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Laura Medina  
*Utah State University*

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**Effective Task-Based Language Teaching and Multiliteracies Approaches  
in Second Language Learning**

**by**

**Laura Natalia Medina García**

A portfolio submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

Approved:

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Dr. Sarah Gordon

Major Professor

---

Dr. Ann Roemer

Committee Member

---

Dr. Ekaterina Arshavskaya

Committee Member

---

Dr. Crescencio López González

Department Head

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

Logan, Utah

2023

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Effective Task-Based Language Teaching and Multiliteracies Approaches**

#### **in Second Language Learning**

**by**

**Laura Natalia Medina García**

Master of Second Language Teaching

Utah State University, 2023

Major Professor: Dr. Sarah Gordon

Department: World Languages & Cultures

This portfolio represents a selection of the author's graduate coursework, methodological approaches, and professional experiences in teaching Spanish as a second language. It was compiled while participating in the Utah State University Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program. The portfolio includes: reflections on the author's teaching experiences and professional environment, her teaching philosophy statement, a professional development peer observation, a paper that explores the theory and practice of task-based language teaching (TBLT) in conjunction with using authentic texts in teaching writing in novice-level Spanish, and a consideration of some of the author's future goals. The paper provides a literature review related to TBLT and suggestions for further research and application in the classroom. The author reflects on the theoretical approaches underpinning her practices, including task-based language teaching and the multiliteracies framework, and discusses practical teaching experiences that have influenced her in her journey as a teacher.

(47 pages)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to express gratitude for the support and guidance that God, family, and colleagues have offered to me throughout this process, especially my husband and my daughter.

I would like to thank my professors in Perú who prepared me well, not only as a second language teacher with all the ESL/EFL theories and practice, but also prepared me to be a guide and help my future students by being perceptive of their needs in the classroom setting. To them, I am grateful for encouraging me to pursue advancement in my career and grow as a language teacher overall. I would also like to thank all of my professors at Utah State University for the guidance I have received in developing my teaching philosophy and for all the input I have received in each of their classes that has helped me to have a clearer and better vision of my own research. Being part of the MSLT program has helped me gain a better understanding of the different perspectives I can have as a language teacher and implement them in a holistic manner in my teaching practice. I feel during this process I have also developed critical thinking skills and research methods that can help me with future research with the objective of finding the best possible way for students to learn a target language.

Last but not least, I am grateful to my MSLT committee who agreed to be a part of my community of practice and invest their time to guide me through this process with their knowledge and feedback.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ACTFL- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

CLT- Communicative Language Teaching

DLI- Dual Language Immersion

EFL- English as a Foreign Language

ESL- English as a Second Language

FL-Foreign Language

L2- Second Language

MSLT- Master of Second Language Teaching

NLG- New London Group

PPP- Presentation, Practice, Production model

SLA- Second Language Acquisition

TL- Target Language

TPS- Teaching Philosophy Statement

TBA- Task-Based Approach

TBLT- Task-Based Language Teaching

UG- Universal Grammar

USU- Utah State University

## INTRODUCTION

I have been a teacher since 2006 in various capacities, teaching in Perú and the US, in both private and public schools. I have taught English as a Second Language (ESL) to children and adult learners and Spanish as a second language to children and adults. I have taught large classes and tutored individuals. I have taken classes in remote and hybrid modes and taught in face-to-face mode. The diversity of these educational experiences has contributed to my growth as a teacher of language and culture. The Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program courses and developing this portfolio have helped me improve as a teacher, by introducing me to a number of effective pedagogical approaches.

This portfolio represents the combination of theoretical frameworks and practical teaching experiences that have influenced me as a teacher, as well as what I have learned in the MSLT program at Utah State University. First, I outline briefly some different teaching environments that have had an impact on my practice. Second, the teaching philosophy statement articulates two principles that inform my current pedagogical practice, focusing primarily on: the multiliteracies approach to second language teaching and task-based language teaching (TLBT). Third, I include one sample paper based on work from the MSLT research methods course, as representative of my graduate coursework. It investigates TLBT in teaching novice-level Spanish, and suggests how we may explore the use of authentic texts to support learning linguistic forms and help develop writing skills. In addition to a research design proposal for future research, this paper provides a concise literature review of some of the work in L2 pedagogy that I have investigated and come to value while teaching and learning in the program, examples of how I use the approach, as well as an appendix with a sample lesson plan. Because I believe language learning and teaching are a lifelong process, the fourth and final section looks forward to the future, expressing some goals and possible future directions for me in language teaching and learning.



## **Professional Environment**

My background in teaching different languages, levels, ages, and diverse learners in the US and Perú informs the teaching philosophy that I articulate below. First, I earned a Bachelor's degree in Education with an emphasis in teaching English as a Foreign Language in Perú. In this program, I learned some of the initial theoretical underpinnings of my practice as a teacher, but the approaches were very different from those in the USU MSLT program or in my current teaching philosophy. From this degree program in Perú, I learned mostly about approaches that relied on traditional EFL methodologies (for example, the Audiolingual Method with drills, the Natural Approach, the Silent Way, or Total Physical Response, among others). I was able to see first hand some limitations in such approaches and began to look for new methods. As part of this practical experience teaching EFL in Perú, I had the opportunity to teach classes at local public schools. One of the main institutional missions for my university in Perú is not only to train teachers for local schools as part of their practical teaching experience, but also to promote community outreach and service among those economically less fortunate. Community outreach and supporting diverse learners is still something that I value in my teaching.

I began teaching EFL to elementary-aged students and adults in English language centers, in Lima, Perú. I learned that not all of the methodology I encountered at the university could be applied to all teaching/learning contexts. I became aware of the different challenges faced by learners of different ages with different goals, as well as the different EFL teaching philosophies of each educational institution, public or private. Most of the language teaching institutions that I have been part of tend to work with different language textbooks that follow a specific EFL methodology. These textbooks tended to focus on the development of oral communication in the target language, and often featured just grammar

structures and everyday phrases that were to be memorized. My perspectives on language teaching changed after leaving Perú.

Since living in Utah, I have had the opportunity to teach many different levels and ages, from middle school-level ESL and Spanish classes to elementary-level Spanish Dual Language Immersion (DLI) courses with the Cache County School District. In teaching ESL in the US, I learned even more about the complexity of being an immigrant in the country from a language and cultural perspective. Students may face challenges within their communities and we need to make education and educational materials and approaches more inclusive and accessible for everyone. The teaching environments and pedagogical approaches were very different between Perú and Utah, particularly with the unique full-immersion content-based model in the Utah DLI program (in which students study 50% of the day completely in Spanish and 50% in English). Through my brief experience with the DLI program, I began to learn how to implement effective techniques such as role play and storytelling in the classroom. In addition, this experience in DLI influenced my interest in how authentic context and texts can provide crucial support for the explicit instruction of grammar as well as a means for teaching culture.

