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Exploring Multiliteracies and Other Approaches to Second Language Teaching

by

Saralee Dunster

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

2023

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ABSTRACT**Exploring Multiliteracies and Other Approaches to Second Language Teaching****by****Saralee Dunster****Master of Second Language Teaching****Utah State University, 2023****Major Professor: Dr. Sarah Gordon****Department: World Languages & Cultures**

This teaching portfolio offers a selection from the author's graduate coursework, teaching experience, and research undertaken while enrolled in the Utah State University Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program. The documents included are a reflection of her pedagogical approach and teaching practice, developed through varying contexts of professional experiences, including teaching English and French as a second language. This portfolio includes: reflections on the author's teaching environment, a teaching philosophy statement, a professional development peer observation, a reflection paper that demonstrates the author's experiences teaching with stories within the context of the multiliteracies framework, specifically multimodal fairy tales with The Fable Cottage platform, and finally, a consideration of future career goals related to language learning and teaching.

(40 pages)

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I also want to extend a thank you to all the professors who helped me each semester to become a better learner and educator. I am also so grateful for my classmates and their contributions in class and outside of class, for their insights, as well as their friendships, which have impacted my experience and education so much more than they realize!

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACTFL- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

BYU- Brigham Young University

CLT- Communicative Language Teaching

EFL- English as a Foreign Language

ESL- English as a Second Language

L1- First Language

L2- Second Language

MSLT- Master of Second Language Teaching

NCSSFL- National Council of State Supervisors for Languages

TED- Technology, Entertainment, Design

TESOL- Teaching English as a Second Language

USU- Utah State University

INTRODUCTION

This teaching portfolio demonstrates a selection of what I have learned and experienced throughout my two years in the Utah State University Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program. Here I explore my teaching practice and experiences and some of the pedagogical approaches that have influenced it. In my reflection, I also draw on my prior experience in diverse classroom settings, including teaching both English as a Second Language (ESL) and French, both children and adults in the US and abroad.

This portfolio contains lessons from these experiences in the classroom and from the theoretical approaches and teaching methods learned in the MSLT program. First, I include a more detailed presentation of my experiences in teaching and my teaching philosophy statement. Second, I provide a peer observation as an example of professional development and a reflection on teaching. Third, I offer a reflection from my own experience teaching with stories, including a review of using the platform **The Fable Cottage** and my exploration of using the multiliteracies approach in the classroom. Lastly, I conclude by exploring my thoughts and goals on future career possibilities.

Teaching Philosophy

Professional Environment

Various learning and teaching experiences in the US and abroad led me to pursue a degree from the MSLT program to broaden my theoretical perspectives and teaching practice. My first time teaching and visiting a foreign country was teaching English in St. Petersburg, Russia for four months. I participated in the International Language Program, which provides volunteer opportunities to teach ESL abroad to students around ages 3-18, of all proficiency levels. Following this volunteer teaching in Russia, I expanded my experience in languages by serving a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Tacoma, Washington, where I learned the basics of the Khmer language in preparation to teach Cambodian people in the area.

Immediately following my mission, I took French classes at Brigham Young University-Idaho and had the opportunity to participate in a study abroad program in Montpellier, France. Though I had never considered becoming a French teacher, I felt I could not let go of my pursuit of the language that I had started studying in high school, and consequently jumped at the opportunity to participate in an immersion program. It was exciting to go use the language that I had perceived as just a type of “code language” for me until then, because I had been learning it for years with classmates, only within high school and university classrooms.

During this study abroad experience, it was enlightening to interact with French speakers besides my classmates, and it was then I learned what it is like to be immersed in another language, in other cultures, and in a foreign country for an extended period of time. While I experienced some of the difficulties that come from language immersion and interacting with a different culture, I found it immensely rewarding, and made memorable connections and friends from around the world.

Because of my own experiences learning languages in the US and in other countries, I believe I am able to relate better to international students, or other community members who arrive in the States with the intent to learn English. I also teach with more empathy, having faced my own language learning challenges, and I enjoy bringing prior experiences with French and France francophone, or American cultures into the classroom.

I received my Associate's degree at BYU-Idaho, and later earned a Bachelor's in English Language at BYU, with minors in Editing and TESOL, and a certificate of proficiency in French. With my educational background and prior experience with teaching ESL, I also taught an ESL summer course for adult learners. Looking to continue my studies in second language acquisition and approaches to teaching through a master's program, I was then offered a position to teach two levels of beginning French language at USU. I have done my best to cultivate an enthusiastic environment of learning through literature, culture, and interactive activities into my French teaching and have learned much over the last two years in this program. Below I articulate important aspects of my teaching philosophy that I have developed through these teaching experiences and through my graduate coursework.

Teaching Philosophy Statement

Throughout my different experiences as both a learner and a teacher of second languages, I have learned that just as each student is unique, each teacher is unique. While certain principles may guide great teachers' practices, ultimately teachers can apply different methods and techniques to be more effective, and consequently improve the students' learning environment. Using a range of methods and strategies make teaching effective. Among them, those that guide key aspects of my current teaching practice include: being positive and implementing teaching approaches that help boost students' motivation; using dynamic assessment for a broader view of student progress; implementing authentic texts and stories with interactive activities; and making my classroom student-centered.

Positivity

Teacher attitude, and more specifically, positivity may influence a learner's extrinsic motivation, and boosting motivation can result in better learning outcomes for L2 learners in any language. Recent research has shown that teacher characteristics play a large role in learner's receptivity; for instance, Dewaele and Chengchen (2021) address the "Broaden-and-Build Theory" which points out "that learners experiencing positive emotions will absorb more input and will build more resources for further language learning" (p. 2). How a student feels about the learning environment, teacher, and material all play a role in the student's level of receptivity. Being mindful of the positive emotions I show in the classroom is important.

There is also a clear correlation between positive emotions promoting a healthier learning environment in the classroom in the existing research (Dewaele & Li, 2021; Moskowitz & Dewaele, 2021). My own experiences echo Erdil-Moody's concept that teachers' positivity towards their roles, and the teaching material contribute a large part to the students' "learner

motivation” (2016, p. 8). Additionally, teacher attitude matters; for example, Moskowitz and Dewaele (2021), who conducted a survey of 129 participants found that “students who felt their teachers were satisfied with their own life achievements, including their chosen profession of teaching, reported higher levels of attitude and motivation towards learning English” (p. 124). Since a teacher’s attitude can be somewhat contagious for some learners, it is therefore essential for an instructor to demonstrate their passion for their role and the subject they are teaching.

