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Kristina Harlan '00

Illinois Wesleyan University

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS IN THE CLASSROOM: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION THEORY AND PEDAGOGY

Kristina Harlan, *Illinois Wesleyan University*
Christina Isabelli, *Project Advisor*

Second language acquisition (SLA) research encompasses various theories of language learning in which the theoretical perspectives sometimes are not connected to SLA methods used by instructors in the classroom. This paper discusses several theories of SLA in an effort to better understand their connection to pedagogy. Foreign language (FL) pedagogy accounts for various methodological approaches the most common being Grammatical-Translation, Direct Method, Audiolingual, and Communicative. These distinctive methodologies have produced a variety of FL textbooks which focus on one or several methodologies.

The following research examines a selection of textbooks in which the methodologies in beginning language learning are analyzed and evaluated. By looking at how such activities are used in the classroom, we can attempt to see the connection between topics in SLA theory and these implementations seen in the textbooks. It will be shown how linguistic concepts are presented as well as how particular strategies are supplemented with activities created by teachers, reflecting current SLA research.

In addition, the views of instructors are considered in this study in an effort to bring together theory and pedagogy. Their thoughts and ideas regarding the effectiveness of certain methods and activities are explored in detail through a series of clinical interviews. My survey should prove to help instructors decide what should be included in choosing the best FL textbook to help second language learners develop in proficiency. It will serve to bridge the gap between theory and pedagogical practice which often is ignored.

Introduction

There exist in second language acquisition (SLA) research various theories of language learning. Linguists and psychologists alike have formulated distinct explanations as to the manner in which language learners acquire a second language. The following paper will briefly discuss several core theories of SLA in an effort to better understand their connection to pedagogy. If there are various theories of acquisition, it follows that there would be different teaching methods included in the text as well, but usually this is not the case. The foreign language (FL) textbook has served as the stage for several methodological approaches, the most common being Grammatical-Translation, Direct Method, Audiolingual, and Communicative. These distinctive methodologies have produced a variety of foreign language textbooks which focus on one or two methodologies of many.

The following research examines a selection of FL textbooks (see *Textbook review* section for complete listing) in which the methodologies in beginning language learning courses are surveyed by analyzing and evaluating certain activities. The exercises, including the four components of second language learning which consist of listening, reading, speaking, and writing, span a collection of specific linguistic concepts (ser/estar, por/para, direct/indirect object pronouns). These particular concepts were chosen because of their level of difficulty for native English speakers to acquire with proficiency in the target language, which is Spanish. By looking at how such activities are used in the classroom, we can attempt to see the connection between topics in SLA theory and these implementations seen in the textbooks. It will be shown how the linguistic concepts are presented as well as how particular strategies are supplemented with activities created by teachers, reflecting current SLA research.

In addition, the views of teachers are considered in this study in an effort to bring together theory and pedagogy. Their thoughts and ideas regarding the effectiveness of certain methods and activities are explored in detail through a series of clinical interviews. My survey should prove to help teachers decide what should be included in choosing the best textbook to help second language learners develop in proficiency. It will serve to bridge the gap between theory and pedagogical practice which often is ignored.

Learning Theories

The theories formulated to explain the acquisition of a second language are very similar to those developed for the first language. While there are obvious differences in terms of the type of learner, the mental processes which occur are closely related.¹ The mechanisms which are employed when a learner studies a foreign language are of great interest to developmental psychologists as well as educators. When evaluating a particular theory of SLA, educators must concern themselves with the way that it addresses the different characteristics of the learner in addition to the variety of contexts in which learning is taking place.

¹ For more information regarding the distinct variations of language learning between children and adults consult Lightbown and Spada (1999).

Behaviourism

In the acquisition of the first language (L1), Behaviourism involves techniques such as imitation, feedback, and practice. According to Lightbown and Spada (1999: 35-36), children learn to speak their native language through listening to the people around them and imitating their behaviour. These methods are also employed in a similar fashion by second language (L2) learners. However, in second language acquisition, behaviourism is linked to Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis which relates the learner's native vernacular to the target language. It states that learners acquire certain target-language structures first because of the similarity to their native tongue; therefore, those structures which are distinctive to the target language are more difficult to acquire by the learner. The transfer of linguistic rules aids the learner in the study of a second language.

