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Implementing Sociocultural and Output-Oriented Pedagogical Practices in the Second Language Acquisition Classroom

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IMPLEMENTING SOCIOCULTURAL AND OUTPUT-ORIENTED PEDAGOGICAL

PRACTICES IN THE SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION CLASSROOM

by

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ABSTRACT

IMPLEMENTING SOCIOCULTURAL AND OUTPUT-ORIENTED PEDAGOGICAL

PRACTICES IN THE SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION CLASSROOM

by
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This portfolio is a product of the courses, literature, compositions, class observations, and reflections included in the Masters of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program. It contains three principal components: teaching philosophy statements, class observation analysis, and reflective work on second language acquisition pedagogical and assessment practices. The author's educational and professional background and experience in conjunction with his intentions and plans for the future are also described.

The reflection section demonstrates effective methodological approaches in a language-learning classroom in support of the relevant sociocultural theory and output hypothesis. It is comprised of pertinent and supportive literature reviews and research, along with the author's own experiences as an instructor of a second language (Spanish) in a collegiate setting. The reflection also provides insight into the significance of language instructors' consideration of society, culture, and relevant output in pedagogy, and their incorporation of dynamic assessment and emphasis on learners' implicit and explicit learning strategies. Throughout this portfolio, contextual examples are used to illustrate the author's personal experience, along with the reflection on what was learned about this portfolio's topics.

(48 pages)

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The field of instruction and academics requires many individuals' collective and collaborative efforts. Each individual provides various ideologies, experiences, and research. The contribution of each is unique and adds value. Every person's influence plays an integral part in achieving success. This has been the case throughout the duration of this program; many have unequivocally influenced me.

I would like to acknowledge and thank all the instructors and professors in the MSLT program who have assisted me toward the completion of my degree and toward my own personal improvement. They pushed me to excel as an instructor and researcher, which in turn allowed me to effectively influence my own students. They taught me to never be comfortable with mediocrity. Having opportunities to observe and participate in various experiences with these individuals has led me to expand my perspective on instructional approaches and research practices. I thoroughly enjoyed interactions with my colleagues, students, and other members of the program. I learned a lot from them thanks to their myriad backgrounds, experiences, perceptions and cultures.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and give gratitude to Dr. Abdulkafi Albirini for his wealth of knowledge, experienced patience, and continuous guidance. He is a brilliant researcher and teacher and guided me toward the best research outcomes in a very considerate and supportive manner. He empowered me to push boundaries and to improve in every way possible. His greatest influence on me was simply his personal and professional example. I would not be where I am without his assistance.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

DA - Dynamic Assessment

IPC - Interlanguage Pragmatic Competence

L2 - Second Language

MS - Madrileño Spanish

MSLT - Masters of Second Language Teaching

SCT - Sociocultural Theory

SLA - Second Language Acquisition

QS - Quiteño Spanish

USU - Utah State University

ZPD - Zone of Proximal Development

INTRODUCTION TO THE PORTFOLIO

I was raised in a predominantly agricultural area of the U.S. where many immigrant or foreign workers were employed to assist in particular crop harvests, most of whom were specifically from Latin America. These individuals could provide better financially for their families through such a commitment by living away from them for prolonged times hoping to gain full time employment. One such individual whom I remember from my adolescence is Ernesto from Chihuahua, Mexico. Ernesto had lived in this area for many years, and my father had developed a close relationship with him. His first language was Spanish, but he had learned to communicate considerably well in English. I clearly recall how he treated me, his personality traits, his demeanor, and his loyalty to his culture, language, and family. He often made me laugh and feel confident in myself within my own context while always maintaining who he was. I was intrigued by this man who was obviously foreign to his surroundings but was able to interculturally communicate, both effectively and affectively. Because of Ernesto, I developed early desires to learn language, observe culture, and experience the world in significant ways.

As a current student and graduate instructor of Spanish in the MSLT program, my experience with Ernesto still has a significant influence on me. After my secondary education, in which I did not study a second language, I had the opportunity to live abroad for extended periods of time. During these occasions, I began to learn Spanish, and I continued to study it in my undergraduate degree because of the impactful experiences I had with other societies and cultures. I also discovered my love for instruction, something I had the privilege of doing while teaching English, in sales and marketing trainings, and through religious studies. Therefore, as I completed my undergraduate work, the most logical decision for me was to continue at USU in

the MSLT program. In this program, I could refine both aspects of language and culture simultaneously while growing via observation of others and through my own research.

My goals for the program were based on the desire to acquire the skills necessary to methodologically teach language more effectively; I also sought to enhance my individual perspectives in linguistics research and instruction as I plan on pursuing a doctorate degree in the future. I wanted to learn from the program's professors and instructors and gain exposure to the various methods used in second language instruction across different languages. Further, I wanted to learn how to develop curriculum—both in theory and in practice—to be able to create my own course goals, aims, standards, and objectives.

During the program, I have ascertained, and learned to articulate to my students, the particular instructional philosophies and pedagogical practices that are both relevant and important to me as an instructor. Additionally, my experiences teaching Spanish in different course levels have provided key insights on how to meet students' unique needs and respect their perspectives. Some examples of improvement towards proficiency include: corrective feedback strategies; activities and tasks; sociocultural inclusion; assessments; and effective learning environment creation. I found the most impactful aspect of the MSLT program—as both a teacher and student—to be the opportunity to learn, witness, and apply the various principles taught in the program. For example, I learned how to integrate culture into lessons and incorporate various elements of linguistics (e.g. pragmatics).

Since the field of language is so vast, reconciling variations of language can be quite difficult. I have learned to more aptly navigate the pitfalls that tend to plague teachers who attempt to incorporate all points at once. Thanks to the interconnection of the many branches of linguistic and language instruction, several components can be subtly implied in the teaching of

one specific element (i.e. culture). Not only did my students improve their communication proficiency, they also enhanced their critical thinking and broadened their awareness of other cultures in relation to their own.

I have always thoroughly enjoyed learning about, and participating in, cultures different from my own. I am fascinated by what a culture's language means to individuals of that culture; how the language is utilized; how people interact and communicate cross-culturally; and just an overall sense of how people view life and themselves. Moreover, I have a passion for helping others learn the same, as each one of us possesses a unique culture, methods of communication, and stories that make us who we are. Being an instructor has given me a great vantage point from which I can observe students triumph and fail to learn language, make intercultural connections, contemplate cultural and linguistic differences, and attempt to add value to their experiences through studying the lives of others. I am extremely gratified to be a part of my students' journeys, and I feel a lot of satisfaction when I hear students' plans to continue studying abroad; changing their degree focus to Spanish; or even just hearing them express desires to be more involved interculturally because of the classes we had together.

I have learned a great deal about principles and practices while being a part of this program, but more importantly, I have learned a great deal about myself and my abilities as a L2 teacher. Thanks to my experiences in this program, I now feel like a more qualified and effective instructor and student I am more motivated to further my own language learning as I continue to teach and have positive experiences with language and culture.

PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Presently, my professional environment is the introductory Spanish courses (i.e. 1010, 1020) in the Department of World Languages and Cultures (previously the Department of Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies) at Utah State University. In these courses, I teach a range of adults from various age groups. The opportunity has been most beneficial for observing how language is acquired, and as a portion of that process, the cultural knowledge individuals acquire through language.