Personally, being able to see the direct difference I am making in students’ lives is part of why I find teaching so fulfilling, because I have been in their position before, as an English speaker learning French in both the US and France. Consequently, I understand the ups and downs of navigating new cultures, as well as learning a language in a predominantly English-speaking country where that language is not commonly spoken. Both these personal experiences contribute not only to my level of satisfaction in my own life, but also my ability to relate to my students and their goals, and to view them more holistically beyond their role as students.

Dynamic Assessment

Frequent evaluation, even on a casual level, is essential in determining the proficiency level of a class, and in monitoring individual students’ progress throughout the semester. To assess progress, there are two major types: formative, and summative. A summative assessment tends to be high stakes and is usually a cumulative test or exam at the end of a chapter, unit, or semester to show what the students have learned (there are many types, including essays, oral assessments, multiple choice exams, etc.). A formative assessment tends to be more ongoing, with lower stakes, and conducted throughout the semester to inform the teacher how well students are grasping the material and progressing through the curriculum. While dynamic assessment can take various forms, it is based on the idea “that instruction and assessment should

be inseparable from one another” (Yildirim, 2008, p. 302). So, while I support the use of summative assessments in the classroom, I would like to focus on the benefits of using continuous formative assessments as a means of assessing the student progress toward learning objectives throughout the semester. Dynamic assessment is a kind of formative assessment that incorporates instruction simultaneously with the assessment, rather than a test that the student completes on their own (Yildirim, 2008).

Dynamic assessment can take many forms, and one method for dynamic evaluation (as defined recently by VanPatten, Keating & Wulff 2020) is to monitor students’ activity, answer questions, and correct them only where necessary to promote fluency without inhibiting their motivation to practice their output. This is a varied approach to assessment which goes hand-in-hand with timely, positive, and corrective feedback under the category of formative assessment.

One justification for dynamic assessment takes into account Vygotsky’s well-known Sociocultural theory (1978), which addresses culture and the gap between the student’s current boundary of knowledge, and that which either the teacher or their peers help the student obtain. So, in working with either the teacher or the class, the student may be able to increase their language skills by using it as a means to complete an activity, and the assessment becomes the “process instead of [the] product” (Yildirim, 2008, p. 302). To generalize, I find these types of dynamic assessments to be more interactive, more student-centered, and therefore more effective in my classroom. Frequent dynamic assessment allows me to get to know my students and see their progress, which provides me with the information necessary to cater my instructional design towards my students, both in daily lesson plans and in meeting the course objectives for the semester.

Authentic Texts and Stories

My teaching philosophy is influenced by the multiliteracies approach, because I believe teachers should strive to work with authentic texts in the L2, and foster development of several skills while students interact with texts and with each other. The multiliteracies approach defines “authentic texts” very broadly. An authentic text is that which could be found in any culture of the L2, and is not written for a contrived context like a textbook or handout (ranging from a poem, a song, to an advertising poster, or an official document, and beyond). According to Allen and Paesani (2010), multiliteracies is more than simply using authentic text, rather it “foregrounds the role of authentic texts of all types—both literary and non-literary—as the core element of instruction” (p. 129). It not only exposes students to a variety of text styles and genres, but it draws from language practice strategies such as “situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice,” (p. 123) allowing students to use the language as a means of understanding the language. This supports the idea that students do not learn from encountering the authentic text alone, but through scaffolded discussion or activities by using “all resources—linguistic, social, [and] cultural” (p. 123) so they may better grasp how to use the L2.

With the use of authentic literature, the student becomes the director of their language interaction rather than simply a receiver, as they are given the tools to actively engage with the learning material. In addition, by being introduced to authentic texts (including more complex literary texts) early on in their language exposure, they also may become better equipped for higher education structures where literature is more widely introduced, and they have the means of growing and becoming more linguistically confident.

The aspect of the multiliteracies approach to L2 teaching that appeals to me the most is the use of a wide variety of authentic texts to teach reading strategies and critical thinking skills (such as analyzing, summarizing, or transforming material). Because I aim to support different learners in my classroom, most of my lessons include speaking, listening, reading, and writing and I often use multimodal texts. Multiliteracies also supports dynamic assessment, as the pre-reading exercises activate the students' schema by having them talk about their own experience related to the text. In addition, they are able to better understand the meaning of new material through interaction with their peers as they discuss and interpret texts, with or without the help of the teacher. As the teacher facilitates the learning process, they are able to answer questions, and gauge the students' level of understanding.

I like to provide students with opportunities for meaningful interactions. Meaningful interactions may be defined here as exchanges that have a context, simulate real-life situations, or would have a real-life purpose. In my classes, students interact with other learners, and practice analytical and interpretive skills through the multiliteracies approach, with different kinds of texts. The more skills used to interpret texts, including higher-order skills, the more students are actually having an opportunity to negotiate in the L2 and to apply what they have learned. Multiliteracies can therefore be more helpful to students than traditional fill-in-the-blanks worksheets, multiple choice comprehension tests, or verb conjugation drills. Multiliteracies incorporates not just reading, but also watching, or listening to texts (and this can be achieved using multimodal texts that include sound and image; for instance, a video of a poem read aloud or an animated version of a children's book in the L2 that offers sound effects and images along with the texts also increases understanding). Listening is practiced the most in a classroom, but reading is the foundation for a large portion of the language, as according to

Crossley and McNamara (2008), it supports students' learning of many linguistic features, including grammar structures, vocabulary, and different kinds of discourse; especially in reading stories where interest in the plot or characters may help engage the student's interest, as they want to know what happens next in the story.