I have also taught and tutored novice through intermediate-low level students in Spanish at Utah State University as a graduate instructor in the MSLT program. It has been a helpful experience to teach students of Spanish of all ages, from elementary through university, and this broad experience has taught me to adapt my materials, expectations, and techniques to better address the needs of each age group and each individual.

In addition, as a lifelong learner of languages and cultures, I continue to learn other languages. I have been learning French with the Alliance Française in Perú and at USU. In all of my experiences as a language teacher and learner, I have focused on helping language learners communicate effectively and share their diverse cultures.

## **Teaching Philosophy Statement**

My approaches to teaching have evolved through my own diverse experiences in the classroom as both a teacher and a learner. I have long had an interest in teaching and in how I could help others learn and guide them through the learning process. Even at a young age, especially in a country like Perú that is linguistically diverse, I wanted to learn how to express myself in different languages and understand how to use language in different sociocultural contexts. As I continued studying more languages, I became more aware of the relevance of understanding cultural aspects of a language in order to comprehend how language can be used. I first decided to become an EFL/ESL teacher to understand more through my own practice how we all relate to the experience of wanting to be able to communicate, and to make ourselves understood.

My biggest challenge as a teacher (of EFL or Spanish) is to find the tools and approaches that will help my students reach their language learning goals. My role as a teacher is to support my students as they find purpose, a sense of achievement, and further motivation in reaching their language proficiency goals or in communicating their sociocultural needs.

I value contexts and texts. In designing lesson plans, I consider: authentic input and exposure to authentic texts, the motivation students can find relating personal experiences and language goals, the inductive and deductive learning of grammatical structures in these real contexts, as well as the development and assesment of the target language skills through engaging in tasks. My teaching is student-centered, which means that I give learners choices in their activities and materials, and promote interaction, engagement, and a sense of agency. I create real-life situations in tasks and role plays, because I believe in learning by doing.

My approach to teaching by doing is two-pronged. First, below I explain the value of aspects of the Multiliteracies approach in my practice. Second, I explore a few ways in which

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) can be very effective to help students reach their language goals. Both pedagogies offer useful tools to help students learn a language in meaningful ways and they may be combined. These two approaches are effective, because they provide context and connections for learning.

### **Multiliteracies Approach**

The Multiliteracies Approach, in general terms, focuses on learner engagement with authentic texts, developing cultural understanding, increasing language proficiency, and helping to build other skills (such as analytical and interpretative skills). The Multiliteracies approach today defines “texts” and literacy both very broadly, because, “This pedagogy allows us to broaden our traditional understanding of literacy (i.e. the ability to read and write) to include the various ways we can interact with our social environment today, which involves images, film, audio texts, photos and a wide variety of other multimodal digital resources” (Brown & Arshavskaya, 2019). Using many different kinds of authentic texts and stories in class gives diverse students more opportunities for interpretation, creativity, and self-expression in the L2. Multiliteracies offers many benefits. It can be more inclusive of diverse learners and cultures and it can give teachers increased flexibility. It can help us teach language and content simultaneously. The multiliteracies approach can be a feasible, positive path for students to become more active learners via textual contexts, that can both build cultural awareness and speak to learners’ own sociocultural backgrounds or interests. For example, I use children’s books in Spanish to teach verb tenses and writing, providing context and opportunities for developing skills, critical thinking, and expression in the L2 as we discuss universal themes and learner experiences related to the text (see Appendix for a specific example from my teaching).

Furthermore, as expressed by advocates of the multiliteracies approach (Warner & Dupuy, 2018) and others, there are many affordances offered by the multiliteracies

framework in developing critical thinking and higher order thinking skills, not limited by student L2 proficiency level. This is because, as first suggested by the New London Group, “On the contrary, FL teaching must better integrate critical framing and transformed practice (in the sense conceptualized by the NLG, 1996) at every level of instruction.” I believe we can address developing higher order skills (including critical thinking and problem-solving) while practicing reading, writing, and speaking with students in the L2 at any proficiency level or age. Incorporating texts and tasks helps me do this in the classroom.

The multiliteracies approach offers a way to teach language, critical thinking skills, and content simultaneously, and in addition has the benefit of exploring structures and grammar through the examples of authentic texts. It can be necessary at times to explicitly teach grammatical forms to improve communication and accuracy. The multiliteracies framework’s focus on texts also offers many opportunities to teach with authentic examples of grammar structures and different types of discourse in the context of a text, be it a story, poem, song, or other kind of narrative. In my teaching, I like to use authentic texts, ranging from children’s picture books and folk tales, to newspaper articles, to popular songs, to social media posts related to the themes of everyday life that we are studying.

Context and culture are key. Multiliteracies framework can give students authentic, meaningful textual context in which to learn the structures of a language: “From a multiliteracies perspective, knowledge of grammar involves not just understanding the rules that define a particular structure but also the relationships between parts of sentences or discourse and how certain structures signal those relationships. Knowledge of vocabulary, much the same, entails more than definitions of discrete words—it includes understanding how words function in context and what culturally situated meanings are associated with certain words” (Paesani, Allen & Dupuy, 2016). Developing communication and thinking skills is part of the multiliteracies framework: analysis, interpretation, critical thinking, and

presentation are all part of this pedagogical practice—and all of these skills can be supported in the classroom through carefully planned tasks, based on the task-based approach.

### **Task-Based Language Teaching**

My teaching philosophy incorporates the use of tasks as outlined by Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). The main paper and appendix that follow in this portfolio explore TBLT in further detail. TBLT can be defined as “...an approach to language teaching that prioritizes meaning but does not neglect form. It emphasizes the importance of engaging learners’ natural abilities for acquiring language incidentally as they engage with language as a meaning-making tool; it thus contrasts with structural approaches that emphasize language as an object to be systematically taught and intentionally learned” (Ellis, Skehan, Li, Shintani & Lambert, 2019). Tasks offer opportunities for interaction, collaboration, practice with forms, and the development of skills, as well as formative assessment, as learners complete them together. Moreover, tasks help students learn form in context.

Aspects of TBLT dovetail nicely with the Multiliteracies approach, I have found. Byrnes, Crane, Maxim, and Sprang (2006) argued for an expanded view of what a “task” can be and explored teaching along the nexus of task, genre, and text. TBLT grew out of CLT approaches, and Multiliteracies can address one limitation seen in earlier iterations of CLT, “because of [CLT’s] propensity to separate language and content, particularly literary-cultural content, such a focus may unintentionally sustain the long-standing bifurcation of FL programs into language courses and content courses with all the attendant negative consequences” (Byrnes 2006, p. 244; as cited in Willis Allen & Paesani 2010, p. 122). Teachers must not separate language and cultural content. In my classroom, combining some aspects of TBLT with elements of the multiliteracies framework helps my students achieve their goals and make cultural connections.

