add that if more people participated in this type of open communication, I believe the CA and ICC would be greatly raised for those who shared in the experience.

Lastly, I think it is important to mention just how different every culture is. This research highlights a couple of things about differences between culture in a small corner of northern Utah and a couple areas in Spain. This type of interview could be conducted anywhere with interviewees from any number of areas. There is always something that I can be learning about our differences which cultivates understanding. The knowledge learned can then be applied to help soften the culture clash of those who visit me and potentially make me more aware of what to expect when I go somewhere else. More CA and ICC, even on a small scale, can lead to better cross-cultural communication.

Conclusion

Xavier and Carlos had many culturally challenging experiences when they arrived in the United States, but over time, they adapted in order to be effective in the classroom and in developing social contacts. Both Carlos and Xavier mentioned the lack of social interactions that they felt during their time in the U.S. It seems that the difference in the way people socialize at an American university compared to Spain is one of the most difficult things to get used to. Upon return to Spain, they can share their own views about CA, ICC and knowledge of U.S. culture with other people in Spain. For Xavier, he can share the knowledge he gained of U.S. culture with his future students to help prepare them for spending time abroad. In addition to what Carlos and Xavier have learned, they have contributed to my CA and ICC.

The exchange of global information and understanding that happened with regards to this research is exactly what Shiveley and Misco (2012) claim will help make instructors more successful. By doing more ethnography in this manner, foreign language instructors in the United States could pass along their new knowledge of cultures to their language students. It would also be useful for instructors from the U.S. considering a career teaching EFL abroad to do more intercultural learning. In this way, they could be better prepared for the cultures they will encounter in a new place. Whether someone is a teacher or a student, it is clear that ethnography can guide them to a better understanding of a new culture. Understanding of other cultures and CA are imperative to improve communication.

Limitations

This project consists of only two interviews. As such, it is difficult to say whether all of the experiences are typical of a professor and a student who visit the United States from a different country. Another limitation is the country of origin and the country where the teaching occurs. Both of these interviews are with people from Spain, studying or working in Utah in the U.S. Although this provides specific information in one context, it also limits the scope of the research. Someone from a different culture will invariably bring different educational expectations and experiences.

In order to fill in these gaps, additional interviews and case studies would need to be completed with instructors and students of foreign origin in other countries as well as including participants from other countries. In addition, continued research in other areas of the U.S. could reveal different cultural norms than the ones presented previously. In the past, much research has been done on study abroad and the impact it has on language proficiency but now more is being done to study CA and ICC. Gathering more examples and studying more comparisons of culture are

key to unlocking greater understanding about cultures around the world. Such understanding can be used to construct better experiences for students and instructors who may find themselves placed in difficult situations around the world. Baker (2012) states that investigation of cultures must continue because it provides the knowledge, awareness, and skills needed for effective communication. These skills are "constantly under revision and change based on each new intercultural encounter and as such are never a fully formed complete entity but always in progress towards a goal that is constantly changing" (p. 68). In our attempts to improve communication between multiple cultures in an increasingly globalized world, ethnography will play an important role.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Dynamic Assessment for Language Teachers

I became interested in the topic of dynamic assessment (DA) through a sociocultural theory

(SCT) class I took during the MSLT program. DA is a practice that stems from Vygotsky's

(1978) ideas about the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The term DA was made popular by

Luria (1961). Unlike traditional standardized testing, which only shows what the learner already

knows, DA focuses on the learner's development by having the instructor creating a relationship

with them so they can do more than they could have done on their own. This type of assessment

can be extremely helpful in an educational setting because it allows instructors to create a more

personalized plan for the student

When I started exploring this topic, I wanted to see how I could better incorporate DA

into my own classroom. I am interested in this alternative to traditional testing because it can

help me learn more about my students. In this annotated bibliography, I will explore ideas

presented by authors who have studied DA in language classrooms. I will also give a brief

overview of how I understand SCT and some of the key terms related to SCT. I hope the results

can be useful for language teachers looking for a different way to evaluate their pupils and

perhaps more accurately measure their students' language proficiency.