Multimodal texts may be broadly defined in general as any type of text accompanied and enhanced by optional types of input, such as: visuals, audio, video, and can even include spatial consideration for easier reading. They can also increase accessibility, offering options such as closed captioning or large print. Multimodal texts vary widely in genre and options, and can include for instance audio books read aloud with sound effects, stories read with different voices and music, or stories read aloud with accompanying animations and closed captioning, etc. I encourage my students to seek out multiple types of texts themselves and authentic material in the language as much as possible at their general proficiency level (from songs, movies, to fairy tales and story books, whether in print, or read out loud on YouTube, for example). Again, L2 teaching material is better when it is authentic, because it gives students the opportunity to encounter the language in context, to have access to different cultures, to see real language, and possibly to later use it realistically.

Student-Centered

Giving choices and setting goals are vital in the student-centered classroom. Encouraging students to search online or look in the library for their own authentic texts supports a student-centered approach to language learning, as it gives them additional agency and responsibility in their own learning. I encourage students to find their own level-appropriate, authentic materials that help bolster their motivation throughout the semester, including: music videos, books, cartoon series, streaming series, or websites of interest to them individually. I periodically

remind the students to set goals and to review their long-term language learning goals to recognize how far they have come, and also to reassess their goals if necessary. Every classroom differs depending on the individual students who enroll, their identities, backgrounds, experiences, and goals, so giving them choices and supporting their goals is my way of helping them in their language learning journey.

The classroom may also differ based on the curriculum or the mode of delivery, such as face-to-face, hybrid, or remote learning. With each new semester, I ask the students about themselves, about their goals, and their sources of motivation for learning a language. I try to get to know each individual, and my intention is to help all students boost their level of motivation through engaging teaching materials, interactive activities that support several skills, dynamic assessment, and to share with them my own positive attitude and passion for the language.

One of my motives as a teacher is to design activities and structure my lesson plans and objectives using approaches and topics that interest students to help students maintain their goals and increase their motivation. Part of this is getting to know my students, their backgrounds, and their goals, so that I can design activities better geared towards a specific outcome. I also believe it is important that learners monitor their own progress by setting actionable goals. For instance, in monitoring progress, it is helpful to implement the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do statements (2017) so that learners may measure their proficiency level and progress as they practice in class activities. In monitoring their own progress, learners may be able to keep the bigger picture in mind when things get hard as their goals remind them of what, and why they want to learn. Setting goals and using Can-Do statements not only supports their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, but it gives them at least one marker to measure their learning outcomes against throughout the semester or term.

Since communication is a social activity, I strive to use interactive and collaborative activities that help students learn to express themselves in the L2, such as having them ask each other questions related to either an authentic text we are reading, or a real-life situation that we are role-playing, or by giving them opportunities to practice the linguistic forms, structures, and cultural aspects of the language in a particular unit of the curriculum. Rather than focusing on just the grammar explicitly presented in the textbook, I strive to create a safe space to practice language. A safe space is a respectful atmosphere in which all students may feel they are able to express themselves in the L2, to get outside their comfort zone, to try new things, and to build confidence without fear of negative judgment, bias, or harsh criticism.

To reiterate, pointing out the improvement in students' language learning experience, and helping them to see their own progress through dynamic assessment can boost their motivation and provide a safe place for self-expression, and to practice the language. I like to encourage my students to seek out different resources and authentic materials that interest them, and the multiliteracies approach provides a framework for autonomous learning and foundational skills for students to take language education in a more personalized direction. These principles are important to me, because they foster autonomy and authenticity in a student's personal language learning process.

Professional Development through Teaching Observation

Observation and reflection can be fruitful in improving teaching practice. Two effective ways to engage in observation are: to record one's own teaching and to conduct a reflection, or to observe other teachers through peer observation. As teachers, one of the most helpful exercises in professional development is to observe each other and exchange constructive feedback.

Below I offer an example of another teacher's class that I observed as part of the MSLT program requirements. Though I have observed many courses in different languages and levels, I chose this lesson because the teacher demonstrated effective methods of scaffolding and recycling, in other words, ways of reviewing material while drawing on previously studied material to reinforce the new. First, I describe the lesson plan, the activities, interactions, and learning objectives. Then I reflect on what went well and what I might have done differently if it were my class and I had more time. My reflection covers the strengths of the teacher, as well as areas of improvement.

Description

I attended a one-hour, university-level French language class. This was a first-year course, and the average ACTFL proficiency level was assumed to be Novice through Novice High. This was a review lesson that built upon grammar structures students had recently learned. The learning objectives for the hour were to review several grammar structures: a future tense, using question words, direct objects, negation structures, and some vocabulary. This lesson was also a preparation for an upcoming summative assessment for the chapter. It included dynamic assessment during the class period in a few whole-class activities and in one pair activity, with the teacher checking the students' level of understanding of the review topic.

About twenty students attended this class, and the teacher began by asking the students a question using the future tense which they had learned a few weeks prior. This was a warm-up activity with the goal of reviewing and recycling what students had learned about that verb tense. This was a teacher-centered, whole-class activity. She elicited responses from them, asking what they were planning on doing that weekend in the future tense, for about ten minutes. The instructor offered corrective feedback after many student responses.

Once she addressed a majority of the students, calling on them individually or asking for volunteers, she used a projector to display a Word Document where she spent the following twenty minutes typing out vocabulary words that students themselves provided from that week's study unit. This was a whole-class discussion and activity, with students giving one-word, or short phrase answers. The list was therefore based on student choice. Once the students had created a substantial list of several terms they selected from their own work that week, she methodically went back to review some of the words before moving on to the next activity.

Then they reviewed interrogatives and question forms. The teacher reviewed how to form a question for a specific response (such as *who* or *what* questions). Then they switched to a traditional "think-pair-share" type activity focusing on reviewing direct object pronouns. Students worked with a partner to brainstorm at least two sentences with a direct object. This was both oral and written. Once they had written down some examples, for the "share" part of the activity, the teacher began requesting a sentence from each of the pairs, which she then wrote on the word document, highlighted the direct objects, and addressed how other objects mentioned were not direct objects (she provided explicit corrective feedback when necessary, explaining that some were indirect objects, or other parts of speech). Following those responses and explanations or corrections, she then started from the top of the list and transformed each of

the students' sentences into the negative form, to practice negation. This was another whole-class, teacher-centered activity (but using student personal examples) for the last five minutes of the lesson.