Innatism/Mentalist

Lightbown and Spada (1999: 36-40) proceed to explain that the Innatist Model grew out of discrepancies found in the application of the behaviourist theory of SLA. The linguist, Noam Chomsky, introduced his own hypothesis termed Universal Grammar (UG) which explained the gaps left in the behaviourist theory of language acquisition.² He noticed that children were learning their native language in similar ways and according to a seemingly prescribed schedule. In order to be able to accomplish the complex task of language learning so early in their lives, Chomsky states that the UG provides them with a set of principles from which to draw. Negating the behaviourist doctrine, children seem to acquire certain language structures which are not presented to them in their environment. According to Chomsky, the language to which children are exposed triggers the UG, helping them to apply certain inherent principles to these structures.

² Chomsky's theory was initially dubbed the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). It referred to an imaginary 'black box' which contains a set of basic universal rules for all languages preventing the child from making certain mistakes in his/her native tongue (Lightbown and Spada, 1999; Cole and Cole, 1996).

There is much debate as to the significance of Chomsky's idea of Universal Grammar with SLA theory. According to Lightbown and Spada (1999: 36-7), researchers have argued whether or not the UG is available to learners as they are exposed to a second language in formal or informal settings. Some insist on the need for explicit instruction on certain grammatical concepts which differ from the first language, in order to avoid transfer of L1 rules. Others are more concerned with the competence of advanced language learners.³ The UG helps to explain how learners are able to acquire complex syntactical structures of the target language to near-native proficiency.

According to an alternate theory within the Innatist Framework, Stephen Krashen (1987) divides his ideas into five hypotheses about SLA. The acquisition-learning distinction separates the two ways of developing competence in a second language, acquiring and learning. Krashen also refers to the phenomenon mentioned by Chomsky in which learners have a defined schedule of language learning which he calls the Natural Order Hypothesis. This theory notes that, while similar in some ways, the order of acquisition of the L2 is distinctive from the L1. In his monitor hypothesis, Krashen more explicitly defines the particular roles of acquisition and learning. Acquisition is responsible for fluency while learning acts as a monitor on the production of the target language. He believes that conditions should be created in the classroom which nurture acquisition because of its unique purpose in the overall process (Krashen, 1987; Lightbown and Spada, 1999).

Finally, the last two hypotheses encompass the issues regarding Input and the Affective Filter in language learning. Krashen (1987) stresses the importance of comprehensible input and the $i + 1$ principle.⁴ The learner retains more of the language if the input is understandable; also, the learner is able to progress more rapidly if the information [i] presented is slightly beyond his/her current competence level [$i + 1$]. The Affective Filter Hypothesis involves variables

³ Competence (knowledge of language) as it is intended here is not to be confused with performance (use of language) [Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991: 114].

⁴ The i represents the current language competence of the learner; the $i + 1$ shows the process of elevating the learner's knowledge to the next level. For additional explanation of his hypotheses, see Krashen (1987).

which relate to the potential success of the language learner specifically those of motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. Krashen's research in this area is of particular importance to language teachers, in that it addresses the different aspects which describe the unique situation of each learner.

Interactionist

Lightbown and Spada (1999: 42-3) explain that theorists supporting the Interactionist perspective view language learning as a process taking place within conversational interactions between the learners. According to Interactionists, acquisition occurs because learners in a classroom or in a naturalistic setting are able to interact and negotiate meaning in order to understand each other. Studies have shown that this type of interaction can be particularly beneficial if a native speaker is involved in the conversation. While the speech may be somewhat modified, this process enables the learner to exchange ideas with the native speaker forcing both speakers to clarify their message as well as check for comprehension.

The Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, supports this view of exchange concluding that language is acquired through social interaction. Lightbown and Spada (1999: 43) clarify that Vygotsky's theory regarding the effects of social interaction on language acquisition focuses on the first language, but has been broadened by some researchers to include the L2 (Hatch, 1992; Pica, 1994; Long, 1983). According to Vygotskian theory, learners would benefit greatly through their interactions with other speakers, especially if these other speakers were slightly more advanced in their language abilities than the L2 learners which is known as the 'Zone of Proximal Development.' In applying his theoretical framework to language learners, Cole and Cole (1996) state that it seems that learners increase their individual abilities because of the support they receive from each other in their interactions. They are each able to contribute to the language acquisition occurring in the social context improving their overall proficiency in the target language.

Methodological Approaches

The variety of learning theories have a profound impact on the way in which instructors approach classroom pedagogy. Along with the many distinct views of language learning, theorists have developed an array of methodologies which follow the trends of the time. According to Celce-Murcia (1999), there have been several approaches including Grammar-Translation, Direct Method, Reading, Audiolingualism, Cognitive Code, Affective/Humanistic, Functional/ESP⁵ showing the gradual transition the profession has seen over the last century. Each new methodology is accompanied with evidence supporting its classroom implementation. Four specific approaches are focused on in this study with which I have come in repeated contact: Grammar-Translation, Direct Instruction, Audiolingual, and Communicative.

Grammatical-Translation. The instruction of the grammatical-translation classroom is often in the native language of the students. Extending from the approach used in teaching Classical Languages, there is little use of the target language.⁶ Typical exercises of this approach involve translating sentences from the target language into the native tongue in addition to analyzing the specific grammatical forms of the L2. There is little emphasis on oral communication in the target language (Celce-Murcia, 1999).

Direct Instruction. The Direct Method was developed in response to the inadequacies discovered in the Grammar-Translation Method. When used in classroom instruction, the latter failed to produce learners who could use the language in communicative situations. This particular technique is in direct contrast with Grammar-Translation in several ways. The class is conducted completely in the second language forcing the instructor to either be a native speaker or to have native-like proficiency. The lessons are primarily based on modern conversational

⁵ Acronym never clarified in source.

⁶ Classical Languages include languages such as Latin, Greek, and Hebrew which are often described as 'dead' because of the low numbers of those who still speak the language. Modern Languages include romance and germanic languages such as Spanish, English, French, German, etc. which are widely spoken around the world.

style with many of the activities in dialogue format. In order to make the information more comprehensible for the learners, actions and pictures are used as a part of instruction. Furthermore, grammatical concepts and the target culture were both taught inductively (Celce-Murcia, 1999; Grittner, 1969).

Audiolingualism. Combining certain aspects of preceding theories, the Audiolingual Method was introduced in the 1940's. It was developed in military schools which shifted the focus of instruction slightly altering the role of the teacher and according to Lee and VanPatten (1995), the instructor is comparable to the military drill sergeant. The classroom is much more teacher-centered with an emphasis on exercises performed in drill-like fashion. Students are encouraged to memorize and mimic grammatical structures and vocabulary with pronunciation being stressed from the beginning. The skills are sequenced with priority given to listening and speaking rather than reading and writing. More importantly, the learners are asked to manipulate the target language which is not necessarily presented in a meaningful or contextual manner. In addition, error prevention is stressed causing the learner to focus on completing a task perfectly (Celce-Murcia, 1999).

Communicative. Learners are immersed in the second language in a contextual manner with the Communicative Approach. The emphasis is on presenting the learner with comprehensible input in the target language through modified speech and the use of pictures. In addition, the Communicative Approach sometimes employs the use of Total Physical Response techniques which aid the learners in their effort to understand the content of the L2 input (Lee and VanPatten, 1995).⁷ The ability to communicate orally in the L2 is the key to this particular methodology; therefore, there is less emphasis on error correction. The learners are encouraged

⁷ Total Physical Response refers to the physically acting out of particular aspects of the language curriculum. For example, command forms and 'school' vocabulary are particularly conducive to this type of instruction.

to focus on meaning rather than form when they are speaking in the target language. The main goal is for the language learner to be able to negotiate meaning within a dialogue or conversational context and get their point across clearly to the others involved in the communicative situation.