Moving forward in the field of linguistics, I aspire to teach both in my native country, the United States, and abroad in university settings. I do not plan on exclusively teaching language throughout my career. However, I hope to continue teaching language learning while I pursue my doctorate degree in the very near future. Participating in USU's MSLT program has expanded my knowledge of second language acquisitional theories, methodologies, and pedagogies to the point that I now better understand my own language learning and teaching. Therefore, this program has equipped me to more effectively assist my students in reaching their individual goals.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

In a global community where knowledge and information have been made readily available via technology, language instruction, and perhaps instruction in general, can be a more arduous option for learners. There are multitudinous sources to learn from, technological applications, and other information sources that give immediate accessibility for learners without being present in a classroom. In my role as a teacher, I impart knowledge and information, but this is not my main task. My responsibility is to *facilitate* students' learning, particularly to help them learn things themselves that will then impact and influence their future learning experiences. The type of interactions and environment I hope to create for my students are crucial to my desired models and patterns of learning and language acquisition. In the following statement, I will describe certain classroom objectives, goals, and pedagogical approaches I have adopted and adapted; each is critical to the learners' language acquisition. These various elements refer to relevant theories of authentic societal and cultural interaction for language instruction, its subsequent assessment, and my own experiences. I will also discuss how I, as a language learning facilitator, intend to implement these theory-based perspectives more comprehensively and effectively in my present and future classes.

In an academic language learning environment, proficiency in a foreign language is usually one of the primary objectives. Proficiency can be achieved by studying the mechanics of grammar, vocabulary, lexicon, etc. in textbooks and other supplementary material, and through listening to classroom instruction, working with other students, etc. Peter Herriot (2011) states, "most important [are] the modes of the combination of words which are more important, not the words themselves" (Herriot, 2011, p 39). Acquiring basic skills (e.g. phonology, grammar) is

vital to that goal. However, I want students to also learn language through societal and cultural contexts where they can learn more than simply how to speak in a foreign tongue.

Thus, my classroom objectives are for my students to: examine material from textbooks and other academic resources to help them develop communicative abilities in the L2; provide activities to continue cultivating those abilities; and to ultimately utilize, and continue developing, their skills in actual societal and cultural contexts. By having these as the primary objectives for my classroom, I hope to enable communication within the classroom and across different contexts and situations in the real world. I aspire to foster communication for my students and provide them with the tools to create opportunities in future real-world circumstances in which they would need to use said tools to communicate.

To attain these objectives and goals, I will base my curriculum development and pedagogical approaches on sociocultural theory (SCT), which was first proposed by renowned Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky first studied psychological development in children. Later, SCT was applied to language learning and instruction. Vygotsky stated, "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level...All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals" (Vygotsky et al., 1978, p. 57). The relevance of this assertion is that language instruction has shifted from the focus of grammar and pronunciation to language use in context, though not explicitly studied by Vygotsky (e.g., recast feedback, input-based instruction); and it shows a sociocultural focus to the use of language among people and critical contexts.

I believe that incorporating the principles of sociocultural theory into language instruction provides something essential that is lacking in a conventional classroom: the authentic opportunity to communicate with native speakers in real-life contexts. SCT allows

students to utilize acquired skills instead of simply simulating social interactions in the classroom. This theory is supported by the Output Hypothesis by Merrill Swain. Swain stated that alongside comprehensible input in instruction, "the act of producing language speaking or writing [output] constitutes, under certain circumstances, part of the process of second language learning" (Swain 2005, p. 471). As these circumstances are designed for students both in and out of my classroom, students must produce language to succeed. If Swain's hypothesis is applied, then the confines of the classroom in which students are only interacting with other students and the instructor are insufficient to achieving language learning goals. Thus, my goals and objectives are founded on SCT and the output hypothesis to better enhance learning in a classroom setting and reflect what learners will subsequently face in context.

I have already implemented these goals, and I intend to continue doing so through various methods. The primary method for implementation is the creation of authentic sociocultural interactions wherein students can use and develop their language learning skills. This begins with collaboration, both with native speakers and all other learners, including the instructor (Swain 2005). In my courses, societal interaction relating to language learning will be critical to developing proficiency. This is especially true within pragmatics which is the relation between language use and the language users in context (i.e. how things are said, to whom, and when) (Firth & Wagner 2007, Arshavskaya 2020, Nemati & Arabmofrad 2014). But for pragmatic development to even occur, there has to be some form of collaborative interaction. A personal example of this comes from a project in a lower-level Spanish course I taught. In this project, I assign students in pairs initially and they are instructed to collaboratively research a native food from a Spanish-speaking country assigned to them. After they have compiled the information (ingredients, history, social impact, etc.), they are required to visit an authentic, local

restaurant that serves this native dish. They must try the food while annotating a review for their research. Further, while they are at the restaurant, the students will interact and communicate with their server, cook, and/or host in Spanish. The interaction, as I previously instructed, will be unscripted and natural so as to mimic authentic contexts for language usage. Afterward, the students will document the details of the experience and what they felt during it. This is obviously a unique experience and can be a valuable opportunity if they allow it. But I believe that simply giving them guided opportunities in and out of the classroom can be advantageous in helping them continue to seek out opportunities to put into practice what they have learned previously. According to Firth and Wagner,

> Studying learning as a social accomplishment shifts our understanding of learning from the construct of a linguistic system or a competence that serves all the speaker's purposes. Instead, the development of social relations, the mutual constituency of linguistic resources and tasks, and the specific biography of the language learners come to the foreground (Firth & Wagner, 2007, p. 812).

That referenced "biography" of the language learners will constitute a large portion of the intended objectives of my teaching because of the uniqueness of each individual and their learning processes in combination with those of others. Of course, proficiency is desired, but if my primary goal remains so myopic, my students lose the greater opportunity of building relationships and applying the aspects of grammar, lexicon, and syntax in a significant way.

As previously stated, language can simply be the means by which we communicate with the world's people. However, it can signify much more than that if it becomes a way to connect diverse populations through intercultural communication, or, each individual's abilities to utilize both second language acquisition and cultural understanding effectively. As a teacher, how I

utilize my teaching methods and approaches makes the difference between students merely fulfilling a requirement for university credit and students being a learner of languages, people, and cultures. However, I do recognize that there exist other viable pedagogical methodologies and philosophies in language instruction apart from the ones outlined above. As will be seen later in this work, I will outline why the approaches I have selected have been effective for my context and why exactly I chose them over others. Nonetheless, I believe there is much more to discover through language, and as a language instructor, I plan to continue developing my abilities; in this way, I hope to set my students successfully on the paths of language proficiency, understanding, and ever-present intercultural progress.

CLASS OBSERVATION

I consider the opportunity to observe a colleague or superior in their area of instruction exceptionally valuable for these reasons: 1) the relevant tasks, activities, models, and all other things that I can adopt and replicate in my class for the benefit of my students, and 2) the unique perspectives of others that expand my own ideas through curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment practices. Fortunately, during my short time as an instructor, I have been present for many great lectures and have obtained relevant ideas to utilize in my own teaching context. Therefore, in this section, I will describe one such observation, analyze pertinent instructional procedures, evaluate overall strategy and practice, and reflect on their implications for my own teaching circumstance and philosophy.