My instructional design usually involves both texts and tasks in some way. The tasks

in my classroom are collaborative and student centered. Tasks that we plan as language teachers need to be interactive, realistic, and organized in a student-centered way, in which learners have the opportunity to develop their language skills (and multiliteracies skills such as analytical, interpretive, and presentational), based on their goals and real-world needs. Teaching with tasks means the teacher needs to step back while students engage in real-life communication in the L2. Outlining the many affordances of TBLT, particularly recently in the context of the pandemic-related increase of remote and hybrid learning, Laxman (2020), explains, “this learner-centred approach keeps learners to the centre of all aspects of language teaching, including planning, teaching and evaluation.” In my own practice, I have often noticed that tasks with specific steps and prompts, well-articulated expectations, and clear objectives and learning outcomes keep students at the center of the activities and help them take responsibility for their own learning. Students even notice their own progress and tasks can be a sort of formative assessment or dynamic assessment. Moreover, it is important to afford them with opportunities to not only use language with the goal of completing a communicative task—as in the long-standing approach of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)—but also to be able to gain autonomy or agency in their own learning process, as they are able to express themselves and create with language as they learn to interpret and apply what they have encountered in texts (as in the multiliteracies approach).

Task-based language teaching and its collaborative, hands-on nature helps develop skills. Students must interact with texts and with each other, working together to communicate effectively to reach the goal of their task. Emphasizing the importance of student participation and collaboration in TBLT, Ellis (2003) says that it seeks “...texts that are learner-centred, discursive practices encouraging learners to actively engage in shaping and controlling the discourse; and social practices that help them in allowing and resolving social trouble. Here, the learners participate and use language to complete these tasks. They

help each other in learning; monitoring each other's tasks and suggesting fellow learners improve; and interpret messages with their full linguistic knowledge and prior experiences.”

Tasks should be relevant beyond the classroom. I use authentic texts (allying with the multiliteracies approach) with real-life situations as the basis for tasks in my classroom. Moreover, some of the tasks that I think could be the most useful in L2 teaching and learning are those in which learners need to work collaboratively towards a solution to a problem, such as: information-gap activities, opinion-gap activities, jigsaw tasks, or tasks with roles assigned to each learner, etc. For instance, one task I have used in my classroom involved first asking students to make inferences using a social media post, after reading a recent newspaper article, through the use of images, titles, and vocabulary related to what they remembered from the article in class. More specifically, I asked students to interpret an authentic news article and an official government social media post based on the most critical period of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, using the photos, headlines, and key words from the texts. Then, in groups and in their own words, they reported, by answering two questions about the restrictions Peruvians were living with vs. policies and restrictions in the US during this critical point in two different sociocultural contexts, making cultural comparisons (comparisons as suggested by ACTFL). At the same time, they were able to make use of the imperfect tense in Spanish and notice the difference with the preterit, while expressing interpretations of the text, cultural comparisons, and their own opinions. In a related task, students could also complete a task based on this text (or other related signs and advertisements related to public health recommendations and restrictions). The grammar structure highlighted is the impersonal use of *se* in Spanish, to express phrases such as, “one can wear...” or “one cannot go....” In groups, they imagined that they were in Perú, in the hospital along with one of the doctors that was on the front lines fighting the virus, as mentioned in the article. In this collaborative writing task, they would imagine and write



some sentences about the things the hospital needed and what the people needed to do or what was prohibited (to create or echo existing public health advertising, posters, or signs).

In another example of a task related to a reading in my classroom, after reading a fictional children's story about a birthday, I asked students to conduct an imaginary interview with the main character about the events that happened in the story. Students were able to demonstrate reading comprehension, and were able to accurately use form (verb tenses and opinion words) to express themselves. In both of these example tasks, students were learning how an interview is structured and interrogatives in the L2. Tasks like these helped students learn interview patterns and useful question words in context; this was in preparation for the unit final project task, in which they needed to conduct an interview about celebrations in their own sociocultural contexts and make cultural comparisons.

Tasks such as these work well with aspects of the multiliteracies approach, as students use analytical, interpretive, and critical thinking skills to work with texts and stories. Some examples of the types of tasks I use to help students develop skills and communicate effectively are those based on Maley (1994) and Mishan (2005) and specifically designed to be applied along with authentic texts (such as children's books, short stories, or fairy tales). Some of these types of proposed tasks are analysis, matching, and response/reaction, for instance. Moreover, Mishan (2005) underlines that making a connection between learners' own personal interests and authentic texts and considering these connections in our instructional design can lead to more effective, student-centered language learning.

In TBLT, the instructor's role is to carefully design tasks, taking into consideration students' individual interests, needs, and goals. The role of learners is to be active participants in their own language learning experience. Through tasks, students can use their L2 abilities as they interact in pairs or groups, reflecting on those abilities to gain more confidence in their language competence. Based on the multiliteracies framework, it is

important to give students space in which they have opportunities to use the language as they process the input (thereby developing analytical and interpretive skills) and find a purpose to use it for themselves (through application and creative expression of the language).

### **Multiliteracies: Texts, Stories, and Storytelling**

Teaching in the Utah public schools Spanish Dual Language Immersion (DLI) program gave me a unique, new perspective on teaching. There was a focus on content and context. In the program, the language structures I taught were often through the context of stories. Through these authentic stories, students could notice a grammatical form within a context. This method of contextualizing language through stories allowed my students to interact with each other as they discovered, under my guidance, the use of the language and in some form, its function.

From this experience as a Spanish K-12 DLI teacher, I was inspired to find a middle ground between the use of stories as language-learning content and the focus on grammatical or textual aspects for students to develop communicative skills. Observing my second-grade students speaking in Spanish while trying to convey their needs and opinions through what they learned in the stories, demonstrated to me their increased oral proficiency level and communication skills resulting from the tasks surrounding authentic texts. However, these stories could be implemented with some effective, explicit grammar instruction for this program to be even more successful; and today the Utah DLI program is beginning to add more explicit grammar instruction to its curriculum. Stories and storytelling can work hand in hand with explicit grammar instruction and provide more opportunity for learners to develop skills, as Ellis (2015) reminds us that meaningful input alone is not enough, “Clearly, meaning-focused instruction that supplies learners with plentiful input that they can understand is effective in developing oral skills. However, there is also evidence to suggest that such instruction is not successful in enabling learners to achieve high levels of linguistic

and sociolinguistic accuracy, suggesting, as claimed by Higgs and Clifford (1982), that there are limits to what can be achieved through ‘natural’ learning.” More recently, the multiliteracies approach reminds teachers to be more aware of the interpretation of meaning and of cultural aspects of the stories and texts we engage with in the classroom.

Using stories helps to facilitate and contextualize explicit grammar instruction or focus on linguistic forms, specifically because stories (or other texts like poems, or songs) enable learners to visualize these forms. Students may participate actively as they collaborate to notice, then construct their own explanation (or discuss using metalanguage) of grammar rules in the context provided by narratives or stories in texts. Again, texts are useful because they may provide interesting, engaging stories, meaningful input, and examples of grammar structures that students may learn through inductive or deductive means—and may ultimately learn to apply in their own use of the language to express themselves.