Relating the learning theories mentioned previously to the methodological approaches, it must be noted that a certain learning theory did not directly bring about a specific methodological approach. However, it is evident that there is a connecting relationship between the two concepts. An example is the four methods development from the Innatism learning theory that was initially formulated for children's language acquisition. The backbone to Innatism is Chomsky whose theory of language acquisition is based on the hypothesis that "innate knowledge of the principles of the UG permits all children to acquire the language of their environment, during a critical period in their development" (Lightbown and Spada, 1999: 36). Although there is great debate over the availability of the UG to second language learners, some theorists believe that the nature and availability of UG in SLA is no different from that which is hypothesized to guide first language learners.

With the fact that environment permits learners to acquire the language, we now look at the methodologies presented. In a classroom that practices one of the four methodologies - Grammatical-Translation, Direct Instruction, Audiolingualism, and Communicative - the learner is exposed to information, albeit in different manners, and are invariably in an environment where their UG is available to guide the acquisition of the second language (according to some theorists). On the other hand, the interactionist theories can be linked only to methodology that incorporate some sort of modified interaction, such as in the Communicative method. The

learners are exposed to linguistic components through their interactions in class, negotiating meaning in an effort to communicate with one another. However, if an instructor uses Grammar-Translation, Direct Instruction, or Audiolinguism methodology, but incorporates some sort of interactional exercise, then too, can these methodologies be linked to Interactionist theories. As can be seen, methodological approaches are connected to learning theories but it proves difficult due to the different implementation of instructors.

Textbook Analysis

This study began with specific questions regarding the way in which SLA theory and classroom pedagogy are connected. Specifically, the following inquiries are addressed:

1. Do foreign language textbooks reflect the implementation of relevant theories of Second Language Acquisition?
2. What is a more effective method of instruction in the foreign language classroom according to instructors?
3. Does research in second language acquisition effect the methodology in the foreign language classroom?
4. Can the various instructional methods be combined in such a way to produce a more effective acquisition pedagogy?

Methods

As a means to provide answers to the research questions, an analysis of FL textbooks and interviews with instructors was carried out. In surveying foreign language textbooks, I established the manner in which each unit or chapter is divided and how specific linguistic concepts are addressed based on SLA theory. In doing so, it is revealed how textbooks reflect the various theories of acquisition. I chose to evaluate particular textbooks because of the accessibility to teachers who use these versions in their classrooms. The textbooks are used in four high school beginning Spanish classes and it should be noted that Dime, En español, Ven conmigo, and Ya verás, were published in 1997, 2000, 1996, and 1991, respectively. One of the more prominent names among SLA researchers, Bill VanPatten of the University of Illinois, introduced a book he co-authored with James F. Lee on communicative language teaching (CLT) in 1995. According to Lightbown and Spada (1999: 40), Stephen Krashen also supported CLT

in some of his writings of the late 1980's. From this information, it is shown that, in fact the publishing companies do indeed attempt to respond to the current findings in SLA research which claim that a combination of methodologies is more effective in producing proficient L2 language learners.

Additionally, in order to connect SLA theoretical perspectives with instructional methodology, I conducted clinical interviews with instructors concerning their individual strategies. Specifically, I was interested in the ways teachers choose to supplement textbook activities and which were the most effective in their opinion. Four instructors were chosen to participate in this study which included telephone and face-to-face interviews as well as observational research. The duration of the interviews was approximately thirty minutes each while the observations that were conducted in the classroom consisted of forty-five to fifty minutes. All of the instructors teach or have recently taught a beginning Spanish class at the high school level. They are also all female, although this was not an intentional consideration for this study.