Strengths

This lesson was successful in its goals of reviewing and practicing material that had been introduced before. In addition, this unit included question words, so this warm-up targeted the structures students had been learning. What someone learns from a lesson may depend on their own language learning goals, motivation, or other variables. For me, I immediately noticed the value of using an opening question not only as a warm-up activity, but also as a review tool or effective method of scaffolding before going on to new material. This may help students connect the material to their own life experiences and to prior knowledge, activating their schema.

Her method of slowly eliciting vocabulary from the students also gave students an opportunity for recall, and to confirm meaning for students who may not have remembered certain words. She also did not rush the lesson in an effort to get through the material; she went at the pace of the students, giving them ample opportunity to provide output in the class, which is one of the few situations they can practice the language with others throughout the week. The timing, with pauses and giving students time to think and answer, was effective. In previous lessons I had observed of this instructor, she sometimes would take comments from the students and translate or reframe them so they could learn the expressions they use in their daily lives in the L2, making it more meaningful to a broader spectrum of students' own lives and what they wanted to express, instead of only relying on the textbook or common tourist phrases. She also had students work together in this lesson, which allows students to interact and share their ideas

and prior knowledge, to produce something new for the entire class to learn from, and simultaneously promote an atmosphere of social learning.

The teacher appeared to value using the computer as much as the whiteboard, depending on the activity, but she moved quite a bit throughout the classroom as she observed the students' pair work, answering questions and offering feedback as she went. Perhaps she posts on Canvas the typed-up results of these collaborative, whole-class activities after each lesson. This would be helpful for students in reviewing spelling and structures. In addition, it gives the students an opportunity to interact with one another in choosing the topics and vocabulary words that are relevant to them. It could provide a written record that would otherwise be lost when the whiteboard is erased.

Another of her strengths was the ability to incorporate elements of culture and cultural comparison in some of her responses, such as asking what weekend activities the students participated in to make the language personally relevant to them, for example when a student wanted to say, "I worked at a booth to help recruit members for my sorority." The instructor also seemed to know individual students and their interests and levels, and was able to adapt to their needs and be flexible with the lesson plan. She was able to adapt and pivot to answer questions that touched on different parts of the language or culture not initially planned, depending on the students' curiosity and enthusiasm about a particular example or phrase, creating a more inclusive teaching approach.

Potential Areas for Improvement

A drawback to taking about half the class time to review is the possibility of running behind the general pace of the curriculum and reducing the amount of time needed to address more complicated grammatical concepts. In the case of vocabulary, I like to give students time to

practice new vocabulary in the classroom to solidify meanings before using it in the grammatical material, but not spend more than 15 minutes maximum in a 50-minute lesson to introduce it. This also helps balance the pace of the lesson for those students who are familiar with most of the vocabulary, and are ready to practice it in context.

It could also boost student engagement to start off with a competitive game, such as a group Quizlet Live activity, so that everyone has the opportunity to participate (especially in a larger class). Games and polling can be effective for reviewing, either individually or collaboratively, as students have to choose from more than one vocabulary word at a time and coordinate with classmates. Kahoot is another useful platform to stimulate learning at a low-stakes level, and can be anonymous. Competition with games like these can also help with student engagement levels or even boost motivation.

I also prefer to prompt or encourage students by asking them to volunteer rather than call them out by name if I am confident that the individual would know the answer or be interested in a given topic. This gives students the choice to participate and a sense of responsibility in their own learning, or in other words, it bolsters their confidence as they are the ones choosing to respond when they are ready, rather than my calling them unexpectedly. At times when no one wants to respond, I reflect on what I just requested of them and whether I jumped too far in my expectations of their ability to deliver, or whether or not I explained a concept clear enough. I also observe my students to determine whether they are tired that day, distracted, or overwhelmed. I then vocalize what I sense is the most viable reason for the silence, and ask how they would like to approach that task given them, to show that I acknowledge their current emotions and energy level, and want to know how best to help them. I feel this is a more

inclusive approach for students who may be facing different challenges, and it increases rapport as they recognize my efforts to teach them, not just the lesson.

The big takeaway in the lesson I observed was to find more ways to elicit language from learners, even when it comes down to thinking of examples. It is important to recognize that each individual learner has different experiences, identities, prior knowledge, and interests. We can have students talk about their experiences and express themselves and their identities through the L2 if we incorporate the personal examples they choose to give, even in a grammar structure review lesson.

We can be more inclusive of all learners, and also help boost their interest or motivation if we ask students for examples that are relevant to them, their lives, backgrounds, knowledge, or interest. Often in my own practice, I am more likely to give them an example in an effort to quickly explain the context so they can practice an exercise and save time, but I liked her approach of collecting the content as a class, and adding other elements such as past tense, or negation to build on the phrases they created, based on their own experiences.

There is a balance between the teacher's speaking and giving students opportunities to speak, and I am more likely to give a quick explanation or example in order to more efficiently get the students working on the new grammar principle together. By observing her teaching strategy, I learned the value of working with students' examples while conducting the explicit grammar instruction, and the value of scaffolding on prior knowledge rather than rushing through the explanation process for the sake of more practice time. This gives students a chance to recall the language they remember, and to come up with examples meaningful to them, or to explore different vocabulary words they want to use.

I really appreciated the opportunity to observe this experienced and thoughtful teacher, and to reflect on how I could improve my own teaching strategies based on what she demonstrated in her classroom.

MAIN PAPER

Reflections on Teaching with Stories

The main paper of this portfolio demonstrates some of the research, coursework, and reflections on my teaching experience during my participation in the MSLT program. First, I briefly discuss past experiences that motivated my teaching innovations. Second, I reflect on examples of lesson plans in my use of stories in my novice French courses. Third, I review **The Fable Cottage** as a technology platform for teaching with multimodal texts and offer reflections on this example of what worked and what could be improved on within the context of my classroom. Finally, I present some of the benefits of the multiliteracies approach to language teaching, such as teaching with authentic and multimodal texts for L2 learners.