Context

Within the Spanish department at Utah State University, there are many noteworthy teachers and researchers. I have had the privilege of observing, and of being a student to, many of them. I was able to learn advanced elements of grammar and composition and study Latin American and Western European literature, art, and cinematography from different time periods. I also was also able to learn linguistic elements of pragmatics and phonology among many other things. The course that I chose to observe, for this portfolio, was Spanish 3630. This course is taught by one of my former professors, whom I consider to be a brilliant researcher and lecturer. The course is entitled *Literatura de Hispano América* and is an in-person class taught twice a week for 75 minutes. During the time of my observation, there were 10 students in the class who all had relatively high proficiency in the language. The primary focus of the course was, as indicated in the title, 19th and 20th century Latin American literature with focuses on the artistic

and literary periods of surrealism, postmodernism, La Vanguardia, etc. These were the main points discussed in the class period I observed.

Instructional Procedures

The beginning of the class was spent conversing, seemingly spontaneously, about specific elements of grammar in reference to phrases, words, and lexicon. It was a constant dialogue between students inquiring and the instructor responding in an encouraging way. Next, the teacher began reviewing what was covered in their last class period to seamlessly transition to the present material. There were definitions of terminology, examples of literature, and time period elements, presented via a PowerPoint presentation. The instructor verbalized the information without much engagement from the learners. However, there was a clear expectation that students should follow along because of their prior preparation for that specific class period. In continuation with the presentation, the instructor showed, read, and analyzed specific poems instructor to provide an example of the specific era's aesthetic.

The instructor then presented art pieces and asked for students' observations based on their previous readings and knowledge concerning the literary periods. The perceived purpose was to invoke the students' attention back to the elements of the literary periods studied prior to the class period, and have them look ahead to their poetry readings from the same era. The additional methods of interaction were student-oriented, or the instructor directed students to get in pairs and use the analyzed poems to answer pre-prepared questions. After each discussion, the students were asked to collaboratively present their thoughts and findings in their own words with assistance from the instructor, as needed. The instructor then provided strategy types and assigned subsequent tasks to present certain contexts of both the area and the literary elements for them to analyze and defend in groups so as to identify the best methods of 1) analysis and

synthesis, and 2) to effectively present sufficient evidence to defend their particular stances while measuring the opposing angles. Others were based on students' understanding of the poetry and of its greater significance. Rather than the poem acting as a catharsis for the author, it was a way to reflect the emotions of society, culture, and self.

The instructor read some of the poems aloud for learners to hear intonations, syllabic emphases, rhythm, and sequence. One major role the instructor fulfilled was lecturer and facilitator of the literary periods, artists, authors, and literature. This overarching position was directly reflected in the instructor's approaches of literary instruction, corrective feedback, and strategic linguistic tasks; the instructor imparted information with various requests for students' collaborative analyses and reflections.

Evaluation

Because this is an upper-level Spanish course, there is a lot of literary content for students to read, analyze, and discuss as they prepare for, and participate in, class. However, in my evaluation of the class, teacher roles, strategies, and overall pedagogy, there was a great lack of interactive tasks in which students could apply the literature to their own circumstantial contexts. This was the most considerable weakness that I perceived because of interactivity's necessity in a language-learning classroom. Students must have opportunities to interact and apply their knowledge to grasp the significance of language acquisition. Another deficiency in approach was the major discrepancy in linguistic ability between teacher and student, or, the students' inability to understand linguistically what the teacher said. As a native speaker with exceptional oration and linguistic maneuverability, the instructor facilitated critical and relevant information throughout the class, and the students generally understood. However, it seemed that students did not comprehend many of the implicit meanings, connotations, and explanations. It is quite

understandable in a lecture setting for large quantities of information to be distributed; but that information should be simplified and synthesized in a comprehensible manner, so students can understand it, while also stretching their learning and encouraging improvement. In this instance, not simplifying the information given to students led to many instances when the instructor spoke without any interaction or solicitation from students. This occasionally led to students becoming confused or distracted.

On the other hand, a principal strength I observed in this class was the skillful demonstration of knowledge shown to students in a visual and comprehensive way. The use of visual effects assisted in students' engagement, as they could use these elements as a foundation for their thoughts and opinions when asked. The many poems, literary periods, and art images that were shown are examples of this approach. They simplified the instructor's discussion points and permitted learners to peruse and analyze them more thoroughly. In terms of engagement, the students, when prompted, could contribute to their collective groups and pairs by intelligently voicing their thoughts and forming arguments. Because the students are second language learners, there are some linguistic and grammatical features that hindered them, but they could still sufficiently express their ideas. The teacher's guidance of these collaborations, both as a class and in groups, was very well done; he simply didn't accept the first answer as the only answer. He probed for more information from students, guided them to support their ideas, and even argued differing points. The instructor created an environment of engagement that required just that—students engaging mentally with the literature, the class, and themselves, providing ample opportunity for the instructor to assess the students.

The overall structure of the class is highly effective, though there are some weak points. Because of its intensity towards analyses and syntheses of literature, and the linguistic

expectations and requisites both in and out of class, this course is not for the faint-hearted. I am able to provide insight to both student and instructor perspective since I was once this instructor's student in this very course. The instructor is a very capable and knowledgeable individual who has major strengths in pedagogically facilitating dense and complex information to students. Nevertheless, there were moments when the complex information the teacher conveyed to students was misinterpreted or altogether misunderstood; the instructor often did not recognize this fact. Despite the weakness, there is much strength in the methodologies and strategies the instructor used, even with themes and topics that are very challenging for second language learners. The direction of spoken information, presentation elements, and discussion guidance are some of the overreaching strengths of instruction in this particular class.

Reflection

I learned a lot from observing this course, especially because, in this instance, I had the perspective of an instructor rather than a student. As a lower-level language instructor, it was intriguing to see the approaches used when the principal objectives were literature-oriented and not linguistic or grammatical; however, there is some overlap. I learned how difficult it is to edify and educate students in both facets of instruction of both when there has been a general unfamiliarity of one or the other. From instructional philosophy standpoint, the way the instructor guided the lesson while simultaneously assessing students' communication proficiency and content comprehension (i.e., sociocultural theory or SCT) was admirable. I plan to adapt the strategies the instructor used to my own future language teaching.

If I were teaching this course, there are a number of things I would do differently to benefit learners. Instead of simply describing historical points reflected in literature, as a class, we would analyze past and present aspects of literature, history, and societal and cultural

reflection. Obviously, I would direct the discussion, but the students would play a larger part in engaging with the material. Playing a major role in class would require more thorough preparation before class on the students' end; resultantly, I would not have them simply read and summarize but also study more into the applications of the literature both modernly and historically. Doing this would allow me to dynamically assess (dynamic assessment in SCT) student preparation, linguistic abilities, and analyses in a legitimate context instead of through traditional exams. Moreover, conducting the class in this way would also allow me as the instructor to mediate the zone of proximal development (SCT) in their linguistic and analytical progress by correction via constant, corrective interaction with me as the instructor and personalized instruction in and out of the classroom. Ultimately, as students participate and direct more in class, I would require much more verbal and written output from them in and out of class, with goals toward language proficiency and the development of autonomy in the relevant material (output hypothesis).