One of the instructors was in her first year of teaching at a high school with an enrollment of slightly over 1300 students; she participated in a face-to-face interview. Another instructor taught at the same high school a year earlier; however, she currently teaches beginning Spanish courses at the junior high level. In addition to opening her classroom to an observer, she agreed to be interviewed over the telephone and provide input on two of the four textbooks included in this study. Additional data was gathered through a telephone interview from a native Spanish speaker who teaches introductory classes at a high school serving approximately 1500 students. Also included in this study are observations and discussions taken over a four-month period working with a veteran teacher with over thirty years of teaching experience. She is nearing retirement from a school of over 3000 students.

Discussion

This section of the paper discusses that data collected from the textbooks and from the interviews. Table 1 displays the results of the initial methodological analysis. In reviewing the

textbook, activities were categorized according to the language teaching methods discussed earlier in this paper. They were classified as a specific style based on the number of activities reflecting that particular method. The approach which appears to influence at least three-fourths of the exercises is the one that is named in the following table.

Table 1: Methodological Analysis

TEXTBOOK	METHODOLOGIES EMPLOYED
<i>Dime</i>	Communicative
<i>En español</i>	Communicative, Audiolingual
<i>Ven conmigo</i>	Communicative
<i>Ya verás</i>	Audiolingual, Grammar-Translation

In this section of the textbook analysis, it was found that there exists a trend in which publishers often adhere to one or two popular pedagogical methods introduced in SLA research. As is shown in Table 1, three of the four FL textbooks examined show a preference for the Communicative Approach while one employs techniques characteristic of the Audiolingual and Grammar-Translation methods. For example, *En español* and *Ya verás* both use the Audiolingual Approach in addition to the Communicative and Grammar-Translation Method respectively whereas *Dime* and *Ven conmigo* use the Communicative Approach almost exclusively. While this doubling up shows a definite connection between the work done by theorists in the field and FL textbook publishers, it does not necessarily mean that the instructors are using these particular techniques in their classrooms. We will return to this topic in a later section of the survey involving teacher interviews.

Linguistic components

In an effort to delve deeper into the specific methods included in each textbook, I chose to evaluate the way in which the linguistic concepts of copulas and object pronouns are covered. The structures focused upon were chosen because of the difficulty for native-English speakers to acquire them with great proficiency. The verbs, ser and estar 'to be,' as well as the prepositions, por and para 'for,' are referred to as copulas. This presents a significant challenge for language

learners because of the inherent desire (as mentioned earlier in *Learning Theories*) to transfer rules from the learners first language.⁸ Example (1) demonstrates the complexity of these copulas.

- | | | | | |
|-----|------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| (1) | Yo <u>estoy</u> cansada. | (condition of the moment) | Yo <u>soy</u> alta. | (characteristic norm) |
| | I <u>am</u> tired. | *fluctuates | I <u>am</u> tall. | *unchanging |
| | Trabajo <u>por</u> ti hoy. | | Trabajo <u>para</u> ese restaurante. | |
| | I work <u>for</u> you today. | (substitute) | I work <u>for</u> that restaurant. | (employee) |

As can be seen, they represent one concept in English, to be and for, rather than two as in Spanish.

Also, the treatment of direct and indirect object pronouns was considered because of the difficulty that language learners tend to have with these linguistic concepts in their own L1 and the difference of placement in the sentence. The following examples show how L1 interference may cause the learner difficulty in acquiring the structure in the L2.

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------|------------------------|
| (2) | I gave <u>it</u> to Ana. | <u>Lo</u> di a Ana. |
| (3) | I gave <u>her</u> the car. | <u>Le</u> di un coche. |

In the English version of example (2), the direct object pronoun it is found after the verb gave. While in Spanish, the object pronouns are never placed after a conjugated verb as in English, rather they are placed immediately preceding the conjugated verb. Therefore, the direct object pronoun, Lo, is placed before the conjugated verb di. The same can be said for example (3) using the indirect object pronoun, Le. The beginning L2 language learner may have difficulty with this particular concept because of L1 interference.

Table 2 presents the varied presentations of the three linguistic elements in the four FL textbooks used in this study. The results focus mainly on the depth of explanation given for each structure as well as the type of methodology behind the activities included for practice.

⁸ For more information on the appearance of L1 transfer, refer to Ellis (1997).