To start off, it was important to get a better understand of testing. **Edwards (2006)** gives

an overview of standardized testing. This type of testing means that each student takes the same

test and everyone is scored based upon the same standard. The standardized test is what I think

of when I think of traditional testing types that I experienced in school: bubble sheets, fill in the

blank, true or false type of questions, etc. Most students who went through public education in

the U.S. likely have a similar experience. Edwards writes that this type of testing can be traced

back to the 1800s. The underlying ideas of creating these types of tests is the same reason we test

students today, we need to assess how well they are learning and how well we are teaching. This information is then used to inform decisions and policies among different groups of students, schools and teachers (p. 9). While the idea behind standardized testing to improve instruction seems like a good thing, there are potentially some negative aspects that come along as well.

While the intent of standardized tests was originally to "guide and broaden" (p. 11) teaching practices, now it oftentimes narrows and limits what is being taught. Essentially, testing has begun to drive teaching; that is, what is on the test is prepared for in the classroom. Teachers "may choose to focus exclusively on test preparation at the expense of more natural and authentic learning opportunities such as class discussions, and field trips" (p. 11). This can lead to students who test well, but are not actually proficient in the subject. In addition to these problems, there are some psychological stress issues that can result from a lot of standardized testing, especially in young children (p. 12). The biggest perceived advantage of standardized testing is that it is the fastest, most efficient way to evaluate large numbers of students (p. 14). The article makes clear the negative effects of this type of testing; however, it is tough to fault a school system for simply trying to do what will work with a large number of students.

Similar to what Edwards (2006) wrote, **Wiliam (2010)** says that standardized testing started in the 19th century but with an added layer of accountability testing. Accountability testing essentially means assessing a school for how well it is doing based on test scores. "Students attending higher quality schools will (by definition) have higher achievement than those attending lower quality schools" (p. 110). This type of classifying results in rewards, honors, and better reputations at certain schools, which can lead to more government money. At its core, the intent of assessment in education is that instructors "can find out whether instruction has had its intended effect" (p. 107) and then tailor their lessons to their students. However,

schools must maintain a way to hold teachers accountable, which tends to narrow the way that educators teach by rewarding high test scores. Higher test scores however, are not necessarily an indication of proficiency. With a basic understanding of why it is necessary to test students and more knowledge about the complications of testing in general, I wanted to learn more about language testing.

Shohamy, Or and May (2017), who edited an encyclopedia on language testing, wrote in the introduction that language tests traditionally includes two components. The first is a focus "on the 'what,' referring to the constructs that need to be assessed" (p. x) the second focus is on the "'how,' which addresses the specific procedures and strategies used for assessing the 'what'" (p. x). Generally, the "what" and the "how" are scored and then the student is given a grade, or in the case of language testing, a proficiency rating. The goals of language testing to score proficiency and the common practices of standardized testing do not work well together. It seems if an instructor really wanted to know how well students were communicating with the language they were teaching; traditional testing would not provide the desired results. Standardized tests provide a direct look at what the student knows and can reproduce on command. During communication there are many ways to say something and be understood, not just one correct way like an answer on a test. This is perhaps why DA could be so useful in language classes. The authors go as far as to call it "one of the most promising approaches to assessment in education" (p. xv). That made it clear that it was time to start looking more at DA practices in language assessment.

To better understand DA, I needed to learn more about the ZPD, first introduced by **Vygotsky (1978)**, who addressed the connection between social interactions and learning. While the book goes into great detail about SCT, I want to focus on what I found to be the overall main

idea; that learning is social and humans learn from interactions within their environment. Vygotsky wrote "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first on the social level and later, on the individual level. First between people and then inside the child" (p. 57). The idea that a child who works through a process with other people can at some point complete the process by themselves is the basis of SCT. I have seen this demonstrated with the development of my own six-month old child. It is illustrated in the way he learns how to grab and pick things up. At first, he cannot do it but if I help him, over time he can do it on his own. While Vygotsky only wrote about his observations of children, I posit that the points he makes about learning can also be applied to children and adults in L2 learning.