This focus on form or grammar instruction taught through stories could resolve the conflict of whether we should teach grammar or *how* we should teach it, especially if they offer a path to facilitate the acquisition of the target language. As summarized in Vogel, Herron, Cole & York (2011), “Instructional approaches that aim at drawing students’ attention to linguistic forms in a real communicative context are now considered most appropriate for the current goals of FL instruction” (referring to studies by Doughty & Williams, 1998; Ellis, 2001, 2008; Katz & Blyth, 2008; Wong & VanPatten, 2003).

In addition to the essential role of grammar in effective communication, linguistic accuracy remains an important component, even in the proficiency-oriented instruction suggested in the ACTFL *World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (2012). The principles of the proficiency model stress form-focused instruction in a meaningful context and emphasize the importance of accuracy as a component of communicative competence. A well-known unresolved issue related to stressing form in the communicative classroom

focuses on the question of when and how the information regarding grammatical rules is best provided to learners (Erlam, 2003; Herron & Tomasello, 1992; Robinson, 1996; Shaffer, 1989). Again, one solution evident here is that providing meaningful contexts through authentic texts, stories, and real-life tasks can help students boost awareness of forms and structures, increase proficiency, build cultural awareness, and express themselves.

## **Conclusions**

Language teachers may feel rewarded when learners are expressing themselves in the target language and being understood. We want to help our students in communicating effectively. To do this, teachers must give students the tools they need to meet their language learning goals. We must also give them opportunities to engage with authentic materials, to interact with people and texts, to achieve success in completing tasks, and to express themselves. I want to help my students engage in the acts of interpreting meaning, applying what they have learned, and expressing themselves effectively in the L2.

First, the multiliteracies approach, with its focus on context and the interpretation of meaning, authentic texts, stories, and skills, informs my teaching. In my teaching, as in the multiliteracies framework, the focus on both form and meaning can find a middle ground as they complement each other. Second, aspects of TBLT are also key to my pedagogical practice because I believe in providing meaningful, purposeful, real-life contexts for my students to communicate and express themselves. I use tasks in my classroom because I have seen that focused, authentic tasks can help students grow, develop critical thinking skills, and reach their language goals. I try to foster participation, collaboration, interaction, and student-centered learning. Finally, I find that the mix of the multiliteracies framework and TBLT that I use gives my students the authentic opportunities, context, and tools they need to develop skills and express themselves as they continue their language learning journeys.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

I find peer observation a useful tool in my reflective practice as a teacher. Below is just one example from many classroom observations I have conducted in different languages as part of the MSLT program. This observation was conducted in November, 2021 in a USU third-year French and Francophone literature course. The course is entitled “Textual Analysis” and is intended to be an introduction to authentic literary texts of many different genres from many cultures around the francophone world. Students were at the intermediate-high through advanced levels, including heritage speakers, with 15 students. This course was taught by a USU professor. This day’s lesson was part of a larger unit that included other francophone short stories and poetry, from Canada in this case, with students both reading stories and poems and writing their own stories and creative poems in French.

### Lesson Objectives

- Understand different perspectives on the current and historical immigration situation in Canada. Understand the theme of immigration through the eyes of francophone Canadian author Gabrielle Roy in the short story *La vallée Houdou*.
- Identify vocabulary and literary imagery. For example: « Houdou » and find its literary meaning within the text and in students’ own lives.
- Talk about several literary themes: immigration, identity, origins, family heritage. Express oneself on one’s background, identity, and family origins, where students came from and conditions of family immigration.
- Answer comprehension and interpretation questions about the text (homework) and express opinions on the text and social issues in class.

### Activities

- Students were first introduced to some historical facts that occurred in Utah. Eight Native American tribes of Utah resided on the land that is now USU. The land-use acknowledgement statement was presented as an introduction to the text and to talk about places and people’s identities. They talked about the terms “First Nations/Premières Nations,” “autochtone,” and “indigenous/indigène” in US, Canada, and Quebec.
- Images of the symbol of Canada “Les feuilles d’érable/maple leaves” on flags, sports logos, money, and places and landscapes that you can find in Manitoba, Canada were shown and compared to the landscapes we have in Utah. Students made cultural comparisons (following

ACTFL World Readiness Standards 5 C's, including cultural comparisons).

- Images shown were more specific when the word “Houdou” was introduced through pictures of rock formations in Utah. The presentation of these images were followed by a whole-class discussion based on the instructor’s comments and questions as they were directed to infer the contextual literary meaning of the word “Houdou” through the visualization of these rock formations found in Utah and familiar to most of the students.
- After introducing other vocabulary, students were presented the theme of the lesson and concepts found in the text: “l’immigration, le travail, la terre/le terrain, l’identité.” A handout with images included these themes and a short list of group discussion questions. These activities were based on a multiliteracies framework and included interpretation of meaning, textual analysis, and application of language.
- The class was divided into groups to discuss the history of their own families and origins through questions proposed by the teacher. These questions were related to the text that was about immigrants to Canada and the lives of both pioneers and First Nations peoples. Many students took out their phones to show photos of family members that had immigrated to America or showed family trees on genealogy apps as part of the speaking activity.

### **Description and observations**

Students were instructed to work in separate small groups as part of a discussion based on immigration. The environment kept its authenticity all the time and class was conducted in the L2. The students and the teacher were always motivated and interested in the topic of the lesson. The instructor was always monitoring and offering guidance. Positive and corrective feedback was offered and seemed to be very helpful as she helped students with questions or comments about what they had to say. After every comment made by the teacher, students were afforded with opportunities to also make comments, maintaining not only the objectives of the lesson but good rapport as well. The topic of the lesson was very deep since it presented specific concepts related to culture and heritage. The participation that came from the students helped build new vocabulary and concepts in relation to the topic. The students and the instructor were open and motivated to share their own heritage and their own families’ immigration situations, inviting a better and more personal connection with the text. Some individual students showed pictures or photos of family members or ancestors from their phones or genealogy websites while talking about their origins or immigration in

their own families. These questions and comments discussed in groups were shared at the end with the whole class. Students related their own family origins, immigration stories, or hardships to those depicted in the text. Students seemed very engaged in the interactions.

## **Reflections**

Having had the opportunity to be a participant in this French literature class gave me insight into the implementation of literature and how to use it for my learners to develop their own understanding of the target language concepts. I even personally felt excited to share information about my heritage and where my ancestors are from in the discussion group activity. I observed that other groups had the same excitement and interest when they were sharing information about their families' heritage as well. I was reminded through this observation that it is important to invite students to make connections with their own prior experiences and prior knowledge first in order to better engage with the text and making personal connections (or activating schema) is something that I can do in my own classroom.

I teach Spanish but I also speak and study French, so I was able to participate in group discussions a little myself, as well as understand what the students and instructor were discussing. I noticed that the level of the language proficiency of the students was at an intermediate-high or advanced level where they are able to be challenged with tasks that will develop their creativity and application of what they have learned when it comes to the creation of other works of literacy like poems or short stories with their own voice (I saw that they had written their own poems in French directly onto real, dry maple leaves they had collected to write on, in a prior class meeting for a creative writing exercise).