Table 2: Linguistic Presentation

TEXTBOOK	SER/ESTAR	POR/PARA	OBJECT PRONOUNS
Dime	--combines instruction of both concepts --explanation of uses with examples --contextual activities	--combines instruction --explains uses of each including examples --contextual exercises	--combines instruction --explains forms in table format with examples --exercises focus on OP by using only 1 verb form, ALM used
En español	--separates concepts --explanations and examples, translation --communicative activities including use of pictures	--separates concepts --simple explanation given before activity --communicative activities, pictures and contextual exercises	--introduces separately and combines later --explanation includes grammatical-translation emphasis --activities progress from ALM to Communicative
Ven conmigo	--combines concepts --explanation of usage with examples in L2 --contextual exercises	--not explicitly presented in Level I of this text	--presented separately --explanation with examples, translation --communicative exercises
Ya verás	--separates concepts --explanation, examples given in L2 --ALM activities, drills	--briefly explained and concepts found in separate sections of textbook --ALM exercises, rote memorization of form	--not explicitly presented in Level I of this text with the exception of dative of interest

*OP=Object Pronouns, ALM=Audiolingual Method, L2=Second Language

**Dative of Interest* refers to situations in which the apparent object of the sentence is the subject.

In examining the presentation of ser and estar ‘to be,’ the study reveals that each textbook gives an explanation of the verbs and examples to inform the learner of the proper usage. They differ, however, in the types of activities used to practice the linguistic concept. While Dime and Ven conmigo provide contextual activities, Ya verás employs techniques reminiscent of ALM with drill-oriented exercises. En español uses pictures following the Communicative Approach in which the learner actually uses the language instead of learning about it. In addition, the texts varied between combining the two verbs to explain them and separating them, presenting them in

different chapters. The textbooks which chose to combine the instruction of ser and estar ‘to be’ also taught each concept separately by placing them in distinct sections of the book. The key point is that the books that display the linguistic concepts separately avoid integrating the two, which is usually done by contrasting the uses of each.

There is a great variety in the presentation of por and para ‘for.’ Dime combines the instruction of this copula in the grammatical section at the end of the text explaining the functions, practicing, and providing examples while En español chooses to separate the prepositions furnishing brief definitions and examples before the practice activities. Ven conmigo does not explicitly present por and para in the Level I textbook; however, the students are using it through implicit introduction to the concepts. In other words, they see its use repeatedly, but are never provided an explanation. The authors of Ya verás briefly explain the copula in separate sections of the book after which the students are provided with ALM exercises requiring memorization of the correct forms.

With the exception of the use of gustar ‘to like,’ Ya verás does not explicitly present the linguistic concept of object pronouns (OP) in the Level I textbook. Ven conmigo separates the OPs, direct and indirect, for instruction and combines the indirect with the direct near the end of the book in a summary of grammatical structures. The explanations are given with examples in Spanish with the English translations. The students then practice the structure with communicatively oriented exercises. En español introduces the OPs individually to practice, then combines them later in the text. There is an emphasis on grammatical analysis in the explanation which also includes both Spanish and English examples. The activities progress from focusing on the ALM to a more Communicative Approach. Dime combines the instruction of both indirect and direct object pronouns in its presentation. The OPs are displayed in a table format with example sentences showing the proper usage of each structure in various situations. The exercises included in the grammatical section of the textbook focus on the OPs by using only one verb form. While the ALM is used in this particular section, throughout the text are more communicative exercises extending the skills of the learners.

Clinical Interview Analysis

In an ideal educational system, research would be undertaken in response to an issue in the schools; the resulting theory would be implemented and tested in the classroom. The successes and failures that occur would, in turn, lead to further research. My goals included searching for ways in which SLA research influences classroom methodology through both textbooks and individual instructors. After having already examined the textbooks, I turn to the teachers. I conducted clinical interviews with a few first-year Spanish teachers regarding their pedagogical practices in addition to their beliefs about the particular texts they were currently using in their respective classrooms. In some cases, I was also able to observe various classroom activities, which enhanced my analysis. All of the findings prove to be extremely beneficial in revealing the link between research and pedagogy; in fact, the relationship between the two could be described as a cycle which is done at the beginning of this section. Interviewing instructors and observing their classroom activities allowed me to obtain practical answers to my initial research questions. Many issues are addressed using both comments from the interviews as well as my own classroom observations.