Observing this course and instructor taught me about the dynamical skills required to teach all levels of language learning (i.e. linguistics, literature analysis and composition, etc.). This upper-level course with its different instructional directions of literature and culture may not be the most suitable to implement SCT and the output hypothesis into as these are more linguistically oriented. Linguistic practice and proficiency, I think, come as a bi-product as certain literatures are discussed, but are not the main requisites and objectives of the course. There are many pedagogical approaches to language instruction that all have differing levels of effectiveness depending on a number of factors. As I receive opportunities to learn these from others in various situations, I can become a more diverse, multi-faceted, and effective instructor in theory and practice.

REFLECTIVE EXPERIENCE

Introduction

This world is replete with, and surrounded by, extraordinary events. They come in many forms and have varying implications that go beyond surface-level perception. For example, the seasons change, not due to arbitrary, theological myths or beliefs, but because scientists observed that Earth sits on an angled axis; as it rotates around the sun, the tilt causes distance between it and the sun, causing seasonal shifts on Earth's surface. Similar types of explanations can be found for many natural phenomena, and the major commonality found in all such events is that they are observable. The same can be said of the social sciences, and in particular, languages and their acquisition among learners. Language has long been hypothesized and theorized about socially, historically, neurologically, and in many other areas (see Fromkin et al., 2014). Just like the physical sciences present in our world, languages have certain performance functions in the world's societies.

There are currently more than seven thousand documented languages in the world; unfortunately, there are many with differing levels of extinction (Eberhard et al., 2022). Nonetheless, by simply looking through the lens of the past, languages are, and have been, a major element in culture, education, economics, science, and all other aspects of humanity. Because languages are so important in many ways, acquiring them is vital. The main dilemma with having so many languages in different locations—though such diversity is beautiful—is that not everyone speaks the same language. That is why academic institutions have created continuous models of curriculum, pedagogical approaches, and relevant assessment practices. These strategies and tools assist individuals in developing the ability to learn and be able to use a second language, and from thenceforth, this will be called second language acquisition (SLA)

(Olivia et al., 2018). There are many theories in SLA regarding curricula, instruction, and research. Though these theories are varied, they all build upon each other in determining the best way to facilitate SLA for learners.

In the following paper, I reflect on my own second language learning and teaching experiences in conjunction with the sociocultural theory and output hypothesis. I do this to demonstrate the changes that have occurred in my present instruction context (Vygotsky 1979, Swain 2005). There is one particular experience that serves as the foundation of this reflection; from it stems my current conceptualizations, approaches, and methods in my language teaching sphere. These are used to best assist learners in achieving their language acquisition goals with supporting research. Further, I will delineate what I have resultantly done in my own classroom along with the successes and failures. Finally, with support from current SLA theories, I will iterate my ongoing perspectives as a language teacher as they relate to this pivotal experience.

Explicit and implicit learning within my personal experience will be discussed in the context of how they pertain to the theoretical foundations I now utilize as a basis of instruction. Explicit and implicit learning are defined as follows:

> Explicit learning is input processing with the conscious intention to find out whether the input information contains regularities and if so, to work out the concepts and rules with which these regularities can be captured. Implicit learning is input processing without such an intention, taking place unconsciously (Hulstijn, 2005, p. 131).

This concept poses a great challenge within SLA because of the absence of instruction. In other terms, explicit and implicit learning originates from what the learner thinks and does and not from what the contextual environment is doing to the learner (Van Patten et al., 2020). Though there has not been a general consensus from researchers and scholars on this point, I will offer, in relation to the supporting theories, the manner in which both implicit and explicit learning have

transpired in my language learning journey both as a student and instructor; as both a student and instructor, I believe both are critically and equally important to SLA as a whole.

Experience

My trajectory of language learning was somewhat unconventional because, as a student in my secondary education, I never elected to study a foreign language, nor was I required to. After I graduated from high school, I served a Christian mission for two years in a country (the Dominican Republic) where English was not the first language. Therefore, to fulfill my responsibilities as a missionary, I had to learn the country's main language, which was Spanish. At first, being in this situation was very difficult because I was fully immersed in a foreign environment, surrounded by individuals I couldn't communicate with because of mutual lack of understanding and lack of *lingua franca*.

The other difficulty was that I did not have an instructor, updated learning materials, or a setting in which to learn the structures and rules of the language. Nevertheless, I applied myself by searching for relevant literature and interacting with native speakers, and I was able to progress very quickly. After two years, I decided to study Spanish for my undergraduate degree at the university level and had many opportunities outside the university to continue developing my language abilities.

One such opportunity came in the form of a study abroad program for a couple of months in the La Rioja province of northeast Spain. I was hesitant to join because I believed that I was proficient enough and did not need any additional study. However, the more I considered it, the more I realized that my language learning did not, and should not, merely hinge classroom instruction. Though I had experienced living in another Spanish-speaking country previously, I needed to be among the native speakers, be part of them, and learn what the language means to

them. While in Spain, I was required to attend a certain number of classes taught by native

Spanish instructors at the university, and I was also permitted to explore the city and region

alongside my host family. My time spent in Spain, both at the university and with fellow students

and my host family, is something that has brought me immense joy and gratification. To describe

every experience and moment there would be impossible, but the one that has most impacted my

language acquisition first occurred in class and then, as an extension, at a point outside of it.

During this particular experience, we were discussing a late-19th-century novel, *La

Regenta* (1884-85) in form of a film converted in 1975. As we perused the history of the literary

period and its characteristics, we were able to offer to the class our own interpretations of the

novel's plot with feedback from the instructor. Afterward, we reviewed the many plot points of

the film adaptation, and there was a small section that we watched. Interestingly, we watched the

film section without sound. The teacher then directed that we should, with partners, make a

dialogue of our own, reflecting on what we knew of the poem, movie, and literary period. I was

intrigued by the purpose of the activity and how I would do it in front of a native speaker.

Creating the dialogue was enjoyable and quite enlightening as to how artists of that day thought.

Then the instructor tasked us to perform the scene. It was embarrassing, but it required me and

my peers to insert ourselves in a different element of culture, society, and even history. Though

humorous, innocuous, and altogether a good time spent, I felt profoundly affected by the

experience. As a major part of it, this teacher was an excellent instructor by way of connecting

with students, romanticizing the classroom and his presentation, and ensuring that the language

and culture resonated with students. Additionally, I now felt more connected with the language

and the culture that I was then living in. After our performances, the instructor requested that we

have a conversation with our host families to ask their thoughts and opinions on the film and corresponding literature and to report back at a specific date both verbally and in writing.

The more I contemplated the experience during my time in Spain, the more my perception of myself and my circumstances, both culturally and educationally, began to change. Not long after that class, I had a candid conversation with the patriarch of my host family, Miguel, one night after we had eaten as an entire family, which is very customary in the Spanish culture. I described the experience that I had had in class and how moving it was for me, and he responded with a reflection on his young adulthood. He said that this novel and film represented the political and social climate during his youth, which was the post-era of the tyranny of Franco in Spain (Mjaul-Leon, 2019). The film is about the rejection of political and social pressures and endorses the pioneering of one's own trajectory in life irrespective of the naysayers. It also took everything that constituted the fascist regime and threw it back into political leaders' faces in blatant mockery. As a young man, Miguel felt the movement profoundly and reflected it in his own decisions. He spoke of his time spent racing motorcycles, overcoming alcoholism, meeting his wife, and having his children. As he recounted these events, they were mirrored, not only in the film I had learned about, but also in the historical period. The sense of profoundness that I had experienced earlier continued to deepen and substantiate my ever-expanding language learning. Miguel's perspectives and experiences had vitalized my own and added a component of culture and language that I rarely had in a formal academic instructional setting.