While I was learning more about SCT, I came across a more modern article about Vygotsky's original writings that agrees with my view. **Holzman (2018)** clarifies the Vygotsky quote I cited earlier, by noting that "There is nothing here that should limit 'between people' to a child and one other person" (p. 44). If what Holzman says is true, then learning at all levels must first happen socially, then later individually. This idea about learning happening socially first before it can happen individually is essentially what Vygotsky (1978) called the ZPD. Vygotsky wrote that the ZPD is "the distance between the actual development level…and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under guidance" (p. 86). In other words, the ZPD is the space between actual and potential abilities, it is what is currently developing. Holzman points out that the "key to the ZPD is that people are doing something together" (p. 44). I have seen this happen with students in my class many times. I group students who know more with students who know less. Generally, by the end of the assignment, the lower-proficiency student is able to do things on their own that at the beginning they could only do with the help of the higher proficiency level student.

Holzman (2018) describes how play and performing can be used by teachers to help students use a higher proficiency of language than what they thought was previously possible. Holzman says that students who are able to play and perform while using the target language can create ZPDs and thus acquire language. Again, I have seen her ideas play out in my classroom. For example, for a particular activity, students pretend they are in a market. The more a student can get into the play situation, the better their language proficiency seems to be as they focus on the activity and helping each other, not on the language. Holzman says that instead of being a zone, the ZPD is more of an interaction, something that "people create together… a way to understand learning and development" (p. 53). While I have not used play to create ZPDs to the level described in the article, I do think that Holzman's view of the ZPD as activity is a much simpler way to understand the complex term proposed by Vygotsky.

As I continued my research of the SCT and ZPD, I found that again and again, SCT comes back to the idea that we can do more socially than we can by ourselves. This seems to be the general argument of Vygotsky and anyone else who subscribes to a SCT of learning. While looking to learn more with regards to the ZPD, I found **Poehner (2007)** who states "This is the significance of the ZPD: It integrates assessment and instruction according to the principle that mediation reveals the full range of an individual's abilities while guiding development" (p. 337).

This article is very helpful not only for explaining the need for assessment but also in showing how the ZPD and DA connect together. Poehner frequently uses the term 'mediation' which. I had noticed in previous articles and Vygotsky's work as well. The author assumes that the reader is well read and knows a lot about SCT which I lacked. I required a deeper understanding of exactly what mediation meant in order to better understand the ZPD and DA.

I found the answer in **Lantolf and Poehner (2007)** who gave a helpful definition of mediation, stating that "higher forms of thinking are socially and culturally derived, emerging as a consequence of our interactions…In this way, our relationship to the world is not direct but mediated" (p. 50). In other words, mediation is something that helps someone perform a task that might be beyond the capabilities of their own level. Through interactions with other people and items such as books or computers, we mediate our way through the world. This makes sense to me because that is exactly what I do. When I have a problem, I cannot always solve it by myself but through interactions with others or tools, I can.

If I compare my life to a standardized test, I would have either failed or gotten in trouble for cheating. I use the help of many mediators, such as other people who give me answers or some sort of website or book that helps me. The relationships with other people have helped me to mediate my way through life, along with tools I have picked up along the way. In a standardized test, there is no mediation. It is only based on what is in an individual's mind at the time of testing. If we look at educational learning the same way we learn in other facets of life, it makes no sense to test without allowing mediation. Yet, that is often the situation we are putting students into by giving a test. They either know the answer or they do not but there is no opportunity for development. This realization helped me to understand how helpful DA could be in my classroom.

When a teacher becomes a mediator and starts working with students on problems, it allows the teacher to see the development of the students instead of only looking at results produced by individuals in isolation. Lantolf and Poehner (2007) propose that "observing a person's history presents only part of the picture; the full picture emerges only when we take account of his or her future: the project of DA" (p. 51). DA must take place during the activity or

within the ZPD because "In dynamic assessment procedures, the focus is on the process rather than the products of learning" (Yildirim, 2008, p. 305). By using DA, teachers can see not only the past development, but what students are currently developing and what direction they might be headed in the future. Looking back on some of the first classes that I taught, I wish I had used this type of assessment more. Information on not only what my students knew, but perhaps where they were headed would have helped me to be a better prepared instructor. Mediation is central in DA but I was still a little unclear about the best way to apply it in my classroom. I needed to learn more about how to mediate.