Through the way this topic was presented through the use of authentic texts and authentic context using literature, the implementation of the Multiliteracies approach could enhance the potential of this authenticity in conjunction with the creation of multiple tasks based on literacy. For instance, in the same groups, as an added task, I would suggest that

students could be asked to identify themselves with one of the individual characters or families in the story they find in the text and create a dialogue including the word “Houdou” to develop its meaning in relation to the topic.

I have some other suggestions for improvement or expansion of the lesson. First, the instructor used paper to write down vocabulary words students asked for, as she circulated around the classroom to each group, and she could have used a mini whiteboard instead to write words, phrases, or illustrations (this would be quicker and more sustainable). Second, another suggestion might be that I do not know if students were supposed to read the text before class (it seemed most students did) but I thought it could be a great idea to start with this assignment so students could previously identify with the text before coming to class to understand it more and connect concepts and key ideas with their personal experiences. Not many full tasks were performed during this student-centered discussion lesson as it looked like it was the introduction. I would have liked to see other types of activities but I also think that the main focus was on expanding the students’ knowledge of immigration, specifically in Canada, and how this was reflected on the text through the message that was transmitted by the author. Homework was announced at the end of class with a follow-up writing activity and discussion on Canvas related to these literary characters. Third, another idea for an additional activity related to the themes of family or immigration that I would suggest could possibly be for students to bring information of an ancestor to a task in which students will share not only the names or places of birth of this person but also an important world event they went through during their lifetime. They could bring pictures from newspapers, magazines, or other family or online sources of information where the class can visualize what it looked like back in those times their ancestors used to live; then students could discuss cultural comparisons or if they had anything in common in their family heritage.

It was an insightful and instructional experience to have been part of this class. I could



see how students interact well with a text, their classmates, and instructor. In addition, I learned more about Canada and perspectives on immigration and the words and cultural facts presented at the beginning of the lesson were very helpful to understand the situation the author wanted to convey. At the same time, students conducted cultural comparisons (in accordance with the ACTFL “5 C’s” that recommend cultural comparisons).

Also, this was a class where the focus was on literature and part of my own teaching philosophy is based on the use of literacy following the Multiliteracies approach as a tool for students to see language and its functions through real life in different contexts. Through these activities presented in this class based on the Multiliteracies approach, I was able to witness how students use the L2 as a tool to interpret a real-life based story and connect it to their own background and experiences.

## **MAIN PAPER**

### **Task-based language learning using authentic texts in teaching the Spanish imperfect tense at the novice level**

This paper is an exploration of Task-Based Teaching (TBLT) methods and the use of authentic texts in the context of a beginning university-level Spanish course. It offers a literature review and a research design proposal, with a discussion of implications for the classroom, and suggestions for further study. This paper was selected for inclusion in this portfolio as representative of the author's coursework in second language teaching research and suggests pathways for future research. An appendix illustrates a lesson plan of TBLT tasks piloted in the classroom.

At the university level, most L2 Spanish language students are introduced to grammatical structures and/or vocabulary primarily from their language textbooks. These grammatical structures, such as the conjugation of verbs (or the agreement of adjectives, negation, interrogatives, etc.) are based on explicit explanations that are later or previously displayed in non/modified or fixed dialogues or texts within the language book followed by exercises containing grammatical drills. I have chosen to include this paper in my portfolio and find it important, since as an L2 educator, I witness the linguistic conflict students may have when trying to understand and/or convey information that they see in a textbook that is often presented without meaningful context. Because of the lack of real contextualization and the critical thinking affordance for them to make real use of these concepts that they encounter outside the classroom, students may struggle with grammar out of context. Many students may not understand or identify with content that solely shows how a grammatical point is, or "should" work, in a table, brief explanation, or out-of-context example. It is then a challenge if a teacher expects them later to produce that element of the target language during an assessment or a real-life situation. Applying carefully-planned L2 tasks that are similar to

real-life situations can enhance L2 learning. Furthermore, the use of authentic texts (broadly defined) may provide further meaningful context for the teacher to help guide the process of critical comprehension, application of grammatical forms, and improvement in the target language skills.

As an example, I will focus my discussion below on the imperfect tense. The Spanish imperfect tense can be perceived as difficult for L2 Spanish students to use accurately, especially when in contrast with their knowledge of the preterit tense and when trying to use them, since both refer to the past but in a different way. Trying to explain how this grammatical concept functions without authentic context, and without an organized, segmented task design procedure can be ineffective. We need to give learners meaningful, authentic context and an opportunity to practice analyzing and then applying this or other grammatical concepts and forms. Also, as the research literature in L2 learning and teaching has shown, theories or approaches that focus solely on grammatical features outcome, as with the Presentation, Practice, Production (PPP) model as described by Noroozi & Taheri (2022), and/or a model with focus on implicit meaning, as also noted in Loewen (2021), seems to be problematic since only focusing on only one of these can inhibit learners' ability to apply what they have learned to communicate effectively or raise their proficiency level.

In the proposed research design and literature review below, it is hypothesized that with a well-planned procedure based on tasks and the use of authentic texts for context, L2 students can begin to effectively apply the Spanish imperfect structure in L2 writing at the ACTFL novice-mid and novice-high levels.

### **Research Questions:**

1. Can the use of tasks in the L2 classroom complement the implementation of authentic texts in L2 comprehension of the Spanish imperfect tense in a university beginning Spanish course (novice-mid and novice-high levels)?
2. Can the use of tasks, based on authentic texts, be effective in helping students to understand difficult grammatical concepts, in order to improve writing proficiency in a university beginning Spanish course at the novice-mid and novice-high levels?

### **Literature Review**

Below, I provide a select literature review related to these research questions; this is not meant to be exhaustive, rather to investigate what is at stake in TLBT and its benefits and limitations in helping students to understand a specific grammar structure and to better express themselves. Of course, the explanation of grammar structures in the L2 classroom has long been a polemical topic, as language educators continue to question whether instruction should be explicit or implicit when trying to help L2 learners understand their functions for them to be able to communicate. Researchers that adhere to the multiliteracies framework, such as Willis Allen & Paesani (2010) and many others, have demonstrated effective approaches to working with authentic texts, explicit grammar instruction, and tasks that foster analytical, interpretive, and application skills while raising proficiency levels.

Loewen (2021) reminds us that the acquisition of a language comes from implicit learning (in which learners discover or notice grammar rules through texts and tasks), whereas explicit grammar instruction only may lose its importance, as it does not contribute

to mental representations of the language, which according to Krashen (1987), are vital for learners to comprehend messages and ultimately to communicate.