Learning to Use Stories

The summer before starting the Second Language Teaching program, I taught an advanced English as a Second Language (ESL) class to nine international students. The school's curriculum included a unit theme, as well as some grammar principles introduced within the context of that theme. In one of the units, we talked about hypothetical scenarios and I gave them writing prompts with imaginary scenarios to choose from. This was a collaborative writing exercise, in which students chose a prompt and a partner to write a short story together. The learning outcomes were clear: all had learned new vocabulary words and grammar structures used in context. The activity also gave me a casual, formative assessment of their mastery of the skills in the unit, so I better knew where the class or individuals needed more help.

What I wish I had known then, and what I would learn later in the Master of Second Language Teaching program, were strategies of going further with reading and writing and approaches to help students grow in these and other skills. I learned how using stories can help

students better analyze, interpret, predict, and express themselves while applying language structures, and cultural aspects of the language learned along the way. I learned about numerous benefits to using text and literature and stories in second language teaching that help provide context and promote self-expression in the L2.

During my first semester at USU, I took a multiliteracies course which inspired me to experiment with using stories in my own classroom. For instance, I found a French version of the fairy tale Little Red Riding Hood/*Le Petit Chaperon Rouge*, entitled *Père Noël*/Father Christmas on a French website for high school students, and decided to use it to teach past tense verbs in context. My lesson plan was as follows: first, I listed critical vocabulary words needed to understand the gist of the story's events. I put students in small groups, then gave them markers and paper to draw out an imagined story using their given vocabulary words. Each group shared their stories with the class orally. Then I projected the text and images of multimodal story *Père Noël* on the screen using visual aids, and together we highlighted past tense verbs they recognized from the previous class instruction. We then read the story, with highlighted vocabulary words (in a different color from the past tense verbs) to help students recognize words we had just learned. I used gestures for certain words I knew they were probably not familiar with but could understand without direct translation. While it dealt with familiar characters, students seemed intrigued by the plot twist as they followed along and were surprised by the ending when it was not what they had predicted.

I considered this activity a success, not only because they became familiar with new words within the context by reading and creating their own stories in the L2, but because they expressed verbal reactions to the story as we went, which showed me that they were also invested in the narrative. Dynamic assessment also helped me know their level of

comprehension. Anecdotally, I noticed in reflecting on this lesson that one of the benefits of the multiliteracies approach and teaching with texts was increased student interest in the material because they wanted to see what happened in the story. What I found useful was the ability to use slides and visual aids to help students connect with the text. We were also able to make ACTFL-recommended cultural comparisons in discussing elements of the French version of this story, including its unfamiliar ending.

Since then, my approach has varied depending on the lesson, but a general outline for when I first started using **The Fable Cottage** story platform in my classroom was to choose a story that included a particular grammatical concept the students were learning. I would then give them a few paragraphs to read out loud, taking turns with a partner, as I walked around the room listening and taking notes on the board of any words I heard commonly mispronounced to go over once they finished. When they finished reading, I reviewed some pronunciation verbally and on the whiteboard, and asked if they had any other questions about specific words, before asking them to provide a general outline of what they had just read. We would then watch the video of the multimodal text and discuss images and vocabulary they encountered.

Following the reading, in effort to practice using the different tenses between French past and imperfect tense, I gave each student a piece of paper, and three minutes to write the story of a well-known fairy tale (in one lesson, *Cinderella/Cendrillon*) in their own words. Once they finished, they would fold down the paper to cover the paragraph they wrote, and on the next section of the paper write down a connecting word in the L2, such as: “And then,” “Until,” “Suddenly,” etc. They then rotated the papers, and using that connecting word as a prompt, wrote the next part of the story, in a version of what is known as the well-known *cadavre exquis* game in French. In this collaborative writing exercise, students were able to draw from the language

they knew, and enjoyed creating novel sentences, asking questions as they went. When we had time to go over the writing, I had them open up the paper they ended up with last, and read it through, correcting as much as they could. I provided corrective feedback as needed, and students also gave some peer feedback. I believe this was a valuable activity because we had already read several stories in class together, so they were exposed to the different approaches to storytelling, discourse, and patterns common in many French fairy tales. Additionally, students benefited from being able to tell their own stories, and enjoyed some humorous results of the group stories, and using peer-correction activities doubled as a formative assessment.

A final brief example of my using fairy tales in my novice-mid French class was a lesson on direct and indirect objects. I did a brief review and explicit grammar instruction in direct and indirect objects before we read Jack and the Beanstalk/*Jack et Les Haricots Magiques*. Similar to the prior lesson, I paired up the students and had them take turns reading out loud to their partner for a few paragraphs before giving some vocabulary words and corrective feedback in pronunciation. Using what the multiliteracies approach would term analytical skills, I then asked them to explain what they understood and what was at stake in the narrative. Then we did a noticing exercise in which students pointed out which pronouns were direct objects and the objects they were replacing. We then watched the video of the text, of which the multimodal visual and audio presentation helped with both comprehension to pronunciation.

Upon reflection, I also recognize that there were limitations, partly based on time, and areas for improvement. As I learned more about the benefits of teaching with texts and stories through the MSLT program, I started implementing additional strategies, such as teaching them a phonetics principle outlined in their textbook before having them read out loud to their partner, so they had a target to focus on as they read. I would like to have had more time for a pre-reading

activity to activate their schema and have students relate elements of the story to their own experiences. Time is always a limitation; with more time, I would more fully implement the multiliteracies approach, for example, I would engage them in prediction and interpretation activities before and after the reading.

A key takeaway from my experience in the MSLT program is that, as language teachers, we are always trying to improve our teaching and to develop more effective methodologies in the classroom. Now more than ever, especially following the increase of technology use in education following the pandemic, there is a call for updated teaching techniques and more effective technology use to support student learning in secondary and post-secondary language classrooms. With options ranging from YouTube (which offers automatic, accessible closed captioning), to streaming online movies with subtitles, to online private tutoring or chat platforms, as well as language learning community apps, and language learning games, etc., opportunities for L2 interaction and learning outside the classroom abound.

Technology offers language learners many affordances, but limitations can be a real challenge for secondary and post-secondary instructors to select which platforms would most contribute to help their students meet their language learning goals. Some challenges are budget limitations, time restrictions, curriculum constraints, programmatic concerns, age appropriateness, accurate cultural integration, and language proficiency level. These and other factors influence an instructor's choice in selecting appropriate tech platforms, in planning lessons, and learning objectives.