From **Davin, Herazo and Sagre (2017)** I learned how to apply mediation in my own classroom. This study followed four instructors and documented their classroom practices before and after professional development opportunities geared towards DA. Interestingly, after extra training to learn more about implementing DA, the instructors ended up giving corrective feedback mainly in the form of recasts instead of providing mediation. I think I have been guilty of this as well. As I tried to learn more about DA, I thought about using it more but I likely ended up just providing more ineffective recasts to my students. Something very important I learned about DA in this article is to not take away learner agency when giving mediation (p. 640). Sometimes as an instructor mediates, it is easy to accidentally say too much or give away an answer. It takes practice to master mediation.

What I learned from this article is that both mediation and DA are difficult. These four teachers in the study participated in a series of professional workshops to teach them how to use DA and they still struggled to implement the practices in their classrooms. DA is not something that I can just read about a little bit and then add to my classroom, it takes work and preparation to make DA effective. "Just as teachers must carefully plan every aspect of their lessons as they

are learning to teach, they, too, must carefully plan their discursive responses to student errors as they learn to mediate" (p. 648). This is an important reminder because teachers who want to use DA should realize that it takes additional training and time to effectively utilize. It is not an overnight change that is easy to integrate into the classroom.

According to Davin, Herazo, and Sagre (2017), "two distinct approaches to L2 DA exist, termed interactionist and interventionist" (p. 634). The authors state that it might be easier to implement intervention at first. While this may be a good tip, there is no definition of intervention in the article. The differences between the two types of mediation are mentioned briefly but not enough to fully understand. The main drawback of this article is that it needed to take a little more time to develop the theory so the readers could understand the content better. There are a few different ways to structure both types of mediation but it is important to realize they are distinct. While the previous two articles give a broad overview of mediation overall, I sought depth on each of the topics of intervention and interaction.

From **Lantolf and Poehner (2011),** I learned more about the intervention model. During intervention, mediation is scripted and the focus is on improving performance. "Mediation is arranged along a scale of most implicit to most explicit, and during DA the mediator follows the scale precisely, moving from hint to hint until the learner either responds correctly or until the final hint is reached and the solution is revealed and explained" (p. 15). This article describes a study that shows how this type of mediation can be used in the classroom. Intervention assumes what the learner's problem is and then provides a scripted hint. This does not allow a ZPD to be created and thus instructors cannot ascertain the real needs of the student so it does not seem like the best method if someone strictly subscribes to SCT. However, intervention does provide one compelling advantage in that, because the hints are prescribed, it does not have to be

administered by the instructor. Hints can be loaded onto a computer and testing can be done digitally. Using technology to administer assessments affords instructors the opportunity to give the assessment to many students simultaneously and provides faster results. Nevertheless, computer mediated assessment may constrain how much the instructor could learn about the students.

The one thing about this study that I did not like very much is that the results are a little confusing to the reader. At first it seems like some students who needed less mediation are at a higher level than students who needed more help through the process. Then, the authors point out that the student receiving more help was actually doing things that were more complicated showing a better control of the language. I understand that the authors wanted to show that this may happen in a language classroom and it is good to include. However, it could be written differently as to not deceive the reader. Again, it is good information to know that the mediation given is not necessarily a mirror of students' levels, but I did not like how it was presented.

What I liked about the study is that it focuses on the learner agency. I also like that the author points out that student progress can be quick or very slow. It all depends on the mediation and how it is received. I like thinking of learning as a collaborative effort between the student and the teacher. The idea of the prompted scripts is to give students enough to help them but not so much as to give them the answer. I see this as a great alternative to not giving any help at all during a test. Although mediation through intervention is better than just a standardized test with no mediation at all, I would think the best option, if there is time and training for it, would be to mediate through interaction.