Yet, L2 language instructors seem to find themselves in the middle of this dichotomy—often asking themselves if it is more beneficial to use implicit or explicit instruction in the L2 classroom. For some language instructors, it can be problematic to solely focus on one type. As also underlined by Loewen (2021), criticism of the older principles in Krashen (1987) has arisen within L2 pedagogy, since it is also important to consider if the type of instruction used also results in the same type of learning outcome. If this is the case, then explicit instruction would only benefit the learner with explicit knowledge in assessments that measure that, which is not really useful for everyday communication in the TL. On the other hand, implicit knowledge might create frustration in the learners who only study the language while trying to decipher and deduce how it functions without context or further practice in applying the forms and structures they are seeing and hearing.

Having said that, of course many language instructors have had the necessity to impart explicit knowledge of grammatical concepts, sometimes in conjunction with exemplification through examples in drill exercises. Or, as language teachers we often incorporate application of forms presented in the textbook through simulations of situations they could encounter in real-life scenarios, such as through role play activities, to help learners with language production. This teaching methodology follows the approach known as PPP, which Noroozi & Taheri (2022) have pointed out has been criticized recently due to its focus on the accurate but practiced use of specific grammar structures, demonstrating deficient communication skills.

At the same time, language instructors could be putting some of the nuances of tried-and-true approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) under the

microscope since, as according to Noroozi & Taheri (2022), although it focuses on communication it can also follow in a certain way a type of instruction that is similar to a Presentation, Practice, Production (PPP) model, with the main difference that instead of focusing on linguistic forms as in PPP, the focus is on linguistic functionality in CLT. In recent years, there has been a call for addressing such limitations in CLT or augmenting or updating CLT with additional techniques and methods. Turpin (2021), reminds us of the decades-long debates over the advantages and disadvantages of communicative language teaching (CLT) and offers multiliteracies as a solution. Today, the instructional approach of multiliteracies provides content, context and textual genres for “interactive, transactional oral language usage” (Allen & Paesani, 2010, p. 122). One of the main critiques of CLT is the limited role of textual content. Viewed as a merely secondary support skills, in CLT reading can be viewed as necessary to deliver comprehensible input, and writing only as something that helps practice language forms; just reading and writing, when viewed as skills to help oral communication, could limit learner opportunities interpret cultural content, create written texts with real social purposes, or develop thinking and intellectual abilities (Allen & Paesani, 2010, p. 122; Paesani, Willis Allen & Dupuy 2016, p. 7; Warner & Dupuy, 2018, p. 117). Moreover, Turpin (2021) offers many suggestions on how the multiliteracies approach (when combined with project-based learning or other related methods) can address these limitations and offer more opportunities for learning the L2 in context.

Perhaps the answer to the decades-old implicit vs. explicit question could be the combination of some explicit and some implicit instruction. However, this combination also raises challenges and could pose the question: if these two types of instructions are used, then why is it that some language learners still struggle to apply grammar concepts from the classroom to what they want to communicate? As language instructors, we expect our students to be able to make use of these linguistic forms, for example in writing essays or in

expressing themselves verbally in role plays or real-life situations. However, at least in my experience, I have come to observe that some students, especially at the novice levels, can experience frustration as they focus on accuracy of form, leaving aside the real intention of what they communicatively need to transmit in the TL, or vice versa.

Some scholars of teaching and learning have proposed the approach of using authentic literary texts, to support the teaching of forms and structures, as a way of avoiding the teaching practice of explicit explanation of out-of-context rules followed by production or drill activities. For instance, as proposed in Paesani (2005), literary texts (from a very broad variety of genres) can be a viable option for language learners to focus on grammatical concepts. In using literary texts, grammar is approached inductively and within a context. According to the Paesani and other proponents of the multiliteracies approach over the last 15 years, students need to be able to be afforded rich input and meaningful language that is found in literary texts. Again, “literary” is being broadly defined and can include any number of genres of written cultural production. Students can discover grammatical, pragmatic, and cultural concepts by being exposed to what the input literary texts have to offer language learners. In addition, authentic texts can provide contexts, models, and examples that may help novice students as they begin to express themselves and expand their L2 communication skills. Moreover, Paesani and others have advocated for the incorporation of literacy and reading (and/or listening) activities, especially at the beginning level. By doing so, language learners may benefit as they have the opportunity to process linguistic forms that have been portrayed differently from language textbooks. In turn, being exposed to simple, authentic literary texts at the novice level may help learners to later understand more complex texts, types of discourse, and grammatical forms in more advanced L2 proficiency levels.

In addition to exposure to different forms and structures as well as various types of

discourse and cultural awareness, students may also benefit from authentic literary texts and stories as a pathway to improving their own creativity as they begin to apply the structures and language that they have seen in their readings to their own language production. As Daskalovska & Dimova (2012) have demonstrated, using authentic literary texts in the classroom can aid in exposure to more types of language or levels of discourse, and boost students' creativity while giving them more opportunities to experience the language, to practice evaluative and interpretive skills, and to express themselves creatively in the L2.

Therefore, in this search for an answer to the implicit vs. explicit way of teaching, the use of texts in the L2 classroom seems to be something viable. This viability according to Paesani (2005), is even more possible when used in conjunction with designed reading tasks. The connection between the use of literacy as proposed by Paesani (2005), for the focus on grammar and the use of tasks goes along with the definition and claims of Task-Based Language Learning/Teaching approach (TBLT) where tasks are defined as problem-solving activities one faces in a real-life context. As shown by Noroozi & Taheri (2022), in the teaching/learning setting, these tasks need to be designed, implemented, and assessed to guide the learners' communicative needs.

In TBLT, students make use of the language they decide is needed according to when they need it to complete a task. These tasks not only encourage real-life communication types as they make decisions or solve realistic problems, but also increase consciousness of the material itself. TBLT then, under this definition, can be redirecting CLT with the idea of the possibility of L2 acquisition with the focus not solely on meaning but on linguistic forms as well, as suggested recently in a significant study by Gavell (2021).

Furthermore, as demonstrated by Skiada-Sciaranetti & Georgiadou (2019) the TBLT approach, which originally grew out of CLT, appears to enhance literacy by affording



language learners authentic communication situations that can broaden language acquisition as they receive oral and written input equal to what they encounter in the real world.

Therefore, the use of authentic texts along with the TBLA is valuable, because authentic texts not only offer cultural awareness but also focus on linguistic forms used within a more natural or organic context.

Gavel (2021) presents what she calls a solution to take advantage of the use of authentic materials through reading and by using tasks that can be used at different language levels, grades, and in general students' needs. There is a necessity, in this case at the university level, for authentic material to be accessible to students. As the author mentions, textbooks or reading books that are explicitly created to help students develop reading skills, lack the context students need for them to experience the characteristics of the language that they can encounter outside the educational setting. In other words, these text excerpts found in educational material could be offered as Gavel cautions us against "artificial language" often heard in the L2 classroom, pointing out the importance of the implementation of authentic materials, since authentic texts portray how language is used outside the classroom much more than teacher speak or textbooks might.