The way to decide which technology to use when designing a course, or even a single task or activity, is experimentation and reflection. As instructors, we need to first consider our own theoretical framework, and then experiment in small ways by implementing different

strategies in the classroom to find out what works best for each teacher, class, and classroom setting. In my teaching, I plan to continue using authentic texts as much as I can to introduce and help students practice grammar principles in context, engage students, and help them express themselves more comfortably.

In order to use stories, I have sought out website platforms that provide access to stories in a multimodal way, provide multimodal texts with audio, video and more, to help students build skills in reading, writing, speaking, analyzing, interpreting, and applying their knowledge. I also looked for platforms that increase student engagement in class. After reviewing several options, I selected **The Fable Cottage** platform and began a pilot study in my own classroom. Below I offer a general reflection and review of this platform with anecdotal evidence (and this is not intended to be an exhaustive study with human subjects), to reflect on what worked well and what could be improved in my reflection.

Review of The Fable Cottage

Below, I consider the use of **The Fable Cottage** website platform in the context of an Intermediate-Low proficiency level university French L2 class for teaching writing and grammar structures and multiliteracies skills. I then review **The Fable Cottage** and discuss how I used it in my classroom, reflect on the benefits as well as some of the limitations, and offer a brief related literature review on the multiliteracies framework, and how I have implemented it using **The Fable Cottage**.

I chose **The Fable Cottage** platform because of its simple, accessible, and user-friendly approach, and also for the engaging authentic and multimodal story presentation it offers novice L2 learners. Other websites with more elaborate activities, and technology, or those that provide audio books for example exist; however, for L2 instructors and students looking for fresh, user-

friendly ways of interacting with literature and stories in the classroom, I found **The Fable Cottage** to be an enriching addition to my teaching tools. Moreover, it offers stories from many different languages and cultures, with versions that differ from the American version, and consequently has broader implications beyond this portfolio or my own classroom. There are a variety of resources for accessing multimodal online stories in French, including for example dramatic readings of Alexander Dumas and Victor Hugo's novels, to animated cartoon versions of LaFontaine's Fables, and authentic literary or non-literary texts and stories from around the francophone world. For this portfolio however, I chose to reflect on my experience using **The Fable Cottage** because it provides short stories, fables, and fairytales, all of which include contextualized forms and structures, or vocabulary that were a part of my curriculum.

For example, this particular website made it easy to select stories that used grammatical concepts learned either that semester or the previous one, at the ACTFL proficiency level needed. It provided a chance for my students to experience situated practice on the forms and structures they were learning from their textbook's explicit grammar instruction, and the website provided stories familiar enough to them they could follow along easier, despite certain plot twists. Even if the student's L2 language proficiency level is low, their background knowledge, genre familiarity, and L1 reading experiences can positively impact textual interpretation and composition. Multiliteracies includes socially, historically, and culturally situated practices and offers strategies to help students connect with prior knowledge and experiences at any proficiency level.

The Fable Cottage is a multimodal digital subscription-based platform that provides access to fairy tales from different cultures in different languages. Based on the table found in

Wang's (2016) article reviewing the website Nawmal.com, I provide the following helpful information in reviewing an education technology platform for use in the L2 classroom:

Title	The Fable Cottage
Platform	Website
Minimum hardware requirements	Internet connection, any browser, speakers, printer access (optional)
URL	https://www.thefablecottage.com/
Support offered	Help available on topics such as how to print stories, change subtitle/cc language, troubleshoot audio problems, etc.
Target language	English (website): Spanish, French, Italian, German
Target audience	K-12 and post-secondary instructors and students
Price	Free trial; payment for further functions varies

Fairy tales and fables are available from many different cultures. While it provides internationally recognized fairy tales (for instance, Cinderella, Snow White, Rapunzel, Rumpelstiltskin, Aesop's fables, etc.) and other short stories, the fairy tales follow different endings than those often portrayed in American culture. I paid for a year's subscription to evaluate the platform more fully, and noted that many of the characters' names, place names, plots, and other details often reflected the French versions of such tales.

The fairy tales are accompanied by the option of audio, visuals, English translation after each sentence, and videos with the option of captioning in either English or the target language. If the internet is unreliable, the website includes the option to print a PDF file with or without pictures or translation, and to download the audio; this is an important consideration for disability accessibility or for access for any students that may be lacking an internet connection or need to use the texts offline. The platform is simple yet versatile to use in the classroom. I

found it not only helps the students experience the language in context, but the storylines also pique their interest throughout the learning process.

The multiliteracies approach values using literary texts and stories because elements in the text (for example, sympathizing with characters, connecting with situations in the story, activating learner schemas, wanting to know what happens next or how the story ends, sharing a common discussion of universal themes, etc.) can boost student engagement. Finding material that engages my students is what I strive for in my teaching philosophy, and using fairy tales and the multimodal texts available on this platform gave me more resources to reach that goal.

In addition to the texts of each story, the platform provides ancillary activities; these are interactive activities the instructor may select, provided they help synthesize what the students learned, and improve on related context. The platform provides different ways of interacting with the text, for example, counting coins, drawing their own dream house and labeling it, or some other linguistic activity related to a subject in the story. It provides certain stories for free, whereas other longer stories can only be unlocked with a subscription. In either case, the website is user friendly, easy to navigate, and there is also the option for students to have their own account to access the stories from home.

Limitations exist however, depending on the types of services the teacher is looking for. For example, teachers or students cannot mark up the text unless they download the PDF version and use software that allows users to edit PDFs; activity suggestions are broken up according to elementary, middle school, and high school activities, but the difficulty levels vary in college, so each teacher needs to modify the activities to best fit their students' needs. It also provides solely stories, so if teachers wanted the students to create their own stories as in digital storytelling, they would need to use a different platform for writing or collaborative writing. That said, **The**

Fable Cottage provides the variety of interactions with texts in the L2 that I wanted to implement to enforce the material they were learning in class, in a fun, contextualized way that did not require them to navigate a new website or create an account.