With a better understanding of intervention, my next task was to learn more about interaction. This started with **Poehner and van Compernolle (2011)** who say that interaction in

DA "requires learners to struggle as they work with the mediator to resolve the tension between their current capabilities and the demands of the task. The mediator's responsibility in a collaborative framing is to target support to learner needs" (p. 191). To reiterate, the focus of the mediator is not to complete the task but to understand the process happening within the activity, or ZPD, and see where the learner needs help. This article breaks down the interaction even more into collaborative interaction and cooperative interaction. During the case study on collaboration, the mediator tries to help the learner and work together with them. The goal of this type of mediation is to accomplish the task at hand. If the learner is not understanding, the mediator provides direction and assistance to complete the problem.

Cooperative interaction is more led by the learner and the mediator will follow along wherever they are going. Poehner and van Compernolle say that through cooperative interaction, although the original task might not be completed, the mediator can still learn a lot about the learner's developing abilities. "Mediator and learner move beyond the confines of the immediate task and turn to questions or problems that … serve to promote learner knowledge and understandings" (p. 192). This seems like a good way to examine the learners' background and see how they are interpreting what they are learning. Regardless of which style of interaction is used, both are interactive events that happen during an activity, which is to say mediation is taking place within the ZPD. Due to how much information the instructor learns about the student, this type of mediation seems far superior to what can be gleaned from using intervention. After gaining a better understanding of some of the underpinnings of interaction I wanted to look at more articles focused there because it seems like such an effective way to evaluate learners.

Poehner (2011) focuses on cooperative interaction in the ZPD and how that allows the mediator to integrate assessment with teaching. Mediation by interaction that takes place during the activity is helpful because "The ZPD brings to light abilities that have not yet fully developed and functions that are still in the process of being internalized" (p. 247). As I have stated earlier, the purpose of DA is to assess those specific abilities that are still developing. Where intervention uses scripts, interaction is off script and either follows the lead of the learner or is guided by the mediator. Poehner claims that it is only through interaction that the cause of poor performance can be found.

What I find very interesting about this article is that it focuses not only on how interaction can help the instructor but that it is also very helpful for the development of the learner. Poehner posits that student development can occur in as little as one interaction. This makes sense as I think about it, anytime students are involved in an activity they should be developing. By mediating the activity, ideally instructors should be furthering their development through the interactions taking place. I had originally thought of DA only as a way to learn more about the students but it can also help the student to learn more.

Although not specifically mentioned in the articles I read, the main drawback that I see in this type of DA is the amount of time that it would take. In a study like this where it just highlights a mediator and two different students, it is great to look at how much is learned and how helpful the interactions are. It would be extremely difficult to find the time to employ this method in beginning language classes which are usually quite large. In my own classes with 25-30 students, it would take more time than the 50-minute, three-times-a-week course allows to do one-on-one testing as an interactive mediator. The next phase of my research was to figure out how to apply DA in larger classes

One way that **Poehner (2009)** suggests applying DA in large courses is by using group dynamic assessment (G-DA). The article states that G-DA has the same general principle of "offering learners mediation to help them co-construct a ZPD, but they differ in that G-DA must also take account of the group's ZPD" (p. 477). When using G-DA in the classroom, teachers are not just looking individually at the students but have to remember the group dynamic. In order to use G-DA, the instructor must give an activity that nobody in the group can complete on their own, so they require mediation. In the article Poehner provides two examples of how G-DA was used by students and teachers.

What I find most useful about the results of the two examples is that in both instances the "teacher proceeds from a developmental perspective that informs her moment-to-moment interpretations of learner needs and helps her decide how to best respond" (p. 488). This means that although it is a group setting, the activity still provides the main feedback required in DA. That is, it allows the teacher to focus on development instead of just current learner knowledge. This is the main difference between formative and summative types of assessments. **Leung (2007)** explains the difference more in depth. While summative assessment seeks to measure what students know, formative assessment is designed to guide the students and help them progress towards goals. In the literature formative assessment is often called assessment for learning, (AfL). Both AfL and DA are closely related but not exactly the same. Leung says they have the following three things in common;

> (a) a commitment to improving student learning through assessment activities, (b) use of students' current knowledge and ability as the starting point for assessment, and (c) a belief in teacher intervention through interactive feedback. (p. 267)