Gavel (2021) also suggests the possibility of a nexus between the use of authentic materials and TBLT. One of the characteristics of TBLT is the emphasis of meaning over form. According to the author, it is vital to take into account the reason that when language learners read in their L1, they apply reading skills that will be applied when reading in the L2 as well. They may learn strategies such as the bottom-up approach, in which learners find the meaning of what they are reading before breaking the language into forms and structures to comprehend what the text is transmitting. In other words, this is bottom-down or implicit learning, in which learners discover grammar through negotiating meaning in texts and tasks.

The goal then is to guide learners to be able to make use of their L1 reading skills through the use of TBLT where they can work on a problem-solving activity the same way they would do it in their L1.

Another study that helps in tying the use of authentic texts together with TBLT and investigates how using tasks may complement them: Skiada-Sciaranetti & Georgiadou (2019). They suggest that TBLT approaches arose mainly from a necessity to combine meaning and focus on form. Though it has limitations, TBLT has been recognized as a solution for those who want to explicitly teach form and structure but also provide a meaningful, real-life context.

Depending on their learning style, educational background, or preferences, some learners have the necessity of understanding grammar concepts as they notice them. It is for this reason and as the authors indicate, TBLT may play an important part in raising proficiency and increasing cultural knowledge, especially when in conjunction with authentic material. But before they explain the importance of the connection between authentic texts and TBLT, the authors note two types of tasks based on the older model of Nunan (1989), tasks that are used in the real world (real-world tasks) and tasks that are used in the classroom setting (pedagogical tasks). The first type of task helps students recognize how real-life language would be used outside the classroom. The second type of task is for language learners to be exposed to real-world situations.

Ellis (2003) makes another contrast between types of tasks as identified in Skiada-Sciaranetti & Georgiadou (2019) as well. These types of tasks are divided into two types. In unfocused tasks, learners are encouraged to notice different forms, but the goal is not to focus on a particular form. Focused tasks, on the other hand, are tasks in which learners are encouraged to inductively process certain linguistic structures such as a grammar concept.

In focused tasks, the purpose of the task also should be limited and clearly stated. Prompts and rubrics make clear the parameters of the task, expectations, and define the role of critical thinking skills within the task. Focused tasks can help students better communicate in a specific area, as well as understand specific grammar structures.

TBLT and its application in the language classroom could help many language educators approach grammar teaching in a more communicative context and also help those who believe that a communicative learning environment involves anything but grammar; this is in part because as cited by Wang (2019), “Task-Based Approach offers the opportunity for “natural” learning inside the classroom. It emphasizes meaning over form but can also cater for learning form...TBA offers an authentic situation for students in which they can acquire the target language naturally” (Ellis, 2003, p. 16). In other words, TBA offers an authentic situation and context for language acquisition, as suggested by Rozati (2014). TBA, or more specifically, TBLT may thus provide opportunity for both “natural” learning and for explicit instruction on form and structure. As Nunan (2010) reminds us of the initial research, “There is growing evidence, particularly in EFL contexts, that learners who receive instruction with such a focus on form within a task-based curriculum may acquire language more effectively than those who do not have such a focus” (Swain, 1985; Doughty & Williams, 1998).

It is important to mention that in the application of TBLT, language teachers need to be aware that even if TBLT can pay attention to some grammar instruction, which is done at the end of the lesson, the main focus is for students to complete the task under the teacher’s guidance and not teach a specific grammar structure. TBLT’s main highlight is for students to use the target language and its structure by participating actively in class towards the completion of a task. As in an earlier study referenced by Wang (2019), “Nunan (2001, p. 25) proposes that ‘...learners must learn not only..., but also to develop the ability to use the language to get things done.’” So in general, TLBT enables students and teachers to work in a

dynamic way, in which grammar works more as a tool for communication rather than just teaching grammar for grammar's sake.

Again, it is crucial to mention that if the combination of TBLT with authentic texts is an effective route for L2 acquisition (as I suggest above in my Teaching Philosophy Statement, combining some TBLT perspectives and tasks with multiliteracies pedagogies), language educators need to constantly pay attention to that, as highlighted in Skiada-Sciaranetti & Georgiadou (2019), based on earlier studies by Widdowson (1983) & Van Lier (1996), that the concept of authenticity should be based on the connection between the learner and the material and the attitude towards it. This way, teachers may offer students the material and designed tasks that are closest to the real world. However, the authenticity does not come only from real-life scenarios but also from the personal involvement the learner has with the material through these tasks.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants:**

To investigate the above research questions, the following proposed study will be conducted with approximately 35 native English-speaking students (in 2 Spanish courses, with students aged approximately 18-25) learning beginning-level Spanish at a four-year university. These classes are selected under the criteria of proficiency level of Spanish (novice-low through novice-mid level) and the mode of instruction (face-to-face instruction with a printed Spanish L2 textbook). Most of these students have finished the first required Spanish level course at the university and some others have had previous knowledge of the language and tested out the previous Spanish level course. There will be two Spanish instructors for this study (the instructors could be inexperienced graduate student instructors and native speakers or non-native advanced speakers of Spanish). The study would be carried

over a one-course semester and will include 50-minute classes taught three times a week for 15 weeks. See the portfolio **appendix** for a sample lesson plan piloted in the classroom.

## **Design**

All students in both Spanish classes have been using the same Spanish language course textbook and have been assigned writing projects over the course of the semester based on writing prompts using the vocabulary and grammatical structure taught. For the study, the fourth and final paper will be examined to answer the research questions. Before writing the final paper, there will be a final paper draft which will be the pre-test for both groups. For the pre-test, both Spanish instructors will ask the students to write a paper where they will be asked to modify or change the final part of a story focusing on and using the imperfect tense and using it in at least 5 sentences. The experimental group will not receive any intervention. Both groups will work on their drafts (pre-test) following the presentation, practice, and production model procedure following the regular textbook exercises. In the final paper drafts, the researcher will conduct a content analysis and highlight the use of the Spanish imperfect tense to keep track of accuracy and catalog a record of errors in both drafts for the experimental and the control group. After the drafts, the final paper represents a summative assessment, in which we can measure progress in use of the imperfect tense.

For the final paper, which will be the post-test, both the experimental and control group will be asked to write an approximately 500-word essay about their experiences in their own elementary school using at least 6 sentences in which they will use the Spanish imperfect tense. Before writing their final papers, the control group will read along with the teacher an authentic text (and/or multimodal online audio/video version) *El Patito Feo* (The Ugly Duckling) in class, then after reading they will work on fill-in-the-gap activities and other automatic type (presentation, practice produce) grammar exercises using this tense and

finally they will be asked to write their final essay. The experimental group, in addition to reading the same book along with the teacher, will work on task types for authentic texts based on Maley (1994) and Mishan (2005) during reading and before writing their final essay. Maley (1994) and Mishan (2005), as well as many proponents of the multiliteracies approach, such as Willis Allen, Paesani & Dupuy (2016), have demonstrated that a wide range of texts, including children's stories, fables, and fairy tales are appropriate for college-level adult learners.