All of the instructors with whom I had the opportunity to speak were very knowledgeable of the current topics being debated in SLA research. A teacher even mentioned subscribing to a particular journal which helped her keep up to date with topics being discussed in the field. As I have stated previously in the textbook analysis, the publishers are attempting to format their materials according to these research findings; however, the awareness of new methods and availability of various materials does not necessarily ensure that these data are being implemented properly in the classroom by the instructor.

For example, a veteran teacher that I had the opportunity to observe was very enthusiastic

about the purchase of new resources for her Level I Spanish students. She also was knowledgeable of the recent theories concerning the communicative language classroom as I discovered through our discussions. However, there was little attention given to orienting the instructors to these approaches and specifically to the modernized textbook in order to ensure proper execution. For instance, the text included a wide array of supplementary materials and multi-media resources which could prove to be extremely beneficial to the language learner. When the classroom instructor is unfamiliar with the variety of materials or the technology inherent to their use, the research done by linguists and attempts made by the editors of the textbooks is futile. Therefore, it is important to make certain that the teachers themselves understand how to incorporate these different facets most effectively to gain successful results in terms of language competency.

Maintaining the belief that a majority of textbooks generally adhere to one or two methodologies, the following comments address the major arguments which arose in speaking with the instructors. This study has shown that each teacher views textbooks very differently. Some perceive the role of the textbook as a guide or tool in classroom instruction. Depending on their personal preferences regarding the layout and methods used in the text, some teachers follow the text more so than others. In fact, the teacher who was the native-Spanish speaker was quite emphatic when responding to one of the questions referring to the role of the textbook; she saw it as having no role in the foreign language classroom. This particular instructor was not in agreement with the rest of the department concerning the textbook which was chosen for first-year students enrolled in Spanish at her high school. Rather than attempting to teach the information in the order which it is presented in the book, she felt that certain concepts needed to be covered at specific times (not in accordance with the textbook she was using). Her reasoning

perhaps stems from being a native-speaker of Spanish; her particular background knowledge of Spanish may cause her to view language learning very distinctly.

Throughout the interviews with the teachers, I discovered that a majority of them understood the importance of combining methods in their instruction. Thus, the data I collected from the interviews confirms my initial assumptions that it is possible to use a variety of instructional methods in the classroom. By methods, of course, I am referring to the particular theories formulated by researchers such as those mentioned earlier in the study (Grammar-Translation, Direct Method, Audiolingualism, Communicative).

However, I noticed major distinctions between the interviews and the classroom observations which were conducted. Many teachers understand the importance of combining methodologies, yet some fail to actually implement these ideas in the classroom. In observing an instructor throughout a four-month period, I found that she was fully aware of the significant value in the various methods available to her; in fact, in departmental discussions, she often raised questions regarding the new trends in teaching foreign language. It seems that her experiences in the profession may have desensitized her to these new innovative theoretical perspectives. She has seen many methods introduced since she began teaching and is now skeptical of the appearance of radical ideas launched by SLA research. In a discussion regarding the current trend in FL classrooms of moving toward more communicative methods, she commented on the fact that each new theory has promised to produce better language learners, implying a rather negative attitude toward this particular method as well. The familiarity with the routine has caused her to become almost unreceptive to the work done by SLA researchers. While this is a particularly pessimistic view of research theory, I believe that it is fairly prevalent among educators, especially those who are considered veteran teachers.