Using stories in L2 teaching helps students understand the language in context rather than simply memorizing words and meanings. Through stories, or narratives, students see how specific words are used, when, and their surrounding collocates. More than just encountering new vocabulary or noticing examples of grammar structures, they are exposed to idiomatic phrases, pragmatics, and other aspects of the language which come to life through that story, and reading or listening to stories provides a more enriching experience that can expose students to cultural aspects of the language.

Storytelling and stories can also help with student interest and engagement as they want to know the end of the narrative, to sympathize with characters, to identify with certain themes or scenes, or simply enjoy the story. Stories may be broadly defined and are not limited to canonical literary texts; they exist in a wide variety of genres, topics, and cultures. On another note, reading, listening, watching, or interpreting and interacting with stories in the L2 can help students apply what they have learned and help them on the path to being able to tell their own stories and express themselves more effectively in the L2.

Multiliteracies Approach

Just as one would not use the same level of discourse in writing an email, a message on social media, a brief text, or a recorded public TED Talk, so too students need different learning approaches to more effectively pick up on the nuances of communication via different platforms. Hadjiconstantinou (2021) demonstrates that “students need to develop an understanding of how different semiotic resources work together to make meaning. This will then lead to developing

students' ability to use text and other modalities to produce and represent meanings in different contexts" (p. 32-33). This is a definition of multiliteracies in action, and something I strive to incorporate into my instructional design and lesson planning.

In general, the multiliteracies approach is all about learners developing, and using higher-level thinking skills in the L2. Allen and Paesani (2010) wrote a publication defining this teaching method specifically in the L2 post-secondary teaching context and delineate its many benefits for learning about diverse cultures and different kinds of discourse: "Multiliteracies attributes to more linguistic disciplines than grammar, such as the mode of entertainment in that country, culture, and the differences between spoken and written language" (p. 121).

Multiliteracies is a framework for teaching with authentic text that recommends a sequence of reading strategies, such as: prediction, anticipation, skimming, scanning, decoding, interpretation, etc. In the L2 contexts it is also interactive, as students interact with authentic texts (again, authentic texts can include literary texts such as poems, novels, short stories, fables, fairy tales, or other kinds of texts, widely defined, such as songs, journalistic articles, etc.).

The approach encourages collaboration activities to interpret the texts (and reinforce language structures) such as ordering or sequencing, predicting, and writing endings or alternative endings, with other students. The multiliteracies framework values using authentic texts (and especially literary texts, following the Paesani model) for teaching skills including analytical skills, interpretive skills, critical thinking, the application of language and self-expression with the language, etc. It can be inclusive of all different cultures, and many kinds of media or cultural production. The framework defines authentic texts very broadly, and instructors must choose authentic texts that are not only proficiency-level appropriate, but also age appropriate.

The Communicative Language Technique (CLT) is a teaching method I have implemented in many of my own teaching strategies, and while it remains useful, multiliteracies takes it a step further; “whereas CLT focuses on language usage, or the interpretation and production of accurate forms, a pedagogy of multiliteracies focuses on language use, or the interpretation and creation of meaning, and its relationship to language usage” (Paesani, p. 125). CLT is a good basis for addressing communication skills, but multiliteracies implements a structure for higher-order thinking skills and incorporates more aspects of language interaction skills. The multiliteracies framework supports language learning beyond semantics, as it incorporates “[contextualized] language use... involving both linguistic and sociocultural knowledge” (Paesani, p. 125). The sequencing of reading strategies and higher-order thinking skills development that multiliteracies advocates for promotes more of those contextualized language experiences that I seek to provide in my classroom.

The multiliteracies framework existed for decades in different forms, but its broad definition has changed with the ever-progressing development of education technology and internet resources. To put the transformation in context, Puteh-Behak (2018) addresses how the rise of the internet shifted the teaching focus from literature to media-centered learning. She describes the origin of multiliteracies, at times previously termed “multiple literacies” (p. 313), and its development over twenty years. Through data collected via interviews, documents, and observations, she demonstrates that multiliteracies is a viable, evolving teaching and learning method, especially as tools continue to improve and develop.

In its evolving form however, multiliteracies is more than a new method of interaction with language; it helps students learn from different media types, develop multiple skills simultaneously, and use technology themselves to reach their learning objectives. To sum up the

definition, it is more than the authentic texts and technological tools used, but rather a way of tapping into “the knowledge and skills that are necessary for learners to understand, discuss, reflect and use multiple representations of texts” (p. 314). Thus, it is not necessarily how the information is presented, whether via PowerPoint, print literature, or technology, but what skills are involved with “handling, managing and transforming information and knowledge represented by the technological resources” (p. 315). The emphases on authentic texts and on higher-order thinking skills are the elements of multiliteracies that second language teaching researchers focus on to get a better grasp of how effective certain strategies are in modern classrooms.

The multiliteracies approach, with its emphasis on meaningful interaction, and sociocultural awareness, reinforces that concept of language learning without removing the authenticity, and there is more than a singular approach to implementing it. As Paesani, Willis Allen & Dupuy (2016) outline, there are several steps to the practice of multiliteracies that help students develop their skills: a situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice. Situated practice is where the students are exposed to the text or material and discuss it freely. Overt instruction involves analyzing the text whether semantically, syntactically, or from another angle to find meaning and forms the students can learn to use. Critical framing puts what the students learned from the overt instruction into use as they make connections between words, contexts, and different meanings within various contexts. Transformed practice takes place when learners are able use that new information to create something of their own and apply what they have learned. Activities in transformed practice might include writing an alternative ending for a story or writing a dialogue, changing the point of view to a different character in the story, or other activities (Allen & Paesani, 2010). None of

the processes are mutually exclusive in these three stages of practice but can overlap a little in their activities.

These practice steps invite questions and interactions, thereby providing opportunities to help activate the student's schema, and to use critical thinking skills beyond rote memorization, or mere recognition of words, or inductive "noticing" of grammar structures. Rowsell & Walsh (2011) state that the purpose of learning is not to master the tool being used, such as literature, but how it is used; it is not necessarily about monitoring the output so thoroughly as to never make a mistake, but for language learning to become nearly incidental as the student focuses on the communicative aspect of the task. It takes time and practice to implement, but when effectively applied, language learning becomes more than simple memorization and recall; through an actual practice of the language through natural thought processes, it becomes both the means, and the outcome.