For the examination of the experimental and control group final papers, the researcher will also highlight the use of the Spanish imperfect tense and keep track of their errors. Finally, the rate of errors in final papers will be examined to compare the comprehension of the Spanish imperfect tense after the mediation and corrective feedback the experimental group will receive. Though some of these activities have already been piloted in my classroom, a future official study would require institutional review board approval and could of course be expanded studies to include a larger *n* with other variables being measured, with more than one class, other proficiency levels, other instructors, or other selections of texts.

### **Implications:**

With this research proposal, I would like to contribute to the ongoing scholarly conversation surrounding the feasibility of the implementation of Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) along with the use of authentic texts. As mentioned in the above literature review, this combination could not only help L2 learners develop reading skills, but it could also be one solution to the avoidance of explicit grammar instruction, as TBLT offers the focus on form within and through authentic, realistic situations that allow the learner to be more autonomous of their own L2 language process.

My intention in this proposed research design and literature review is just to lend another perspective and a new voice to the conversation about best practices in teaching L2 forms and structures. Even decades ago, Van Patten (1993, p. 435), as mentioned in Paesani (2005), suggested that the acquisition of L2 grammatical forms through the use and the control of rich comprehensible input material—that can be found in literary texts as one source—can benefit language learners in the pursuit of the development of their communicative skills in the TL. In addition, after completing an extensive literature review and summarizing it here, I have a continuing interest in researching more on how TBLT can afford language educators with ideas when designing activities in the L2 classroom in combination with authentic texts. As Paesani (2005) highlights, the introduction of literature in the L2 classroom should be treated carefully through tasks taking into consideration the learners' language levels and by doing so, language instructors could start introducing literature even at the novice level to help students develop language proficiency as they move up to advanced levels. I would like to conduct further research with different variables, including other proficiency levels, different grammar forms and structures, other genres of literary texts and various types of tasks and writing activities.

This overview of how we might develop new best practices combining the two approaches—using authentic literary texts and TBLT activities—has many broader implications beyond just my beginning Spanish courses. This combination of explicit and implicit grammar teaching, using authentic texts, and designing real-life tasks informs my teaching philosophy and helps me to support my students' language learning goals. The above research design provides a potential avenue of research or point of departure for a pilot study or later study with human subjects. This preliminary study design also raises several key questions for further research in the scholarship of teaching and learning for me to investigate in the future.

## **STATEMENT OF FUTURE GOALS**

I have very much enjoyed my time in the classroom and I have learned much from my Spanish/Spanish DLI and EFL/ESL teaching experience at all levels in schools and universities in Perú and in the United States. With the experience teaching at the college level at USU, I became more interested in working with adult learners and ideally becoming a lecturer in a university, a four-year college, private school, or two-year community college, teaching language, literature, and culture. One of my motivations is to support diverse adult learners and learn more about the different backgrounds they come from, the challenges they may face, and the many language learning goals they have. I look forward to implementing the innovative approaches I have learned in the MSLT program, such as TBLT and Multiliteracies approaches. Through the use of the tools these approaches provide, I would like to help my future students with their language learning goals, and communicate in the L2. Despite the many challenges diverse adult learners may face in life (including financial challenges, familial obligations, cultural differences, time constraints, etc.) I can support them to help them be successful in their language learning goals in different sociocultural contexts.

In addition, I will continue to search for professional development opportunities to improve my teaching in local teaching-related workshops, conferences, or online webinars. At the same time, I plan to continue observing other teachers in other languages, and exchanging ideas with them, and have already begun to do this as part of my practice. Second Language Acquisition and language teaching are fields that I find endlessly interesting. I am always looking for ways to better address learners' needs in different contexts. I see myself in the future continuing to study other languages and keeping up with the latest research in approaches to second language teaching.



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## APPENDIX

### SAMPLE LESSON PLAN

#### Teaching the Spanish Imperfect Tense through a Multiliteracies and TBLT Approach

**Course:** Beginning Spanish II, Utah State University

**Level:** Novice-mid and novice-high levels

**Literary text:** *El Patito Feo* (The Ugly Duckling) illustrated children's story

**Grammatical structure:** the imperfect tense

**Themes:** not judging others, childhood experiences, expressing emotions and opinions

#### Objectives:

- Talk about feelings (and give opinions) while looking at an image or title in a story
- Understand a children's story written using the different Spanish past tenses
- Recognize and distinguish structures in the present, past, and the imperfect tense in the story, through reading tasks.
- Infer the difference between the preterite form in Spanish vs. the imperfect, through reading tasks.
- Further develop effective L2 reading strategies (such as skimming, predicting, etc.)
- Tell one's own story from a past childhood memory.
- Write a 500-word writing project, focusing on personal experiences and emotions in elementary school, using at least 6 sentences in the Spanish imperfect tense.

#### Pre reading-tasks

- **Prediction/interpretation/inferencing:** Questions are asked based on the images on the book cover to elicit predictions about what might happen in the story (e.g., How many ducks do you see? Can you describe the ducks? What are the colors of the ducks? What emotion do you see? By looking at the title, what could the word "patito" mean? Why do you think the two ducks are looking at the small one? etc.).

- Then, in groups, students are handed out pictures captioned with words that go along with the story (nouns, verbs, adjectives, emotions, etc.) so they can put them in order and form a sentence. After that, they decide where these formed sentences go, at the beginning or middle of the story.

### **Tasks while reading**

- Students listen to the story as the teacher shows pictures and uses gestures.
- As students listen to the story, a digital “Word Wall” is used and shown on the classroom screen to place words into categories (nouns, adjectives, verbs, etc.) so students can make meaningful connections among words, in order to apply them later to continue forming sentences of their own.
- **Matching:** Later in groups, students match excerpts from the story to the pictures that were previously shown.
- **Response/Reaction questions:** The excerpts students used to match with the pictures are read and shown by the teacher. These excerpts and pictures are now shown to elicit reactions of what is happening in the story through questions, scaffolding and building on prior knowledge as well as drawing on students’ schema and personal experiences when applicable (e.g: would you have done something differently, do you identify with the character or with what is said in this part of the story, and how?, etc.)

### **Post-Reading Tasks**

- **Analysis:** Through the use of a visual organizer (a timeline with images from the story) students are guided through questions to locate past events from the story according to the preterite and the imperfect tense. Later in pairs, students read the story excerpts aloud again and put them in the right column, the preterite or the imperfect tense using a different visual organizer, while also drawing elements from the story that match the verbs. They refer to the timeline previously shown so make

the right decision.

- **Analysis:** Students discuss (as a think-pair-share) the moral of the story and begin to list the major themes they see (not judging others by their appearance, not discriminating against those that are different, feelings of belonging/not belonging, etc.).
- **Application:** In a writing exercise, students write a personal story using the Spanish past tenses correctly to express a childhood memory (related to discrimination, or bias, judgment, or feelings of belonging, etc.) in a time in their own lives, using what they have learned to express their own feelings and tell their own stories in the L2.