Contextual Literature

The experience was significantly different from any I had in my journey of language acquisition, mainly because it reconciled the dichotomy of classroom instruction and authentic language immersion in context. As a current language instructor, I find it challenging to simulate

real-life experiences for my students within the classroom in hopes of giving an opportunity like the one I had. However, because of this occurrence with Miguel, I now orient my pedagogical and theoretical practices towards Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (SCT) and Merrill Swain's output hypothesis. I place special attention on learning strategies, giving my students the best opportunity to utilize their abilities acquired in the classroom in authentic real-life contexts.

First introduced by renowned psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, sociocultural theory states that learning [language] is a social and dialogic process (Vygotsky et al, 1979). He also stated that societal interaction is critical to cognitive development through two steps: interaction with others and the potential for cognitive development, which is limited to a zone of proximal development (ZPD). This zone is intended to extend individuals' capabilities, challenge them, and push them to the next level of proficiency. It is a critical portion of the proposed theory, because it provides the necessitated area of 'push' within the social and cultural learning sphere. As defined by Vygotsky, the ZPD is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under [competent] guidance of in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky et al, 1979, p. 86).

A crucial element of Vygotsky's theory is dynamic assessment (DA). The critical role DA plays in teaching the second language (L2), can be underrated, underutilized, and even misunderstood. As defined by Vygotsky, dynamic assessment is the approach to assess using multi-faceted methods (first proposed in the psychological development of children), not a one-way assessment; or using both society and culture to not only instruct, but also assess. He states that it is impossible to gain the scope of an individual's development by assessing just a single trajectory; therefore, an interactive approach is taken to gain that and to facilitate future

learning (Vygotsky et al, 1979, p 86). There are two types of DA: interactionist and interventionist. The latter implements more traditional assessment (i.e. tests, exams, and other forms of a more quantitatively oriented measurement), while the former is more dynamic in nature, allowing the instructor more freedom to assess in a personalized manner, or qualitatively.

In conjunction with SCT, the output hypothesis purported by Merrill Swain states that, alongside comprehensible input in instruction, "the act of producing language speaking or writing [output] constitutes, under certain circumstances, part of the process of second language learning" (Swain 2005, p. 471). As these authentic circumstantial contexts are designed for students, both in and out of the classroom, they need to produce language in order to succeed. If Swain's hypothesis is utilized, learning within the confines of the classroom, and interacting only with other students and the instructor, are insufficient on their own.

An empirical study by Nemati & Arabmofrad (2014) was conducted to identify the input versus output instructional treatment argument, focusing on sociocultural concepts and peer scaffolding. The study incorporated 90 students in four groups, individual input, collaborative input, individual output, and collaborative output-based, each with experimental instruction over the course of 13 weeks: Results indicated an increase in all groups of production and awareness through casting doubt on the superiority of the output-based pedagogy (Nemati and Arabmofrad, 2014). As it relates to the study, DA has everything to do with the actual instruction going on, and in this case, input- and output- orientation. The collaboration is key in this conducted study because it relates to the socio-cultural aspect; it has reference to the ZPD, which is directed through collaboration. The students' traditional assessment provides insight about the quantitative improvement, or lack thereof, for the students.

In terms of DA, utilizing a more dynamic or interactionist approach to evaluate each group yielded a more comprehensive perspective as to the effectiveness of both the input vs. output-based instruction and the collaborative work (societal context). By assessing and teaching in such a way, a teacher may ascertain a more accurate perception of students' increased capabilities. Within the title of this article, interlanguage pragmatic competence (IPC) is emphasized, or foreign language learners' ability to proficiently, competently, and naturally use both their first and foreign language. IPC involves speaking language within society and culture. Assessment of certain interlanguage pragmatics must be done by induction of situational interlanguage pragmatics.

Another study was conducted by Compernolle and Kinginger (2013) concerning the dynamic nature of interpersonal relationships (a type of sociocultural exposure) indexed in language and conceptual knowledge development. The intent was to use "cooperative interaction [to] reveal both fully formed and emerging competencies." This, in fact, was the outcome of a case study done on one particular student of French who received help from a tutor (Compernolle and Kinginger, 2013, p. 285). This particular student showed significant improvement through the assessments administered (DA).

Because the dynamic assessment was conducted throughout the instruction and not just at the end, each student experienced greater growth. The true intent of DA is not just for the teacher to determine if the student received a passing grade, but for the student and teacher—or tutor in this case—to evaluate, from many angles, students' performance and abilities to help improvement occur. The evaluations give further benefits to the sociocultural instructional framework. The assessment was geared toward the individual student's metapragmatics—"[the individual's] explicit knowledge of pragmatics in social interactions"—as it related to the ZPD

and the guidance of the tutor (Adams et al. 2018). The assessment became the instruction, and vice versa, as the student's pragmatic performance was promoted (ZPD). Compernolle and Kinginger state,

> It is important to reiterate that the goal of [the] interactions was not simply to guide learners to a predetermined "right" answer. Instead…based on Vygotsky's concept of zone of proximal development, we have proposed that cooperative interaction [sociocultural interaction]– in which the assessor not only observes, but also intervenes in learner response processes [DA]– can lead to development within an assessment task (Compernolle and Kinginger, 2013, p. 297).

Almost all elements of SCT were implemented while measuring the student's metapragmatics. Yet they all contribute to the greater whole of what dynamic assessment is. The interaction between peers and teachers during the assessment, the utilization of instruction throughout the duration of the assessment, and the implicit manner of instruction (interactionist DA) to promote the ZPD all contribute to what it is to learn a language within natural contexts.

Continuing with the concept of output interaction, another study by Compernolle and Kinginger (2011) was conducted to gauge and promote certain sociolinguistic competencies in the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Students of French were analyzed during an instructional conversation. Afterward, the students completed a language analysis task in which they attempted to hypothesize about the nature of language variation. The instructor led a collaborative discussion with all students with the intent of demonstrating the variation of French through explicit pedagogies (Compernolle and Williams, 2011). The opportunities in this study for students to self-assess, hypothesize, and collaborate are what made it a contributive and enlightening study. Textbooks, authentic texts, and grammatically-savvy instructors also need accompanying input- and output-based collaboration to give language learners the experience necessary to navigate the L2 in and outside of the classroom.

The students studied their own analyses of conversation and collaboratively hypothesized about the variation in language. The instructor mediated (intervening and interacting guidance to a specific end)—the ZPD was extended through the instructor's guidance and the students' collaboration on their work—and the students hypothesized in their second language in a sociolinguistic context. Interventionist DA was used in this situation, which is still dynamic in nature, but with a tailored means-to-end goal. The conclusion drawn from students' analyzed conversations is that "once learners understand what a given variant means in a social context – and how its use is simultaneously determined by and constitutive of that context – they are becoming social agents acting with mediational means" (Compernolle and Williams, 2011, p. 54). In other words, instead of being controlled by the strict mechanics of grammatical rules, the students are making the grammar their own, incorporating the formal linguistic variants as both the tools and results of the social context. This study simply corroborates the necessity of providing authentic environments (sociocultural contexts) in which students can make the second language their own. This occurred within the instruction and throughout the assessment processes in conjunction with the ZPD, or teacher mediation and peer collaboration.