While they share a great deal, the two differ in that DA is aimed at long term development and AfL is geared toward supporting a specific activity or classroom task (p. 269). In addition, DA stems from a SCT perspective and AfL does not. This article demonstrates that DA is a type formative assessment but not every version of formative assessment is DA. Depending on the teachers training or background they can apply different styles of formative assessment in the classroom but only those who come from the sociocultural perspective or training would be using DA. The differences would mostly be visible in the way that the instructor mediates the learning. It is also important to note that during DA the mediation should focus on the benefit of the group not only the individual. Mediating done in this way ensures that the group, and in turn each member, is developing. Following Poehner's lead about research on the efficacy of G-DA, **Alavi, Kaivanpanah, and Shabani (2011)** conducted a study about mediation methods of instructors situated in a G-DA setting.

Alavi, Kaivanpanah, and Shabani (2011) studied a group of 15 students learning English. The researches performed a pretest and posttest and counted the number of mediations offered to the group. The frequency of mediation in the posttest dropped remarkably compared to the pretest. "This reduced mediation from the teacher indicates the stretching of the learners' ZPD to higher levels…confirming their growing autonomy and self-regulation functioning" (p. 52). Although the DA is taking place in a group setting, it is still an effective way to understand the development of the students. Group work is something that I already use in the classroom and could be an effective way to apply DA as well.

In addition to the use of G-DA, technology is another approach to applying DA in larger groups. **Poehner and Lantolf (2013)** take a closer look at how to use computers to carry out DA. This exercise is called computerized DA (C-DA). Generally, this is done through

intervention where, if a student answers wrong, a prompt is given to help them realize the error and try again. The instructor is also supposed to be present to give supplemental instruction (p. 326). The computer then gives both a mediated and non-mediated score which shows the student's actual and potential development, essentially providing the instructor a map of the ZPD (p. 328). In the study, the authors look at scores from three groups of test takers; Chinese listening, Chinese reading, and French listening. Although perhaps not as in-depth or informative as some of the interactive DA I looked at earlier, C-DA could be applied more easily in larger groups of students and still provides more opportunities for growth by both the learner and the instructor.

Results from C-DA strike me as superior to standardized test scores. Poehner and Lantolf (2013) say that this type of assessment "provide[s] learners and educators with information pertaining not only to their actual abilities but also to their ZPD" (p. 337). This information is very useful because it allows the teacher to personalize future instruction so as to better meet the needs of the individual students. This style of DA also contains one of the main principles of DA of "integrating the diagnosis and promotion of abilities" (p. 337). It ties together instruction and assessment into the same activity. The last part of this article that I particularly enjoyed was the conclusion. The authors point out that this is just the beginning of C-DA. The format of prompts should not be looked at as the only way to perform C-DA. I do not know exactly what is going to happen with technology in the future but I am certain that C-DA will continue to grow and evolve with it. I am glad the authors included this as to not limit the potential of DA.

Darhower (2014) writes about using C-DA on Spanish students looking at past-tense narration. This study employs the use of C-DA in a different way than what is described in the above. The author studied five students, with synchronous DA via internet chats. The students

chatted with each other while the mediator observed and aided or gave direction when necessary. There was a level from one to six assigned to each type of mediation. It ranged from providing a prompt to giving explicit explanations. Although very different from the prompt system described for C-DA in the other study, this is also something that could be much more easily put into practice in the classroom. I could see myself using this as a group project which I can give specific times for so that I can mediate. By using this approach,

As the author points out, this type of assessment still promotes the critical role of DA to give "assisted performance which exposes emerging abilities that are not yet fully internalized" (p. 237). I like this study because it shows a sort of innovation for C-DA, a way to test that avoids multiple choice and simply giving answers. I see this as a cross between interaction and intervention, all done in a way that would be much easier to apply to a large group of students instead of a one-on-one interview. Another great tool with this type of assessment is the record of what is being discussed. "Another advantage is that the automatically generated transcripts are readily available for both research and pedagogical purposes" (p. 238). Being able to read over conversations can be very insightful for mediators as well as the participants, this is not something that is afforded to practitioners of oral DA. A teacher can use the scripts to review where learners are and plan future lessons. In addition to written transcripts, audio recordings can be useful as well. The students can use the information to learn about their own L2 development and see what they can improve on.