On the other hand, there are teachers who are successfully implementing these ideas into their classrooms. One instructor in particular, who I interviewed as well as observed, does make an attempt to employ different methods; admittedly, she does so based on both theory and her own 'research' conducted in class. She made the important distinction between researchers and instructors. She claimed that some researchers have never even taught the subject area or level with which they are concerned. Therefore, she maintains contact with the current research and subsequently tests these methods on her students. In doing so, the instructor is evaluating the practicality of the studies and using what she feels is most beneficial to the learners in her classroom. Most of the teachers also commented on the need to be flexible and vary methods according to the particular students enrolled in the class. This information is key to finding the most effective combination in order to teach successfully.

As previously addressed in this study, the textbooks generally do not adopt several methods, but rather remain loyal to one or two in particular. Therefore, if the instructors are honest in their attempts to incorporate a combination of pedagogical practices in the classroom, it is reasonable to assume that they create their own supplementary materials. All of the teachers interviewed mentioned several examples of resources they had produced in order to experiment with the various instructional methodologies. Their reasoning for inventing additional materials included attempting to appeal to the diverse learning styles present in the classroom as well as simply engaging their students. The teachers agreed that by alternating their approaches in class, their students were much more involved in the language learning process.

Learning from experience and flexibility were central themes among the educators involved in the study. Though the subjects ranged from a first-year teacher to a veteran teacher close to retirement, all teachers stressed the importance of the ability to adapt to sudden changes

which are inevitable in the school setting. While the study has shown that experience in terms of an extended number of years in the educational system has the potential to result in negative responses to new ideas, it does not have to be the case by any means. One teacher who has taught for a little more than five years mentioned the significant advantages of learning from the experience of other educators. She spoke of the benefits of sharing ideas and helping each other to improve their own teaching techniques. However, when posed with the question regarding the influence which their own experience as students had on their teaching methods, many instructors realized that it was imperative to experiment and discover their own style.

Conclusions

In searching for a link between SLA research and FL pedagogy, the present study reveals several key elements. First of all, the most common way in which research effects methodology is through the publication of the modern language textbook. However, as the textbook analysis shows, the blind implementation of the text is not sufficient in producing competent language learners in the three linguistic elements analyzed. The classroom instructors must be aware of the current research in order to address specific language learning issues with a more well-rounded view of the possibilities being tested to aid in the process. In making themselves more conscious of new techniques, they are able to produce supplementary materials proven to be more beneficial to the students.

In an attempt to find a definitive answer as to the most effective method of instruction in the FL classroom, I have come to realize that it is a difficult task. In fact, the study has shown that the ideal methodology includes a combination of the various approaches which have been introduced over the years. The instructors helped to solidify my initial assumptions that indeed it is possible and, in fact more effective practice to experiment with the findings of theoretical research and choose the aspects that are most beneficial to the L2 learner.

Classroom Implications

While I realize that these methods are neither scientific nor quantitative in nature, I believe that they offer some valid points to consider when discussing the relationship between SLA theory and classroom pedagogy. They emphasize the cooperation of researchers and instructors in order to make the classroom instruction benefit the learner through the best possible means. First of all, the teachers must be aware of current issues in SLA research in order to come to an educated consensus in choosing the proper instructional materials for the students at their school. Until the publishers begin printing material which includes a wider variety of methodologies, instructors must continue to be selective in the strategies they choose to implement in their classrooms. They must constantly check themselves and each other to make certain that they are effectively putting these ideas to use in the classroom. Routine observations and evaluations could be performed so that educators can gain a distinct perspective on their classroom instructional strategies. These combined efforts would be advantageous to the beginning language learner in their individual pursuit to become proficient in the target language.

Appendix: Clinical Interview Questions for First-Year Spanish Instructors

What is your preferred methodology for classroom instruction?

How do you approach grammar instruction in the classroom?

What role does the textbook play in the classroom?

What are some examples of supplementary materials used in your classroom instruction?

How do you teach to reach all of the different learning styles in your classroom?

(techniques, materials, strategies, etc.)

Do you approach instruction of particular linguistic concepts differently based on the degree of difficulty to acquire for native-English speakers?

Does/Should current SLA research influence decisions made in terms of methodology or classroom instruction? How do you implement research findings into your classroom instruction?

How were you taught Spanish? Does that influence your own methods?

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