Another study was conducted of one particular elementary school Spanish as a second language teacher by Lantolf and Poehner (2010). There was no predetermined instructional experimentation administered nor an assessment of students' abilities: "The use of DA [dynamic assessment] was not merely the implementation of a generic model designed by someone else; rather it reflected the teacher's own interpretation of DA as well as her familiarity with her students and the constraints of her particular classroom context" (Lantolf and Poehner, 2010, p. 29). This teacher's approach unified the theory and practice for which Vygotsky advocated, and by doing so, she implemented adequate ZPD for students with the subsequent support and

direction. Results showed a greater sense of student autonomy as she relinquished needing things to be a certain way and allowed students to work their way through independently. This further proof showed the breadth and depth of DA and its true contribution to L2 learning as it relates to the improvement of subsequent teaching.

Notably, the results underscored that DA is "not a pre-specified technique or method of assessing that must be followed in a prescribed manner," but has become a reconceptualization of the relationship between teaching, assessing, and developing (Lantolf and Poehner, 2010, p. 29). Though daily instructional interactions and DA are intertwined in everyday usage within the classroom environment, there is a critical difference between the two. The daily interactions include very intentional efforts to provide mediation (constant interventionist and interactionist guidance), and DA provides quite a range of mediation that is consistently and systematically regulated in accordance with learners' needs, which makes all the difference. This can eventually translate to daily instruction; however, it can be so only because of the way students are dynamically assessed.

An additional research study by Brito (2017) focused specifically on language learners' performances based on immersion, then on classroom exposure. The research intent was to "contrast learners with advanced French proficiency who have attained this level with no, little, or more immersion experience through study abroad" (Brito, 2017). Taking students of the same proficiency that had been immersed versus those that had classroom experience, Brito discovered that participants with more immersion showed more native-like tendencies compared to equally proficient counterparts without such experience. This provides needed insight into immersive settings as it relates to societal and cultural interaction and its value to students. Therefore, even in an informal language learning setting, DA can occur alongside output. An example of this

would be study abroad students, who are not native French speakers, in an immersive context, receiving a consistent assessment from differing perspectives of their language learning. This is happening not only by instructors but by the *native speakers*, though perhaps incidentally. This stimulates greater self-awareness and autonomy within the language, consequently initiating dynamic self-assessment.

In reference to language learning as a whole, the discussion of the findings stated that "language immersion leads to more native-like brain processing of L2 in [individuals]...efforts on the curricular level [can] be made to either emphasize the importance of…[the] incorporate language immersion (i.e. a more implicit instructional mode) into the classroom setting" (Brito, 2017, p. 44). True immersion can't exist in a foreign language-learning classroom alone. The immersion involved living among those people and cultures to whom the language belongs. The study does elaborate on the fact that those who participate in such study abroad programs have significantly improved their language capabilities by way of societal interaction. All the students had similar proficiency in mechanics, but when assessed interactionally, those who had been fully immersed demonstrated higher competencies. As previously stated, this can greatly improve the instruction and subsequent assessment done within these foreign language learning classrooms to resemble the cultural and societal immersion needed within the spheres of language acquisition, though perhaps not to the same extent.

Although there are observable language pedagogies from instructors and measurable students' output strategies, it is difficult to observe what goes on in between, or the type of learning that is occurring within students' minds. Acquisitional improvement is observable, but it can't be said whether this improvement was implicit or explicit learning. Krashen theorized that learners have two independent ways of developing knowledge of a second language. He stated

that "language acquisition is an *incidental* process that results in tacit linguistic knowledge, while language learning is an *intentional* process that results in conscious, metalinguistic knowledge" (Krashen, 1994; Rebuschat, 2015). His claim is that language instruction should be focused on stimulating the conditions for language acquisition to occur versus the learning of language. Though a lot of controversy exists within these claims, it is the general consensus that language acquisition involves some forms of implicit learning. However, there is no such consensus on how implicit learning is accomplished or what the role of explicit learning is (Rebuschat, 2015).

In a particular study by Ellis (2002) concerning implicit and explicit learning, evidence suggested that the knowledge acquired from learning via language usage is generally not grammar-oriented or done with abstract rules or structure. Rather, it is a large collected mass of "previously experienced utterances" (Ellis, 2002). Therefore explicit learning naturally becomes implicit, because "when we use language, we are conscious of communication rather than of counting, yet in the course of conversation, we naturally acquire knowledge of the frequencies of the elements of languages, their transitional dependencies, and their mappings" (Ellis, 2005, p. 322). Consequently, though there is no conscious thought applied to these statistics, there must be an implicit learning of these elements of linguistic structures. Independent of the observed criticality of implicit learning, explicit learning is absolutely necessary for L2 acquisition (Ellis, 2005; Rebuschat, 2015). The reason for such a statement is that there is observable empirical data indicating that explicit instruction, and subsequently explicit learning, speeds up the process of acquisition, and the explicit types of pedagogy are more effective than the implicit ones (Ellis, 2002, 2005).

Explicit language instruction is comprised of the many linguistic elements associated with that language: phonemes, syllables, syntax, lexicon, and so on. Implicit instruction involves

the implicit and unconscious learning and usage of these elements. The construction of speech and grammar blurs the boundaries between the mechanisms of the processing, or the learner's ability to process linguistic structure; nonetheless, "dynamic systems approaches emphasize that we should focus our attention as much on process as on structure, on linguistic construction as much as linguistic constructions" (Ellis, 2005, 2007, 2011; Elman, 2004). The dichotomy created for implicit and explicit learning needs to be reconciled, as both are dynamically necessary for language learning. Whether instruction is exclusively explicit or implicit, the student learning that transpires will still be explicit and implicit in relation to the output. James claims that,

> The traditional psychology talks like one who should say a river consists of nothing but pailsful, spoonsful, quartpotsful, barrelsful, and other moulded forms of water. Even were the pails and the pots all actually standing in the stream, still, between them the free water would continue to flow. It is just this free water of consciousness that psychologists resolutely overlook. Every definite image in the mind is steeped and dyed in the free water that flowers round it. With it goes the sense of its relations, near and remote, the dying echo of whence it comes to us, the dawning sense of whither it is to lead (James, 1890, p. 255).

In terms of SLA and SCT, the contributions of a dynamic classroom setting and sociocultural instruction to language acquisition are a necessary combination of linguistic structures and experiences for students (Ellis, 2005). As outlined above, though there are attempts to say precisely how language learning occurs in the brain, there is much more going on behind the scenes that needs to be accounted for. In SLA, students learn explicitly and implicitly, whether conscious of the processes or not, but instructors facilitate both in their pedagogical strategies and practices.

Reflection

When I first began my experience as a language instructor, I felt fairly confident in my ability to teach principle and theory; however, I was now confronted with the intimidating challenge of teaching grammar concepts, linguistic accuracy in pronunciation and comprehension, and interculturality. I was not sure how to best tailor this to individual learning strategies and types, how to ensure language proficiency with both input and output, and how to simultaneously demonstrate the societal and cultural implications. Initially, there were many trial-and-error situations in which I experimented based on prior research or replicated methods I had seen from other instructors, and it did not result in the success that I had hoped for. In other moments, I saw success. Yet I was not able to determine my own pedagogical approaches that proved effective while also reconciling them into one methodological whole. I ruminated on this for some time when the primary experience stated above came to memory suddenly, and I began to apply what I had experienced and studied to my teaching.