The one negative of this study is that it only includes five students. The author mentions that he originally wanted to use more but logistical issues forced him to test with a smaller group. This makes me wonder if it would actually be feasible to use this approach in my own classroom or if logistically it just would not work. As computers continue to get smarter, I think one way

around some of the issues would be to have everyone participate remotely and write a program to do some of the mediation based on certain keywords or phrases. This would give the mediator more freedom with how to use this type of C-DA. Although this would make it easier to use with large groups, once again it comes with the constraint of learning less about each student. The farther that an instructor distances themselves from the assessment process, the less good it does anyone involved.

Something that should be looked at with all forms of DA and that I did not find mentioned in any of the studies or articles that I looked at is the cost. When it comes to testing, I think most organizations are going to do whatever saves them money in the long run. Even though it may provide better results, the time involved with DA is likely more expensive to a university or school district and therefore, they use standardized testing. Even with C-DA I am sure that programs are expensive to design and develop and therefore come with a large price tag. The technology needed to participate in C-DA might not be available to every student so it might not be a good way to implement DA. From everything I have read, more research needs to be done to determine the cost of testing. Then some form of a cost-benefit analysis could be conducted to determine the best practices in assessment, at least from a fiscal perspective. As for the learning side of things, I think that interactive DA is the best way to help students. When possible, this is the method that I think should be practiced in the classroom.

Overall, I have learned that DA is more focused on the development of the learner rather than what they can already do by themselves. This in itself gives me at least an angle from which to approach my assessments. Naturally, this type of assessment is closely connected to the ZPD. While a ZPD is often formed in classes amongst peers of varying levels, during DA, the student and the instructor form a ZPD. This means that the instructor acts as a mediator during an

activity with a student. In this sense, thinking of ZPD as an activity, DA is simply a student and an instructor working on an activity together. When the teacher and the student are working together, the teacher is helping the student to achieve success while focusing on the processes of the student. This is absolutely something that I can work on applying in my own teaching.

I have found ample evidence to show why interaction during DA is superior to traditional testing. Since traditional testing does not allow mediation, no ZPD is created and it is impossible to find the potential of the learners, leading to an assessment that shows only their actual level. This information does not help me know what I should be teaching next to help the students develop in the future. There is still much to be learned and explored with the use of DA and C-DA. Poehner and Lantolf (2013) say "We are in the beginning stages of what promises to be a lengthy and challenging process" (p. 337). I agree and am excited to see where the future of DA is headed.

LOOKING FORWARD

At this juncture in my life, I have gratefully accepted a position of employment with USU Extension as an assistant professor. I will be working in the USU department of agriculture and natural resources in Millard County. For this position, I will be working in rural Utah to help spread the reach of Utah State University resources to community members who might not fully know what is available to them. I will implement programs, assist in research and teach community classes to help meet the needs of underserved populations. My goal in everything I do is to improve the lives of those who I will be around.

One of the main reasons I was initially interviewed for this position is my Spanish proficiency and my skills as a teacher. Although I will not be teaching in a traditional language classroom, the training I have received in the MSLT program will assist me in all my duties as an assistant professor. I am very excited about this prospect to do something new and continue to learn. There will be many opportunities for both teaching and learning in my future. As someone who enjoys education, that is all I can ask for.

As I continue forward with employment and working as a professional educator, there are some areas where I would like to improve. One particular space I would like to improve is with my command of the Spanish language. There are many new phrases, regional differences, and nuances to Spanish that I can continue to learn. I will never reach a level of proficiency where there is no way to improve. I am excited to continue asking questions and making progress in this area. I believe that the more I can learn about Spanish, the better I can meet the needs of my those who I serve. Additionally, a greater level of proficiency will help me be a better communicator across different cultures.