Essentially, meaning and form make the most memorable connection when there is interaction within the same context, such as family life, outings with friends, at the workplace, public spaces, etc., and the more we use diverse texts and other material familiar to students, the better they can make connections between the language and the concept. I personally enjoy incorporating stories and fairy tales into the curriculum when possible, because they often have universal themes, or characters that I believe my students would be able to relate to in one way or another.

Teaching fairy tales in the L2 can be particularly effective because of their universality and the way students may connect with them. As Jones & Schwabe (2016) state,

From the earliest stage of storytelling, oral tales and their manifold retellings have served not only to mesmerize, entertain, and captivate listeners, but also to educate audiences

about valuable life lessons and universal truths. Early tales contained examples of human conduct and provided guidelines on how to overcome serious challenges, survival struggles, or master problematic interpersonal relations (p. 3).

Using literary texts (and particularly fairy tales) in the L2 classroom gives context to grammar structures, use of vocabulary, intrigue of plot within the literature, and authentic literature similar to those in native culture storylines. The multiliteracies framework facilitates the use of multimodal texts and I try to use as many varying modes of input as possible, and subject matter pertinent to the students. Using multimodal texts supports accessibility with features such as closed captioning, and it helps students read, analyze, and interpret texts in different ways.

A TED Talk by Sir Ken Robinson (2006) made an impact on my thinking in the classroom regarding different skills and intelligences. Robinson addresses the need to change our view of intelligence, which would change our teaching approach, saying;

We know three things about intelligence, one; it's diverse; we think of the world in all the ways we experience it; visually, aurally, orally, kinesthetically, abstract, and through movement. Two; it's dynamic, and interactive, not compartmentalized. Three; it's distinct... educate the whole of children, not just their minds. (TED, 13:10)

Similar ideas underpin the multiliteracies framework, because under this description of how students process information, the result of focusing on singular grammatical principles such as filling in verb conjugations falls so far below the potential for fuller, engaging learning modes.

Besides the fact that we now have more options than the written page to work with, Hadjiconstantinou (2021) explains the need for a variety of language learning modalities, stating that "language is no longer an independent code but is part of a set of semiotic resources that effectively 'synchronize' to communicate meaning. Part of the shift requires the literacy

curriculum to evolve beyond the traditional domains, competencies, and skills” (p. 30). To support his point, I would add (as suggested by the multiliteracies framework), that the material must be authentic to be effective or useful in real-world application. For example, the videos provided in my curriculum were inadequate to represent natural discourse, whereas the interview responses given in the French language YouTube videos that I used in class demonstrated a range of natural discourse that varied depending on the interlocutors, and the context.

Limitations

Among certain limitations to implementing multiliteracies into a curriculum is the restriction of time; in the case of language learning, there is often a language test to pass, and integrating multiliteracies into a curriculum can detract from any given instruction geared towards that objective. Many teachers prefer to finish the syllabus material for the semester rather than engage in creative multiliteracy approaches (Puteh-Behak, 2018), which I ended up reverting to in an effort to keep my students’ progress consistent with other class sections. Other restrictions include limited accessibility from other countries, unreliable Wi-Fi, and limited access to text both relevant and appropriate for the students.

In essence, while multiliteracies is a valuable technique, it may be more or less effective depending on the learning contexts, background or goals of the learners, the curriculum, or even the country. It is important to be flexible and adapt our use of multiliteracies methodologies in order to foster a more inclusive, more culturally sensitive classroom, and better address the needs of all learners. In addition, the multiliteracies approach can be combined with other useful teaching approaches.

Conclusion

The multiliteracies approach for language teaching relies on the use of authentic texts, and multimodal texts are a richer form of authentic texts because they can include additional meaning with different kinds of audio and visual enhancements (and are sometimes more accessible, and inclusive of all learners). Combining the use of multimodal texts with multiliteracies approach allows the student to be creative about their language learning, interact with the language by learning how to craft and express themselves, rather than regurgitate quoted material. It also promotes collaboration, and can work as a type of dynamic assessment, or a final project to measure learning outcomes, with a result the student can feel proud of for creating on their own, or with their group.

To recap, the sociocultural dimension of the multiliteracies framework makes reading more than an act of language use and cognition. Multiliteracies is inclusive of a wide variety of texts, but in the above review and testing of **the Fable Cottage** platform and in many of my other classroom experiences, I have found that using authentic, multimodal texts are particularly effective in the beginning L2 classroom and confirm that the literary genre of fairy tales is especially useful for teaching many aspects of language and culture.

Statement of Future Goals and Plans

Coming into the MSLT program I wanted to learn as much as I could about different teaching methods, which ones are more effective, and how to better motivate and engage my students in their learning process. I now realize that the broader question of which approach is best for language teaching can never really be answered. In addition, I now know that research in fields such as second language acquisition, education, and applied linguistics is ever evolving with new developments in research and technology every day. Through professional development and participation in future conferences and webinars, or by continuing to read the latest research in language teaching, I look forward to keeping up with research that continues to explore second language acquisition and teaching methods.

Approaches to teaching must be adapted for learners' goals, proficiency levels, age groups, identities, classroom environment, and other variables. I have learned that even if a teacher has the perfect lesson plan and layout for a class of twenty-four, the teacher will need to modify it for a class of five, or even for a different semester. In other words, there is no perfect lesson plan other than the one the teacher creates to the best of their ability, and which they then modify throughout the lesson to best fit the needs of individual students on a given day. A good teacher is one who is flexible, constantly learning and looking to improve, and who keeps the students' best interest in mind.

With the theoretical approaches and practical techniques I have learned from this program, and from my time in the classroom, I would be happy to teach English classes at an English language center here in the US for international students, either in a community language center or a private school. Eventually, I envision working in an administrative position where I can help with curriculum development, program building, best teaching practices, community outreach, and advocacy. Language learning can be approached in a plethora of ways,

especially with the constant improvements and changes in education technology. I hope to contribute to that improvement, even on such a small scale as helping to improve the learning community at a single institution.

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