In my previous teaching experiences, I went to class with hardly anything prepared by way of presentation, literature, and material, with the expectation that I would describe everything in a manner that was more relatable than the traditional lecture-type courses. Because this was a beginning-level course and was immersive, the student's first language was scarcely ever used, and I found myself running into a wall. I quickly began to realize that the tactics I was implementing, though valuable in some ways, were not overly effective because of the learners' inability to understand what I was saying, and because of the lack of supportive material. In other words, I was teaching the language theoretically in culture and linguistics, rather than practically. Though this type of pedagogy has its merits, for these beginning learners, I needed to dramatically adjust things to more a comprehensible, input-oriented methodology.

Thereafter, I prepared differently with PowerPoint presentations, the textbook, and outlines of grammar principles to teach all according to the preconceived curriculum standards. Students completed tasks from the textbook in and out of class. These consisted of conjugating verbs, filling in the blanks, and learning new vocabulary. Again, I found myself running into a wall because, even though students were showing a better understanding of concepts in class because of the alterations of input, their output attempts were subpar; they were seemingly lacking the affective investment, not only in the course, but in the language as a whole. I went from one extreme to the other in my instruction and couldn't discover the balance.

I then began the introspection of how I, as a student, would ideally like to have been taught and in what circumstances. I deconstructed my experience of studying in Spain and why it had a different impact, and I thought about all the theories and studies I had analyzed but hadn't yet incorporated. I immediately realized that I needed to create an authentic environment in which students could learn the language and not just give another lecture that they were required to attend for university credit. I needed to bring society and culture to the table and allow students to be a part of those in and out of class—the beginnings of SCT. Secondly, I needed to encourage and stimulate output in diverse forms that encompassed both the culture and society which I had studied in both Vygotsky's theory and Swain's hypothesis (Swain, 2005 & Vygotsky, 1978). Thirdly, I needed to determine best practices for each student's individual learning strategies, while simultaneously assessing their current and progressive capabilities. This needed to be done dynamically, not simply for the purpose of quantitative proficiency measurement.

These three points from my personal experience formed the foundation of my instructional change. That particular teacher in Spain demonstrated elements of the theories, delineated above, in ways that majorly influenced my student and teacher trajectory. He created

the optimally effective and authentic learning experience in a class by 1) having students immersed in a Spanish-speaking society and culture; 2) utilizing relevant material and literature to further authenticate the experience in poetry, film, and experience; 3) stimulating collaborative work in and out of the classroom via group/pair work and discussion; 4) encouraging engagement with other native speakers; 5) dynamically assessing learners linguistically and culturally throughout, and after, the official instruction through tasks, observation, instructional approach, and interaction, and ultimately; 6) determining learners' specific learning types through said assessment to thereafter improve pedagogical approaches.

Comparing and contrasting my experience as a young undergraduate student with my many instances of studying others' research, claims, and findings, I established more effective, efficient, and pertinently admissible methodological strategies for teaching language. The societal and cultural foundations that I hoped for in a language classroom could concurrently exist with the praxis-oriented grammatical and linguistic necessities, and ultimately, students could engage and communicate in a socially edifying way. According to SCT theory, "the most important forms of human cognitive activity develop through interaction with social and material environments." These include the particular conditions frequently encountered in educational settings (Engestrom, 1987; VanPatten et al. 2020).

Student development in an institutional language-learning classroom originates mainly in the interaction between the class and the instructor, which is authentic in its own right; nonetheless, the most crucial point is that in this type of environment, emphasis can be allocated towards "praxis-based research, which entails intervening and creating conditions for development" (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014; VanPatten et al., 2020). Therefore, in this simulated setting that I create, I need to incorporate both theory and praxis, functioning interdependently, to

help students achieve linguistic efficiency and cultural adaptability. This is the aim of SCT with support from the output hypothesis as I have already implemented them in my context.

There are examples of these changes oriented in SCT, and in particular, dynamic assessment, that I have implemented in my now teaching context. One such instance occurred when teaching the complex principles of when to use *qué* (which or what) and *cuál* (which or what) for interrogative inquiries as they have set riles of usage. After I had taught the rules and given pertinent examples, I gave a collaborative activity for pairs of students to fill in the blanks of a few pre-constructed sentences and then thereafter and then have a dialogue about the topic of the sentences, implementing the two interrogative forms. I, in turn, went among the groups, listened, participated, and gave corrected feedback as needed. There was one pair that was evidently frustrated with the specific distinction. As I noticed, consequently, I sat with them and mediated a furthered discussion, revisited the standards and rules, and furthered the conversation (in the L2) to demonstrate in real-time the correct usage. As I gave more practices to the class in the collaborative pairs, I revisited and assessed this specific couple of students to continue to mediate within their zone of proximal development. Incorporating DA, in this instance particularly, assisted myself as the instructor to remain cognizant of students' needs, collaboratively interact with them to find strategies, and ultimately given feedback continuously both in class and even afterwards during their summative assessments. I deem DA via SCT a very effective methodology based on my own experiences as well as alternatively compared with other methods of pedagogical assessment and practice. Simultaneously, during these encounters, I require ongoing output from these individuals by naturalistic dialogue pertaining to the themes at hand. The feedback that I gave was not simply recast in which I gave them the correct answer.

Instead, I required it of them in contextual conversation in which they had to consciously determine which term to use in the correct location as part of the ongoing speech.

As I have implemented further changes, I have observed success in a range of students and different courses. One example of success is teaching the complex grammatical construct of double object pronouns when both an indirect and direct object pronoun are utilized in the same clause of a sentence (e.g. *¿Le das la silla a Miguel? No se la puedo dar.* [Translation: Can you give the seat **to Miguel**. No, I can't give **it to him.**]). Instead of exclusively using practices from the textbook and other praxis materials, though important, I have used certain in-class tasks and activities. I divide students into groups of three. They are then tasked, in the target language, to research a specific genre of native music, including its history, cultural roots, modern-day implications, etc., from an assigned Spanish-speaking country (i.e., La bachata, Dominican Republic). Afterward, I direct that they should listen to a song of that genre, write down what they understood while listening, analyze to verify if it matches the genre and why, and most importantly, listen and identify for double object pronouns to write down. In general, there are many double object pronouns used in Spanish music, though it depends on the song itself. As an example before the assignment, I have them listen to the song, "Darte un beso" by Prince Royce, which is a bachata tune. In their same groups, I have them identify the double and single object pronouns. At the end of their assignment, I have the group present their selected song, country, and genre and give an example of a double object pronoun, or if there were not any, either an indirect or direct pronoun.

I observed that the collaborative interaction in this activity was done with enthusiasm. This is because, as a class, learners were observing real-time culture in the language they are learning. There is now a balance for myself as the instructor that was not there previously.