Along with increased language proficiency, I would also like to expand my knowledge of using technology to teach. During the last semester of teaching as a graduate instructor, we had to move all of our classes online. This happened very quickly and although I got through the semester, I do not think my students learned as much as they would have in the classroom. By seeking out professional development and teacher education opportunities I can improve the way I use technology to teach. This can help me have a larger role in remote learning opportunities and help prepare me for the future. By using technology better and improving my language skills I can be a better educator in the future.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
Conversation with Xavier

Q: ¿Tenias un estilo de enseñar diferente cuando llegaste a los estados unidos? ¿Cómo ha cambiado tu estilo de enseñar con más tiempo en los estados unidos?
A: Cuando eres primerizo, cuando vas la primera vez a dar clase, eres más vinculado a los estudiantes. Veía las notas de los estudiantes y les avisaba. Me preocupaba mucho por las notas y el bienestar de los estudiantes. Ahora, sé cómo son los alumnos. Ahora, si un alumno no tiene interés para esforzarse más en la clase, es cosa de él. No me vinculo tanto como antes. Hay veces que digo, chicos, soy latino y si pregunto ¿Cómo estás? Es que quiero saber. Quiero que me respondáis. Me acostumbra a cosas de clase como de comer en clase, lo de llevar gorro en clase. Al final me acostumbra a esas cosas, pero, al principio eran muy chocantes para mí.

Q: ¿Cuál es la cosa más diferente de la cultura aquí en los estados unidos?
A: Para mi es lo sociable que somos en España. Importa mucho la socialización. La relación que tienen los maestros en España. Un profesor al mes, harían una actividad juntos con otros profesores. O después de terminar la clase, nos vamos a tomar una cerveza. Es muy importante lo que es el acto social. Y aquí, es menos importante.

Q: ¿Cuándo regresas a España vas a cambiar la manera que enseñas?
A: Tendré que cambiar todo porque los estudiantes son diferentes. Para empezar, no es probable que enseñe en una universidad. Lo más probable es que enseñe en una secundaria. Todo de los estudiantes con respeto a la cultura será diferente. Los estudiantes aquí son respetuosos. Tendré que dedicar mucho tiempo al controlar la clase. Me tendré que adaptar.

Q: ¿Hay algunas cosas que quieres llevar de regreso a España?
A: Sobre todo, los métodos. El método comunicativo me parece muy importante y en España no se aplica, si sí, no lo he visto nunca. En España no se utiliza este método. Cosas del método de enseñanza puedo usar pero el cliente, la persona que vaya a enseñar es completamente distinto.

Appendix B
Conversation with Carlos

Q: ¿Entonces, hablaste inglés antes de llegar?
A: Básicamente. El inglés que yo sé, es lo que aprendí desde que era pequeño. Antes de venir, yo hablaba inglés. No he tenido ningún problema en comunicarme con nadie.

Q: Quiero saber las diferencias entre la vida universitaria en los estados unidos y en España.
A: En España es mucho más estricto. Es decir, tu, por ejemplo, no puedes decir quiero hacer esta clase de psicología. No. Tú en España haces un examen y dependiendo de la nota, puedes estudiar cierta carretera. Yo solo puedo coger clases que ya me dicen que yo puedo coger. Es rígido. Solo puede estudiar lo que dice el plan de estudio. Si no saques estas clases, no te dan el título.
Trabaja muchísimo menos, muuuuchisimo menos. No hay tanta asignación no hay tanto exámenes, no. Tiene un examen final que te cuente mínimo 70% y es todo.

Q: ¿Qué hacen los estudiantes después de estudiar?
A: Ahhhh. Te puedo hablar un rato. Ya estoy acustumbrado. En España, tenemos clase, hablar, ir a desayunar juntos, vovler a clase, ir a comer juntos, tomar una cerveza, ir al gimnasio, café por la tarde y estar juntos. Aquí es más frio. No sé. Son amigos, pero no son amigos de verdad, es diferente.

Q: ¿Qué tal la religión?
A: Dije, wow. Dije, es fuerte aquí. Yo no, bueno yo respeto a cada uno, pero…Comparado a mi estilo de vida, a mí me gusta salir, tomar una cerveza, beber, salir de fiesta tarde, estas cosas, aquí no las veo tanto porque la gente no lo hace, porque no quiere claro. Eso sí, me costó algo de acostumbrarme. De encontrar mi lugar.