Socioculturally, students are collaboratively engaging in their own contexts, while producing output in various methods; consequently, they are involving themselves in different cultures and societies and researching and analyzing related aspects. Linguistically, they are practicing speaking, writing, and listening to the grammatical construct via interaction (implicit learning). They are also actively searching for it in real context (explicit learning). As the instructor, I can assess and help students by participating in their group work, providing guidance and corrective feedback as needed, performing simple observations, and determining their progress and emotional involvement with the language and language instruction. Finally, a positive consequence is that the students thoroughly enjoy this activity and make efforts to improve because of it.

This balance of linguistic improvement and sociocultural exposure was not something I had yet mastered early on in my teaching context as stated above, but as this primary experience influenced me thoroughly to adapt, I had other pertinent instances that also contributed. These other experiences came from observing my colleagues in their own settings and practices, studying relevant research conducted, and through trial and error within my own classroom. From all these experiences, I quickly recognized that class time was very precious and needed to be filled with only the most relevant and effective instruction and assessment approaches.

Therefore, I now have a greater focus on the blended version of linguistic practice and sociocultural involvement in conjunction with dynamic assessment tactics.
Another example of my instructional improvements comes when I am teaching language pragmatics. When I teach language pragmatics, often specific to a certain country and regional variation, I place particular emphasis on the manner in which native speakers imply meaning in their usage and in the practical application. In lieu of pragmatics, I sometimes teach about speech

acts. In doing so, I initially direct students' attention to specific locations in which the speech

acts are used and compare their implications as speech acts in relation to grammatical structure

and function. There was a study done on corner store interactions in Quito, Ecuador and Madrid,

Spain that was also tailored towards requests; I would use this study as an illustration in this

specific case. I would explain that these speech act interactions have a basis in the relationships

of the interlocutors, involving both the power and social relationships which affects the structure

of the request and subsequent responses. The speech act of greetings is also used in defining the

requests. The findings of this study conducted, that I would give as examples, indicated that the

Quiteño Spanish (QS) utilized more formal greeting exchanges (e.g., *buenos días*, *buenas tardes*,

¿cómo le va? [good morning/day, good afternoon, how is it going]) whereas the Madrileño

Spanish (MS) used more informal with little interaction and very rare exchange (*hola-hola*)

(Placencia, 2005). However, despite the formality in QS, there was an invitation for customers to

develop personal talk, while in MS, such inquiries were scarce. Though greetings are a distinct

speech act, they form a crucial function, and actually realize the request sequence, in the original

act. Resultantly, in exhibiting address forms in interconnected production of the greetings, the

QS convey affection and achieve other "interaction effects," or the request; this suggests that the

interlocutors regard each other as specific somebodies rather than as any customer or shopkeeper

(Placencia, 2005, p. 593). Conversely, the Madrileño speakers orient toward the actual

transaction while also specifying, at the very beginning, the product and desired amounts without

much "preamble." However, there were still scenarios, though very few, in which the Madrileño

speakers engaged in personal communication (Placencia, 2005).

  This described element of pragmatics sets the stage for the linguistic and grammatical

instruction of greeting lexicon, grammatical structures, and conjugation tenses all in

conversation. At the same time, I can again bring the real-world context of society and culture to the learners for them to observe and be a part of, along with videos, audio recordings, and relevant literature that serve as the foundation to give evidence of those real-world contexts therein. Practical tasks in real-time would provide learners the opportunity to experiment with speech acts and to implement and accustom themselves grammatically to greeting approaches. For the duration of the class, or classes, and in subsequent take-home assignments, I could assess linguistic accuracy and proficiency along with the comprehension of the concepts; this would help me determine future individualized instructional alterations, if needed.

Conclusion

There have been many critical experiences to my language-learning trajectory that have accumulated through the years as I have been a student, participant, teacher, observer, and a continuous learner of language and language acquisition. The experience outlined here has significantly affected my current pedagogical approaches and still has an influence on me today, with support from varying SLA theories and hypotheses. I hope to have many more experiences like that as I continually seek improvement and try to better assist learners in more efficiently and effectively acquiring language through various avenues.

Though I now base my instruction in SCT and the output hypothesis with an emphasis on explicit/implicit learning, I am fully cognizant that my perspectives, philosophies, and pedagogies will change due to ever-evolving circumstances and additionally garnered experiences to better suit learners. Ideal language-learning settings are not always possible in an academic classroom; nonetheless, as a teacher, it is my responsibility to do the best I can to simulate these settings. Not all students will have the opportunity to study a second language in an immersive fashion, be educated by an expert instructor, and implement learning in real-life

contexts with first-language speakers. I recognize I was privileged to have those experiences myself. However, as someone that has experienced this and more, I can now more effectively create the optimal environment in a classroom for learners to acquire higher quality language, both linguistically and socioculturally.

STATEMENT OF FUTURE PLANS AND GOALS

There is always more to learn. I aspire to never cease learning, whether that be in language pedagogy, curriculum development, pragmalinguistics, neuroscience, or any other aspect of academia or knowledge as a whole. As it relates to my own context as a student and teacher of language, after having completed this MSLT program, I plan to pursue my doctoral work in the same sphere of linguistics. I desire to continue to instruct language acquisition and delve more into literature orientations, sociolinguistics, and another aspect of linguistics, though the plan is tentative. My primary goal is to make language the foundation of my future research and instruction.

Aspects of my teaching in particular that I would like to continue to develop are the best methodologies for balancing assessment practices in and out of the classroom, both in L2 acquisition and in composition and literature studies. As described above, there has been a lot of research conducted on this point. But I hope to contribute in my own way and circumstance to further the empirical data and discovery of best approaches with the support of proposed prevailing theories and research conducted by those that preceded me. I also desire to further my knowledge and teaching capabilities to better incorporate and balance society and culture in the classroom language pedagogy (SCT) while also maximizing and maintaining linguistic development and accuracy (output hypothesis). My ongoing instructional experience will teach me much in regard to both these subjects, but I hope to conduct my own research to further contribute to the best possible methods for learner success. I do plan to more eclectically incorporate effective approaches based in SCT and the output hypothesis as I garner experience in my own context as well as observation. I recognize I am not an expert in either of these

theories nor in their implementation, but I am going to continue to refine my own approaches to best suit students learning language via culture and society.

Teaching has always been a profound passion of mine, though at times, I have not recognized it as such; therefore, having been able to teach in the MSLT program at a collegiate level has simply added to the flame of that desire. Language is another devoted passion that has been enriched by my many experiences with it and all those who use it. Coupled together, these two entities form a powerful influence on my future trajectory as they have on my past. I plan to continue making language instruction and study a major factor in the next steps of both my professional and personal life; I want to continue to grow and learn alongside my students while continuing to utilize and explore practices based in SCT and output hypothesis.

Ultimately, I am enamored with the defining and influential opportunity that instructional positions can give me, especially in the realm of language. I can be a facilitator of that knowledge. I can guide learners to discover truths about language, other cultures, and themselves. I can nurture a student's learning strategies that lead to greater understanding. I can demonstrate the monumental privilege and benefit that it is to study and acquire another language. I can assist to bridge the gap in learners' understanding with that of the world's cultures, societies, and languages. I want to do all those things as an instructor and researcher of language. If I can influence just one individual with my instructional approaches, and perhaps research, to be, and do, better in their personalized context, then I have succeeded. I also hope to benefit the masses and individuals with language serving as the paramount foundation. That is the goal and the plan as I continue my studies in a doctoral program and instructional setting.

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